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g), the script went through some modification to include more modern Alphonson during 19<sup>th</sup> century, through a conscious effort of reformers used printing in Arabi-Malayalam.

Arabic literature written in Arabic alphabet are often referred to as *aljamiado* (Hegyi 1979). Aljamiado refers to the literature of the Moriscos, former Christians forcibly converted into Christianity in 15th century long after Christian 'lost Spain'. Arabi-Malayalam was used by a minority in Kerala. This is not fully alone. Popular poems/songs written by Monkutty Vaidyar, one of the eminent poets who wrote in Arabi-Malayalam were sung by people who knew Arabi-Malayalam, as well as in states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka (Jallobb 2013).

### **Third History**

Information on how old Arabi-Malayalam is, is often contingent upon proof of Arab presence in the Malabar Coast. Contact with the coast of Malabar brought with Arabs, Arab merchants' contact with the coast of Malabar and Omani trade with Malayalam. Some scholars including K Aboobakkar and O Vazhippara (2013) establish that evidence for presence of Arabs from ninth century establishes that Malayalam has been in existence since then. (Vazhippara 2013). While it is not clear whether Arabi-Malayalam developed in that specific period or not, there is ample evidence for Arab presence in the Malabar Coast. Contact between India and China has a very long history that could be traced back to before Christ (Hegyi 1979). Arabs were middlemen in the trade between coast of Kerala and China. Arabs themselves had extensive trade relations with Kerala (Hegyi 1979). Some other languages including Malayalam have references to spices in various historical materials. Fourteenth century Ito Banita's records speak about colonies of Arab merchants along Malabar coast. Arabs traders lived in small colonies in Kerala while during monsoon season and were socially involved with the natives. They had close relations with the local traders and chiefains. Such settlements led to marriages with native women under the auspices of local rulers (Hegyi 1979). Thus is the premise for the argument that the Mappila community, which originates in Malabar before the advent of Islam. By the 15th century, the Mappila community consisted of large numbers of Hindus converts. Various opinions about the origin Arabi-Malayalam itself. Scholars concur the reason for emergence of Arabi-Malayalam, they have

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### **Arabi-Malayalam and the Mappila Identity**

Basima P.

#### **Introduction**

Used almost exclusively by the Muslim population of India, the Mappila community has been a key force in delineating and shaping Indian Muslim identity (Qutubuddin 2007). Arabic made its entry to India at various points in time and invasion. Many of these languages made use of Arabic script, including Kashmiri, Bengali. Some languages such as Sindhi and Kashanifuri borrowed the script and in turn developed mixed languages like Arabic-Turk and Arabic-Tamil.

This essay attempts to understand Arabi-Malayalam's role in the formation of Mappila Muslims of the pre-independent Kerala. It mediates the identity of Mappila Muslims of the State of Kerala, south India, and the Malabar region. It also attempts to understand the role of religion in the formation of the Mappila community, its role in fellowship and its social relations with the local traders and chiefains. Such settlements led to marriages with native women under the auspices of local rulers (Hegyi 1979). Thus is the premise for the argument that the Mappila community, which originates in Malabar before the advent of Islam. By the 15th century, the Mappila community consisted of large numbers of Hindus converts. Various opinions about the origin Arabi-Malayalam itself. Scholars concur the reason for emergence of Arabi-Malayalam, they have

concluded that the text used included Arabic, Sanskrit, Arabic, English and Malayalam.