



Quthubathul Jihadiya And The Semiotics Of Resistance Against Colonial Power In Malabar

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Abstract

Quthubath al-Jihādiyya, written by Qadi Muhammad, represents a pivotal moment in sixteenth-century Kerala's struggle against colonial domination. At the heart of this study lies a central question: How did a single sermon reshape anti-colonial strategy in sixteenth-century Malabar? As a foundational text for jihad-focused political thought, it laid the ethical and intellectual groundwork for later influential works, including Fath al-Mubīn and Tuhfat al-Mujāhidīn. The arrival of the Portuguese in Malabar at the end of the fifteenth century initiated a prolonged conflict, marked by Vasco da Gama's and Cabral's voyages and the consolidation of Portuguese power in Cochin. This led to a series of treaties, the construction and loss of a fort at Calicut, and renewed hostilities, culminating in the construction of a fort at Chaliyam. Quthubath al-Jihādiyya stands out as the first unequivocal statement of resistance, contributing to the Portuguese defeat and the 1571 demolition of the Chaliyam fort, closely associated with Fath al-Mubīn. The conflict persisted, spurring the creation of Tuhfat al-Mujāhidīn in Ponnani. This article re-examines Quthubathul Jihādiyya (1571 CE), an underexplored sermon by Qazi Muhammad ibn Abdul Azeez of Calicut, emphasising its crucial role in Malabar's early anti-colonial efforts. Delivered during the Chaliyam War, the sermon provided spiritual motivation and strategic guidance, integrating Islamic theology, Qur'anic exegesis, and prophetic traditions to galvanise resistance. Drawing on semiotics and postcolonial theory, we assess Quthubathul Jihādiyya as a political sermon. Semiotics illuminates how religious symbols within the sermon convey messages of resistance and empowerment. Postcolonial analysis reveals the sermon as a decisive rebuttal to colonial authority, challenging Portuguese control and cultural assumptions. By applying semiotics, we decipher symbolic elements in the sermon — such as religious icons and language — to uncover deeper layers of meaning and their role in empowering the oppressed. Postcolonial theory further frames the sermon as a critique of colonial narratives, examining how it challenges Portuguese attempts at cultural and political domination. This methodological approach highlights the potency of religious discourse in opposing colonial violence, economic deprivation, and cultural erosion. Semiotics, in this context, refers to the study of signs and symbols as elements of communicative behaviour, particularly how they come to represent resistance and empowerment in the sermon. Postcolonial theory examines the impact of colonialism on cultures and societies, offering a lens through which we explore how Qadi Muhammad's sermon subverts colonial narratives and reasserts local identity and authority. By applying these interpretive frameworks, we demonstrate how Quthubathul Jihādiyya was transformative in shaping anti-imperial ideology in the region. Here, jihad is reinterpreted not as a sectarian conflict but as a principled defence of land, economic stability, and community life under the Zamorin. The sermon counters colonial and orientalist portrayals of Mappila resistance as irrational, instead presenting a considered political theology rooted in ethics, shared responsibility, and strategic foresight. Furthermore, the sermon's discussions of naval warfare, collective action, and interfaith collaboration underscore the emergence of an

early, indigenous form of secular patriotism guided by spiritual values. By foregrounding Quthubathul Jihādiyya as a central text in Malabar's resistance literature, we contribute to broader discussions on subaltern agency, the political power of sermons, and the enduring impact of Islamic thought on regional anti-colonial movements.

Keywords: Quthubathul Jihadiyya; anti-colonial resistance; Portuguese; Malabar Coast; Islamic political theology; semiotics of resistance; Chaliyam War (1571); Mappila–Nair alliance.

Mosques serve as the primary venues for communal prayers, with Friday congregational worship being a central practice for most Muslims. The juridical title "Qadi" derives from the Arabic root *qāḍa'* (قضاء), signifying the exercise of authoritative judicial judgment. It refers to an office vested with the legal authority to adjudicate disputes and administer justice within the framework of Islamic law. The head of the congregation may be the Qazi, the Khatib, or the Imam, who leads the assembly. The Khatib delivers the Khutba, a formal sermon that precedes the Juma (Friday) prayer and which all members are expected to attend. Here, a khutba is a formal religious speech given from the pulpit to guide the community on faith, ethics, and shared responsibility, especially in difficult times. The Ulama represent the broader body of Islamic scholars, while a Qadi is a judicial authority selected from among them. In Quthubath al-Jihadiyya, Qadi Muhammad's sermon is powerful because he held both scholarly and judicial authority. During times of conflict and moral crisis, Muslim Ulama became leaders, expressing resistance through sermons, legal opinions, and poetry based on the idea of jihad. Quthubath al-Jihadiyya is a rare example of such a sermon, written and delivered by Qadi Muhammad as both a religious and political message. It combined Quranic teachings, prophetic traditions, and current grievances to justify resistance against Portuguese rule. Instead of being just a theological talk, it became a call to action, turning jihad from a religious idea into an absolute moral duty. This made the Ulama not only legal and spiritual leaders but also key figures in organising community resistance and political awareness. Reflecting on our analysis of Qadi Muhammad's sermon, we recognise his dual role as both a sympathetic narrator and a critical analyst. While we are drawn to the historical and spiritual significance of this text, we are also mindful of maintaining scholarly distance to evaluate its impact and context within 16th-century Malabar. This reflexive standpoint is crucial for examining the sermon not merely as a historical artefact but as a pivotal moment in anti-colonial literature, to be understood within the ambiguities and complexities of its time. To provide context, the leadership lineage leading up to Qadi Muhammad includes several notable predecessors who each contributed to the institutional continuity. These include Qadi Fakhr-al-Din Usman, who was known for his scholarship and community influence, and Qadi Muhammad's own father, Qadi Abdul Azeez, under whom judicial traditions were strengthened. This historical line of leadership underscores why Qadi Muhammad's sermon marks a turning point: it represents both the culmination of prior efforts and a strategic shift in response to colonial challenges.

Many authors¹ have consistently framed war as just only when waged in defence of land, liberty, and communal order, rather than for aggression or profit. To pre-empt any misinterpretation of jihad as aggressive or militant, it's crucial to underscore from the outset that Quthubath al-Jihadiyya casts jihad as a *fard kifaya*,² or a communal obligation, predicated on the defence of Malabar's social equilibrium, livelihoods, and religious honour against Portuguese intrusion. It is a call for defensive, civic duty, not

¹End Notes

Afsaruddin Asma, *Jihad: What Everyone Needs to Know*, Oxford University Press, United States of America, 2022, p. 12.

² Although the *Qur'an* does not use the term *fard al-kifāyah*, jurists inferred it from verses that assign obligations to a group rather than to all believers, especially Quran 9:122, Q 3:104, and Q 8:60.

sectarian militancy. Historically, the Mappila community in Malabar coexisted peacefully and harmoniously with people of other religions, with religious differences rarely resulting in conflict, hostility, or discrimination. The arrival of the Portuguese disrupted this equilibrium, plunging the community into crisis. A brief comparative reading situates Quthubath al-Jihādiyya alongside other Islamic anti-colonial sermons, such as those of Imam Shamil³ in the Caucasus and Sayyid Ahmed Bareilvi⁴ in North India, which similarly frame resistance as a religious and ethical obligation to protect the Muslim community from foreign domination. The rhetoric and structure of Imam Shamil's sermons often incorporate powerful imagery and appeals to cultural identity, elements that resonate with Quthubath al-Jihādiyya's integration of local and Islamic values. Sayyid Ahmed Bareilvi's sermons, by contrast, employ direct calls for unity and strategic planning, which parallel the emphasis on collective obligation articulated in Quthubath al-Jihādiyya. While sharing this discursive framework, Quthubath al-Jihādiyya is shaped by the specific historical conditions of Malabar and the Indian Ocean world, particularly its engagement with Portuguese maritime and commercial imperialism. This context differentiates the text from other anti-colonial sermons by centring the defence of coastal society, trade, and regional autonomy within a maritime imperial setting.

From 1498 to 1571, the Portuguese committed systematic acts of violence against the Muslims of Malabar, including the desecration of the Qur'an, the destruction of mosques,⁵ the enslavement of believers, the violation of women, the obstruction of the Hajj pilgrimage,⁶ the subordination of Calicut's economy⁷ and brutal physical persecution. Portuguese chroniclers depict their viceroy, Afonso de Albuquerque, as motivated by crusading zeal, even attributing to him the proposal to march on Medina and target the tomb there for symbolic purposes.⁸ This episode demonstrates how religious symbols were instrumentalised as tools of power and reveals the profound hostility toward Islam that underpinned Portuguese imperial thought at the time. The extreme hostility displayed by the Portuguese toward Muslims in the Indian Ocean world was not a spontaneous or purely local phenomenon, nor simply a reaction to Muslim expansion into Christian lands centuries earlier. Instead, it was shaped by the ideological legacy of the Reconquista and late-medieval crusading culture, in which Islam was constructed as Christianity's principal civilizational and religious adversary. Portuguese maritime expansion occurred immediately after the fall of Granada in 1492, and Portuguese elites consciously imagined their overseas ventures as a continuation of the holy war beyond Europe. This mentality was reinforced by papal authorisations that framed conquest, enslavement, and violence against Muslims as legitimate acts in defence of Christendom. Both Christian and Muslim societies developed religious doctrines that presented warfare as divinely sanctioned (Christians termed it

³ Gammer, Moshe, *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar: Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Daghestan*, Frank Cass, London, 1994.

⁴ Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1982.

⁵ Danvers Frederick Charles, *The Portuguese in India: Being a History of the Rise and Decline of Their Eastern Empire*, Vol. 1, W. H. Allen & Co., London, 1894, pp. 128-129, 183-184, 210.

⁶ Danvers Frederick Charles, *The Portuguese in India*, Ibid., p. 104.

⁷ Danvers Frederick Charles, *The Portuguese in India*, Ibid., pp. 442-443.

⁸ Danvers Frederick Charles, *The Portuguese in India*, Ibid., p. 271, 306.

Holy War; Muslims, jihad).⁹ However, the extent to which these beliefs genuinely motivated those involved in the protracted conflict over Iberia, rather than political, economic, or strategic considerations, remains challenging to determine. The fusion of crusading zeal with financial motives, particularly the desire to dominate the pepper trade routes, illustrates how faith and commerce were intertwined in these colonial endeavours, contributing to a sacralised form of violence that served both ideological and material objectives.

In Sri Lanka, Raja Sinha II countered Portuguese power through a formal alliance with the Dutch, combining diplomacy with coordinated military action.¹⁰ This approach reflected a strategic adaptation to the colonial threat, demonstrating how regional actors leveraged both indigenous military knowledge and external diplomatic opportunities to resist European encroachment. Although the Portuguese initially arrived in 1498 under Vasco da Gama as traders, they quickly became colonial aspirants. Beginning with Vasco da Gama and followed by Cabral, the Portuguese introduced systematic violence on the Malabar Coast, using military force to impose their political and religious objectives, including the bombardment of cities when their demands were rejected; their first demand was that the Moors be expelled, which the Zamorin refused. Shaped by the long-standing Christian–Muslim conflict in Europe, their arrival marked the beginning of a brutal and bloody phase in Malabar’s history.¹¹ Shaped by the long-standing Christian–Muslim conflict in Europe, their arrival marked the beginning of a cruel and bloody phase in Malabar’s history. R. S. Whiteway suggests that although the Portuguese initially came to India mainly for commercial reasons, their actions were also driven by hostility towards their traditional enemy, the Muslims. This hostility gave their expansion a crusading or religious character, turning trade ambitions into a broader ideological conflict.¹²

In the Indian Ocean, where Muslim merchants dominated trade and pilgrimage networks, this inherited crusading ideology intersected with economic rivalry and imperial ambition, producing a particularly aggressive and sacralised form of violence against Muslim populations, institutions, and symbols. These actions were not isolated excesses but constituted a sustained regime of religious, social, and political oppression aimed at subjugating the Muslim community and dismantling its spiritual life. Muslim and Indian Ocean sources frequently referred to the Portuguese as “Franks” (al-Faranj,¹³ Farangi, Paranki), not

⁹ Hugh Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal: A Political History of Al-Andalus*, Pearson Education Limited, 1996, Routledge, London, 2014, p. 308.

¹⁰ Pieris P.E., *Ceylon and the Portuguese 1505-1658*, American Ceylon Mission Press, Tellippali, Ceylon, 1920, pp. 271-272.

¹¹ South Indian History Congress, *Proceedings Volume of the Thirteenth Annual session*, Government Arts College Coimbatore, 1993, V. Kunhali, *Portuguese Impact on Malabar*, p. 260.

¹² White Way R.S., *The Rise of the Portuguese Power in India*, Janaki Prakashan, Patna, 1979, p. 15.

¹³ Al Mabari Zayn al Din, *Tohfut ul Mujahideen, A historical work in the Arabic Language, Persian Interpreter to the Headquarters of the army, Fort St. George*, Tr. Eng., Lieut. M.J. Rowlandson, Printed for the Oriental Translation of Great Britain and Ireland, John Murray, Albemarle Street and Parbury Allen & Co., Leadenhall Street, London, 1833, preface ix.

because they were ethnically Frankish or French, but because “Frank” had become a generic term for Western Latin Christians since the Crusades. In Islamic historiography, the Franks represented a civilizational and religious category rather than a precise ethnic group.

The Arabs were the great carriers of Indian trade in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and their activities extended from the Red Sea ports to Canton and the marts of China.¹⁴ According to tradition, Malik ibn Dinar¹⁵ and his companions arrived on the Malabar Coast in the seventh century CE, introducing Islam and establishing nine mosques said to have been built at Barkur, Chaliyam, Darmapattanam, Kodungalur, Madayi, Mangalore, Quilon, and Srikandapuram.¹⁶ In *The Lusiads*, Canto VII,¹⁷ Camões commented that Seraman¹⁸ (Cheraman) Perumal once ruled Malabar. After him, the region was divided, leading to the later dominance of Calicut and the Zamorin. Malabar within the Islamic–Arab commercial and religious world through references to the “laws of Mahomet,”¹⁹ Arabia, Persia, and the spice trade. The “burning spice”²⁰ clearly alludes to the pepper trade of the Malabar Coast, long dominated by Muslim merchants, and situates Malabar within a Muslim-controlled maritime network that the Portuguese sought to penetrate and displace. According to this tradition, Perumal accepted Islam and aligned himself with it, marking an early moment of religious and commercial transformation. Malabar thus appears not as a peripheral frontier, but as a cosmopolitan zone shaped by maritime trade, transregional religious exchange, and royal mediation long before Portuguese intervention. The Zamorin of Calicut thus appears not as an eternal ruler but as a successor within a post-Perumal political order. Unlike many sixteenth-century European writers, Camões does not describe Islam in purely polemical or demonising terms.²¹ Instead, he presents it as a law, a system, and a faith capable of persuading rulers. Islam is not shown as a recent intrusion but as an established religious presence linked to trade, travel, and cultural exchange.

Calicut constituted another vital centre in which authority was vested in the Qaḍis, who exercised both religious and social leadership. In the ninth century CE, Chaliyam functioned as the headquarters of this establishment. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa refers to Chaliyam as al-Shaliyāt, describing it as the “Port of the Indians” and praising it as a flourishing town renowned for the manufacture of fine textiles bearing its name. The term survives in Malayalam as *sall*, still denoting soft cotton fabrics.²² At that time, Calicut and the Zamorin

¹⁴ Panikkar K.M., *India and the Indian Ocean*, George Allen & Unwin Private Limited, Bombay, 1945, p.36.

¹⁵ Arabic manuscript, *Qissat Shakarwati al Farmad: A Tradition Concerning the Introduction of Islam to Malabar*, Friedmann, Y. Israel Oriental Studies V., Tel Aviv University, 1975, p. 245.

¹⁶ William Logan, *mlBe*, Vol. I., in II Vols, Reprinted by the Superintendent, Government Press, Madras, 1951, p. 194.

¹⁷ Luís Vaz de Camões, *The Lusiad or Portugal's Historical Poem*, Portuguese, Tr. End, Richard Fanshaw, Humphrey Moseley, Prince's Arms in St. Paul's churchyard, London, Cant VII 32-34, 1655, p. 142.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, stanza 33, pp. 142-143.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*,

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-145.

²² Muhammed Husayn Nainar, *Arab Geographers' knowledge of South India*, University of Madras, Madras, 1942, p. 73.

had not yet emerged, and Chaliyam was a significant trading centre. The eleventh to the sixteenth century of Mappila history is intimately linked with the rise of the Zamorin of Calicut, who gained ascendancy among the contending rajas of northern Kerala.²³ The Zamorin's coalition with the Mappilas and Arab traders, forged as much by commercial pragmatism as by political foresight, yielded reciprocal economic advantages, enabling the Arabs in particular to consolidate their dominance over Arabian Sea commerce and to project a formidable mercantile influence eastward.²⁴ With the Zamorin's rise, Calicut became the region's political and commercial hub, attracting judicial and religious authority. One of the mosques traditionally ascribed to Malik ibn Dinar was established at Chaliyam, in the vicinity of Calicut, which at that time functioned as the principal seat of Calicut's authority.²⁵ Moreover, the Qāḍīs of Calicut claimed descent from Malik ibn Ḥabīb. This lineage conferred both religious legitimacy and juridical eminence, thereby anchoring Islamic institutions in Malabar within an inherited sacral and administrative continuum. The Qazi institution moved from Chaliyam to Calicut,²⁶ enabling the Qazis to lead the growing Muslim community under Zamorin patronage. Genealogical records link the Chaliyam Qazis to the Ansari lineage²⁷, particularly the Khazrajite clan, which is known for welcoming the Prophet Muhammad to Medina. Malik ibn Habeeb and Habeeb ibn Malik, said to have come with Malik ibn Dinar, are regarded as founders of this judicial line. In the broader Islamic world, Ansaris of Khazraj descent often served as judges until modern law systems arrived. Qazi Muhammad's ancestors included scholars like Qazi Fakhr al-Din Usman, whom Ibn Battuta met in Calicut, and Abu Bakr ibn Ramadhan, who taught Shaykh Zain al-Din ibn Ali al-Ma'bari (Makhdum the Great). Ibn Battuta says, The Qazi of Calicut was Fakhr ud din Usman, a distinguished and generous man.²⁸ According to the testimony of Abd al-Razzaq Samarqandi,²⁹ Calicut had a substantial and permanently settled Muslim population, with two mosques for Friday congregational worship, administered by a single Qaḍi, and adhering predominantly to the Shafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence.

²³ Poonen T.I., *A survey of the rise of Dutch power in India*, (Trichinopoly: St. Joseph's Industrial School Press, 1948), p.12.

²⁴ Roland Eric Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala, A Study in Islamic Trends*, The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, Orient Longman, Bombay, 1976, p. 54

²⁵ Ahmed Kutty E.K., *Arabic in South India (papers in honour of Prof. S.E.A. Nadvi)*, Ed., Department of Arabic, University of Calicut, Calicut, 2003, p. 84.

²⁶ Asghar Ali Engineer, Mohamed K.M., *Origin and development of Arabic studies in Kerala*, Ajantha Publications, Delhi, 1995, p. 162.

²⁷ Hussain K.T., *Kerala Muslimkal Adhinivesa virudha samarathile pandhitha sanidhyam*, Mal., Islamic Publishing House, Kozhikode, p. 53.

²⁸ Nilakanta Sastri P A., *Foreign Notices of South India, From Magasthenes to Ma Huan*, University of Madras, 1939, p. 241.

²⁹ Major, R. H., Ed., *India in the Fifteenth Century: Being a Collection of Narratives of Voyages to India, in the Century Preceding the Portuguese Discovery of the Cape of Good Hope*, Tr. from Latin, Persian, Russian, and Italian sources, Hakluyt Society, London, 1857, pp. 13-14.

Their scholarship and legal authority strengthened the Calicut Qazi institution and paved the way for Qazi Muhammad's rise. While many predecessors in the Chaliyam–Calicut Qazi line were prolific, Qazi Muhammad's influence exceeded theirs. He authored about seventeen works in Arabic and Malayalam, covering theology, Sufism, grammar, history, math, and astronomy. By using multiple languages and fields, he reached broader audiences and expanded his impact. Muhiyudheen Mala³⁰ and Fath al-Mubin established their reputations, revealing their poetic sensitivity and analytical skill in shaping Malabar's intellectual life. His literary corpus traverses multiple disciplines—grammar, tajwid, taṣawwuf, and fiqh—with the greater part of his compositions cast in verse. Foremost among these is Fath al-Mubin, a work that delineates the condition of Muslims under the Zamorin Rajas of Calicut and exhorts them to armed resistance against the Portuguese. His prose writings are comparatively scant, notable examples being Maqaṣid al-Nikaḥ, Zabd al-Mafakhir fi Manaḡib al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir, al-Faṣiḥa fī al-Wa'z wa al-Naṣiḥa, Naṣiḥat al-Ikhwān, Mudkhal al-Jinan, and Sirat al-Nabi, each reflecting a didactic and moralising intent grounded in religious scholarship.³¹

Qadi Muhammad ibn Qadi Abdul Azeez wrote three main works against colonialism: Quthubath al-Jihādiyya, Fath al-Mubīn, and Qasīdat al-Jihādiyya. Of these, Al-Fath al-Mubin is especially notable for showing Qazi Muhammad's talent in Arabic poetry and history. The important sermon Quthubathul Jihādiyya became known to scholars only in November 2011, when it was found during a manuscript survey in Kerala by the National Mission for Manuscripts, which works to preserve India's documentary heritage.³² The text was discovered in the private collection of Pangil Ahamed Kutty Musaliyar, a former President of Samastha Kerala Jamiyyathul 'Ulama, in Calicut, turning a private artefact into a public historical source. The manuscript is well preserved, reflecting careful custodianship that has ensured the integrity of its textual content.

Qazi Muhammad held a central place in Calicut's judicial elite; his legacy was rooted in Malabar's Qazi tradition. Born into a family of jurists³³ as the son of Qazi Abd al Azeez, he inherited not only a title but also intellectual leadership. The description of his father as Qadi al-quḍat al-muslimin³⁴ implies that the author of al-Fath al-mubin was the son of Malabar's highest judicial authority, and thus wrote from within the apex of the Muslim legal-religious establishment, giving his work exceptional institutional authority and historical credibility. His birth year is uncertain, with estimates around 1537 CE, but his rise is well documented. After his father's death, the Qazi office passed first to his elder brother, Ali Nashri, then to

³⁰ Roland E Miller, *Mappila Muslim Culture: How a Historic Muslim Community in India Has Blended Tradition and Modernity*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2015, p. 323.

³¹ Ahmed Kutty E.K., *Arabic in South India op. cit.*, p. 84.

³² *Thejas Newspaper*, Calicut, 15 -11- 2011, p.2.

³³ Hussain K.T., *Kerala Muslimkal Adhinivesa virudha samarathile pandhitha sanidhyam*, Mal., Islamic Publishing House, Kozhikode, p. 53.

³⁴ Sebastian R. Prange, *Monsoon Islam Trade and faith on the Medieval Malabar coast*, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2018, 155.

Muhammad, consolidating his authority in religious and legal domains. Beyond his judicial role, Qazi Muhammad was known as a philosopher, poet, and Sufi thinker who influenced Arabi-Malayalam literature. As a social reformer, he mediated doctrinal and ritual disputes, especially regarding ṭarīqa practices in Kerala. He was likely affiliated with the Qadiri Sufi order, founded by Shaykh Muḥyī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, whose teachings stressed strict adherence to the Qur’ān and Prophetic tradition. Qazi Muhammad’s work demonstrates the lasting influence of the Calicut Qazi institution. Over time, he became a key figure whose impact echoed through tradition. His year of death is disputed; some sources say 1616 CE, but his tombstone says 1608 CE. He is buried at the Grand Juma Masjid (Mishkal Mosque) in Kuttichira, Calicut. Although claims that he authored as many as 500 works are likely exaggerated, they reflect his extraordinary productivity across Arabic prose and poetry on theology, ethics, law, Qur’anic studies, language, and astronomy.

Islam reached Kerala early through the spice trade. By the fourteenth century, Calicut had emerged as a significant commercial hub under the Zamorin, sustained by Arab–Muslim networks and secure monsoon commerce. This balance was shattered by the Portuguese under Vasco da Gama, whose militarisation of trade and persecution of Muslims provoked unified resistance under the Zamorin, culminating in the fall of the Portuguese fort at Chaliyam. In sixteenth-century Kerala, maritime taxation formed a significant source of royal revenue, while political power lay chiefly with the Kolathiri, the Zamorin, and the ruler of Venad, under whom more minor chiefs remained subordinate. Having extended his dominance over Valluvanad and Cochin and curtailed their access to overseas trade, the Zamorin drove these lesser powers to view Portuguese intervention as a strategic counterweight, leading them to cooperate in building the Chaliyam fort. Strategically located on a near-island between the Beypore and Kadalundi rivers and close to Calicut, Chaliyam enabled the Portuguese to monitor and disrupt Arab–Muslim sea trade. Confronted by the Portuguese threat, the Zamorin sought aid from Muslim rulers abroad, but promised support from Gujarat and Bijapur failed, and even the Mamluk fleet sent from Egypt in 1508 under Mir Husain—despite reinforcement from Malik Ayaz—collapsed due to internal divisions and Portuguese intrigue, allowing the Portuguese to secure naval supremacy. As Portuguese power grew, Muslim resistance intensified, with intermittent successes despite internal rivalries, and Ali Adi Raja of Arakkal’s appeal to Adil Shah of Bijapur helped form a broader anti-Portuguese coalition alongside Nizam Shah of Ahmadnagar, leading to coordinated campaigns against Goa and Chaul and the Zamorin’s decisive assault on Chaliyam. However, the alliances quickly collapsed when Nizam Shah, fearing Adil Shah’s intentions, made peace and withdrew, and Adil Shah, similarly suspecting betrayal, retreated, undermining the anti-Portuguese effort.³⁵ In contrast, the Zamorin, though not a Muslim, remained firmly opposed to Portuguese rule even as other Muslim rulers stepped back. Qazi Muhammad praises this unusual but essential stand as the Fath al-Mubīn (Manifest Victory). This interfaith collaboration, symbolically recognised as “The Chaliyam Covenant,”

³⁵ Danvers, Frederick Charles, *The Portuguese in India*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

did not just exemplify military strategy; it redefined jihad as a civic and pluralistic duty rather than a strictly confessional one. By standing together, the Muslim and Nair warriors transformed their resistance into an early expression of secular patriotism, emphasising that religious discourse could transcend sectarian lines to unite communities against colonial oppression. The Nairs, along with the supporting Zamorin, interpreted the sermon as a call to mutual defence and safeguarding regional independence, viewing it as a strategic response to foreign aggression. Their commitment underscored the shared objective of protecting regional stability and maintaining societal balance, thereby solidifying the intercommunal resolve against the Portuguese aggressors.

Context and Motivations Behind the Composition of Quthubath al-Jihādiyya

The composition of Quthubath al-Jihādiyya in 1571 CE by Qazi Muhammad, who served as the chief Qazi of Calicut, signals a profound response to the sociopolitical upheaval caused by Portuguese colonial encroachment in the Malabar region. One might ask: What factors compelled Qazi Muhammad to choose this moment to issue such a call to action? The Portuguese disruption of Malabar's socio-cultural equilibrium, marked by sustained violence, coercion, and the erosion of long-standing mercantile harmony, arguably played a crucial role. Why did the Zamorin remain steadfast in his resistance while others capitulated? His unwavering defiance was perhaps fuelled by principles of justice and communal honour, deeply valued in the Malabar Muslim community. The Zamorin's opposition offered a beacon of hope, providing a context in which Muslims, potentially disillusioned by external betrayals, sought to rally around shared objectives. In this context, Qazi Muhammad issued Quthubath al-Jihādiyya as both an oration and a written fatwa circulated to major mosques across Malabar, calling upon Muslims to resist Portuguese aggression. This critical injunction emerged as a necessary response to the political and religious disruptions associated with the early Portuguese presence in Malabar.

The Portuguese, who were being relentlessly pressed by the Zamorin's forces on land, dismantled their fort at Calicut and withdrew from the region. At sea, Kutti Ali's fleet continued to inflict sustained harassment upon Portuguese shipping, severely undermining their maritime operations. In response, Lopo Vaz de Sampaio (1526–1529), who succeeded Menezes as Governor, initiated determined measures to neutralise what had come to be perceived as the "Kutti Ali menace." Accordingly, the Portuguese fleet was once again deployed in 1528, culminating in the capture of Kutti Ali off the coast of Barkur. In the aftermath of his capture, the Zamorin undertook a comprehensive reorganisation of his naval forces, entrusting leadership to Pachachi Marakkar, a close relative of Kutti Ali, Ali Ibrahim, a merchant of Cairo, and Kunjali II, the young and energetic son of Kutti Ali. Under this renewed leadership, the Kunjali Marakkars adopted an aggressive maritime strategy, extending their operations beyond the Malabar coast to strike Portuguese possessions in Ceylon and along the eastern seaboard of India. As a consequence of these sustained naval offensives, Portuguese commercial activity in Indian waters was brought to the brink of paralysis. The deteriorating situation led the Portuguese crown to recall Governor Sampaio, and in October 1529, Nuno

da Cunha replaced him.³⁶ The new Viceroy moved swiftly to reassert Portuguese maritime supremacy by constructing a fortified stronghold at Chaliyam and stationing it with a permanent Portuguese garrison. It is noteworthy that Chaliyam lay within the territory of the Raja of Vettat (Tanur), and the fort was erected with his consent in 1531.³⁷ Instead of confronting the paramount ruler directly, the Portuguese chose a strategy of political manipulation by negotiating secretly with his subordinate, the Raja of Tanur.³⁸ By paying him £300, they secured land at Chaliyam to build a fort, thus establishing a military and commercial foothold in Malabar through diplomacy and intrigue rather than open conquest.³⁹ When the Zamorin attacked Vattam for the favour shown to the Portuguese, they helped the Cochin Raja to raid Itappalli in 1536, and recover the sacred stone removed from Cochin in 1503. They also built a fort at Kodungallur.⁴⁰ The possession of Chaliyam furnished the Portuguese with a strategically commanding position, enabling them to repeatedly harass the Zamorin's fleet at will and providing a forward base from which they could penetrate deep into the heart of the Zamorin's dominions in the event of renewed hostilities.

In 1531, the Portuguese intercepted and captured several Zamorin vessels en route to Gujarat, taking prominent Marakkar figures such as Ali Ibrahim Marakkar and Kutti Ibrahim into custody. Having thus asserted naval dominance, the Portuguese entered negotiations with the Zamorin from a position of pronounced strategic advantage and secured authorisation to construct a fort at Chaliyam, despite the vehement opposition of Kunhali. The fortification was erected with remarkable speed, being completed within a mere twenty-six days. Quoting the Cochin Raja's letter dated 18 December 1533 (Corpo Chronologico, Part I, Moco 52, Document 23), K. M. Panikkar states that the Chaliyam fort was of such strategic significance that it stood "like a pistol held at the Zamorin's throat."⁴¹ According to the letter, the fort seriously affected the Zamorin's entire trade and endangered his communications, particularly if he attempted an attack on Cochin. Here, they demolished the ancient mosque (the Jama'at mosque)⁴² built by Malik Bin Dinar and constructed a fort with its materials. Acts of deliberate religious and cultural violence against the Muslim community of Shaleat accompanied the construction of the Portuguese fort at Chaliyam. Contemporary accounts record that the Portuguese not only dismantled the ancient Jami' mosque—one of the earliest Islamic structures in Malabar—but also reused its stones as building material for their fort and

³⁶ Sreedhara Menon A., *A Survey of Kerala History*, S. Viswanathan Printers & Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 2006, pp. 226-227.

³⁷ Baldeo Sahai, *Indian Shipping: A historical survey*, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1996, p. 141.

³⁸ Manuel de Faria y Sousa, *The Portuguese Asia or the History of the discovery and conquest of India by the Portuguese*, Spanish tr. Eng., Capt. John Stevens, C. Brome, London, 1695, p. 133.

³⁹ White Way R.S., *The Rise of the Portuguese Power in India*, Westminster Archibald Constable & Co., 2 Whitehall Gardens, 1899, p. 229.

⁴⁰ Krishna Ayyar, *A short history of Kerala*, Pai and Company, Ernakulam, 1966, p.85.

⁴¹ Panikkar K.M., *Malabar and the Portuguese*, Voice of India, New Delhi, 1929, Reprint 1997, p. 114.

⁴² Roland Eric Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala*, A Study in Islamic Trends, The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, Orient Longman, Bombay, 1976, p. 67.

even added a church within the same complex. Although Muslim complaints temporarily compelled the Portuguese authorities to promise restraint, this assurance was soon violated when the mosque was demolished so that “not one stone remained upon another.”⁴³ The episode further involved the destruction of Muslim tombs and the appropriation of their materials for military construction. These actions reveal that Portuguese expansion in Malabar was not merely commercial or strategic but also deeply entangled with religious domination and symbolic desecration, transforming fortified spaces into instruments of cultural erasure and political control. When the Zamorin attacked Vattam for the favour shown to the Portuguese, they helped the Cochin Raja to raid Itappalli in 1536, and recover the sacred stone removed from Cochin in 1503. They also built a fort at Kodungallur.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Kutti Ali was succeeded by Kunjali II in 1531, who not only inherited his predecessor’s position but also intensified the maritime resistance against Portuguese expansion. Undeterred by sustained pressure, Kunjali II persisted in his hostilities, compelling the Portuguese, in a state of mounting frustration, to resort to indiscriminate violence against Muslim populations they could apprehend. In 1550, hostilities between the Zamorin and the Portuguese resumed. Still, the absence of decisive engagements led to mutual exhaustion and culminated in a fragile peace in 1555, which granted the Portuguese unrestricted authority to enforce their pass system.⁴⁵ Despite this truce, Portuguese rule in Kerala was marked by extreme brutality—including the destruction of mosques and settlements and indiscriminate massacres—ensuring that tensions with the Zamorin persisted without abatement.

Nevertheless, Kunjali II remained defiant and inflicted a series of decisive naval setbacks on the Portuguese fleet—off Cannanore in 1563, near Puthuppattanam and Bhatal in 1564, and subsequently off Diu in 1569. In retaliation, and driven by desperation, the Portuguese unleashed brutal reprisals upon the Moplah settlements of Thikkoti, Panthalayini, Kappat, Thannur, and Ponnani. In 1564, the Kolathiri’s forces, supported by the Zamorin, besieged Fort Angelo at Cannanore and destroyed Portuguese vessels anchored in its harbour. The crushing defeat of Vijayanagar—the principal Portuguese ally—at the Battle of Talikota in 1565 further emboldened the Zamorin to launch sustained military campaigns against Portuguese power. The arrival of the Portuguese on the Malabar Coast at the end of the fifteenth century marked a profound rupture in the region’s long-established commercial, political, and religious order. Seeking to dominate the Indian Ocean trade through force rather than negotiation, the Portuguese employed naval blockades, coercion, and exemplary violence to dismantle existing mercantile networks, many of which were controlled by Muslim traders and sustained through cooperation with local rulers such as the Zamorin of Calicut. Their aggressive attempts to monopolise commerce, suppress Muslim shipping, and impose political subordination destabilised Malabar’s fragile socio-economic equilibrium and generated prolonged

⁴³ Al Mabari Zayn al Din, *Tohfut ul Mujahideen*, Rowlandson M. J., op. cit., p. 131.

⁴⁴ Krishna Ayyar, *A short history of Kerala*, Pai and company, Ernakulam, 1966, p.85.

⁴⁵ Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala history and its makers*, D.C Books, 2019, p. 107-108.

conflict with indigenous powers. As Portuguese encroachment intensified across Malabar, the Zamorin, urged by his mother, convened a strategic council at the Mishkal Mosque in Calicut with leaders, merchants, and military commanders, where they resolved on armed resistance. It was within this climate of disruption, violence, and political instability that, in 1571 CE, Qazi Muhammad, serving as the chief Qazi of Calicut, issued the Quthubath al-Jihādiyya—both as an oration and as a written fatwa circulated to major mosques across Malabar—calling upon Muslims to resist Portuguese aggression. The Portuguese heraldic symbols, such as the armillary sphere and the cross of the Order of Christ that adorned their ships, signified imperial dominance and missionary zeal. In contrast, local maritime emblems reflecting Hindu-Muslim alliances, like the crescent and star alongside native motifs, represented resilience and communal solidarity against foreign rule. This symbolic clash underscored the competing semiotics of power and authority at sea.

His sermon cast resistance as a collective obligation, not merely a military response but a defence of justice, livelihood, and spiritual honour. To fortify this stance within Islamic tradition, classical tafsīr, such as that by al-Tabari, emphasises collective obligation (fard kifāya), requiring community effort to resist oppression. Similarly, the exegesis of scholars like Ibn Kathir further amplifies the ethical foundation by linking it to communal responsibilities prescribed in the Qur'an, thereby reinforcing the idea that defending one's community is an essential part of religious duty. This call was precipitated by the Portuguese disruption of Malabar's socio-cultural equilibrium, marked by sustained violence, coercion, and the erosion of long-standing mercantile harmony.

The political catalyst for Quthubath al-Jihādiyya can be traced to the second Zamorin–Portuguese treaty of 1531 CE, which sanctioned the construction of a Portuguese fort at Chaliyam. The site, previously occupied by Muslim property including the Chaliyam Jāmi' Mosque, was forcibly appropriated, inflicting deep psychological and material trauma upon the Muslim community. Colonial attacks on Islamic sacred spaces catalysed a re-conceptualisation of jihād in sixteenth-century Malabar, transforming it into a core marker of Muslim communal self-definition.⁴⁶ The decades between 1531 and 1570 were marked by sustained political instability, culminating in Qazi Muhammad's intervention through this ideologically charged exhortation. The resultant accord disastrously compromised Malabar's strategic and commercial interests. Chaliyam, located scarcely eight miles from Calicut and commanding a critical maritime corridor to Arabia, became a Portuguese military outpost that severely disrupted trade and mobility. By the close of 1531, Portuguese forces arrived with construction materials, erected a fortified complex, and simultaneously razed the ancient Chaliyam Jāmi' Mosque—among the earliest Islamic institutions in Malabar—along with two other mosques. Their stones were repurposed to build both the fort and an internal church, transforming a political concession into a profound symbol of religious and economic subjugation. The demolition of the Chaliyam Jāmi' Mosque during the construction of the Portuguese fort

⁴⁶ Sebastian R. Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

marked a decisive rupture in Malabar's political and moral order. Initial Portuguese gestures of conciliation—repairing minor damage to the mosque—were soon revealed as tactical deception. The complete razing of the mosque, followed by the desecration of Muslim graves and the reuse of their materials for a fortress and church, inflicted profound communal trauma. The Zamorin who sanctioned the fort died before its completion; his successor, Nanbiyathar, promptly annulled the agreement, subdued the Chaliyam ruler, and reasserted traditional sovereignty.

The martyrdom of Kutti Pokkar (Kunjali Marakkar II), repeated betrayals by Muslim sultans who retreated into treaties, and the failure of coordinated resistance by Nizam Shah and Adil Shah plunged Malabar's Muslims into despair. With external support exhausted, hope increasingly centred on the Zamorin's continued defiance, creating the immediate political context for Qazi Muhammad's intervention. Following its circulation, Malabar Muslims joined the Zamorin's Nair forces, with hostilities beginning on 24 Şafar 977 AH (1571 CE) and Qazi Muhammad personally participating in the naval campaign under Kunjali Marakkar. The Portuguese fort was subjected to a prolonged and relentless siege, executed with such effectiveness that the garrison was rapidly reduced to extreme privation, exhausting its provisions and resorting to the consumption of dogs and other animals deemed vile and impure.⁴⁷ As the sun set over Chaliyam, the air was heavy with the smell of salt and gunpowder, mingling with the distant cries of seagulls echoing off the water. Night after night, the resounding, resonant thud of cannon fire vibrated through the air, a grim symphony accompanying the ships that encircled the fort, blocking any escape. The Zamorin's fleet, commanded by Kunjali, imposed a stringent maritime blockade, systematically intercepting all relief and supply vessels dispatched from Cochin and Cannanore, thereby sealing the fort's isolation. As the Zamorin enforced a landward blockade of Chaliyam, Pattu Marakkar (Pata Marakkar) Kunjali III—having just succeeded Kunjali II—effectively severed its maritime supply lines. Isolated and exhausted, the Portuguese garrison capitulated in November 1571, after which the fort was systematically dismantled and reduced to ruins.⁴⁸ This culminated in the decisive siege and complete demolition of the Portuguese fort at Chaliyam in 1571,⁴⁹ after which the territory was granted to the Parappanad Raja in recognition of his support.⁵⁰ In recognition of Kunjali III's services during the Chaliyam campaign, the Zamorin granted him permission in 1572 to fortify Puthuppattanam and hold it as a vassal.⁵¹ The formidable fort of Kottakkal was erected there in 1572–73, and Kunhali was further invested with privileges and authority on par with the most exalted Nair chieftains of the realm.⁵² On the other hand, the

⁴⁷ Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala history and its makers*, op.cit., p. 109.

⁴⁸ Krishna Ayyar K V., *A short history of Kerala*, op. cit., p.85.

⁴⁹ Mappila Review, Vol. 3, March 1944, No. 11, Raja P.C.M., *Zamorins and the Mohamedan sovereigns of the world*, pp. 18-19.

⁵⁰ Sreedhara Menon A., *A Survey of Kerala History*, S. Viswanathan Printers & Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 2006, p.228.

⁵¹ Krishna Ayyar, *A short history of Kerala*, Pai and company, Ernakulam, 1966, p.85.

⁵² Panikkar K.M., *Malabar and the Portuguese*, Voice of India, New Delhi, 1929, Reprint 1997, pp. 132-134.

Zamorin's attack on the fortress of Chaliyam succeeded after a siege of four months.⁵³ Sheikh Zainuddin Makhdum gives a detailed account of the Chaliyam War in his work *Tuhfat al-Mujāhidīn*.⁵⁴ However, the Marakkars strongly opposed the Portuguese attempt to construct a fort at Ponnani,⁵⁵ viewing it as a direct threat to regional autonomy and maritime interests.⁵⁶ This resistance led to prolonged confrontations among the Portuguese, the Zamorin, and the Kunjali Marakkars, which continued until Kunjali IV's death. In 1595, Kunjali III was succeeded by Kunjali IV.⁵⁷ Kunjali III's most enduring legacy lay in persuading the Zamorin to adopt a policy of naval self-reliance, abandoning dependence on external powers and laying the foundation for a resilient indigenous maritime defence system.⁵⁸

Khuṭbah refers to a sermon or formal public address, particularly one that conveys religious or moral exhortation. At the same time, al-Jihadiyya denotes that which relates to jihad, understood as struggle or effort in a spiritual–ethical sense and, in specific historical contexts, as armed resistance. Quthubathul Jihadiyya means "The Sermon on Jihad," that is, a formal religious address that interprets jihad as a moral and political duty in a specific historical context. The text, therefore, frames jihad not as expansionist violence but as a defensive obligation imposed by persistent injustice, humiliation, and the denial of fundamental religious and human rights. In Quranic-juristic terms, defensive jihad here means: - A communal obligation (*fard kifaya*) to protect social and spiritual equilibrium. A reactionary measure against persistent oppression and violation of religious freedoms. An ethical duty to preserve the community's dignity and autonomy.

Thus, the call for jihad emerges as a historically conditioned strategy of resistance, articulated by Malabar's scholars as necessary for the survival, dignity, and autonomy of the Muslim B. Many Portuguese sources depicted their expansion and the establishment of forts as defensive measures to protect their burgeoning spice trade and ensure the safety of their settlers against perceived threats. Together, these accounts highlight the importance of self-representation in colonial contexts and demonstrate how Portuguese actors sought to frame their actions as defensive and justified.

The sermon opens with invocations to God and blessings on the Prophet Muhammad, presenting jihad as both a moral struggle and collective obligation, enumerating Portuguese atrocities, and urging all Muslims, combatants and supporters alike, to defend the homeland, with martyrdom promised as the highest spiritual reward. Emphasising naval warfare, Qazi Muhammad highlights prophetic guidance, the value of financial support for the cause, and ethical conduct in battle, stressing steadfastness, unity, and resistance as acts of

⁵³ Baldeo Sahai, *Indian Shipping: A historical survey*, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1996, p. 140.

⁵⁴ Al Mabari Zayn al Din, *Tohfut ul Mujahideen*, Rowlandson M.J., op.cit., pp. 166-181.

⁵⁵ Nambiar O.K., *The Kunalis Admirals of Calicut*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1963, First published under the title Portuguese Pirates and Indian Seamen, 1955, Second Revised and Enlarged Edition, 1963, p. Preface, ix.

⁵⁶ Krishna Ayyar K.V., *A short history of Kerala*, Pai and company, Ernakulam, 1966, p.86.

⁵⁷ Krishna Ayyar K. V., *A short history of Kerala*, Ibid., p.86.

⁵⁸ Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala history and its makers*, op.cit., p. 108.

both faith and patriotism. Muslim ulama emerge as ideological guides through sermons, legal opinions, and poetry rooted in jihad. Within this context, Quthubath al-Jihadiyya became pivotal, institutionalising religious discourse for anti-colonial mobilisation. Prepared during the Chaliyam War and supported by the Zamorin, the sermon served not only as a religious exhortation but also as a strategic text that integrated faith, politics, and military planning, representing one of Kerala's earliest organised anti-colonial articulations. Historically, religiously inspired movements have periodically revitalised society, reshaping its moral, political, and social order, and in Malabar, such mobilisations intensified under European colonial pressure. Earlier regimes, including non-Muslim rulers like the Zamorin of Calicut, had protected Muslim economic and religious interests, but Portuguese ascendancy disrupted this balance, undermining Muslim prosperity, cultural identity, and maritime livelihoods. Anti-colonial Muslim resistance in Malabar, whether revolt, reform, or organised opposition, followed a consistent ideological framework, consciously emulating prophetic precedents and early Islamic practices. Within this framework, jihad was understood not as indiscriminate violence but as a sustained moral, intellectual, and physical struggle in accordance with divine justice, encompassing ethical self-discipline, speech, writing, and armed defence as a last resort. Quthubath al-Jihadiyya thus redefines jihad as a multifaceted struggle for justice and communal coexistence, deriving legitimacy from scriptural interpretation rather than sectarian aggression. By analysing the sermon through this lens, my work extends existing scholarship on Malabar resistance, illuminating Qazi Muhammad's unique contribution to framing jihad as a social and political duty grounded in ethical resistance. This reading challenges conventional views by showcasing jihad not merely as a religious obligation but as a civic duty intertwined with regional identity and solidarity. Moreover, it underscores the sermon's role in fostering intercommunal harmony and facilitating Muslim-Nair cooperation, culminating in the fall of Chaliyam Fort. By framing Malabar as Dar al-Islam (the Abode of Islam), rooted in social concord and shared political purpose, the sermon transcended religious boundaries. It contributed significantly to the evolution of Islamic political theology by promoting a model of pluralistic resistance. An example of this can be seen in historical alliances, such as the Ottoman-Christian coalitions, which further attest to the precedence of pluralistic cooperation against common adversaries. The Franco-Ottoman alliance was formally established in 1536 between Francis I of France and Suleiman I (the Magnificent) of the Ottoman Empire as a strategic coalition against the Habsburgs.⁵⁹ This connection not only underscores the originality of the mid-sixteenth-century alliances in Kerala but also situates them within a broader tradition of interfaith alliances in Islamic history. Beyond a religious statement, the sermon represents a key work in Kerala's political ethics, blending faith, patriotism, and pluralism to challenge Portuguese colonial ambitions, exemplified by the fall of Chaliyam Fort. The Tuhfat al-Mujahidin

⁵⁹ Christine Isom Verhaaren, *Allies with the Infidel: The Ottoman and French Alliance in the Sixteenth Century*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2011, p 40.

explicitly frames the conflict as a holy war (jihad),⁶⁰ which explains why Muslims from different towns gathered in large numbers, since participation was understood not merely as political resistance but as a religious obligation. To add nuance, one might consider the alliances formed as 'proto-secular patriotism,' acknowledging that this historical moment prefigures modern notions of secular nationalism while also operating within its own unique cultural and religious frameworks.

Quthubathul Jihadiyya's main aim is to transforming Muslim resistance into a sacred moral obligation by grounding it in Qur'anic authority, theological reasoning, and emotional persuasion; the sermon begins by affirming Allah's absolute sovereignty over history, life, death, victory, and destiny, and by establishing that struggle in the path of God is a divinely sanctioned response to injustice and oppression, then presents the Portuguese as violent aggressors who destroyed mosques, persecuted Muslims, disrupted social order, humiliated rulers, forced conversions, and inflicted widespread suffering, thereby framing the conflict as defensive, just, and unavoidable rather than aggressive or political; it rebukes Muslims for passivity, attachment to worldly comfort, and fear of death, reminding them that life is short, death is inevitable, and true success lies not in survival but in moral action and eternal reward, and it redefines jihad as the highest form of worship that includes not only fighting but also intention, preparation, financial support, patience, unity, and discipline; the sermon elaborates a robust theology of martyrdom in which death in God's path is transformed into honor, forgiveness, divine proximity, and everlasting life, thereby removing fear and turning sacrifice into aspiration, while also emphasizing that divine help comes through steadfastness, sincerity, and collective solidarity rather than disorder or selfishness; finally, the sermon concludes with a prayer that the believers be made sincere servants who consciously uphold God's religion with dignity and moral worth and not mere instruments of history lacking spiritual integrity, thus presenting the entire struggle as not only a military or political act but as a spiritual trial, ethical duty, and redemptive mission that seeks to restore justice, preserve religious identity, and give transcendent meaning to suffering under colonial domination.⁶¹

The fall of Chaliyam⁶² dealt a decisive blow to Portuguese ambitions in central Malabar. The public execution of Dom Jorge de Castro⁶³ for surrendering Chale underscores how the Portuguese regarded the fortress as strategically indispensable, its loss deemed so grave that a high-born noble was made an exemplary scapegoat to reaffirm imperial authority. Despite later raids, blockades, and fort-building, Portuguese power never recovered, constrained by sustained local resistance and internal dissensions.

⁶⁰ Muhammad Husayn Nainar S., *Tuhafat al Mujahidin*, Tr. Eng. University of Madras, 1942, P. 87.

⁶¹ Qāḍī Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-'Azeez, *Quthubathul Jihādiyya*, Tr. Eng. by Ashik T., *The speech for war: An important and rare source on anti-colonial Struggles of Malabar*, M.A Project, MES Kalladi College, Mannarkkad, Appendix II, pp. 96-104.

⁶² Kareem C.K., Ed., *Kerala district Gazetteers Malappuram*, Government Press Ernakulam, 1986, p. 44.

⁶³ Bell Aubrey F. G., Diogo do Couto, *Hispanic Notes & Monographs*, Portuguese Series, vol. 6, Hispanic Society of America, Oxford University Press, Humphrey Milford, 1924, p. 24.

Portuguese historian Danvers observes,⁶⁴ Although the new Viceroy Dom António de Noronha's arrival initially strengthened the Portuguese position, the subsequent attempt to reinforce the fort at Chale failed because the response was slow and internally divided, leading to its surrender to the Zamorin not through battlefield defeat but through negotiation shaped by personal and domestic pressures, thus exposing the vulnerability of Portuguese authority and the decisive role of non-military factors such as disease, timing, diplomacy, and private interests in colonial conflicts. A Portuguese colonial campaign narrative recording Faria y Sousa⁶⁵ attributes its loss partly to an untimely change in the viceroy's authority amid overwhelming opposition. Although it failed to expel the Portuguese from Indian soil, it effectively checked and constrained Portuguese ambitions of political aggrandisement. Following the Chaliyam victory, Qazi Muhammad composed *Al-Fath al-Mubīn*. Read alongside *Quthubath al-Jihadiyya* and *Qasidat al-Jihadiyya*, *Fath al-Mubīn* consolidated a coherent discourse of resistance that fused religious legitimacy with secular solidarity, enabling unprecedented Hindu–Muslim cooperation and the destruction of Chaliyam Fort. Significantly, *Quthubath al-Jihadiyya*, delivered as a public *khutba*, represents the earliest form of organised resistance literature in Malabar; its sermonic structure, ethical vocabulary, and mobilisation strategy were later adapted and reproduced in Muslim anti-colonial writings during the British period. While these texts illuminate the resistance strategies and socio-political dynamics of the period, significant archival gaps remain. Notably, untranslated manuscripts and incomplete archival records limit a comprehensive understanding of this historical narrative.

Conclusion

Quthubath al-Jihadiyya articulates an early and sophisticated anti-colonial philosophy in which religion serves as an ethical engine for justice, unity, and freedom rather than an exclusionary force. The sermon remains a historically significant text, demonstrating how faith-based discourse can sustain secular coexistence and collective resistance. It served as a unifying force, bringing together diverse communities to withstand external aggression. In this context, jihad is presented as ethical resistance and the defence of land, rather than religious conflict. Qazi Muhammad unequivocally supported the Hindu Zamorin against Portuguese Christians, highlighting an ethic rooted in political solidarity and territorial loyalty. *Quthubath al-Jihadiyya* catalysed an unprecedented alliance between the Muslim Mappilas and the Zamorin's Nair forces, culminating in the defeat of the Portuguese at Chaliyam. The text functioned not only as a theological treatise but also as a communicative infrastructure of resistance, facilitating the diffusion of a shared moral vocabulary of defence, honour, and obligation among Malabar's Muslim population. Importantly, the sermon also resonated with non-Muslim actors, such as the Nairs and the Zamorin himself, who recognised it not merely as a religious edict but as a call to mutual defence and collective survival. By interpreting the sermon as an articulation of common interests against a foreign aggressor, these

⁶⁴ Danvers, Frederick Charles, *The Portuguese in India*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁶⁵ Manuel de Faria y Sousa, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

communities found a shared cause for resistance against colonial domination. A coherent theory of ‘ulama’ praxis emerges by conceiving their intellectual production as an integrated ideological apparatus in which sermons (khuṭab), legal opinions (fatawa), and didactic-poetic compositions operate as mutually reinforcing modalities of authority. Within this triad, the khuṭba occupies a central, performative position, functioning as both devotional exhortation and a powerful instrument of political pedagogy. Delivered in mosques and other congregational spaces, sermons shaped collective moral consciousness by interweaving sacred history, Quranic paradigms of struggle, and contemporary grievances into a unified narrative of ethical obligation, thereby transforming political resistance into an act of worship and embedding the idiom of jihad within the community's everyday moral imagination. The orality and immediacy of the khuṭba enabled the ‘ulama’ to respond dynamically to unfolding historical circumstances, recalibrating legal and ethical arguments in real time and disseminating them across a broad, often non-literate audience. Collectively, these genres reveal the ‘ulama’ not merely as jurists or theologians, but as ideological architects of mobilisation, whose intellectual labour fused religious legitimacy, political resistance, and communal identity into a sustained and actionable framework of collective consciousness.