LANGUAGE, RELIGION AND HISTORY

Arabi-Malayalam and Vernacular Islam among

Mappila Muslims of Kerala

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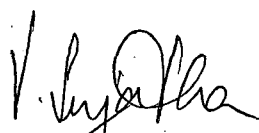*School of Social Sciences*

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled "LANGUAGE, RELIGION AND HISTORY Arabi-Malayalam and Vernacular Islam among Mappila Muslims of Kerala" by Mr. **Abdur Rahoof Ottathingal**, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, has not been previously submitted for any other Degree of this or any other University. To the best of our knowledge this is an original work.

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Chapter-1

Introduction

Unlike their counterparts in other parts of India, the Muslim community in Kerala has been different on grounds of social formation, religious practices, linguistic habits and larger cultural background. The social and historical experience in the regional contexts has contributed to the genesis of distinct cultural practices among Mappila[1] Muslims of Malabar, Kerala. Arabi-Malayalam as a distinctive form of linguistic practice among Mappila Muslims was intervowen into their social space of literary enterprises, spiritual activities, cultural performances and educational engagements. Arabi-Malayalam is the textual practice of writing Malayalam in Arabic script. This particular linguistic form and textual practice are the product of Mappila Muslims regional Islamic cultural and history and culture, and may be seen as 'forms of life' emerging in response to the social and religious dispositions of Mappila Muslims.

Starting from the culture of manuscript, evolving through printing and continuing through newer technologies, Arabi-Malayalam textual production has a history of more than four centuries. Arabi-Malayalam texts dealt with diverse themes of social, spiritual and cognitive importance in the community, while religious knowledge formed considerably a large part. The songs in Arabi-Malayalam which are called generally as *Mappila paattu* are the most popular variety among Mappilas. And Sufi spirituality has been a notable influence on many texts of popular use and later, also of point of debates in the community. The uses of different Arabi-Malayalam texts varied according to the themes dealt with. The songs of Sufi spirituality called *Maalas* or *Sabeena paattu* praising saints, martyrs and prophets are high-placed in the ritual traditions among Mappila Muslims. The *Maalas*, like *Muhyiddin Maala* (1607), one of the earliest and most popular *Mappila paattu*, exalted the saints' power of intercession between the believer and god, and mediated in different spaces in several respects between the religious and other socio cultural contexts of lived Islam among Mappilas. This takes place as a part and also

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[1] Mappila is a generic appellation given to the Muslims of Kerala in general and of Malabar, the norther region, in particular. Though it was used to identify all those who came as settlers through missionary or trade, Muslims, Christians or Jews, it came in time an identity special for Muslims of Kerala. Malabar being the region where Muslims are in majority Mappila in the regional context is Muslim, and there are few Muslims other than Mappilas mainly outside Malabar, such as Labba and Rauthar (Kunju:1989; Gangadharan: 2004).

reflection of the deep seated practice of *paattu* (song) among Mappilas which formed a cultural space in which women engaged more actively than in other spaces. Significantly, the phenomenon of Arabi-Malayalam among Mappila Muslims forms a critical understanding about the place of texts and their uses in practices in Islamic communities. In contrast to the trend of dichotomization between 'textual Islam' and 'lived' practices that dominates in the anthropological studies about Islamic communities in South Asia,[2] The cultural practices around Arabi-Malayalam texts testify the fact that texts hold social and religious meaning in the local everyday contextsas linguistic and literary mediations of universal Islam.

It was specially the regional and local historical contexts of Malabar that contributed to the origin of Arabi-Malayalam and shaped the peculiar spaces of practices around it, notably the religious ones. Its difference in terms of form and content that led to the marginality of its literary output to the larger field of 'standard' Malayalam language and literature has to be elaborated in relation to the ruling ideologies and cultural preferences of the social elites. The social image of the practitioners in Arabi-Malayalam, thus, is constructed in the backdrop of social and historical domination and subordination. This study critically addresses the discourse of reform among Mappila Muslims which could absorb, appropriate and distort the identity and intentions of a 'vernacular Islam' in Kerala that has produced and been, in time, product of the practices of Arabi-Malayalam.

Arabi-Malayalam as a literary practice differed in its linguistic form of expression in terms of its script from Malayalam, the language of its larger social and cultural context namely Malayalam. It also differed from Arabic whose script it drew upon in terms its regional moorings in Malabar. Furthermore, the special religio-cultural aspect Arabi-Malayalam texts is largely shaped in response to the local context of liminality which makes it different from the universal ways of practicing Islam constitutes Arabi-Malayalam giving rise to a vernacular Islam. To produce the universal tenets of Islam with colors of the shared larger culture in local contexts the Vernacular Islam among Mappilas negotiated mainly through the meaning complex of Sufism. Arabi-Malayalam

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[2] See, for example, Imtiaz Ahmed. 2004. 'Introduction: Understanding Islam', in Imtiaz Ahmed and Helmut Reifeld (eds.) *Lived Islam in South Asia-Adaptation, Accommodation and Conflict* (xi-xxv). Delhi: Social Science Press.

drawing upon Sufi Islamic orientation forms a remarkable response and representation of vernacular Islam in Kerala.

However, the diverse transformations that tookplace in their social, cultural and economic spaces of Mappila Muslims have affected the practice of Arabi-Malayalam and vernacular Islam in time. Generally the larger historical process of social and religious reforms which cut across religions, castes and regions in Kerala, and very closely the organized efforts of religious reform among Mappilas which began in the early 20th century have unfavorably affected the practices in vernacular Islam among Mappilas. The religious reform among Mappilas was largely puritanist, represented mainly by the Mujahid movement, and it advocated for a universal and standard Islam that should not be 'polluted' by local cultural innovations. Delegitimizing the Sufi interpretations[3] and spiritual practices in the local cultural contexts, and calling for a 'Malayalam Islam' which projected the 'backwardism' of Arabi-Malayalam, reformism worked as discourse ran adverse to Arbi-Malayalam. It strove to replace Arabi-Malayalam texts, especially *Maalas*, which mediated the universal texts in local context, and advocated for a return to 'original' Islam. Arabic and Malayalam began to be treated with clear distinction. Thus, reformism historically reconstructed the matrix of practices in and around Arabi-Malayalam indentified as 'vernacular Islam' in a pejorative sense. Consequently, in defending the identity of vernacular Islam against reformist contestations, the Sunni orthodoxy's perception of their self identifying with vernacular practices has also changed. In the debates their major intention has become to prove their subscription to universal scriptures that are projected against 'vernacular' practices by the reformists. The Sunni orthodoxy continues to adopt Arabi-Malayalam as the medium of instruction in their centers of religious education, while the internal debates between Sufi circles and Sunni religious scholars are increasing. In other words, owing to the singularizing and creolizing ideological dominance of reformism the Sufi ideological current of vernacular Islam has been distorted in time.

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[3] Sufism is an umbrella term for a variety of philosophical, social and literary phenomena occurring within the Islamic world. It refers primarily to diverse schools of Islamic mysticism. Sufism or *Tasawwuf* is the esoteric aspect of Islam which transcends the division between Shi'ism and Sunnism (Nasr: 1966). The spiritual orders or *Tariqa* following Sufi ideology have exerted considerable influence ver the development of Islamic social, cultural and sometimes, political life of the Muslim communities. Sufism has varied expressions mainly that of popular piety and devotion to the saints and their shrines (Elias: 1998). Mappilas were largely owing to Sufi Islamic orientation.

As an attempt in historical sociology dealing with the cultural uses and practices of language and literature in vernacular contexts, the discursive formations and changes in the social and cultural conditions are at focus in this study.

Conceptual Framework:

'Field' is a major concept used in the study to explain the practice of Arabi-Malayalam and its place in the Malayalam literary space. Following Pierre Bourdieu's understanding, 'field' is used as an investigative framework which can explain the rules that legitimize the linguistic and literary practices. A field is a location of constant struggles for the legitimacy, to be powerful to define the 'standard', owing to the schemes of domination that constitute the domain. Fields are relatively autonomous, socially instituted, having a contingent history and the domination and subordination in them are related to social position.[4] The contestations in the linguistic and literary field have links to the social and cultural positions of the actors in the field.[5] Accordingly, the social-historical aspecs of languages, Arabi-Malayalam and Malayalam are seriously considered in the following sociological analysis.

Another important concept employed in the study with its theoretical signification is 'practice'. Referring to action and at the same time, to the objective structures which produce and are produced by the activity of the actors, practice suggests the dialectical relationship between action and its social historical contexts. Pierre Bourdieu explained practice as product of historically structured and structuring dispositions or *habitus*.[6] As *habitus* is 'product of history', rather, it is the 'embodied history'[7], it has to be considered that 'practice is inseparable from temporality',[8] and hence, it gets unfolded in time. The historical phenomenon of Arabi-Malayalam as a cultural practice but can be only partially explained through Bordieu's theory of practice. Arabi-Malayalam literature as a cultural practice inhabiting the ritual and everyday frames of temporality suggest to the

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[4] Bourdieu, P. 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power*, edited by John B. Thompson. Cambridege: Polity Press. See also, Pierre Bourdieu. 1996. *Rules of Art*. Oxford: Polity Press.
[5] Bourdieu 1991.
[6] Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, translated by Richard Nice (78-86). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[7] Bourdieu, P. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. translated by Richard Nice (54 & 56). Cambridge: Polity Press.
[8] Bourdieu, P. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. translated by Richard Nice (81). Cambridge: Polity Press.

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objective conditions as well as the cognitive and motivating structures Mappila Muslims of Kerala. The *paattu* culture which dealt with emotional as well as cognitive *moods* of Mappilas and was part of their everyday life, a study of their literary cultural practice may throw light upon Mappila Muslims' 'matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions', or the functioning of their *habitus* in time. But to address the reality of cultural choices, willed preferences and differences, and religious intentions that led to the practice of Arabi-Malayalam Bourdieu's notion of habitus is insufficient. Rather, they are products of cultural and political will that emerged in certain historical junctures. It can be construed at best that Arabi-Malayalam literature is a practice whose emergence and later shifts are products of the cultural choices of Mappila Muslims, although it carried the habitual imaginations, everyday usages and the familiar form *paattu* to the most.

Nevertheless, to understand literary activity as a willed creative social practice it is very important to hold 'languages', and not a language. Literary practices are common across languages, but the language to express a community's literary creativity is chosen from among alternatives. Mikhail Bhaktin (1981) has pointed out that, literary linguistic activity at all time and everywhere comes upon languages and not language. "Consciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity of having to choose a language".[9] The selection, the preference, or the will of choosing a language for literary practice involves cultural and historical choices. Bhaktin, hence, considers language in relation with literary practice as 'socioideological registers'. The choice, which can be politically motivated or spiritually inspired, according to Sheldon Pollock, is largely 'cultural choice' determining the order of practice of literature such as vernacular or cosmopolitan.[10] In the present study, Mappila Muslim community is understood as exposed to the plurality of linguistic register. The cultural intentions and innovations that worked out through the linguistic and literary preferences in Arabi-Malayalam are discussed in detail in the following analysis.

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[9] Bhaktin, Mikhail M. 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (295). Austin: University of Texas Press.

[10] Pollock, Sheldon. 1998. 'The Cosmopolitan Vernacular'. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 57 (1) (Feb: 1998): 6-37.

The changes in the practice of Arabi-Malayalam are explained in relation with the discourse of reform generally worked out in Kerala and its particular ways of unfolding among Mappilas. As Abu-Lughod (1991) pointed out, discourse as linked to practice as analytical trope allows for the possibility of recognizing within a social group the play of multiple, shifting and competing statements with practical effects.[11] The operation of religious and social reform among Mappilas is dealt critically in the study aiming at an explanation of the contesting cultural intentions within the community and their shifts in time. Very importantly, a focus on the discourse may reveal how the place of the texts in practice are shaped and reshaped. In this study, the term text is used to mean books in practices, but, very importantly, not as a ruling or guiding principles, but as part of practice, product of practice and producing practices at the same time.

Culture in 'cultural practice' has been used mostly with a focus on religion, and sometimes as including religion. Here I have followed Clifford Geertz's notion of religion as a cultural system.[12] Nonetheless, wherever the religion is dealt differently along with other cultural activities such as artistic performances, religion and culture are used separately as practices.

A major concept connecting at the end the whole argument of the study is 'vernacular'. In linguistics, the term vernacular is associated with languages or dialects spoken in particular social and geographic locations; vernacular dialects or languages might be contrasted with standard forms of language that cross social and geographic boundaries or locales. In this study, Arabi-Malayalam and the religious and the cultural activities and performances are treated as vernacular practices. But there are negative and positive senses of the term vernacular and both are addressed in the case of Arabi-Malayalm. To explicate the peculiar literary practice of Arabi-Malayalam, following Sheldon Pollock, the term vernacular is used in the study as a contrastive category juxtaposed against the 'cosmopolitan' dominant practice. Maintaining a conscious difference from something larger; the vernacular intellectuals chose to write in a language that does not travel as

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[11] Ibid.
[12] Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Religion as a Cultural System", in *Interpretation of Cultures*. New (87-125).York: Basic Books.

easily as the well-travelled language of the cosmopolitan order.[13] By preferring Malayalam which is written in Arabic script with some conscious alterations to make it locally sounding, Arabi-Malayalam by its practitioners was a practice invoved vernacularization. This process involves an understanding, a will, or choice to to write in a language that differed from the dominant order.[14] Here, at one level Malayalam is the regional cosmopolitan. But, though they are using Arabic script, their preference of Malayalam, as it is used in the local context of Malabar, makes also Arabic a dominant and 'standard' other against which they preferred their Malayalam of use. However, this preference involves a 'cultural choice', a will to differ and prefer, which in the case of Arabi-Malayalam was mainly religious, the religion they practiced in local fashion. Pollock (2006) has noted that *bhakti* or devotional cult was a major influence on the process of vernacularization in South Asian context.[15] He has underlined that to produce a regional alternative to the dominant other(s) is to affect a profound break, in cultural communication and self understanding. It was in conscious opposition to the larger sphere (of Malayalam and Arabic, in the context of this study) that the intellectuals in the vernacular order of consciousness (Arabi-Malayalam) defined their regional worlds.[16]

The religious choice that shaped the process of vernacularization of the language and literature of Mappilas has also been dealt as having vernacular fashion. Adopting Joyce B. Flueckiger's elaboration of the Islamic cultural practices in regional and local contexts, the the mappila ritual practices which are related to Arabi-Malayalam like *nercha* and religious contexts of *Maala* and *Paattu* etc. are treated in the study as practices in vernacular Islam. According to Flueckiger (2006), the ritual and devotional practices of Muslims shaped in local multi-religious context which are contested when juxtaposed to the knowledge and practices of 'universal', or transnational Islam (the equivalent of 'standard' form of a language) are considered to be Vernacular Islam. Vernacular Islam represents along with the 'universal' components certain practices such as, marriage customs and other life-cycle rituals, dress and forms of veiling, and devotional practices, often taking local, vernacular forms while still being considered to

[13] Pollock, Sheldon. 1998. 'The Cosmopolitan Vernacular'. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 57 (1) (Feb: 1998): 6-37
[14] ibid.
[15] Pollock, Sheldon. 2006. *Language of the Gods in the World of Men- Sanskrit, Culture and Power in Premodern India* (423). Delhi: Permanentblack.
[16] ibid.: 20.

be Islamic by those who practice them.[17] The color of locally shared culture in ritual practices or a *'shared ritual grammar'* which is largely expressed through the language of Sufism and appealing more to a syncretic context makes vernacular Islam a *'crossroad'* of practicing religion and spirituality.[18] The Mappila Muslims' Islamic practices, of which Arabi-Malayalam is a significant part, as juxtaposed against the 'standard' 'universal' Islam which is projected by the puritan reformist sections among them gets a deep tint of vernacular. But 'reform' as a dominating discourse among Mappilas has largely denounced the attribute of vernacular to the practices that are locally shaped among Mappila Muslims and considered them as 'deviation'. Hence, the sense of vernacular in the discourse of reform is pejorative.

Objectives of the Study:

1. This study primarily attempts to understand the social and historical context of the production of Arabi-Malayalam language and literary practices among Mappila Muslims of Malabar, Kerala.

   The study is also to examine how Arabi-Malayalam as a literary practice is treated in the larger space of Malayalam language and literature.

2. A major focus of the study is to elaborate the relationship of Arabi-Malayalam texts to the diverse religious, social and artistic practices among Mappila Muslims of Kerala.

3. The study wants to explain the cultural choices, ideological thrusts, and social functions of Arabi-Malayalam literary texts in practice.

4. Very importantly, this study aims at an explanation of how the linguistic form and textual body of Arabi-Malayalam represent and respond to the local contexts of practicing Islam. How and why Arabi-Malayalam as a cultural practice maintained its identity and got reconstituted in time. The study seeks to critically

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[17] Flueckiger, J. B. 2006. *In Amma's Healing Room: Gender and Vernacular Islam in South Asia* (2). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
[18] ibid.

examine the shifts in the identity of Arabi-Malayalam as a practice in 'vernacular Islam' in Kerala.

Methodology:

The M.Phil. dissertation in CSS, JNU is expected to be based on secondary literature as it is designed to be a prelude to the Ph.D. Accordingly this historical sociological study of Arabi-Malayalam as a cultural practice is based, to a major extent, on secondary sources. To fill the gap in the analysis of the culture of production and uses of Arabi-Malayalam texts and the older form of education system of Arabi-Malayalam, I have conducted interviews of some people of the functional printing and publishing houses, oral narratives of some aged people, and a few people who preserve the rare and old Arabi-Malayalam texts. To elaborate the relationship between Arabi-Malayalam text and practice in socio cultural contexts, I have chosen the case study of the uses, practices and functions of an Arabi-Malayalam text which is the first found and highly placed text in the Mappila Muslims' cultural domain, *Muhyiddin Maala*. My conscious and heavy reliance on Malayalam and Arabi-Malayalam sources has helped to enrich the research with the insights that cannot be derived from the available materials in English. And significantly, as an insider to Mappila's culture of Arabi-Malayalam I have depended also upon my own experiences and memories to interpret the practices in vernacular Islam in Kerala.

Scheme of Chapterization:

Apart from the first chapter that provides an introductory theoretical discussion on language, literature, culture and society, there are four chapters including the conclusion. The second chapter, '*Alphabets in Cultural Practice: Arabi-Malayalam among Mappila Muslims of Kerala*', deals with the language, literary and other texts, general aspects of practice of Arabi-Malayalam, and its place in the larger field of Malayalam. The chapter which is relatively longer is divided into three sections, the first being a social historical account of the formation of the community. The second section gives a detailed explanation of the institutional dynamics of Arabi-Malayalam from the description of its linguistic peculiarities, production and distribution processes of Arabi-Malayalam texts,

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elaboration of the textual varieties, and the contexts of related practices. In the third section Arabi-Malayalam is placed in the larger field of Malayalam language and literature analyzing the social and historical roots of marginality of Arabi-Malayalam.

Chapter three, *Texts in Local Islamic Cultural Mediation(s):The Case of Muhyiddin Maala*, is a focused study of a culturally influential Arabi-Malayalam text, *Muhyiddin Maala*, to explain the practices of Arabi-Malayalam texts in contexts. This chapter attempts to elaborate Arabi-Malayalam as a cultural practice. In the local context of Mappila Muslims Arabi-Malayalam texts played considerable role of cultural mediation, and it shows how texts are part of practices in Mappilas spiritual and social life.

In the Chapter four, *Social Context of Vernacular Islam in Kerala: Reformism and Arabi-Malayalam*, the social contexts of present day marginality and negative identifications with Arabi-Malayalam are critically investigated in relation with the changes brought about in society through the organized efforts of religious reform among Kerala Muslims. With an emphasis on the aspect of vernacular Islam carried in Arabi-Malayalam, the chapter examines how the meaning of 'vernacular' was reconstituted in the background of reforms among Mappilas. As a critical investigation into the ideology and process of operation of 'reforms', the *distortion* of 'vernacular' in the current discursive domain in the community and its effects on practices are seriously addressed. Finally, a brief concluding discussion forms the Chapter five.

Chapter II

Alphabets in Cultural Practice

Arabi-Malayalam among Mappila Muslims of Malabar, Kerala

Introduction

The study of the linguistic particularities and the repertoire of literary productions over time, it is thought, can reveal and reflect upon the nature of passage of the corresponding culture and community through various periods of time. Language and literature talk much about past, present, and the envisaged future of the life as well as the thought processes of any community. A critical exploration through the body of literature produced by a community can also elicit genealogical information of the cultural and religious ideological appropriations and stereotypes developed, and began to operate from within the community as well as imposed from outside it in different historical junctures. Understanding of the institutional dynamics of a language and the literary activities in it is, thus, of great sociological and social anthropological importance to explain the transformations in the ritual practices in the community over a period of time.

This chapter is aimed mainly at the social historical analysis of Arabi-Malayalam in its linguistic, socio-cultural and religious contexts. It is my intention to show the importance of placing the content of the textual body in the transforming ritual practices of the community, substantiating the symbiosis between text and practices in cultural life. Apart from an analysis of the peculiarity of the trope 'script', the defining linguistic distinctiveness of Arabi Malayalam (Malayalam written in Arabic script), the cultural particularities of it as the history of social, economic, and religious life of a community, Mappila Muslims of Kerala, South India, amidst various linguistic cultural exposures, territorial and extra territorial, and the evolution of its cultural and ritual self are expected to be explained as the practice of Arabi-Malayalam through time. Along with these, it is also aimed at locating Arabi-Malayalam literature in the Malayalam literary field to understand the larger social and historic context and cultural and language ideological

currents which led to undermine the contributions of literary efforts and counter hegemonic thrusts in the practice of Arabi-Malayalam.

For the conveniences of detailing and analysis this chapter is divided into three sections. The first would deal with the social and cultural history of the community operated through Arabi Malayalam, the Mappila Muslims of Kerala. The second section which would occupy the major part of the chapter is aimed primarily at an elaboration of the linguistic, cultural and religious features of Arabi-Malayalam literature, and then to some essential extent the explanation of the social, cultural and political environment of its production. The last part of the chapter would be a discussion on the course of development and relative decline of Arabi-Malayalam contextualizing it in the larger debates of Malayalam literary public sphere, the social and religious reforms of early 20th century operated in the community in particular and Malayali social and cultural sphere in general, and in the current political and cultural debates around the public establishment of the static images of the community during modern times.

1. Mappila Muslims in Kerala: A Brief Social History

Mappilas are the Muslims of Kerala in general and of Malabar, the northern region of Kerala, in particular, though not as a social identity exclusively for all of them. Mappila is a generic appellation given to the Muslims of Kerala in general[19]. The term, which is transliterated from Malayalam, has taken several forms, the most common being Mappila, Mappilla, and Moplah.[20] On the origin and usages of the term Mappila M. Gangadharan (2004), who has studied the history of the community, has pointed out that the term Mappila is not used in most of the early historical accounts on Mappila community such as Shaikh Zainuddin's 'Tuhfat ul Mujahidin' of 16th century, or in the accounts of the travelers began to come to Kerala since 13th century. But the Potuguese officer, Duarte Barbosa who lived in Kerala in the first two decades of 16th century with much close familiarity with the then Kerala's culture and Malayalam language has used the term Mappila to talk about the Muslims of whole Kerala.

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[19] Kunju, Ibrahim. 1989. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: Their History and Culture* (1). Thiruvananthapuram: Sandhya Publications.

[20] Miller, Roland E. 1967. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala- A Study in Islamic Trends* (30). Bombay: Orient Longman.

Barbosa gave a picture of the community through the colonialist lens of a Portuguese Latin Christian officer who saw them as the descendants of the Moors of the European context who had a tough communal interaction in the history involving also crusades. He narrated that they are the Moors (Muslims) who are found increasingly throughout Malabar[21]. They talk the language of other heathens of the land and live half dressed but use a round cap on their head and left their beard unshaved. They, I think, form the one fifth of the total population, most of them are rich and all sea trade and travelling is theirs. If the Portuguese could not invade over Malabar the region would have been of Moors, and there would have been a Moorish (Muslim) ruler. Because if any heathen, the local people with their own customs mostly Hindu who did not believed in the religion of the Portuguese trading invaders, Latin Christianity, got depressed or unhappy s/he became a *moor*. The Moors loved them, and if it is a woman they also married them. These people follow some customs even of the local heathens. The children from these marital relationships inherited half of their property. The children of their sisters inherited the other half. These people are Muhammadans who have many mosques here and Friday is their sacred day. They follow polygamy and convert their children and their mothers to their religion. And this evil generation is getting increased in number. The people of this land call them 'Mapuleres'.[22] The aversion of Portuguese in the region traders against Muslims at that time has been succinctly captured in Barbosa's expression of 'evil generation'.

It is assumed that those who came through the lines of foreign trade or religious missionary and settled in Kerala were commonly known as Mappilas. As Prof. K.M.Bahauddin[23] pointed out that, the term once was used for Christian and Jewish settlers in Malabar as 'Nasrani Mappila' and 'Juda/Jutha Mappila, respectively, and Muslims were called 'Jonakan/Conakan Mappila' in the southern parts of Kerala. In the Northern part of Kerala, Malabar forms its major part, since the Christian and Jew population is of lesser number, the term 'Mappila' came to be known in general for

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[21] It has to be understood that by Malabar Barbosa meant, as it is explained by himself, the geographical area which includes almost all parts of the present Kerala.

[22] From the *Book of Duarte Barbosa*, English edition, translated by M.L Dames, Delhi: A.E.S, (1989), as quoted in Gangadharan, M. 2004. *Mappila Padanangal* (Malayalam, *Mappila Studies*) (9-10). Calicut: Vachanam Books.

[23] Bahauddin, K. M. 2004. *Kerala Muslimkal: Cheruthunilppinte Charitram* (Mal., Kerala Muslims: History of Resistance), quoted in M.Gangadhran. 2004. (11).

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Muslims. Though the whole Muslims in Kerala were understood as Mappilas, this generic name cannot stand for every one of them at present in Kerala.[24] At present, it is generally used to apply to those Muslims living in the area north of Cochin, and in the southern parts Muslims are known as 'Mettan' a degenerated form of 'Mlechan' in Malayalam.[25]

There are various opinions regarding the etymology of the word 'Mappila'. Roland E. Miller has reviewed eight etymologies for the term, such as, as an honorific name derived from two Malayalam terms, 'maha' and 'pilla' respectively meaning 'great' and 'child'. It might have been used by the native people of Kerala who gladly received and respected the visitors and settlers from abroad. Another interpretation he gave was that the term derived from 'Matawu' or 'Ma' meaning 'mother' and 'Pilla' meaning 'child'. It suggested 'mother's child' designating the offspring of foreign husbands and indigenous wives. Another interpretation, closer to this' is that it is taken to mean either bridegroom or son in law. It is similar to the Tamil use of the term. To the present day newly married Muslim in Kerala is known as 'new Mappila'. There are some more interpretations regarding the origin of the term mentioned by Miller. However he set upon 'bridegroom, or new husband as the most plausible, given the historical pattern of marriage between Arab traders and local Kerala women.[26] Another reasonable explanation of the origin of the term was given by M.R.Raghava Varier, the epigraphist who opined that it is derived

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[24] It can be noticed that the whole Brahmins in Kerala are generally understood as Nabootiris, but it is not the case in reality though the Nabootiris are the majority of Brahmins. (Gangadharan 2004: 11).

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

'Mlechan', the original form of the Malayalam world 'Mettan', is a term of contempt in Sanskrit, in the linguistic cultural field the one who mispronounces. See for details, Karassery, M.N. 1995. 'Arabic-Malayalam', in Asghar Ali Engineer ed., *Kerala Muslims- A Historical Perspective* (168). Delhi: Ajanta Publications.

It should also be noticed that in the caste hierarchy of the Hindu society, which in majority in the region, Muslims are also considered closer to the rank of untouchables. In the travel accounts of Ibn Battuta, it was mentioned that though Muslims are impure and 'Mlecha', the Brahmins of Kerala had a relative respect to them. (Ibn Battuta as quoted in Randathani, Randathani. 2008. *Mappila Malabar*, second edition, (18). Calicut: Islamic Publishing Bureau. The Malayalam spoken among Muslims, which contained largely Arabic, then many other languages mostly due to religious links and contacts, is considered as lacking purity of words. The linguistic and literary authority was characterized by the Sanskritised Malayalam, and those literary cultures and linguistic experiences that did not follow the Sanskritic model are being marginalized in the literary and linguistic history of Malayalam. The criteria of linguistic and literary expertise were shaped in the Sanskrit-oriented linguistic and literary field and its aesthetic trends. See, Taramel, Umer. 2006. 'Mappila Paattu- Paada samskaravum Samskara paadavum' (Mal., Mappila Songs-Textual Culture and Cultural Text), in Balakrisnan Vallikkunnu and Umer Taramel (eds.). *Mappila paattu: Paadavum Padanavum* (Mal., *Mappila Songs: Text and Study*), (17-18). Kottayam: DC Books.

[26] Miller, Roland E. 1967. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala* (30-32). Bombay: Orient Longman.

from '*maha*'/great and '*pilla*'/accountant. This position very importantly pointed out that all three foreign communities were originally mercantile settlements.[27]

Formation of a Muslim Community in Malabar:

It was in the colonial period that the actual process of formation of communities took place in Kerala as part of new political and economic changes. The social and economic organizations, new social values etc contributed to the strengthening of community identity and the opportunities opened in the time led to competition among communities. Towards the end of 19th century the unrest of the communities had begun. But, the emergence and development of Islam and Muslims in Kerala had taken place in Kerala long before these times. There were some notable factors behind the formation of Muslims in Kerala, the primary one being the early Arab contacts through sea trade. The massive process of conversion into Islam especially from the lower castes was another factor.[28] Along with these two, the engagement of Sufis had a great role in the spread of Muslims and shaping Islamic practices in Kerala.[29]

The early stage of growth of Muslims in Kerala was marked primarily by some economic and social factors. Unlike the historical experience of the development of Muslim settlements and culture in most other parts of Indian subcontinent where there was a ruling class support in the background of religious developments, the political factor was of least importance in the emergence and spread of the Muslims in Kerala, though it came along in later stages, such as the king Zamorine's support for Mappilas' religious and trading activities in the 16th century.[30]

The Malabar Coast of southwestern India, (the area now included within the modern boundaries of Kerala State), had been exposed to the contacts of several groups of people from different countries through sea trade. The presence of the Arab traders in Malabar coast, even before the birth of Prophet Muhammad and the formation of a Muslim

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[27] Dale, S.F. and Menon, Gangadhara. (1978). Op. cit.

[28] Dale, S.F. 1990. 'Trade, Conversion and the Growth of the Islamic Community of Kerala, South India'. *Studia Islamica*, No. (71): 155-175

[29] Kunjali.V. 2004. *Sufism in Kerala*. Calicut: Publication Division-University of Calicut. (See Also, Kunju 1989: 20-24).

[30] Zainuddin, Shaikh. 1942. *Tuhfathul Mujahidin* translated by S. Muhammad Hussain Nainar (51-52). Madras; Madras University Press.

community in the region, as early as the fourth century A.D., when, with the decline of the Roman Empire, has been mentioned in several historical documentations.[31] The Arab traders, like the Romans, were attracted to the Chinese and Southeast Asian products, and especially to the Malabar Coast for its rich stock of spices and for its services being as an entry point in the Indian Ocean trade which stretched from the Mediterranean to East Asia.[32] A noted Arab traveler of 9th c., Abu Zayd, has also given some accounts describing the vessels with the Arab traders made out of the boat making technologies of Kerala and Lakshadweep, and carrying cargo of coconuts and spices to Umman and other Arab regions.[33] Referring to the accounts of the Arab geographer, Ibn Rustah (c. 900 A.D), Ibrahim Kunju (1989) has illustrated that the Indian ships were sailing up to the West Asian port cities.[34] These early direct contacts of Arabs with Malabar cost has also a great role for Arabic being high placed among the Muslims of Kerala. The very term Malabar, as the linguists and philologists attributed, had derived from such contacts.[35] The contact of Arab merchants and their settlements on Malabar Coast were a major a factor in the early development of Muslim settlements in the region.

However, the popular story of conversion of a Kerala ruler to Islam and his meeting with the Prophet and his consent for propagation of Islam in the region is considered to trace the origin Islam in Kerala. As there are different opinions among historians regarding his return to Kerala the exact time of origin of Islam in Kerala is contested. It is, so, considered as in 7th century (during the life time of the prophet), 8th, or 9th century.[36]

The process of large scale conversion, especially of the lower caste Hindus, had been another major factor which led to form a community of Muslims in Kerala. In the Portuguese and, then, British colonial political and social context many people in the hinterlands of Malabar converted into Islam. The conversion of the lower castes to Islam

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[31] Parappil, P.P.Muhammad Koya. 1994. *Kozhikkotte Muslimkalude Charitram* (Mal., *The History of Muslims at Kozhikode).*, (38). Calicut: Focus Publications; Panikkar, K.N. 1989. *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar. 1836-1921* (50). Delhi: OUP. Gangadharan,,M. 2004. *Mappila Padanangal* (Mal., *Mappila Studies)*, (83-84). Calicut: Vachanam Books.
[32] Dale, S.F. (1990).
[33] Kurup, K.K.N. 2006. *The Legacy of Islam (Kerala) – A Study of the Mappilas of Kerala* (21). Kannur: Samayam Publications. (
[34] Kunju, A.P.Ibrahim. 1989. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: Their History and Culture* (15). Tiruvananthapuram: Sandhya Publications.
[35] Kurup. (2006: 11).
[36] Kunju. 1989. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala* (15-17). Tiruvananthapuram: Sandhya Publications..

was mainly due to the 'inconveniences' and social and cultural disabilities they faced under the caste hierarchy. They expected social emancipation through conversion.[37] Alongside, the Portuguese takeover of the domination in the sea trade from The Muslim merchants followed the social and political repression and unrest of Muslims in the region. The support from the native kings like Zamorins of Calicut, especially at times of Portuguese targeting of Muslims had helped Mappila Muslims to withstand the oppressive situations and develop their religious institutions such as building mosques. Unlike the mercantile elite in the coastal region, the people of the hinterlands were mainly of poorer social and economic conditions. The conversion of these people offered them socio cultural and economic mobility. Under the already prevailing upper caste domination and the land policies during the British time stiffened unrest and thus mobilizations among this largely agrarian population. The *Sayyids*, locally called *Thangals*, who came from Yemen with Islamic missionary purposes upholding the Sufi spiritualism rose in this time of distress into the leadership of Mappila Muslims. They had a considerable role in the conversions of lower caste and also some upper caste Hindus into Islam, and in mobilizing Muslims against the colonial repressions.[38]

Role of Sufis was significant in spread of Islam in Kerala, and in shaping the cultural habits of Mappilas. Though there are only scanty 'standard' historical sources explaining the Sufi engagements in Kerala, the early Arabi-Malayalam texts which clearly represented the Sufi ideology and reflected the social and cultural contexts of their practices mark the presence and influences of Sufism and Sufis informing the development of religious practices among Mappilas.[39] Malik bin Dinar, an early missionary came to Kerala with some associates from Arabia and propagated Islam among the native people and built several mosques, was a disciple of the famous Sufi, Hasan ul-Basari.[40] The presence of Sufis such as Shaykh Shahabudin Qazaruni and Ahmed Jalaluddin Bukhari was mentioned in the early historical narratives on Kerala.[41] The Makhdums of Ponnani who came from the Coromandel Coast of Tamil Nadu and

[37] Dale, S.F. (1990).
[38] Kurup and Pokker. (eds.). 2006. *Mambuaram Sayyid Fazl Pookoya Thangal: The Everlasting Presence in the Anti-colonial History* (Mal.). Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers.
[39] Randathani, Hussain. 2008. *Mappila Malabar*. Calicut: IPB.
[40] Kunju. (1989: 20-21).
[41] ibid.

began to command the leadership of Mappila Muslims were adhering to Sufi orders and the first Makhdum (1467-1521) authored the well known Sufi poem *Adhkiya*.[42] Mamburam Sayyid Alawi Thangal was a noted *sayyid* figure from Yemen who had the spiritual influence of Sufi line and the leadership of Mappilas' fight against the feudal lords and British administration.[43]

The Qadiri *Tariqa* or Sufi order was the most popular among Mappilas, and the first found Arabi-Malayalam text, *Muhyiddin Maala* written by Qazi Muhammad of Calicut was a call to the *Tariqa*.[44] The colonial context of insecurities had massively generated a sense of community among Mappila Muslims whereby their socio political resistance and spiritual defense led them to produce the Arabi-Malayalam literatures of popular use.[45] It was in the same context that a kind of aversion to the language of social and cultural elite, Malayalam, and to the language of the colonial oppressors emerged among them.[46] The cultural practices and Islamic art forms among Mappilas are said to be the contributions of Qadiri Sufi order.[47] The early institutional practice of religious education and spiritual teachings which in later period developed into *Dars, Madrasas* and then Arabic colleges were molded initially in Sufi orientation.[48] And significantly, several Arabi-Malayalam songs colored with Sufi spirituality were written during the time of Portuguese and later, the British colonial repressions.[49] The popular practices of saint-veneration, activities related to *jaaram* or *Dargah,* tradition of spiritual healing, the thematic orientation of most of the religious books used among Mappilas, and the narrative of *paattu* or songs were all shaped in Sufi spirituality.[50] In the cultural realm, the popular festivals and songs prising the saints, martyrs and religious heroes called *Malas or Nerchappattu* enabled

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[42] Randathani (2008).

[43] Panikkar, K.N. (1989).

[44] Kunjali, (2004).

[45] Aboobackar, K. 2008. 'When Reading *Muhyiddin Maala* Once Again' (Mal.), in Sainuddin Mandalamkunnu. (ed.). *Muhyiddin Maala: Charitram, Paadam Padanam*. (Mal., *Muhyiddin Maala: History, Text and Study)*, (27). Thrissur: Kaizen Books.

[46] Rahman, M.A. 2008. 'Muhyiddin Maala: Oru Pratibodha Kavyam' (Mal., Muhyiddin Maala: A Poetry of Counter Consciousness), in Sainuddin Mandalamkunnu. (ed.), *Muhyiddin Maala: Charitram, Paadam Padanam*. (Mal., *Muhyiddin Maala: History, Text and Study)*, (33-34).Thrissur: Kaizen Books: Thrissur.

[47] Randathani, Hussain. 2007. *Sufi Margam* (Mal., *The Sufi Path)*. Calicut: Islamic Publishing Bureau.

[48] Kunjali (2004).

[49] Aboobackar, K. 2007. *Vaidyarude Kavya Lokam* (Mal., *Vaidyar's World of Poetry)*. Calicut: IPB.

[50] Kunjali (2004).

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them to create internally a sense of community consciousness.[51] And the general 'folk culture' among Mappilas in which Arabi-Malayalam and Sufism were wedded together and generated a large corpus of cultural practices that are locally shaped contributed greately to communal harmony.[52]

The Occupational Compostion of Mappila Muslims:

Historically Mappila Muslims emerged in the Malabar coastal region as a trading group. The Arabs' sea trade in the Indian Ocean region was an influential factor in the development of a Muslim community of traders on Malabar Coast.[53] But a large number of people in the hinterlands who were converted into Islam from lower castes were primarily agricultural tenents.[54] They worked in the lands of feudal lords. The landed people among Mappilas in the 19th century were negligible in number. *Ossans* or the barbers and *Puslans* or the fisher men were also part of the converted Muslims.[55] Those who were converted from lower castes such as Cherumar and Pulaya were following their traditional occupations. These lower caste converts formed a major chunk of population among Mappilas, apart from few who were converted from upper castes like Nairs and some people of Arab lineage. The people of Arab lineage and Prophet's descent who are called Sayyids or *Thangals* enjoy high status in the community. They command traditional leadership, and most often practice spiritual healing among Mappilas.

The Portuguese blow to the Arab and local Muslims trade in the coastal region in the earlier stage, and later the British land policies which led to massive eviction of the tenents off their working land caused for collective rage, mobilization and reactions. The lower occupational status and the growing material insecurities were at centre stage when Mappila/Malabar rebellion broke out in the late years of 19th and early years of 20th

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[51] Poonathala, Shihabudheen. 2004. 'Community and Political Identity: Emergence ofMuslim Political Identity in Malabar', in K.N.Ganesh. (ed.). Culture and ModernityHistoricalexplorations (245-259). Calicut: Publication Division, University ofCalicut (2004)

[52] Randathani, Hussain. 2004. 'Communal harmony in the Mappila Folk Culture', in K.N.Ganesh. (ed.). Culture and Modernity-Historical explorations (236-45). Calicut: Publication Division, University of Calicut.
[53] Dale: 1990.
[54] Gangadharan:2004.
[55] Mathur. P.R.G. 1977. *The Mappila fisher Folk of Kerala* (305-24). Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society

century.[56] Mappilas engagement in the rebellion has marked with the color of their religious ideology.[57] It was one prominent historical context when Arabi-Malayalam literature, especially the *Mappila Pattu* of resistance vigour was produced in plenty among Mappilas. The British had destroyed and confiscated several Arabi-Malayalam presses and burnt many *paattu* or songs which were penned in Arabi-Malayalam as a motivating political and cultural activity against the colonial state and and their local allies, the land land lords.[58]

Mappila community underwent several changes in social, religious and economic grounds after the rebellion. It was the time when a small group among them rose as landed and thus powerful to control their political and religios leadership.[59] Mappilas began to be partially part of government services mainly after the reformist advocacy for development of the community through government jobs. However, the massive migration of Mappilas to the Gulf countries, irrespective of their economic background, which strated in 1970s marked a drastic shift in the economic status of the community in general. This process has contributed to the development of a middle class among Mappilas in the recent times.[60] Nevertheless, still a large section of the community especially in the rural Malabar remains as agricultural workers.

Malabar Rebellion and Later Formations:

Malabar rebellion of 1921 which started in the late 19th century and was an outcome of a series of revolts against the landlords and colonial state has been considered a crucial social and political juncture in the history of Mappila Muslims. The local uprisings in which a mass rebellion of Mappila Muslims of mostly agrarian background broke out in rebellion culminated in the massacre of a large number of them. The rebellion had decisive consequences on Mappilas social, religious, political and economic life. There are different views about the character of the revolt. Some of the scholars interpreted it as primarily a peasant revolt and considered the religious involvement in the revolt as a

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[56] Panikkar: 1989.
[57] Dale:1980.
[58] Kareem and Moulavi: 1978.
[59] Gangadharan: 2004; Tharamel: 2006.
[60] Osella and Osella: 2007.

mere instrumental factor in mobilising the Mappila mass.[61] On the other hand, some explained it in terms of religious assertion and considered religion as the primary factor in mobilising the people for the uprisings.[62] The second view holds that the rebellion was mediated through religious sanctioning of violence, and through mobilizations on religious line 'homogenized' the community. The notion of *'jihad'*, the 'militant tradition' of Mappilas and the involvement of *ulemas* and other religious leadership were considered by the second. As a rebellion against the ruling colonial state and the land lords, the representation of the 'rebellious' community in the later historical narratives have largely potrayed negatively, and this has deeply influenced the negative fixation of image of the community in the later narratives in the Malayalam literary field.[63] This forms a third view that focuses on the representations of Mappila Muslims in colonial writings after the rebellion.[64] As a critical enterprise, the third view examines the historical negative image fixations of Malabar and Mappilas as 'fanatic zone' and 'fanatic people', and how the nationalist version of the rebellion indirectly reinforced the same. It has seriously pointed out that the negative image of Mappila Muslims and Malabar have been forming the historical narrative in many pre and post independent literary works which are celebrated in the literary field of Malayalam.[65]

According to M.Gangadharan (2004),[66] the unsettling experience of the rebellion has created an 'awareness' of unification and collective movements for development and achievement in the social, economic and political domains. He said, the Muslim identity-based political articulation like that of Muslim League got grip over the community, and the susequent strengthening of social engagements in the public sphere were in a way, product of collective constructive thinking that began after the repression of the revolt. The consolidation of the community and collective efforts to reconstruct the social life of Mappilas were manifest in the aftermath of rebellion. And this was the period when the religious reform movement that had clear influences in later stages on shaping a Muslim

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[61] Panikkar, K.N. 1989. *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar. 1836-1921.* Delhi: OUP.

[62] Dale,S.F. 1980. *Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier: The Mappilas of Malabar 1498-1992.* Oxford.

[63] Ansari, M.T. 2008. *Malabar- Deshiyathayude Ida-Paadukal* (Mal., *Malabar- Space-Marks / Engagements of Nationalism*). Kottayam: D.C.Books.

[64] Ansari, M.T. 2005. 'Refiguring the Fanatic- Malabar 1836-1922', in Shail Mayaram et. al. (eds.). *Muslims, Dalits, and the Fabrications of history. Subaltern Studies xii* (37-77). Delhi: Permanent Black.

[65] Anasari, M.T. 2008.

[66] Gangadharan, M. 2004. *Mappila Padanangal* (Mal., *Mappila Studies*). Calicut: Vachanam Books.

political identity too, began to operate in the community.[67] The religious reform among Mappila Muslims was taking place in the larger historical context of Kerala when there were several similar collective efforts of social and religious reform across different sections of society.[68] Amaong Mappilas, it was a time of many layered changes, such as religious reform movement, organized efforts for religious education, and collective articulation of Muslim political identity. The formation of reformist religious organizations like Muslim Aikya Sangham was followed by the rise of the opposing orthodox Sunni organization called Samastha.[69] The operation of reformism among Mappila Muslims made their discursive domain brisk and the Islamic cultural practices which were shaped in the larger context of local culture began to be contested. This had deeper impacts on the traditions of linguistic, literary, and ritual practices among Mappilas.

The Post-Independent Conditions:

After the independence the Mappila social and political domain began more to be consolidated and they as a community rose at different levels to bargain for the developments. With the strengthening of religious and social reform among Mappilas there was an increase in the public interests in education, especially women's. The boom in gulf migration among Mappilas of Malabar which started in 1970s has contributed to the economic and educational development in the region. The international migration, especially, as Mappilas preferred, to gulf countries, have consequential effects of socio economic developments in the community and have strong influences on reshaping the ethnic identity of Mappilas, like Ezhava Hindus and Syrian Christians, in the current times.[70] This period, following the gulf remittance, has significantly been characterized by new trends in their life style, newer material constructions, mobility in the social status of several ordinary folks, and shifts in the economic activities characterized this period. Along with the economic-oriented migration to the Arab countries, the older links to Arabic has been reshaped on new grounds in the religious realm. It has been noted that

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[67] ibid.

[68] Gopakumar, P.F. 2007. *Keraliya Navothanam* (Mal., *Kerala Renaissance*). Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publications.

[69] Faizy, P.P.Muhammad. 2002. *Samastha* (Mal.). Kottakkal: Prakasham Publications.

[70] Kurien, Prema. 2004. *Kalaedoscopic Ethnicity: International and Reconstructon of Community identities in Kerala.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

the 'gulf-influence' has trengthened the 'Arabisation' of Mappila Islamic culture in the current times and the new prescriptions and cultural preferences like 'purdah' has got social currency.[71] It is noteworthy that the gulf-imagination has been reflected in the *Mappila Paattu* (songs) of the period.

However, the political developments on communitylines, social economic changes after the gulf impact, the general cultural and religious shifts due to the reformist interventions, and the religious discurses addressing the new social and cultural trends from religious point of view, all o fthese factors have contributed to the present shape of Mappila Muslims socio economic and cultural life in Kerala at present. Mappilas have a unified thrus for development at educational and political levels while though they differ internally, and they are counted externally as a decisive economic and political group in the present Kerala. The internal divisions go largely on religious preferences where the 'traditional' practices have been considered barriers to 'development' by most of the educated and economically well off among the community. The common ordinary folks in general and the Sunni orthodoxy in particular are still oriented to the Mappilas' religio cultural practices of local historical importance and they still find meaning in their linguistic, literary and cultural preferences in practice despite the the larger context of shrinking of their domain of practice amidst various changes in and around the community. *Mappila Paattu* has entered to the school and university text books while as a passionate experience it has come to a shrunken experience among them.

2. The Linguistic, Literary and Cultural Field of Arabi-Malayalam

Among the various social, cultural and religious manifestations of the Mappila Muslim community of Malabar, Kerala, Arabi-Malayalam stands a unique and revealing source of their identity and its historically rooted mode of expression. Arabi-Malayalam carries the marks of historical formation of the community, and it also reflects the shifts in their larger socio cultural life. Arabi-Malayalam has been considered as an exemplary model of Mappila identity consciousness and self expression. It is a cultural outcome emerged

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[71] Osella, Filippo and Osella, Caroline. 2008. 'Islamism and Social Reform in Kerala, South India'. *Modern Asian Studies*. 42,2/ (3): 317-346.

out of the give and take between Arabs and the local people of Kerala[72] through cultural, religious, trade and marital relationships.[73] The dominant perspective regarding Arabi-Malayalam is that it is another form of Malayalam, the official language of Kerala. Since it is written in Arabic script and introduced by the Arabs who came to Kerala, this language is called Arabi Malayalam, and its Literature is known as Arabi Malayalam literature.[74] As Mappilas are the dealing people of Arabi Malayalam the language and literature of it are also known as 'Mappila *bhasha*/language' and 'Mappila *sahityam*/literature' respectively. Arabic was the religious language and Arabi-Malayalam was the textual language of Mappila Muslims of Kerala.[75] But during the latter half of the20[th] century, so many changes have taken place in the place of Arabi-Malayalam in the community.

Arabi-Malayalam is characterized by certain particularities in linguistic aspects and in the field of textual practices. A large number of compositions and books in diverse fields, such as creative writings like novels, travelogue, poetry etc., intellectual tracts, religious hymns, books on healing and therapy, spiritual and mystical notes. The *pattu* or song tradition, which later known to be popularly as 'Mappila Paattu' is the prominent genre of Arabi-Malayalam literature, of which *maala paattu* or the devotional poetry informed by the Sufi spiritualism and then *pada paattu* or war songs narrating the stories of wars and the venerated martyrs in the history of the community or the larger religious history of Islam stand highly appealing to the cultural and religious self of the community. However, Arabi Malayalam by its informing relationship with the religious and socio cultural life of the Mappila Muslim community calls for a comprehensive examination beyond merely its linguistic or literary dimensions.

2.1. The Language of Arabi-Malayalam:

A cultural sociological explanation of the language of Arabi-Malayalam in this context would be focusing on a historicization of the linguistic practices, a description of the

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[72] Vallikkunnu, Balakrishnan. 2006. 'Mappilappaatu Vicharathinte Naalvazhikal' (Mal., 'Mappila Songs The Chronicle of Thought'), in Balakrishnan Vallikkunnu and Umer Taramel. (eds.). *Mappilappaattu: Paadavum Padanavum* (Mal., *Mappila Songs: Text and Study*),. (7). Kottayam: D.C.Books.

[73] Aboobacker, K. 2007. *Vaidyarude Kavyalokam*, (Mal., *Vaidyar's World of Poetry*), (19). Kozhikode: IPB.

[74] Abu, O. 1970. *Arabi Malayala Sahitya Charitram* (Mal., *The History of Arabi Malayalam Literature*) (7). Kottayam: National Book Stall.

[75] ibid.: 125

particularities of script and writing, a cultural and geographical contextualization of the language along with an explanation of the link between Arabi-Malayalam and similar forms of linguistic and cultural phenomena elsewhere beyond the geographical locus of Arabi Malayalam substantiating the commonalities and differences looking at its dimension of universality.

A Historicization of the Linguistic Practices:

The exact time when Arabi-Malayalam script and writing came into existence is not traceable in the light of historical evidences. But it can be believed that it might have emerged in the 9th or 10th century A.D[76]. Though the first found Arabi-Malayalam work, *Muhyiddin Maala*, was composed in 1607,[77] its systematic structure, craft unlike an infantile work of composition in a language and its rhyming fluency suggest that there might have been works composed before this *Maala*.[78] But the *Maala*'s influential impact on the community, Sufi spiritual content of popular appeal and the attractive style of composition in verse made it lasting still despite being written at a time when there was no print, and, one can reasonably assume, other earlier works had been lost due to several reasons.[79] Moreover, the script used for the writing of the earliest copies of Muhyiddin Maala was considerably a progressed form of Arabi-Malayalam.

As early as the 7th century A.D., or the 1st C. after the Hijra, the Arabs were found to be using Arabic script to write the local languages of the countries they started settling in and propagating Islam over there. It is a well accepted historical fact that the spread of Islam in Kerala began in the 9th Century, and it is reasonable to believe, then, that it was the time when a cultural atmosphere to emerge Arabi Malayalam was set afoot[80]. So when they came to Malabar in the 9th c they might have founded Arabi Malayalam primarily for the purpose religious propagation.

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[76] Ibid.: 22
[77] Miller, R.E. 1967. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala- A Study in Islamic Trends* (288). Bombay: Orient Longman.
[78] About eight centuries before the composition of *Muhyiddin Maala*, could not have, however, passed without some linguistic, textual and literary activities of the similar kind. They are not kept for the later periods, may be , because of the colonial destruction of the material and cultural assets of the community and, notably due to the absence of print in those times (Muhammadali 2007: 33).
[79] Aboobacker, K. 2007. (33). See also, Kareem, K.K.Muhammad Abdul and Moulavi,C.N. Ahmad. *1978. Mahathaya Mappila Sahitya Paramparayam* (Mal., *The Glorious Mappila Literary Tradition*), (44). Kozhikkode: Paraspara Sahayi Press.
[80] Aboobacker, K. 2007. (21).

These questions of historicity pertain particularly to script, writing, or print of Arabi Malayalam. Before the introduction of writing, with the *maala* and *paattu,* generally, the songs of devotional and and other content, the vocabulary of diverse linguistic origins typical of Arabi Malayalam books and compositions, and the grammatical and stylistic peculiarities of it, Arabi Malayalam as a language in oral system had definitely been the part of the Mappila religious, cultural and social life ever since Arab influence and later Islam began to spread in Malabar. It can be understood that the emergence of Arabi Malayalam was the natural consequence of Mappilas' cultural roasting of Arabian tradition of Islam into theirown habits of orality.[81]

Arab contact with Kerala dates back to ancient times, and Arabs, on their way to the Adam mount of Cylon, had arrived at Malabar with the mission of propagation of Islam in the 7th century.[82]And Muslims as a society had emerged in Kerala in the 12th or 13th century A.D.[83] Balakrishnan Vallikkunnu, an authority in Mappila literary and cultural history, pointed that it was in connection with the religious ritual practices. Some trade-related terms and usages might have come into existence first. The sense of need is the basis for the emergence of a language, and for the social existence a linguistic necessity emerges at new level. The social existence of the community gets strengthened when it develops into a group identity. It takes place initially through religious rituals. It was in the 12th century only when such a situation came in the Arabic in Kerala.[84]

The basic skill of reading of Arabic was to be imparted to the early Muslims converted from the local people for the performance of their daily prayers and recitation of Qur'an. The left of religious teachings such as the basics of beliefs and practices and the prophetic tradition / the *Sunna* and history were given in Arabi Malayalam writing. For the easier and wider dissemination and reception of this body of knowledge when there was no print the verse/poetic style and reiterated recitation method that are easier for

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[81] P.K., Muhammed Shareef. 2009. *Keralathile Arabi Sahityam: Samoohikavum, Samskarikavum Charitraparavumaya Nottangalil* (Mal., *Arabic Literature of Kerala: In Social, Cultural and Historical Glances*), (9). Unpublished Dissertation, M.Phil. School of Letters, Kottayam: Mahatma Gandhi University.
[82] Abu, O. 1970. *Arabi Malayala Sahitya Charitram* (Mal., *The History of Arabi Malayalam Literature*), (20-21).
[83] Gangadharan,M. 2004. (Mal.,), *Mappila Studies* (41). Calicut: Vachanam Books.
[84]Vallikkunnu, Balakrishnan, interviewed by Umer Taramel. 2009. 'Arabi Malayalavum Mappilappattum' (Mal.,'Arabi-Malayalam and Mappila Songs'), in *Pachakuthira Monthly*, (Nov., 2009): 55.

memorization were used.[85] These methods command considerable importance even while the writing and texts dominate in the educational field of Arabi Malayalam.[86] Due to the unbounded dissemination and unrestricted influence of oral *paattu* tradition, the Arabi Malayalam literature could live in the everyday life in Malabar even crossing the boundaries of communities despite of the predominance of religious emphases and community's cultural imagination in it. Kareem and Moulavi (1978) have shared their memories of the *harijan* (dalit) non Muslim children feeding their cattle and singing the lines from *Badar Padappaattu* of Chakkeeri in Arabi Malayalam.[87] It is significant to note that the *Paattu* culture that was initially shaped in Arabi-Malayalam literary cultural practice has crossed the boundaries limited by religion in the larger local cultural context. The existence of the Mappila version of *Ramayana*, generally known as *Mappila Ramayanam*[88], succinctly points to this liminal context where the literary culture of Arabi-Malayalam developed.

Even before several Arabi Malayalam texts had been spread in Kerala. These old Arabi Malayalam texts were produced and reproduced through hand writing and then copy writing of them for the mass distribution. Mayin Kutti Elaya of Kannur wrote a *Tarjama* or translation and interpretation of Qur'an in 1868 (1287 of Hijra calendar). His work was of 6 volumes[89] or in 8 volumes according the historian of Arabi Malayalam literature[90] and it was the handwritten copy of it that spread among the people. It is a known fact that he brought 100 copies of the *Tarjama* in the first time and he sent several

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[85] Kareem and Moulavi. 1978. (Mal.,) *The Glorious Mappila Literary Tradition*), (37).

[86] The tradition of *hifz ul Qur'an* or memorization of Quan is a prominent institutionalized practice also among Mappilas of Malabar as elsewhere in Kerala, other south and north Indian states, or in the whole geographies of Islamic culture and civilization in general. Institutes for *Hifzul Quran* with or without being part of Madrasas or Arabic colleges continue to exist in Kerala. Memorization of the texts is an important pedagogical practice in the religious centers of study from *Othupalli* of the olden days, *Dars* in mosques in old and new forms, to Madrasas and Arabic Colleges of preset times.

[87] Kareem and Moulavi (1978: 37). *Gazvath Badr al Kubra*, known as *Chakkeeri Badar* was written in 1907 by Chakkeeri Moidin Kutty (died in 1929), as shown in, Muhammadali, V.P. 2007. *Mappilappaattukal Noottandukaliloode* (Mal., *Mappila Songs Through Centuries*), (69). Kottayam: Current Books.

[88] Karasseri, M.N. 2007. 'Mappila Ramayanam' Kandethiya Qissa' (Mal., 'The Story of Finding out 'Mappiala Ramayana'). *Mathrubhumi Daily*. Dec.30 (2007). (For the available portion of the text of *Mappila Ramayanam*, See, Karassei, M.N. 2004. *Kurimanam* (88-93). Kozhikode: Tirurangadi Bookstall.

[89] Kareem and Moulavi, (1978: 53-54)

[90] Abu, O. 1970. *Arabi Malayala Sahitya Charitram* (Mal.,) *The History of Arabi Malayalam Literature* (129).

copies to the socially influential and leading households and families as well as to some of the *ulamas* or religious clergy. There was a rich culture of manuscripts and their distribution.There were many people in the community who live by copy writing of the books in manuscripts for moderate payments. The people who make handwritten copies of thousands of pages of several books were found till recent times. They were known as *Mullas*. [91] Kammuty Musliar of Chavakkadu and Anappadikkal Mammu haji of Kalpakancheri were well known *ezhuthu mollakkas* or copywriters.[92] Many of the oral texts might have come to be preserved through their writing. And also it was the differences of the writers in different times that led to the slight differences found in some different copies of the same text, like the variations in the words used in *Muhyiddin Maala* of different copies. However, the print perhaps has brought the textual body of Arabi Malayalam to a level of fixity and standard.

Culture of Alphabets Altered: Arabi Malayalam as a Language in Script and Writing:

The primary reason why the name Arabi Malayalam is it is Malayalam written using

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[91] Kareem and Moulavi. (1978: 225).

The widespread culture of manuscript had given rise to a section of practitioners in the field of Arabi-Malayalam who held high place in the traditional forms of life that had been closely linked to the religious education of Mappilas. The copy writers are called *mulla, molla or mollakka*, which might be a localized abbreviation of *Muallim* in Arabic, meaning teacher. Mullas are originally the teachers of *Othupallis*, the old form of primary centre of teaching religious knowledge and reading and writing of Arabi Malayalam, (Aboobacker 2007: 35), usually held with few students in the houses of the teachers or in some adjacent tiny huts. It was a single teacher school of primary religious education along with any mosque. They were also called Maktab.(Pasha, Kamal. 1995. 'Muslim Religious Education', in Asghar Ali Engineer (ed.)., *Kerala Muslims- A Historical Perspective* (136). Delhi: Ajanta Publications. They mainly teach the reading and recitation of Qur'an and memorization of some small and important Quranic verses and chapters that could be recited in the performance of certain religious rituals. Pokkar bin Kunji Pokkar from Pananjeri village is one such famous copy writer whose names is still kept in printed copies of many Arabi Malayalam texts I have seen, like on a recently printed copy of *Muhyiddin Maala* which is used for this study,(2009. Tirurangadi: Amirul Islam Litho Power Press).

Some of my information about *Othupalli* and its institutional functioning are based on the narration of the memories of my maternal grandmother, Beekkutty who is now of 75. She keeps those memories of *Othupalli* times with considerable clarity as she had completed the portion any standard *Othupalli* student could accomplish. She then had completed her formal Madrasa and schooling upto 5th standard. A more informative account of Othupallis and Madrasas is coming ahead in this study where it deals with the institutionalized education and learning of Arabi Malayalam in the section on practice of Arabi Malayalam.

[92]Muhammadali, V.P. 2007. *Mappilappaattukal Noottandukaliloode* (Mal., *Mappila Songs Through Centuries*), (22). Kottayam: Current Books.

Arabic alphabets. It is the *Naskhi* script of Arabic, which second to Roman in its usage globally, which is used to write Arabi Malayalam.[93] It is written from right to left. There are 28 alphabets in Arabic and all of them are consonants. But only 15 letters of them can be represented in Malayalam alphabets in their phonetic originality. Writing Arabic in Malayalam letters which cannot represent half of the letters of Arabic sound was thus not dependable. Besides, in case of Arabic words a change in letter would necessarily bring phonetic variation along with change in meaning.[94] This might be the ground for Arabi Malayalam to be written in the *Naskhi* Arabic script. It is to be understood that the strict phonetic tradition in Arabic is an important aspect to be kept in mind in the explanation of the course and consequences of interaction between Arabic and other languages.[95]

The symbolic representational marks of scripts in Arabic tongue hold the value of phonetic expression, in other words, an Arabic letter gets sound only when it is given some dots and short lines. So, the phonetic difference is represented by these symbols such as dots above and/or below the letter. In order to get the lexical items of the local lingua franca incorporated and represented in writing with equal emphasis on writing Arabic without phonetic damage, Arabic-Malayalam is, thus, written in Arabic script with some modifications. This modification was a process of adding some more letters just by putting some additional phonetic symbols of dots on the existing letters in Arabic; hence it became capable of representing all the sounds of the Malayalam tongue spoken in the region.[96] A text in Arabic Malayalam to an Arab is difficult to read without adequate training, and s/he may not get any meaningful statement out of it.[97] A Malayali who can't read Arbic cannot read it. Also, the Malayalam spoken among Mappilas of

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[93]There are two types of scripts used to write Arabic- *Kufi* and *Naskhi*. Both are of common origin, the *Nabathiyan* script. *Kufi* script which is more or less in square form was founded in Kufa (now Iran). Now it is used only for artistic beautifications by script such as calligraphy. *Naskhi* is the one found in common texts. The same script with a lighter variation is called '*Malabari* script' which is used to write Arabi Malayalam (Aboobacker 2007: 19).

[94] For example, *asal, as'al* and *azal*, three Arabic words in three different meanings, could be written in Malayalam only as *asal* which doesn't differentiate between the three different meanings in Arabic denoted by three differential uses of the second syllable '*s*' which has three phonic varieties in Arabic. The very word '*Arabic*', which means '*pronounce with clarity*', when its first syllable is pronounced with a little variation, the meaning of the word changes as '*want*'. The words like '*Allahu*' and '*Muhammad*' ignoring which Islamic religious tradition cannot be practiced, is difficult to be transliterated in Malayalam without phonetic damage.

[95]Karassery, M.N. 1995. 'Arabic-Malayalam', in Asghar Ali Engineer (ed.). *Kerala Muslims- A Historical Perspective* (168). Delhi: Ajanta Publications.

[96] For example, the sound '*pa*' in Malayalam which has no equivalent in Arabic is written in Arabic's original '*ba*'. But this '*ba*' is read '*pa*' since there are three dots put below the letter instead of one dot.

[97] When I showed the printed copy of *Muhyiddin Maala* to a student from Saudi Arabia at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, in December 2009, she responded that she couldn't read it and the text looked to her like that in Urdu language of which she was not familiar.

Malabar changes from that of the other part of Kerala generally understood as dialectal difference, and it contains a large number of lexical items came from different languages, such as Arabic, Tamil, Persian etc. So, a read out of an Arabi Malayalam text to a Malayali of a different region can convey only the gist of its meaning. In a nutshell, Arabi Malayalam writing is a process with religious, cultural and socio economic roots of 'transliteration of Malayalam into sophisticated Arabic script'.[98]

It has to be accounted that Arabi Malayalam has also been considered as a distinct language which has its own linguistic and historical features. Apart from the script, it has also its own grammatical structures and rules, stylistics as well as a peculiar fund of vocabulary with common and literary terms, and antonyms and synonyms, along with a cultural historical reference point of emergence of some words and usages.[99] It is also noted that there were all assets for Arabi-Malayalam to be a separate distinct language if it could have had the geographical isolation or the support by the rulers.[100] However, Arabi Malayalam has also undergone changes, modifications and influences in correspondence with the shifts and twists in the linguistic, cultural and social field of the territory of Malayalam, Malayala Rajyam or Keralam.[101]

<u>Script of Religio-Cultural Choices: Arabi Malayalam as Local and Universal:</u>

Arabi-Malayalam as an operation of religious choice over the alphabetic expression of language was not a cultural and linguistic phenomenon unique and particular to the Muslims of Malabar and their cultural historical formations. Though there are several particular aspects to Arabi Malayalam like its literary field and practices in it, there is a general logic in the phenomenon of Arabi-Malayalam which is shared by similar linguistic phenomenon and more or less same cultural contexts in India as well as in other countries. All non Arabic contexts where Muslims began to live have witnessed authentic linguistic transformations under the influence of Arabic language and Islamic culture.[102]

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[98]Karassery (1995: 169).

[99] Abu (1970: 22-61).

[100]Aboobacker (2007: 15)

[101] Abu (1970: 15). A discussion on the reform of Arabi Malayalam language and related contestations in the religious and social arena are given in the end of this section, as 'Reforming Arabi Malayalam and Related Contestations among Mappilas'.

[102] Aboobackar (2007: 20).

Where ever Arabs went spreading Islamic culture they have introduced a linguistic phenomenon similar to Arabi-Malayalam.[103] The introduction of new script was followed by varying consequences in the field of language and related cultural practices. In some contexts the earlier script was completely replaced by the new cultural linguistic phenomenon and the newer one dominated linguistic world and informed the cultural field in toto, (the universal logic of Arabi-Malayalam), while in some other contexts Muslims maintained the existence of the newly introduced script and its linguistic realm as an alternative cultural and linguistic field of practice.[104] Arabi Malayalam was emblematic of the second variety in its whole respects. But it has lost much of its social and cultural potentialities, yet it formally commands and informs many of the ritual practices among Mappila Muslims of Malabar.

Persian language is a good example of the earlier variety, in which the local script was replaced by the newly introduced one. Persians were using Pahli script to write their language till the year 80 of Hijra. When Islam became a major part of Persian life they avoided their earlier script along with their earlier custom of worshiping fire.[105] When the followers of Prophet went to Persia, which is now Iran, they tried to teach Arabic since the understanding of Arabic is important to learn the fundamentals of Islamic religious practices and reading of Quran. But it was not quick or easier to learn Arabic for all. So, aiming mainly at the easy access for the common people, they invented the system of writing the local language in Arabic script. Later on this model of writing local languages in Arabic script became the universally accepted model wherever Islam entered. Thus this method was followed in Turkey, India, Cylone, Malaysia, and Maldives. All documents, religious and other, including medical, legal, gazettes and newspapers were written in it.[106]

But the case of Turkey is different that when the people of Turkey started embracing Islam they did not have a script at all. They accepted Arabic script for the writing of their language while they accepted Islam as their religion. Till the time of total devastation and

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[103] Abu (1970: 15).
[104] Aboobackar (2007: 21).
[105] ibid.
[106] Kareem and Moulavi (1978: 32-33).

restructuring of Turkish religious and cultural field under the rule of Mustafa Kamal Pasha in the last century, Turkish was written in Arabic script.[107] Malayan and some languages in the West Asian area are still written in Arabic script.[108] Many African countries also have witnessed similar experience of mass conversion to Islam and introduction of Arabic script to their oral texts and language.

The existence of this linguistic phenomenon as an alternative system can be found in the case of many Indian languages. Inhabiting among a large number of population and stretching over a wide geographical area Urdu is less noticed as sharing the cultural linguistic phenomena implicated in Arabi-Malayalam. The proximity and distance between Urdu and Hindi in terms of their vocabulary and script shows that there had been an application of the linguistic logic on some cultural religious grounds similar to that of Arabi-Malayalam. The script of Urdu is was found by adding seven more letters in Arabic script to make it corresponding to the Hidustani sounds. But the Arabic script of Urdu did not replace other scripts of writing Hindustani. It becomes Hindi in Devanagiri script. Sindhi and Punjabi languages are written still in both Devanagiri and Arabic scripts. These are known as Arabi Punjabi and Arabi Sindhi. O.Abu testifies that there were news papers available in Arabi Punjabi (Abu: 1970, p.16), and the Sindhi newspapers are still using Arabic scripts (Kareem and Moulavi: 1978, p.33). There were literary works available in Arabi Bengali found as early as early as a century before Arabi Malayalam. 'Nabivamshakavya' of Sayyid Sulthan in Arabi Bengali dates back to the 15th century (Vallikkunnu and Taramel: 2009, p.56). Likewise, there are Arabi Kannada and Arabi Tamil which is also known as Arwi. When Muslims entered to Cylon or Sri Lanka in the latter half of the 7th century they have introduced Arabic script to write Sinhalis language of Cylon , which began to known as Arabi Sinhala (Ibid., p.17).

There are some languages which were also written Arabic script, but in passage of time these scripturally innovated state of these languages lost its influence. Hence they could survive neither as a dominant variety over the original script, nor as an alternative linguistic practice. Gujarathi, Marathi, Telugu are of this variety. However, the present of

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[107] Aboobackar (2007: 21).
[108] Abu (1970: 16)..

Arabi Malayalam and Arabi Tamil or Arwi shows that despite both these traditions had a rich textual and literary culture which is closely linked to the structure and process of religious rituals and cultural orientations, due to certain social and religious forces like religious reform and the larger processes of modernization mainly in the field of through education, these languages exist like a shadow of their earlier active times.

It is worth mentioning some affinities, influences and interactions between Arbi Tamil / Arwi and Arabi-Malayalam in terms of their historical development. There is a dominant assumption among most of the historians and cultural analysts of Arabi Malayalam literary field that Arabi Malayalam was modeled much on Arabi Tamil, and thus Arabi Tamil or Arwi precedes Arabi Malayalam. But, there is an objection to this assumption from the two eminent historians of the Mappila literary tradition, K.K.Muhammed Abdul Kareem and C.N.Ahmed Moulavi (1978). They opined it is the reasonable possibility to believe that Kerala Muslims imitated Persian Muslims in writing local language in the Arabic scripts. There was a time of strong contacts and cultural flows between Kerala and Persia. It can be verified by the fact that there are several Persian words still in use among among Mappilas like *Mulla* for the traditional scholars and *Shabeena* which later became *Sabeena* or *Safeena* hich is the book of hymns and devotional songs sung usually in the nights (The word *shabeena* in Persian indicates to the timing of the recitation of these texts, which is night, *Shab*). The names of many books taught in the traditional religious educational entres in mosques, *Dars*, and the influence of Persian Islamic scholars among the Islamic scholarly circles of earlier times in Kerala also point to the Persian influences in Kerala.They also say that it is not reasonable to believe that Tamil Muslims could not be teachers of Kerala Muslims since Islam came first in Kerala and Arabic language and Islamic literature were greatly admired, adored and enriched by the Muslims in Kerala.[109]

But Arabi-Malayalam's linguistic features and the lexical and terminological affinity with Tamil indicate that there were channels of influence from Arwi to Arabi-Malayalam. The prominent genre in Arabi Malayalam literature, the genre of verse or poetry in Arabi which is generally known as *Mappilappaattu*, ie., Mappila songs, has close similarity with Arabi Tamil in its structure, vocabulary and terminologies, and its rhyming. The

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[109] Kareem and Moulavi (1978: 35).

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Tamil novelist and a commentator of orthodox Islamic culture and Muslim literary practices in the coastal regions of Tamilnadu, Thoppil Muhammed Meeran has said that the word 'korva', which is used by the author of the first found Arabi Malayalam text describing his own work, is a form of poetry in Coromandel region. The very term 'isal' or the popular rhythmic modulations, which is the central feature of followed for the consideration of a *mappilappaattu*, shows close affinity to Tamil. M.A.Rahman has observed that the major *isals* of *Mappilappaattu- kombu, tongal, oppnachayal, oppanamurukkam and birutham* are well known rhythmic models songs in Arabi Tamil.[110]

The first found Arabi-Malayalam literary text, *Muhyiddin Maala* contains 25-30 percent of its vocabulary from Tamil language. The terminological and rhythmic structuring of the text indicates that it had followed the *korvas* which was prevalent in Tamilnadu, and these *korvas* were popular in the devotional songs of the Shivites in the Coromandel region. It can also be noted that the text has followed the rhythmic structure of *Khafeef* of Arabic poetry, *Kakali* of Malayalam, and *Nandirvarakkanni* of Tamil together. And also the historical fact that the south eastern coastal region was the original place of many of the religiously influential households, like that of Ponnani Makhdooms', suggests that Tamil and Arabi Tamil were of strong force of influence internally shaping the body of Arabi-Malayalam literary texts. Beyond all, since the Sangham age, the Mappilas also share the recorded history of the undivided region of Tamilakam, which was known at that time as Malabar to the outsiders.[111] Lastly, one of the famous early verses in Arabi-Malayalam, '*Saqoom Padappaattu*', which was a model for the compositions of the master mappilappattu writer Moyinkutti Vaidyar, was originally composed in Arabi Tamil. Varisai Muhyiddin Pulavar had written his '*Saqoon Padai paar*' as early in 1648.[112]

Alphabet, Language and Religious Choice: *Aljamiado* Literature

To conclude the discussion on Arabi-Malayalam's aspect of generality and the universality of its underlying linguistic phenomena, another dimension of the

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[110] Aboobackar (2007: 27).
[111] Vallikkunnu and Tharamel (2006: 10-11)
[112] ibid. 56.

phenomenon is to be highlighted which is drawn upon a comparison with Arabic-Spanish. Studying the '*aljamiado*' phenomenon originally linked to the 16th century Islamic minority in Spain, O.Heygi[113] arrives at a conclusion that it is a frequent occurrence of co-existence with other alphabetic systems among the Muslims who live in the border areas and in the condition of minority. He explained the phenomenon of '*aljamiado*' as Minority literatures written in the Arabic alphabet. This term was used first in Spain. The Romanized suffix 'ado' is added to the originally Arabic term 'AlAgamiya', (which is a variant of 'Al Ajamia' due to the phonetic variation of 'ja' as 'ga' in the Hispanic and Christian environment), meaning 'foreign' or 'non-Arabic'. The Romanized form of '*aljamiado*' losing some of its original connotations and suffering some semantic modifications later became purely a technical term denoting 'Spanish texts written in the Arabic alphabet'. At a general level, it is the phenomenon of intentional alphabetic introduction of Arabic in non Arabic cultural surrounding which is in majority.

Looking beyond the European context Heygi (1979) observes that it is a widespread phenomenon that where ever Muslim community lived in the minority situation and frontier regions this alphabetic modification reflecting their ideological distinctness while engaging in the common geographies of culture has taken place. This alphabetic preference reveals also about their socio cultural environment and tradition beyond the external representational aspect of the script. '*Aljamiado*' literatures are particularly characterized by 'linguistic Islamization' and active presence of "*a cultural content that differentiates them from the surrounding 'establishment' literatures*".[114] There are even wider connotations to the peculiar scripts modified under the religio-cultural choices, since there is an understandable unity between the form and content of the alphabet.

Aljamiado as a phenomenon of widespread occurrence ranging over The European, African and the whole Asian situations, "*rather than regarding this usage as a means to conceal the content of the texts from hostile outsiders-as has been at times suggested-the*

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[113] Hegyi,O. 1979. 'Minority and Restricted Uses of the Arabic Alphabet: The Aljamiado Phenomenon', in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*. 99 (2) (Apr. - Jun., 1979): 262- 269.
[114] ibid.

practice should instead be interpreted as the exteriorization of religious cohesion and an outward sign of cultural affinity with the World of Islam".[115]

Vincent Barletta (2005) has shown how *aljamiado* or the Crypto Islamic literature among the Morisco Muslims negotiated their religious practices in the specific political, cultural and social contexts in Muslim Spain.[116] He argued that the traditional Islamic hand written narratives of the Moriscos helped this minority community to survive for over a century in early moder spain largely by giving them cultural tools to deal with time. These narratives in Arabic-Spanish had been a succinct marker of how the community perceived their time and in which way they practiced their religion amidst external political and cultural pressures. However, Barletta has pointed that apart from the aspect of cultural resistance, there are much important lines to look at these literatures as cultural practice among Moriscos. The local, face-toface interactional and culturally situated factors stand remarkable as they shaped the community's social organization and their own existence without reference to the the larger contexts, and with internal diversities.[117]

Dealing with the Aljamiado literature involves understanding of the historical transformations of the religion as a "certain way of life and the keeping up of a clearly defined self-image", not merely as system of belief in the supernatural or textual codes. It reflects the internal forces of a cultural system which frequently get modified in particular time and space yet with a generality of logic. Exploration through such a willfully introduced alphabetic modality is supposed to understand *"a coherent ideological system, with its form and content closely interrelated, which penetrates daily life, and imposes a meticulously circumscribed life-style on the followers. Islamic tradition, with its minute attention to details, comprises all aspects of life".*[118] Subscribtion to this linguistic phenomenon is a form of confession of the faith while engaging in the common field of cultural production and reproduction. It is one of the

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[115] ibid.
[116] Barletta, Vincent. 2005. *Covert Gestures: Crypto-Islamic Literature as Cultural Practice in Early Modern Spain.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
[117] ibid.: x.
[118] Hegyi, O: 1979.

culturally and historically rooted mode of external manifestation of the religious identity, the Islamic identity as by subscribing to the language of Quran undoubtedly suggests an expression of the association with the community of its world view too.

Arabi-Malayalam shares much with aljamiado and similar activities elsewhere the religio cultural choices behind the use of Arabic alphabets for local languages. The inhabitance as a minority community in the local larger cultural contexts thus marks a point of generality. However, the political and social specifities that informed aljamiado cannot be found in Arabi-Malayalam. But the universal aspect of religious negotiation of literature as a cultural practice in local contexts is worth mentioning.

Arabi-Malayalam as a cultural phenomenon which still continues in practice among Mappilas commands greater historical and cultural value. Began in the culture of manuscript and evolved through print, the textual production in Arabi-Malayalam has come to inhabit, significantly, also the digital medium of current usage.

Arabi Malayalam in Print:

The first printing house of Arabi-Malayalam was established at Thalasseri or Tellichery in 1867 or 1868.[119] Before that there was a Christian missionary group called Basel Mission, running a printing house at Illikkunnu near Thalasseri. Theekkookkil /Theeppooppil Kunjahmed who was trained in the Basel Mission's press opened the first Arabi-Malayalam printing press. It was a *Mu'shaf*, a copy of Qur'an that came in print first. A *Salaath kithab*, the hymns in praise of Prophet Muhammed, and some other books were printed there later. Without much delay, later many of those who worked and being trained in printing technology from the first printing press of Arabi Malayalam dispersed to Ponnani, Tirurangadi, Valapattanam and other places to open their own printing houses of Arabi Malayalam. It is reported that 15 printing presses were being run at a time under Mappilas in different parts of Kerala, from Kondotty, Malappuram, Kodur, (all in Malabar), to Kayamkulam.

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[119] Kareem and Moulavi (1978: 45-48). See also, Abu (1970: 126-127).

But several of them could not withstand the newer cultural and social forces which affected the linguistic and cultural aspects of Arabi Malayalam. Yet there are some printing presses of Arabi Malayalam run at present mainly at Tirurangadi, then Parappanangadi, Ponnani, Trissur. Among them the one at Tirurangadi stand atop with its historical and productive influence among Mappila muslim community. It is Amirul Islam Litho Power Press which is also known as C.H.Muhamed & Sons who has two other presses of the similar orientation, all run by the sibling brothers of C.H.Muhammed who was an influential leader in the social and political arena of the community in the locality. Amirul Islam Fi Ma'dinil Uloom was established by Chalilakath Ahammed in 1883.[120] It started with a stone press called Litho Hand press. It is a white plane surfaced stone on which the egg white and some ink compound were applied and run with hand to copy the letters wrote by the artists. At the same time there was a printing press in Kannur run by a woman, Pathumma Beevi, who was a descendant of the Arakkal ruling Dynasty of Kannur. She started it for the printing of Qur'an, and the first translation of Quran was printed by her. There was also another printing house of stone press run by Nayamveettil Ammukka in Thalasseri. But none of them could command as much rigorous productivity, regularity and influence as C.H.Muhamed & Sons did in the Field of Arabi-Malayalam printing, publishing and mass distribution.

Chalilakath Ibrahim Kutty started running Amirul Islam Litho Power Press or C.H.Muhamed & Sons after its founder and his father Ahmed's death. He started printing the whole Arabi-Malayalam texts and other books that are taught in the *Dars[121]*, the religious educational system attached to the mosques. Later on the press kept on printing and publishing a large body of literature in Arabic and Arabi-Malayalam. It comprised of *Tarjumas* or translations of most of the Arabic texts available in Kerala at that time. Many books on prophets' biography, stories about him, books about mystical and metaphysical content, books containing knowledge of medical and healing practices, on quran and hadith, as commets on the contemporary debates in the discursive realm of

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[120] Khalid, P. 2001. 'Kalathinoppam Sancharicha Prakashanaalam' (Mal., 'The Flame That Traveled With Time'), in *C.H.Ibrahim Haji Smaranika- 2001* (A Book In Memory of C.H.Ibrahim Haji), (214-219).Tirurangadi: AIP Press.
[121] The religious learning circles in the mosques, which was a wide institutionalized education system among The Muslims of Kerala and which still survives though without much influence as it had earlier. See, Pasha, Kamal. 1995. 'Muslim Religious Education', in Asghar Ali Engineer (ed.). *Kerala Muslims- A Historical Perspective* (133-137). Delhi: Ajanta Publications.

mappilas' religious life, and a large number of songs narrating the events in Islamic religious and cultural sphere in kerala and extra territorial.

After the death of Ibrahim kutty, his eldest son C.H.Muhamed, later the press was also known after whose name, began running the press. It was a notable event that the advent of electricity in Tirurangadi was during his time, and in this context he started reforming the printing pressn using electricity, and thus he introduced the Litho power Press. After his demise in 1957, first his two sons, C.H.Ibrahim Haji and C.H.Kunjahamed Haji together and after the partitioning of the properties of their father C.H.Ibrahim Haji alone began running the Press. It was he who brought the modern offset printing machine in the press. The translation of Qur'an in Mahal language by the Islamic scholar of Lakshadweep, Husain Deedi, which was denied permission by the government to print and publish in the Island due to some religious pressures, was printed under the initiative of Ibrahim Haji in 1957. [122] It is worth mentioning that it had started Malayalam printing in 1952, and since then it has been printing around 500 books in Malayalam and more than 500 books written in Arabi-Malayalam. The books, especially the copies of Quran printed in the Malabari (Arabi-Malayalam) script are exported to many other countries like Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and gulf countries. At present they are distributing their books to 600-700 bookstalls in Kerala. But the consumption as use and practice of Arabi-Malayalam has been substantially reduced to some people who are mostly coming from the villages and not much influenced by the mappila theological reforms and forces of modernization. Most of the books are used for the purpose of reading some old books of songs which has no religious or cultural relevance in present of the community. Though the *madrasas* of the orthodox sunni sect in kerala still use Arabi Malayalam script in their texts, a large part of the body of Arabi Malayalam literatutre has been neglected and are on the way of 'extinction'. The preservation of this literature is not of a priority for any of the groups or organizations active among the Muslims of Kerala. Thus, the practice of Arabi-Malayalam in the cultural and religious ritual sphere is also shrinking and began to be in a formal existence. [123] However, it was an important aspect to be noted in the course

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[122] Khalid, P (2001).

[123] Many current information regarding Amirul Islam Litho Power Press (C.H.Muhamed &Sons), Tirurangadi, in particular and Arabi Malayalam printing and publishing in general were collected from the conversations with Ayyoob, son of Ibrahim Haji, at C.H.Muhamed & Sons. He together with his two brothers, Mahmood and Shamsuddin, is

of development of Arabi Malayalam literatures that the prose literatures in it were proliferated after the introduction of print.[124]

For the distribution of the Arabi Malayalam literature, even before the emergence of shops and stalls of the books in the region, there was a popular indigenous way which shows a particular Arabi Malayalam cultural way of attachment to the books. There were some people who carry the some Arabi Malayalam books especially of religious hymns of the daily ritual practices, in their bamboo baskets as head loads selling to people. These baskets contained sweets, combs, small face mirrors, sometimes, pens and note books, and along with the books in Arabi Malayalam popularly known as *Safeena Paattukal* or *Sabeena Paattukal*.[125] They traveled on foot going house to house through villages. The man who carried this basket and distributed the Arabi Malayalam books in houses is called *kottakkaaran* or 'man of basket' in some localities like Tirurangadi. These texts were counted also as one of the items to be sold as things in *kotta* or basket is *Kottakkaran*'s means of livelihood. [126] M.A. Rahman, a current advocate of Arabi Malayalam in Malayalam literary field and Kerala's cultural public sphere, has mentioned about the Arabi Malayalam poets who wrote and printed by themselves and went to house after house selling their works. But most of them have disappeared due to lack of interest of the people, and the class of this occupation suffered severe material support from the people. And also, these poets have no place in the history of Malayalam literary or cultural history. There were also wandering poets, mostly mystical who wrote their poems on the walls and doors. None of them merited mention in the vastened

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running the press at present. Also, the conversations with the owners, workers and people in and around Ashrafi Printing Press, K.Muhammed Kutty & Sons, both at Tirurangadi, and Bayaniyya press at Parappanangadi have contributed to the information about the field of Arabi Malayalam, especially after the introduction of print.

[124] Kareem and Moulavi (1978: 48).

[125] *Paatukal* in Malayalam is songs, and *Safeena* or *edu* is the book of hymns. *Safeena Paattukal*, which are also known as *Nercha Paattukal*, in fact, forms one and dominant part of the large body of verse literature or poetry in Arabi Malayalam. They are mainly the songs narrating the saints, martyrs of the battles between Muslims and others in Kerala and elsewhere like Arabia, and hymns called *dhikr* and *mantras* which are religiously prescribed for different ritual occasions daily and other. However, a detailed account of Safeena Paattukal and other varieties in verse and prose literatures explaining the thrusts and themes of the texts is given in the coming discussion on the Arabi Malayalam literary field.

[126] I remember my childhood at Chemmad, near Tirurangadi in Malappuram district in Malabar, when I stay sometimes with my maternal grandparents, Abdukka, an old man of the close neighborhood used to come to our house with his basket on his head. He carried *Badar Maala, Badar Baith*, some *Moulid kitabs* and *Edus*; some of the Arabi Malayalam texts of popular influence and ritual importance, along with biscuits, combs, and some small utensils of kitchen use. Our close neighbor, Kunjumon kakka, elder brother of Abdukka, was also a *kottakkaaran* or man of basket. My grandmother had narrated me about Kunjuman kakka's basket as he carried even the slices of jack fruit in it together with the *edu* and *moulud* books.

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history of Malayalam literary practices.[127] This method of distribution and selling of Arabi Malayalam books still survives in some remote villages.[128] It is assumed that this practice was restricted to Malabar region which was the heartland of practice of Arabi Malayalam.

Reforming Arabi-Malayalam and Later Contestations among Mappilas:

The Arabi Malayalam script had been modified many times by many people with various interests in the Arabi Malayalam's linguistic and cultural field. However, it was only after the introduction of print that attention to reform the script had been paid. It was by adding some phonetic signs over or below some of the original Arabic letters in order to make it clearly corresponding to the Malayalam sounds, without adding any new alphabet into the 28 alphabets in Arabic. The reform and modification of the script of Arabi Malayalam was a reflection of the transformations in and around the community. The intentions to reform the language of the community had clear roots in the discursive formations and the contestations forming them in the field of Arabi Malayalam, cultural and linguistic. It was the time when some of the rooted cultural practices among Mappila Muslims began to be contested at the wake of social and religious reforms in and around the community.

Vakkom Abdul Qader Moulawi and Kulangaraveettil Moidu Musliar merit mention for their efforts to reform the script. It was Vakkom Abdul Qader Moulawi who bought the changes in the script with an orientation of modernizing the language and reforming the linguistic culture.[129] Sayyid Sanaullah Makti Tangal is another important figure to note in relation with reforms in the field of Mappila language and culture. He sought to reform and 'simplify' the Arabi Malayalam with a clear perspective of modernizing the cultural field of Mappila Muslim of Kerala, and wrote a book entitled *Muallim ul Ikhwan*. Unlike orthodox Muslim scholars, reformist Makti Tangal's ideas for the regeneration of the

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[127] Rahman, M.A. 2009. 'Mappilamarude Prativyavaharangal' (Mal., 'Mappilas' Counter Discourses'), in *Pachakuthira Monthly*, (June 2009): 32-37.

[128] Ayyoob, one of the owners of C.H. Printing Press in Tirurangadi, testifies that there are few people still coming to the Press and take the books to sell them to people going house to house. He added that women in the households, especially the old women, are still interested, and perhaps they are the people of Arabi Malayalam at present. Occasionally some old women come to the Press to get some *edu* or *mouhud kitab*, and that would be, according to him, some of the rare times they come out from their houses to the public places.

[129] Abu (1970:130-131).

Mappilas brought him in conflict with the orthodoxy. [130] In *'Muslimkalum Vidyabhyasavum'* (Muslims and Education) he advocated for the immediate importance of learning English and 'mother tongue' Malayalam, and in *'Narinarabhichari'*'s new manuscript he also stressed the importance of women's education. He had run an year an opposition newspaper named *'Tuhfat ul Akhyar wa Hidayat ul Ashrar'* in Arabi Malayalam published from Cochin. In *'MaktiManaklesham'* he has appreciated those who left the reluctance to learn English, and also given a scathing criticism of the orthodox religious scholars who were not well versed in Malayalam language and its grammar. He blamed them for misleading the people using devotion, and for their aversion towards English education. [131] Makti Thangal was the first Mappila to write a book in Malayalam, named *Katora Kutaram.* [132]

Though the pragmatic concerns behind the scriptural modifications were recognized commonly as inevitable linguistic developments, however, the reformist vilification and reconstitution of Arabi Malayalam as a drive of sanitization of the Mappila cultural field based on the ideals of general Malayalam linguistic and literary field have been critically revisited in the present literary and cultural public sphere of Mappila Muslims of Kerala. These critical considerations' major emphasize was on Arabi Malayalam's own cultural thrusts and counter discursive intents. [133] They, thus, consider Arabi Malayalam as a

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[130] Panikkar,K.N. 1989. *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar 1836-1921* (64-65). Delhi: OUP.

[131] Kareem and Moulavi (1978: 429).
There was time among for Mappilas when they generally believed that English is the *'naraka bhasha'*, the language of hell. They also kept their selves in aversion with Malayalam. These should be understood in the context of the formation of the community and its own way of linguistic cultural engagements alongside the prolonged colonial repressions. It should also be taken in to account that the linguistic and cultural authority of Malayalm language had exerted Sanskrit as its linguistic reference point to evaluate the linguistic and literary expertise. Thus Malayalam had an exclusively Sanskrit oriented time when the linguistic and literary expertise in such a language as Arabi Malayalm had to be excluded for its lack of purity and non Sanskrit cultural reference point. Arabi-Malayalam had always been assertive of its Arabic linguistic and cultural identity. In such a case, the linguistic and cultural field of Arabi Malayalam has to be understood as practice with counter discursive intents. (A discussion on this theme is following as the last part of this chapter).

[132] Panikkar, K.N. (1989: 64).
Katora Kutaram, like his work, *Parkaleetha Porkkalam* dealt with polemical issues between Islam and Christianity. He has published many tracts countering Christian evangelization, and also conducted open debates and street meetings (Kareem and Moulavi 1978: 426-427)

[133] See, Rahman, M.A. 2009. (Mal.), 'Mappilas' Counter Discourses', in *Pachakuthira*, (June 2009): 32-37; and Taramel, Umer. 2006. 'Mappilappaattu: Paada samskaravum Samskara paadavum' (Mal., 'Mappila Songs: Textual Culture and Cultural Text'), in Balakrishnan Vallikkunnu and Umer Taramel. *Mappilappaattu: Paadavum Padanavum* (Mal., Mappila Songs: Text and Study), (15-23). Kottayam: D.C.Books.
A detailed discussion on Arabi Malayalam's counter discursive intents is coming ahead in the last section of this chapter. Also, the last chapter would critically consider the course and consequences of religious and cultural reforms among the Mappila Muslims in their linguistic, literary and cultural field.

linguistic way of opening to the diverse cultural particularities Mappila Muslims carried with as a community.

K.Aboobackar observed that it was the pressures of Sanskrit oriented Malayalam that shaped and transformed in time the general public sphere of Malayali society that led to linguistic reforms of Arabi Malayalam. He criticized that the reformers like Makti Thangal sought actually to purify it by 'sanskritising' Arabi-Malayalam as they were led by an assumption that Arabi Malayalam was the degenerated form of Malayalam. This led Arabi Malayalam to a marginal and weaker alternative existence in the present.[134] M.A Rahman considered Arabi Malayalam as a counter model of literacy and education of Mappila Muslims which was rooted in their cultural consciousness, social and economic marginalization, and political and cultural oppression under the prejudices of colonial rulers and landed dominant castes and their cultural modes of exclusions. The reformists could not represent the cultural identity of Mappila Muslims of ordinary rung who run an alternative tradition of mass literacy and education despite all ailments and miseries they had to suffer in the social, economic and political fields.[135]

2.2. Texts in the Field of Arabi-Malayalam:

Arabi-Malayalam, having practical relevance in linguistic, educational, cultural and religious spaces, can be seen as fields, yet its major aspect of linguistic and literary activity makes it a field with manifold implications. With its own alterities and commonalities in the content and form, it can be placed in the larger field of Malayalam, while it has an internal field in itself with its own conventions, standards and generic contestations peculiar to a field. As a linguistic and literary field, Arabi-Malayalam has been productive in textual culture, active in literary engagements, innovative in implicating its ideological thrusts in the creation of linguistic artifacts, and functional in the locations of education, religion and culture.

Arabi-Malyalam undoubtedly merits a rich tradition of textual production and literary activities with diverse thrusts and themes, as well as particular forms of textual

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[134] Aboobackar (2007: 22).
[135] Rahman (2009).

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development and practices typical of the field. Irreducible to the mere alphabetical variation, the field of Arabi-Malayalam shows that it was mainly a medium of writing, composition, and textual production with culturally and ideologically rooted creativity.

The vast body of literature in the field of Arabi-Malayalam can be divided into two major sections, the verse and the prose. It is the literature in verse that merited more importance, influence, production and popularity. The verse literature in Arabi-Malayalam is generally called as *Mappilappaattu* or Mappila songs. The works in verse worth more in number and it has a long history of produced in Arabi Malayalam they are the works generally understood as Arabi Malayalam literature. There are also a large number of works in the prose section yet lesser in number in relation to the *Paattu*/song or verse section. However, the whole body of these literatures, in general, dealt with themes varied from fundamentals of religion, hymns, praise of the prophet, veneration and eulogies of the saints and martyrs in history of Islam in Kerala and elsewhere like Arabia, mystical notes, on medical knowledge and healing practices, on language and linguistic practices, travelogues, biographies, magic, sexology, dictionaries and translations etc.

Mappilappattu: Arabi-Malayalam Literature in Verse

The section of verse in Arabi-Malayalam includes several subsections such as, *Maala paattu, Padappattu, Qissa pattu, Kalyana paattl, Madh' paattu, Thadi urudi paattu, Viruthangal, Kessukal etc.*Among these *Maala paattu, or Nercha paattu, or Sabeena/Safeena paattu* have much to do with the religious self of the community that had the choice of introducing the script of its self expression. It was the religiously informed habits of the Mappilas which produced this variety of verse poetry, and at various historical levels it was the informing force of their self in religious and cultural fields. Thus *Maalapaattu* has to be given greater analytical importance, as its existence in the community was in mutuality- between *Maala*s and the Mappilas, a perpetual and mutual production and reproduction of associations with each other through the history.

Maaalappaattu are the 'praise songs' in veneration of the spiritual leaders in the religious history of Mappila Muslims. It narrates their life in general, special incidents, and their spiritual message. *Padappaattu* are the 'war songs' narrating the history and heroes of the

wars in the history of Islam in Kerala and elsewhere. *Qissappaattu*, 'the story songs', are narration of the biographies of prophets, saints and men of great spiritual veneration. *Kathu paattu* or letter songs are to covey some message, mostly of love, flirt, and containing sexual imaginations. *Kalyanappaattu*, thehenna songs', also called *Maylanchi paattu*, are stories of some joyous occasions, which has appeal to interior life of the people and mostly historical value too. They are sung along other performances mainly on the occasion of marriages. *Mad'h paattu* are mere eulogies. The songs with spiritual messages and discourses on the spiritual success of man are known as *Thadi Urudi paattu*. *Viruthangal* are also devotional songs of deep mystical content. *Kessu paattu* are the songs of imaginary stories and emotions. Sometimes it also deals with the devotional imaginations. However, whole these forms of songs come under the general category of '*Mappila paattu*'.[136]

To explain the dominant particularities of content of cultural and religious life condensed in the in these *paattu*/songs two most influential and popular forms of Mappila verse literature are to be explained here. They are, 1. *Maala paattu*, 2. *Padappaattu*. The first one represents the spiritual and religious orientation and its mode of expressions. As texts situated embedded in the realm of ritual- religious and cultural- practices they stand as cultural generating force in the social life of the community. The second section of war songs reflects upon how they perceive their collective existence as a religious community and its grounds of conflict and co existence in the history of a religious community in and outside the territory. It is significant to note their temper which is translated as collective action of political character that gained currency during the communal and political tensions in the region.

1.*Maalappaattu*: The devotional eulogies or praise songs in Arabi Malayalam literature are called *Maala paattukal*. *Moulid/moulud*, the Arabic word meaning 'texts of praise to be recited', is what meant in Arabic Malayalam literature as *Maala*. So it has nothing to do with the *Mukundamaala* which is believed to be written in Kerala before 10th century, nor with *BharataMaala*, the Muthamil text of a *niranam* poet.[137] They deal mainly with

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[136] Abu, O. 1970. *Arabi Malayala Sahitya Charitram* (Mal., *The History of Arabi Malayalam Literature*), (61-62).
[137] Vallikkunnu and Taramel. 2006. (Mal,). *Mappilappaatu: Texts and Study* (25).

themes of adoration, veneration and praise of the people of higher esteem in the Islamic community of the region for their spiritual greatness. They are also called *Nercha ppaattu.*

They are generally devotional songs. It can be noticed that the *bhakti/* devotional literary movement in Kerala and other south Indian region was getting flourished from 16th century. As devotion in overflow these literatures expressed the pangs of cultural and social suppressions in other ways. It was then not just a sheer coincidence that the first found Arabi Malayalam literary work as a Maalappaattu, Muhyiddin Maala, was written in the same time which has still lasting spiritual and cultural influence on Mappilas.[138] There are several other well known and influential *Maalappaattu* such as *Badar Maala, Rifaai Maala, Nafeesath maala, Manjakkulam Maala, Mamburam Maala, Mahmood maala, and Malappuram maala.* Maala paattu are sung or recited mostly with a purpose of cure or prevention of some ailments, physical, natural, or social. They are recited mostly in sacred places. The tradition of recitation of the Maala paattu dates back at least to 15th century in Kerala. But, the social and religious reformist tendencies arose in the early decades of 20th century commenced the conflict of ideas in the outlook shaping the literary culture of Mappila Muslims. The orthodox Muslims went emphasizing the religious content of *Maala,* and glorifying the form as sacred, while the reformists' puritan interest was and still is operating as to give up the entire body of this literature as absurd and heretical.[139] However, *Maala* as a popular model of poetic expression of honor and devotion could not be rooted out from the collective consciousness of Mappila Muslim community.[140]

2.Padappaattu: There is a vast collection of literature found in the category of *Padappaattu* or war songs in Arabi Malayalam literature in verse. O.Abu has noted that there are around fifty texts that can be called *Padappaatu* in Mappila literary productions

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[138] ibid.: 25

[139] ibid.:27

[140] A detailed analysis of *Malappaattu* and its practices in religio-cultural and social contexts would be given in the next chapter. It is a focused study of an influential and popular *Maalappaatu* which is also the first found Arabi Malayalam literary text that still survives in practice, *Muhyiddin Maala,* explaining its practical implications in religio-cultural and social sites among the Mappila Muslims community.

in verse. [141] The historical context of production of *Padappattu*, the 18th and 19th centuries, was characterized by collective disturbances and social and political identity crisis. At this juncture of social contentions the dominant currency of devotional poetry was replaced by war songs. It is so important to note that most of these songs that took part strongly in the political generation of the individuals in the community with its own peculiar cultural inputs are written at places such as Ernadu, Valluvanadu and Kozhikkod, the hot beds of socio political tensions at that time.[142]

Padappaatu are mostly narratives of the battles in the Islamic history. There are also some war songs narrating the fights of Muslims with feudal or colonial rulers in Malabar. It's believed that the war song *'Anwa'ul Basar wa Akbarul Badar'* written in Arabic by Kaipatta Muhyiddin Moulavi in 1832 A.D. was the model for the later coming *Padappttu* in Arabi Malayalam. Moyinkutty Vaidyar (1852-1893) is honored as the master *Mappilappaattu* writer mainly for his famous *Padappaatu* in Arabi Malayalam, *'Gazwath Badar al Kubra'* (The Great Battle of Badar), commonly known as *Badar Padappaattu*[143] modeled on Kaipatta Muhyiddin Moulavi's book. The first known *Padappattu* in Arabi Malayalam is *'Saqoom Padappaattu'* which was written in 1836.[144] *Fathul Busra* as *Mu'thath Padappaattu* of Vallaanchira MoideenKutty Haji of Manjeri, a major town in Malabar, and *Tabuk Padappaaattu* of Chullian Mammad Kutty of

[141] Abu,O. 1970. (Mal.), *The History of Arabi Malayalam Literature.* (90-92).

[142] Vallikkunnu and Taramel, (Mal.), *Mappilappaatu: Texts anad Study.* (47).

[143] It was written in 1876 as it is mentioned it the text itself. It has, thus, followed the Arabi Malayalam tradition of mentioning the year of writing, mostly in Hijra calendar and sometimes in Malayalam calendar, in the text itself. MoyinKutty Vaidyar's *Badar Padappaattu* was the narration of the battle of Badar which held in the 7th century A.D. in Arabia between a small group of Muslims led by Prophet Muhammed and the Quraish tribal lords, the social, economic and political leaders of Mecca. It was a battle against the rise of Prophet Muhammed and his religion, Islam which was accepted mainly by the oppressed sections of the region. Later on many people, who were highly placed in social, economic and political fields, were converted to Islam. Badar, in the history of Islam, later became a metaphor of resistance and its remembrance and reference, especially in literary field generated collective vigor of opposition against any social, economic or political oppressions. It is also notable that the battle of Badar has been the theme of many *Mappilappaattu*, not merely *Padappaatu*. There are *Kess Paattu* or songs narrating imaginary stories, *Kalyana / Maylanchi Paattu* or songs of marriages, and *Mad'h Paattu* or general praise poetry, that took the battle of Badar as their theme.

[144] It is also known as *'Thantha Saqoom'* (Father Saqoom), being the first ever written *Padappaattu* in Arabi Malayalam. It is told that the *Padappaattu* literature in Arabi Malayalam was modeled on the Arabi Tamil tradition of *Padaippaar*. The literary expressions used to narrate the battles in Islamic history in *Kitab ul Maghazi* (The Book of Battles) written by Muhammad bin Umer al Waqidi had influenced largely the Tamil Muslims' literary works.there is a *'Saqoon Padaipor'* in Arabi Tamil written by Varisei Muhyuddin Pulavar of Madhura in 1686 which is considered one of the earliest works in Arwi or Arabu Tamil. The plot of this text was taken from *Kitabul Maghazi*. In 1836 Mappila Alim Umer Labba of Kayal Pattanam translated it into Arabi Malayalam as *'Saqoom Padappaattu'* (Vallikkunnu and Taramel (2006: 47-49).

Kodotty, another town in Malabar, are some other earlier war songs.[145]

It is very significant to note that Mappila Muslims of Kerala had gone through four centuries of resistance against colonial repressions since Vasco Da Gama, the Portuguese naval chief, attacked Malabar in 1498. There are some texts, in verse and prose, found in Mappila literature, specifically wrote in the context of onslaughts of the Portuguese navy and the untiring resistance of Mappila Muslims of Malabar against them. In such terms,*Tahridh ala Ahl al Iman ala Jihadi Abadathi Sulban al Marghabathu fil Jinan Al Munqidath mina Niraan* (Inspiring the Belivers to for the Battle against the Worshippers of Cross to be Saved from The Hell and to be Invited to Heaven), a poem written in Arabic by Zinuddin Makhdum, the First (died in 1521) stands historically notable literary effort as a mode of cultural resistance powerfully prevailed among Mappilas.[146]. It has been observed that it was under the inspiration of this poem that Kunjalis, the sea fighters against the Portuguese navy who later became the naval admirals of Zamorines, fought their battles.[147] Kunjalis are now remembered as the heroes of the community as they imagine an indigenous community identity. Another Arabic poem, '*Fath ul Mubin*' (The Clear Victory), written in Arabic by the author of *Muhyiddin Maala*, Qazi Muhammad of Calicut, narrates the history of Mappila Muslims' victory over the Portuguese capturing the Chaliyam Fort in 1571.[148] *Tuhfat ul Mujahideen* (The Gift for the Battlers), the earliest historical document on Kerala,in general, and Mappila Muslims social and cultural life, in particular, written in Arabic by Zainuddin Makhdum, the Second (1531-1583) was also contained a special chapter inspiring Mappila Muslims to fight against the Portuguese invaders as in a battle against the evil powers repressing the believers.[149]

The British repressive rule also had generated the thrust of Mappila literary culture. There are many works, mainly as *Mappilappaatu*/in verse or songs and also in prose written against colonial repressions that joined hands with the feudal lords of the land. The traditional intellectuals, such as religious scholars and inspiring Sufi saints, involvements

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[145] These '*Kavitaalans*', a title of honor to the *Mappilapaattu*/song writers as literary savants, were the teachers of Moyinkutty Vaidyar. See, (Vallikkunnu and Taramel (2006: 47)).

[146] Randathani (2008: 27-35).

[147] Aboobackar (2007: 45-46).

[148] Gangadharan (2004: 94-113).

[149] Makhdum, Shaikh Zainuddin. *Tuhfat ul Mujahidin*, translated by C.Hamza. 1995. Calicut: Al Huda Book Stall.

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in these struggles against feudal and colonial oppressors had been remarkable.[150] (Panikkar, K.N. 1989. *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar 1836-1921* (59-65). Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Balakrishnan Vallikkunnu and Umer Taramel (2006) have given a classification based on the content and orientations of *Padappaattu*. According to them, the war poetry or songs in the Mappila literature can be classified into four sections. The first, those related to the folk Islamic tradition which has no much association with the Islamic history in general. They are mostly of imaginary contents. *'Saqoom Padappaattu'*, *'Saliqath Padappaattu'*, *'Salaseel Padappaattu'* and *'Jin Pada'* are of this kind. The second section, which is most popular dominant, includes the written songs narrating the battles in the official history of Islam. *'Badar Pada'*, *'Uhud Pada'*, *'Futuh u Shaam'*, *'Makkam Fat'h'*, *'Kandaq Pada'* *'Khaibar Pada'* *'Hunain Pada'* and *'Karbala Pada'* come under this category. The third ones are about the battles held in the history of Muslims in Kerala, such as *'Cherur Pada'* *'Malappuram Pada'* and *'Mannarkkadu Pada'*. The last section is of the songs imagining some unreal battles, such as *'Eli Pada'* (Battle of Mice) describing the story of the three days of battle between Mice and Cats.[151]

However, *Padappaattu* as narration of battles in verse were written notably with interesting effects of sounds and rhyming that elevate the reader, singer and the listener to the hues and cries of the battleground, with highly emotional and suspenseful modes of expressions. O.Abu, a historian of Arabi Malayalam literature has observed that this typical quality of *Padappaattu* might have been one of the attractions for Moyinkutty Vaidyar's *'Badar Pada'* to be seriously noted and translated by some linguists and folklorists. [152]

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[150] Panikkar (1989: 59-65).
[151] ibid.: 47-48
[152] Abu,O (1970: 91).

A British folklorist and historian of ancient Indian literature, F.Facet has translated Moyin Kutty Vaidyar's *Badar Padappaattu* in The Indian Antiquary (Nov.,-Dec., Issue, 1901).. Facet has noted that it was written in the language of the Mappila poets, Malayalam written in Arabic alphabets, which was a mixture of languages/words from Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Hindustani and Arabic. For the purpose of rhythmic modulation these poets, according to him, had borrowed words of different languages they accessed. He has mentioned some *Mappilappaattu* as *Padappaatu* of popular acceptance among Mappilas, such as, *The Songs on Martyrs of Battle of Maappuram, Alungalkandi Paattu, Battle of Badar, and Battle of Uhud.* In his analysis, Facet has pictured Mappilas as uncompromising fanatics, though he has captured some essence of the literary efforts among them. He has taken these texts as sources of religious

Arabi-Malayalam Prose Literature:

The prose category of Arabi-Malayalam literature include diverse kinds of texts related to Mappila's religious, cultural and social life, lesser in number in relation to their counterpart in verse though. Translation of the texts from different languages, mainly Arabic and then Persian, into Arabi Malayalam forms a dominant part of its prose literature. It is significant, so, to note that the term 'Tarjuma' which literally means translation in Arabic was commonly used for any Arabi Malayalam text in prose style. There were many texts in prose, original and translated, in Arabi Malayalam, and it was the introduction of print which led to larger production and spread of them among Mappilas. Arabi Malayalam in prose holds heterogeneous body of literature ranging from religious tracts, Islamic history, history of prophets and saints called *Auliyas*, mysticism, polemical works as debates between Islam and other religions, Islamic law, to the books on Ayurvedic and Unani medicine, sexology, mathematics, astronomy, world history, multi lingual dictionaries in different field of knowledge, and creative writings such as stories, novels and travelogues.

There is no fixed opinion about the early Arabi Malayalam prose texts. However, there are some early texts found such as, *Kaifiyyatu Salaath, Noor ul Iman, Noor ul Islam,* books prescribing religious codes of daily life, and *Vellaatti Mas'ala*, describing the story of an intelligent, knowledgeable and beautiful girl named Souda, daughter of a merchant called Abu Shahm, who was taken to the court of Harun al Rasheed, the well known Abbasid ruler of Midieval Baghdad, where she replied all complicated and riddled questions asked by the scholars in the court. But these texts did not have any mention of author or year of writing in them.[153] Mayin Kutty Ilayas's Qur'an translation and Shujayi Moidu Moulavi's Sufi mystical notes are considered great landmsrks in the literary

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fanatism inspiring Mappilas to fight against non Muslims. It has to be noticed that the oppressive nexus of feudal lords and colonial rulers had targeted Muslims as an uncompromisingly warring people against injustice. And it was an objective reality that none of these oppressors belonged to the religion of Mappilas, Islam. The Mappilas' 'Jihad' against the colonial oppressors had to be vilified, problematized and denounced using the lens of colonial masters. Facet has also written about another *Mappila Paattu* text written by Moyinkutty Vaidyar, *Badarul Muneer Husnul Jamal*, a popular love song still sung among Mappilas, as "A Popular Mopla Song" in The Indian Antiquary (March, 1899). As quoted in, Kutty, K.M.Ajeer. 2006. (Mal.), 'Maapilappaattu and Moyinkutty Vaidayar in Indian Atiquary' in K.M.Ahmed ed. *'Mahakavi Moyinkutty Vaidyar Padanangal'* (Mal., Studies about the Great Poet Moyinkutty Vaidyar), (176-182). Kondotty: Mahakavi Moyinkutty Vaidyar Smaraka Committee.
[153] Kareem and Moulavi (1978: 269).

history of Malabar Muslims.[154]

There are many books in Arabi Malayalam prose written on non-Islamic topics, though there is a misconception that only few such books were written like the translations of the Gospels of St. Mathew and St. Luke, and a biography of Christ as '*Uttama Snehitan*' (Best Friend).[155]

Apart from a large body of literature on religious themes, especially translations of life histories and other historical narratives, there are many books of creative imagination as well as scientific knowledge. The literary practices and their internal diversity and richness point to the fact that Arabi-Malayalam had all the potential of a living language. M.A. Raman has given a consice account of Arabi Malayalam prose literature showing its internal diversity.[156] *Arabian Nights* was translated into Arabi Malayalam in 1877, and its re-rendering by Kariyadan Moosa and T.C Kunjayan, both of Thalassery, in 8 volumes was taken to house after house to be sold by the *Mappilappaatu* sellers. It is a notable fact that the first novel came in Malayalam was an Arabi Malayalam translation of a Persian novel, *Chahar Darvesh,* written by Amir Khsrau, in 1866.[157] There are other novels like the translations of *Amir Hamza,* an Arabian novel, and stories like *Vikramaditya Kathakal* translated by Cheriya Kunjippokkar of Malappuram that were in Arabi Malayalam. Syyid Gafoor Shah's *Nabi Charitram*, the biography of Prophet Muhammad in *Manipravalam* style of Malayalam literature which is a mixture of Malayalam and Sanskrit.

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[154] Karassery, M.N. 1995. 'Arabic-Malayalam', (173).

[155] It was a comment made by Roland E. Miller, a famous historian of Islamic culture among Mappila Muslims of Kerala as it is generally understood by many outsiders to the Mappila Muslim religious and cultural field. (See, Miller, Roland E. 1967. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala- A Study in Islamic Trends* (288). Bombay: Orient Longman.
It is a general perception about the whole Arabi Malayalam literature that it did not contain many books on non-Islamic themes. Though it dealt mainly with the topics of Islamic religious and cultural orientations, there were many texts dealing with several other topics, especially in prose literature. Many scholars could not understand the range of themes and orientations Arabic Malayalam literature dealt with mainly because they could not read the Arabic scripts. There are also ignorance and prejudices regarding Arabi Malayalam reducing its vast and heterogeneous corpus of literature to a small collection of mere religious tracts and hymns.

[156] Rahman, M.A. 2009. (Mal.), Mappilas' Counter Discourses Op. cit..

[157] In the later period, *Chahar Darvesh* was printed also in Malayalam. It was translated into Urdu by Mir Amman in A.D. 1803. An English edition of it came in India only in 1994 from Penguin as '*Four Darveshs*'. The second part of it was brought in Arabi Malayalam in the year 1872. However, it is significant to note that *Indulekha* of O.Chandu Menon which is considered to be the first Malayalam novel came 22 years after the translation of *Chahar Darvesh* into Arabi Malayalam. It has also to be viewed that novel is considered generally as a literary genre of modern invention, of recent origin. (Rahman 2009).

There are many books on medical knowledge and practices available in Arabi Malayalam prose. KunjiMayinkutty Vaidyar of Kasaragodu had translated the 8 volumes of *Ashtangahridayam* studying Aryavaidya and its medical prescriptions. *Vaidya Saaram, Bala Chikitsa, Shishu Chikitsa* or *Ilajul Athfaal by* Kodumudi Paloli Abdulla Musliyar, *Ottamoolika* or *Fawa'id ul Mufradath bi Dala'il al Adwiya'* by P.P.Kunjamu Moulavi,Edappalli, *Kitabu Tibbi wal Adwia* translated into Arabi Malayalam as *Valiya Vaidya Saaram Tarjuma* or *Sarva Roga Chikitsa Grantham* are some other books containing medical knowledge and healing practices of Unani, Aryavaidya, and indigenous traditions. There some books on '*talsamaath*' or spiritual and 'magical' healing such as *Shrutippetta Ponnani Paropakara Tarjuma* and *Upakara Saaram.*[158]

Shujayi Moidu Musliyar's *Fath ul Fattah* or *LokaCharitra Samgraham* (Brief History of World) had been printed at Talassery in A.D.1892. The first text on Kerala history in Arabi Malayalam was *Malabar Charitram* written by Pattikkadu Ibrahim Moulavi. [159] There are also several books on language and linguistic knowledge written in Arabi Malayalam. Many multi lingual dictionaries of various languages, such as Arabic, Malayalam, Urdu, Persian, Telugu, and Tamil, as well as dictionary of Arabi Malayalam and Malayalam words were written in Arabi Malayalam. *Makhzan ul Mufradath* is a multilingual medical dictionary which contained the names of medicines in English, Urdu and Malayalam written by the author of *Malabar Charitram*. Puthan Purakkal Muhyuddin published his *Aadabu Sibyan,* an Arabi Malayalam text in Mathematics, in 1880.[160]

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[158] Most of these books on medical knowledge are still available and sold in the book shops. I have collected 5 of them from the C.H.Printing Press at Tirurangadi, where I found one of its owners, Ayyoob telling me that the orthodox muslims and general mass with lesser modern education and villagers are the people mostly interested in these books. But he has also pointed that these books attract even educated urban Muslims but oly orthodox Muslims generally called Sunnis, not Mujahids or Jama'at e Islami. The spiritual healing tradition, popularly known as '*talsamaath*' or '*Ism Chikitsa*', or '*Isminte Pani*' based on these texts which are having reference to Quanic verses, Prophetic sayings, and the famous 99 names of Allah still pravail in practice among Mappilas. Hence, most of the books related to it are been made available also in Malayalam. There are several spiritual healers mostly located near to some spiritual centers of collective gathering like *dargahs* or *jarams*.

[159] M.A.Rahman (2009) has mentined that he had read the Arabi Malayalam text of world history, *Fath ul Fattah,* even before he went through Jawaharlal Nehru's *Glimpses of World History.* And he has also noted that Mappilas have gone through the Arabi Malayalam text on Kerala history, *Malabar Charitram,* before their reading of the books on Kerala history written by A. Shreedhara Menon, an established authority in the field.

[160] Rahman has also mentioned that he has seen a copy of '*Musalman Panchangam*' that was created by Makhdum family in 1895, with Abdul Rahman Mangad of Vazhakkadu who preserves a rich collection of Arabi Malayalam texts with him. Panchangam as a calendar which suggests the astrological signs and days of an individual is common in the Hindu religious culture and generally considered non Islamic.

Sufism and mystical religious thoughts form a large body of Mappila religious discourse, and several books dealing with these themes were found among Arabi Malayalam Texts, verse and prose. The prose literature has specially dealt with some of the hot debates regarding the methods, bases, and contents of Sufi spiritual philosophy and practices among Mappilas. The Major one of them was the famous *Kondotty-Ponnani Kaitarkkam,* or the arguments between Kondotty and Ponnani sections of spiritual affiliations.[161] Another important discourse prevailed in the religious field of Mappilas was the debates different scholars on *wahdatul wujud* and *wahdathu shuhood,* similar to the *bhakti* philosophical contestations over *adwaita* and *dwaita.*[162] Many books have been written in Arabi Malayalam prose dealing with these debated spiritual and philosophical issues.

As pointed out by O.Abu, the negligible number of the Islamic literatures available in Malayalam, despite of long and rich history of Mappila Muslims' discursive engagements and creative literary activities, suggests that Arabi Malayalam was the textual language of Mappila Muslims of Kerala.[163] Most of these intellectual engagements and creative enterprises of Mappilas happened to be not noticed by the larger society outside the community mainly because they were expressed in Arabi Malayalam which was not easily accessible and retrievable to other people outside this religious linguistic field.[164]

Arabi-Malayalam has also become part of the journalistic activities of the members of the community. There were news papers and magazines published in Arabi-Malayalam. M.N.Karasseri (2004) has noted that, *Hidayathul Iqwan* published by Abdulla Koya Thangal is considered to be the first daily came in Arabi-Malayalam, and *Rafeequl Islam* the first weekly.[165] As the initial steps Moidu Moulavi's *Al-Islah* bi-weekly and Vakkom Abdul Qadir Moulavi's *Al-Islam* monthly worth mention. Koya (1994) has given a documented account of the broad legacy of journalism and publishing of new papers and

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[161] It was debate on the legitimate way of practicing Sufism. The religious scholarship was criticizing Muhammad Shah, a Sufi scholar with a group of followers at Kondotty, a town in now Malappuram district, for his 'deviant' practices which leads to 'heresy'. The *Ulema* or the religious scholars of Ponnani side labeled him as Shia. (Kareem and Moulavi 1978:318-22).

[162] Karassei, M.N. 2004. *Kurimanam* (76-77). Kozhikode: Tirurangadi Bookstall.

[163] Abu, O 1970. (Mal.), The History of Arabi Malayalam Literature), (125).

[164] Rahman (2009). Op. cit.

[165] Karasseri (2004).

magazines in Arabi-malayalam and Malayalam among the Mappilas of Malabar.[166] Makti Thangal merits mention for his intellectual engagements through Arabi-Malyalam news paper and monthly respectively called *Sathyaprakasham* (1899) and *Paropakari* (1902). Both were published from Calicut but they could not sustain due to financial crisis. It was a notable achievement that the first magazine for women came in all Malayalam language and in Kerala in Arabi-malayalam. *Nisaul Islam* (1930) was that monthly in Arabi-Malayalam which addressed mostly religious issues pertaining to women's education and family life. It was published by P.N.Hyder Moulavi and the editor was K.C.Komutty Moulavi. *Al-Bayan* (1930) was another monthly which was published by V.K.Muhammad Moulavi focusing religious issues. *Al Muallim* is a monthly published by the Sunni religious organization called Samastha Kerala Jam'iyathul Ulema since 1976. It includes articles in Malayalam and Arabi-Malayalam and still exists in publication.

2.3. Arabi Malayalam as Cultural Practice:

Regarding the practical dimension of language there are two essential aspects that can better explain the cultural experience of literature. The first one is the aspect of use that was the prime emphasis in Wittgenstein's treatment of language, and the other is the aspect of time that is explained by Bourdieu as the locus in which the logic of practice unfolds. According to Wittgenstein, the meaning of language lies in its use.[167] This shows, further, that, language lies mainly in its use in the human institution rather than its systematic aspects,[168] and hence the pragmatics of language has to be taken seriously to explain the sense and meaning of it. Explaining practice also requires the consideration of occasions of use, or different contexts of use set through time. Arabi-Malayalam literature as a cultural practice living in the ritual and everyday frames of temporality shows the very fact that 'practice is inseparable from temporality' and it gets unfolded in time.[169]

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[166] Parappil, P.P.Mammed Koya. 1994. *Kozhikkotte Muslimkalude Charitram* (Mal., The History of Muslims at Kozhikode), (248-260). Calicut: Focus Publications.

[167] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1953. *Philosophical Isvestigation* (20). New York: Macmillan.

[168] Das, Veena. 1998. 'Wittgenstein and Anthropology', in *Annual Review of Anthropology.* (Vol. 27): 171-195.

[169]Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *The Logic of Practice.* translated by Richard Nice (81). Cambridge: Polity Press.

As 'forms of life',[170] Arab-Malayalam can be explained as an experiential reality operating in the everyday life of the community. Furthermore, language as a part of cultural practices has direct links with the history of the individuals involved in it. Also, language through literary activities reflects its true nature of social and cultural embeddedness. Arabi-Malayalam, in that way, is emblematic of the Mappila Muslim's religious orientation, cultural moorings and evolution, and social and political contexts of the community's life very much in history and more selectively in present. As a cultural practice of longstanding history, through its time to time production, and improvising reproductions as uses in religio-cultural, social and political contexts, the body of textual varieties in Arabi-Malayalam facilitated and helped to give shape to social processes at much more local and personal as well. Practice as a product of 'habitus', 'the durably installed generative principles' regulated improvisations', [171] produces and is produced by the history forming the individual and the collective life. It is the productive realm of practice that perpetually constructs a dialectical relationship between the structure and the dispositions making up the 'habitus', the structuring structures in social and cultural life.

Arabi Malayalam as a linguistic and cultural practice has to be understood as the habitual backdrop of the community at focus. The historical self of the Mappila Muslims of Kerala can be studied by analyzing their own linguistic cultural practices. Arabic Malayalam has several dimensions of practice in the social, religious and cultural life of the community. The heterogeneous form of Arabi-Malayalam's textual body comprised condensation of varied symbols, remarks and directions of a time the dominant cultural mode of which was popular piety which in later stages began to be disdained or at least disputed mainly on religious grounds after the rise of theological reform among the Mappilas by the early decades of 20th century. It is these later contestations about Arabi-Malayalam, especially the overarching presence of a Sufism and its popular frame of piety which were the dominant themes dealt in the texts, significantly formed the discursive domain that continue to shape the religious and cultural mode of life among Mappilas. However, Arabi-Malayalam texts, through the very practice of their production

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[170] Das, Veena (1998).
[171] Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. by R. Nice (78-86). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

and the improvised reproductions in ritual contexts, have vitally been in Mappila's social and cultural field creating a religious dimension in everyday life. Language as it dwells as a form of life and marks the human sociality, Arabi-Malayalam in its practical contexts of use in different occasions succinctly explain that language lives as experience rather than as massage, or communicative or informative mode.[172]

The uses of and practices around the Arabi-Malayalam literature have been varied in time and space.[173] Arabi-Malayalam texts, mainly of songs, bear deep cultural significance in the religious ritual contexts, different forms of cultural performances, and notably in the Mappilas' traditional religious education. The Arabi-Malayalam texts of various kinds, mainly of religious importance, are used in several everyday and ritual contexts among the traditional Mappila Muslims. The texts of poems praising the saints, martyrs and religiously high placed people are sung in different occasions such as *Nercha, Moulud, Velliyazhcha Raavu, Raatib Maasam* etc. These texts are mainly *Maala*s, the poetries in honor of the Prophet, the saints and martyrs of local and extra local historical significance, sung individually and collectively. *Narcha*s, ritual contexts wherein the saints, martyrs in the local and extra-local religious memory, and the religiously respected people are venerated, are one of collective occasion in which the *Maala*s are used. The songs and other prayer books, generally called *edu*s in Arabi-Malayalam bear the spiritual and emotional ovation to the saints who are honored in *Nercha*. *Moulid*s, the texts of songs honoring the Prophet and also saints, are, in fact, texts in Arabic, but since the *Maala*s or *Nercha Paattukal* being the Arabi-Malayalam versions of *Moulid*s are also called sometimes as *Moulid*s. These memorizing sessions are also called *Moulid* or *Moulud*. *Edu*s or books of chants and hymns are of regular use in everyday basis as there are *edu*s to be used after each five times prayer, *Niskaaram* (Mal., daily prayers called *Namaz*). Other than the occasions of *Nercha*, the regularity of singing *Maala*s can be noticed in *Velliyazhcha Raavu* (Mal., the eve of Fiday) as it is considered spiritually auspicious among Muslims. *Maala*s and *Raatib*s eulogizing the saints of different Sufi orders, mainly the Qadiriyya Sufi path, are sung individually and collectively at

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[172] Das, Veena (1998). Op. cit.
[173] A focused analysis of the uses of and practices around a text is followed in the next chapter where the ritual and everyday uses of the language and the textual body are explained in detail. Hence, only a brief and general account of the practical contexts is given here.

households, mosques and Sufi centers like *Jaarams* (shrines), Majlis and *khanqahs* (Sufi centers where disciples of a particular Sufi order gather around their spiritual leader) in the *Raatib Maasam* (Mal., the Month of *Raatib* (the songs and narration of the history of the saints). It's a localized popular expression for the fourth month in the Hijra calendar, *Rabi ul-Aakhir*). It was on the 11th of the month of *Rabi ul-Aakhir* that the founder of the Qadiriyya Sufi order Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani (1077-1165 A.D) passed away. Among the traditional Mappila muslims this month is considered with high reverence after the 3rd month of Hijra calendar, *Rabi ul-Awwal* on the 12th of which Prophet Muhammad was born.

The performance arts of Mappila Muslim community have largely been set along the Maapila songs, and thus the Arabi-Malayalam texts of these *paattu* or songs became so popular in use. Mammed Koya (1994) in his work on the history of Muslims of Calicut has given a reasonable account of the performing arts among Mappilas of Malabar.[174] *Oppana, Duff muttu, Arabana, Kolkkali* are the major performance arts popular among Mappilas. *Oppana* which is mainly attributed to women is performed in the occasion of marriages singing songs narrating the stories of men and women of religious veneration in the community. The song named *'Thashreef'* is considered to be the first of *Oppana Paattu*. In *Duff muttu* or sing and with small tambourine, and *Kolkkali,* a dance using short sticks which resembles to quick martial movements along the songs, both performed by men, *Maappila paattu* is the current setter. *Duff* is performed mainly in religious occasions and the songs in praise of Prophet Muhammad, and sometimes it is used in the *kuth raatib* (the spiritual performance among the disciples of Rifa'ee Sufi order in which sharp weapons are used to pierce and wound the body as a ritual act singing the *Baiths* or songs of praise). *Kolkkali* is not confined to the religious domain as it is performed also in the extra communal contexts. Both *duff and kolkkali* are sometimes called in the feast of marriage as an extravaganza. *Arabana* or the more dance with tambourine singing mainly songs of praise and also of love and war. It, like *Paricha muttu* (a performance similar to the martial art called *Kalarippayattu*), shows fast movements with quick notes of songs. Generally, most of the performance arts are set

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[174] Parappil, P.P.M. Koya. 1994. *Kozhikkotte Muslimkalude Charitram* (225-240).

along the singing of *Mappila paattu* which were Arabi-Malayalam texts and nowadays produced in Malayalam also. Historically, different forms of this textual body had played various functions in the social, cultural and political contexts of the community, *Cherur Padappaattu*, a war song narrating the battle of Mappilas at Cherur written by K.T.Muhammad that inspired Mappilas to rise up against the British onslaught in the early years of 20th century,[175] could be an instance.

The practice of Arabi-Malayalam through Mappila *paattu* is closely connected with the rites of passage among Mappila Muslims with strong relevance and widespread popularity in earlier times, and lesser significance and collective attachment at present. Along with the artistic contexts of performance, V.M.Kutty (2007) has also explained the ritual occasions wherein the Mappila *paattu* are sung in Malabar and Lakshadweep.[176] Child birth is an occasion when mainly *Maala paattu* especially *Nefeesath Maala* are sung. It is sung collectively by the women of the household and close neighborhood believing that it would bring a safe child birth. On the occasion of *Mudikalachil,* the time of shaving the hair of a newborn baby commonly seven days after the birth songs and performances were popular. And On the fortieth day of birth (*Naalpathu Kuli*) the woman who gave birth is taken in a group of women to bath, and they sing *Maalapaattu* and *Qissapaattu.* The occasion of circumcision is also of ritual relevance as the boy is taken to the mosque or *Jaram (Dargah)* and during the act of circumcision a group of men sing *Maala*s of different kind. Marriage is a larger occasion of songs and performances among Mappilas. Different varieties of songs were sung by different groups of men and women in the house of bride and bride groom. *Mailanchi paatu* (henna songs) and *Oppana* are typical of celebrations of woman's side and *Duff muttu, Kolkkali* and *Arabana* are of man's side. Arrangement of feast for all participants is followed in all these ritual contexts.

Although Arabi-Malayalam is a language used mainly among the people of literary activities for their writing and textual production rather than as a spoken language, through the social contexts of its performance and practice it has been very much part of

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[175] Kurup, K.K.N. 2006. *The Legacy of Islam-Kerala* (17). Kannur: Samayam Publications.
[176] Kutty, V.M. 2007. *Maapila paattinte Charitra Sancharangal* (Mal.,*The Historical Movements of Mappila Songs*), (11-128). Kozhikode: Lipi Publications.

the cultural habits of ordinary Mappila folks. The competition of *Mappila paattu,* which once was popular, conducted between the groups of singers from the sides of bride and bride groom was an occasion when people of all social status took part with much indulgence.[177] It helped growth of widespread interest in study and rehearsal of songs and other performances in different other times. These competitions later came to be regulated by rules and conventions which were collectively established. Forming of the *'paattu koottams'* or the singing circles among the wandering people of deep Sufi spiritual orientation[178] was another major influence making Arabi-Malayalam and its *paattu* culture part of everyday life of the ordinary folks. Expressions of popular appeal, the content and frames of Sufism which was the current of popular piety and the regularity, open access and overwhelming presence seen in the practice of *paattu* among Mappilas made Arabi-Malyalam a language of common people, of the lower sections in the society, crossing the bounded field of literary practice. Women constitute a large part of the practice as they were the major ones to use the *Maala paattu,* the dominant variety, and the inculcators of the *paattu* culture in the houses. The fishermen, people of physical labor, wandering Sufis, and the general participants of most of the ritual contexts in the community engage themselves as the practitioners of Arabi-malyalam through its *paattu* performances. However, as the language and its uses shrunk mostly to religious domain of practice, the religious leadership who functions as nobility of *Musliyars, Moilyars,* or *Moulavis* became the initiators and legitimizing authorities holding the power over the common mass.

This shift can be seen better marked in the dominant practical domain of Arabi-Malayalam that is the field of religious education of Mappila Muslims. No language can be seen isolated from the educational system which possesses the authority necessary to engage in a universal process of durable inculcation of legitimate language and corresponding culture. Bourdieu (1991) has explained this dynamics of linguistic field pointing that the educational system, in connection with language, works as a mechanism of producing the cultural capital, reproducing the structure, and setting the standards of

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[177]K.Aboobacker. 2007. (Mal.), Vaidyar's World of Poetry), (29).
[178]M.A.Rahman. 2008. 'Muhyiddin Maala: Oru Prathibodha Kavyam', (Mal., *'Muhyiddin Maala:* a poetry of counter consciousness'), in Sainuddin Mandalamkunnu, (ed.). (mal.), *Muhyiddin Maala:* History, Text and Study (32-38). Thrissur: Kaizen Books.

legitimacy.[179] Arabi-Malayalam as a linguistic and so cultural field in itself (and also a field for itself in contrast with the dominant field of Malayalam) has been manifest as a site of struggles for legitimacy in its passage of evolution. *Othupalli*, the oldest form of educational system of Arabi-Malayalam was organized around the practice of reading and writing of the language.[180] Pasha (1995) has given a brief account of the development of religious education among the Muslims of Kerala.[181] These centers of Arabi-Malayalam educational system, also called *Maktab*, focused mainly on the correct reading and recitation of Qur'an, some smaller texts of chants called *edus*, and memorization of some small sections of the Holy text which has to be recited in certain religious rituals. *Dars* system, which ran alongside *Othupallis*, was a much more organized one set in the Mosques. It gave preference to much deeper learning of religious knowledge using texts in Arabic more and focusing to impart the religious knowledge relevant to settle the issues in a Muslim community and carry on the leadership of it. The attachment to mosque and their explanations referring to the primary texts, Qur'an and Hadith, rendered them high seat in the eyes of the common people. Pasha (1995) describes, later, *Madrasa*, a reformation in the structure and function of *Othupalli* with revised curricula, syllabi and text books, became a widespread form of Islamic religious educational system in Kerala since the early decades of the 20th century.[182] It used mainly Arabi-Malayalam text books with a preferential treatment to the language. Dealing with the basic training of writing and reading, it sought to deal with different areas of religious learning, taking it a simplified and much more Arabi-Malayalam form of *Dars* education, as from *Madrasa* one can evolve into *Dars* as a progression in religious education and into authority of religious knowledge. As the religious organization called Samastha Kerala Jam'iyyatul Ulema came into existence in 1921[183] as an organized effort of the orthodox religious scholars to establish the *Madrasa* as an institution which take care of traditional Islamic knowledge and value system which were stored mainly in the Arabi-Malayalam textual body, the system got a new impetus of defending the language as a

[179] Bourdieu, Pierre. 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power*(61-63). Cambridge: Polity Press.
[180] Aboobackar (2007: 35).
[181] Pasha, Kamal. 1995. 'Muslim Religious Education', in Asghar Ali Engineer (ed.). *Kerala Muslims- A Historical Perspective* (133-146). Delhi: Ajanta Publications.
[182] Ibid.: 137.
[183] Faizy, P.P.Muhammad Faizy. 2002. *Samastha*.(Mal.).

religious fund of knowledge against the emerging tendencies of religious reform which began to delegitimize the language and the religious practices established in and around it. However, this organizational patronage and institutionalization, along with organized management of the *Mahallu* system (the religious leadership and authority of different localities with a *Qazi* religious jury and a mosque as its centre, similar to parishes) by the organization though indirectly led it to a claim of authority in the field of Arabi-Malayalam and its religio-cultural domains of practice.

Lateron, Samastha as an organization began to claim the representation of the traditional orthodox Sunnism in Kerala engaging in debates with the later emerged organizations of reformist face and revivalist orientation like Mujahid movement and Jama'at-e-Islami. As the organization began to operate in the religious field of the community bearing the mantle of patron of traditional Arabi-Malyalam Islam, which in fact was built in Sufi Islamic orientation with local cultural expression of it, it started to question the isolated religious practices, even if they are traditionally oriented and opposing to the 'reformist' interventions. However, the organization can be seen in time taking the whole body of practices embedded in the Arabi-Malayalam texts into an arbitrary homogeneity and throw its operation of power several practices, especially of Sufi Islamic orientation, happened to be the object of the organization's scathing criticism. This has led to de-legitimization of several disparate and diverse practices of Arabi-Malayalam in time. One can, in this context, observe that an apparently paradoxical process is going on as the religious organization of widespread domination in the field claims the authority and on Arabi-Malayalam and it rises up with contestation, critique and de-legitimization against the several practices which are institutionalized in the religious lines of the organization but not conforming to the authority and domination of the organization. This situation can explain how the traditional '*Musliyars*' came to be a dominating person who came to be accepted as a person to legitimize and delegitimize the religious practices. The domination over the textual body, in turn, has given operational way to domination over the practical contexts. This can be interpreted as working of the internal dynamics typical of a field, here Arabi-Mlayalam's educational field with its all connection with linguistic and cultural practices, in which the dominant or the claimed authority dominates over other less powerful claims, favors its dispositions and reproduces the hierarchy and

standards of the domination.

However, the present condition of the practice of Arabi-Malayalam is clearly showing that the language and the religio-cultural activities in and around it have shrunken into some limited spaces and occasions. Arabi-Malayalam has become an object through which the past of the existing practices can be imagined, generally as a cultural artifact that renders to collective nostalgia. (But, the treatment of an object as relic while it's still active as a form of life with some people points to the underlying power relations-between the dominant group who construct a collective opinion and the less powerful ones who attach themselves to the living practice). The challenge of the puritan religious movements in the name of reforming religious practices has largely affected Arabi-Malayala as cultural practice.[184] Notably, the production and distribution of the texts have come down, from the massive consumption through *kottakkaar* or 'men of baskets' who went on selling the texts from house to house as head load, to a withered availability of them limited mainly to some old stores or libraries, with some old men of interest and practice, or generally at the premise of *Jarams* or *dargahs* which have been labeled as the centers of heresy by the reformists, yet several ordinary folks seek spiritual solace there. The attachment to the practice of Arabi-Malyalam has, thus, remarkably changed from general to particular nature. The official defenders and the authorities who claim to be the patrons of the culture of Arabi-Malayalam has come to a very unique nature of attachment wherein they uphold it against their official counterparts from the reformist groups in the community while they debate within and delegitimize those who take it up in an organized manner without conforming to the authority of the organization. Many of those who take up the culture of Arabi-Malayalam are Sufi orders that operate among the people but facing the labeling of heresy from the puritan reformists and of deviation from the official Sunni organization. This has made those who have attached themselves to any Sufi order, not to any official organization, consider the organization as a mere mundane command which claim domination in the religious realm, and thus, it contributes not to the spirituality of the people but for the pragmatics of the organized life of a religious

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[184] Religious reform and the later shifts and contestations held in the field of Arabi-Malayalam would be explained in detail in the last chapter where the phenomenon of Arabi-Malayalam would be examined in connection with the analytically deeper concepts such as liminality and vernacularization.

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community.[185] Sufism, as the practical frame in which most of the practices of Arabi-Malayalam were justified and got legitimized, has now come to be with some disparate, yet internally organized, groups, mainly Sufi orders like Qadiriyya, who are not officially represented by the organizational authorities, but are found in considerable number in the community. In a nutshell, the script of the Arabi-Malayalam is being defended and the practical language (the culture carried in the script) embedded in it and defined in the local cultural contexts has been labeled as heretic by some authorities and deviant by some others who, at the same time, argue strongly for the script. (*Madrasas* run by Samastha strongly advocate for Arabi-Malyalam in the text books of primary classes[186] but they always oppose the Sufi orders that stand for the earlier Arabi-Malayalam texts' practical content, while the *Madrasas* run by the puritan reformist organizations such as Mujahid and Jama'at-e-Islami do not follow Arabi-Malayalam in their text books at all).

3. Arabi-Malayalam and the Linguistic Field of Malayalam

To place Arabi-Malayalam in the field of Malayalam language and literature primarily suggests to an effort to explain the rules that legitimize the linguistic and literary practice and schemes of domination in the field. As an investigative framework, 'field' would explain how the conventions and standards are related to the positions in culture and society, hence, to the ideologies underlying and constituting the hierarchy. Pierre Bourdieu[187] who introduced the concept of field for the sociological investigation of mainly art and culture explained that field is a relatively autonomous structured space, which has been socially instituted, thus having a definable and contingent history of

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[185] A recent incident which is exemplary of this contestation was the reaction from Shaikh Yusuf Sultan Shah Qadiri Chisty, the present leader of Qadiriyya *Tariqa*, a dominant Sufi order in Kerala, against the two traditional religious organization's public announcement of religious ban on his Sufi order as the scholars of the organization warning the people against the 'heretic' and 'deviant' path led by Shaikh Sultan, or Sultan Baba as called by his followers. Reacting to the ban Sultan Baba explained the tendency of the organizations as strategic and not religiously oriented as they fear loss of support from the common mass who are interested in Sufi spirituality. He wrote in a magazine published by the managing body that runs the institutions under their *Tariqa* that, "instead of guiding a religious community and interpreting the emerging religious contexts based on the primary and secondary texts of religious sanctity in the land, the self-authorization and de-legitimizing domination of these organizations have led to disintegration of *Din*, the faith. (Chisty, S.Y.Sulthan Shah Qairi. 2007. 'Sangadanakal Deeninte Thakarchakku Kaaranamaayi' (Mal., 'Organizations Caused for the Decline of Faith'). *Jeelani Sandesham Monthly*, 1(11): 2-8).

[186] Under the supervision of Samastha Kerala Jam'iyathul Ulema a monthly called *Al-Muallim* in Arabi-Malayalam and Malayalam is published since 1976. It addresses mainly the teachers of the *Madrasas* under Samastha.

[187] Bourdieu, Pierre. 1996. *Rules of Art*. Oxford: Polity Press.

development. One major condition to the emergence of the field is that agents recognize and refer to its history. Fields are locations of constant struggles for the legitimacy, owing to the schemes of domination that constitute the domain. The actors in the field feel natural about the rules and conventions as the field operates in the doxic state. Doxa, according to Bourdieu (1996), is the learned beliefs and values which are deep-founded, unconscious and taken as self-evident. It is privileging the dominant, and tends to reproduce the very hierarchy that rules the field. It is the field coupling with 'habitus' (which is shaped through the engagement in the field) that produces practice.

Malayalam[188] is the official language of Kerala, and the development of its linguistic and literary field has peculiar history of struggles by the agents involved in it at different levels. Malayalam was originally the name of the land and the language was denoted by the terms 'malayanma' or 'malayayma'. Malayalam came to be the name of the language only after the emergence of modern Malayalam, and subsequently the earlier terms began to suggest Old Malayalam.[189] Though there some contestations, the dominant opinion is that Malayalam belongs to the Dravidian family of languages.[190] This was relying on the idea that Malayalam was derived from ancient Tamil in the 6th century, of which modern Tamil was also derived.[191]Before Malayalam came into being, Old Tamil was used in literature[192] and courts of a region called Tamilakam, (and also Malabar, an area which include a large part of Tamil Nadu and Kerala). T.K.Krishna Menon (1990)[193] has identified four stages in the evolution of Malayalam. First, of Karintamil (3100 BCE - 100BCE) was mainly a time Old Tamil without Sanskrit influence. Second, Old

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[188] Malayalam is one of the 22 scheduled languages of India with official language status in the state of Kerala and the union territories of Lakshadweep and Mahe. About 31.8 million people consider Malayalam as their mother tongue

[189] Varma, A.R.Rajaraja. 1996. *Kerala Panineeyam* (1). Kottayam: D.C.Books. According to Rajaraja Varma, 'Malayalam' got fixed as the name of the language in the first half of 19th century (p.1).
[190]Caldwell, Robert. 1961. A Comparative Grammar of Dravidian South Indian Family of Languages (23). Madras: Madras University Press. See also, Haldar, Gopal. 2007. *Languages of India* (55-57). Delhi: National Book Trust.
[191] Burnell, Arthur Coke. 1874. *Elements of South Indian Palaeography from the Fourth to the Seventeenth Century,A.D* (39). Thalasseri: Basel Mission Press.
[192] The famous literary work *Silappatikaram* is a good example of this.

[193] Menon, T.K. Krishna. (1990). *A Primer of Malayalam Literature*. Asian Educational Services.

Malayalam period (100 BCE – 325CE), contemporary of Sangam literatute in Tamil when Sanskrit started influencing and Tamil-Brahmi script was used to write inscriptions. Third, period of Middle Malayalam (325 CE-1425 CE) was marked by writing of literature in Tamil as well as Sanskrit, and presence of Jains in the linguistic arena. And, finally, the period of Modern Malayalam (1425 CE onwards) when Malayalam began to stand as a language separate from classical Tamil and Sanskrit. In this period 1795 CE marked a shift in different aspects of social and cultural life as the British gained complete control over Kerala.

The trajectory of evolving a writing system, formation of standard literary language in the linguistic and literary field, and the emergence of regional and community based dialectal differences in the general socio-cultural domain would point to the differential claims and cultural dynamics of domination in the larger field of the language. Malayalam was historically molded through different flows and fusion in cultural, thus, linguistic, terrain. Dravidian Tamil, Sanskrit derived Budhist Pali language, and the Jain Kalpasutra were known in the land from 500 BC. The Grantha Bhasha or Sanskrit mixed Tamil (which was written in Grantha script or Aryan *Ezhuthu*/writing, and used by the Brahmins who migrated from the North, especially the Tulu Brahmins who began to dominate with their Tulu script) co-existing with Tamil-Malayalam (which had a Dravidian affinity to the Sangam literature and was written in *Vattezhuth*) formed the initial standard of Malayalam when it began to stand as a separate language. P.K.Balakrishnan who argued in his seminal historical work on Kerala that there is a clear disconnect between the existing works on caste in Kerala and the lived experience of it documented in the first hand accounts like letters, travelogues and the likes has aptly pointed the growth of Brahiminical standards in the social, cultural and linguistic terrains.[194]The gradual growth of the Namboothiri Brahmins' presence, involvement and domination in the religio-cultural domain since 9th century made Malayalam owing more to Sanskritic grammatical and cultural influence.[195] The script of present day Malayalam[196] was formalized since 17th century when Thunjathu Ramanujan Ezhuthachan, who is considered to be the father

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[194] Balakrishnan, P.K. 1983. *Jati Vyavasthayum Kerala Samoohavum* (Mal., Caste System and Kerala Society). Kottayam: National Bookstall.
[195] ibid.: 236-249.
[196] The script of Malayalam language consists of 53 letters including 16 vowels and 37 consonants.

of modern Malayalam, began to write his works in Grantha or Tulu Malayalam script, a southern Brahmi variation.[197]

Though the oldest literary works are traced back to a period between 9th and 11th centuries,[198] Malayalam language developed into a matured production of literary works through a large scale mixture of Sanskrit with Malayalam, in terms of script and also vocabulary, and a literary movement called *Manipravalam* which began to dominate from 14th century led this massive activity in the field.[199] At a time when there were also different traditions of folk songs, *Manipravalam* along with classical songs called *Paattu* dominated the field. *Ramacharitam* of *Paattu* and *Vaishikatantram* of *Manipravalam* are the oldest examples as both belong to 12th century. *AdhyathmaRamayanam* of Thunjath Ezhuthacha (17th century) was the earliest popular prose work, (though *Bhashakautaliyam* (12th c.) on Chankya's *Arthasastra* was identified but as one of less popular appeal). However, as Rich Freeman (1998) pointed out, *Lilatilakam*, a prominent treatise on Malayalam written during the time of *Manipravalam* movement, (and thus its construction of arguments were shaped by the cultural and linguistic ideology of *Manipravalam*), has been explaining how Malayalam was crafted following the linguistic orientation and cultural sensibilities of the Namboothiri Brahmin and Nair communities who dominated in culture and in the field of language and literature[200]. Thus *Manipravalam* literature, as the formative factor the subsequent current of influence on later literary activities that shaped the dominant frame, has critical importance in understanding the doxic elements that characterize the field of Malayalam of a time when Arabi-Malayalam has began to function.

Though the field has developed much from the *Manipravala* period and established a separate Malayalam, the ideological thrusts infusing the current of dominant movements in the subsequent periods show close affinity to the Sanskrit-oriented linguistic ideology that still comes to light when particular activities in language, literature or art are being

[197] Burnell, Arthur Coke. 1874. *Elements of South Indian Palaeography from the Fourth to the Seventeenth Century,A.D.* (35). Thalasseri:Basel Mission Press.
[198] Asher, R.E. and Kumari, T.C. 1997. *Malayalam*. London: Routledge.
[199] Balakrishnan, P.K. (1983: 246).
[200] Freeman, Rich. 1998. 'Rubies and Coral: The Lapidary Crafting of Language in Kerala'. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 57(1) (Feb., 1998): 38-65.

evaluated. This can be noticed the similarity in the judgmental dispositions that, *Lilatilakam* classified the then existing Malayalam of the *Manipravalsm* context into *Uttama* (good and high) and *Neecha* (bad and low) while a very later text which is considered in most of the departments of Malayalam as highly dependable, *Kerala Sahitya Charitram* (History of the Literature of Kerala) of Ulloor S.Parameswara Iyer (1877-1949), evaluate Arabi-Malayalam in its short mention that it lacks 'purity' of words. (One can place the ideological unconscious, the doxic orientation, that informed this sense 'purity' and 'impurity' in the larger social space. Remarkably, Muslims outside Malabar, mainly in the central and south central Kerala where they are minority in population are still generally called *Methan*, a degenerate form of *Mlecha* ('impure'). Stunningly, the genealogical understanding of the term suggests that it was used initially for non-Sanskritic). It is the still pervasive gaze of the classicism (juxtaposed against 'folk') which is historically constituted by the dominant ideology that determines the position of disparate variants of activities in literature and art which emerge mainly from the peripheries of the field. The Sanskritic ideals of literary and cultural practices are, thus, implicitly seated as the frame of reference, though Malayalam has been established a language and literature of its own and Sanskrit is treated explicitly as different from Malayalam. Therefore, the activities in art and literature which do not subscribe to the sensibilities and standards of this dominant paradigm are always judged as lacking quality, purity, and standards of merit. In the works which documented, surveyed, or analyzed the history of literary and linguistic analysis in Kerala, Arabi-Malayalam, like some other similar activities, as it did not follow the Sanskrit-oriented linguistic and cultural ideologies (the implicit evaluative orientation), could not qualify the standards in any, and did not merit even mention in many works.[201]

It worth mention that, historically in a literary and linguist field which evolved in a Sanskrit-loving condition, the engagement of different communities and the activities from different regions[202] vary in their orientation and sense of history of the field. Therefore, variations in intonation patterns, vocabulary, and distribution of grammatical

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[201] Tharamel (2006: 17-18).

[202]There are thirteen regional dialects for Malayalam as identified by Subramoniam (Subramoniam, V. I. 1997. *Dravidian encyclopaedia. vol. 3, Language and literature* (487). Thiruvananthapuram: International School of Dravidian Linguistics.

and phonological elements are observable along the differences in community, region, occupation, social status and life style. While the formal literary Malayalam is highly influenced by Sanskrit, the lexical imports and other linguistic and cultural influences are noticeable also from Hebrew, Syriac and Latin in the Jewish Malayalam dialects, and English, Portuguese, Syriac and Greek in the Christian dialects. Muslim dialect, popularly known as Mappila Malayalam generally used in Malabar, is showing clear influences from Arabic and Persian. It is significant to note here that the only script used to write Malayalam other than Brahmi, which is used by the majority, is Arabic[203] (Arabi-Malayalam being its operative field). As Arunima (2006) pointed out, using the newly emerged print media the process of constitution of a standard Malayalam took place in the historical context of 18th and 19th centuries where the polemical engagement of different religious communities, Hindu, Christian and Muslim, in the public sphere was stronger. While there were different literary journals advocating consideration of language as a community wealth (meaning commonly shared belongingness beyond smaller groups or subsections in a larger society), the community identities based on caste or religion claimed differential positions in the public sphere. Hence, the process of standardization and modernization of language "did not imply either a total erasure of older literary, cultural practices, or a simple homogenization of an ethnic identity centered on language (*Malayali*). Nor indeed was the new public realm that was created a purely 'secular' one, where secularism implied a rupture with faith. For each community this change translated differently".[204] It shows that the modern process of production of a standardized Malayalam mainly through print initiated a different process in which the 'traditional' dominant and subordinate did not die but began to play new roles. It also suggests that the present of the linguistic and literary field of Malayalam which functions mainly on the sequential effects of the processes it came through still has differential claims and hierarchical order of different actors in it and the dynamics of domination and subordination of different groups can be and is operative. It has to be noted that the domination and subordination in the field point their positions in the larger social and

[203]Lewis, M.Paul, (ed.). 2009. "Malayalam". *Ethnologue:Languages of the World* (16th ed.). SIL International. http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=mal. Retrieved on 30-06-2010.

[204]Arunima, G. 2006. 'Imagining communities-differently: Print, language and the 'public sphere' in colonial Kerala'. *The Indian Economic and Socialhistory Review*, 43 (1): 63-76.

cultural hierarchy. Examining the dynamics of the linguistic field Bourdieu (1991) has pointed out that, the rules of transmitting linguistic capital which is essential to dominate in the struggles in the field (a dominance that determines the normative packages and standards) has to be posited very much as the linguistic competence measured by academic criteria depends on the level of education and the social trajectory.[205]Therefore, placing of Arabi-Malayalam in the field of Malayalam language and literature thus cannot escape understanding of its marginal and subordinate position, and its culture's perceived backwardness in contrast to the practices that dominate the field. The community who were at the perils of external attacks of colonial intrusions and culturally excluded from the larger imaginations of the land (an imagination in which the colonial domination and the local cultural nobility clubbed together) had historically to be devoid of the cultural capital that decided the position in the field, of art, literature and language. So, the demeaning approach to and trash-treatment of Arabi-Malayalam in the general records of the field ('the capital of instruments of expression', 'presupposing appropriation of the resources deposited in the objectified form in libraries', as Bourdieu explained it[206]) also reveal the social position of the agents attached to Arabi-Malayalam in the larger culture and society where the field exists. The sociology of this cultural situation of domination and subordination underlines the fact that the cultural needs and preferences are product of upbringing, education and social origin.[207]

Explaining the textual culture and cultural text of Arabi-Malayalam, Umer Tharamel (2006)[208] has found in his critical review of the dominant works of history of Malayalam literature that, in the famous work by Ulloor S.Parameswara Iyer (1877-1949) 'History of the Literature of Kerala' and K.M.Goerge's 'Literary History through Movements' Arabi-Malayalam poetry called *Mappilapaattu* in a negligible mention in few lines, while the relatively later work called *Kairaliyude Katha* (The Story of Kerala) by N.Krishna pilla it was not mentioned at all.[209] He has also pointed out that, it is a dominant trend of

[205] Bourdieu, P. 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power* (edited by John B. Thompson), (57). Cambridge: Polity Press.
[206] ibid.
[207] Bourdieu, P. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1). Harvard University Press,
[208] Tharamel (2006: 17-18).
[209]The works by Chengarappalli and Shooranadu Kunjan Pilla have dealt with the Arabi-Malayalam *paattu*/songs in a considerable detail, and it was Kutti Krishna Marar, a famous moder Malyalam literary critic, who fpr the first time pointed out the similarity between the Dravidian forms of songs and Arabi-Malayalam *paattu*.

framing the literary history in Malayalam that the works originated from or similar to Sanskrit are glorified while the literary activities which stood in difference, contrast and opposition to the Sanskrit-oriented dominant current were disqualified, neglected and their historical significance is overlooked. The historical context of production in so crucial to understand any text, and, it is significant to note here, the colonial contexts of Arabi-Malayalam literary production has largely been favoring the dominant cultural elite. It was in this colonial context in general that the literary and artistic activities, which were shaped in the contexts of opposition against the discursive arrangements of the colonial power in which the local cultural nobility was ranked high and decisive role in defining the categories, were put in the categorical pack of 'folk' in contrast to the classical. This fold of activities, Arabi-Malayalam is a major one of which, was characterized mainly by its ethnic moorings, and carry the imprints of a several multiplicities at work in socio-cultural domain (as linguistic, religious, cultural and ethnic), and, therefore, it should not be taken out of its social, political and historical contexts that rendered real meaning to its practice. In addition to this, in representing the Mappila agent and the space of Malabar the major and greatly considered literary works in Malayalam still follows the colonial construction of 'fanatic' and 'fanatic zone' which were introduced in the colonial explanations of Malabar rebellion.[210] The well accepted literary texts' historical narrative is thus a marker of how unequally set the so called literary public sphere of Malayalam, and how biased still the cultural consciousness of the dominant current in it working.

Arabi-Malayalam along with the similar other practices which had an identity stemming generally from local, ethnic and minority community bases are treated as part of 'folk culture'. *Vadakkan Pattukal* (Northern Ballads) shows similar fate. One of the main features of these practices was its difference from the upper caste (Namboothiri Brahmin and Nair) orientation. Furthermore, their indigenous nature, non-Sanskrit roots and less educated actors also characterize their practice. The actors in these practices, especially in Arabi-Malayalam, were historically strong agents struggling against social, political and

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[210] Ansari, M.T. 2008. *Malabar: Desheeyathayude Ida-paadukal, Charitra Sahitya Paadangal* (Mal, Malabar: Sapce-Marks/ Engagements of Nationalism, Historical and Cultural Texts). Kottayam: D.C.Books. See also, Ansari, M.T. 2005. 'Refiguring the Fanatic- Malabar 1836-1922'. in, Shail Mayaram et al (eds.). *Subaltern Studies, vol.12* (37-77). Delhi: Permanent Black.

economic dominations, colonial and feudal. Meanwhile, the modern constitution of the dominance of the literary and cultural practices of the ruling 'nobility' and 'pedigree' in the field was made possible in the colonial discourse of power which could not work without its other. Thus the category of 'folk' implies mainly a historical process of marginalization. Subsequently, the post colonial imaginations of several analytical categories like 'tradition', 'modern', and 'national' in relation with category of 'folk' are also set in the same fashion. As Stuart Blackburn (2003) observed, the identity called 'folk', and folklores, however, are dealt with notable ambivalence when they have to be treated in relation with 'nationalism' and 'modernity'. It is valorized as the repository of local cultural past while it is demeaned as familiar, childish, of uneducated and thus backward.[211] The dominant cultural, literary, linguistic and aesthetic judgment that presupposes the lower position of the so called 'folk' literature and *paattu* culture of Arabi-Malayalam while they are accommodated in its institutions (syllabus or text books) as part of 'popular' 'past' shows the very ambivalence. This tendency inherently presupposes sanitization of the activity like that of Arabi-Malayalam to be considered at par with the standard current in the field. However, the constant struggle to claim or maintain the 'standard' and linguistic and literary 'authority' is the defining feature of the field of language and literature.[212] However, in a post colonial situation, it has now been understood that the colonial constitution of the cultural and aesthetic standards, having gone through a historical process of 'homogenization' and 'territorialization',[213]the present of the general cultural public sphere of Kerala has large influence of *savarna* consciousness on it, and this operates at the cost of negating plurality of publics, Malayalam cinema being reflective of the very fact.[214]

3.1 Arabi-Malayalam as an Activity of Counter Consciousness:

Despite the fact that there is a practical limitation hindering the majority of Malayalis' access to and close engagement with Arabi-Malayalam due to its script which is far distant from Malayalam script, the historical signification of Arabi-Malayalam's

[211]Blackburn, Stuart. 2003. *Prit, Folklore, and Nationalism in Colonial South India* (147-48). Delhi: Permanent Black.
[212] Bordieu. 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power* (46-61).
[213]Tharamel (2006). Op. cit.,
[214]KunjuMuhammad, P.T. (interviewed by M.Noushad). 2009. 'Keralathinte Pothubodham Savarnamaanu' (Mal.,'The Cultural Consciousness of Kerala is *Savarna*'). *Prabodhanam Weekly* (Annual edition, 2009): 30-46.

difference is much relevant in understanding the trajectory of the power-matrix that dominated in the practice of Malayalam language and literature as well as general social and cultural dynamics of the society in Kerala. Arabi-Malayalam while as an institutionalized practice has been internally suffering from the problems domination and unequal access, patriarchal and feudal orientations coupled with religious authority's complicity being active, the counter discourse that informed the linguistic and literary alterity of Arabi-Malayalam and cultural choices that infused its practice are of greater significance. A cultural practice of the kind of Arabi-Malayalam could survive only as opposing to the historically hegemonic discourses; and in explication of the historical context the opposition of the marginalized literary and cultural practices to the centrality of dominant practices has significant value.[215]

Arabi-Malayalam was directed by its Islamic moorings and developed to cater the social and cultural needs of the Mappila Muslim community in history. It inhabited the larger social space of Kerala and underwent the dominent discursive currents as being functioned mainly by the male and feudal notions, at the same time worked as literary and linguistic practice carrying a counter consciousness. The language, literature and culture carried through Arabi-Malayalam clearly marked Mappilas historically developed counter consciousness as a complex of practice outside the subduing and pathologizing dominations of colonial power and social elites, and tended to make its socio-cultural space favorable to its subjects. Discourse, in general, has to be understood, thus, as Foucault (1990) says, "Discourse transmits power; it reinforces it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it.... Silence and secrecy are shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions; but they also loosen its holds and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance... Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy".[216]

The historical context of practice of Arabi-Malayalam has been marked by the presence of layers of discourses, colonial and their native consequent formations. It is a practice

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[215] Tharamel (2006: 17-18).
[216] Foucault, Michel. 1990. *History of Sexuality* (vol.1), (101-102). Penguin Books.

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initially driven with spiritual thrusts to withstand the colonial repression, and later, in general, as a cultural activity which walked different from the hegemonic standards that set by the nobility who possessed social and cultural capital. Thus Mappilas' rejection of the hegemonic educational standards, with a sense of English as 'the language of hell' and deviation from the writing system of Malayalam (which was shaped in the Sanskritic cultural orientation favoring mainly Namboothiri and Nair) as *Aryan Ezhuthu* have to be understood in the particular historical context.

Mappilas as a community emerged mainly through a massive process of conversion largely from lower castes back ground of oppression and humiliation showed greater interest and involvement in the practices like Arabi-Malayalam as an expression of the possibilities of their positive transformation in social status. The creative indulgence they manifested was, thus, reflecting a sense of liberation from the totalitarian repressive structures of caste and shaping of a newer sense of emancipation. The textual culture and the cultural text that informed it had, hence, critical role in the social formation of Mappilas.[217] It showed greater appeal among Mappilas' lived context of social, cultural and religious life. Moreover, it was a form of creative negotiation of Mappila's with their dominated socio economic, cultural and political conditions. As M.A.Rahman (2008) pointed out, in the colonial context of social and economic miseries, negligence of the political authorities in addressing their social needs, and arrogance of the local cultural elites who dominated the educational system[218] Arabi-Malayalam functioned as an alternative system of mass literacy and education with its cultural thrusts ran counter to the dominant discourse.[219] Therefore, its operation was in opposition to the discourses of colonial modernity and parallel to the cultural and linguistic standards of the social elites.[220] Notably, there is a great lot of works, especially in Mappila song tradition, oriented to and also sometimes written by women. But the aftermath of Malabar rebellion that took place in the first decades of 20th century a minor section emerged to relatively higher economic status in the larger feudal contexts, and the religious nobility started

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[217] Tharamel, (2006: 23).
[218] Rahman, M.A. 2009. 'Mappilamarude Prativyavaharangal' (Mal., 'Mappilas' Counter Discourses'), in *Pachakuthira Monthly*, (June: 2009): 32-37.
[219] Rahman (2008: 33).
[220] Mandalamkunnu (2008: 6).

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giving support to this domination within. It was this male-feudal domination that worked largely to restrict women from education. Thus, it can be observed that, the consciousness that rejected English and *Aryan Ezhuth* in the colonial context turned mystified in the newer context of domination and it negated the possibilities of discursive engagement to women.[221]

Nonetheless, considering Arabi-Malayalam in terms only of their resistance to the social and cultural pressures of the dominant group has some analytical limitations. As a cultural practice among a minority community, it would give a picture of the community as homogenous overlooking its internal diversities, and it could give mostly a negative understanding as what they are not, as Barletta pointed out. The local, face-to-face, interactional factors that shape social organization and practice in minority communities are very important to note.[222] The cultural context of larger process of cultural give and take and adaptations between different communities that are reflected in forms of performing arts, architecture etc.,[223] have also to be considered to understand the meaning of the practice of Arabi-Malayalam. Arabi-Malayalam's adaptations form the Sanskritic literary works[224] and its cultural models[225] in particular contexts of history and *Mappila paattu*'s present of Malayalam completely Malayalam medium have their own significance when understanding Mappilas' difference and commonality in the larger social and cultural space of Kerala. However, Arabi-Malayalam represented Mappila Muslims's Islamic culture and the process of formation of their social identity in a very creative and productive way, involving diverse intellectual and creative streams in, and also, not exclusively though, as an intentional opposition to the layers of the dominant discourse surrounded it in the field of Malayalam language and literature, and Kerala's social and cultural space.

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[221] Tharamel (2006: 21-22).

[222] Barletta, Vincent. 2005. *Covert Gestures: Crypto-Islamic Literature as Cultural Practice in Early Modern Spain* (x). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

[223] Kochangadi, Jamal. (ed.). 2003. *Kerala Samskarathile Aadaanapradaanangal* (Mal., Give and Takes in Kerala Culture). Kozhikode: Vachanam Books.

[224] K. Aboobacker (2007) has noted that there are Sanskrit influences in the structuring of the poems of Moyinkutty Vaidyar, the master Mappilapaattu writer.

[225] Umer Tharamelhas pointed out that the *bhakti* poetic culture of 16th and 17th centuries, of which is the *maalas* like *Muhyiddin Maala*, were a response colonial repression and the dominant culture. But it adopted the forms dominant practices yet differently stood with its own identity that stemmed from its cultural difference (2006: 16-19).

Discussion:

As a linguistic and literary practice emerged in the early modern historical context of Mappila Muslims of Malabar and operated in their collective domains of social, religious and political activities and appealed to their individual selves through their creative engagement in the cultural life Arabi-Malayalam represents Mappilas' historical manifestation of identity as a religious community in socio cultural contexts. Though the practical relevance it had in the earlier time has declined mostly, it survives still in the present being limited to the religious domain of a small part of the community. The *Madrasa* education of the Sunni section among Mappilas being the major location of use, and the old people especially women among them being those who find it relevant for their present life, Arabi-Malayalam texts and literary practices, with the particular script and the general themes and orientation in them, have largely become a cultural artifact that are treated as useless and backward among the sections who are generally religiously 'reformed', socially 'developed', educationally 'forward' and economically well off. Among these sections who are dominant in the community at present, Arabi-Malayalam is praised as a 'nostalgic' evocation of their past and as a practice of 'folk' culture they don't want to follow but enjoy as of their past. The school education has developed among the community largely and Malayalam commands completely in their linguistic and literary preference. *Mappila paattu*/songs are still of immense popularity in the community, but its form and content has largely been set by the newer trends in social life, and their texts, even of the older Arabi-Malayalam ones, are now in Malayalam. Using some older expressions while narrating the immediate contexts or imaginations, which is usually creating either nostalgic or comic effects but not necessarily an appeal of seriousness in the present, is the dominant trend of Mappila *paattu*.

The development of school education, positive shifts in economic status and operation of reformist and revivalist forces in the community have all contributed to the changes in the place of Arabi-Malayalam among Mappilas. The approach to Arabi-Malayalam as 'backward' and 'useless' are driven mainly by the reformist forces which are showing similarity in their general orientation to that of the social elites who are dominant in social and cultural space of Kerala and determine the standards in literary and linguistic

field. Thus, it can be discerned that the reformist forces who considered Arabi-Malayalam as of less sanity share its social and cultural orientation with the larger process of social reform in Kerala in the late 19th and 20th century that could mobilized the lower sections of the society but followed an apparent 'sanskritization' model in which the cultural ideals of the social nobility is being idealized, thus the practices of the culturally and socially weaker sections began to be perceived as kitsch, backward and familiar that cannot be placed in a 'sane' 'national' and 'modern' public space. However, this argument does not suggest that Arabi-Malayalam in its linguistic peculiarities should be re-established in the contexts of use, instead, I want to say that a critical evaluation of the approaches (from within the community and outside in the larger society) to the linguistic and religio-cultural particularities of Arabi-Malayalam can reveal the inherent ambivalences in the way the categories such as social development, modern and national are constructed. And also, the meanings carried in these notions take up the social ambitions of the dominant sections who seek to determine the currents of socio cultural dynamics of their time.

Chapter-III

Texts as Cultural Mediation(s): The Case of *Muhyiddin Maala*

Introduction:

Understanding the meaning and uses of a text in its context can unravel the cultural knit and pattern of the community of its production and use. The texts that mediate the cultural practices within local, ritual institutional and interactional settings have to be seen as embedded symbolic treasure whereby the members of a community can culturally interact, ask and identify each other, imagine their past, and shape and reshape their future. *Muhyiddin Maala*,[226] an Arabi-Malayalam text of religious and cultural ritual importance among the Mappila Muslim community in Kerala has already been explained and debated largely on literary, historical and theological lines. But, as a text that fashioned and got fashioned by the cultural, religious, and social self of the community, the *Maala* entails a more exhaustive explanation in ways more sociological and cultural and linguistic anthropological. Hence, the present study of *Muhyiddin Maala* would look at the text as a cultural practice in which its production as well as reproductions over time as in its varied uses in ritual contexts are taken into consideration with equal importance.

I have chosen this text in particular for two principal reasons. First, for its historical importance as the first found Arabi-Malayalam text, popularly understood as the earliest text of *Mappila paattu*. The second and the most important reason to choose *Muhyiddin Maala* for a focused contextualized study stems from my particular interest in the intriguing place of this text in the cultural and religious ritual spheres, and in the

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[226]Hereafter, 'the *Maala*' would mean *Muhyiddin Maala*.
The text of *Muhyiddin Maala* used for this study is a new edition, but 'printed after checking the mistakes' printed on, yet the year of publication is not mentioned (printed Amirul Islam Litho Power Press/ C.H. Muhammad & Sons, Tirurangadi -Kerala). It is significant to note that the *Mala* was written four centuries back and there was a wide spread culture of manuscript of the same Arabi-Malayalam texts by several people at different places and times. Hence, there are differences as corrections found in some words in different editions, print and manuscripts (Kareem and Moulavi (1978: 156). There is another significant fact which can tell much about the cultural linguistic journey of the text in community through time that the old linguistic expressions that were found in the earlier editions have been changed and 'corrected' to the currently used words for them in its new editions. The text used for the study is in Arabi-Malayalam. There is also another edition of the text available completely printed in Malayalam letters (distributed by Chanthappadi Bookstall, Calicut).

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discursive formations in them in the community.[227] The shifts in the religious and cultural life of the Mappila Muslim community in Kerala through time, this study hopes, can be understood in the varying approaches and levels and modes of attachment of the members of the community to the text and its practical ritual contexts. Thus, the content, the textual form, the larger contexts of its use and practice, and the surrounding religious and cultural discourses over time shaping the modes of transformations of the cultural self of the community are equally on focus here.

1. The Text and the Author in Context:

As it is told in the text itself *Muhyiddin Maala* was composed in 1607 A.D (782 of Kollam era) by Qazi Muhammed of Calicut.[228] The 142nd and 143rd verses of the *Maala* say:

> "*In the year of Kollam era, I composed this Maala in 155 lines.*
>
> *Like pearls and rubies strung together, I've tied this garland, O people!*"[229]
>
> *As (smooth as) butter in milk, I recite this in the form of verse.*
>
> *Those who study this, are the fortunate ones.*
>
> *Like an eye witness who can point, the one named Qazi Muhammed*
>
> *Who was born at Athura of Kozhikode, prepared all these (korva) (poetic) lines.*[230]

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[227] The *Maala* category of Arabi-Malayalam texts that were written and sung in veneration of saints and for saintly intercession to the god were the target of reformist attacks, and *Muhyiddin Maala* stands atop as a long standing representation of its kind surviving still in the discursive domain of Mappila Muslim community of Kerala.

[228] During the celebration of 400th year of *Muhyiddin Maala* the year of writing and the authorship of the *Maala* were debated.

[229]*MuhyiddinMaala*,(10).

The *Maala* contains 155 verses excluding the last verse of prayer. And, significantly, 202 out of 582 words of the text are of Arabaic. It also contains several words from Tamil.

One can explain the intention behind the expression of 'pearls and rubies' as indicative of Arabi-Malayalam's form of literary and textual production, (by mixing mainly Arabic, along Tamil, words with the those of local language, Malayalam), which ran parallel to the mainstream Malayalam literary mode of composing of that time, *Manipravalam* literature (see, Muhammadali (2007: 35). *Manipravalam- mani+pravalam-* which literally meant pearls and rubies was a form of poetry mixing Sanskrit words and grammatical structures with Malayalam. *Manipravalam* set a standard of literary evaluation of Malayalam so strongly, and the standard Malayalam's genesis and development were closely connected with *Manipravalam* and the language ideology that has been infused in it satisfying the *savarna* nobility of the social and cultural hierarchy (see; Freeman (1998)). Arabi-Malayalam, in its form and content, worked to a great extent by choice away from the standards and operated as a counter discourse practiced in the cultural margin and leveled against the Sanskrit-dominating linguistic and cultural centre of Malayalam and its later larger context of colonial modernity (see, Mandalamkunnu (2008); Rahman (2009); Tharamel (2006, 2008); and, Aboobacker (2007)).

[230] *Muhyiddin Maala*; [verses, 11-14], (2). By Athura he meant Chaliyam of Calicut which was the centre of his *Mahallu*, the locality/parish of a religious community in Muslim Kerala (Vallikkunnu and Tharamel (2006: 28).

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Muhyiddin Maala is an Arabi-Malayalam text of eulogistic poetry describing the spiritual glory of the medieval Sufi saint of Baghdad, Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani (1077-1165 A.D) who was born in Jilan/Gilan, Iran. A philosopher, a religious thinker, significantly, a spiritual leader and an author of several books such as *Qasida Ainiyya, Qasida Nuniyya, Qasida Ba'iyya, Qasida Ghousiyya, Qasida Lamiyya,* all in verse, and *Fathur Rabbani, Al Ghunya li Talibi Tariqil Haq, and Sirr-ul Asrar* in prose, and *Futuh-ul Ghaib* in prose and verse,[231] Sheikh Jilani was a prominent figure who sought to reconstruct the Islamic way of living at a time when the ruling *khalifas* (Islamic ruler) led the people as subjects of their whims and ran Islamic centers of study and thought to ensure support for them at any time. He involved in strong intellectual debates against the rulers of the land and the dictating religious authorities of the time grounding his thoughts in Quran and Sunna, the Prophetic tradition. He called the people to the spiritual path of purification of the soul and moral commitment to the reconstruction of the society, encouraging them to defy the exploitative and misleading structures and their ruling authorities, religious and mundane, but both for the religious cause. The intellectually brisk background of Baghdad was being remolded, in yet another way, a centre of reconstructive religious discussions and contestations and spiritual engagements as people gathered around Sheikh Jilani to seek more indulging religious knowledge and to be closer to the god.[232]It's told that this is the reason why he was given the title of honor *"Muhyiddin'*, the rejuvenator or reviver of the faith.[233] The Sufi order *Qadiri* or *Qadiriyya,* named after him, was developed around his spiritual teachings to get people closer to the god fighting to the evils and injustices that hinder their path.[234] *Muhyiddin Maala* was composed mainly as an exultation of the saintly qualities of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani who is popularly known among Mappilas as *Muhyiddin* Shaikh, as well as an invitation of the people to the *Qadiriyya* Sufi order

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[231] Faizy, Musthafal. (2002). *Sampoorna Muhyiddin Maala Vyakhyanam* (Mal., *The Complete Interpretation of Muhyiddin Maala*), Vol. 1 (130). Puthanangadi.

[232] The political context of his life was troubled by the quarrels of Abbasid Khalifs and Sljuqi Sultans for power. The social and religious environment was at an institutionally flourished stage, but the religious authorities and the clergy was interested in the scriptural debates and not in the purification of the soul in order to get closer to the god which was, according to Sheikh Jilani, the prime aim of religious study and life. (I'jaz, Tafzal. (2008). *Sheikh Muhyiddin Abdul Qadir Jilani* (Mal.) pp.83-91; and Mandalamkunnu. 2008. (Mal.), 'Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani(R): an intellectual outline', in Sainuddin Mandalamkunnu, (ed.). *Muhyiddin Maala: Charitram Paadam Padanam* (Mal. Muhyiddin Maala: History, Text and Study), (106-112). Thrissur: Kaizen Books.

[233] According to the *Maala, "By the order of the ultimate one, The religion itself called him the name* Muhyiddin*". (Muhyiddin Maala* [verse,17] (17)).

[234] Mandalamkunnu. (2008). 'Sheikh Muhyiddin Abdul Qadir Jilani'(112); Randathani, Hussain. 2007. *Soofi Margam* (Mal., *Sufi Path*), (43). Calicut: Islamic Publishing Bureau.

which was and still survives to be the most prominent and prevailing Sufi order among the Muslims in Kerala.[235]

Muhyiddin Maala as all other *Maala*s is a long rhymed poem which is still, though on a shrinking scale, sung in reverence in the Mappila households, especially by womenfolk, on several occasions, more importantly at times of distress. For the cure of diseases and to get rid of poverty people sang *Maala*s. It was a collective and popular habit to sing *Nafeesath Maala* for safe child birth and *Rifaa'in Maala* for the safety from snake bite.[236] And this textual culture evolved and spread along the development and popular acceptance of the *Thariqath*s, the Sufi orders following the spiritual teachings of the saints. *Maalas* exalt the saintly qualities of the '*Awliya*', (Arabic.,'saint, plural of '*wali*', literally means 'friend of God'), and their '*Karamath*' (metaphysical qualities by which they spiritually influence, guide and guard) for their '*baraka*'/'*barkath*' (Ar., 'blessings'). They are the equivalent of '*Tadhkiras*' elsewhere in India.[237] They are also known as '*nercha paattukal*'.[238] *Maala*s begins with *Bismi* (Ar., 'In the name of Allah', a line in praise of the god which is believed to be auspicious to begin with any meaningful act), and *salath* and *salam* (Ar., words of praise in honor of the Prophet), and it ends with an *Iravu* (Mal., an appeal to these saints for intercession and mediation to the God. '*Tawassul*', the Arabic term for the act of *Iravu,* became too popular as a crucial point of debate between the 'traditionalist' orthodox Muslims who admire the saint- veneration and the 'modernist' groups who stood for reform advocating a 'pure' Islam in Kerala).

Though the genesis of the textual production called '*Maala*' has generally been construed following the literal meaning of the word as 'garland' of spiritual offering to holy men,[239] the social and cultural milieu in which it was initially introduced shows more about not only origin but later developments as well. *Maala*s are the *kirthana*/ praise

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[235] Kunjali.V. 2004. *Sufism in Kerala* (75, 81-85). Calicut: Publication Division-University of Calicut. See also, Randathani. 2007. *Soofi Margam* (135-141).

[236] Muhammadali, V.P. 2007. *Mappila paattukal Nootaandukaliloode* (Mal., *Mappila Songs through Centuries*), (32). Kottayam: Current Books.

[237] Kunjali (2004: 63).

[238] '*Nercha*'/'*Nercca*' which literally means vow, is a ritual offering and festival annually performed in reverence of a holy man. *Maalas* have remarkable role in *nercha'* as singing of these songs is a notable activity in relation with the context by the ordinary people of less religious education. Such religious leaders as *Ulama* (the scholars) and the clerics are dealing also with Arabic texts and more exclusive engagements with the contexts. But *Maala* form the aura of more general and popular involvement in the local ritual contexts among Mappilas.

[239] Kunjali (2004: 26).

songs in Arabi-Malayalam, which closely resembles the *Moulid*, the praise songs in Arabic sung in honor of mainly the Prophet Muhammad and sometimes the saints too. O. Abu (1970) has sought to explain that, like many other art and cultural forms of Mappila Muslims such as festivals, games, architecture of houses and mosques that show some external similarity to their counter parts evolved in local Hindu culture, the tradition of writing *Maala*s resemble to that of ancient Hindu devotional praise poetries. Though they look alike, the internal structure and the core of Maalas are essentially Islamic and thus of Mappila definition.[240] The *Maala* has been found as following the form of *korva, a* poetic writing tradition which was popular among the Shivites of Tamilakam of the time.[241] The early *Maala* writers had been influenced by *korva*s' folk and popular tradition that helped largely to enhance piety among the ordinary folks. They spread among the common mass more easily than the difficult and complex expressions of the *Ulema,* the religious scholars. It is significant to note that in the 16th century South India the tradition of devotional poetry and popular piety had taken an active turn of expressing the angst of the oppressed and the 'uncultured' people who were excluded from the hegemonic 'high' cultural practices. *Muhyiddin Maala,* appealing mainly to the illiterate mass, shared this socio cultural environment with the devotional poems of Thunchathu Ramanujan Ezhuthachan, who is considered to be the father of Malayalam language.[242] While the *Kilippaattu Ramayanam* of Ezhuthachan was sung in great reverence in almost all the households of common Hindu folks, similarly, it was *Muhyiddin Maala* that occupied the *Bhakti* environment of the common Mappila mass. As it aroused the sense of devotion and thus a collective and popular mode of expressing religiosity, the *Maala* was also treated as a sacred text.[243] Mappilas of high religious knowledge came to consider the text as next to Quran and Hadith, the superior texts and dogma depended as the legal

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[240]Abu, O. 1970. *Arabi Malayala Sahitya Charitram* (Mal.,*The History of Arabi Malayalam Literature*), (64-65). Kottayam: National Book Stall. (1970).
[241]Vallikkunnu and Tharamel (2006: 26).
[242]"The application of Aryan *eluthu* (writing) to the vernacular Malayalam was the work of a low-caste man who goes under the name of Thunjattu Ejuttacchan, a native of Trikkandiyur (near Tirur, in the present district of Malappuram). He lived in the 17th century" (Burnell (1874: 35).
In the time of Ezhuthachan, *Vattezhuttu,* an old script originally used to write Tamil, was generally used in Kerala to write Malayalam. However, he wrote his Malayalam poems, *like Kilippaattu Ramayanam,* and other works, in *Aryan-ezhuttu,* a Grantha-based script originally used to write Sanskrit, so that he could accurately transliterate Sanskrit words into Malayalam. With large scale effusion of *bhakti* or devotional rendering, his works became unprecedentedly popular, which also popularized the writing system adopted by him, and that is the current Malayalam alphabet.
[243] While Ezhuthachan's *Ramayanam* exalted the mythical figure of Rama, *Muhyiddin Maala* eulogized the historical personality called Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani or *Muhyiddin Shaikh.*

source, and with the common folks *Muhyiddin Maala* was a condensation of practical knowledge of Quran and Hadith. This people who cannot understand Arabic accepted the *Maala* as their text of religion and culture as written in their language and could be read without the help of others. Significantly, a felt sense of social and religious belongingness which was established between the people and the text made its meaning in the social life deeper and its use wider.

The historical context of how a text like *Muhyiddin Maala*, which could respond at various levels of cultural and religious uses to the *'moods'* and *'motivations'* of the Mappila Muslim community of Malabar, could be written has very much to be understood placing it in the complex of cultural domination and exclusion. Such an understanding can reveal the meaning embedded in the uses of, and attachment to, the text among the community. It is, hoever, undeniable that *Muhyiddin Maala* had, and still continues to be (though not in wider use or users), occupied a space of high reverence in the community's religious and cultural life. M.A. Rahman observes that, *Muhyiddin Maala*, which became popular among the common users of Malayalam language and got a high place in their cultural life, at a time when Malayalam literary language was dominated by Sanskrit words and linguistic structures. Even the *'Kilippaattu'* style of writing mixing Sanskrit with Malayalam and taking a way of expression more closer to the common people could not respond to the cultural moods of the then Muslims. The very language of Arabi Malayalam and the literary texts in it came into popular use in the 17th century when a Malayalam of elite cultural orientation and Sanskrit reverence was in dominance. This had a great cultural efficacy of an 'alternative literary mission' with 'counter poetic theology'. Since its script was Arabic it could not travel through the ways of consciousness at multi communal level in the local context of Kerala where the Hindu community was in majority and Sanskritic cultural ideals were in dominance.[244] The meaning and function of the script and the text of the *Maala*, thus, has to be understood in the context of its use and historical juncture of its production. Hence, a feeling

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[244] The case of the *'thottam'* (the lyrics or songs) of *'Pottan Theyyam'* (a ritual performance popular among the lower caste Hindus of Northern Kerala) written by Koormal Ezhuthachan is not different. It was the first revolutionary text challenging caste hierarchy. It says, *"Whoever the hit one may be, me or you, it will bleed blood only"*. Like *Muhyiddin Maala*, the *Thottam* which was written in simple Malayalam of use among the common mass and lower sections of society, has not got mention in the standard literary history of Malayalam. (Rahman, M.A. 2008. 'Muhyiddin Maala: Oru Prathibodha Kavyam' (Mal., *'Muhyiddin Maala*: a poetry of counter consciousness'), in Sainuddin Mandalamkunnu, (ed.), (2008), (32-38).

expressed about the form and content of the *Maala* as kitsch/obsolete and rude/insane[245] clearly exposes that it, at least, shares with the cultural aristocracy a sense of linguistic and religious purity and superiority, if it is not a blatant proclamation of its cultural reference plate.

The act of writing the *Maala*, the choice made to form its content and the varied and intimate uses and effects of it in a variety of contexts show an inter-linkage of a complex kind in historical sense. Qazi Muhammed wrote *Muhyiddin Maala* primarily as text of religious use, intended to motivate the people to follow the *Qadiriyya* Sufi path developed from the spiritual teachings of Shaikh Muhyaddin Jilani.[246] Qazi depended to form the internal structure/ content of the text on some of the writings and the compiled lectures of Sheikh Jilani, such as the *baith*s (in Arabic, verses) he told especially the ones compiled as *Thakmila* at the end of *Futuh-ul Ghaib*, and the detailed study about him called *Bahjath-ul Asrar* by the Egyptian scholar Nuruddin Abul Hasan Shathnufi who had also been a follower of the Sheikh's spiritual path.[247] It has been noted that, the historical time of Shaikh Muhyiddin Jilani,[248] the protagonist of the *Maala*, shows some resemblance to the social and political backdrop of the production of *Muhyiddin Maala*. The *Maala* was written at a ghastly time when the community was amidst an array of challenges, internal and external, and also deplorable at social, economic, political and religious realms. The sectarian debates and disputes between several Sufi orders was

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[245]As it is seen in several analyses talking from a reformist point of view looking culturally and religiously down upon the Arabi Malayalam language, texts and the culture, Muhammadali (2007: 32) being an example.

[246] As an open call, the *Maala* asks, "*O the people who desire for the (success of) life after death, be His follower right then*" (*Muhyiddin Maala* [verse,149] pp.11).

[247]Faizi. 2002. pp. 182. *See also*,Vallikkunnu andT haramel. 2006, pp. 28.
The *Maala* says it, "*From the verses told by him and the book called Bahja, as well as Takmila* (Qazi Muhammed) *found* (these verses). (*Muhyiddin Maala* [verse, 15] pp.2).

[248]The73 years that Shaikh Jilani(470–561 A.H.) (1077–1165 A.D) spent in Baghdad was a time of deep crises at political, social and religious levels. The prolonged conflicts between the Abbasid Khalifs and Saldjuki Kings for power and prowess had largely unsettled the social life of the people. Time after time the Saldjuks strove for power. Coercion and domination of the Khalifs and kings had several impacts as the general Muslim society was undergoing several internal strives vitiated with feud and greed, cruelty and bloodsheds, and, needless to say, a large chunk of the masses was in miseries and helpless condition. Shaikh Jilani's social and religious mission was a p positive engagement with this turmoil. As he saw, religion in the hands of then religious and political authorities was safe to exploit the people, and its regular experience was felt by them just and unchangeable. Delegitimizing the power hungry rulers and their religious supporters, he called for moral propriety and rectitude of the self. His focus was on the social installation of the sense of simplicity, cooperation, renunciation in public life and ethical behavior based on spiritual cleanliness. His teachings, through sermons and writings, later became institutionalized as a Sufi order which oriented to individual and collective sense of ethical life and objection to the religious and political systems of coercion.

almost ravaging the stable knit of the religio-cultural life of the community from within,[249] and from outside the Portuguese attack had heavy losses and impacts upon the community as it opposed the invasive domination on economic, political and cultural grounds. The background set in and after the dejection of and rage against the Portuguese assault, the exploitative landlordism, the *Devadasi* system, and the pervasive dominance of *Manipravalam* literary culture that mainly went in praise of the body of the women at a time of miseries had led the morally oriented people of all religions to resettle the society in spiritual path, and the songs and poetries effusive of *bhakti* began spread.[250]

According to Umer Tharamel (2006) who is a leading scholar of *Mappila* Paattu, the native discourses of colonial time sought to survive mainly through two ways. One way was of strong resistance against the interventions of the dominant discourses. *Chentamil* is an example of this variety as it although was a linguistic discourse with some amount of Sanskritic influence, it resisted to come in *Manipravalam* form having ample orientation to classical Tamil and antagonism toward hegemonic discourses. The second variety, while adopting the form and themes of the hegemonic culture sought stand as another practice of its own identity. The devotional literary movement that flourished in most of the Indian languages in the 16th and 17th centuries is the best instance of this variety. It was the collective insecurity in society spread out of the colonial repression and its consequential effects on social structure that prompted the production *bhakti* literature. But with local variations it followed mainly the texts that based on Vaishnava and Shiva culture. Thunchathu Ezhuthachan's *Ramayanam Kilippaattu* and Qazi Muhammad's *Muhyiddin Maala* in fact of this nature of response to the social condition. But, later when the *bhakti* poetries are revisited in the literary field of Malayalam the *Maala* could not attain due mention despite of its devotional content, appeal to a culture, and its social relevance. It shows the exclusive arrangement of the later cultural space of

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[249]The authors of "*The Glorious Mappila literary Heritage*" sensed the introduction of the *Maala* as a product of an internal debate. They sought to explain that between 13th and 16th centuries there were several Sufi orders, *Thariqaths*, working in organized manner among the Muslims of Kerala. People of different orders built different mosques of their own and established several *khanqahs* or the centers of Sufi brotherhood where *Murids*, the disciples did collective chanting and singing of *Moulids and Malas* and sought spiritual knowledge from their *Shaikh*, the master. Sufis from Persia, Arab countries and Khurasan came here and organized the *Thareeqa* practices along with propagation of Islam. However, the situation grew into the times of debates and arguments for domination among different orders. It was looking at this plight of disintegrating disputes that Qazi Muhammed wrote the *Maala* striving to organize the community on the lines of the Sufi order he was following (Kareem and Moulavi (1978: 152).
[250] Muhammadali (2007: 35-36).

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Malayalam that was dominated by the hegemonic literary and aesthetic yardsticks like which favored the social position of the nobility such as Brahmins and Nairs, the upper castes. There are some other forms of practices which had cultural and social orientations different from that of the hegemonic ones bearing the label of 'folk' and sharing the fate of *Muhyiddin Maala*.[251] Anyway, the explanations that limited the context of production of the *Maala* into mere internal disputes between the different Sufi orders fail to understand the larger socio cultural and political contexts that produced the text and later determined its place.

However, understanding the text as a socially embedded activity points to the fact that *Muhyiddin Maala* had an active involvement in uniting the community, internally with spiritual strength and externally for the opposition of the Portuguese onslaught. Furthermore, the comprehension of the *Maala* also as related with the other texts wrote by the author is succinctly marking the dominant current of Mappila Muslims textual culture being spirituality intertwined with the ethos of social and political struggles.[252] *Fath ul-Mubeen* (Ar., The Clear Victory), written in Arabic by the author of the *Maala* during the period between 1579-1607 A.D, is a poem narrating the history of the victory of the King Zamorin and his people, mainly Mappilas, capturing the Chaliyam Fort defeating the Portuguese force in 1571.[253] He was, in fact, continuing a tradition of Maapilas' textual culture wherein Shaikh Zainuddin, the first, wrote *Adhkiya* and *Thahridh* as well,[254] and Shaikh Zainuddin, the second, brought out his *Thuhfat ul-Mujahidin*[255] suffusing the social and physical history of the land of Malabar, the

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[251] Tharamel (2006: 16-19).

[252] Pointing at the social contents percolated into the body of literature in Arabic and Arabi-Malayalam produced by Mappila Muslims of Kerala, K.Aboobackar (2008) noted that the Mappila culture has been shaped as a blend of spirituality, militaristic resistance and art. This nature was expressively present in almost all the literature since the first Arabi-Malayalam text till the end of the first half of the twentieth century (in Sainuddin Mandalamkunnu, (ed.), *Muhyiddin Maala*: History, Text and Study (27). Thrissur: Kaizen Books).

[253] Gangadharan, M. 2004. *Mappila Padanangal* (Mal., *Mappila Studies*), (94-113). Calicut: Vachanam Books.

[254] Shaikh Zainuddin, the first or the elder, (1466- 1521 A.D) has written several scholarly works, mainly in the Islamic branches of learning. *Hidayat ul-Adhkiya Ila Taqat al-Awliya*, commonly known as *Adhkiya* is one of his famous works, a Sufi poem emphasizing that piety is the basis of true happiness and victory. The local *Ulema* considered this text as the manual of Sufism in Kerala (See, Kunjali (2004: 17-18). *Tahridh* or *Tahridh ala Ahl al- Iman ala Jihadi Abadathi Sulban al- Marghabathu fil Jinan Wal Munqidath mina Niraan* (Inspiring the Belivers to for the Battle against the Worshippers of Cross to be Saved from The Hell and to be Invited to Heaven) was also his text as an orienting and land mark work in the resistance literature of the land (See, Randathani. 2008. *Mappila Malabar* (27-35)). The Kunjalis, the naval admirals of Zamorin who fought against the Portuguese navy, got inspired from this text (See, K.Aboobackar (2007: 45-46)).

[255] *Tuhfat ul Mujahideen* (The Gift for the Battlers), the earliest historical document on Kerala, in general, and about Mappila Muslims' social and cultural life, in particular, written in Arabic by Zainuddin Makhdum, the Second (1531-

condition of the Muslims at the face of the Portuguese onslaught, and a call to get their spirituality strengthened to fight against the domination as a *Jihad*. When the tradition passed on to later generation a complex mix of these elements was still present, like in Moyinkutty Vaidyar's poetic texts that invoked manifest sense of war against the British colonialism and local land lords, and expressed deep interest in spiritual awakening.[256] It is significant to note here that historically Mappilas had the spiritual leadership which invoked them to channelize the spiritual strength to fight against worldly evils and for mundane liberations.[257]

In a nutshell, indicating the cultural driving forces against political dominations, *Muhyiddin Maala* served as a Sufi spiritual manifesto of Mappila Muslims' religious mobilization as well as socio-political assertion. Furthermore, the link between the text of *Muhyiddin Maala* and its popular usage with devotional appeal can be explained as a lived history carried through the present in improvised contexts. Hence, an elaboration of the ritual complex placing it in its discursive domain, in which, significantly, prolonged local debates on Sufism took place, in the community called Mappila would explain the social and cultural meaning embedded in the *Maala*.

2. Sufism, *Muhyiddin Maala* and Mappila Muslims:
An attempt to elaborate a tradition of living Islam

A comprehensive explanation of the place of and the roles played by *Muhyiddin Maala* and Arabi-Malayalam in the religio-cultural and social space of Mappila Muslims in Kerala would be possible only by elaborating their general thematic orientation that appealed to the users, which is Sufism, and its local manifestations in the cultural and historical contexts of Malabar. Sufism or *Tasawwuf* has been an important part of the

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1583). It includes a special chapter inspiring Mappila Muslims to fight against the Portuguese invaders as in a battle against the evil powers repressing the believers. It called for a *Jihad*, the Holy war, suggesting clearly it as the manifestation of spiritual strength by conquering your passion and thus being fit to confront any mundane force (*Tuhfat ul Mujahidin*, translated by C.Hamza. 1995. Calicut: Al Huda Book Stall).

[256] Aboobackar. 2008. in Mandalamkunnu (ed.). (2008), (27). Moyinkutty Vaidyar (1852-1893) is famous for his *Padappaattu* or War songs, a rich and popular section of Mappila songs. His *Badar Padappaattu*, written in 1876, was a narration of the historic battle between the Prophet and the local powers of Arabia of that time. The narration was filled with spiritual veneration of the Prophet as well as the invocation of the sense of resistance. This text is believed to be a prime source of inspiration for Mappilas to fight against the land lords and colonial forces.

[257] The active involvement of the traditional intellectuals, such as inspiring Sufi saints and religious scholars, in the struggles against feudal and colonial oppressors had been remarkable. This tradition of engagement was constituted mainly through the textual culture among the community (See, Panikkar, K.N. 1989. *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar 1836-1921* (59-65). Delhi: OUP.

geographies of Islam; being found in almost all countries where there are Muslims living, with diverse historical significance in different contexts, mainly religious, then cultural, social, and also political. According to Jamal Elias (1998), being one of the most dynamic dimensions of Islamic religious and cultural expression, 'Sufism' is an umbrella term for a variety of philosophical, social and literary phenomena occurring within the Islamic world. It refers primarily to diverse schools of Islamic mysticism, to the phenomenon of spiritual orders or *Tariqa* that have exerted considerable influence over the development of Islamic social, cultural and sometimes political life and to the varied expressions of popular piety and devotion to shrines of the saints found throughout the Islamic world.[258]

According to Hossein Nasr (1966), the *Tariqa* or Spitual Path which is usually known as *Tasawwuf* or Sufism is the inner and esoteric dimension of Islam, and though it is considered as an ideology and practice developed from external influences (as seen in many Orientalist narratives on Sufism) it has roots in the basic tenets of Islam, the Quran and prophetic tradition. While *Tariqa* is the spiritual path and mystical dimension of Islam and *Sharia* is the divine law that organizes the social and human norms (as a religious authority producing the structure of an Islamic society, and an intertwined practice of these two folds leads to *Haqiqa* which is considered to be the sublime truth, being the source of both the earlier ones.[259] In Adhkiya, a Sufi poem which is considered among the *Ulema* of Kerala as the manual of *Tasawwuf* composed in Malabar in 1521 A.D. by Shaikh Zainuddin Makhdum, the first (1466-1521 A.D), it is said allegorically that, '*Sharia* is like a ship to embark, *Tariqa* is like an ocean to sail and *Haqiqa* like the precious pearl to be sought'.[260] However, it's the aspect of Sufism that helps the normative system of Islam to negotiate with local variations. The Sufis' role in the development of different Muslim communities of diverse cultural life around the world point to this fact, and Sufi practices adopting local cultural and artistic expressions and inserting Islamic current in it have been instrumental in shaping the cultural life of the Muslim communities. The different art-forms among Mappilas point to the meditative

[258]Elias, Jamal J. 1998. 'Sufism'. *Iranian Studies*, 31 (3/4), (Summer - Autumn, 1998): 595-613.
[259] Nasr, S. Hossein. 1966. *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (121-122). London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.
[260] *Al Adhkiya*, [verse:5], (2).

role of Sufism in shaping the religious and cultural practices of a community,[261] and very importantly, *Muhyiddin Maala* is a succinct practical model of being the text of this particular process of mediation. Thus, in the particular historical context of Malabar, Sufism has been a strong channel of Islamization as a social and cultural process of change that shaped the little tradition of Islam (which stands dominant in the region) as Mappilas being largely a community emerged through conversion from Hinduism.[262] Hence, Sufism can be construed as a practice which is rooted in Islamic base and external manifestations that are varied according their local social and cultural contexts. Furthermore, the legal and normative prescriptions (the Law) of Islam are unfolded and fulfilled in the practical contexts mainly through the contemplative spiritual, thus, interpretive, dynamism (the Path).[263] It is essential to note that Sufism presupposes the importance of experience rather than scriptural certainty in understanding the divine and, love rather than fear in shaping the practice of religion.[264]

The wider understanding of Sufism suggests to manifold external manifestations that it "is often seen as the spiritual muse behind much of pre-modern verse in the Islamic world, the idiom of much of popular Islamic piety, the primary social arena open to women's religious participation, and a major force in the conversion of people to Islam in Africa and Asia", as Elias (1998) noted. The Sufi orders or *Tariqa*s served also as educational institutions that fostered not only the religious education but also music and arts; decorative and performance.[265] Never the less, the practice of Sufism has generally been taken with ambivalence as there has always been relative tension between the *Ulema* (the scholars of Islamic jurisprudence who hardly tolerate cultural adaptations) and Sufis in history regarding the regarding legitimacy of roots and practice.[266] While they Sufism is praised for its instrumental role in uniting Muslims and rejuvenating

[261] Randathani. 2007. *Sufi Margam* (Mal., *The Sufi Path*), (138-39). Calicut: Islamic Publishing Bureau.

[262] Singh, Yogendra. 1996. *Modernization of Indian tradition* (73). Jaipur: Rawat Publications.

[263] The widely accepted definition of *Tasawwuf* is suggestive of its Islamic base and evident generality that leads to meditative possibilities. As a religion, *Ihsan* (the spiritual clarity that is the base of *Tasawwuf*) is a fundamental orientation along with *Islam* (submission to the divine will) and *Iman* (the faith in the divine unity and prophet) constituting the belief and practice in Islam. In fact, the Sufi masters have over the ages defined Sufism by the well known *Hadiith* of the prophet who when asked what is *Ihsan* said: '*Ihasan* is to adore Allah as thou didst see him, and if you does not see him nonetheless see thee' (Nasr (1966: 134)). Essentially this definition is also that of Sufism.

[264] Randathani (2007: 11).

[265] Elias (1998). Op. cit.

[266] Randathani (2007: 10-16).

Islamic communities in phases of social and political crises,[267] they have also been vilified for a lack of respect for Islamic law and for fostering ignorance and superstition.[268] Significantly, the debates between different *Tariqa* and the *Ulema* (of the modern puritan and politically motivated organizations as well as of the Sunni orthodoxy who also debate with the former section as scriptural defense of an ideal Sufism) form a major part of the history of Sufism and general religious discourse in Kerala.[269]

Sufism as a movement had its development through different stages. Randathani (2007) says that although the Sufi orientation was prevalent during the time of Prophet Muhammad, it emerged as a movement in the 9th century. It was in the 13th century that Sufism developed into an organized practice wherein the Murshid/Shaikh (Sufi master)-Murid (disciple) or *pir-murid* system of relationship was institutionalized and thus different Sufi orders took shape. The Sufi centers called *Ribat, Khanqah, Zaviya* where the disciples gather around their master and also practice chanting have already developed in the period between 10th and 12th centuries, and the *Ulemas'* critique taking on Sufi practices as deviation have raised in this period.[270] Focusing on the organization of practices Spencer Trimmingham (1971) has noted three major stages in the development of Sufism as a movement. They are the Khanqah stage, The Tariqa stage and the Taifa stage. The first is was mainly of wandering circles of a master and his disciples being guided by him, with undifferentiated lodges and convents and individualistic and communal methods of contemplation and exercises for the inducement

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[267] Tharamel, (2006). pp.16-17; Randathani, (2007). pp.9.

[268] Elias(1998).

[269]While Sufism has been present in most of the lived religious and cultural context in the history and also in present (though in a shrinking state), it could never escape several kinds of criticism, and the larger religious debate among Mappilas was between *Ulemas* and Sufis and sometimes between different Sufi orders (Kareem and Moulavi (1978: 318-323, 152) till the operation of strong puritan reformist forces in the community. These forces identity in the local context was mainly their outright opposition to Sufism and they labeled creative and cultural expressions in Sufi practices as heretic innovations (Mandalamkunnu (2008: 39-44), and this was the ideological thrust that made a large section of Arabi-Malayalam texts contested and in turn the culture of their production was weakened (Tharamel (2006: 27) ; See also, Abu (1970: 63-65). However, it is a discernible fact that the dominance of legalism (a strict and sometimes exclusive adherence to *Sharia*) has a crucial role in shaping these debates, and thus the Sufism in Kerala has largely been organized and controlled by the legalistic Islamic organizations (Kunjali (2004: 61).

[270] Randathani (2007: 9-11). The major Sufi orders that led the general movement of Sufism all over the world are: 1.Qadiriyya (of Abdul Qadir Jilani-died1166 A.D), 2.Suhrawardiyya (of Ziyauddin Suhrawardi-died1168 A.D), 3.Rifaiya (Ahmad al-Kabeer Rifai-d.1182), 4.Yasawiyya (Ahmad Yasawi-1166), 5.Kubraviya (Najmuddin Kubra-1221), 6.Chishtiya (Abu Ishaq Shami-940), 7.Shadiliya (Abul Hasan Shadili-1258), 8.Badawiya (Ahmad Badawi-1276),9.Mawlaviya (Jalaluddin Rumi-1273), 10.Naqshabandiya (Muhammad Bahauddin Naqshabandi-1389) (Randathani (2007: 16). There are orders based on family lineage like the Ba'Alawi (founded in Yemen by Muhammad bin Ali-1178-1255) a major one which is also relevant being the leading force of propagation of Islam in Kerala and the formation of Mappila community in Malabar (2007: 17).

of ecstasy, and having minimum regulations to live a common life. The second stage, the duration of 1100-1400 A.D being its formative period, witnessed specialized doctrines and methods and teaching of developed schools of mysticism, and accommodation of the mystical spirit to the standards of tradition and legalism. The third, *Taifa* stage started from the period of the founding of the Ottoman Empire (14th century) and Sufism became a popular movement, new foundations of *Tariqa* lines which branched into numerous orders were formed, fully incorporated with the saint cult. Belonging to a cult association became important. Emerged as saint cult, veneration of *pir* or *wali* began gained strength. This was the stage that established the power of *Baraka* or blessing of the saint and the belief that he posses the power to intercession with god, and its greater appeal among common folk led them to venerate them seeking spiritual strength as well mundane achievements and relief at times of distress. [271] It seems that Sufi practices became of Kerala during this saint-veneration stage, with a particular variety added in as martyr-saints[272] who emerged in the local social, religious and political contexts of strives.

2.1. Sufism among Mappilas of Kerala:

There is a serious misconception informing most of the noted historical and other works on the Muslims of India that Sufism did not exist in Kerala or not at all a relevant factor in deciding the course of social, religious or cultural life of the Muslims in Kerala.[273] Roland E. Miller who stayed fourteen years in Malappuram, the major centre of Mappilas, for his well known study, *Mappila Muslims of* Kerala (1967), has seriously underestimated the influence of Sufism in the community. [274] And while some studies

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[271] Trimmingham, Spencer J. (1971. *Sufi Orders in Islam*. Oxford) as quoted in Kunjali (2004: 59-60).

[272] Kunjali (2004: 61).

Dale and Menon (1978) have pointed out the relevance of veneration and worship of saints (*Awliya*) and martyr (*Shahid*) as public festivals called *Nercca* among Mappilas ("'Nerccas": Saint-Martyr Worship among the Muslims of Kerala'. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*. 41 (3): 523-538).

[273] Kunjali who authored *Sufism in Kerala (2004)* has noted that being geographically separated and culturally isolated the Mappila Muslims and their engagements with Sufis are little known. I.H.Qureshi who studied the *Muslim Communities* in India went with the wrong impression of non-existence of Sufism in South India. Richard Maxwel Eaton whose study on *Sufis of Bijapur* stands atop in the field could only quote a general study on Sufism to mention the mystical poem of a 'certain Zain al-Din', in fact it's about his famous work *Adhkiya*. Many other works like these (Athar Abbas Rizwi's too) while considering different communities in Indian Islam, Mappila Muslim's Sufism is underestimated. Kunjali criticized this tendency as the *Dothi* wearing non-Urdu speaking Mappila is not regarded as having any separate identity other than '*Madrasi*' (Kunjali (2004: 13).

[274] Quoting I.H.Qureshi, R.E.Miller had to say that, "The extensive Sufi missionary activity known elsewhere in the history of Indian Islam is not evident in south India" (Miller (1967: 53).

consider Sufis' influence in the early development of Islam in Kerala,[275] some others denied the allegiance of the early missionaries to the Sufi ideology.[276] But, V.Kunjali's *Sufism in Kerala* (2004) has sought to establish the dynamic presence and influence of Sufism in the history of religious and cultural life of Mappilas. He has explained the reasons for not considering Sufism as an ideology and practice relevant among Mappilas in most of the studies, the major among them being that the texts/materials which explain Mappila's religious and cultural engagement with Sufism are largely in Arabi-Malayalam and Arabic.[277] None the less, Sufism in all the studies has been dealt as a historical object, as even Kunjali takes Sufism as a 'relic' of mystical theosophy,[278] and miss the sociologically significant aspect that Sufism as a practice that informed the emergence and dynamics of several religious and socio cultural institutions and ritual complex, and forming the current of various religious discourses, is a condensed factor which has critical relevance to reveal much about the socio cultural and religious shifts that give shape to the present of Mappila community. The present analysis dealing with interconnections between Arabi-Malayalam and Sufism (which is richly manifested in *Muhyiddin Maala*) is mainly focusing on how Arabi-Mlayalam texts carried the Sufi ideology that has diverse manifestations among Mappilas.

Though the exact origin of Sufism in the history of Kerala is not traced, the presence of Sufis and their involvement have been noticed in the early time of spreading Islam in Kerala.[279]Also many existing institutions of diverse religious functions in the present of Kerala are being explained to be transformations of the once specialized centers of Sufi practices.[280] Kunjali (2004) has noted that eleven Sufi orders are traced in Kerala: 1.Qdiri, 2.Rifai, 3.Chishti, 4.Suhrawardi, 5.Naqshabandi, 6.Kazeruni, 7.Shadili, 8.Ba-Alawi, 9.Ba-Faqih, 10.Aydarus, and 11.Nurishah.[281] There are several Arabic and Arabi-

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[275]Kunj, Ibrahim. 1989. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala* (20-24).

[276] Muhammaed, K.M. *Kerala's Contribution to Arabic Learning and Literature*, as quoted in Kunjali (2004: 71).

[277] Kunjali says, the materials that could reveal the things are mostly unpublished and scattered in private collections, and the absence of a tradition of historical writing in Persian that could attract the attention of a researcher in medieval history being the other major reasons (2004: 12).

[278] Kunjali (2004: 58).

[279] Kunju (1989: 20-24).

[280] The *Palli Dars* and *Madrasas* are understood as to be the earlier times *Khanqahs* and *Jama'at Khanahs*. *Srambiasi* or the small mosques/ the humble structures of prayer raised generally seen on side of the streams and generally away from the bigger mosques are interpreted to be the representation of the Sufi *Zawiyas*, the place where people oriented to Sufism practice their specialized spiritual practices (Kunjali (2004: 61-62).

[281] Kunjali (2004: 63).

Malayalam texts and tracts on Sufism in the form of poem and prose written and composed in Kerala, and many of them are still in use as texts or reference in the religious scholarly (*Ulema*s') debates and in ritual contexts of recitation and singing. And most of the Arabi-Malyalam texts dealing with different themes from travelogue, war songs, to medicine and healing are spun in Sufi orientation, while the popular texts of *Maala* songs are exclusive repository of Sufism. *Adhkiya* (1521) of Zainuddin Makhdum, the second,[282] is the famous Arabic text on Sufism in verse. *Moulid*s, the small Arabic texts which contain poetic narrative of the birth, history and greatness of Prophet Muhammad, recited in grouping especially on *Milad un-Nabi*[283] are also of significant use in Kerala. *Maala Paattukal* or the songs in praise of Sufi saints (*wali / pir*) in Arabi-Malayalam are the texts which are of common use and people's texts piety. Among several of this category, *Muhyiddin Maala* stands as the manual of popular Sufism in Kerala. As all the *Tariqa*s (Sufi order) claim their basic adherence to theQadiri order,[284] and all of them recognize Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani as the greatest Sufi,[285] and also, the two major religious leadership which deeply influenced the community, the Makhdums of Ponnani who came from the Coromandel coast and the Sayyids who came from Yemen, followed the Qadiri order,[286] a *maala* praising Muhyiddin Shaikh (the popular name of Shaikh Jilani) became the text which evoked piety among people at its diverse contexts of use. Therefore, the general call help as '*Muhyiddin Shaikhe*'[287] among Mappilas (now among Sunnis only) at times of distress, angst or wonder can be noted as an everyday evocation of the *Maala*.

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[282] *Hdayatil Adhkiya Ila Tariqatil Awliya*, (as the full name of the text), had been recognized as one of the text books for the 6th standard in the *Madrasa*s run by Samastha Kerala Jam'iyathul Ulema, the dominant religious organization among Sunni Muslims in Kerala. Later they avoided this text from its syllabus. The Wahhabis / Salafis or Mujahids (the puritan reformists) have Kerala Nadwat ul-Mujahidin, and Jama'at-e-Islami running their own *Madrasa*s which are in aversion to these themes and orientation.

[283] It is the celebration of the birth day of the Prophet on the 12th of Rabiul Awwal, the 3rd month of Hijra calendar. *Manqus Moulud* written by Zainuddin Ibn Ali of Ponnani (d.923) is of common use. Notably, there are *Moulid*s of several other saints locally and extra territorially important such as *Mamburam Moulid* in which Syyid Alawi Tangal, a Sufi saint who had critical role in the massive conversion and challenging feudal and colonial dominations among Mappilas.

[284] Kunjali (2004: 65).

[285] ibid.: (73).

[286] Randathani (2007: 137-141).

[287] Which means, '*O, Shaikh Muhyiddin! (help me)*'.

2.2. Mediation(s) by *Muhyiddin Maala*:

The significance of the *Maala* in the diverse social, cultural and religious contexts among Mappilas suggests that it has remarkable role of mediation in different senses. The one important sense of mediation is, as explained by Vincent Barletta (2005), to focus on the ways in which passages of the text were employed to mediate (and thus, give shape to) the performance of specific, socially embedded activities within the community.[288] Apart from this, the linguistic anthropologists' critical tendency to view culture itself (and thus, language) as a system of mediation, as Duranti (1997) considered culture as critical in organizing the use of different forms of tools in specific activities,[289] suggests to the significance of taking texts in their situated and contextualized meaning. Understanding *Muhyiddin Maala* as situated in contexts of use hence would explain how the text functioned as a tool of mediation in social and cultural situations, and how its language became crucial in the social life of the community of its use.

Religious piety has decisive role in the Mappilas' organization of temporality/time in their life. The regularity of their cultural life has been ordered in the ritual acts which are largely molded in the Sufi ideology that is represented in the *Maala*. Therefore, *Maala* itself formed the regularity of cultural life of Maapilas. It regularly stands in the ritual progressions of the community in time, from the daily recitation of the *Maala* after the prayer of *Maghrib*/dusk in most of the households, and on the eve of every Fridays (*Velliyazhcha Raavu*) along with other *Maalas*, to the yearly celebration of the death (*aandu*) of Muhyiddin Shaikh as *Nercha* with large prayers, performances of arts and feast. The month of *aandu* therefore, for them is *Raatib Maasam* (*Maasam* is month in Malayalam. It is *Rabi ul-Aakhir*, the fourth month of Hijra calendar. *Raatib* is the Arabic poetic narratives of the history and praise of the saints, here of Muhyiddin Shaikh). Mostly the yearly celebration is the collective occasion of the larger ritual of *Nercha* wherein the saints, martyrs in the local and extra-local religious memory, and the religiously respected people are venerated. Recitation of *Maalas* (mostly *Muhyiddin Maala)* and *Moulid/Moulud* (the Arabic version of *Maala*) form a large part of the

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[288]Barletta, Vincent. 2005. *Covert Gestures: Crypto-Islamic Literature as Cultural Practice in Early Modern Spain* (84). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

[289]Duranti, Alessandro. 1997. *Linguistic Anthropology* (40). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

collective ritual acts, while these sessions of memorization of Sufi saints are also called *Moulids.* These, in brief, suggest that *Muhyiddin Maala* stands as a text which mediates the temporal organization of the ritual activities that are largely defined in Sufi ideology.

Apart from this there are several other ritual occasions the cultural and religious fulfillment of which are mediated through the recitation of *Muhyiddin Maala.* Child birth is an occasion, the anxiety and hopes of the situation is managed through recitation of the *Maala* outside the room.[290] Many later activities related to child birth, such as *Mudikalachil* (the shaving of the hair of the newborn baby on the seventh day of birth), has also been traditionally conducted along a gathering of people reciting the *Maala.*[291] People used to take a vow by reciting the *Maala* to fulfill their mundane needs, or to conduct a gathering of people to recite which is usually followed by a feast to get their worldly needs fulfilled. These kinds and other monthly or yearly ritualistic gathering of a group of people in mosque or in different households to recite the *Maala* is a strongly appealing activity among the Mappila fishermen community in Kerala.[292] They resort to the spiritual promises of *Muhyiddin Maala* as it would save them in the troubles of this world and the other world[293] when they start fishing with new boats, nets, at times of troubles in the sea, and conduct *Moulid* and *Ratib* yearly and monthly for the general safety of their work amidst uncertainties of the sea.[294]

There are diverse other contexts of general social and cultural mediation in the community. The *Maala* was considered next to Quran, or rather, in the local cultural experience of Islam the ordinary folks' Islam was generally the localized Sufi practices being centered mainly *Muhyiddin Maala* and other *Maalas* and *edus* (the Arabi-Malayalam books of hymns and chants). To put it in context, to follow Quran, as the common Maapila folks understood it, is to follow the practice of *Muhyiddin Maala.* The

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[290]Faizi, Musthafal (2008: 68).

[291] Kutty, V.M. (2007: 111-28).

[292] According to Hussain Randathani historically many guilds, crafts men and working groups of several kinds in different Muslim communities around the world had been closely linked with Sufi orders, and Mappila Fishermen were largely associated with Qadiri *Tariqaa,* and thus the *Maala* became very much a part of their vows and other ritual activities (2007: 110-111).

[293] Verse no. 48 and 49 of *Muhyiddin Maala* says, "*at times of troubles for my followers, I am there always to hold their hand. No worry to those who hold me, and I'm the security for those who hold me*" (p. 5). It further says, "*Whoever is calling me from anywhere, I will answer them before they close their mouth*" [verse: 53], (5).

[294] Mathur. P.R.G. 1977. *The Mappila fisher Folk of Kerala* (305-24). Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society..

illiterate folk who sing the *Maala* from memory considers the script of the *Maala* as the script of Quran and thus of god. Arabic, the script of Arabi-Malayalam thus, for them, is the script of Quran and heaven; it is the writing they see in the religious manifesto of their everyday life, the *Maala*. Therefore, understanding of religiosity of any individual was to understand the level of attachment to the *Maala*. There was a time, not so far back, among Mappilas when the women among them were asked whether they knew the recitation of *Muhyiddin Maala* from their memory as a generally followed religious criterion to get marry.[295] And the story of Muhyiddin Shaikh's childhood described in the *Maala* which shows his strong allegiance to honesty and truth became a standard to inculcate this ideal in the children among Mappilas. The *Maala* says, "*When the mother told not to tell lie, he gives gold to the robber*".[296] Thus, the text mediates the religious process of socialization too. The widespread popularity of the name 'Muhyiddin' and its derivative forms such as Moideen, Mideen, Moidu, Midu and Mothi among Mappilas is another way *Muhyiddin Maala* was placed in the social priority. The widely found priority for the name can best be understood as the high place of the *Maala* and its protagonist in the community. And the priority of naming the children among Mappilas was also mediated through the *maala*.

Historically, the collective feeling in the context of fear and survival during the time of colonial repressions was mediated among Mappilas through the production and use of a *bhakti* literature the current of which was shaped in Qadiri Sufi ideology of Muhyiddin Shaikh.[297] And their political actions, mainly of 19th and early 20th century were also mediated largely through spiritual activities, as conducted gathering for *Maala* and *Moulid* before they went to attack their enemies, feudal or colonial.[298] The general sense of mediation of the particular text can be applied also to its indirect and evocative presence in many art forms, especially performing arts, among Mappilas. The Qadiri Sufis are considered to be the religious force behind the development of many of the

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[295]Tharamel (2006: 26).
[296]*Muhyiddin Maala*, [verse;103], (8). It says that when Muhyiddin Shaikh was going to Baghdad for his studies his mother gave him some gold for his expences, and told him never tell lie. Following the words of mother when he faced a group of robbers onhis way asking whether he posses anything valuable with him, he gave them the gold. This act, it's told that, has led these robbers to rethink about their actions.
[297]Tharamel (2006). Op. cit.
[298]See, Panikkar, K.N. 1989. *Against Lord and State* (59-65). Delhi: Oxford University Press.

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Mappila art forms.[299] The songs that are the audible current and rhythm of the Mappila performing arts such as *Kolkkali, Arabana* etc. are adaptations of the *Maala* in terms of their theme or spiritual frame of reference.[300]

There is another aspect of mediation which is represented in *Muhyiddin Maala* more relevant to its theology. The notion of intercession (of the saints/Sufis between people/followers and the god) which is a central religious aspect of construction a *maala* can be noted in its remarkable presence in *Muhyiddin Maala*. This aspect became a point of serious debates among Mappilas especially after the theological reforms of 20th century and thus affected the range of use /engagement with the *Maala* in the community. Generally recitation of a *Maala* itself is a prayer, praising the glories/ supernatural powers (*Karamath*) of the saint and asking the god to get the spiritual and worldly needs fulfilled, with a belief that the saint has power of recommendation to the god. This appeal to holy men for intercession or mediation is called *Tawassul* and asking for help from the god for the sake of their attachment to the holy men is called *Istigasa*. Any *Maala* structurally has an essential ending part of *Iravu* (prayer) which is a prayer of intercession, and so are *Muhyiddin Maala*'s last sixteen verses whereby the glorified saint Muhyiddin Shaikh is asked to take up their issues.[301] In this regard, *Muhyiddin Maala* represents as a grand text of this variety of mediation. The *Maala* in general is an argument for the supreme power of *Muhyiddin Shaikh* to mediate between the people (who call him for help) and the god. With several lines of establishing Shaikh as the powerful one to mediate[302] and an *Iravu* of popular appeal the *Maala* fulfills the religious function of mediation in its highest possible manner in the community.

Muhyiddin Maala as a text which was produced in the manifest time of *Tariqat* (Sufi religious culture) in the history of Mappila community *Maala* became a standard form of literary expression of popular devotion in the local Islamic culture. After *Muhyiddin Maala* a great lot of *Maalas* came in the form of *Muhyiddin Maala* such as *Badar Maala,*

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[299]Randathani (2007: 139).

[300]Parappil, (1994: 225-40). See also, Kutty (2007).

[301]The issues are primarily spiritual, other worldly and religious, and the different contexts of use determine the sense of mediation. There are several social and cultural occasions where by the *Maala* is mediating its fulfillment.

[302] Quoting Muhyiddin Shaikh his *Maala* says, *"My words are of god's words, if say be, it will be. I did not do anything without the permission of god"* [verse; 32-33], (4).

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Rifai Maala, Mahmood Maala, Manjakulam Maala.[303] Even when the *tariqa* or *tariqath* (sufism) among Mappilas became a marginal experience after the interventions of religious reformism in the 20th century the literary form of the *maala* survives with much deeper appeal, and thus evokes the rich past of its content (Sufism) which is no longer a manifest or widespread practice at present. M.N.Karasseri's *Basheer Maala*[304] is an example using the form of the *Maala* without direct attachment to the content generally carried in *Maalas*. And the form of *Maala* was adopted also to write songs on different themes which have nothing manifestly common with the content of the *Maala* such as *Parishkara* (reform) *Maala, Durachaara* (bad customs) *Maala, Vellappokka* (flood) *Maala, Kaathukuth* (piercing the earlobe) *Maala.*[305] Thus, *Muhyiddin Maala* stands a model of literary expression which appeals to the locally experienced Islamic culture of Mappilas and evoke the rhythm of expression in their religion and culture.

Discussion:

However, in the present social, religious and cultural conditions among Mappilas *Muhyiddin Maala* is losing its mediative significance due to several reasons, the major one being the theological reform that began to operate in the community from the early decades of 20th century. Though the volume of practice and thus the mediative significance of the *Maala* have shrunk, the meaning of *Muhyiddinn Maala* in the present of the community still persists, though not as strongly and widely as it was, in the life of several people, mainly among women and other non-*ulema* (scholarly) population.

The reformist groups have outright rejection of the body of literature called *Maala* as it, according to them, generates heresy, superstition and backwardness. While they try to put with the objective situation of the influence of the *Maala* as a text of mediation and intercession though still with a religious aversion (as it is reflected in their doubts regarding the year of writing and the authorship of *Muhyiddin Maala*),[306] reformist

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[303] Muhammadali (2007: 36).

[304] It is song in praise of the famous Malayalam fiction writer Vaikom Muhammad Basheer whose inclinations to Sufism is reflected in his writings. (Karasseri, M.N. 2000. *Basheer Maala.* Calicut: Lipi Publications).

[305] Vallikkunnu and Tharamel, (2006: 27).

[306] While the reformists have started admitting the political and social meditative significance of the *Maala*, they don't want to take the religious mediation (intercession) of the txt as legitimate. Hence, their doubt whether the mention of year of writing in the text a latter addition, or how can such a socially and politically correct person like Qazi

interventions in time have complex consequences also on their opposition's ways of defending its identity. The Sunni religious organizations who debate with reformists scripturally defending the ideal ways of practicing Sufism are but largely disoriented from the Sufism of *Muhyiddin Maala* and contested towards emerging Sufi trends among Mappilas. A striking point in the present religious debates among Mappilas (who are generally Sunnis as opposed to Shia) is that there are several denouncing accusations of Sufi practices as Shia Islamic practices[307] whereas there is no general tracing or any official representation for Shiaism in Kerala. As noted by S.H. Nasr sufism, in fact, is existing within Shi'ism and Sunnism,[308] though with differences in thrusts and fashion. Sufi practices are still of deeper interests among common Mappila folks and of strong significance in their everyday life, but the official authorities are not representing their lived spirituality. It can be understood that, when the official Sunni organizations became largely disoriented to Sufism, the Sufi practices (the local representation of which is *Muhyiddin Maala*) began to be taken as Shia, an alien outsider to the Mappilas religious habitus.

Furthermore, it shows, the religious organizational authorities do not represent the everyday spirituality of the Sunni Mappila folks. Thus, as it's portrayed in the novels featuring the community's cultural traits and later shifts such as *Ntuppoopaakkoranendarnnu* (My Grand Dad Had an Elephent) of Basheer[309] or *Sulthan Veedu* of Koya,[310] it's observable that the culture of Arabi-Malayalam and *Muhyiddin Maala* is understood as part of the everyday and ritual pattern of the 'rural' 'traditional' 'backward' Mappila Muslims and amidst the socio cultural shifts it evokes the *nostalgia* of a superstitious time left behind the present of 'reformed' and 'progressive' 'modern'

Muhammad could write a text of religious 'deviation'. This ambivalent support fails to recognize the 'political unconscious' in the religion of *Maala* which generated an alternative way of looking at things at a crucial historical juncture (Rahman (2008: 38), nor the reformist argument regarding the year of publication or the authorship factually correct (Abdullakunji, T.K, (2008: 52-64).

[307] Samastha Kerala Jam'iyathul Ulema, the dominant Sunni organization among Mappilas which was established in response to reformism have a history of banning Sufi orders as labeling Shia deviation and disoriented to Sharia. The recent case is its banning of a prominent Qadiri order in 2005 (which is led by Shaikh Yusuf Sultan of Aluva and having followers throughout the state and outside) projecting that it is a Shia *Tariqa* because it also follow some belifs which are followed also by Shias (*Sathyadhara Monthly*, July 2006).

[308] Nasr (1966:126-127). S.H. Nasr has substantiated that Sufism is also divided into Sunni and Shia ways.
('Shi'Ism and Sufism: Their Relationship in Essence and in History'. *Religious Studies*, 6 (3), (Sep., 1970): 229-242.

[309] Basheer, Vaikom Muhammad. 2007. *Ntuppooppakkoranendarnnu* (My Grand Dad Had an Elephant). Kottayam: D.C.Books.

[310] Koya, P.A.Muhammad. 2004. *Sulthan Veedu*. Kottayam: D.C.Books.

Muslim. (Sarcasm, humor or aversion generated through 'reform' can be the inner sources of this manifest *nostalgia*).

Generally, the process of mediation through the *Maala* is also pointing to the larger cultural context that shaped it. The cultural and social mediation of Arabi-Malayalam, in general, seems to be shaped in the liminal cultural contexts through which the community of Mappila Muslims of Kerala developed. Significantly, the vernacular aspect of Islam among Mappilas is represented mainly through these mediations at religious, cultural and social levels.[311] And, *Muhyiddin Maala* merits a remarkable place in the discursive formation of the local Islamic culture of Mappilas. And contrary to the general anthropological projection[312] there is relevance for texts for the discursive formations in the local and lived contexts in Muslim communities, but these texts are mainly meditative texts such as *Muhyiddin Maala*. In other words, it is the above mentioned meditative aspects peculiar to Arabi-Malayalam textual practices that form the profile of Vernacular Islam in Kerala which is debated in the present between the Sunni supporters, Sufi practitioners, and the reformist opposition of *Mujahids* and Islamists (*Jama'at e Islami*).

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[311] A detailed discussion on vernacular Islam and liminal cultural contexts is following in the next chapter.

[312] Imtiaz Ahmed has projected a dichotomy between the 'textual' and 'lived'/'local' Islamic practices. This argument posits that the practices in 'local' 'lived' contexts bear no textual significance. See, Ahmad, Imtiaz. 2004. 'Introduction: Understanding Islam', in Imtiaz Ahmed and Helmut Reifeld (eds.). *Lived Islam in South Asia-Adaptation, Accomodation and Conflict* (xi-xxv). Delhi: Social Science Press.

Chapter-IV

Social Context of Vernacular Islam in Kerala

Reformism and Arabi-Malayalam

Introduction:

An attempt to understand the present of Arabi-Malayalam and the world of practices in it has to be focused mainly on the discursive field among the Mappila Muslims of Kerala. Arabi-Malayalam's directions of shifts and the condition of the present are determined by the debates and ideological differentiations in the history of the community. At present, the notable decline in the production of texts in Arabi-Malayalam and the religious, cultural and social present of marginality of its practice have been identified with its perceived markers such as 'traditional' 'rural' and 'backward' practice of Islam which is understood in contrast to the 'reformed' 'modern' state of social and religious life among Mappila Muslims of Kerala. The process of religious and social reform among the Muslims alongside the larger socio cultural changes in Kerala generally known as 'Kerala Renaissance' has played a critical role in shaping the identity of the religious and cultural practice of Arabi-Malayalam. While following the 'universalist' orientation and 'progressive' aspirations that are endorsed in the discursive field of the 'national modern', and projected towards reconstruction of 'tradition', the general tendencies that characterized the process of social, religious and cultural reforms in the larger context of Kerala, the direction of reform in the social and historical contexts of Mappilas has particular implications too. Despite of its emancipatory normative promises and their partial fulfillment, underestimating the social and cultural roles that Arabi-Malayalam played mostly in the lives of the under privileged lower sections, and reviving the religious fundamentals against the local historical features of Islamic culture and religion the 'modern' reformist interventions which began from the late 19th century actively involved in presenting a negative image of 'vernacular' practice of Islam in Kerala which is yet to be purified, hence debated. While the reformists' take on the religion and culture of Arabi-Malayalam was opposed by the 'traditionalists', this defenders of Arabi-Malayalam have evolved into a complex way of attaching themselves in the course of

their constant engagement in the debates with the reformists and thus, have shaped their collective identity contrastively. It is in this discursive present that a socio cultural practice among Kerala Muslims' past and present (which is expressively built up in Arabi-Malayalam and shaped to a large extent in Sufi ideology) began to be re-construed in a new sense of 'vernacular Islam' in Kerala.

1. Arabi-Malayalam and Social and Religious Reforms: A Critical Overview

Reform in general implies change and improvement and social reform sociologically suggests a collective attempt to reconstruct some limited aspects of the existing social order. Its organized expression on a purposeful ground involving significant number of people refers to social reform movement.[313] And, religious reform movement is a form of collective action which is focused to bring about changes in the locus of religious life of a group, and interested mainly in nurturing or elevating their religious identity. Although the tradition of religiously oriented collective action can be traced to several centuries back in Indian history, it was 20th century that became a time of several reform movements which emerged and functioned in a highly politicized context.[314] And, the movements oriented to religious issues did not openly identify with nationalism though, as Kenneth Jones (2010) pointed, in the 20th century India "secular ideologies provided new form of legitimization for dissent, even as religion added new dimensions to its own sphere of action."[315] This general wave of reforms that began in Bengal (known generally as 'Bengal renaissance') and spread to many parts of India had its emergence in Kerala in the latter half of the 19th century[316] and got much social and political momentum in the 20th century.[317] Nonetheless, the agency of reform in the larger Indian context was formed predominantly by the, social, cultural and economic elites; some examples of driving reform apparently from the lower sections can be noticed discretely though.

However, the specificity of geographical context and religious community has also decisive role in shaping the content of reform. In this regard, among the Muslims of

[313] Marshall, Gordon. 1998. *A Dictionary of Sociology* (616). Oxford University Press.

[314] Oommen, T.K. (ed.). 2010. *Social Movements- Vol.1, Issues of Identity* (72-3). Delhi: O.U.P.

[315] Jones, Kenneth W. 2010. 'Socio-Religious Movements of 20th century', in T.K.Oommen (ed.) *Social Movements- Vol.1, Issues of Identity* (72-73). Delhi: OUP.

[316] Govindapillai, P. 2003, *Kerala Navodhanam Oru Marxist Veekshanam*, (Mal., *Kerala Renaissance A Marxist Perspective*), (41-50). Trivandrum: Chintha Publishers.

[317] Jones, Kenneth (2010), Op.cit.

Kerala the general process of reform has been translated in their particular social, religious and historical context, while following the general paradigm of 'modernization'. Among them, the language of 'modern' reform operated as a critical and sanitizing scrutiny of their 'traditional' religion and culture and, in turn, of the linguistic and literary culture that was responsive to their local history, Arabi-Malayalam, which is, according to the reformists, part of an innovated cultural complex that deviated from the 'pure', 'original' and 'universally accepted' way of practicing Islam.

1.1 The Larger Context of Reforms in Kerala:

The socio cultural reforms in Kerala generally explained as *Keraliya Navothanam* (Kerala Renaissance) which began from the late 19th century, it is claimed that, unlike the general trend of reform in Bengal and other parts of the nation was a movement started from subaltern footings.[318] It was a social and cultural response from the within the society due to the internal contradictions generated by the feudal system based on caste hierarchy and accelerated by the colonial capitalist interventions and strengthened nationalist movement.[319] The economic and social reorganization under the colonial administration was molded in a 'modern' orientation which opened the space for modern education, growth of middle class, spread of the capital and more democratic social order.[320] It has wider implications for generating collective efforts of reform across different sections (castes and religious communities) of society at Kerala.

Such names are remembered in the dominant narratives profiling reforms in Kerala as Vaikunda Swamikal who worked for the social and religious uplift of Channar community (a lower caste), Chattambi Swamikal who was for the structuring of an egalitarian religious society, Sri Narayana Guru whose social and spiritual teachings led to collective mobilizations of Ezhava (a lower caste) community, Ayyankali who organized Pulaya (a lower caste) to fight against caste system, Sahodaran Ayyappan who strove to establish social equality against caste hierarchy, V.T.Bahtathiripadu who wrote against the sufferings of women in the *Savarna* caste communities, Mannath

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[318] Gopakumar, P.F. 2007. *Keraliya Navothanam* (Mal., Kerala Renaissance),(16). Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers.
[319] Govindapillai (2003: 41-50).
[320] Gopakumar (2007: 15-24).

Padmanabhan who worked to reorganize Nairs, K. Kelappan who led the Vaikom *Satyagraha* of 1932 for the right of lower castes to enter into temples, P. Krishnapillai and A.K.Gopalan, both engaged in social reconstruction on socialist lines, Vakkom Moulavi and Makti Thangal, both worked for religious revival and social reforms among Muslims, and Poykayil (Kumaragurudevan) Johanna who challenged the discriminations against Dalit Christians who are converted from lower castes.[321]

Reviewing the project of 'modernization of Kerala' which is being celebrated with nostalgia in most of the current studies about it, Sunil P. Elayidom (2009) has pointed out three major strands in the unfolding of renaissance in Kerala. The first strand exclusively concentrated on the role played by the mainstream social and religious reform movements like *Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Sangham* (SNDP), *Yoga Kshema Sabha, Nair Service Society* (NSS), *Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham and Pratyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha* (PRDS). The second one focuses on the institutional changes brought out mainly by the colonial administration. Failing to address the caste hierarchies which in fact reinforced through colonial land laws and upholding a narrow conception of reform merely as awareness generated through western education this strand appears uncritical and shallow. The final strand's emphasized structural changes in the material production system. While it addressed the objective situation, the role of the cultural ideology is missed out.[322] Ilayidom (2009) has also pointed to several cultural ideological blind spots in the exalted Kerala renaissance despite of its distinctive subaltern footings. The project of reform and modernization driven by the humanist ideal of enlightenment as it is actually unfolded in Indian context historically endorsed a discursive field of the national modern which could absorb and appropriate the Brahmanical values into its domain, reiterating a nostalgic historical narrative linearly progressing form the Vedic past. Through its convergent character the problematic dimensions of gender and caste could hide easily inside this discursive field. By its operational strategies the 'national modern' could not accommodate in and 'othered' largely the different lower and weaker

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[321]Gopakumar (2007); Govinda Pillai (2003); and, Ganesh, K.N. 1997. *Keralattinte Innalekal* (Mal., *Kerala's Past*) Thiruvananthapuram.

[322]Elayidom, Sunil P. 2009. 'Cross - Currents within: A Cultural Critique of Kerala Renaissance', (Paper presented in the seminar on '*Kerala : Towards New Horizons*' organised by *Jan Sanskriti*, Delhi in connection with the Birth Centenary Celebrations of E.M.S.Namboodiripad on (21st Feb- 2009).

sections in Indian society such as women, Dalits, Muslims, and Adivasis. Despite of its noted social distinctiveness, Kerala renaissance also functioned generally in a not very different orientation as being located in the domain of a concealed Brahmanical ideology, and thus, undermined the possibilities of a replacement of the ideology of the national modern with that of national popular. It is because of the underpinnings of the upper caste ideal on the general movement of reform that it unfolded in the lines of 'sanskritisation'. Furthermore, it is under the shadow of these inherent tendencies that the celebrated reforms in Kerala could not sharply tackle the problems of patriarchy and Brahmanical ideals of the human and individualism. Consequentially, a middle class of these cultural dispositions got strengthened and the present of Kerala has to face a continuing social stratification.

As Devika (2004) observed the mainstream narrative of modernization and reform in Kerala presupposes a homogenized category of women[323] which largely miss out the sufferings of women at different contexts mainly at lower rungs of society. Eapen and Kodoth (2002) have pointed out a growing uneasiness with the 'unconventional social development' in Kerala and the projected 'high status of women' in it, as a focus on families which mediate micro level decisions regarding education, health or employment reveals the real condition of women's status in the state which is not so high.[324] And the grip of patriarchy is still stronger amidst the exalted claims of reforms.

Given the fact that the dominant discursive realm of modernity in which the drive for reform was taken forward, the 'folk' and 'popular' cultural practices were to be sanitized to get a place in the mainstream. As Partha Chatterjee (1993) pointed out, a national sphere which emerged against the Western sphere appropriated and sanitized traditional practices, and a search for post colonial modernity involved a rejection of modernity.[325] In addition, as Blackburn (2003) noted, the perception of folklore as part of the interior

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[323] Devika, J. 2004. 'Women's History or History of En-Gendering?: Reflections on Gender and History-Writing in Kerala', in K.N.Ganesh (ed.). *Culture and Modernity –Historical Explorations* (114-40). Publication Division, University of Calicut.

[324] Eapen, Mridul and Kodoth, Praveena. 2002. 'Family Structure, Women's Education and Work: Re-examining the High Status of Women in Kerala'. (Working paper, Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, (November-2002).

[325]Chatterjee, Partha. 2008. *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (7th impression), (72-75), in Partha Chetterjee Omnibus. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

world of indigenous culture generated ambivalence toward it.[326] The case of modern reform in Kerala was not different in respect to its dealing with the cultural practices which have to inhabit the markers of lower sanity, 'folk' and 'popular', that are defined by the mainstream practices of cultura and literature. According to Umer Tharamel (2007), a modernity which was upheld by the mainstream reforms in Kerala could not accommodate the practices and their informing cultural feelings of the subaltern sections. And mainly because of its exclusive cultural and literary orientation, the Arabi-Malayalam literary practices and the cultural contributions in *Mappila paattu* were marginalized by the mainstream representations of social and cultural reforms.[327]

1.2. Contours of Socio Religious Reforms among Mappilas: A Critical Understanding

The movement of reform among the Muslims of Kerala began in the form of theological reform in the second decade of 20th century. It was Vakkom Muhammad Abdul Qadir Moulavi (1873-1932) who initiated the modern reforms on religious grounds which blew as a 'wind of change' in the community (Miller: 1967).[328] Although there were impulses for reconstruction of the Muslim community at wider level, as movement it was publicly represented by the *Mujahids*.[329] They are also known as *Wahhabis* (followers of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab, the medieval puritan reformer of Islam in Saudi Arabia) and the movement came to be called by interchangeable names such as *Mujahid* (of *those who make attempt* to restore Islam to its 'original purity'), *Islahi* (reformist), or *Salafi* (which follows the righteous *predecessors*).[330] From the *Aikya Sangham* of 1922 led by K.M.Moulavi, E.K.Moulavi and K.M.Seethi Sahib, the Islamic reformist movement in Kerala evolved into the formation of Kerala Jam'iyathul Ulema in 1933, and formally organized as Kerala Nadvathul Mujahidin 1952. In very recent past an internal split has taken place in the organization. (Notably, it was with the beginning of these reformist interventions that the organization of Sunnis in Kerala, which in later period underwent splits at organizational level, Samatha Kerala Jam'iyathul Ulema was formed in 1925 as

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[326] Blackburn, Stuart. 2003. *Print, Folklore, and Nationalism in Colonial South India* (16). Delhi: Permanent black.

[327] Tharamel, Umer. 2007. 'Pinjipoya Edukal- Thula veena Navothana Vyavaharangal', (Mal., 'Torn pages- Holed discourses of renaissance'). *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, (Sep. 23-29, 2007): 29-33.

[328] Miller, R.E. 1967. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala* (270). Bombay: Orient Longman.

[329] ibid.: (274).

[330] Kutty, E.K.Ahmad. 1995. 'The Mujahid Movement and Its Role in the Islamic Revival in Kerala', in Asghar Ali Engineer (ed.). *Kerala Muslims- A Historical Perspective* (69-70). New Delhi: Ajanta Publications.

response to and debating with reformism and to scripturally defend the authenticity of several popular Islamic practices grown in Sufi ideology in Kerala.[331] Began with the predominant thrust 'back to Quran and Sunnah', the reformism among Mappilas intended to reconstruct the religious and related socio cultural life in the lines of 'pure' Islam which have grown in the local context of Kerala deviating from the 'original' ways in several respect. Very importantly, Arabi-Malayalam as an indigenously grown linguistic and literary and cultural practice among Mappilas has largely been affected by the reformist interventions, and the identity of Arabi-Malayalam has been crystallized as an activity which is largely infused by 'vernacular innovations' of Islam. However, at most of the contexts, the project carried out as reform among Mappilas was largely revivalist, a fact which is clearer in the religious realm.

The major focuses of the *Mujahid* reforms in Kerala, according to Ahmad Kutty (1995), were to assert *Towhid* (unity of God) and purify of Islamic practices from all sorts of *shirk* (polytheism) which are contrary to the monotheistic foundations of Islam.[332] Reformism considered several local Islamic practices polytheistic or later innovation (*Bid'a*), and so it was projected mainly against many practices existed in the local religious and cultural life such as saint-'worship', tomb-'worship', seeking the blessing of the dead saints, prophets etc., (*Istigatha*), and invking their intercession (*Tawassul*). *Nercha, Moulud, Ratib,* and singing of *Maalapaattu or Sabeenapaattu* began to be considered deviation from the 'original' Islam. Promotion of secular education and education of women were reformists' focuses of social significance. Propagation of Arabic language as the medium of Islamic learning and culture was their strong emphasis, and in time, several Arabic colleges were established and Afdhal ul-Ulema[333] as an academic course began to spread.

Vakkom Moulavi, the father of modern reformist Islam in Kerala, had been influence by the Egyptian reformer Muhammed Abduh (1849-1905) and his disciple Rashid Rida (1865-1935) through their publication, *Al-Manar*. Abduh's critique of *Taqlid* (to follow

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[331] Faizy, P.P.Muhammad. 2002. *Samastha* (14). Kottkkal: Prakasham Publications.

[332] Kutty, E.K.Ahmad (1995), Op. cit.,

[333] It is an academic program in Arabic, parallel to that of general Arabic language, which has courses of B.A. and M.A. levels. Unlike the general courses on Arabic, Afdhal ul-Ulema has special Islamic current in its contents. It can be observed that a considerable majority of those who study Afdhal ul-Ulema course are from the reformist background.

the interpretations of the early Imams) was a strong influence on Moulavi. Vakkom Moulavi engaged in public sphere through periodicals entitled *Muslim* and *Deepika* in Malyalam, and through the five issues of *al-Islam* in Arabi-Malyalam. And Vakkom Moulavi influenced several other leaders of reform such as K.M. Seethi and K.M. Moulavi. Seethi operated at political level while K.M.Moulavi's domain was religious and his role was instrumental in the appearance of the reformist publications such as *al-Irshad, al-Islah* and *al-Murshid*. K.M.Moulavi led the fight against *shirk* or 'heretic' practices in Malabar. Reform generated a sphere of debates between Sunnis and Mujahids in Malabar wherein the subjects of debates included *tawassul* (invoking saints in prayer) the place of independent reason in Islam, and the use of vernacular etc. C.N.Ahmad Moulavi was another religious figure whose writings for reform but went a bit liberal towards Sunni opposition.[334] Along with others, Sayid Sanulla Makthi Thangal(1847-1921) who argued for following of Malayalam language, secular education and employment under British administration; Chalilakath Kunjahammed Haji (d.1919) who worked to reform the script of Arabi-Malayalam; and Sayid Hamadani Thangal (d.1922) who argued for the promotion education in the community were noted reformist leaders among Muslims in Kerala.[335]

It can be observed that the processes of reform and modernization of religious practices in Kerala has followed at general level the ideological trends of Islamic reform in South Asia. But there are also particular disjunctions between the Mappila and general South Asian (which always projected the North Indian) experiences of reform. Francis Robinson (2008) has noted, since 18th century Muslim societies have been expressed prolonged and deeply felt process of renewal (*tajdid*), and the movements for the renewal and reform in South Asian context has been identified with modernization. They functioned with general focus on the areas such as the new emphasis on human will (as 'reformed' Islam represented a willed faith or a 'protestant' faith) and transformation of the self (re-examining the everyday practices). It owes largely to the general processes of secularization in social life. In effect, reform has worked as an assault on the authority of the past in its concern to make contact with the Quran and Hadith afresh. Robinson

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[334] Miller (1967: 270-81).
[335] Kunju (1987: 227-34).

denoted very importantly that to embrace this modern condition getting rid of the past the reformists have given rigorous support for the adoption of print and popularization of the original sources, Quran and Hadith through publications.[336] Robinson (1993) has also pointed out the instrumental role of print as a modern technology in shaping the change among Islamic communities over the globe. The effect of print led to relative de-sacralization of the script by massive generation of the sacred books, and it also affected the traditional attachment of people to the texts, driving a shift from oral dependence and reading and writing became part of life. According to Robinson, the late introduction of print into the Muslim world has made 'modernization' and change in their religious life later than others.[337] However, this conception of 'modernity' as a complete rupture from and getting rid of 'tradition' seems to be shaped looking at the western experience of 'modernity'. As Blackburn (2003) pointed, the print has not replaced the older books, instead it has reproduced the texts of 'tradition' to play different role for 'modernity'.[338] And, as a case of Mappila reform, the experience of Arabi-Malayalam (which has an anti-reform badge in the present) is that it has also been used for propagation of reform and it survives still in practice amidst reforms.

According to Osella and Osella (2008) the Mujahid movement in Kerala is clearly part of universalistic trends and shared Islamic impulses toward purification. while it is placed in the longstanding links to the Arab world, contemporary links to the Gulf, wider currents of Islamic reform at Indian and global level, reformism has also been producing itself locally since the mid 19th century. It was part of a Kerala-wide reformist enthusiasm across all religious communities. Apart from the 1920s and 1930s agitations for a break from the 19th century past, the 1950s post-independence social activism, post 1980s religious revivalism are also notable in the larger frame of reformism. The present of Kerala Muslims like other communities in Kerala associate religious reformism with a self-consciously modern outlook, the promotion of education, rallying of support from the middleclass etc. Significantly, in the present condition, the orthodox Sunni

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[336] Robinson, Francis. 2008. 'Islamic Reform and Modernities in South Asia'. *Modern Asian Studies.* 42 (2/3), (2008): 259- 81.
[337] Robinson, F. 1993. 'Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print'. *Modern Asian Studies* 27 (1) (1): 229-51.
[338] Blackburn (2003). Op. cit.

traditionalism in Kerala is concomitantly associated with 'backward', superstitious and un-modern practices, described as being located in rural and low-status locations.[339]

Apart from the Mujahid movement there is *Jama'at e Islami* which is also oriented to reform with a specific focus on the political reconstruction of society on Islamic lines. The organization adheres to the theocratic positions of Abul A'la Moududi of Pakistan. The political stand of Jama'at e Islami is widely debated in public sphere in present day Kerala.With the production of abundant literature on Islamic lines emphasizing invoking political activism it stands mainly as an organization generating public discussions on political lines, although they have also joined the rally to fight against *'khurafath'* (superstitions) and 'heretic' and 'deviant' practices carried among Sunnis. However, it is not different from Mujahid movement in its orientation towards traditional Sunni practices. Although they have started recently to acknowledge the political aspects of the traditional texts and their writers, Jama'at e Islami is still unable to understand the religious and cultural ideology that shaped these texts and authors.

1.3. Arabi-Malayalam and the Language of reform:

Islamic reformism in Kerala had a special take on language. With its new approach to Arabic and study of Malayalam[340] reformists treated Arabi-Malayalam as an obsolete and 'backward' practice which has no religious or cultural essence at all. Unlike other parts of India where the religious language of Muslim communities is mainly Urdu, Mappilas from the very earlier days of the formation has considered Arabic as their religious language. But their attachment to Arabic was expressed through Arabi-Malayalam and the literary works in it are by and large of Sufi ideological frames or influences. It was a linguistic cultural innovation whereby their language of *'Malayaliness'* and language of *'Muslimness'* could rest in intersection. Reformists since their early days in Kerala had shown their distaste towards Arabi-Malayalam.

Advocating to follow Malayalam and to make 'pure' Arabic their religious language reformism criticized and ridiculed the orthodox Sunni's attachment to Arabi-Malayalam.

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[339] Osella, Filippo and Osella, Caroline. 2008. 'Islamism and Social Reform in Kerala, South India'. *Modern Asian Studies.* 42 (2/3): 317-46.
[340] Miller, (1967: 275).

Sanaulla Makti Thangal in his '*Muslimkalum Vidyabhyasavum*' (Muslims and Education) advocated for the immediate importance of learning English and 'mother tongue' Malayalam and promoted employment under the British administration. He confronted the orthodox scholars who used Arabi-Malayalam[341] and blamed them for Mappilas rejection of English language.[342]The practical importance of Malayalam and English for the community was to be projected; it becomes an elitist sanitization when it undermines the political and social contexts (colonial and Brahmanical) of Mappilas' consideration of 'English as the language of hell' and Malayalam as *Aryan Ezhuthu* of upper caste Hindus. To reform the ritual practices around Arabi-Malayalam, the puritan reforms of 19th century adopted an extreme way of abandoning Arabi-Malayalam in toto. Thus, its shows that, reformism was driven by the pulls of standard Malayalam and it owed largely to the ideological pressures of literary and cultural public sphere of Kerala which could not accommodate the expressions of the weaker and different. And the reform could not reflect the social and political contexts of 'counter discursive intents' that informed the literary enterprise of Arabi-Malayalam.[343]The marginal status of Arabi-Malayalam has been constructed also by the fact that the assertion of Malayalam against Arabi-Malayalam was driven mainly by the assumption that Arabi-Malayalam is a degenerate form of Malayalam. This assumption is cleared reflected in the evaluation Arabi-Malayalam language by Makti Thangal.[344]

Maalapaattu or *Sabeena paattu*, the section of texts in Arabi-Malayalam that have profound seat in the Mappila religious life, especially for women, were the major target of attack by the reformists. These texts were widely debated among Mujahids and Sunnis. The reformist Mujahid section fought hard to uproot the influence of these texts in Mappila relious life. *Muhyiddin Maala* is a good example of being targeted by the puritan reformists for its Sufi ideological content and veneration of saints in it which are considered heretic and deviation from the original Islamic orientation of Unity of God. In this regard, 'educating' women and 'reforming' them from the superstitious practices,

[341] Panikkar (1989: 64-65).
[342] Kareem and Moulavi, (1978 :429).
[343]Rahman. 2009. (Mal.,) 'Mappilas' Counter Discourses'. Op. cit.
[344]Aboobackar (2007: 22). Makti Thangal was the first Mappila to write a book in Malayalam, named *Katora Kutaram*, an Islamic polemical engagement with the Christian missionaries (Panikker:1989).

reformism grabbed the *paattu* (songs), *edus* and *Maalas* (books) of women from them. Among Mappilas women could once recite, sing, teach and write these texts in Arabi-Malayalam. Thus, *Maalas* and *Sabeena edus* were generally considered the books of Mappila women. The approach of reformist toward Arabi-Malayalam and the books in it like *Maalas* was denouncing as 'backward' and 'non-modern' and religiously 'deviant'. The Mappila women who used to read, sing, write, and, sometimes, even teach, thus, became 'backward', 'illiterate' and 'superstitious'. But, as Shamshad Hussain (2009) reflected, is it correct to call a women 'non-reformed' and 'backward' only because she is living inside a religious system, while she is relatively free to construct her own space to sing and teach? There were several women teachers and song writers inside the cultural world of Arabi-Malayalam. They could teach how to write in Arabi-Malayalam, and how to perform their religious activities, and how to write good songs and how to sing it enjoyably. Since they were not subscribed to formal 'modern' education they were treated as 'illiterate' and no social and cultural agency was attributed to them. But, in the present of Mappila community these women are 'ill equipped' and treated 'backward'. Shamshad pointed that there is definitely a process of repression that left these women of creativity with a denouncing badge of 'backwardness'.[345]It is relevant to remember the remarks of J.B. Flueckiger (2006) that women get considerable space of engagement in vernacular Islamic practices which are responsive to local contexts in South Asia.[346]

It has to be noted here that the 20th century interventions of the organizations claiming 'reform' such as Mujahid movement and Jama'at e Islami originated mainly from rich and urban backgrounds,[347] and their conception of 'modernity' and thus, 'modernization' was shaped to a great extend in the ideals of 'colonial modernity' the imagination of which is by and large a western and the operation of which favored the upper strata of the society. Hence, these 'reformist' interventions could not accommodate the local versions of reconstruction, and 'non modern' models of reforming the religious and cultural life of

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[345]Shamshad Hussain. 2009. *Neunapakshathinum Lingapadavikkum Idayil*, (Mal., *Between Minority and Gender Status*), (12-16). Thiruvananthapuram: The State Isntitute of Languages, Kerala.

[346] Flueckiger, Joyce Burchalter. 2006. *In Amma's Healing Room: Gender and Vernacular Islam in South Asia*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

[347]Ahammad, A.P. 2006. *Muslim Navothanam: Chila Keraliya Chitrangal*, (Mal., *Muslim Renaissance: Some Kerala Pictures*). Edapal: Noun Books.

the Muslim community in Kerala. There are strong sources of reform in the very history of Mappilas such as the Sufi ideology and its textual representations in local contexts.[348]

While the reformist organizations have elevated the status of women by promoting school and college education for women and opened the space for women in mosque, there is another side, a saddening fact behind this 'modernization' that the *paattu* (song) culture of Mappilas in which women could enjoy their agency for creation and performance has been largely sidelined and dropped aside being labeled as 'yet to be sanitized' and 'purified' on religious ground. *Paattu* is a creative space of engagement for women in the literary culture and realm of knowledge production in Arabi-Malayalam.[349]The mainstream Malayali women's writing or reformist narratives on women's uplift have not at all noticed such a space of women in Arabi-Malayalam and *Mappila paattu*. As long as this space carries the mark of religiosity on, it is difficult to merit mention in the mainstream narratives of 'modernization. Studying the women's mosque movement in Egypt, Saba Mahmood (2005) has noted that the secular-liberal politics of which feminism has been an integral part is always annoyed and suspicious of, if not altogether rejecting, the emancipatory possibilities of women's active engagements in religious realm,(especially in the west when the case is of Islam). Women's movements in Islamic cultural domains are treated by the mainstream feminist circles as detrimental to the interests and agendas of women's liberation.[350] Using the mainstream liberal-secular criteria, the assessment about Mappila women has always been irritated by the 'illiteracy' and 'Backwardness' of these singing women.[351]In a similar fashion, the narratives of Mappila Islamic reform have failed to account for the roles and place of *pattu* in Mappila religious and cultural life, and how it functioned in women's life. However, this argument does not suggest that Arabi-Malayalam has given a full-fledged avenue for emancipation of women and other folks in the community.

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[348] Mandalamkunnu, Sainuddin. 2007. *Kerala Muslim Navothanam- Charitram, Varthamanam, Vimarshanam*, (Mal., Kerala *Muslim Renaissance-History, Present, and Critique*). Thrissur: Kaizen Books.

[349]Hussain, Shamshad (2009). Op. cit.

[350] Mahmood, Saba. 2005. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

[351] Caroline Osella has pointed that a Sunni women respondent at Calicut has highlighted that, " If you join the Mujahids there is no singing, but we Sunni women have such beautiful songs", as an argument over her relative, a Mujahid woman, against 'saint worship' in Sunnism. (Osella and Osella; 2008).

Paattu (the song tradition) that is richly nurtured in the literary culture of Arabi-Malayalam was not a practice of mere emotional satisfaction. It was the medium of cognitive, intellectual, as well as emotional expression among Mappilas.[352] *Paattu* as a local domain of practicing Islamic culture in which production and distribution of knowledge, exchange of information, storytelling, promotion of cultural ideals and contestations of ideas, and emotional expressions were all fulfilled, and offered space for a series of people in all sections of the community irrespective of gender, class, profession, or sect, stands like an indigenous acumen and 'Indian ecumene'. To elaborate the practices of Indo-Muslim history writing in the 19th century India C.A. Bayly used the phrase of 'Indian ecumene' which, according to him, is characterized by a distinct information order and an indigenous public sphere.[353] The aversion to the Sufi ideology and practice that largely informed the literary culture and major thematic orientation in classical and later Arabi-Malayalam texts, the reformists approached the entire textual body and its intents with a sense of blind disapproval. It has also caused to a great extend for the weakening of the culture of *pattu* that stood along the practice of Arabi-malayalam. The reformist disapproval, in time, began to create a relative detachment among the people in the world of Arabi-Malayalam from the cosmology that represented in *Paattu* as well as in the Arabi-Malayalam texts of spiritual orientation. As a result of the discursive engagements around Arabi-Malayalam texts in practice, from the sides of its denouncers and defenders, the linguistic priorities in the present condition among different sections of Mappilas regarding Arabic, Malayalam, and Arabi-Malayalam has notable features of shifts.

Arabi-Malayalam as a medium of instruction is still in use in the *Mdarasa* of Sunnis, and the texts in Arabi-Malayalam such as *Maalas, Sabeenas, edus* are used among some people, especially in the households, popularly among women, but only among the Sunni section who are still in majority. The religious and cultural practices centered in Arabi-Malayalam literatures are still prevalent amidst the reformist critiques and vilifications. The Sunni section among Mappilas is considered to be the patrons of Arabi-Malayalam in the present condition, though as a language it has least importance for being limited to

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[352] Aboobackar, K. (2007), Op. cit. See also Hussain, Shamshad (2009).

[353] .Bayly,C.A. 1996. *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sunnis. But It shows that the ideological and practical effects of Arabi-Malayalam, such as a large part of its textual body's dominant orientation towards Sufism and the culture of *Paattu, Maala, Moulid* and ritual organization of life along the recitation of devotional texts, makes it associated with Sunnism in the present situation. Nevertheless, the disapproving interventions of reformism against Arabi-Malayalam language and its practical and ideological aspects have remarkably caused the shrunken state of Arabi-Malayalam even among Sunnis.[354]

The reformists prefer Malayalam for their *Khutuba,* the weekly Friday sermons at mosques, while Sunnis still ritually follow the recitation of Arabic texts. But the promotion of Arabic language by the Mujahids and other reformists for secular vocational purposes with a religious inspiration is very much visible. Arabi-Malayalam is no more of use-value for them nor does it make sense to their invocation of spirituality. So, the reformist linguistic preference is showing a spiritualization of the secular and the 'active vernacularization' of the religious activities, a process of translation as a complete skipping from Arabic to Malayalam. The translation of Quran which was initially a reformist enterprise was opposed at earlier times by the Sunni orthodoxy. To explain and teach Quran and Hadith they they preferred Arabi-Malayalam. It reflected their spiritual attachment to Arabic in a manner of 'passive vernacularization', a process of translation as a skip from Arabic to Malayalam retaining the Arabic script. However, Sunnis at present are not against the translation of the sacred texts into Malayalam.

In other words, the reformists are in a process of 'Arabising' the secular public life, while oriented to Malayalam in the religious private realm. The Arabization process has link to the process of increased volume of Gulf migration after 1970s and the annual Hajj-visits to Mecca by a large number of people.[355] But its active preference to Malayalam in the religious realm points to their orientation towards the effective and practical communication of religion, and to open a direct access to the original sources that could generate independent and rational engagement with Quran and Hadith, the primary motive of *Islahi* (reformist) movement advocating for an 'original' and 'pure' Islam. On

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[354]Faizy, P.P.M (2002); Osella and Osella (2008); Vallikkunnu and Tharamel (2006); and, V.P.Muhammadali (2007).
[355] Osella and Osella (2008).

the other hand, the aversion of Sunnis towards Malayalam language and secular education has become a part of their distant memory of past, and they are also promoting secular education and women's education. However, they still are retaining more or less a link of passion towards Arabi-Malayalam as their language of spirituality (though as texts kept in shelves). But among them also the cultural and social relevance of Arabi-Malayalam has almost lost, not vanished yet though. It is the Sufi circles or the centers of *Tariqath* who are subscribing themselves to the Sunni fold (though it is not always necessary for the Sunni official organizations to recognize their subscription) that are for a passionate attachment to the older Arabi-Malayalam texts such as *maalas*. It is mainly for the thematic affiliation to and promotion for the Sufi ideology and practice in the majority of the surviving texts. They can be observed as the people of Vernacular Islam in its larger sense including cultural and ritual practices that are historically shaped in the local contexts.[356] Beyond the linguistic 'vernacularization' of religiosity, the Sufi circles of Sunni fold represents the Vernacular practice of Islam through ritual practices without letting the Arabi-Malayalam's ideological and practical intents be frozen in course of time. Hence, Arabi-Malayalam as a cultural practice in Vernacular Islam in the present day Kerala can be associated generally with the Sunni fold and particularly with the Sufi circles that are facing outright religious condemnation from the reformists and relative disapproval at times by the Sunni organizations.

2.Vernacular Islam in Kerala: Arabi-Malayalam as an Islamic Cultural 'Crossroad'

In linguistics, the term 'vernacular' is associated with languages or dialects spoken in particular social and geographic locations; vernacular dialects or languages might be contrasted with 'standard' forms of language that cross social and geographic boundaries or locales. According to Sheldon Pollock (1998) 'vernacular' is a contrastive category juxtaposed against 'cosmopolitan', and the very idea of '*vernacularization*' involves an understanding of something of the world against which it defines itself. In the case of literary practice preference of language is a willed activity and it involves a 'cultural choice'. Thus, vernacular intellectuals define a literary culture in conscious opposition to

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[356] Randathani (2007); Faizy, P.P.M. (2002).

something larger; they choose to write in a language that does not travel as easily as the well-travelled language of the cosmopolitan order.[357]

In this sense, Arabi-Malayalam as a literary practice involves multiple process of vernacularization and yet it remains unique and complex in its being 'vernacular' on several grounds. Arabi-Malayalam stands vernacular to both Arabic and Malayalam. While the writers in Arabi-Malayalam chose to write in Arabic script, they skipped away from Arabic language. And they used their local language, Malayalam, but wrote in an extra territorial language, Arabic. It can also be observed that Arabi-Malayalam undergoes a process of vernacularization whereby it retains both its cosmopolitan and regional aspects. The choice of Malayalam phonetics (that is the language of local cultural context which is also a 'cosmopolitan' in relation to Arabi-Malayalam) over Arabic (which is the 'cosmopolitan' language of Mappilas religion, yet it is also a 'vernacular' as its script is chosen as a medium to make a different order from the local 'cosmopolitan' Malayalam. It can be noticed in the case of Arabi-Malayalam that the script and language are differently used in different aspects, both for association and dissociation with the vernacular and the cosmopolitan. Thus, Arabi-Malayalam stands as a different variety of vernacular (as it involves 'cultural choice' of dissociation) literary practice of multiple intersections between local/global, vernacular/cosmopolitan, and script/language, and among all these three orders.

As Pollock (2006) pointed out, some linkage between language choice and religious identity has long been evident in South Asia context. Moreover, devotionalism (bhakti) has worked largely as the engine of vernacular revolution.[358] The first found literary work, and most other works in Arabi-Malayalam are thematically constructed in Sufi devotionalism, the once massively popular and presently a shrunken religious trend among Mappilas. Arabi-Malayalam has also a peculiar imagination of a distinct region and local space as it is an activity in aregional language of India, Malayalam, it yet again seeks to regionalize and localize being in Arabi-Malayalam, a more responding mode to the Malabari cultural and religious space of Mappila Muslims in Kerala. This particular

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[357] Pollock, Sheldon. 1998. 'The Cosmopolitan Vernacular'. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 57 (1), (Feb., 1998): 6-37.
[358] Pollock, Sheldon. 2006. *The Language of Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, culture and Power in Pre-modern India* (423). Delhi: Permanent Black.

imagination involves a self definition and definition of the space and locale in which the literary practice operated. Pollock (2006) has underlined that to produce a regional alternative to the dominant other(s) is to affect a profound break, in cultural communication and self understanding. It was in conscious opposition to the larger sphere (of Malayalam and Arabic, in the context of this study) that the intellectuals in the vernacular order of consciousness (Arabi-Malayalam) defined their regional worlds.[359] And, significantly, creation of vernacular literature is intimately related to new conception of communities and places.[360] Therefore, Arabi-Malayalam was a practice based on the understanding of Mappilas and Malabar with its peculiar cultural historical moorings, hence the literary and religious culture of Arabi-Malayalam are vernacularized.

2.1. Arabi-Malayalam as Vernacular Islamic Practice:

The religious ritual practices around that are part of the larger realm of activities in Arabi-Malayalam have another related dimension of Vernacular. The ritual practices and cultural performances which are inherently linked with Arabi-Malayalam represent localization of Islam. Studying vernacular Islam in which woman is getting public space of action in the practice of spiritual healing through negotiating with Sufi cosmology that operates at local level among Muslims in Hyderabad J.B. Flueckiger (2006) has explained that the ritual and devotional practices of Muslims shaped in local multi-religious context which are contested while juxtaposed to the knowledge and practices of 'universal', or transnational Islam (the equivalent of 'standard' form of a language) are considered to be Vernacular Islam. Thus, the authority of Allah, the Prophet and Quran, and the Five pillars incumbent on all Muslims are examples of the knowledge and practices in 'universal', transnational, 'standard' Islam. On the other hand, vernacular Islam represents along with the 'universal' components certain practices such as, marriage customs and other life-cycle rituals, dress and forms of veiling, and devotional practices, often taking local, vernacular forms while still being considered to be Islamic by those who practice them.[361] The color of locally shared culture in ritual practices or a *'shared ritual grammar'* which is largely expressed through the language of Sufism and

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[359] ibid.: (20).
[360] Ibid.: (6).
[361] Flueckiger, J.B. (2006: 2).

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appealing more to a syncretic context makes vernacular Islam a 'crossroad' of practicing religion and spirituality.[362] Sufi interpretation as a 'deconstructive hermeneutics'[363]

The religious, cultural and social mediations peculiar to the texts in practice of Arab-Malayalam constitute the character of Vernacular Islam in Kerala. In that sense, *Muhyiddin Maala,* like other *Maala paatu, Sabeena paattu, edus,* and *Moulid kitabs,* as text of mediations at diverse levels of Mappilas' socio cultural and religious life represents a major and intensive aspect of vernacular Islam in Kerala. The religious and cultural practices of Arabi-Malayalam such as *Moulid, Ratib, Nercha,* the saint-veneration and honoring of *jarams (dargahs),* the general *pattu* culture, and cultural performances that are woven with *paattu* or songs of religiosity etc. are constituting elements of Mappila vernacular Islam which is condemned and de-legitimized on religious grounds at present by the reformist Mujahids and Islamist Jam'ate Islami. They level criticism against the practices of vernacular Islam advocating for a standard universal Islam which should not be 'polluted' by the local superstitions and 'heretic' practices.

The historical context of development of vernacular Islam can be identified as a liminal space and time of fluidity and flexibility where the structural boundaries of culture and religion were not strongly maintained. This liminal nature of practices was obvious and sustaining throughout the formative periods in the history of the community, and it appears in the present only in some times and discrete places. Victor Turner (1974) explained the concept of 'liminality' as anti-structure which (in contrast to the binary oppositions such as purity/pollution, or Muslim/non-Muslim) does away with all divisiveness, discriminations, and binary. It liberates the actors 'from conformity to general norms', though not permanently.[364] The formation of Mappila community was to a large part through conversion from mainly lower castes and also from the upper caste like Nairs. People got converted while the cultural and geographical spaces remained

[362] ibid.
[363] Almond, Ian. 2004. *Sufism and Deconstruction- A Comparative Study of Derrida and Ibn 'Arabi.* London: Routledge.
[364]Turner, Victor. 1974. *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic action in human society* (274). Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

largely shared. The matriliny among Mappilas has been identified as a practice that belonged to the Nair caste in early times and began to exist among Mappilas though conversion.[365] This practice has largely declined. In the cultural and ritual realm of Mappilas there were several practices that gradually decline in time which symbolically designate temporary 'antinomic liberation from behavioral norms and cognitive rules'.[366] *Nercha* and other local Sufi spiritual practices of saint veneration and seeking intercession and blessing from the holy men and women are understood to be the local developments of Islam. The arts and festivals among the Muslims of Kerala, and now after the interventions of Sunnis, among the Sunnis, show a process of oscillation between structure and 'communitas' or the anti-structural state.[367]

However, those who are in 'vernacular' practices among Mappilas prefer to define them Islamic and defend their Islamic identity in local contexts and also seek to justify them on universal scriptural basis, while the reformists of Mujahid and Islamist varieties among them call these practices vernacular mainly to denote the 'non-Islamic' identity, religious 'illegitimacy' and 'deviation', and 'heretic innovations' crept from 'extraneous' culture. Hence, reformist denotation of 'vernacular' about Islamic practices among Mappilas is mainly pejorative and disapproving, and in time, going through decades long debates and contestations defending 'vernacular Islam' against reformist vilification and condemnations the Sunnis' sense of vernacular have started connoting the pejorative sense of 'vernacular', a sort of echoing the sound of their opposition. Doing away with the body of Arabi-Malayalam literatures for an apparent lack of 'originality' is an increasing tendency among the Sunni religious scholars. And, the Sunnis' increasing tendency for negation of the roots in local shared culture and assertion of the scriptural bases which is acceptable to universal and 'standard' Islam point to the growing negative perception of vernacular among them. Significantly, this points to a social character, as Shail Mayaram (2004) noted, general to practices in liminality that they are marginal and fragile being "subject to ruling class ideologies that seek to absorb, appropriate, and

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[365]Kunhikrishnan, V.V. 1995. 'Matriliny among the Mappilas of Malabar', in Asghar Ali Engineer (ed.). *Kerala Muslims: A Historical Perspective* (56-67). New Delhi: Ajantha Publicatons.

[366] Turner (1974: 273).

[367] Harris, V.C. 1995. 'From Structure to Communitas and Back: Notes on the Arts and Festivals of the Muslims of Kerala', in Asghar Ali Engineer ed. *Kerala Muslims* (200-206).

distort their visions and agendas".[368] Therefore, reform which is administered by the ruling elites stands among Mappila Muslims of Kerala as a singularizing, and thus creolizing religious and cultural force that relocates the identity of vernacular practices of Islam which is by and large represented in the spiritual and cultural roles of Arabi-Malayalam literature.

2.2. 'Vernacular Islam' in the Discursive Present of Mappila Muslims:

Arabi-Malayalam and the ritual practices that are conceived as part of vernacular Islam did not start functioning by those who practiced it in the earlier times with a sense of vernacular. The juxtaposed categorization of 'vernacular' necessitates its historical understanding. In an objective condition of history there is a moment of 'discovery' of vernacular. In the case of history writing this discovery took place against the dominant 'English' writing of history in historical context which is according to Partha Chatterjee (2009) colonial modern.[369] Similarly, it is the reformists' introduction and projection of a 'universal' and 'standard' Islam that resulted in the understanding of the local Islamic practices as 'vernacular'. The reformist Islam looked down upon the 'vernacular' variety of practices in Islam in the case of Mappilas historical developments. Those who practiced the 'vernacular' considered it as Islamic and defended its Islamic legitimacy and currency.

Therefore, in the case of Arabi-Malayalam historically there are two moments to its identity as a vernacular practice of language, literature, religion and culture. The early moment represents mainly as a literary practice local context which differed consciously from the Malayalam 'standard' but in religious realm it was an embedded practice without reference to a 'standard' Islam until the 19th and 20th century reformism began to introduce such a 'universal' standard in Islamic practice. After the reformist intervention the identity of Arabi-Malayalam as a vernacular literary activity that could shape and reflect the religious practices in local context began to be used in negative/ disapproving sense. The reform considered it as a 'deviant innovation'. Most of the religious practices

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[368] Mayaram, Shail. 2004. 'Beyond Ethnicity? Being Hindu and Muslim in South Asia', in Imtiaz Ahmed and Helmut Reifeld (eds.). *Lived Islam in South Asia- Adaptation, Accommodation and Conflict* (27). Delhi: Social Sciences Press.
[369] Chatterjee, Partha. 2009. 'Introduction- History in the Vernacular', in Raziuddin Aquil and Partha Chatterjee (eds.). *History in the Vernacular* (9). Delhi: Permanent Black.

of the Sunnis are condemned by the reformists mainly on the ground that those practices are not described or proscribed by the original texts, Quran and Hadith. Reformists criticize and condemn Sunnis, especially the Sufi orders *Triqats* in Sunni fold for their practices such as saint-veneration, *Maala paattu / Moulid* tradition, *Nercha /aandu* etc. considering them as crept in from local Hindu culture 'extraneous' to 'original' and 'universal' Islam. In the present of Mappila religious life, the category 'vernacular' thus suggests also a historicization of the locally responding Islamic practices through which they are de-legitimized. As a recent phenomenon, the writings of the Islamist reformist organization, Jama'at e Islami in Keral have started talking about the anti-colonial spirit of the older 'vernacular' texts while their authors are still being condemned for their 'backwardism', 'heresy' 'deviant innovation' that are reflected in their Sufi practices.[370] However, they fail to realize that it was their Sufism that worked as an ideology of liberation for them. They do ignore that the dominant spiritual trend in the indigenous context at the historical time of the leaders of anti-colonial resistance was Sufi practices.

In the long course of debating interaction with reformist 'corrections' the Sunni orthodoxy, the official supporters of vernacular Islamic practices have evolved to a complex attachment to Vernacular Islam. While their organizations such as *Samastha*[371] still stand for the language of Arabi-Malayalam as they use it in their *Madrasas* as a medium of instruction, and scripturally defend the Islamic legitimacy of the 'vernacular' practices around it, but takes stands against many of the contemporary manifestations of the 'vernacular' Islam. They have publicly delegitimized several Sufi practices which are, in fact, representations of Islamic practices presented in Arabi-Malayalam. These Sufi circles, discrete and mostly unorganized in comparison with the official organizations, thus, have started asserting their 'originality' of Sunnism that is historically rooted in Kerala against the official Sunni representations' claims. It can be observed that the Sunni organizations' relative detachment in time from the 'vernacular' practices was actually a product of reformist purification. In other words, the Sunni orthodoxy who is

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[370] K.T.Hussain's (2008) *Kerala Muslimkal: Adhinivesha Virudha Porattathinte Prathyayashastram* (Mal., *Kerala Muslims:The Ideology of Anti-colonial Struggle.* Calicut: IPH) is an example of this argument for the older texts, retaining the condemnation of the older locally informed ideology. It is to say that it was the *Islamism* (which is in fact a modern invention) that shaped the spirit of struggles kept in these books. So their authors were 'reformers' but *unfortunately* having 'retrogressive' allegiance' to the 'superstitious Islam'.

[371] *Samastha Kerala jam'iyathul Ulema*, which got split into two organizations both claiming the name *Samastha*, claims the dominant and legitimate official representation of Sunni orthodoxy in Kerala . (Faizy (2002)).

the present patrons of Arabi-Malayalam literatures and practices has started dwelling a religious world with a relative sense of alterity towards their own world. The Sunni organizations major activity is to engage in the discursive realm arguing for the legitimacy of 'vernacular Islam' but with a growing feeling of religious illegitimacy of the same within them. This is what reflected in their scriptural argument for Sufism and increasing contestations against contemporary expressions of Sufism. It shows that the history of vernacular Islam in Kerala is valorized by a section of Mappilas while the present experiences are debated.

Conclusion:

The changes in the socio religious and cultural life of the Mappila Muslims of Kerala have been largely shaped through the discursive engagements among them. The reformist enterprises of 20th century have initiated the larger contestations in the religious and cultural realm. The focus on history and discursive formations, according to Talal Asad (1993), can explain the place of texts in practice among Muslim communities,[372] and Mappilas are not an exception. Arabi-Malayalam has always been there in these discursive formations among Mappilas, either as the foreground of debates or as the perceptible background of contestations. The very practice of and association to Arabi-Malayalam in their linguistic, literary and spiritual and cultural aspects, contrastively mark the borders within the community.

It is worth mention that amidst the pressures of the puritan and the politically Islamist varieties of arguments denouncing the spiritual practices in Arabi-Malayalam and thus, projecting the 'expiry', 'anachronism' and 'backwardism' of the language in the present,[373] the Sunni section among Mappilas keep their attachment to Arabi-Malayalam mainly for religious education. The spiritual ideology that facilitated the emergence and growth of Islamic practices which resemble to the regional and local context of shared

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[372] Asad, Talal. 1993. *Genealogy of Religion- Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam.* London: The John Hopkins University Press.

[373] Reformists have always been apologetic about the presence of Arabi-Malayalam, while among those who opposed the reform there were some blind arguments for Arabi-Malayalam till recent times which completely ignored the practical advantages (mainly educational and political too as it is a shared domain) of using Malayalam in the changed contexts in Mappila's present situation. Ahmad Jameel's essay is a latest example projecting the 'expiry' of meaning of the Arabi-Malayalam as a medium of literary and spiritual expression and thus its being an anachronic cultural activity of 'backwardism'. (Ahmad Jameel, Ahmad. 2009. 'Arabi-Malayalathininnu Malayala Islamilekk', (Mal., 'From Arabi-Malayalam to Malayalam Islam'). *Prabodhanam Weekly* (60th annual special issue, 2009): 111-17).

culture and retain the fundamental tenets of Islam was Sufism. Sufism or its institutional form known among Mappilas as *Tariqa* has largely been a point of debate mainly after the interventions of reformism. The reformist advocacy for a 'standard' and universal' Islam thus went disapproving the Islamic character of the local practices among Muslims strictly maintaining a religious boundary and denouncing the liminal spaces and times of cultural and spiritual expressions.

Chapter-V

By Way of Conclusion

Literary productions as creative expression and source of socio cultural practices in a community open up a fertile ground for the sociological and social anthropological analysis. The language chosen for the literary enterprise in focus can point to the 'cultural choices'[374] in contexts of writing. This choice can be shaped by social pressures, religious and spiritual orientation, or cultural habit. Arabi-Malayalam as a literary language developed among the Mappila Muslims of Malabar, Kerala, reflects the social historical contexts of the community. It was a language more of religious importance for the Mappilas, though it was used for non-religious expressions. The very form of the language and the literary content of the texts in Arabi-Malayalam are suggestive of the regional and local experience of Islamic life of Mappila Muslims. And the level in which the community is practicing the blending Arabic and Malayalam (in terms of preference and difference) shows that the Mappila Muslims history developed in a more vernacular fashion and in *liminal* context of merging and refixing the boundaries of spiritual and cultural practices. Furthermore, the place of the Arabi-Malayalam texts in the vernacular everyday practices of the community is showing that the collective and individual cultural and spiritual dispositions have developed in the objective situations and at the same time these empirical sites of practices are product of the Mappila dispositions.

This study as an attempt to explain the field of practices in Arabi-Malayalam has followed an important consideration that the textual production in Arabi-Malayalam has been construed within the practice of Arabi-Malayalam. The production of books in Arbi-Malayalam is part of the regional experience of religion and culture among Mappila Muslims. A vernacular practice emerged historically out of the liminal cultural context, Arabi-Malayalam, produced and influenced several practices of liminal and vernacular fashion in time. It was at primary stage the social and historical context of Mappilas Muslims that contributed to the development of a cultural consciousness and intention to produce a language of their own and the manifold practices in and around it. However,

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[374] A language is chosen from among languages for a literary practice (Pollock 1998).

the historically shaped cultural choice behind the creativity of the phenomenon called Arabi-Malayalam has in time been received and practiced by the people in Arabi-Malayalam as part of their everyday life. Arabi-Malayalam being product and representation of Mappilas' cultural creativity that is unfolded in everyday contexts of life, it can be understood as the 'embodied history'[375], that produces individual and collective practices. But addressing the cultural intentions of linguistic and literary innovations in the case of Arabi-Malayalam such a practice cannot be completely fitting to the notion of 'habitus'.

Nonetheless, an explanation of the present state of Arabi-Malayalam the attachment to which is dissimilarly organized among different sections in Mappila community is indicating the shifts in their perception of history, the ways they carry their collective cultural memory and their definition of language, religion and history in the regional context. It was the ideological operations of 20th century reformism which marked the internal divisions among Mappilas regarding Arabi-Malayalam and the related practices in Vernacular Islam that worked as a major cultural force leading to uneven attachment to the Arabi-Malayalam texts among the different groups in the community at present.

One very important fact that constitutes the phenomenon of Arabi-Malayalam is that it clearly marks the distinct relationship of texts to practice, proving that the dichotomy projected between text and practice is false. Often there is a tendency to project 'textual' Islam as the domain of theology against 'local' 'lived' 'everyday' and 'folk' Islam as the focus of anthropology.[376] But the case of Arabi-Malayalam being largely textual practices in local and everyday contexts shows that the basic texts, Quran and Hadith, are not rejected in the local practices of Islam, but they are mediated through different order of textual production. A large number of Arabi-Malayalam texts, such as *Maala* or *Sabeena paattu* functions the role of mediation of the basic texts among Mappila folks in the local contexts.

Another significant aspect to be noted about the practice of Arabi-Malayalam is its nature of being a distinct 'vernacular' order of practice. While the language of Arabi-Malayalam

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[375] This was the sense in which Bourdieu explained the notion of 'habitus' (1990: 56).

[376] See, Ahmed, Imtiaz. 2004. 'Introduction: Understanding Islam', in Imtiaz Ahmed and Helmut Reifeld (eds.). *Lived Islam in South Asia-Adaptation, Accommodation and Conflict*. Delhi: Social Science Press..

being the written form of the Malayalam of the social and historical context of mainly Malabar region in Arabic, the script is not Malayalam and its sound is not Arabic. Historically it was a linguistic and literary innovation of a creative way of performing their 'language of religion' and 'language of the larger culture'. But, as Malayalam language developed to cater the linguistic and cultural needs of expression for Mappila Muslims of Malabar, Malayalam began to be their language of expression in most of their cultural occasions. The spiritual orientation represented in the dominant variety of Arabi-Malayalam texts in use, such as *Maalas*, was clearly a reflection of (and is continuing to be a source for) the local way of practicing Islam. Remarkably, a *pattu* (song) culture which included a series of people (notably women), contexts, and orientations (emotional and intellectual) has been developed in and around Arabi-Malayalam. Vernacular Islam which is juxtaposed against 'universal' and 'standard' Islam among Mappilas was practiced mainly through independent manifestations and interdependent ideology. But, it was mainly the religious reformist enterprise that started in the early 20th century and carried out mainly by those who possesed social and cultural capital among Mappilas that influenced the creation of an image of the practice of Arabi-Malayalam as 'backward' and 'condemnable' on linguistic and religious grounds.

However, historically as willed practice, Arabi-Malayalam rejected the ideology of cultural elites in Malayalam by not using the same standard Malayalam and on the other; it produced the texts of local way of attaching to the language of Quran and Prophet. So, Arabi-Malayalam negotiated their cultural difference and spiritual mediation in local context. And the shrinking of the practices in Arabi-Malayalam, literary, cultural and spiritual, at the wake of puritan and Islamist reformism can be explained as the effect of singularizing and homogenizing force of ideology of the social and cultural elite. The power of the ideology of reform, it can also be observed that, has affected the self-perception of the insiders of Arabi-Malayalam and vernacular Islam who engage in the debates against the reformist interventions in the present.

Limitations of the Study:

This study of the Arbi-Malayalam literary and religio-cultural practiceshas predominantly focused on the secondary sources. Though the historical works on Mappila Muslims on

Kerala are in plenty, the works of sociological and social anthropological studies that could explore the ethnographic possibilities about the community are few. Further the literature in English on the subject is scant. This study based on secondary literature suffers from the lack of ethnographic insights that could explain better about the present of Arabi-Malayalam, the practical domains, and the shifts in experience. My lack of training in linguistic analysis has also weakened the explanation the linguistic aspect of the phenomenon of Arabi-Malayalam. However, as an insider to the culture of Arabi-Malayalam I have tried to elaborate the meaning-complex surrounding the practice of Arabi-Malayalam.

Further Prospects:

Having introduced the profile of the practice of Arabi-Malayalam among Mappila Muslims of Kerala at secondary level, the explanatory possibilities and hopes for an ethnographic study have come to the fore. I have relied heavily on Malayalam and Arabi-Malayalam sources that have provided an enriching research experience which cannot be derived by examining writings only in English on the subject. However, further empirical study on how vernacular Islam and its underpinning Sufi ideology is producing the practices in local contexts of Mappila Muslims, and how they are negotiating between their practices and reformist ideology in the present would be useful. That could possibly explain how the *Ulema* or the religious scholars' domination was historically established among the orthodox Sunnis whose religious icons are largely Sufi saints. A field-based study among Mappilas at present can explain better about how the history of Arabi-Malayalam is retained in the present, and what are the 'newer' uses of the 'older' texts and what are the recent innovations and modifications in the ritual and cultural complex in and around Arabi-Malayalam. An ethnographic study of the *paattu* (song) culture among Mappilas (the space of which is marked by considerable creativity of women) would be very much revealing of the cultural shifts in the community. Furthermore, an ethnographic study of the discursive domain, the debates in religious, cultural and social domains of practices, focusing on the linguistic and literary ideologies and priorities among Mappila Muslims could initiate a new register of thinking about the relationship

between language, ritual and knowledge; as well as between local and global, indigenous and universal, folk and classic, and vernacular and cosmopolitan.

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