

THE GENESIS OF THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN CEYLON (SRI LANKA): A HISTORICAL SUMMARY

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Research on the historical origins of the Ceylon Muslim community is yet an uncharted field in the overall history of the island. Ramanathan's "The Ethnology of the Moors of Ceylon,"¹ I. L. M. Abdul Azeez's criticism on Ramanathan's thesis,² Siddi Lebbe's writings on the subject in his *Muslim Necan*³ and Cassim's *Ilankaic Conakar Carittiram*,⁴ based almost entirely on Siddi Lebbe's works, are all, considering the context and spirit in which they were written (as shown below), open to the charge of historical bias and partisanship. Van Sanden's *Sonahar*⁵ is a comprehensive but an uncritical presentation of all hearsay evidence and is overtly apologetic of the British colonial rule over the Muslims. Goonewardena's "Some Notes On The History of the Muslims In Ceylon Before the British Occupation"⁶ and de Silva's "Portuguese Policy Towards Muslims"⁷ are the only scholarly works available on the period before 1800, but they too have their shortcomings. The former, as the title itself suggests, is only a peripheral treatment limited by the author's inaccessibility to Arabic, Portuguese and Tamil sources; while the latter, constrained by the scope of the article, does not throw any light on the origins of the community. Besides these, several articles have appeared from time to time authored by a variety of writers ranging from Muslim activists to University lecturers. The only common feature in all these articles is that they try to trace the historical origins of the Ceylon Muslims as far back as possible and thereby they forget to

¹ P. Ramanathan, "The Ethnology of the Moors of Ceylon", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch)*, vol. 10, no. 36, 1888. The name Ceylon was changed to Sri Lanka in 1972.

² I.L.M. Abdul Azeez, *A Criticism of Mr. Ramanathan's Ethnology of the Moors of Ceylon*, Colombo, 1957 (reprint).

³ The *Muslim Necan* was a Tamil journal edited by Siddi Lebbe. His writings on the history of the Ceylon Muslims were serialised in this journal between 1883 and 1885.

⁴ B.D.M. Cassim, *Ilankaic Conakar Carittiram*, (in Tamil), Colombo, 1948.

⁵ Van Sanden, *Sonahar, A Brief History of the Moors of Ceylon*, Colombo, 1926, 2nd edition.

⁶ K.W. Goonewardena, "Some Notes on the History of the Muslims in Ceylon Before the British Occupation", *University Majlis*, vol. IX, 1950-1960.

⁷ C.R. de Silva, "Portuguese Policy Towards Muslims", *The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies*, vol. IX, no. 2, Jul-Dec. 1966.

highlight some of the changes that took place in the later periods. This article, while trying to trace the origins of the Ceylon Muslim community, approaches the existing knowledge on the subject with a critical mind, and accounts for the changes that had taken place in later periods on the basis of available data.

The Ethnological Aspects

Ethnologically the Muslim community of Ceylon is a complex of two major and several minor elements. Among the major are the Moors and the Malays while the Arabs, Persians and Afghans; the Sinhalese, Tamil and Burgher⁸ converts to Islam; and the Muslims of other nationalities constitute the minor elements. This article is not interested in the latter group and even in the former, its main concern is about the Moors.

To start with, the name Moor itself requires explanation. It is, first of all, one among several names by which a majority of the local Muslims in Ceylon are called. Among the others the Tamil name *Conahar* and the Sinhalese name *Marakkalaminusu* have wider currency. Epithets such as *Tambi*,⁹ *Nanamar*¹⁰ and *Kakka*¹¹ are sometimes used by the Sinhalese and Tamils when referring to the Muslims. These epithets are however not generally liked by the Muslims because they believe that those epithets carry with them a sense of derogation. There are also two other names, *Hambankaraya* in Sinhalese and *Cammankarar* in Tamil by which a certain section of the Moor community is referred to. The meanings of these two names will be considered later in this section.

The etymological origin of the name Moor is universally known. It comes from the Latin root *mauri* which originally referred to the inhabitants of the Roman province of Mauretania which included

⁸ The Burgher are the descendants of the Portuguese and Dutch who are also called Eurasians.

⁹ *Tambi* is a Tamil word for younger brother. But the Europeans in Ceylon, particularly the British, used it confusingly to refer to any itinerant merchant. According to them there were "Sinhalese Tambeys", "Moorman Tambeys", "Bombay Tambeys", "Brahmin Tambeys" and "Madras Tambeys". See "Tambeys of Ceylon" in *The Chambers Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Art*, no. 781, 14 Dec. 1878. Today the epithet *Tambi* simply represents a Ceylon Muslim.

¹⁰ This is a colloquial Tamil word of obscure origin mainly spoken by the Muslims living in the Sinhalese Districts of Ceylon to address their elders. These districts are those outside the Northern and Eastern provinces. By the end of the 19th century Ceylon had nine provinces and within them twenty-one administrative districts. Except for the two provinces mentioned above, which had five districts between them and which were predominantly Tamil populated, the rest were known as Sinhalese Provinces and Sinhalese Districts.

¹¹ *Kakka* is also a Tamil word for crow but the Muslims of the Tamil Districts it means an elder brother.

present day Western Algeria and North-East Morocco.¹² After the seventh century A.D. the Latin *mauri* through its Spanish counterpart *moro* was employed to denote the followers of Islam who after the death of the Prophet Muhammad overran Spain and Morocco.¹³ The Portuguese were said to have "borrowed" this epithet and "bestowed" it indiscriminately upon the Arabs and their descendants, whom, in the sixteenth century, they found established as traders in every port on the Asian and African coast.¹⁴ According to the Portuguese historian Fernao De Queyroz the Muslims of Ceylon were called *Mouros* by his people because "they . . . were from Muritania".¹⁵ Thus, the Spanish *moro*¹⁶ in turn became *mouro* in Portuguese and finally took its anglicised form Moor.

Although this sixteenth century appellation, "previously unknown among the Muslims themselves,"¹⁷ was current within the political circles of colonial times, it did not receive its ethnic sanction from the Muslim community until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, as a result of a speech made in 1885 at the Ceylon Legislative Council by the Tamil member P. Ramanathan. While addressing the council on the "Mohammadan Marriage Registration Ordinance" of that year he stressed a point that the Moors of Ceylon were of Tamil origin.¹⁸ He elaborated his theory further in a paper which he read before the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, three years later.¹⁹ To the articulate Muslims of that time Ramanathan's theory, despite some elements of truth,²⁰ threatened to undermine the community's chances of gaining a Muslim representative at the Legislative Council.²¹ His contention

¹² The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1971 edition, vol. 15, p. 819.

¹³ E. Levi-Provencal, "Moors" in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Leiden, 1936, vol. III, p. 560. He even traces the origin of the name Moor to ancient Phoenicia.

¹⁴ Sir James Emerson Tennent, *Ceylon, An Account of the Island: Physical, Historical and Topographical With Notices Of Its Natural History, Antiquities and Productions*, London, 1860, vol. I, p. 630.

¹⁵ Father Fernao De Queyroz, *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon*, translated by S.G. Perera, New York, 1975, AMS edition, Vol. I, p. 21.

¹⁶ In fact, for e.g., it was the Spanish who called the Muslims of Philippines *Moros* by which name those Muslims are known even today. See, Cesar Adib Majul, *Theories On The Introduction And Expansion Of Islam In Malaysia*, International Association of the Historians of Asia, Biennial Conference, Proceedings, Taiwan, 1962.

¹⁷ A.M.A. Azeez, "Caylon", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1980 edition, vol. II, p. 27

¹⁸ *Ceylon Legislative Council Debates*, 1886.

¹⁹ P. Ramanathan, *op. cit.*

²⁰ Ramanathans point that many of the social customs and manners of the Moors were similar to those of the Tamils and were possibly borrowed by the former the latter was never denied by his Muslim critics. See, I.L.M. Abdul Azeez, *op. cit.*

²¹ The government of Ceylon at this time operated on the basis of the Colebrook Constitution of 1833 according to which the Legislative Council was to consist of 10 official members and 6 un-official members, all of the latter nominated by the Governor to represent the Sinhalese, Tamil, Burgher,

that all the Moors in Ceylon were Tamil speaking and of Tamil origin made a separate Muslim member superfluous. Hence it became incumbent on the part of the leading Muslim personalities such as M. C. Siddi Lebbe (1838-1898), a pioneer Muslim journalist and reformist in Ceylon, and I. L. M. Abdul Azeez (1867-1915), also a journalist and intellectual, to prove that the Moors were an entirely different race of Arab origin. Siddi Lebbe's *Muslim Necan* spearheaded the attack against Ramanathan's malicious campaign. The battle was however won when Arthur Gordon, the then Governor of Ceylon, nominated M. C. Abdul Rahiman as the first Muslim member to the Legislative Council.²² But the most significant outcome of this episode from the present point of view is not that the Muslims won a seat in the Legislature but the tenaciousness with which they clung to the name Moor which later made even Ramanathan plead in the Legislative Council "not [to] deprive them of the pleasure and honour of that name."²³ It finally found its place in the Ceylon law books with the passing of the Ceylon Citizenship Act in 1949.

The name most familiar to the bulk of the Ceylon Muslims is *Conakar*. There are at least three interpretations of the meaning and derivation of this name. The least accepted is that it is a Tamil derivation from the Arabic word *Sunni* denoting one of the two principal sects in Islam. This opinion which was advanced by Brito²⁴ has to be rejected for two reasons, one factual and the other logical. Factually the Tamil-speaking Muslims of both Ceylon as well as India call themselves *Cunnattu Jama' attar* to indicate their belonging to the *Sunni* sect and not *Conakar*. And logically it is unacceptable because the Muslims of southern India are not known as *Conakar* even though they speak Tamil and belong to the *Sunni* sect. The second interpretation is that of Rev. Fr. Beschi, an eighteenth century Catholic priest according to whom the name *Conakar* is a Tamil corruption meaning *Cola-nakara* people or the people of the *Cola*

General European planting and mercantile communities. In the seventies and eighties of the century there was increasing agitation from the Ceylonese for an unofficial majority in the legislature. Some were claiming for a councillor to represent Buddhist interests and some others for even the *karava* (fisher) caste. It however looked legitimate that the Muslims of Ceylon who had been denied so far of a place in the legislature should get one representation. Hence Ramanathan's attempt to identify the Muslims with the Tamils was a planned sabotage. On the Legislative Council and its development, see, K.M. de Silva, "The Legislative Council in the Nineteenth Century", in *University of Ceylon History of Ceylon*, vol. III, pp. 226-248.

²² It is significant that the Donoughmore Commission Report mentions this Muslim representation as one for the Moormen of "Arab descendants", *Ceylon Report of the Special Commission on the Constitution*, London, 1928, London, 1928, p. 12.

²³ *Ceylon Legislative Council Debates*, 1924.

²⁴ C. Brito, *The Yalpana Vaipava Malai or The History of The Kingdom of Jaffna*, translated from Tamil, Colombo, 1879, Appendix, p. 82.

country.²⁵ The real name according to him is *Coliyar* and *Conakar* is its corrupted version. This interpretation was rejected in the nineteenth century by the Muslim critics on very sound evidence. It was shown by them that the ancient Hindu geographers had mentioned in their works the names of fifty-six different countries, two of which were *Colam* and *Conakam*.²⁶ In addition, those geographers had also mentioned the names of eighteen different languages among which one was *Conakam*.²⁷ Hence, it is clear that the name *Conakar* must refer either to the people of *Conakam* or to those who speak *Conakam*. Since *Colam* is different from *Conakam*, *Conakar* cannot be the people of *Cola-nakaram* as Beschi claims. The solution to the problem appears to lie in a third interpretation which is popularly accepted and has more historical authenticity. According to this, *Conakar* is the Tamil derivation of the Sanskrit *Yavana* which was originally applied both in India and Ceylon to designate the Ionian Greeks but later extended to include "all the foreigners who came from the west, and also the Arabs."²⁸ Thus *Conakar* means not *Sunni* or *Coliyar* but those from Greece or Arabia and their descendants. Like the name Moor in English *Conakar* in Tamil also has gained currency to denote a particular ethnic group in Ceylon whose members are largely Muslims.

The name *Marakkalaminusu*, though popularly used by the Sinhalese to address the Muslims in general, is partly Sinhalese and partly Tamil in its composition and does not literally carry with it any ethnic connotation. The first half *marakkala* is the combination of two Tamil words *maram* + *kalam* meaning wooden vessel and the second half is the plural form of the Sinhalese *miniya* meaning a person. Hence, in combination they mean the persons who either came by boats or owned boats. The Sinhalese *marakkala* and Tamil *marakkalam* also bear similarities in meaning and sound with the Arabic *markab* from which the Maraikkayar Muslims of South-India trace their origin.²⁹ Nevertheless, whether the name *marakkalaminusu* refers to Mauritians, Graeco-Romans, Arabs, Indians or even Malays who all indeed came by boat to Ceylon is not clear from its literal meaning. But in practice, it has come to mean in Sinhalese the same group of people referred to by the Tamil *Conakar* and the English

²⁵ J.C. Beschi, *Vulgaris Tamulicæ Linguae Dictionarium Tamulico-Latinum*, South India Time Press, Madras, 1882.

²⁶ B.D.M. Cassim, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-33.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Wilhelm Geiger, *Culture of Ceylon in Mediaeval Times*, edited by Heinz Rechart, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1960, p. 110. There is a difference of opinion however with regard to the direction from which the foreigners came. According to some the name *Yavana* was applied to those who came from a northerly direction. See, Van Sanden, *op. cit.*, p. 123; P. Arunachalam, *Ceylon Census Report*, 1901, Vol. I, p. 117. This difference does not matter because after all Greece, Rome and Arabia all lie to the north-west of Ceylon.

²⁹ Edgar Thurstan, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Madras, 1909, Vol. I, pp. 1-2.

word Moor. Considering the historical link between the Arabs and navigation it may well be more appropriate to connect the Sinhalese *marakkala* to the Arabic *markab* than to the Tamil *marakkalam*.

Within this group of Moors or *Conakar* or *Marakkalaminusu* is a sub-group called coast-Moors or Indian Moors which is regarded as different from the Ceylon Moors. They are also known as *Hambankaraya* or *Hambaya* in Sinhalese and *Cammankarar* in Tamil. The meaning of the English expression is direct and clear but the Sinhalese and Tamil equivalents raise some confusion. In this case the words *hamban* in Sinhalese and *campan* in Tamil are said to be the derivations from the Malay word *sampan* which also means a small boat.³⁰ Therefore linguistically speaking *hambankaraya* and *cammankarar* must refer to the same people as *marakkalaminusu*. But whereas the last is used to denote all the Moors in general the first two are employed to refer only to those "Mohammedan immigrants from the east coast of India . . . not permanently settled in Ceylon . . . (who) do not as a rule bring their wives and families to the island . . . [but] sojourning in it for a year or two at a time for purposes of trade . . . return periodically with their savings to South India."³¹ Confusion increases when one studies the names and inhabitants of two towns in Ceylon, Sammanturai on the east coast and Hambantota in the south. The former is a thickly populated Muslim town almost totally occupied by the Ceylon Moors while in the latter there is a significant Malay colony established during the time of the first British Governor Lord Frederick North in the early nineteenth century.³² It is said that the names of these two villages take their origins from Malay. But neither of these inhabitants are addressed as *Hambankaraya* or *Cammankarar*. If so, how and why the Indian Moors acquired a name of Malay origin is a historical mystery. Ramanathan's interpretation that *Cammankarar* comes from *camankarar*³³ meaning dealers in wares seems reasonable but it does not explain its Sinhalese equivalents. Clearly, more information than that provided by etymology alone is required for a satisfactory explanation of the ethnology of Ceylon Muslims.

³⁰ P. Ramanathan, *op. cit.*

³¹ P. Ramanathan, *Riots and Martial Law in Ceylon*, 1915, London, 1916, pp. 1-2.

³² C.N.A., 5/2, North to Hobart, 24 Nov. 1802. By the end of the 19th century the town of Hambantota had a total of 767 Malays, second only to Colombo which had over 5,000 of them. *Census of Ceylon, 1946*, Vol. I, part II.

³³ P. Ramanathan, "The Ethnology of The Moors of Ceylon", *JRASC*, 10 (36), 1888.

*Origins of the Muslims of Ceylon**(a) The Moors and the Arab Theory*

Ethnologically, as mentioned at the beginning, the Muslims of Ceylon fall into two major groups, i.e., Moors and Malays and within the former is a sub-group called the Indian Moors. Of the Ceylon Moors it has been said that they still continue to be "among the few ethnological conundrums . . . (yet) to be unravelled."³⁴ Nevertheless, there are two theories of which one, generally asserted by the local Muslim leaders³⁵ and accepted even by Ceylon educationists³⁶ traces the origin of the Ceylon Moors to Arabia, while the other traces it to India. The core of the first theory is a set of traditions that was current among the Ceylon Moors and which received the attention of scholars quite early in the nineteenth century. Although these traditions are generally "vague, distorted and unsatisfactory", they serve as useful pointers towards further inquiries. The least known of those traditions is that the Ceylon Moors are the progeny of "that tribe of Arabs of the posterity of Hashim, who were expelled from Arabia, by their Prophet Mahomet as a punishment for their pusillanimous conduct"³⁷ in the battle of 'Uhad in 625 A.D. These expatriates were said to have founded a colony at Káyalpatnam in the east coast of South-India and from there were said to have moved in successive waves to Ceylon.³⁸ This tradition which is quoted even in the official documents of recent times³⁹ can be rejected on two grounds. Firstly, after the battle of 'Uhad the Prophet was not yet in full control over the whole of Arabia and so not powerful enough to expel anybody from the peninsula. The available literature on the Prophet's biography does not make any reference to the expulsion of any member of the Hashim tribe during his life time. All that he did was to expel the Jews from Medina and it is known that they settled at Khyber which was well within Arabia.⁴⁰ Secondly, that

³⁴ Harry William, *Ceylon Pearl of The East*, London, 1951, reprint, p. 81.

³⁵ Razik Farred, "The Executive Committee for Education from Inside" in *Education in Ceylon (From the Sixth Century B.C. to The Present Day)*, Colombo, 1969, Part II, p. 599. M.C.A. Hassan, *Sir Razik Fareed*, Colombo, 1968, pp. 167-171; I.L.M. Abdul Azeez, *op. cit.*; B.D.M. Cassim, *op. cit.*

³⁶ J.E. Jayasuriya, *Educational Policies and Progress During British Rule in Ceylon, 1796-1948*, Colombo, not dated, p. 2.

³⁷ C. Pridham, *Ceylon and Her Dependencies*, London, 1849, Vol. I, p. 470.

³⁸ *Ibid.*; also see, John Ferguson, *Mohammedanism in Ceylon*, Colombo, 1897, pp. 304.

³⁹ See for example, *The Ceylon Census Report*, 1946, Vol. I, part I, pp. 8-9.

⁴⁰ Mohamed Ibn Ishak, *The Life of Muhammad*, translated by A. Guillaume, Oxford University Press, 1967, reprint, pp. 437-445; W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad Prophet and Statesman*, Oxford University Press, 1961, pp. 148-153; Maulana Muhammad Ali, *Muhammad The Prophet*, Lahore, 1933, 2nd ed. pp. 157-166.

part of the tradition relating to the settlement at Kayalpatnam conflicts with a tradition current in India according to which the first Muslim settlement at Kayalpatnam seems to have been of Iraqi refugees who escaped from the persecution of Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf who was then Governor of Iraq under the Caliphate of Malik Ibn Marwan.⁴¹ This must have been either in the late seventh or early eighth century A.D. According to one Ceylonese historian the Kayalpatnam settlement was of an even later date and was established in the middle of the ninth century.⁴²

This Indian tradition which came to be reiterated with much tenacity by prominent Ceylon Moors⁴³ was first recorded by Sir Alexander Johnston, the Chief Justice of Ceylon in the early nineteenth century.⁴⁴ According to Johnston's version a portion of those Hashimite Arabs driven from Arabia by the tyrannous Caliph, "made settlements in Concan, in the southern parts of the peninsula of India, on the island of Ceylon and at Malacca."⁴⁵ This tradition receives some historicity in the light of an event recorded by an Arab historian, Ahmad Ibn Yahya Ibn Ja'bir Al-Biladuri in his *Futuhul Buldan* written in the ninth century. He records that the king of the Isle of Rubies (Ceylon) sent as a present to Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf the bereaved widows and daughters of certain Muslim merchants who had died in his country.⁴⁶ He seems to have done this as a measure to ingratiate himself with Hajjaj.⁴⁷ This event has not been disputed even by Sinhalese historians.⁴⁸ Besides, the discovery in Ceylon of a dinar coin belonging to the time of the Umayyah Caliph Walid Bin Malik, A.H. 86-96 (A.D. 705-711) also suggests that the Arabs may have been in contact with Ceylon during this period.⁴⁹ However, to trace the

⁴¹ *Madras Census Report*, 1891, Vol. XIII, p. 275.

⁴² H.W. Codrington, *Ceylon Coins and Currency*, Colombo, 1924, p. 157.

⁴³ See for e.g. I.L.M. Abdul Azeez, *op. cit.*; A.M.A. Azeez, "Ceylon", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1960 edition; M.C.A. Hassan, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

⁴⁴ Sir Alexander Johnston, "A Letter to the Secretary Relating to the Preceding Inscription", *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. I, 1827, p. 538.

⁴⁵ Sir Alexander Johnston, *op. cit.*

⁴⁶ H.M. Elliot and J. Dawson, (ed.) *History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, London, 1867, Vol. I, p. 118; Suleyman Nadvi, "Muslim Colonies in India Before Muslim Conquest", *Islamic Culture*, Vol. VIII, 1934, pp. 478-480.

⁴⁷ H.M. Elliot and J. Dawson, *op. cit.* This event is said to have been the immediate cause for the Arab invasion of India in 712 A.D., I.H. Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Sub-Continent*, The Hague, 1962, 1962, p. 35.

⁴⁸ C.W. Nicholas and S. Paranavitana, *A Concise History of Ceylon*, Ceylon University Press, Colombo, 1961, p. 164; S. Paranavitana, "Civilisation of the Period: Economic, Political and Social Conditions" in *University of Ceylon History of Ceylon*, Colombo, 1959, Vol. I, part I, p. 362.

⁴⁹ H.W. Codrington, *op. cit.*, p. 158. Although Codrington lists this coin amongst the collections discovered at Muturajawela he fails to make any comment on it. The reason may be his confusion over the name and dynasty of the Caliph which he calls Al-Wahid I and Awami respectively. There was no such Caliph and such a dynasty in Muslim history.

origins of the Ceylon Moors to the Umayyah period is to conclude that they arrived in Ceylon only after the death of the Prophet in 632 A.D. and that they originally came as Muslims. The statement of Nafis Ahmad that "one of the earliest scenes of Muslim settlements was Ceylon towards the end of the first century A.H.,"⁵⁰ and the conclusion of Neelakanta Sastri, a historian of great repute in India, that "before the end of the 7th century, a colony of Muslim merchants had established themselves in Ceylon,"⁵¹ also express the same sentiment.

But the Arab connections with Ceylon reach far back into pre-Islamic times. "Long before anybody else—Persians, Indians, Chinese, Egyptians, Greeks or Romans—became navigators in Southern Seas", says Ahmad, "the Arabs were the only nation which furnished mariners, carriers and merchants in the Indian Ocean."⁵² Joseph Desomogyi traces the Arab connection in the Indian Ocean to "the days of the Phoenicians."⁵³ From a study on Java, Imam claims that the Arabs traded between Madagascar and Sumatra via Ceylon as early as 310 B.C.⁵⁴ And according to Tennent, one of the most brilliant Civil Servants and historians of British Ceylon in the nineteenth century, "the Arabs, who had been familiar with India before it was known to the Greeks, and who had probably availed themselves of the monsoons long before Hippalus ventured to trust to them, began in the fourth and fifth centuries to establish themselves as merchants at Cambay and Surat, at Mangalore, Calicut, Coulam and other Malabar ports, whence they migrated to Ceylon, the government of which was remarkable for its toleration of all religious sects, and its hospitable reception of fugitives."⁵⁵ But the most significant of all the references is that which Geiger quotes from the ancient Pali chronicle Mahavamsa; according to which in the fourth century B.C. Anuradhapura, the Sinhalese capital had near its western gate a "ground set apart for the Yonas"⁵⁶ who "were the Arabian traders who visited the island perhaps even before the Aryan immigration."⁵⁷

Among those Arabs must have been a group of Sabaeen traders who were also inhabitants of South Arabia and are mentioned by name

⁵⁰ Nafis Ahmad, "The Arab's knowledge of Ceylon", *Islamic Culture*, Vol. IX, 1945.

⁵¹ K.A. Neelakanta Sastri, *Foreign Notices of South India*, Madras, 1939, p. 20.

⁵² Nafis Ahmad, *op. cit.*

⁵³ Joseph Desmogyi, *A Short History of Oriental Trade*, Hildersheim, 1968, p. 54.

⁵⁴ S.A. Imam, "Ceylon-Arab Relations", *The First Twenty Years, A Moors Islamic Cultural Home Publication*, Colombo, 1965.

⁵⁵ J.E. Tennent, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 579-580.

⁵⁶ Wilhelm Geiger, *ip. cit.*, p. 59.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

in the Qur'an.⁵⁸ Religiously they are said to be a Judaeo-Christian sect,⁵⁹ and racially they were "Arabs from the Hadramaut and Oman coasts."⁶⁰ The narratives in the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea show that already in the first century A.D. the Sabaeans had monopolised the maritime commerce of India and had acted as intermediaries between the Indian merchants and those of Egypt.⁶¹ And they were also in frequent contact with the Malayan Archipelago ever since the days of Babylon.⁶² Therefore, it is probable that the Sabaeans must have also been in contact with Ceylon. The fact that the Chinese traveller Fa-Hien had seen them in Ceylon in the fifth century A.D.⁶³ supports our conclusion.

Besides the Arabs, traders from Persia also had contacts with Ceylon before the birth of Islam. Cosmas Indicopleustes mentions a Greek and Persian trader disputing before the King of Ceylon in the sixth century A.D., as to which of their kings was superior.⁶⁴ All this shows that long before the arrival of the Muslim expatriates during the time of Hajjaj there were Arabs, Persians, Greeks and Romans⁶⁵ frequenting the shores of Ceylon. On the eve of the birth of Islam, however, it was the Persians who dominated the Indo-Arabian trade and had become the "intermediaries for the silk trade between China and the West";⁶⁶ and Ceylon being the entrepot for sea trade between China and the Near East became a frequent port of call to the Persian merchants.⁶⁷

Since sea travel in those days was dependent upon the winds and since loading and unloading of vessels took a much longer time than at present, merchants and sailors who set foot on the shores of the island had to wait for considerable periods of time until their ships were reloaded with goods and the winds became favourable. During that period "there would always be a few women at the ports

⁵⁸ *Al-Qur'an*, 2:62, 5:69; 22:17.

⁵⁹ Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi, *The Holy Qur'an*, The Taj Co. Ltd., Karachi, 1971, Vol. I, p. 13A, 276n.

⁶⁰ Chau Ju-Kua, *Chu-Fan-Chi*, translated by F. Hirth and W.W. Rockhill, St. Petersburg, 1911, introduction, p. 3. This book deals with the Chinese-Arab trade in the 12th and 13th centuries.

⁶¹ Captain R.L. Playfair, *A History of Arabia Felix or Yemen from the Commencement of the Christian Era to the Present Time*, Bombay, 1859, p. 15.

⁶² Roland Braddell, "Notes on Ancient Times in Malaya", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Malayan Branch*, vol. 20, part II, 1947; H.G. Quaritch Wales, "The Sabaeans and Possible Egyptian Influences in Indonesia", *JRAS (MB)*, Vol. 23, no. 3, 1950.

⁶³ G.F. Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times*, New Jersey, 1951, p. 38.

⁶⁴ Cosmas Indicopleustes, *The Christian Topography*, translated from Greek and edited by J.W. McCrindle, New York, not dated, pp. 367-370.

⁶⁵ On the Roman Ceylon contacts see, C.W. Nicholas, "The Geographical Background", *University of Ceylon History of Ceylon*, Vol. I, part I, pp. 16-18; J.E. Tennent, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 549-570.

⁶⁶ G.F. Hourani, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, also pp. 43-44.

of this island (as at other ports of the world under such circumstances) to provide some consolation to the lonely sailor or trader.”⁶⁸ It is therefore quite probable that out of these circumstances there emerged a nucleus of an Arab and Persian community in Ceylon during the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries. Of this the Persian element must have been quantitatively important since the Persian government staged an expedition against Ceylon in the sixth century “to redress the wrongs done to some of their fellow countrymen who had settled there for purposes of trade.”⁶⁹ Many of these Persians appear to have been of the Nestorian sect of Christianity and even had a presbyter appointed from Persia.⁷⁰ The most vital clue to the origins of the Ceylon Moors lies in the fate of this Persian community after the sixth century. Hourani finds in the Arabic records of sea trade with the Far East less mention of Persians and more of Muslims and Arabs after the ninth century.⁷¹ In fact the Far-Eastern trade after that time became an Arab monopoly which was never challenged until the coming of the Portuguese towards the end of the fifteenth century.⁷² Mendis is certain that the “Persian trade with Ceylon ceased in the seventh century,”⁷³ but as to what happened to the Persian community in Ceylon there is no information. Among the local records there is no further mention of the Persians until the arrival of Ibn Batuta, the Arab traveller from Tangiers in 1344 A.D.⁷⁴ During his travels in Ceylon Batuta met a Persian Muslim⁷⁵ in Mannar who accompanied him to Adam’s Peak; cited a shrine built to venerate a Persian Muslim saint Shaikh Othman of Shiraz; and visited the King Aryachakkaravarthy who he found “understands the Persian tongue.”⁷⁶ All this suggest that the king must have had intimate and lasting contacts with the Persians before he met Batuta. The question therefore arises whether the Persians with whom Aryachakkaravarthy was familiar were an entirely new wave from Islamic Persia or the progeny of those who settled in Ceylon before Islam was born and became Muslims later in keeping with changes in their mother country, or a mixture of both. There is little evidence on the question as a whole, but some references indicate that the answer probably lies in the second possibility.

⁶⁸ K.W. Goonewardena, *op. cit.*

⁶⁹ J.E. Tennent, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 579.

⁷⁰ Cosmas Indicopleustes, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-119.

⁷¹ G.F. Hourani, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁷² Cesar Adid Majul, *op. cit.*, p. 342.

⁷³ G.C. Mendis, *The Early History of Ceylon or The Indian Period of Ceylon History*, Calcutta, 1940, fourth edition, p. 70.

⁷⁴ “Ibn Batuta in the Maldives and Ceylon, translated from the French of M.M. Defremery and Sanguinetti”, *JRASC*, 1882.

⁷⁵ This Muslim was a khorossanian, a province in Persia.

⁷⁶ Ibn Batuta, *op. cit.*

Geiger calls the early Persians the "pre-runners of the Moormen."⁷⁷ Another author of recent times is certain the Ceylon Moors are of Persian origin, even though he fails to support his case with evidence.⁷⁸ Tennent, while analyzing the causes for the disappearance of Nestorian Christianity from Ceylon came to the conclusion that "the more immediate cause . . . was in all probability the rising influence of Mahometanism [sic] and the arrival of its followers from Persia and Arabia whose descendants are known by the popular designation of 'Moors'."⁷⁹ He goes on to say later that the Moors are "of Persian rather than Arabic origin."⁸⁰ Even the discourses in the mosques, according to Tennent, seem to have been delivered in Persian in the nineteenth century.⁸¹ There is however one difficulty in accepting this conclusion, and that is the difference between Persian Islam and the Ceylon variety. While the former has been predominantly *shi'a* after the sixteenth century⁸² the latter is predominantly *sunni*. Tennent was obviously exaggerating the identity of the Muslims of Ceylon as belonging to the "sect of shahis" as opposed to "So-nees",⁸³ even though there is reference to the "followers of Ali" amongst the Muslims in nineteenth century Ceylon.⁸⁴ It is also highly improbable for Persian to have been the language of discourse in the mosques because there is evidence to show that until very recently the *'ulema* in Ceylon were refusing to deliver their sermons in any language other than Arabic. What is more plausible is that the Persian community that was domiciled in Ceylon on the eve of the birth of Islam was converted to that religion either by the Muslim traders who came later or by the *sufis*⁸⁵ and *faqirs*⁸⁶ who arrived from the Malabar coast in the ninth century.⁸⁷ This is only speculation, but until further evidence is discovered the theory that the Moors are of Arab origin has to remain subject to doubt. To say that the term Arab is employed to designate the "conglomeration of the Persians, Arabs and Abyssinians"⁸⁸ from which the Muslims of Ceylon originated is a convenient way of dodging the issue.

⁷⁷ Wilhelm Geiger, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

⁷⁸ F. Houtart, *Religion and Ideology in Sri Lanka*, Hansa Publishers, Colombo, 1974, p. 75.

⁷⁹ J.E. Tennent, *Christianity in Ceylon*, London, 1850, p. 7.

⁸⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁸¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 36.

⁸² *Shi'ism* was imposed on Persia by the Safavid King Ismail Safavi (1502-1524). Before that Persia was *sunni* Islam by religion.

⁸³ *Op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁸⁴ J.W. Bennett, *Ceylon and Its Capabilities*, London, 1843, p. 62.

⁸⁵ The *sufis* are Muslim mystics.

⁸⁶ The *faqirs* are also a group of mystics living in voluntary poverty to reach self-realisation or any form of spiritual fulfilment. See, M.M.M. Mahroof, "The Faqirs of Ceylon", *Islamic Culture*, vol. 41, 1967.

⁸⁷ S.M. Yusuf, "Ceylon and the Arab Trade", *University of Ceylon History of Ceylon*, vol. I, part II, p. 705, 10n.

⁸⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 704.

The Moors and the Indian Theory

The second theory that the "Moors are (by race) pure Tamils of South India who had been converted to Islamism",⁸⁹ originates from the idea that the early Arabs did not come direct to Ceylon. Since they could obtain the produce of this island from the "great emporia of the Malabar coast",⁹⁰ the Arabs, according to Arasaratnam "did not come to Ceylon . . . for a long time";⁹¹ and in his opinion the earliest Arab colonies in Ceylon were of the tenth century, established "by agents of the principal traders of the South Indian ports to supply them with the goods of Ceylon."⁹² The date tenth century is presumably based on the cufic inscription discovered in Ceylon by Alexander Johnston in the early nineteenth century, which refers to the death of one Khalid Ibn Bakaya and which bears the date 337 A.H. (959 A.D.)⁹³ It is difficult to accept Arasaratnam's view especially in the light of what was discussed in the preceding section. There were Arabs who came to Ceylon before Islam and there were Arabs who came after Islam. Even in the case of the latter, researches show an earlier date than the tenth century.⁹⁴ According to one researcher the Muslim Arab-Ceylon connection goes back to the days of the *Rashidun* (rightly guided) Caliphs of the seventh century.⁹⁵

Yet, the Indian theory is not altogether valueless. It shows that the Ceylon Moors originated from more than one source. The Arab settlements along the Malabar coast in India are as old as those in Ceylon.⁹⁶ "The similarity in the peculiar nature of the social organization in pre-Islamic Arabia and on the western coast of Southern India, especially in Malabar facilitated the free mingling of the Arabs with the women of South-West India."⁹⁷ According to Panikkar, "it is reasonable to suppose that . . . at least after the time of Caliph Omar the trade with Malabar was exclusively in the hands of the Moors."⁹⁸ Thus after the seventh century the Arab traders came in large numbers, married Indian women and settled as permanent communities.⁹⁹ The Mapilla (Moplahs) Muslims of Kerala and the Lebbes and Maraikkayars of the Coromandel coast are the descendants of these settlements.¹⁰⁰ In Ceylon, the fact that many of

⁸⁹ C. Brito, *op. cit.*, appendix, p. 82.

⁹⁰ S. Arasaratnam, *Ceylon*, New Jersey, 1964, p. 117.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Op. cit.*, p. 118.

⁹³ I.L.M. Abdul Azeez, *op. cit.*, appendix A.

⁹⁴ A. Cherian, "The Genesis of Islam in Malabar", *Indica*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1969.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Nafis Ahmad, *op. cit.*

⁹⁷ A. Cherian, "The Impact of Islam on South India: Synopsis of Thesis submitted for Ph.D. at the University of Bombay, 1971", *Indica*, Vol. 1, 1964.

⁹⁸ K.M. Panikkar, *Malabar and The Portuguese*, Bombay, 1929, p. 23.

⁹⁹ A. Cherian, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁰ E. Thurstan, *Caste and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. IV, pp. 198-205

the Moors in the nineteenth century carried the name Lebbe or Maraikkar or both as part or parts of their full names (such as for example, Segu Lebbe Maraikkar Muhammad Ali Maraikkar and Ahamathu Lebbe Meera Lebbe), spoke the Tamil language and even physically resembled the South Indian Muslims, induced the British to identify them with the Lebbes of South India.¹⁰¹ The Lebbes and Maraikkayars as seen above were people of "mixed Hindu and Musalman origins,"¹⁰² and they were said to be Hanafiites and Shafiites respectively.¹⁰³ But in Ceylon amongst the Ceylon Moors the majority were of the latter sect though with a sprinkling of Hanafiites.¹⁰⁴ This suggests that a majority of these nineteenth century Moors must have been the descendants of the Maraikkayars of the Coromandel Coast and particularly of Porto Novo, Nagore, Muttupettai and Kayalpatnam.¹⁰⁵

The earliest of Arabs and Persians who came directly to Ceylon could not have been large in number although the latter was numerically and in terms of influence sufficient to cause an expedition against Ceylon. Gunawardena estimates their number in "terms of dozens rather than in hundreds and thousands."¹⁰⁶ As a racial entity in Ceylon they could not therefore have been a significant factor in an estimated population of about seven million.¹⁰⁷

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Muslims in Ceylon were said to have "attained the highest degree of their commercial prosperity and political influence"¹⁰⁸ in the island. This was also the period when the Muslims on the opposite coast had a similar success in the economic and political spheres. The rise of the Zamorin of Calicut as "the leading ruler"¹⁰⁹ on the West Coast of India in the thirteenth century was possible, according to Panikkar, partly because of "the support of the Moorish settlers who contributed so

and Vol. V, pp. 1-5; S.S. Nadvi, "The Muslim Colonies of India before the Muslim Conquests", *Islamic Culture*, Vol. VIII, 1934; Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends*, Orient Longmans Ltd., 1976, pp. 41 & 51; K.A. Neelakantasastri, *A History of South India*, Madras, 1976, fourth ed., p. 439.

¹⁰¹ C.N.A. 5/1, North to the Court of Directors of the English East India Company, 26 Feb. 1799; James Cordiner, *A Description of Ceylon*, London, 1807, Vol. I, p. 139.

¹⁰² *Madras Census Report, 1901.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, W. Preston Warren, "Islam in South India", *The Muslim World*, Vol. 21, 1931.

¹⁰⁴ A.M.A. Azeez, "Ceylon", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1960 edition, p. 28.

¹⁰⁵ H. Bperrum, "The Tamil Muslims of South India", *Muslim World*, Vol. X, 1920.

¹⁰⁶ K.W. Goonawardena, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁷ N.K. Sarkar, *The Demography of Ceylon*, Ceylon Govt. Press, Colombo, 1957, p. 18.

¹⁰⁸ Alexander Johnston, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁹ K.M. Panikkar, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

largely to the prosperity and power of his kingdom."¹¹⁰ The Zamorin's naval forces were under their command and it was with the help of the Muslims that he was able to defeat his enemies.¹¹¹ In addition, the Muslims under the Zamorin had a monopoly of seaborne trade and "their commercial relations extended as far west as Tripoli and Morocco."¹¹² In short it is said that in political power and influence the Muslims in Malabar were next only to the Nairs,¹¹³ a class of militia-men.¹¹⁴ An important development of this honeymoon period between the Zamorin and the Muslims was that even the Indo-Ceylon trade gradually passed from the hands of the Hindu traders to those of the Muslims.¹¹⁵

It is against this background of commercial prosperity and political influence of the South Indian Muslims that one should view their arrival in Ceylon, and their addition to the already existing Arab, Persian and perhaps even Abyssinian¹¹⁶ Muslim complex. The rate of this influx is not known. Writing in the late seventeenth century Queyroz observed that the Moors came to Ceylon at the rate of "500 to 600 each year."¹¹⁷ That he is referring to the period prior to the arrival of the Portuguese in Ceylon in 1505 is apparent because after that time the anti-Muslim policy of the Portuguese, based on economic and religious rivalry, would not have encouraged Muslims to come to Ceylon in such large numbers. It is also significant that a tradition relating to the Muslim village of Beruwela on the west coast of Ceylon speaks of a colony of Muslims from Kayalpatnam settling there towards the middle of the fourteenth century.¹¹⁸ Hence it is not unreasonable to conclude that Muslims from

¹¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 23.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ For a detailed description of the Nairs, see E. Thurstan, *op. cit.*, Vol. V.

¹¹⁵ K. Indrapala, "South Indian Mercantile Communities in Ceylon, Circa 950-150", *The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies*, (new series),

¹¹⁶ Ibn Batuta speaks of Colombo being under the control of a sea captain named Jalasti who had under his command 500 Abyssinians. Ibn Batuta *op. cit.*

¹¹⁷ Fernao De Queyros, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 742.

¹¹⁸ K.W. Goonawardena, *op. cit.* But this cannot be the first settlement at Beruwela as Goonawardena thinks. His argument that Ibn Batuta did not mention Beruwela in his travels is not sound because no one knows the routes which he followed within the island. How could he have mentioned a place if he had not gone there? Moreover, a year or two and not "five or six" after Ibn Batuta left Ceylon, John de Marignolli, otherwise called John of Florence, a Papal Legate, was driven ashore by gale and he landed at Pervilis which later identified as Beruwela. "Here" he says, "a certain tyrant by name Coya Jaan, a eunuch, had the mastery in opposition to the lawful king. He was an accursed Saracen, who by means of his great treasures had gained possession of the greater part of the kingdom." Sir Henry Yule, (translator & editor), *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol. 3, Taipei, 1966, p. 231. This Coya Jaan is said to be the title Khwaja Jahan given to the vazirs by the Sultan of Maabar and it is agreed that this particular vazir is the

South India must have traded with and sometimes settled peacefully in the coastal districts of Ceylon between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As a result of this influx of the Indian element the strain of Persian and Arab blood in the community must have been gradually weakened as it happened in South India itself.¹¹⁹ Thus when the Portuguese arrived in Ceylon at the beginning of the sixteenth century the port of Colombo had developed into a "colony of Moors of Indian origin."¹²⁰ From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century until the British arrived the Indian influx was largely curtailed if not totally prohibited. On the one hand the lack of Portuguese power in the east coast of Ceylon enabled the Muslim traders to trade with the independent Kandyan kingdom in the central hills of the island, through its eastern ports of Trincomalee, Kottiyar and Batticaloa.¹²¹ On the other, the relative freedom which the eastern coasts of South India also enjoyed from Portuguese harassment¹²² meant that intercourse was possible between the Indian Muslims and their counterparts in Ceylon. This connection continued even after the Portuguese were ousted by the Dutch in 1656. According to a Tamil source,¹²³ a colony of *Conakar* from Kayalpatnam settled at south Mirusuvil in the north of Ceylon during the Dutch rule.¹²⁴ However the anti-Muslim attitude of both the Portuguese and the Dutch did not allow that freedom of movement which the Indian Muslims enjoyed prior to the arrival of the colonialists. Nevertheless, it is evident that the majority of the Moors who lived in Ceylon at the beginning of the nineteenth century were the descendants of those Indian Muslims who came centuries earlier and who were themselves of mixed origin, while a minority was of either Arab or Persian descent amongst whom some had come long before Islam was born and some thereafter. In Hambantota for example, Denham reported in his census of 1911 that a colony of Muslims traced their origins to a *Maulana* or religious dignitary who had come from Baghdad only one hundred and fifty

"vazir and admiral Jalasti" whom Ibn Batuta met in Colombo. *Op. cit.*; Van Sanden, *op. cit.*, p. 41. This shows that Jalasti's power and command had extended up to Beruwela where there must have been a Muslim settlement. This is proved by the copper grant dated 7 May 1018 which speaks of the privileges granted by the Sinhalese king to Mudali Maraikkar, a Muslim merchant of Beruwela, and his descendants for bringing seven weavers from the opposite coast. (For a translation of this grant in Tamil, see B.D.M. Cassim, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56. Sir Alexander Johnston also refers to it.) Therefore Beruwela must have been settled with Muslims long before the 1340s.

¹¹⁹ Kenneth McPherson, *The Political Development of the Urud- and Tamil-speaking Muslims of the Madras Presidency 1901-1937*, an unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Western Australia, 1968, p. 7.

¹²⁰ P.E. Pieris, *Ceylon and the Portuguese 1505-1658*, Tellipalai, Ceylon, 1920, p. 24.

¹²¹ C.R. de Silva, *The Portuguese in Ceylon*, Colombo, 1972, p. 10.

¹²² T.V. Mahalingam, *Economic Life in the Vijayanager Empire*, University of Madras, 1951, p. 119.

¹²³ *Yalpana Vaipava Malai* or *The History of the Kingdom of Jaffna*, (translated by C. Brito), Colombo, 1879.

¹²⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 54. The exact date of the settlement is not known.

years earlier.¹²⁵ And even in the nineteenth century the Arabs continued to frequent Ceylon especially to take part in the pearl fisheries.¹²⁶ The Qur'an's encouragement to "go about in the spacious sides" of the earth and to "eat of this sustenance"¹²⁷ probably gave an added incentive to the wandering instincts of these desert dwellers. Despite the discriminatory policies of the Portuguese and Dutch it would appear that the (new) Muslim communities were not treated with hostility by the indigenous people. Davy, a British Major, remarked in the early nineteenth century that all these groups, though looked upon by the Colonialists as "foreigners" were in actual fact "naturalized" Ceylonese.¹²⁸

The Malays

The Malays are another element in the Ceylon Muslim racial complex. Although their origins are definitely known, they are not detailed here since the main focus of this article is on the Moors. Nevertheless, a summary is provided below for the sake of a comprehensive picture of the Muslim community.

Ceylon had contacts with the Malay peninsula from very early times and the country was known to the Malays as *swarnabhumi* (land of gold).¹²⁹ Twice in the thirteenth century the island was invaded by Chandrabhanu of Tambralinga, a Javaka prince from the Malay peninsula.¹³⁰ The *Yalpana Vaipava Malai* mentions that there was during the reign of Vijayabahu "a numerous army of *yavakar*"¹³¹ in the king's pay."¹³² And toponyms such as Sammanturai in the east and Hambantota in the south, and Cavakacceri and Cavankadu in the north of Ceylon also indicate that there must have been some Malay connection with these places during the medieval era.¹³³ In these latter areas there seems to have been a small Malay colony whose "numbers underwent constant diminution by deadly feuds

¹²⁵ E.B. Denham, *Ceylon at the Census of 1911*, Colombo, 1912, p. 238.

¹²⁶ C.S.P. 37 of 1890, W.C. Twynam's Report on the 1890 Pearl Fishery; Ma.Ka.Mu. Katar Mukaiyateen Maraikkayar, *Alim Pulavar Anra Olukkam*, (A Biography of S.M. Sayyid Muhammad Alim Pulavar), Madura, (India), 1960, p. 14.

¹²⁷ *Al-Qur'an*, 67:15.

¹²⁸ J. Davy, *An Account of the Interior of Ceylon*, London 1821, p. 108.

¹²⁹ Senarat Paranavitana, *Ceylon and Malaysia*, Lake House Publishers, Colombo, 1966, pp. 1-5.

¹³⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 76; W.M. Sirisena, *Sir Lanka and South-East Asia*, Leiden, 1978, pp. 36-57.

¹³¹ In Tamil alphabet there is no equivalent to the sound 'Ja'. It is either written as 'ca' or 'ya'. Thus Java can be written as *Cava* or *Yava* and *Javakar*, the people of Java as *Cavakar* or *Yavakar*. In the old days the Tamils called Java *Cavakam*. V. Kankasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, Madras, 1966, reprint, p. 11.

¹³² *Yalpana Vaipava Malai*, p. 33.

¹³³ W.M. Sirisena, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48.

among themselves and by the oppression of kings."¹³⁴ During the Portuguese period also one hears of Malay soldiers serving in the army of Rajasingha,¹³⁵ the King of Kandy. The Dutch council minutes of 8 September 1660 cited by Tambimuttu refers to a land grant of twenty-eight acres at Wolvendhal in Colombo to a group of Malays who had become Christians.¹³⁶ Finally, Goonewardena observes that some of the Sinhalese who bear names like Malalage, Malalasekera and Malalgoda "have remarkably Malayan features."¹³⁷ From these references it is possible to conclude that whatever was left of the old Malay community must have lost most of its Malay identity both by changing religion and by inter-marriage with the Sinhalese.

But the Malays who lived in nineteenth century Ceylon were Muslims and the descendants of a new wave whose arrival dates back to the eighteenth century. It had been customary for the Dutch to take the Malays to various settlements in Asia and Africa "for the purpose of carrying on various branches of trade and manufactures and also to employ them as soldiers and servants."¹³⁸ They formed the artisan community in Cape Colony,¹³⁹ while in Ceylon they served mainly as soldiers. The first arrival of this later infusion of Malays was in 1709 when the Dutch in Java banished Susuna Mangkurat Mas, a Javanese ex-prince together with his followers and their families to Ceylon.¹⁴⁰ He was followed in 1723 by another forty or so Javanese princes and chiefs who surrendered to the Dutch at the Battle of Batavia.¹⁴¹ These families formed the nucleus from which the Malay community later grew.

¹³⁴ *Yalpana Vaipava Malai*, p. 34.

¹³⁵ Fernao De Queyroz, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 442.

¹³⁶ Paulinus Tambimuttu, "Malays were in Ceylon Before Recorded History", culled from an article in *Ceylon Daily News*, 13 Nov. 1965 and reprinted in *Glimpse from the Past of the Moors of Sri Lanka*, (ed.) A.I.L. Marikar, A.L.M. Lafir and A.H. Macan Markar, Colombo (not dated).

¹³⁷ K.W. Goonewardena, "Comments on Ceylon and Malaysia in Medieval Times", *JRAS(CB)* new series, vol. 7, no. 2, 1962.

¹³⁸ Robert Percival, *An Account of the Island of Ceylon*, London, 1803, p. 168.

¹³⁹ Freda Troup, *South Africa An Historical Introduction*, London, 1972, pp. 58-61.

¹⁴⁰ Thomas Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java*, London 1817, vol. II, pp. 195-197; Gallicus, "Javanese Exiles to Ceylon in the 18th Century", *Tropical Agriculturist (Literary Register Supplement)* no. 18, 1888-1889.

¹⁴¹ H.C. Sirr, *Ceylon and the Cingalese*, London, 1850, pp. 260-261. According to some the number was forty-four. See Paulinus Tambimuttu, *op. cit.*