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Waqfs from Malabar: Role of endowments in community formation

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Abstract

This study examines Muslim endowment records from Malabar to understand Muslim Community formation in the region. Waqf has been crucial in formation of Community across world. Historian marshal Hodgson calls Waqf as a material foundation of Muslim communities. By showing texts and historical records from the region, the study argues that waqf played a significant role in perpetuating Islamic Culture and Religion in the Coasts of Malabar.

Keywords: Endowments, Malabar, Islam, Waqf

Introduction

This study will look into the formation and growth of the Muslim community in Malabar. The Mappilas Muslim community is located in Malabar. Mappila signifies bridegroom in Malayalam language. According to the majority of experts, the term Mappila originated from marriages between indigenous and Muslim foreign traders or Paradesis. The prevalent account of the advent of Islam in Malabar dates back to the prophetic era. One ruler of the Chera dynasty is said to have observed the prophet's miracle (the moon splitting) and then travelled to Mecca to meet the prophet. He converted to Islam at Mecca and died there, never having returned to his kingdom. Prior to his demise, he dispatched a few intellectuals to Malabar in order to disseminate the Islamic message. Various historians disagree with this account. In any case, it is possible that Islam arrived on the Malabar Coast in very early times, as Arabs have maintained commercial relations with Kerala since ancient times. Since the eleventh and twelfth centuries, however, historical evidence suggests that Muslim traders migrated to and settled in significant numbers along the littoral regions of the Indian Ocean. Muslim merchants dominated the majority of Indian maritime trade in medieval times. In the twelfth century, there was a commerce boom in the Indian Ocean, according to historians. Due to its geographic location, supply of high-value spices such as pepper, and dependable monsoon for safe sea travel, Malabar was an integral part of the Indian Ocean commerce. According to Ibn Batutah, a Moroccan traveller who visited Malabar in the thirteenth century, travellers and merchants from the Arabian Peninsula, China, and Africa were present for commerce in Malabar. They were referred to as Paradesis in Malayalam. Due to their commerce, these foreign Muslim merchants attained a high standing among the native Malabar population. Their commerce enabled local kingdoms to amass wealth via taxes and charges. Due to their commercial ties, the kings of Malabar were extremely concerned about Muslim traders and their well-being. To entice merchants to the ports, kings gave a secure, dependable residence. This cooperation and mutual regard between Pardesi merchants and indigenous royalty benefited both groups. This circumstance led to the establishment of the Mappila Muslim community on the Malabar coastlines. Mosques were constructed with the approval of local monarchs. Central to interactions between indigenous people and Pardesi Muslim merchants were mosques. Around these mosques, Muslim merchants established communities, which were primarily connected to the ports. In his study of the emergence of Islam in Malabar, Sebastian Prange identifies the mosque as the essential element of 'Monsoon Islam'. Muslims constructed mosques wherever they settled. In Islamic history, the mosque has not only been the place of worship, but also the hub of cultural, political, and economic activities. Additionally, mosques have frequently served as centres of Islamic knowledge. Ibnu batutha highlights the education of Muslim men and women in mosques in his travel journals as he describes his time in Malabar. Waqf laws have guided the construction and upkeep of the mosque. In later periods of Islamic history, such educational institutions as *madrasas* and colleges emerged.

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Madrasas were a component of mosques in the past. Since ancient times, the waqf system has facilitated the construction of mosques, the spread of Islam to many regions of the globe, and the establishment of Muslim communities worldwide. Knowing the historical practices and structures of waqf contributes to a thorough knowledge of Muslim community building. The commerce boom in the Indian Ocean and subsequent port colonies led to the growth of Malabar's coastal cities. Among these cities, Kozhikode or Calicut was the most prominent. We could locate records detailing the emergence of Calicut in Indian Ocean trade beginning in the thirteenth century. For centuries, Kozhikode served as the capital of the local Zamorin's kings. The Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama landed in Calicut in the sixteenth century. The growth of Calicut as a major port city, the ascent of the Zamorin's, and the formation of Muslims as a powerful group along the Malabar coastlines occurred concurrently. The mosques played a major role in this community formation. I would like to investigate the establishment of waqf institutions and their legacy in Malabar ports in order to comprehend the formation of Muslim communities. I believe waqf records from Malabar would provide an accurate depiction of the formation and history of the Malabar Muslim community. One of the major coastal cities was Calicut, which has a rich and beautiful Muslim past. It is the only city that does not fall under Portuguese or Dutch control. Kannur is another port located in the northern portion of Malabar. Kannur is the only city on the Malabar Coast with the legacy of a native Muslim reigning family. They are referred to be Ali Rajas of the Arakkal family. They continue to uphold the tradition of Kannur Muslims even today. They ruled Kannur for a considerable amount of time in the past. Muslims from Calicut, Thalachery and Kannur were primarily merchants in the Indian Ocean. Even throughout the Portuguese and Dutch eras of dominance, their tremendous development in trade allowed them to maintain control of the land and sea. The majority of Muslim heritage in Kannur has their imprint. Due to their history, they continue to enjoy a high standing among Muslims in Kannur. Prior to the arrival of the Portuguese in Cochin, Muslims enjoyed a prosperous trade and living. The most known ulema family among the Malabar Makdhums that resided in Cochin during their early years. Both Zyn ul din makdhoom and his son served as the qadi of the Shafi mosque in Cochin. In Cochin, the arrival of the Portuguese destroyed the Muslim commerce industry. Cochin was under the reign of Venad kings. The Portuguese pressured him to evacuate Muslims from Cochin, but he refused. Muslims and Jews in Cochin retreated to their little communities upon the arrival of the Portuguese. There are many remnants of Jewish and Muslim villages in Cochin. Waqf institutions played a significant part in the creation and evolution of worldwide Islamic communities. In the history of Islam, the core institution of Muslim community life is the mosque, which was created as the waqf. Waqf legal discourse supplied mosques and other Islamic organizations with enduring relevance. Through waqf practices, madrasas, colleges, universities, khanqahs, and bazaars were also formed. The waqf system is integral to the creation of Muslim communities. The Waqf system includes its practices, legal discourses, and institutions.

The expansion of Islam in Malabar and the expansion of trade in the Indian Ocean occurred simultaneously. Thus, the history and tradition of the Muslim community are

associated with the Malabar Coast ports. Coastal regions played a significant part in the trade and history of the Indian Ocean. Therefore, these port cities are the primary heritage sites for the Malabar Muslim population. Traders arrived in these port cities and first propagated their culture and religion at these locations. The mosques were the most significant part of Muslim community formation and development. In Islamic history, mosques were established and maintained as waqf, which gave them a legal and religious status. Waqf gave mosques enduring value and protection. Thus, identifying and documenting waqf past is essential to comprehending the history of the Muslim community. Waqf records in Malabar recounts the history of the formation and growth of the Muslim community in Malabar. The trade of the Indian Ocean drew Muslim merchants to the Malabar coastlines. The interaction between immigrant Muslims and native Hindus resulted in the establishment of a Muslim community in Malabar, which became known as Mappilas throughout time. The everyday lives of the Muslim community revolve around Islamic legal discourses. Waqf is one of the legal discourses that has long assisted Muslim communities in building and protecting their institutions, such as mosques. Waqf practices and intuitions played a larger role in the propagation of Islamic faith and knowledge. Textual and non-textual evidence, institutions and their inscriptions, and the tradition of legal records of Waqf all contribute to the foundation and growth of the Muslim community on the Malabar Coast. Islam arrived in Malabar via the Indian Ocean, unlike other portions of the Indian subcontinent. Muslim merchants' earliest settlements were in ports. The Indian Ocean has a very long-lasting effect on Asia and Africa's coastal communities. An oceanic-centred approach to the history of these tribes is quite important for comprehending their way of life. It is a well-known fact that Malabar in the Indian subcontinent has a different trajectory in terms of the origin and growth of Islam compared to many other regions of the subcontinent. Malabar has never been ruled by the Mughals or the Sutanates. In contrast to other regions of the Indian subcontinent, the majority of Malabar's Muslim community adheres to Shafi law. Muslim groups from Indian Ocean locations such as Oman, Mozambique, the Indonesian archipelago of Lac dives, and Malaysia share greater similarities with the Malabar Muslim community than do Muslim communities from many other places of the Indian subcontinent. Malabar regions were part of the kingdom of Mysore under Tippu Sultan and Hyderali. When the British conquered Mysore, the region became part of the British Madras province. Before the rise of the Mysorean dynasty, it was ruled by many lineages, including Kolothnadu, Venad, and Zamorins. The Zamorins were the most potent of these feudal kings. Calicut was the Zamorins' capital. Kolathunad was ruled by kolathiris, and Kannur was their capital. Kannur witnessed the establishment of Arakkal Ali Rajas, an autonomous Muslim dynasty. The Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British vied for control of the trade monopoly in the Indian Ocean through the invasion of the Malabar region. It is a well-established fact that Malabar's initial Muslim community centres were ports. Consequently, I am tasked with discovering the origin and development of the community via waqf past. I shall examine Malabar's port cities, such as Kozhikode, Cochin, and Kannur, to be crucial historical places for comprehending the phenomena of Muslim community creation. For this work, I shall map the

waqf records of these port cities. This is not a study of mosques, but it does take seriously the texts that discuss waqf procedures and administrations. Additionally, historical inscriptions on ancient waqf monuments are meticulously analysed. Waqf studies is an expanding field of study in oriental history. There is numerous research on the evolution and contribution of waqf in various regions of the world. As a result of the vast availability of documentation, the waqf of the Ottoman Empire has been the subject of the most exhaustive research. There are studies in the Indian setting that concentrate on colonial interference and waqf-related legal changes. There are numerous studies on the administrative and legal issues of waqf. These studies do not provide any information regarding the long-term effects of waqf on the littoral communities of the Indian Ocean. My goal is to contribute to Indian maritime history and waqf studies by filling this gap. There are studies that examine the Mappila Muslims of Malabar at various points in time. What role did the waqf play in the history of Malabar Muslims? And what legacy does the waqf have in the history of Malabar's port cities? *Qissat farmad Chakravarthy*, sixteen-page tale, is the earliest text extant on Malabar history (The story of Cheraman Perumal). It is retained in the British library, and English versions are now available. There are scholars who have examined this text and its contents in depth. The authorship of this text is unknown. This is the first document to describe the narrative of a monarch who travelled to Makkah to meet the prophet and afterwards converted to Islam. Historians are divided over this tradition. The famous ulema Zain u din Makhdhoom, who composed *Thuhfathul mujahidin*, expressed the story's veracity as early as the sixteenth century. In 1578, he composed *thuhfa* to prepare Muslims for battle against Portuguese forces. In the text, he presents a brief history of the Muslim community in Malabar. Scholars place the *Qissat* dating before the eleventh century. The *Qissat* is an attempt to establish waqf custodian rights over a particular family from Arab soil. From this text, we can assume that waqf practices were prevalent even in previous periods. We do not know whether the individuals who told the narrative had actual ties to the prophet or whether they were the actual founders of mosques in the several Malabar ports. We might therefore assume that every mosque in *Qissat* is located in Malabar's earliest ports. *Qissat* does not include major port cities such as Calcutta and Cochin in its narrations. The absence of Kozhikode and Cochin indicates that the story was composed prior to the thirteenth century. According to known evidence, both of these cities originated in the thirteenth century. According to the existing inscription, one of the Madayi mosques listed in *Qissat* was founded in the eleventh century. This indicates that waqf practices were prevalent among Muslims at least beginning in the twelfth century. And two major roles described in the story that have the authority to oversee waqf property and ports are the qadi and Shabandhar (a Persian word for captain). Shabandhar was the port and its affairs' governor. Qadi was the spiritual and legal leader of Muslims. It supplies us with the history of the Muslim community. We could assume that Muslims in their respective localities had autonomy.

The positions of qadi and *shabandhar* were the most powerful among Muslims. Qadi has the authority to administer and maintain mosques and Muslim religious

issues. This picture will become apparent after we consider the waqf of Calicut. Three port cities played a significant part in the history of Malabar after the twelfth century. Kozhikode, Cochin, and Kannur are their names. Calicut is the most significant of these cities. Kozhikode was home to the most powerful native zamorins and was never overrun by the Portuguese or the Dutch. Muslims and zamorins fought the entire struggle against the Portuguese in Kozhikode between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Cochin and Kannur were smaller cities than Kozhikode. Ibnu batutha traveled to Calicut during the fourteenth century. Meherdad sokoohy, an expert on the historic mosques of Calcutta. The Mishkalpalli mosque is among the most significant architectural structures in India, according to him. In his groundbreaking research of Muslim architecture in south India, he has mapped a large number of ancient mosques. According to him, the monuments of Calicut provide significant insight into the growth of Islamic architecture in India because they show a combination of indigenous and non-indigenous architectural aspects. He describes the historical significance of Mishkalpalli, Muchundi palli, Jamimasjid, Idrispalli, and Hadarapalli in Malabar history. Mishkalpalli, which the Portuguese destroyed in the fourteenth century, was afterwards rebuilt by Muslims. Mishkalpalli is the largest mosque among these. According to Z.A Desai, the Arabic inscription on the Muchundi palli reads as follows: "Shahab al din Raihan, as a freed slave of late Masud, purchased land from its owner with his own money and built this mosque and a well-made provision for its imam and Muadhin by construction. Ibnu Batutah referred to a particular Shihab ud din as the Shah Bandhar of Kozhikode port. This may be the same individual. And another inscription in Malayalam Vattezhth allots specific lands for Muchundi mosque's expenses. Even in the present, the Qadi of Calicut is of great importance. They are usually responsible for managing and controlling Mishkalpalli and Muchundi palli. This indicates that Calicut has been a Muslim centre for centuries. We could also recognize the significance of Qadi and Sha Bandar in the history of Calicut. They were community leaders, as well as managers and architects of mosques. Numerous old mosques dating back to the fourteenth century indicate that Calicut was the most important centre for the foundation and growth of the Muslim community. In the fifteenth century, Ma Huan, a Chinese traveller, wrote that Calicut housed twenty to thirty mosques. Cochin and Kannur also hold prominent positions in the history of Malabar. Cochin was governed by Venad Swaroopam. It was ruled by zamorins for a number of years. Prior to the arrival of the Portuguese, Muslims were the primary traders in Cochin port. The most influential Ulemas of Malabar Muslims, known as the Makhdhoom family, arrived in Cochin from the Coromandel Coast. Makhdhoom constructed the shafi Masjid of Cochin and served as the mosque's Qadi. His shrine is still located close to the Shafi mosque. The Kannur Arakkal family currently holds Muthawalli (administrative positions of Waqf) in more than thirteen mosques. Which indicates their great influence among Muslims. No historical waqf documentation are available to analyse their contributions to waqf. A disagreement involving a waqf belonging to the Arrakkal family was recently reported in the national press. It was an approximately eighteenth-century resting spot for Hajj travellers in Mecca, constructed by a member of the Arakkal family. Recently, the Saudi

Arabian waqf board replaced it for renovation. Saudi Waqf Board informed the Indian government that it will receive a fine of nearly 500 crores in lieu of the Keyi rubat waqf property. The conflict between the Arakkal and Tellichery Keyi families has yet to be resolved. This shows that Arakkal has a very extensive waqf property heritage, even beyond India. The most important institution that carries the Muslim community's tradition in Malabar is the mosque. Unlike many other regions of the Indian subcontinent, Islam arrived in Malabar by way of the sea. Details about waqf institution like mosque provides us the origin and growth of Muslim population in the region. According to evidence, the majority of the region's earliest mosques were constructed in its ports. It proves further that the early Muslim settlements were in Malabar's coastal regions. We may view the oldest extant text about Malabar Muslims, the *Qissat chkravarthy Farmad* cites around ten mosques that were all located in Malabar's ports. Qissat's lack of mosques inland from the Arabian Sea indicates that the emergence of Muslim communities in Malabar's interior regions occurred much later. The growth of Kozhikode in the history of Malabar was closely related to the formation of the Muslim community in Malabar. Mishkalpalli and Muchundipalli are wonderful architectural structures that help Kozhikode preserve its rich past. And Qadi held a higher position in the history of Muslims in Malabar. The majority of mosques were governed by a Qadi, who had been guiding the people around his property. At the time, prominent ulemas of Malabar served as qadis of mosques. One of Makdhoom's sons served as the Qadi of the Ponnani juma Masjid. In addition to being religious leaders, these qadis were also authors of Arabic and Arabi Malayalam literature. Even in modern times, *Tahrid of makhdoom* senior and *Muhyudhin Mala* of Kozhikode Qadi are part of the daily lives of Muslims. Additionally, they were political leaders of the time. The second Makhdoom to call for Jihad against the Portuguese. In Malabar history, the Friday sermon or Qutuba by the qadi of Calicut appealing for resistance against the Portuguese is also widely known. This indicates that Qadis held a prominent position among Malabar's Muslims. They were taught and practiced in mosques. They were the community and mosque leaders. While examining contemporary Malabar, we did not observe a significant amount of Qadi influence among Muslims. It may be the result of the emergence of more structured organizations, the widespread growth of communities, or the loss of autonomy of Qadis in the modern nation-state system. Rather than Qadis, land-owning Muthawallis, Mahallu committees, and religious organization bodies may govern mosques and Waqf nowadays. Qadi-centered mosques and Waqf are currently uncommon in Malabar. There is a need for additional research to comprehend this shifting in status and the contemporary effects on community life. Malabar's Muslim community once enjoyed a Qadi-centered, more autonomous way of life. Waqf information and heritage indicate this. A further noteworthy aspect of waqf of Malabar is that it is frequently financed by slave traders of the Indian Ocean. The Mishkal or Muchundhi names and their ancestry indicate this fascinating past.

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