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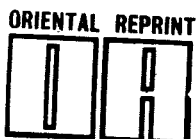
# THE RELIGIOUS QUEST OF INDIA

## INDIAN ISLAM

A RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF ISLAM IN INDIA

BY  
**MURRAY T. TITUS**  
 PH.D. (HARTFORD, K.S.M.), D.D. (OHIO WESLEYAN)

Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi Kütüphanesi	
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### CHAPTER III

#### PEACEFUL PENETRATION

THE story of the spread of Islam by the sword has been told so repeatedly that it is not easy for the casual reader of history to realize that its followers ever employed any other method. While India, in common with other conquered countries, furnishes innumerable examples of the employment of military and political power to secure conversions, as we have observed in the preceding chapter, we are now to consider the evidences of peaceful penetration, and the results of the patient missionary endeavours of itinerant preachers and traders. We shall also need to consider the effect of the democratic social system of Islam, with its strong appeal to the down-trodden millions of the depressed classes of Hindus. In fact, there seems to be ample reason for believing that a relatively larger proportion of the present Muslim population of India can be regarded as the result of methods of peaceful penetration than can be associated with the harsher methods of the Muslim conquerors.

There is an abundance of material available on this subject in the extensive biographies of the Indian Muslim saints, which undoubtedly would yield rich reward to the painstaking student.<sup>1</sup> Up to the present, however, very little has been done to uncover this information beyond the able researches of Sir T. W. Arnold, who has presented the main outlines in his chapter on India in *The Preaching of Islam*. Since there is room for no more than a bare sketch of the extensive operations of Muslim missionary efforts, I hereby acknowledge my indebtedness to Prof. Arnold's investigations in what follows.

#### THE INFLUENCE OF MUSLIM TRADERS

The reason for mentioning the trader first is not that his was a more potent influence for the dissemination of Islam than that

<sup>1</sup> For extensive bibliography see W. Ivanow, *Descriptive Cat. Pers. MS., A.S.B.*, I, 1924, 78-115; and II, 71-90.

#### PEACEFUL PENETRATION

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of other peaceful missionaries, but because he was the first to arrive. It is known that Arab traders have had long and intimate contacts with the western coast of India, but the earliest record of any settlement appears to belong to the eighth century. We may even suppose that while Muḥammad b. Qāsim was fitting out his military expedition for the occupation of Sind, which was to become the most distant eastern province of the Damascus government, traders from Arabia were fitting out their ships, and preparing to say farewell to the homeland in anticipation of the new trading colonies to be established on the western coast of India. The Arabs were the people who, in these early centuries, maintained the commercial routes between India and Europe, and conducted a thriving trade in spices, ivory, and gems. Many of them, also, landing at the ports of Sind, travelled across western India and up into Central Asia; and, if we may judge from the missionary activities credited to Muslim traders in other parts of the world, it is more than likely that these traders from Arabia were a very real influence for the spread of the faith.

One very important factor in the establishment of Muslim settlements on the western coast of India was the encouragement to trade given by the Hindu rulers. The Balhārā dynasty in the north, and the Zamorin of the Malabar coast, were most partial to Muslims; and many a trader, encouraged by the complacent attitude of the Hindu chieftains, took up his abode in Anhilwāra, Cambay and Sindan, or in Calicut and Quilon. They were treated with great consideration, were allowed to build mosques freely, and were permitted to practise their religion without hindrance. Consequently, these early Arab and Persian settlers established themselves all along the coast, intermarried with the Hindu population, and thus gave rise to the Nawaits or Natiā community of the Konkan, and the Mappillas or Moplahs of the Malabar coast.

The traditional account of the introduction of Islam to the Malabar coast is recorded by Zayn-ud-Dīn, an historian of the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> He states that the conversion of Cheruman Perumal occurred during the lifetime of the Prophet. A company of pilgrims from Arabia were making a journey to visit Adam's

<sup>1</sup> See Arnold, op. cit., 264 ff.

# MUSLIMS OF INDIA

Their Literature on Education, History, Politics, Religion,  
Socio-Economic and Communal Problems

Mohammed Haroon

M.A.; M.Lib. Inf. Sc.  
Assistant University Librarian  
University of Delhi

Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi Kütüphanesi	
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# PASSIVE VOICES

A penetrating study of Muslims in India

K. L. GAUBA

Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi Kütüphanesi	
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Tas. No:	954.08 GAU.P



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PASSIVE VOICES

The State held a general election along with the Lok Sabha election of 1971. The result was that the DMK was returned to power with an overwhelming majority.

### 3. KERALA

In point of area Kerala is the second smallest State of the Indian Union representing only 1.03 of the total area of India. But it supports a population of over 21.28 million which is 3.89 per cent of the total population.

Kerala has always led or still leads all other States of India literally with 60.16 per cent literacy.

Kerala has been one of India's trouble spots. Highly intelligent communities, more politically conscious and better educated than their counterparts in other parts of the country, the people of Kerala have been a constant source of anxiety to the seats of power in Delhi. Travancore-Cochin (then) never wanted to be a part of the Indian Union. Under the leadership of the great Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, they opted for independence, but eventually yielded to pressure, irrelevant in the context of subsequent accession. But it has ever been an uneasy union. To hold or seize power in Kerala, the Congress Party has been put to exploit from time to time every conceivable device, principled or unprincipled, normal and abnormal.

Mid-term by-elections, Governor's rule, arrest and incarceration of political opponents on fake grounds and association with different groups, for the sole objective of seizing or holding power are some of the devices to gain and hold power intact.

Kerala is the only State in which educated females outnumber educated males. It is the only State where there have been spells of Communist Government and PSP rule. Kerala has also had a number of unstable Ministries. It is the only State until the 1972 elections in which the Muslim League has dared appear and function prominently as a party in elections to the legislature and to local bodies. It is the only State in India in which the Muslim League has held important portfolios in the Government.

SOUTHERN STATES

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Kerala also has had the distinction of a woman sitting as a High Court Justice—Mrs Anna Chandy (Christian).

The State of Kerala situated in the south western extremity of the Indian peninsula has an area of about 15,000 sq. miles. Its population (according to the 1961 Census) numbered 16,903,715. (1971 Census : 21.34 million.) The community-wise 1971 figures were not available at the time of writing. Kerala consists mainly of the territories formerly comprised in the Princely States of Travancore and Cochin, which accounts for its high percentage of literacy and political consciousness. The principal language is Malayalam.

The powerful religious communities in the State according to the 1961 Census were represented as under :

Christians 3,587,365 : Hindus 10,282,568, and Muslims 3,027,639.

Although Hindus in the State number more than ten million and are the predominant community, they are far from being a homogeneous or united group. Rivalries between Brahmins, non-Brahmins, Nairs and Ezhavas have been and continue to be a feature of social and political life in this part of India.

Ancient distinctions, prejudices and social barriers have split the Hindu community in Kerala more seriously perhaps than in other States, thus affording a larger opportunity to minority communities, such as Christians and Muslims to make more effective use of their votes.

The Ezhavas, for instance, a large and well educated non-Brahmin community have long considered the Brahmins their more serious rivals than the Christians or Muslims.

Many Ezhavas have also in considerable numbers exchanged the narrow confines of their own community for the wider social orders and acceptances to be found in Christianity and Islam.

The Kerala Legislative Assembly is elected from 114 constituencies returning 133 members. One Member is nominated. The total number of seats is 134, eleven seats being reserved for scheduled castes and one for scheduled tribes.

# The Khilafat Movement

Religious Symbolism and Political  
Mobilization in India

by  
Gail Minault

Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi Kütüphanesi	
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# MUSLIMS IN INDIA

by

**S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi**

Translated from Urdu

by

**Mohammad Asif Kidwai**

M. A., Ph. D

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# MAPPILA MUSLIMS OF KERALA

*A Study in Islamic Trends*

ROLAND E. MILLER

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Nader, 118, 11. 2 ff.; Pseudo-Kāsim b. Ibrāhīm, *K. al-ʿAdl wa 'l-tawhīd*, in *Rasā'il al-ʿAdl wa 'l-tawhīd*, ed. Muhammad 'Imāra, i, Cairo 1971, 125, 11. 4 ff.): the unbeliever must be fought and cannot be inherited from, the believer is loved by God, the *munāfiḳ* should be summoned to do penance or otherwise be executed; all this cannot be said about the *fāsiḳ*. Therefore, since these juridical regulations (*ahkām*) cannot be applied to him, the corresponding designations (*asmā'*) are not valid in his case either. In this presentation of the problem which became common in the future, the term *manzila* was replaced by *ism*; thus it slowly lost its significance for the theological vocabulary. Dirār b. 'Amr (2nd century [q.v.]) and Bishr. b. al-Mu'tamir (d. 210/825 [q.v.]) still wrote treatises about the *manzila bayn al-manzilatayn* (cf. *Fihrist*, 215, 1. 13 and 205, 11. 23 f.). Abu 'l-Hudhayl included it among the *uṣūl al-khamsa*; Ibn al-Rēwānī [q.v.] refuted the Mu'tazila in this point (cf. *Fihrist*, 217, 1. 10). The terms *ism* and *ḥukm* are already found, though perhaps not yet systematically linked with each other, in Abū Ḥanīfa's *Risāla ilā 'Uthmān al-Battī* (ed. Kawtharī, 35, 1. 16 and 36, 11. 12 f.). The disputation between Wāṣil and 'Amr b. 'Ubayd preserved by al-Shāfi' al-Murtaḍā (*Amālī*, ed. Muḥammad Abu 'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo 1373/1954, i, 165, 11. 8 ff.) where Wāṣil uses *ism* but not *ḥukm*, is apparently a retrojection or a recast possibly taken from the *K. Mā djarā baynahū* [sc. *bayna Wāṣil*] *wa-bayna 'Amr b. 'Ubayd* (cf. *Fihrist*, 203, n. 1) which may have been composed in the second half of the 2nd century; nevertheless, it remains our oldest testimony for the Mu'tazilī position and shows archaic features in part of its argumentation.

Similarities with Christian speculations about penitence have been pointed out by E. Grāf (in *OLZ*, iv [1960], 397; cf. also R. Strothmann, in *Isl.*, xiv [1931], 215). There is, however, to date no proof for any influence.

**Bibliography:** Given in the article. Cf. also W. Madelung, *Der Imam al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm und die Glaubenslehre der Zaiditen*, Berlin 1965, 10 ff.; W. M. Watt, *The formative period of Islamic thought*, Edinburgh 1973, 213; J. van Ess, in *REI*, xlvii (1979), 51 ff.; M. Cook, *Early Muslim dogma*, Cambridge 1981, 94. See also FĀSIK and MU'TAZILA.

(J. VAN ESS)

**MAPPILA**, standard Western form of Malayalam Māppila, the name of the dominant Muslim community of southwest India, located mainly in the state of Kerala, primarily in its northern area popularly known as Malabar. Significant numbers of Mappilas are to be found also in southern Karnataka and western Tamil Nad, as well as in diaspora groups scattered throughout India, including the Laccadive Islands, Pakistan, the Gulf States and Malaysia. In 1971 there were 4,162,718 Muslims in Kerala, almost all Mappilas, and of these 2,765,747 (est.) were concentrated in Malabar. Mappila growth in the past century has considerably outpaced that of the general population. If the rate of increase in the decade 1961-71 (37.5 %) was maintained, the size of the community in 1981 would exceed 5,700,000. Mappilas share the language (Malayalam) and the culture of the inhabitants of Kerala (Malayalis), as well as the unique religious blend of its 25 million people (59.5% Hindu, 21.0% Christian, 19.5% Muslim). Not only because of its size but also because of its particular historical experience, the Mappila community represents a significant segment of Indian Islam.

#### 1. The Name

The name Māppila ( = Māppila, Moplah) is a

direct transliteration of the current Malayalam term. Its origin is not settled, but it appears to have been a title of respect formed by a combination of *mahā* "great" and *pilla* "child"; it was referred to visitors and immigrants from abroad, both Christians and Muslims, either in the broad sense of "honoured ones" (Logan, i, 191; Innes, 186; Hameed Ali, 265; Kareem, 61) or in the more specific meaning of "bridegroom" and "son-in-law" (Miller, 33; Thurston, iv, 458; Gough, 442; Gundert, *A Malayalam and English dictionary*). The latter meaning points to a process of intermarriage and is supported by contemporary usage in colloquial Malayalam and Tamil. Other derivations, including Arabic, have been suggested, but none so persuasive as the above. In time, the term became the distinctive appellation of the indigenous Muslim community of Malabar, although it is still occasionally applied also to Syrian Christians in South Kerala.

#### 2. The origin of the Mappilas

Mappila culture is the Malayalam culture of Kerala with an Arabian blend, a fact that points to the ancient intercourse between Kerala and southern Arabia, founded on the great spice trade. The Mappila community traces its origin to that well-documented relationship. Arab trade with Malabar [q.v.] was going on for centuries prior to the advent of Islam, becoming particularly energetic from the 4th century A.D. and continuing until the European era. Islamicised Arab traders brought their faith with them to Kerala, where some settled and intermarried with the native Malayalis. The earliest generally accepted epigraphic evidence of Muslim presence in Kerala is represented by the Tarisapally copper plates dated 235/849 (Kunjanpillai, 370), which contain Muslim names in Kūfic script; however, a Muslim tombstone at Irikkalur dated 50/670 was observed by Mappila scholar C.N. Ahmed Moulavi before it was washed away, and another tombstone inscription at Pantalayini-Kollam dated 166/782 was legible in the 19th century (Logan, i, 197; but note the criticism of Burgess in Logan, i, p. ix). Because of the Kerala climate and the impermanence of palm leaf writing materials, there are no known literary manuscripts in Malayalam predating the 14th century. Nevertheless, despite the paucity of material proof, I.H. Qureshi's (p. 11) balanced opinion that Islam entered Kerala "within a few years of the proclamation by the Prophet of his mission" is very probably correct and Mappilas, in that light, may be regarded as the first settled Muslim community of South Asia.

Another view favouring a later 3rd/9th century dating for Mappila beginnings is dependent on an unreliable passage of the *Akhbār al-Sin wa 'l-Hind* [q.v. in Suppl.]. Arab geographers, who provide the available materials for the 3rd-6th/9th-12th centuries of Mappila history, were compelled to rely on such reports (only al-Mas'ūdī travelled to India, and he to the north; cf. Nainar, 3 ff.). The point of view, however, is also related to the persistent and much-debated tradition of the conversion of an important Hindu ruler, Āṣerman Perumāḷ. The form of the tradition that is generally accepted by Mappilas is that reported by Shāykh Ahmad Zayn al-Dīn (904-89/1498-1581) (referred to as Zainuddin), who was the earliest known Kerala Muslim to deal with the subject of Mappila origins and whose *Tuḥfat al-muḍjāhidīn* became the basis for later Indian Muslim writings on the subject (Firishī, iv, 531). Zainuddin dates the conversion event to 207/822, but most Mappilas prefer an earlier dating, that of 3/624. According to the story, Āṣerman Perumāḷ's missionary followers

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Moplah