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Topic : **SUFI-SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTIONS OF HADRAMI
SAYYIDS IN KERALA: A HISTORICAL STUDY**

Abstract:

Key words: *Hadramawt, Sayyids, Sufism, Diaspora, Malabar*

Hadrami Sayyid diaspora has been one of the major demographic groups of Muslim society in Kerala since the last three Centuries. The ethnic Arab communities in Kerala originate mainly from the Hadramawt in Yemen and Arabian Peninsula. This place is the region of Hadramawt in present day Yemen, near the South Arabian Coast. Those who hail from Hadramawt call themselves Hadrami. Among these Arabs, the ones that gained extensive recognition within India and overseas were the *Sayyids of Hadramawt*, Descendants of Prophet Muhammad. These Hadrami Sayyids attained fast upward social mobility in Kerala through their recognized respect as the Prophet's Descendants, as exemplars of good Muslims, and as preachers and teachers of Islam in a multi-religious environment. Bearing a sacred lineage that traces back to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the Hadrami Sayyids indeed have played a key role in the making of indigenous traditional Islam in the region.

The present study shed light towards the massive involvement of Hadrami Sayyid community in socio-religious scholarly contributions in Kerala. Like their counterparts in other parts of the world, the Hadrami Sayyids of Malabar were successful in not only drawing strong public support and regards, but also they were influential enough to leave their own marks in the Sufi-

scholarly fields of Malabar. This study aimed at bringing prominent Sufi scholarship among Hadrami diaspora in Kerala and their contributions in forming and developing of traditional Islam. The study checked the cultural growth of Sufi liturgical activities and their ethnic knot with Southern Arabia. The study attempted at discovering the historical development and integration of cultural politics in the indigenous Islam of Kerala.

The different professions of the *Hadrami Sayyid* individuals shown here exemplify the changing role of the Sayyids outside their birth place. The examples from Malabar show that several Sayyids went into successful political leadership and commercial purposes. In Hyderabad, prominent Hadrami Sayyid Community entered into the armed forces. Unlike the Europeans, whose actions combined invasion and trade and who sustained dominations by natives, Hadramis arrived into wide-ranging exchanges with the Malabar local community in the Indian Ocean region, particularly in modes that come under the broad banner of religion. Their travels traced out pathways across the ocean marked by mosques, graves, and schools and other institutions.

Historical descriptions of *Hadrami Sayyids* show that they have remarkable capacity to deal with the socio-cultural and political situations in and outside of *Hadramawt*. There are various writings of historians and anthropologists based on their research works on Hadrami Sayyids and their migration to Indian Ocean, especially since the 1990s. Morimoto, Ulrike Freitag, Engseng Ho, Anne Bang and Omar Khalidi are some notable scholars who contributed in the history of Hadrami Sayyids. These studies show how these Sayyids structured a social system as their own and how they secured and enhanced their positions in these societies as per the situations. In total the Hadrami Sayyids were the icon of the time, they were the pioneers of Islamic propagation in their land and their migrated lands.