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# Muslims of Kayalpatnam: A Mosaic of Diverse Aspects of Culture and Tradition

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**Abstract:** *Kayalpatnam is a South Indian seaside community with a long history. It has attracted people and civilizations from all over the world to its once-bustling harbor. It is located on the coast of the Bay of Bengal at the southeast corner of the Indian Peninsula. This hamlet is located in the district of Thoothukudi. Once the maritime trading hub of the seafaring Arabs in south India was Kayalpatnam. Kayal has welcomed a large number of travelers and traders, Sufis and scholars, Sultans and slaves, invading armies, and rebels. For trade, the Chinese and Greeks were regularly visited. The little town now appears to be a well-kept secret gem, wrapped in layers of history and boasting remarkable histories of trade, resistance, religious research, and literary achievements. Kayalpattinam's contribution to the Islamic spirituality and culture of the region is significant and priceless, particularly to its rich Muslim traditions, Sufi legacy, and centuries-old Arab links. Throughout the years, it has produced a number of religious experts, renowned spiritual teachers, and provided a magnificent marketplace for local and international trade. The old Kayal had been a lively port that attracted ships from remote regions when it was a significant town of the Pandyan Empire and afterwards held by the Ma'bar Sultans for a comparatively brief period. Marco Polo, Wassaf, Rashiduddin, Barbosa, Abdul Razak, and Nicolo de Conti, among others, had arrived at this Tamil Muslim town on the Coromandel Coast and written extensively about it at various periods. Even Ptolemy and Ibn Battuta praised the region's economic splendors.*

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**Keywords:** Kayalpatnam, Nayaks, Nawabs, Moplahs, Dargah, Mihrab, Malabar

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## Introduction

South Asia's trading operations were mostly structured under the aegis of the Cheras and their feudatories around the end of the first millennium. This was primarily done to accumulate money in order to oppose the Cholas' eventual economic and political expansionist activities. The Cholas tried to monopolize Southeast Asia's economic activity by dominating Ceylon's exchange centers, the Coromandel Coast, and the Sailendras. With networks extending to Abbasid Persia and Fatimid Egypt, Jewish

merchants joined the Arabs in expanding their trade into the Indian Ocean areas; nonetheless, the principal route by which they transported goods to the Mediterranean world was via Aden al-Qus, Fustat/Cairo, and Alexandria (Malekandathil 2002: 240-41). Coincidentally, with the fast Islamic growth in the ninth century, Arab dhows and Abbassid merchants regularly visited the Malabar Coast for trade. The Cheras had begun mobilizing Kerala's marine trade as early as the 9<sup>th</sup> century, primarily through the port of Quilon (Rao 1918: 66).

Kayalpatnam Region was called Tenpandy Nadu under the reign of the Pandyas and Cholas, as Tirunelveli Seemai under the Madurai Nayaks' and as the land of Southern Poligars under the Arcot Nawabs. After the formation of revenue districts under the British Raj, there emerged the Tirunelveli District. Nowadays, it is in Tuticorin District. During the Sangam Age and after, the area was under Pandya rule and was conquered by the Cholas in the ninth century CE. Thereafter came the rise of the Pandyas as the Second Empire by the twelfth century when they reconquered this area and it continued under their sway till the immersion of Vijayanagar Kingdom. It was occupied by the Portuguese and then by Dutch during the sixteenth century. In between, Nayaks acted as representatives of the Vijayanagar Kingdom. During their reign, Arcot Nawabs assigned this area to the East India Company in the eighteenth century.

### **The Native Specialty of Kayalpatnam**

According to the 2011 census, Kayalpatnam had a population of 40,588 with a sex ratio of 1,082 females for every 1,000 males, much above the national average of 929 (Census, Government of India 2011). There were 4,995 children under the age of six, with 2,548 boys and 2,447 girls. 7.37 % and 0.01 % were assigned to Scheduled Castes and Tribes, respectively. The town's average literacy rate was 81.3 percent, compared to 72.99 % nationally (Census, Government of India 2011). According to the 2011 religious census, Kayalpatnam has 26.34 % Hindus, 67.24 % Muslims, 6.36 % Christians, and 0.01 % others (Census, Government of India 2011). Also, the total Muslim population in Kayalpattinam is 27,293, which is 67.24% of the total population.

The identity of the Kayalpatnam area is founded on trade history rather than political or religious factors. Commerce, political developments, cultural traits, and social structures have all contributed to the development of the Kayalpatnam area. When 'Colonialism' promotes inter-regional differences and prejudice, the sub-regional identity grows. Further, the Kayalpatnam region is one of the rich areas of archaeological enquiry since the discovery of Megalithic implements by Dr. Jagor (Jagor 1876) in Adhichanallur. The Kayalpatnam region comprises other historical places like (i) Adichanallur (the urn burial field), (ii) Korkai (capital of Pandyan country), (iii) Srivaikuntam and Tiruchandur (the religious places), and (iv) Kayalpatnam, Virapandyapatnam, and Kulasekarapatnam (the commercial spots). Kayalpatnam and its surrounding places lie on the banks of 'Thamirabarani' and on the coast of 'Coramandel' (Pate 1917: 431). This region forms a part of the Tuticorin

District. Kayalpatnam is a historic seaport town of the Pandian country. Thamirabarani originates from the slopes of the Agasthiyamalai 8°, 37', north latitude and 77° 15', east longitude in the Western Ghats traverses 'Tirunelveli' and 'Tuticorin' (Figure 1) Districts. After the 'Pabanasam' falls, it runs in an eastern direction and flows into the Gulf of Mannar. 'Kayalpatnam' is located at its mouth. Korkai is in a few kilometers' interiors (Ramachandran 1980:11). Adichanallur, Srivaikuntam, and Kulasekarapatnam lie on the banks of this river.

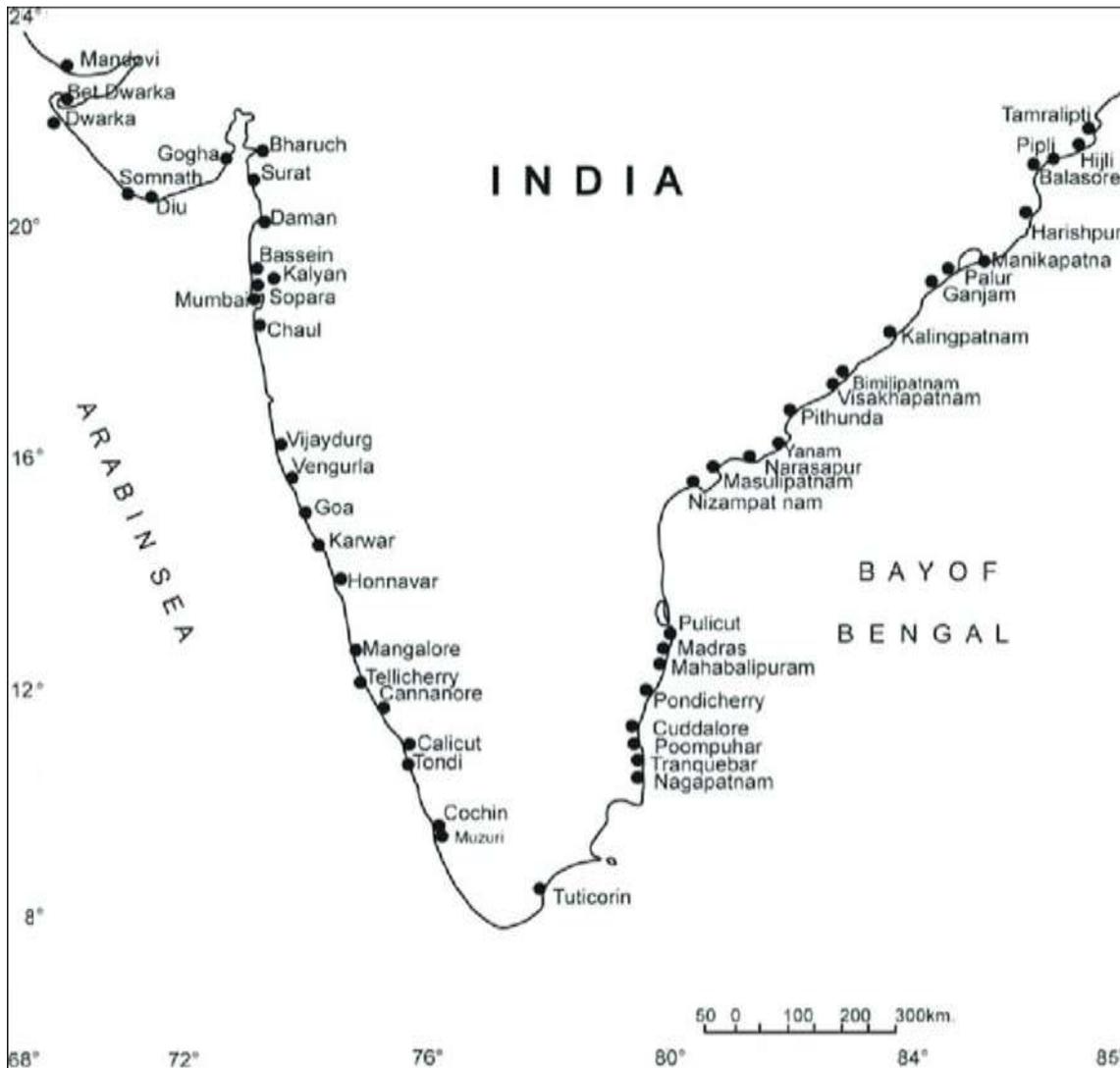


Figure 1: Ancient seaports in India

Kayalpatnam is located in 8° 35' latitude and 78° 07' longitude (Revenue Records of Kayalpatnam 1990). There is evidence for the presence of the Pandyan capital Kabadapuram on the bank of Thamiraparani during the period of the second Sangam Age. Valmiki, the author of the Ramayana, depicts the splendor of Kavate, the capital of the Pandyas, after describing the origin, course, and merging of the river 'Thamiraparani' with the sea. The epic 'Ramayana' also claims that the 'Vanara' men observed the 'Kavatapuram' fortifications brilliantly ornamented entry gate (Schoff

1974: 314). According to the preceding sources, Kabadapuram (Pandya kavate) was the Pandya capital, located at the mouth of the Thamiraparani River. The town of Kayalpatnam is located near the mouth of the river Thamiraparani (Figure 2) (Selvaraj 1984).

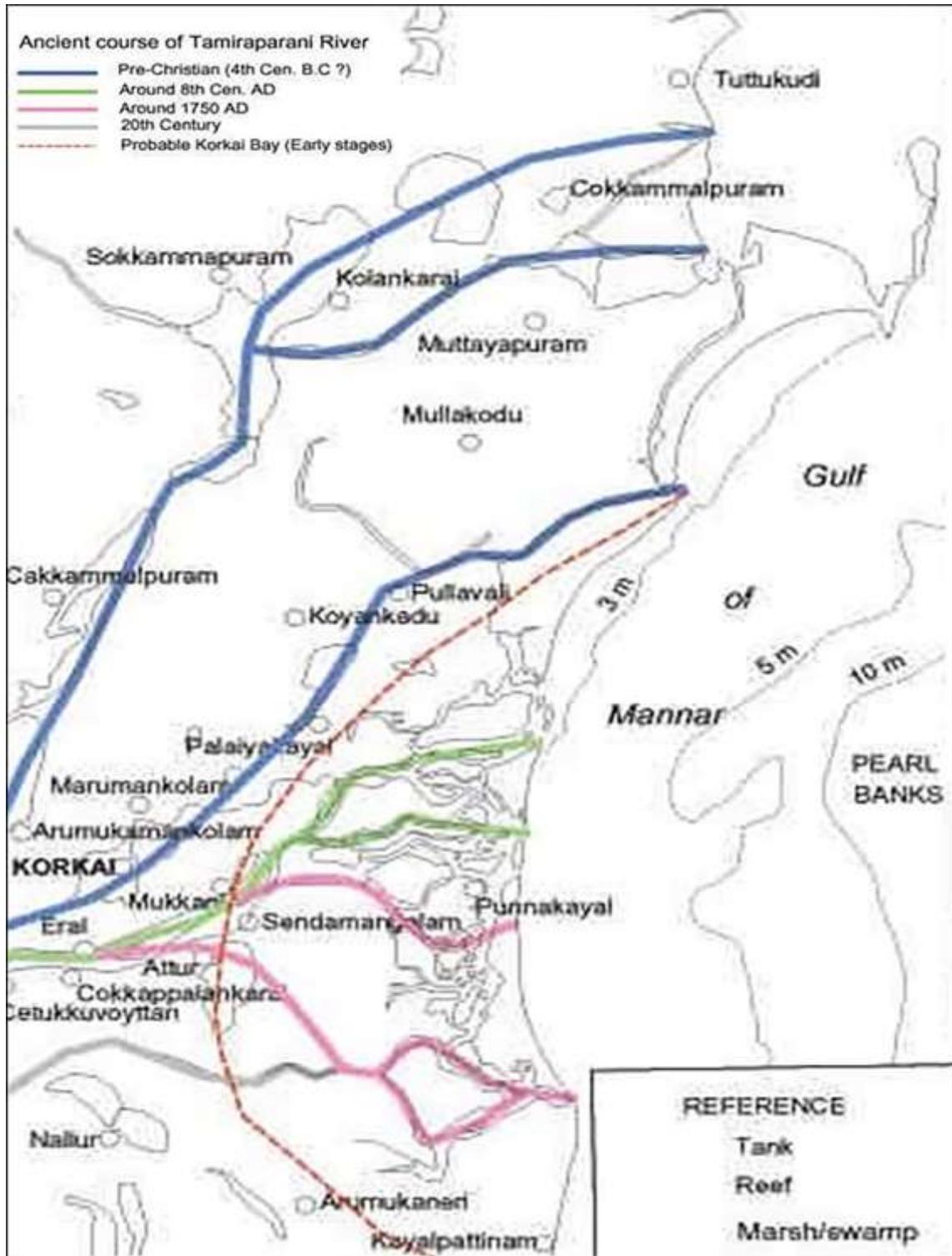


Figure 2: Map showing ancient course of Thamiraparani River

Korkai near Kayalpatnam served as a section or fraction of Kabadapuram. Chronologically, Korkai is the oldest port site of Tamil country possibly since the beginning of the first millennium BC. Korkai (8°40'N; 78°5'E) is recognized by the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea as Colchis and by Ptolemy as Kolkhoi. Correct identification came in 1838. Early archaeological excavations carried out by Caldwell in the Tamiraparani delta in the 19th century, affirmed its present site almost in ruins close to a place called Eral (Gurumurthy 1974: 279). It was a dual centre of early Pandya authority, mentioned in the Ramayana and Mahabharat as Pandya-Kavada and as Kapatapuram in Kalithogai. Due of Korkai's preeminent status, the Periplus refers to the whole Gulf of Mannar as the Colchic Gulf. The early items of the site at Korkai have been discovered thanks to excavations by Nagaswamy and others. Stone inscriptions at Korkai's Vetrivelamman Koil and the Pillayar Kovil, as well as at Attur on the other bank of the river, confirm that the location is the historic port of Korkai. Though it continued to function till the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, it was on a decline since the 3rd century AD. Palayakayal arose as a new port after Korkai's demise, although it never reached Korkai's popularity. The seashore is currently around 200 metres east of Kayalpattinam.

Aditchanallur, the largest megalithic burial urn region in South India, situated about 20 kilometres upstream of Korkai on the same river valley on the right side of Tamiraparani (Ramachandran 1980:16). Adichanallur site has revealed that they belonged to the period between 905 BC and 696 BC. In 2005, around 169 clay urns containing human skeletons were unearthed that date back to at-least 3,800 years. In 2018, research on skeletons remains were dated to 2500 BC–2200 BC. (Christy 2019: 158) After the destruction of Kabadapuram, which was on the same site, the current Kayalpatnam site may have sprung up as a new emporium. Marco Polo describes the city of Cail (Kayal) as:

*“... a great and noble city belongs to Ashar, the eldest of the five brother kings. In this city, all the ships touch from the west, as from Hormos and from Kis and from Aden, and all Arabia, laden with horses and other things for sale. And this brings a great concourse of people from the country roundabout and so there is great business done in this city of Cail (Yule and Cordier 1929: 370).*

Some of the Arabic inscriptions discovered in Kayalpatnam show that Egyptian merchants may have visited the territory or perhaps stayed there permanently. On June 23, 1498, Sheik Abubakar, son of Cairo Utuman, died here, according to one of the inscriptions on the cenotaph. Caldwell, who explored this area in 1861, found a hoard of coins from the 13th century C.E. Some seem to be from the Gulf area, while one was issued in Spain during the reign of Peter of Aragon (1276 CE) (Caldwell 1984: 80). Mackenzie and Walter Elliot also noticed some Chinese coins here (Yule and Paleramo 1984: 8).

According to "Dr. Caldwell," a new emporium emerged between Korkai and the sea after the sea had retreated from Korkai due to the increasing elevation of the line of

coast. Kayal was the one (Caldwell 1982: 18). But some centuries later, the new place Kayal served as a seaport and carried immense direct trade with China and Arabia. Because Korkai was found at length to be too far inland for the convenience of seaborne trade, here Korkai was referred by Caldwell instead of Kabadapuram (Badshah 2008: 31). The current Sea customs route to the Kayalpatnam beach (Figure 3) was previously known as *Pandaksalai* (warehouse) road. The inscriptions of Kulottunga - I says about 'Korkai-Maramangalam'. It shows that Korkai was also called 'Maramangalam.' 'Maran' is the name of one of the Pandyan rulers. During the tenth and eleventh centuries, the imperial Cholas were in possession of this region. The references are in the above inscriptions, which were found near Korkai. From the time of the Pandyas until the seventeenth century, when the 'Dutch' people took the seaport of Tuticorin in 1658, Kayalpatnam was a well-known seaport (Latiff 2004:120). Kayalpatnam declined in importance with the introduction of Dutch control in Tuticorin, whereas Tuticorin grew in prominence.



Figure 3: Map of Kayalpatnam region (<https://sufimanzil.org/kayalpatnam-history/>)

The Second Empire (12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries) of the Pandyas reached its widest extent and attained the height of its splendor. In this age, Pandya country was divided into five areas, and five Pandyas ruled them at a time. Marco Polo, who visited part of the Pandya Kingdom towards the end of the thirteenth century, speaks of 'five royal brothers' and 'five crowned kings' of this most significant province of *Ma'bar*.<sup>\*</sup> Jatavarman Sundara Pandya I (ruled 1251-68) and <sup>\*</sup>Foreign writers used the word '*Ma'bar*' for Coromandel Coast.

Maravarman Kulasekhara I was the most powerful monarch of the Pandya dynasty. There were also a number of "co-regents" or "sub-kings," especially during the reign of Maravarman Kulasekhara I, although it is not certain how far their power stretched or what their relationship was. Under Kulasekhara, Nilakanta Sastri recognized four such "sub-kings," including Jatavarman Sundara Pandya II (accession in 1276) and Jatavarman Sundara Pandya III, as well as an unidentified ruler (Baliga 1960: 37). Chinese sources regarding the diplomatic contact with Mabar in 1280 and the following years mention the Sultans' five brothers (Yule and Cordies 1921: 331). The Muhammadan historian Wassaf who had chances of gaining a more accurate knowledge of South India in his day, says, "A few years since the Dewar was Sundara Pandi, who has three brothers, each of whom established himself in independence in some different country" (Elliot and Dowson 1867: 32). The five provinces were Madurai, Tirunelveli, Ramnad, Karur and Pudukottai. This time Korkai acted as the capital for the Tirunelveli region. The Kayalpatnam was the seaport of the Tirunelveli Pandyan country.

The emergence of Muhammadan power in Madurai about 1330 A.D. forced the Pandya monarchs to flee the Madurai and Ramnad provinces. Then they moved to the south, where they founded 'Ten Pandi Nadu'. It's possible that the 'Korkai' had been their capital (Pandarathar 1977: 130). The Portuguese arrived at Calicut, Kerala, in India on May 20, 1498 (Latiff 2004:110). They arrived in three tiny ships captained by Vasco da Gama, the first European sailor to reach India by doubling the Cape of Good Hope. In the following year, he returned to Europe and presented his king with a synopsis of his voyage's events and findings. He cited a spot on the Tirunelveli coast called 'Kayal', where he was told pearls might be discovered and which was under the Mussalman rule (Yule and Cordies 1921: 372).

Portuguese observations on south India provide ample material for a good analysis and assessment of south India culture and history in the Middle Ages. Kayalpatnam is known as 'Cale Patao' in Portuguese. Fr. Sebastiao de Pedro who lived during the battle between Portuguese and Arab Muslims on this coast mentions that battle in his work. Fr. Joao de Villa Conde who visited Kayalpatnam on his way to Ceylon on 22 April 1547 called it as a settlement of Muslims (Stephen 1998: 66). Portuguese could not develop their commercial activities directly with Tamil country initially. As the Moors or Muhammadans already occupied the coastal region of Tamil country. The illiterate Paravas were caught defenseless in the whirlpool of power politics and commercial conflicts between the Portuguese and native potentates, between the Catholic Christian and the Arab Muslims (Mohammadans). They were frequently utilized as important pawns on the chessboard of colonial politics, keeping people eternally dependant on either politics or religion (Manickam 1998: 20). According to Dr. Caldwell, the first known appearance of a Portuguese expedition on the Tirunelvelly coast occurred in 1532, when a committee of Paravas, persons of the fisher caste, traveled to Cochin in search of assistance against the Muhammadans. Kayalpatnam was the most populous city along the coast at the time, as it is now (Caldwell 1982: 68). When the Paravas

approached the Portuguese in Cochin, latter agreed to help them provided they supported them in their mission of converting people to their faith. The deputies agreed to the proposal and were baptized by Father Vaz and other priests in Cochin (Latiff 2004: 113).

In 1532, a Portuguese armada led by Father Micheal Vaz, the Vicar General of Cochin, landed at the seashore of Kayalpatnam at the invitation of the Paravas. The combat took place between Portuguese and Muslims in Kayalpatnam, and it began near Irattakualam Palli and ended near Punnai Kayal on the north end of the city (Latiff 2004: 113). The battle was mainly confined to the coast of Kayal only. The Muslims were pitted against Portuguese soldiers who were backed up by the Paravas of Kayal and surrounding villages. The conflict lasted many days, with both forces fighting violently, and many people died on both sides. Muslims suffered severe losses, with some of their homes and even places of worship being burned by the Portuguese. Many Muslims became martyrs (Kunju 1989: 32). The tombstones located along the coastline between Kattu Magudoom Palli and the Punnai Kayal boundary tell the story of Muslims who battled the Portuguese valiantly and died as martyrs. People dug between the Irattai Kualam Palli areas and the Koman area of Kayalpatnam a few years ago and discovered the bones of warriors who died in the battle of 1530. Swords and other wartime equipment were discovered and gathered (Latiff 2004: 114).

The Portuguese wreaked havoc in Kayalpatnam, and residents were terrified of their lawless, violent enemy. As a result, some Muslims fled to Kilakarai, Paranki Pettai, Nagore, Karaical, Palaverkadu, Madras, and Ceylon (Mohammad 2001: 8). Following their victory in combat, the Portuguese proceeded to baptize the Paravas all along the coast in line with an agreement that their delegates had signed. According to Dr. Caldwell, the whole Parava caste accepted the Portuguese deliverers' faith, and the majority of them were baptized. After the war, the jealous Paravas of Kayal, who had summoned the Portuguese army from Cochin to subdue the Kayal Muslims, were compelled to submit to their power. At Punnai Kayal, the Portuguese built a fort and established a garrison (Latiff 2004: 114). Kayalpatnam Muslims suffered a lot due to the atrocities of the Portuguese from 1532 to 1560 A.D. Before the advent of the Portuguese, Kayalpatnam Muslims had been in good economic and social conditions (Mohammad 2001: 8). Kayalpatnam Muslims lost their commerce and educational dominance due to Portuguese barbarous tortures, cruelties, and unhealthy economic competitiveness. Kayalpatnam's status was diminished, and the Portuguese referred to Punnai Kayal as Kayal rather than Kayalpatnam. Saints like Kali Alauddin Wali, Abdur Rasheed Wali, Shaik Sadak Wali, a student of Nagore Qadir Wall, and other saints and academics aided the people at this time (Mohammad 2001: 8).

### **Arab Settlements in Kayalpatnam**

The area of Kayalpatnam is a melting pot of faiths. The Hindus make up the vast bulk of the people in this area. In this location, though, Muslims and Christians are almost evenly distributed. The Pandyan kings did not want to lose their profitable trade with

Arabs. As a result, they equipped them with all the necessary amenities. The Pandyas were unconcerned about their missionary efforts. Similarly, Madurai's Nayaks developed trading contacts with the Portuguese, who brought Christianity to the region (Homell 1922: 25). In their early phases of development, organized faiths such as Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism spread over the Southern Peninsula.

The first Muslim fleet appeared in Indian waters in 636 A.D. during the Caliphate of Umar (Tarachand 1936: 31). The land routes to India were investigated, and a considerable quantity of information was gathered, leading to Muhammad bin Qasim's conquest of Sindh in the eighth century. Meanwhile, sea trade persisted, and Muslims established themselves in three ports along the south Indian coast and Ceylon (Tarachand 1936: 31). In the early years of the Christian period, Arabs and Jews settled in Ceylon and Southern India.

On their trip to China, Arab traders traveled through the Coromandal coast. The typical routes' from Arabian ports or the Persian Gulf to China ran through the seven seas, including the Gulf of Palk and the Bay of Bengal, which the Arabs called 'Schelahath' or 'Kalahabar' and 'Kerdenj' (Tarachand 1936: 40) respectively. The majority of the population of the Arabs on the east coast lived in 'Kayalpatnam' in the Tirnelvelly district, near the mouth of the Thamiraparani, where Caldwell picked up large quantities of broken pottery and, more importantly, a number of Muslim coins bearing dates ranging from the seventh century (71 A.H) to the thirteenth century A.D (Tarachand 1936: 40).

The first settlement of Arabs in Kayalpatnam was from Mecca and Medina and they landed here during the reign of the first caliph, the successor of our Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), Ameerul Momeneen Hazarat Sayyidna Abubakar Siddiq, with the message of Islam (Hussain 2007: 26). The second settlement of Arabs took place at Kayalpatnam in 842 A.D. They came from Egypt (Hussain 2007: 26).

The Tamil Kings' interactions with Arabian and Persian merchants were usually warm and friendly. The Hindu rulers of the south needed horses for their armies, and they were heavily reliant on the Arabs for fine-bred horses, for which they were well compensated. South India's western shore is closer to Arabia, Persia, and other Western Asian countries. Because of the proximity of these two regions, lively commerce between Arabs and Tamils developed quickly. The lucrative horse trade rewarded the Arabs well, as they imported additional horses from Hurmus, Qais, Bahrayn, and Oman. These exotic animals were carried directly to Tiruperunthurai, which was formerly a bustling seaport from which Arabian horses could be readily transported to Madurai and the Chola capital. By the end of the thirteenth century, Kayalpatnam became the principal trading center of the Muslims in South India (Uwise 1953: 10). Amir Khusro and Ibn Batutta give ample testimony to the existence of many Muslim settlements in Malabar (Habib 1931: 99). They were also responsible for creating several Muslim communities in the south, like the Moplahs, Lebbaies, and Nawayats in south India and in Tamilagam.

The Anjuvannatar was a merchant guild that had commercial links with Tamil Nadu. It was initially thought to be a guild of Arab Syrian merchants, but it was eventually limited to Arab merchants alone. On the east coast, proof of their existence can be seen in sites like Pandya country's Kayalpatnam. In later inscriptions, one particular class of traders called "Kudiraichetties" was mentioned as specially engaged in importing and supplying horses, possibly they acted as agents for the Arab merchants. The merchants, who came from Arabia, were called Sonagars (Ramachandran 1980: 132).

Sufi saints have also played a significant part in Kayalpattanam's Islamization. "The most important element in the development of Islam in South India was the impact of Sufis, Muslim mystical adepts whose actions are now recognised to have been vital in the extension of Islam throughout South East Asia and many other parts of the Muslim world," according to Susan Bayly (Bayly 1989: 74). The Sufi tradition was introduced into south India by early Muslim traders or navigators as early as the eighth or ninth century A.D. and shortly after, with the support of West Asian traders, a number of commercial sites were established as Sufi hubs, such as Pulicat, Kilakkarai, Kayalpattanam, and so on (Bayly 1989: 77). Kayalpattanam is historically significant as an early Sufi hub in South India. The prominence of Kayalpattanam as one of the centres of Sufi culture in south India has clearly been demonstrated by a significant number of copper plate inscriptions unearthed in the graveyards of various tombstones, which include the records of death and graves of some local figures. According to legend, one of these inscriptions dates from the reign of Pandyan ruler Tribhuvanachakravartin Kulashekara. A well-established Muslim community flourished in Tamil Nadu as a result of Arab contact with the Coromandel Coast. Similarly, they had blended with the indigenous society on the Malabar Coast by learning the native language and traditions and marrying local women. The Muslims of the Coromandel Coast who speak Tamil are known as Labbais now (Caldwell 1982: 36).

The Labbais are referred to as 'The Mappilas of Coromandel Coast, that is to say the converted Dravidians or Hindus with a minor admixture of Arab ancestry' in as given in the 1881 census report. The majority of them are claimed to be traders, with some weaving corach (sedge) mateti and others diving in the Gulf of Mannar's pearl and chank fishery. Interestingly, Kayalpattanam in Tirunelveli district appears to have been the first Labbais colony. According to one account, the Labbais are descended from Arab traders who travelled to India in the eleventh and twelfth century. The Mughals oppressed these Arabs, who ultimately returned to their homeland (Miller 1976: 38). The importance of the Marakkayars should not be overlooked while examining the Muslim colonies of Kayalpattanam. Despite being classified as part of the Labbais, they varied from them in key respects. The Marakkayars thought they were superior than the Labbais at times. The term Marakkayar is thought to have originated from the Arabic word Markab, which means "boat," indicating their active participation in trading. They had thought of themselves as descendants of Arab merchant immigrants with distinct Islamic cultural elements mixed in with a few Tamil

cultural characteristics (Thurston and Rangachari 1909: 1). They played an important role in Kayalpattanam's maritime trade and ultimately became the Zamorins' naval officers on the western coast during the sixteenth century (Stephen 1991: 73). The Labbais were the followers of Hanafis, prevalent in North India and the Deccan (Bayly 1989: 80). In reality, for more than a millennium following the arrival of Islam, the port of Kayalpattanam has played a significant part in the history of Muslim settlements on the Coromandel Coast.

## Early Mosques in Kayalpatnam Region

*Kadalkarai* mosque was the first and earliest mosque in Kayalpatnam which was erected by Arab traders and missionaries (mainly Sahabas) who arrived in Hijira 12 (633 A.D.) during the lifetime of Hajrath Seyyidina Abu Bucker Siddiq (Latiff 2004: 60). Mr. S.Rajagopal M.A. and Mr. Bose M.A. (Department of Archaeology - Madurai) read and validated one inscription that began with Pu-vin-kelathi and claimed that it belongs to the reign of Pandavarmah - Kulasekara Pandyan. The land and grant provided to this mosque by the Pandyan ruler are described in this inscription (Latiff 2004: 60). The largest and the oldest monument of Kayalpatnam is the *Jami al Kabeer or Kutba periya palli* (Sinnakani 2007: 301). In the graveyards around the structure, there are a lot of tombstones from different eras. The mosque is a magnificent structure with a portico on one side and a large prayer hall on the other. The structure is entirely made of stone, with 70 cm thick walls and monolithic shafts and bracket capitals supporting the roof lintels. *The Jami Al Saghir or Kuthba Sirupalli*, the Smaller Jami, located near the Jammu-Al-Kabir, is a mosque that is similar to the bigger Jami and is said to have been erected around 750 years ago, according to natives. Although the mosque has no historical inscriptions, it is related to some of the town's earliest tombstones, which serve to date the structure. *The Ahamed Nainar Masjid* is situated in the heart of the old town and near the building is a graveyard with the Shrine of Qazi Alaudeen (Latiff 2004: 89). Whose family is known to have served as Kayalpatnam's Qazi (judge). The Shrine is also linked to the Naina family, whose ancestor Ahamed is said to be the mosque's creator. The Shrine's structure is modern, unlike the mosque's, although the graves within originating from the sixteenth century.

*The Sirunainar Palli or Qadiriya Masjid* is located to the south of the Jami Al Kabir and is intimately associated with the leaders of the Qadiriya sect in Kayalpatnam (Sinnakani 2007: 301). A number of Sufi shaikhs are claimed to have lived and taught there, and their tombs may be seen there. According to legend, the mosque was erected around 650 years ago by a Hindu stonemason under the sponsorship of a Sufi, *Saint Shaik Abdul Rashid*. The mosque is split into five aisles by four rows of four columns and has a single hall with walls 60 cm thick. The hall has three doors with two windows on the eastern side and a single mihrab on the western side, and it is practically square in design. There are two doors and two windows on the northern and southern sides. The absence of a front is the fundamental variation in the mosque's layout from others previously seen. In most South Indian mosques, there is a colonnade (large hall) (Latiff 2004: 89). *The Rettaikulam Palli* which is situated at the north of the old town in the

block between Nainar and Lebbai Appa streets, is called the Jami Al Kabir. The mosque is the town's most sophisticated structure, with a variety of unique elements not found elsewhere. Its name, which means "mosque of the two ponds, comes from the two connected reservoirs, one of which had a praline dish and a long sword discovered while silt was being cleaned some time ago (Shokoohy 2003: 107). Both items are now kept in the mosque. The mosque contains a prayer hall with a colonnaded portico in front of the single main entrance on the east side and two entrances on the northern and southern sides with the traditional projecting porches. The door frames are embellished with carved foliations; however, most of the carvings are in poor condition and hidden by several whitewash coatings. The outside walls are adorned with low relief pilasters similar to those found in the town's other mosques (Shokoohy 2003: 107). Another notable monument in the neighborhood of Kayalpatnam is the *Kattu Mogdum Palli*, which, while not located inside the town, is noteworthy for its wooden structure. On the way to Tiruchendur, the Kattupalli lies about two kilometers outside of Kayalpatnam. Kattupalli's primary structure is a stone tomb chamber known as Mogdum Dargah rather than a mosque. Kattu Mogdum mosque was identified by two inscriptions, one near the pond and the other between the mosque and the Dargah (Latiff 2004: 71). It has a rectangular layout with a flat roof supported by the walls and lintels resting on trapezoid capitals over four monolithic columns.

Despite the expedition that destroyed the ancient mosque in Tamil Nadu, the monuments of Kayalpatnam give a foundation for a more profound knowledge of the Muslim community of South India's architectural traditions. The abundance of architectural remains in Kayalpatnam, as well as the presence of tombs and other inscriptions" dating from the 14th century onwards, show that this "City of Kayal" was the site of a Muslim settlement at least from the end of the 13th century and considering that there is no other side in the area with such an abundance of Islamic remains. The constructions of the following mosques happened after 1400 A.D. They are Salahuddeen Palli, Kadai Palli, Kutty Appa Palli, Koman Palli, Maricar Palli, Hafil Ameer Palli, Appa Palli, Thayim Palli and Aram Palli.

## Conclusion

During the early centuries, Kayal was a prominent seaport in the region. The port was used to export pearls and chanks caught along the south coast. The trading ventures with Arabs and Chinese benefitted the numerous rulers of this region. The blossoming of various religious groups is well-known in this region. In truth, Hindu kings were religiously tolerant of various faiths. It explains how Islam and Christianity spread. The Tamil - Arab culture began to reflect on their social life as a result of Arab settlements and their marriage with local women. It traces the influence of Islam in the society. The famous travellers and historians like as Abdullah Wasaf, Rasheeduddin, Ibn Batuta, and Marco Polo provided information about Kayalpatnam. Rev. Bishop Caldwell, Sir Elliot, Col-Henry Yule, Sir John Emerson Tennant, Sir Simon Casio Chitty, and Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan all support the theory that the Arabs

initially arrived in Kayalpatnam and then spread to the rest of India. However, there is an unfortunate controversy among historians that the city recorded as Cail, Qa'il, or Kayal in ancient and mediaeval travel reports is not Kayalpatnam. They say that today's Kayalpatnam is a relatively modern town, and that the old Kayal's exact location is unknown. In his celebrated study, 'Maritime History of Coromandel Muslims', renowned historian Dr. Raja Mohamad claims that after the Portuguese demolished and seized Old Kayal, the new Kayalpatnam was created as a competing port. In reality, a careful evaluation indicates that the unneeded conflation was introduced by colonial historian Robert Caldwell, a South Indian historian who was also the Bishop of Madras at the time. In 1890, Caldwell conducted an excavation operation and identified a location five miles north of Kayalpatnam as the genuine site of Kayal, pointing out the remnants of walls, temples, wells, and storehouses. However, he makes no mention of any Islamic ruins in the area.

The Muslims had their settlements in Kayalpattanam from the early days of Islam. Therefore, the Arabs had a prominent role in making Kayalpattanam a hinterland. Kayal has made an incomparable contribution to Islamic learning and spirituality in the region. On the literary field, the Tamil literary community considers Kayalpatnam poets and academicians in high regard. Through their great appreciation of the literary beauty of Tamil language, scholars and poets from the Kayalpatnam Muslim Community have formed a vital component of Tamil culture over the years.

The Islamic art and architecture heritage has greatly influenced the local culture. True Islamic architectural features, such as the arch, minar, and dome, were introduced. Many beautiful structures were built in the Dravidian architecture beginning in the seventeenth century A.D. There were a lot of mosques and tombs that have Islamic architectural characteristics. There is a sprit in the construction of mosques in modern times.

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