

# The History of Muslims in Monaragala District (Wellassa), Sri Lanka: An Archaeological View

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## Abstract

Monaragala-also named Wellassa by its ancient residents- is one of the 25 administrative districts, located in South Eastern part of Sri Lanka. There are three major ethnic groups in Sri Lanka, among them the Buddhists are the predominant, constituting 94.5% of the district and the first minority is Tamils. Also the Muslims are the second larger minority in this district. There are discourses that the Muslims of Monaragala have got a longer history and their settlement in Wellassa held 500 years ago, but it is not brought proper evidences to prove their longer existence in this region. Therefore, the main objective of this paper as per the fulfilment of the abovementioned gap, is to explore the proper evidences existed in the same region-Monaragala with doing an analysis of archaeological antiquities such as older mosques, Shrines of holy saints, land deeds written by the Muslims in early times and daily home porcelains which preserved in mosque and some residences. Also it has been analysed in this paper some folktales and utterances which prevailed among the native residents to give in-depth explanations the archaeological antiquities. As a result, these are rightful evidences to prove the longer existence of the Muslims in Monaragala region when it investigated the antiquities seen in this region with the folktales and utterances prevailed among the residents. Thus, it is proved that the Muslims have been living since Portuguese time to date in the region of Wellassa.

**Keyword:** history, Muslims, Monaragala District, archaeology.

## 1. Introduction

It is only by a person that gathered perception of the traditional history of his ancient family lineage, can become a civilized man keeping pleasant contact with the society, not causing harm to the cultural values and dignity. Similarly, a civil society fully ignored of its past history cannot have a conceptual framework for a clear future of its energetic society. It is also very difficult for that civil society to move forwards, onwards and upwards with the designed ideal goals of its future progress and prosperity. So it is very necessary for each and every civil society to maintain well and clearly formulated historic documents systematically and serially for the use of future generation to pave life-giving permanent path in good orders for the full benefits and safe future with various advantages. Preserving and remembering the history of origin and existence of a human society in a particular region is most important aspect either it is Buddhist, Hindu or Muslim and so on.

The case of Muslims society of Monaragala (Wellassa), there mere discourses prevailed among the society that those Muslims have got a longer history in this region. Very recently former president Mahinda Rajapaksha (2004-2014) visited to Bakinigahawela and in his address he stated that “the Bakinigahawela Old Jummah Mosque has got 800 years ancientness in this region”. Even though the abovementioned discourses

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prevailed it is not provided the proper evidences to prove the longer existence of the Muslims in Wellassa region. Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to explore the proper evidences with doing an analysis of archaeological antiquities seen in the same region such as older mosques, shrines of holy saints, land deeds written by the Muslims in early times and older daily porcelains which preserved in mosque and some residences. Also it is analysed some folktales and utterances prevailed among the native residents to explain in-depth the archaeological antiquities.

## **2. The History of Wellassa Muslims - Archaeological View**

Monaragala is one of the 25 administrative districts, located in the Province of Uva in the South Eastern region of Sri Lanka. It has a terrain extension of 5639 sq KM (Department of census and statistics, 2012). The geographical land space is 2<sup>nd</sup> to the largest district in Sri Lanka. It is bordered by Ampara on the East, by Badulla on the North, by Ratnapura on the West and by Hambantota on the South. This district has 03 polling divisions, 11 divisional secretariat divisions (D.S.) and 1324 villages. This district was created as a separate unit after 1958 (Gwillim Law, 2010). Before that it was under the jurisdiction of Badulla district. The capital city of the district is Monaragala division. In Monaragala the Sinhalese are the dominant group which comprises 94.5% of the total population, the Tamils 3.3% and the Muslims 2.17%. Particularly, when we observe the Muslims in Monaragala, there are 05 villages having Muslims in majority. But there are many villages where Muslims are living as minorities. There are few hamlets where Muslims are found as minority too. The Muslims live as residents only in 06 divisional secretariats (D.S.) of total 11 D.S. divisions in the district, namely Medagam, Bibile, Badalkumbura, Wellawaya, Buttala and Monaragala. The majority of the Muslims are living in Medagama D.S. division. So the objective of this topic is to analyse the establishment of the Muslims in Wellassa, through an archaeological view of ancient mosques, shrines, older deeds and older porcelains seen in this region.

### **• Ancient Mosques**

In Monaragala District six mosques considered as of the traditional, older and ancient. They located in Alupotha, Bakinigahawael, Kotabowa, Malgastalawa, Boragoda and Kanulwela villages. They were the Jumma mosques in those older villages. Of these, two mosques, namely Malgastalawa and Boragoda were abandoned by the Muslim residents of these 2 villages who left for resettlement in other village areas. These mosques were now ruined. The ancient Alupotha Jumma Mosque and older Kanulwela Jumma Mosque were demolished and in their places new mosques were put change the last decades. Hence, at present, the ancient mosques in Bakinigahawela and Kotabowa are still in existence. These two ancient mosques are the mere sources of evidence to prove and explain the cultural history of Muslims of Moneragala District.

The villages Boragoda and Malgastalawa had two mosques, though they were destroyed, they stand as strong site of evidences to reveal the residents long life as well as the customary habit of traditional practices of these ancient Muslims in those villages. There are no informative materials or tales about the respective ancient mosques. Consequent upon the negligence of these mosques, the Sinhalese started settled down in these two villages. Though it is so, there are marks of the existence of these mosques that could be observed Malgastalawa is the mother village of the Muslims of Monaragala District as related by the residents of Wellassa. So from this point of view, it could be regarded as the very ancient mosque. As Malgastalawa is one of the ancient Muslim villages, so we can treat this mosque as one of the ancient mosque started first in Wellassa region.

Alupotha and Kanulwela mosques were located in respective villages were destroyed in last decade. Based on folktales, Alupotha mosque has a history of 650 years. However, there are no documentary evidences to prove its origin of years. According to a Kanulwela resident, the Kanulwela Jumma Mosque was put up in 1927 A.D. after the demolition of Boragoda Jumma Mosque. The building works of this mosque was under the control and supervision of a man who called Madige Vidana (Widana Appa) strongly maintained, put up with rolled natural clay and used “Keena Trees” which were in the village forest sites. During the time of building works of this mosque, there were large number of Muslims had lived in

Kanulwela and Boragoda. Therefore, the demolition of the mosques, first, in Boragoda (abandoned village by the Muslims) and later, in Kanulwela is a worse negative point when we get effort to prove the longer history of the Muslims in this region.

The present mosque found in Kotabowa is older than Kanulwela mosque, put up in 1895 as related by the villagers. Although this village has got a longer history with many years, but the mosque was seemed to be put up in later period. "HAUL" a washing tank for prayer was put up with the use of hammer and heavy stone (Paaraang kal). It is a significant feature of their effort to bring this stone to the mosque from Malgastalawa ancient mosque after the demolition of it and after abundance of Masgastalawa village by the Muslims. The Muslims of Kotabowa brought this heavy stone to Kotabowa mosque with the help of an elephant. Also some other important things from Malgastalawa mosque were taken to Kotabowa old mosque is the information available from village people. This stone is exhibited to the public. The significance of this stone is that it reveals the long history of the Muslims in that region. Also this stone tank was used by an ancient king as a vessel revealed by the villagers who believe that this stone has a record of over 500 years old.

In Moneragala district, the Bakinigahawela Old Jumma Mosque is standing as a scenic feature that is preserved till today from ancient time. The local village people who are having understood the long ancient traditional history of it, now decided to look after it as the monument of cultural and historical record and symbol. So the mosque is preserved and maintained by the people even today as it appears earlier. They say that this would have been put up about 500 years ago up during the period of Portuguese colonization and maintained perfectly. During that period, this was a very important and big Jumma mosque in Wellassa region.

There are many evidences to prove that the mosques in Alupotha and Bakinigahawela have historical and chronological records of existence over 600 years. For example, these two villages were located along the ancient route of King Dutugemunu (161-137 B.C.) from Mahagama to Anuradapura across Wellassa. The Arab-Muslims would have made use of this route for their commercial activities since they arrived in Ceylon. Also, commercially Weligama and Dewundara (Southern Province) are the regions famous in 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century for commercial activities. During these periods Muslims were also engaged in business activities in the interior regions of this century. It is believed that the Muslims or Muslim traders had visited to Wellassa too from the Southern part of this island. This route was founded even before paving the route for commercial purpose from Kingdom of Kandy to Eastern Province. So during the ancient time this route (Kandy to Southern) was used by the Muslims who had undertaken trade or commercial activities, they had used "Thawalam" system (Taking commercial goods on the back of an ox). These traders or travellers had to spend too many days to meet their needs. Soon the side of route, in certain places they had put up resting place or residing temporary points. In the cause of time these temporary residing places have become villages. Unlike the present, in the past, Muslims had very faith in their religions and religious practices (Dewaraja, 1994). So they put up mosques in the places where they temporarily stay and leave. In this manner, the mosques were put up in Bakinigahawela and Alupotha.

There are evidences to show that these mosques were put up in Bakinigahawela and Alupotha areas by the Muslims of Southern Province. This connection with Southern Province can be identified from the fact that the appearance and style of the mosques in Bakinigahawela and Alupotha are similar to those of the older mosques of Southern Province in terms of size, shape, interior, side and front elevations. In Weligama Palathady (Bridge Bank) mosque was put up in 1200 A.D. (Mukhtar A. Mohammad, 1995). Similarly the Meerah Sahib Mosque was put up in 14<sup>th</sup> century. The interior feature of the mosque walls are 3 feet width to be seen (*ibid*). Also, Mohideen Grand Jumma Masjid is the main mosque in the Weligama city. It goes beyond 400 years of its existence. A Tombstone (Mizan) was found here on it year 1011(Hijri) printed (*Ibid*). At the early times, it was seen small in size unlike at present, bow shapes were around this mosque, cemetery also maintained besides the mosque. In A.D. 1767, this mosque was renovated. The president of the trustee board of this mosque was called as 'Mathicham' (*Ibid*).

So the older mosques in Bakinigahwela and Alupotha are planned out and designed according to the pattern of mosques in Southern Province, is possible to say. Because, the Bakinigahwela mosque called Mohideen Jumma Masjid is surrounded by not only the cemetery, but also its head trustee called 'Mathicham'. The interior walls are of 3 feet width with all style of building structure. The Bakinigawela Old Jumma Mosque is like Weligama Mohideen Jumma Mosque and was renovated in 1700 A.D. is the information available from the village residents. During the early period the mosque was like a tent with the roof of tree leaves. In 1700 it was renovated with country tile on the roof. This work was carried out by Segu Shamsuddhin Waliullah during the Dutch period. Now as a monument, the tomb of the Shamsuddhin Wali is found in front of this mosque. The mosque space area was expanded with allocating of compound areas to each family to do well. Each family had been given each portion of the work in order to complete actively. The Mathicham, Marikkar, Aarachi and other eligible families have developed their compounds.

Bakinigahwela Old Jumma Mosque is a building based on wonderful structure. According to the views of the old personnel, this mosque was put up with the use of granite stone and sand's mixture. In these days due to the absence of cement uses, other items like limes, bee juice, and the eggs were used with mixture to build the building. In those days the village people have clearly experienced with doing it. The remains of the walls with this mixture with firmness and stability can be seen from the concrete less bow shapes (Wilmadam) in the interior and exterior of the mosque, are the example for ancient architecture styles. It reflects Indian architecture style on this mosque building structure.

1970s, Noor Yalman, a Turkish had visited Bakinigahwela to study the Wellssa region. He had removed a sand block and sent it to Postgraduate of Institute of Archaeology in order to examine whether the inside walls are having ancient characteristics. As a result, a report was prepared conforming; these walls were put up with the mixture of bee juice, eggs, and limes. The contents of the report are not known to the people in the village. A resident called Mr. M.M. Yaseen (Retired Grama Sewaka) (1924-2010), who was assisting Noor Yalman (1978), says that the report was taken by Noor Yalman.

As far as the structure of this mosque is concerned, three sides are surrounded by corridors. This was put up during the time of its renovation. There was a big well on the right side of the mosque. A galvanize tube was connected with the water trough (Hauz) and the water is drained from the deeper well by 'Muaddhin' (Carer of Mosque), then easily the water reached to trough. At present this well is damaged beyond usage and also the water trough is changed from this system of drainage. As this mosque is located in a place surrounded by trees, it is found in a cool condition of areas. This mosque is in a little interior to the main road. Because of the Portuguese and Dutch bad activities, the interior area had been selected to build this mosque, is taken as told by the elders. There are 6 pillars with "Keena" trees are which were brought from the Keenagoda village which located nearby Bakinigahwela. Also the same trees are used for the roof of it. Even today they stand very strong and firm. There are 5 entrances to go into to interior mosque from the veranda. Doors and stands are very strong. There are double type doors made of separated whole piece of timber. Inside the mosque on front wall on the right there are 3 holes and also on that wall in the left side there are 3 more holes. These holes were used for keeping things, such as caps, Yaseen books and Thasbeeh series. The nails, as big as chisel, fixed on the roofs and doors are indicating its antiquity and archaeological importance. These nails are thick enough to have weight of 5 times of the current thickness of the nails. There are also 4 bow shapes on the front walls in the interior, in the centre on the right and left sides with which the mosque is designed to beautify its appearances. There is a Qura'n madhrasa attached to the mosque and this is supposed to have built about 200 years ago.

During the period of Dutch, this mosque was functioning as school. The "Lebbes" who served in this mosque had taught Tamil language and Al-Qura'n to the youngsters and elders. This school service was continued for over 150 years. Among the ancient Katheeb of this mosque about Hameed Lebbe was prominent. Khatheeb was the responsible person for using this mosque as the centre of educational services an appreciable contribution to the Muslims. This mosque school system was in practice until the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century when the government school was started in Bakinigahwela in 1914. During 1850s, there were many men served as Khatheeb. Among them, Segu Madar Lebbe, Abdul hameed Lebbe and Abdul Koththoos Lebbe are 3 to be specially included in that tradition. They have served for a long time in this

field. Abdul Kuththoos Lebbe, born in 1916 and he passed away in 2008, is one of the older men of Bakinigahawela village. He served for 45 years as the Khatheeb of this mosque and served for 58 years as the Registrar of Muslim Marriage in Monaragala and Badulla Districts. Also it is necessary to give below few Muaddhins served in this mosque as following.

1. Pakeer Muhammadu Muaddhin (He was normally called Military Muaddhin, and served for 30 years)
2. Marikkar Muaddhin
3. Baseer Muaddhin
4. Latheef Muaddhin
5. Sinnakutty Muaddhin (Kanatha)
6. Mohammed Ismail Muaddhin (10<sup>th</sup> Mile Post)
7. Saththar Muaddhin (He is Military Muaddhin's son and serving even at present)

There is some other who came from Dickwella (Southern Province) to serve as Khatheeb and contributed Qura'n Madhrasa in this mosque. Among them, one called Thouseek Lebbe from Dickwella is noteworthy to be mentioned.

In 1992 the ministers, namely, A.H.M. Azwar, and Imtiyaz Bakeer Makar, also Colombo Urban Council Mayor Umar kamil directly visited and observed the mosque. They having well understood the antiquity of the mosque and of the services it had been rendered to the ancient people. And los they advised the residents to maintain the ancient conditions of this mosque without any physical damages. Also A.M. Najimudeen (2002) who is author of the book, entitled, 'Muslimkalum Kalawarach soolalum' (Muslims and Unrest), has put up the photo of this mosque and has emphasized that this mosque has ancient history with inspiration. So this mosque today stand as a monument to indicate the fact that the Muslims have been living here since this mosque was put up. Based on certain view it can be said that the Muslims were living since 16<sup>th</sup> century when the mosques was put up in Wellassa, specially, in Bakinigahawela. Also, based on another observation is that if during the period of putting up of Weligama Mohideen Grand Jummah Mosque (400 years ago) the Bakinigahawela old mosque was also put up, then the history of the Monaragala District Muslims has also been passing of 400 years.

#### • Shrines

The shrines found in Monaragala District are standing monumental prove to the fact that it shrines the ancestry of the Muslims here. There are 3 shrines, namely Kataragama, Alupotha and Bakinigahawela where three Saints had lived and buried in each village. During 1700 A.D. in Kataragama, one man, named Pakeer Bawa in the forest place was engaged in meditation, and he used to drink milk more at always. There was a vessel with him used for keeping and drinking milk in his travel bundle. Later period, because of this habit of more drinking milk, he was called as "Palkudi Bawa" (Milk Drinking Bawa). He had come from India to Southern Coastal region of Sri Lanka and from there to Kataragama through King Dutugemunu's ancient route. The travellers who came through the forest passage route used to meet this Saint and observed some mystic conduct in his blessings. This story about the Saints marvellous blessings started spreading all over the region. So the people, who heard about this Saint, came to meet him to get advices or blessings from him for various needs. In the course of time, after his death, people thought of putting up a shrine as a mark of monument to respect him. During the period of Ottoman Empire it had the capacity and efficiency of putting up tomb and shrine well known all over the world (Anes, 2007). This thought had influenced Kataragama also to have a shrine of "Palkudy Bawa", but no any record of information about this Katagama Shrine to make known of it to the public. In any way this event indicates us that the Muslims were existed in Monaragala in 1700. Now Kataragama is a separate divisional secretariat in Monaragala District is a fact to be noted.

However, the history of shrines located in Bakinigahawela and Alupotha is somewhat different from the history of Kataragama shrine. The holy Saints enshrined in Alupotha and Bakinigahawela had come from same area to Ceylon. The village people have well kept in mind the history of these two Holy Saints. These two shrines are located on the ancient route of King Dutugemunu that from Mahagama, Hambantota, through

Kataragam, Buttala, Alupotha, Bakinigahawela, Mahiyangana, Polonnaruwa, at last, it was reached Anuradapura (Kandayya, 1964). According to the fewer resident's point of view, these two holy Saints had come from Batavia in Indonesia. The public has the feeling that both of them are father and son. But some other thinks that they are father in law and son in law. They had come to Ceylon during the Dutch reign.

The Saint enshrined in Alupotha was at the age of 16 years. His name was Shaikh Mohamad Maahath Waliullah. Alupotha residents say that two travellers had gone through Madugasmulla Junction to Kandy passage across Kottagodiya to Kataragama, earlier mentioned Dutugemunu route. Having both of them reached Alupotha one called Shaikh Mohamad Maahath felt sick and passed away at that place. In order to wash his dead body Shaikh Shamsuddhin Walked to some distance in search of water. At that time he happened to see a spring coming up water. This spring is seen even today in Alupotha. The Muslims called this as "Bubul" in Sinhala language. From this spring, Shaikh Shamsuddhin collected water and washed the dead body and buried in that place-Alupotha. Shaikh Shamsuddhin told the Muslims of those days about this enshrined body and come towards Bakinigahawela. This incident had taken place about 300 years ago. The village people have come to appreciate his good and holy Journey in his life. Consequently, a Shrine was put up in this place to respect this holy Muslim Saint.

Wellassa was a region which touches up on the history of Malays in the Dutch colonization. During the period of 1700 A.D. a group of Indonesians who were against the Indonesian Batavia rulers were deported to Sri Lanka, and South Africa. These deported people could come to have contact with the Muslims in Sri Lanka and lived with their supports. These people came to Sri Lanka during the regime of Dutch and they joined the Dutch Army forces and helped the Dutch rulers in this country. Some others have served as sailors on the Dutch ships and boats (Ameen, 2000). The Muslims of Bakinigahwela village used to say that these two Saints-Shamsuddhin and Maahath served under Dutch rule, as sailors, came from Batavia (Indonesia). The Alupotha Muslims used to say that Shaikh Mohamed Maahath Waliullah came from Batavia. So these two Saints might be the Sailors of Dutch ships and might come from Indonesia-Batavia according to the resident's point of view.

Shaikh Shamsuddhi Waliullah came to Bakingahawela and had served for a long period as Khatheeb. Before his arrival the Bakinigahwela Old Jummah Mosque was erected. In this Jummah mosque he conducted religious programmes under his management and during the period of 1700 A.D. this mosque was renovated under his supervision and management. He with full stability and service mindedness had carried out this duty actively as revealed by the people who listened to the ancient village folktales. There is a wonderful story about Shaikh Shamsuddhin Waliullah in Bakinigahwela after the years he passed away; there was no building for the Quran Madhrasa within the compound of this Old Mosque. In 1850s, the building of Madhrasa was designed in front of this Old Mosque; the land was digged for the foundation of the Madhrasa. In that place a dead body which like buried on that day was seen. In that place there was a coconut tree also. After having uprooted that coconut tree this buried body was observed. Its finger tip was found cut and bleeding. This was conveyed by the Labourer named 'Ganegalamulla Nilame' a Sinhalese, who engaged in digging the foundation for the proposed Madhrasa, with the information that he held event to Mr. M.M. Yasin (1924-2010) a village resident, when told that "this was like just now buried body". After that one of the Moulana who visited to Hambantota across Wellassa had heard about it. He then put up a Shrine in the name of that holy Saint and started the practices of annual festival that called "Kanthoori". Before this there had been the practice of "Kanthoori" functions in Alupotha. This practice was understood from Southern Province cultural influences. This practice has induced the majority of the families lived in Medagama, Kanulwela, Kotabowa, Buttala and Wellawaya in carrying out Kanthoori in their own villages.

Hence, keeping up the Alupotha Shrine, annual Kanthoori celebration has been in practice in memory of the Saint-Maahath Wali till last decade. Muslims living in different parts of this country have the habits of attending this Kanthori celebration. They used to donate to the shrine as a mark of respect to meet their needs with a typical belief. Large number of Muslims from different villages or towns in this country together with Sinhalese and Tamils who also used to donate to the Shrine had been given the rice meals packed in thatched palm leaves when they visited to the Shrine. Roads and the village areas were beautiful with decorations every year.

In Bakinigahawela also similar Shrine Kanthoori celebrations were observed till last decade. In a year three Kanthoori festivals were celebrated. Of these Mohideen Shrine Kanthoori (also called Siyarathadi Kanthoori) was very big and famous. There was the occasion of raising shrine flags. The other festivals are namely Burdha Kanthoori and Subhana Moulidhu Kanthoori of these. Subhana Moulidhu festival has norm with special features. On the occasion of Kanthoori Moulidh will be recited and observed for 12 days, on the 12<sup>th</sup> day as last big Kanthoori was celebrated. During the time of Mohideen Kanthoori “Khamsiya” Moulidh will be recited and observed and closed it with prayerful request to the saint. These Kanthoori festivals were celebrated in front of the Old Mosque compound Shrine. At the start this Shrine was kept in a small building inside with rocks arranged around the Tomb, with the heaps of pure land. The disciples of the Saint collect this pure sand in a small bag and throw them on the paddy fields at the time of cultivation with believing of growing more paddies. They believe that they will get good paddy products as well as the clearing of insects and pesticides. Burning oil lamps called “Kuththuwilakku” and offertory (Kanikkai Kattuthal) were taken place in this Shrine. The Sinhalese and Tamils used to bring thing and donated to this Shrine. They do so, because they have faith in fulfilling their expectations with the blessing of this saint. Even during the British regime they also donated dried food things. In this region, there were large number of Sinhalese families lived. They also had the habits of sending donations to Kanthoori festival. The managing people had accepted these donations or gifts with happy moods. So far the Sinhalese and Muslim relationship, because of this Kanthoori celebrations, have been the bridges. From all regions of this country, three ethnic groups visited to these Shrine celebrations. The meals for the males were distributed in the mosque compound. But for the others Kanthoori rice meals were packed in thatched palm leaves and sent to them.

Kanthoori was conducted during night hours, so, on both sides of the mosque road it was stood young coconuts in front of top side were cut off in order to have it empty to fill with kerosene oil and candles were kept along the roads on the long sticks or pillars to provide light at nights. With happy moods, the people with their families with new dresses, caps worn used to visit the Kanthoori. For collection of donations in cash, tills or cash boxes were kept accessible to contributors. In all villages, the people engaged these days pleasantly, somewhat similar to the cultural festivals. The shrine area was covered with various decoration, and the tea shops and boutiques all over the place. Till 1990, this Shrine festival had taken place in Alupotha and Bakinigahawela. After that interest for the Shrines became less and less to the extent of reaching the events of these shrine festivals. In the last decades, the practice of celebrating Kanthoori is decreased due to the religious resurgence on the customs and habits of Muslims in these villages.

In India these types of Kanthoori festivals were to take place among the people due to the impacts of shrine respects on the cultural influences. During the period of Portuguese and Dutch regimes, the arrivals of the traders or merchants from Middle East to Ceylon were blocked. As a result, the local Muslims in Ceylon had face serious problem of difficulties. However, this gap began to be bridged by the “Suhufi Saints” arrivals from South India (Ameen, 2000). The Shrine festivals conducted in Wellassa region can be viewed on this background. The main goal of this was to bring the Muslims living with the shortfalls of religious knowledge or interests to the right of spiritual life. So the Shrines in Wellassa stand as a mark of their existence as a grown-up society with long historical records. The unity among the society and the association with the Sinhalese is another appreciable advantage brought about by these Shrine Kanthoori festivals.

#### • **The Older Land Deeds and Porcelains**

In 1656 A.D. the Dutch had captured the coastal region of Sri Lanka. They tried many times to capture the Kandyan Kingdom that was in a strong and powerfully authenticated and invincible position. However, some areas limited in special extent, located inside the boarder or boundary of Kandyn Kingdom were slightly under the influence of Dutch rule. Wellassa also one of such areas under Dutch controls. Although Wellassa was under the Kandyan Kingdom, the Dutch used to frequently visit and obtained commercial products from the Muslims in those Kandy areas. Because of this nature of contact with the Dutch, Muslims could purchase some Holland national commercial articles from the Dutch people. In this way, during later part of 1700 in many Wellassa villages Shrine Kanthoori festivals had come into practice as mentioned earlier. So the Muslims could buy some of the serviceable porcelains from the Hollanders. These articles are

still preserved and kept in the Old Jumma Mosque of Bakinigahawela. These porcelains indicate the historical fact that the Muslims in Wellassa were living as a grown-up society. The following porcelains are protected in the Mosque: crystal porcelain vessels, small dishes, porcelain plates, porcelain cups, porcelain tea distillation. On the back side of these things the Holland Stamps are fixed. Also it has been kept Chinese and Japanese articles fixed with the stamps of respective courtiers on its back. The residents of Wellassa used to say that these utensils were obtained during the Dutch period to use them for conducting Shrine Kanthoori. Also some other kinds of utensils are still in use in the houses of the Muslims in this region and are preserved by them. The age old wooden household things, agriculture implements, decorated materials are among these articles. There are wooden safe boxes, iron safe boxes long in size, width spade kept and preserved. The village people say that they were used by the Kandyans.

Besides, there are many materials used by the Kings of Kandy Kingdom kept still by the Muslims at their homes in Wellassa. There are copper dishes, cups, plates and pots to be mentioned used in this region. Of those there is a copper cup on the backside of it a king's stamp was printed. According to the resident's points of view, this printed stamp on these articles belongs to one of the Kandyan Sinhalese King Rajasinha-II (1635-1658) and these things were used by the respective King in Kandyan time. Besides, there are copper small try, copper utensils and utensil for spitting out the betel juice. Also older day bottles, copper vessels, old age clocks are preserved in this region. There is a coin printed 1832 year. These items of utensils indicate that they were obtained by the Muslims during the Kandyan regime and handed down their offspring and being preserved traditionally. Also it is proved with abovementioned event the longer history of existence of the Muslims in Wellassa region since at least Rajasinha-II tenure.

Besides, the land deeds written during 1800s also remained as documentary proof for the history of the Muslims in Wellassa and in this country Sri Lanka. There are some deeds, registered by A.K. kariyappar in Wellassa, still posses by the Muslims. In 1905, A.K. Kariyppar in the position of Notary Public, Badulla had completed some deeds with emblem (Laakkada) are found in the course of research works. In 1905 "Vaikasi" month, 4<sup>th</sup> day, it was found completed. Also, another deed written by Kariyapper in 1875 "Panguni" month 2<sup>nd</sup> was found in Kotabowa village. On the backside of the deed it was mentioned "No.137, this deed is given to "Palliyar" at the cost of Rs.200". These deeds were completed in 1800s show us that the Muslims lived with high positions as educated people and with a long historical influences in Wellassa region.

### **3. Conclusion**

In summary, although the discourses and talks prevailed among the public that the Wellassa Muslims have got a longer history of existence in that area, the proper evidences are not brought out to prove it perfectly. So this paper has tried to fill in that gap with analysing the antiquities located respective region, such as older mosques and shrines older deeds written by Muslim professionals and the older daily porcelains protected by the village residents. According to abovementioned antiquities, particularly, the mosque located in Bakinigahawela was build earlier than the Dutch colonization in Ceylon. It can be assumed that this mosque might be built in Portuguese time according to some other evidences. So it is proved through above statements that the Muslims have been living in Wellassa since Portuguese period. Likewise, as per the information provided by the native residents that the Saints-Ash Sahikh Maahath and Shamsuddhin waliyullah had stayed in Wellassa region in 1700 A.D. and then passed away here and buried. The residents say that, however, before these two Saints's visiting to Wellassa a sizable Muslim society had been lived in this region. With this statement it could be understandable that the Wellassa Muslims have got at least more than 300 years history of existence in this region. Protecting the daily porcelains at Bakinigahawela Old Jumma Mosque and some residences by the Muslims is powerful another evidence to prove their existence more than 300 years ago, because the Dutch colonization was held in between 1656-1796 A.D. in Ceylon. So within this period the Wellassa Muslims might have received the porcelains from Dutch people. Besides that, the Muslims had the great government positions during the British regime such as Notary Public and some local government positions. This is proved by some older deeds written by Notary



Public, which are protected by native residents even today, and some other administrative personal diaries of the local government officials. So these statements evidenced us that the Muslims had been seen as a well established society during the periods of Dutch and British in Wellassa. Finally, the researcher hops that this research will encourage the Wellassa Muslims to move fast toward a brightening future with knowing their past history.

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