

History of Muslims in Monaragala (Wellassa) District, Sri Lanka: Empirical Evidences

Ahamed Sarjoon Razick

Doctoral Candidate, The National University of Malaysia (UKM), Lecturer, South Eastern University of Sri Lanka

Prof. Dr. Khaidzir Hj. Ismail
The National University of Malaysia (UKM)

Dr. Mohammad Jazeel Mohammad Ibraheem
Senior Lecturer, South Eastern University of Sri Lanka, Oluvil, Sri Lanka

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kamarudin Salleh
The National University of Malaysia (UKM), Malaysia

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ahmad Sunawari Long
The National University of Malaysia (UKM), Malaysia

Abstract

Monaragala is one of the 25 administrative districts of Sri Lanka. This district was also named as Wellassa by its ancient inhabitants. It is located in the Uva Province in the South Eastern region of Sri Lanka. In Monaragala the Sinhalese are the dominant ethnic group as they constitute 94.5% of the total population, the Tamils 3.3% and the Muslims 2.17%. The main objective of this study is to explore the history of the Muslims in Monaragala District. It is an unfilled gap and there is no more academic research on the history of Muslims of Monaragala. Thus, this study takes this gap to be bridged throughout an academic field survey as a qualitative nature of research. In order to carry out this research there has been used the folktales and utterances prevailed among the native public as well as the administrative records and census reports, the ancient tombs and daily used house wares and articles. Based on the finding of this study, the Muslims settled down in Monaragala or Wellassa area during the time of Portuguese rule (1505-1656) from the Central (Kandy) and Southern provinces of Sri Lanka and increased their settlements gradually during the Dutch (1656-1796) and British regimes (1796-1948).

Keywords: History, Muslims, Monaragala District, Wellassa, Sri Lanka

1. Introduction

It is only by a person who 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 its 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 civilized 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. Based on these contemplations, the principle investigator (who belongs to Monaragala) has come forward to lay the faithful and confident foundation for this research study, on “the history of Muslims in Monaragala district, Sri Lanka: Empirical Evidences” the information about this aspect is an obscenity.

The case of Monaragala district Muslim community, until recent time there is no specific developments or prosperous in the social, political and economic fields. Though it is so, during the period of last two decades, the Muslims in Monaragala district are facilitated to have rejuvenation in education and economic activities. On the above backdrop, the main objective of this study is to explore the history of the Muslims in Monaragala district. The aim of this research is to stimulate the Monaragala district Muslims to take good strides toward the episode of their past history and to move toward the years to come to display their future. This is the service and benefit of the history is concerned. Each and every society or community shined shoulder the motivating knowledge of the past history and move towards the bright and prosperous future with faith and confidence, as advices given to the mankind by the person poet and great philosopher Allama Iqbal. It is a proclamation made to the world society for its survival in this world.

2. Introduction to Monaragala District

Monaragala is one of the 25 administrative of Sri Lanka. It is located in the Uva Province 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 2nd to the largest district in Sri Lanka. It is bordered by Ampara on the East, by

Badulla and Ampara on the North, by Badulla and Ratnapura on the West and by Hambantota on the South. This district has 03 electoral divisions and 11 divisional secretariat (D.S.) divisions. So far it is not given urban council or municipal council positions. 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.

The present Monaragala region was called as Wellassa from the ancient time by its ancient inhabitants. During the middle ages, 100,000 acres of lands were used for paddy cultivation. This land has one lakh acres in space. So this was called 'Wel Laksha' (in Sinhala language) meaning one hundred thousand acres of paddy fields. In the course of time this hundred thousand paddy lands came to be called as Wellassa (Salsabeel, 2001). Even now it is so. In order to prevent abolishing the name Wellassa many firms, institutions and establishments were introduced to maintain and to popularize the name Wellassa. The people in this location had the habits of boasting themselves as hereditary heroes of the soil and used the name Wellassa in their activities carried on with boast.

The present Monaragala town was called as 'Muppanaiweli' in the middle ages by Wellassa residents. Lot of Palmira trees were found in the place which was the old bus stand and the present market in Monaragala town. In that place there were 03 Palmira trees grown very close to each of it. So this place of three Palmira was found with of thick shadow. This shadow was used by the traders and travellers to take rest on the way to reach their place of destination. They used to rest and started their journeys again. This place with the 3 palm trees there came to called as 'Muppapnaiweli' (in Tamil language) and as 'Tri-Palmira space'. This name is still being used by some people (Salsabeel, 2001). Also it is to be mentioned, that place is existed as a Grama Sewaka (G.S.) Division. (G.S is a government officer to carry the public administrative functions in village basis). It is located in the centre of Monaragala divisional secretariat area. After the independence this village people leave migrated to the towns and cities. Because of this migration this village dominated by the Sinhalese, and it was attributed to the Sinhala term as 'Monaragala'. This name came to be used after 1900 A.D. (Salsabeel, 2001).

Present Badulla, which was called as Uva by its ancient residents, also was a region next to Wellassa under the Kandyan kingdom (1521-1817). At present this Uva is a separate province, consisting two districts which are Monaragala and Badulla. In 1873 the Uva region was separated officially on administrative basis by the British rule. At the start it was called as 'Uvai' (Department of Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs, 1996). The Muslims called as 'Uvaiyoor'.

3. Distribution of the Muslim Population in Monaragala

In the matter of the population distribution, there are 03 electorates, 11 D.S. divisions and 1198 villages in the district. In 2012 the total population was 451058. Of these people there are 387949 village residents and 8224 estate people most of them in the estate areas are Tamil people. Population statistic of Monaragala district has been separately maintained since 1958 and before this separation year, Monaragala was an adjoined region with Badulla. In Monaragala district, 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 residences only in 06 divisional secretariats 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. Very few Muslims are living in other D.S. divisions namely Katharagama, Thanamalvila, Madulla, and Siyamnbalanduwa. In Sewanagala division there are 03 Muslims only to be seen. These Muslims of 04 D.S. divisions have been staying there for the purpose of trading or business. The chart given below makes this situation clear. The information given in the chart is related to the distribution of population in D.S. divisions, including Sri Lankan Moors and Malay Muslims and this is the total number of Muslims in Monaragala district.

Muslim Population Distribution in 2012 (Monaragala District)

S.No.	Divisional Secretariat Divisions	Total Population	Muslim Population
01	Madulla	31238	10
02	Bibile	40329	1020
03	Medagama	35881	4939
04	Badalkumbura	40103	1814
05	Monaragala	49520	372
06	Siyambalanduwa	54040	29
07	Buttala	53084	468
08	Wellawaya	60060	1088
09	Thanamalvila	26683	11
10	Sevanagala	41900	03
11	Kataragama	18220	55
Total		451058 (100%)	9809 (2.17%)

(Census of Population and Housing, 2012)

4. Uva and Wellassa Region in Ancient Time

The history revealed that Uva and Wellassa regions were very popular in the ancient time. The arrival of Aryans, visits of king Dutugemunu, the activities of Veddhas (Huntsmen) are examples to support these views. In 6 B.C. the arrivals and colonization of Aryans had taken place in Sri Lanka. Many Aryan groups have come to Sri Lanka from western and Eastern regions of India through the ocean routes as well as land routes (Ministry of Education, 2006). Aryans had settled down near the Village of Malwattha Oya River. In the course of time, the increment of Aryans population and lack of water for use from the river, have forced the Aryans to have shifted to the other river villages and settled down there. Accordingly, the settlements were established in the North West Malwatta Oya and Galoya region and as well as in the Eastern region of Mahaweli Gange and in the South Eastern regions of Manikka Gange, Kirinthe Oya, and Kumbukkane Oya River areas (*ibid*). Of these colonization regions Manikka Gange and Kumbukkane Oya are the Rivers running across the regions of Uva and Wellassa.

Besides, Mahawamsa (1962) (a historical book written in Pali language of the Kings of Sri Lanka) revealed the facts that there were Aryan settlements in the region of Mahiyangane, Vinthanne, Siristhawattu, Katharagama and Digawapi and these settlements were taken place after 5 B.C. The areas of Mahiyangane and Katharagama were under Uva region in ancient time (Gunarasa, 2003). There are 12 regions that give evidences for the periods of their settlements before the beginning of written history of Sri Lanka; Rawana-Ella and Buttala are two areas of them (Ministry of Education, 2006) and which are located in the main route of Monaragala and Bandarawela. A big waterfall is also there with the name 'Rawana-Ella. So the region of Uva and Wellassa are to gives information relevant to Pre-historic periods indicating their ancient status. Wellassa is a region of the ancient residents of Veddhas (Huntsmen). This point of view is emphasized by Noor Yalman (1971) in that, he says that Wellassa was a resident region of ancient Veddhas.

Mahawamsa also says that king Dutugemunu (B.C. 161-137) had established pleasant contact with the region of Uva and Wellassa. This information is available in the chapter under the heading of 'The Victory of Thusta Gamy'. He had a record of reaching Mahiyangane (is an area located in Uva). There he fought against a man 'Santhan' who was a Tamil, and was defeated and killed. After that he came to 'Amthittakam'. Dutugemunu at a time of good omen with a big strong army force started from Magama, travelled along the old route ran from Magama to Buttala and on the way he destroyed the ports of Ellalan located along the banks of Mahavali Gange (River) completely. At last in order to capture the Vijithapura fort, he started to make preliminary arrangements to fight, but toiled as Dutugemunu won the war (Mahawamsa, pp. 263-264). Beside these, there are evidences to show why and how the travelled along the route of Buttla. The people in this area have a folktale that king Dutugemunu had travelled along the Udagamgoda route passing through Bakinigahawela (located in Monaragala). Also through this route the ancient people as well as travellers have gone to Kandy in those days. So it was possible for king Dutugemunu to have reached Mahiyangane region through this route.

Therefore the above incidents and accidents revealed the fact that the Uva and Wellassa regions were remote ancient or past areas in the ancient history of Sri Lanka and also its history stands high in the sky.

5. The early Muslim Settlements in Monaragala district and its distribution

As far as Monaragala district is concerned one of the main berries facing the researcher is the absence or lack of historical evidences or inscriptions and materials necessary for understanding the history of the earliest settlements of the Muslims in Monaragala district and to determine the period during which year the Muslim settlements in Monaragala took place precisely. So in order to carry out this research the folktales and utterances

prevailing among the eternal public, as well as the census reports, administrative records, the ancient tombs and daily used house wares and articles are used for this research study.

Professor Cader (1997) indicates that during the period of middle age (1500 A.D.) there was a commercial link between the Kandyan kingdom (1521-1817) and the Eastern province of Sri Lanka. In the affairs of commercial activities, increasing position of participation of the Muslims has taken place. This association regarding the trades and commerce was found easy through Wellassa (Monaragala) region. Based on this perception, Cader (1997) arrived at conclusion that the earliest or first settlements of the Muslims in Southeast region would have possible. In fact Monaragala region is located in south eastern region. So it is possible that during the period of middle age for the Muslims to have settled down in Wellassa.

During the time of Portuguese regime (1505-1656) Muslims were ill-treated badly. So they had to find safe place to hide and live. At that time, Wellassa region was a famous forest area and safe land area. It was called as 'the soil that protected king'. This special concept is also attributed to Wellassa. Besides, the forest area, so-called Thambathenna adjacent to Bakinigahawela is a place where protected Rajasinha I (1581-1592) (So-called 'Singala Raja' by Wellassa residents), as viewed by the Muslims and remembered even today. Because of the ill-treatment caused to the Muslims of coastal fringe area, they had gone to Wellassa for safe. As a result that the routes leading to Wellassa became popular and the movements of the people including Muslims also became increased.

In 1580 A.C. Portuguese was brought under the Spanish rule. As the Spanish regime entertained enmity against Portuguese, so the Muslims were ill-treated by the Spanish. The Muslims in Spain were deprived of the rights. Their religious freedom was rejected; the use of Arabic Language was prevented; The Muslims religious habits and practices were prohibited; forcible conversion has taken place. In order to safeguard themselves, the Muslims started to behave like a Christian and continue to live under the camouflage. The Spanish regime was defeated in 1588 A.D. in the Armada war. They had felt that this defeat was a Gods' punishment to them because of existence of the Muslims in the land. Having convinced in this way, the Spanish regime started evacuating the Muslims completely from Spanish during the period in between 1609-1614 A.D. Following this event, the Christian priests who lived in Sri Lanka and some authorities as supporters of Christians had demanded to evacuate the Muslims from Kotte Kingdom (1412-1597). Together with, there were some other reasons to evacuate the Muslims from Kotte kingdom for the second time (first time was in 1526). This was for the reasons of the fact that they felt the Muslims were not supporting to prevail peace into localities, they were carrying on trade and business with the Kandyan kingdom that these trading activities tend to strengthen the hands of their enemies, and though they are minority groups but economically belts off. These were the reasons that induced the Portuguese to be angry with the Muslims, and to send them out from Kotte kingdom (Ameen, 2000).

The Muslims, who were sent out for the 2nd time by the Portuguese, in 1626, started moving to Kandy. At that time, kandyan kingdom was ruled by the king Senerath (1604-1635 A.D). The king Senerath had received these migrated Muslims in Kandy and sent them to the areas of Wellassa (Monaragala). They had gone to Kotabowa (Wellassa) and Pangaragama (Uva) and to Batticaloa, and Irakkamam (Eastern part of Sri Lanka). These were 4000 Muslims sent to Batticaloa alone (Moulana, 1997). These are based on the history; this is the evidence to say that during the Portuguese regime, the Muslims from Kandy were sent to Wellassa for colonization. The Muslims were able to settle down in Wellassa as the Kandyan kings had full confidence in the Muslims. There are good documents available to show that Kandyan kings have extended their full support to the Muslims for peaceful life. The following Kandyan kings have shown their friendship to the Muslims. Rajasinha I (1581-1592), Senarath (1604-1635), Rajasinha II (1635-1658), Wimaladarmasuriyan II (1687-1707), Keerthi Rajasinha (1741-1747). Of these kings, king Senarath has a special place in the contribution of services to the Muslims. King Senarath has given shelters and support as friends of his (Makeen, 2001).

The Indo-Sri Lanka commercial activities also became famous and popular during the period of middle ages. It can be inferred that the Muslims have settled down in Wellassa at that time. To support this view, in Bakinigahawela and Alupotha villages, there are tombs of Shaikh Samsudheed Oliullah and Shaikh Mohamed Mahath Oliullah. Both of them have come from India to Sri Lanka at the start and then have gone to Kandy through Kotte kingdom (present Colombo) and from Kandy they have gone to southern province through Wellassa route. While both of these Shaikh coming back from Southern province, one of them happen to pass away at Alupotha in Monaragala. After that the other Shaikh stayed in Bakinigahawela and there he started preaching Islam and its principles to the Muslims in that village. As per their original place, some are of opinion that both of these Shaikh are of Malay Muslims have come from Indonesia-Batavia. But when considering their names, they are not of Malay Muslim origin. So it can be argued that both of these Shaikhs are of Muslims of Indian origin. It is possible because in the middle age Indian Muslims had connection with Sri Lanka in term of trade. So it can be said that both of these Shaikh were of Indian origin. So it can be assumed that during the period of middle age era (1500 A.D.) Muslims have settled down in Wellassa or Monaragala.

The Muslims who had migrated from Southern province specially from Matara, Weligama, Dikwella, Dewundara regions who lived with a great commercial influences, settled down to Wellassa during the

Portuguese period. These Muslims were cruelly treated and caused harm. In fact, for example the Portuguese Admiral Antonio De Amaral De Manezes Neto has caused lot of harm to the Muslims in Matara. In 1643 he ordered obstructions to the Muslims to go along the road, where Muslims' shops and business centres were besieged and Muslim males were caught, youths in number in between 200 - 300 were killed with knives, Muslim ladies and children were dispatched as slaves to Colombo areas. So some of the Muslims who were afraid of the slaughtering habits, began to move to the interior regions of the island and settled down as refugees according to the statement made by M.I.M. Ameen (2000). These migrated people came to settle down in Alupotha located in Wellassa. Later on from Alupotha, the Muslim colonization has come to spread over to some other areas. These events of migration and colonization of Muslims have come to increase in number of Muslim populations. Because of these incidents, the people migrated from Dikwella, Weligama areas in Southern province are living in Alupotha, Bakinigahawela and Buttala areas, even in these present days. There are some people who have shifted with the purpose of trading, business and merchandising cannot be ignored or rejected. This information is returned by the Muslims in Southern province through verbal means.

It can be said that these Muslims would have been settled down in Wellassa area for the following reasons.

1. Frequent tensions caused to Muslims by the Portuguese in the coastal regions tend to become terrorist regions.
2. In those days place Wellassa was found as a secured and safe region.
3. Wellassa is a region where the Muslims had already gone there as merchants and businessmen in those days.
4. Wellassa region was well known of the transport route and sufficient experience in travelling by the Southern Muslims.
5. The annoyance and distress caused by the Portuguese to the Muslims induced to seek security from Kandyan kings received those Muslims in those days and colonized them within the region.
6. As the Muslims of Southern province have understood that some other Southern province Muslims were already settled and living in Wellassa.
7. As Wellassa was famous place for business activities in the past, so they had faith in this opportunity for carrying on their business and for earning to live peacefully and progressively in prosperity in the future.

So the Muslims of Southern province have come to Wellassa region during the Kandyan kingdom (1521-1817) to seek shelter. These settlements might have been taken place during the period of king Senerath (1604-1635) due to his habit of receiving the Muslims to his region in those days. Therefore, it could be assured that the Muslim settlements occurred in Wellassa from the Southern province as well as from the Kandyan region. Also the historic research reveals the fact that during the renowned period of Kandyan kingdom under famous king Senerath, the Muslims driven out by the Portuguese from the Kotte kingdom and Southern province on many occasions took shelters in some areas in Kandy. Accordingly, the Wellassa residents say that the Muslims were initially shifted to Pangaragama in Uva region, then to Kotabowa in Wellassa region, then to Irakkamam in Digawapi region. Besides, Kotabowa and Pangargama area were under the control of Kandyan kingdom whereas Irakkamam was under the control of Digawapi kingdom (Eastern part of Sri Lanka).

Also it can be concerned that it was possible for the Muslims to have settled down in Wellassa areas from Pangaragama as it is close to Mahiyangana located in Uva province, because Wellassa is close to this village and also situated on the same route where Pangaragama and Wellassa villages were located; commercial and business activities were also conducted in these areas. In this way the Muslims in Pangaragama came to live heavily. So the opportunity for establishing settlements in these areas could be found mostly.

Najmudeen (2002) says that the Muslim settlements are found in many villages in Uva region. These settlements have long period of existence. For example, Pangaragama village in Vintenna region Muslims were found densely. According to the 1901 census report there were 320 people lived there, of whom 240 were Muslims and 78 were Kandyan Sinhalese. In order to safeguard the life of the Kandyan king Rajasinha II a Muslim woman had sacrificed her life, an event became important in the history. Also there was a conflict between Sinhalese and Portuguese in Uva. In that event king Rajasinha II in order to escape from the attack went to Pangaragama village and disappeared by hiding in a wooden cave. The Portuguese army that chased behind the king Rajasinha II came across to meet a Muslim lady drawing milk from a cow. They asked her to tell them whereabouts of the king (Rajasinha II), but she did not reveal it and kept secretly. So the Portuguese warrior killed her. In order to respect the lady's sacrifice of her life the Kandyan king donated a large space of land to the Muslims as a mark of honour to that lady.

Considering the above responses by the Kandyan kings to the Muslims, it is clear that the Muslims have lived as a society in Pangaragama. It is also believed that the first settlement of the Muslims in Uva was in Pangaragama that indicates the Muslims have partly spread out to Wellassa from Pangaragama. To start with in Kanulwela, in Kotabowa (villages in Monaragala), the Muslims have settled. They are having blood relation to

link between the Muslims of Kotabowa, and Pangaragama from the past to the present days is a basic reason for this inference.

Another interesting fact is that the agricultural goods which were produced in Kandy and were exported out stations were also produced in Wellassa too. So far this purpose the people who engaged in production of agricultural goods in Kandy, have migrated to Wellassa is an example to be noticed. As Wellassa was a most suitable for agricultural activities, many people from Kandy have migrated and started cultivating agricultural crops. Among the Kandyan agro-products, the arecanut was very popular. This product was exported to India through coastal merchant ports. Because of this, arecanut had become as important productive goods. Even today the Muslims are having arecanut estates. This production of arecanut was carried on by the people migrated from Kandy. Similarly, agricultural products such as coffee, coco, Jack fruit, cinnamon were produced by the people settled from Kandy and have showed the way of producing them to the people of Wellassa. So when observation made on these produced goods, it guides to concern that these people had migrated to Wellassa in large numbers.

The Muslims of Southern province had come to Kandy to take the agricultural goods produced in Kandy to bring their own region. As Southern region was a harbour area, the agricultural engagements did not gain any popularity. So any agricultural products of Southern province did not reach the Wellassa market. They have brought oceanic product such as salt, dried fish and etc goods to Wellassa and from then in turn , they collected rice, betel leaves, arecanut, perfumery products and taken back to their region from Wellassa. In this way, the traders have come to settle down in Alupotha and Bakinigahawela villages. From these villages the Muslim colonization had taken place in other villages in the region.

It is to be mentioned that one of the important agricultural products produced in Wellassa, even today, is arecanut. There are 03 kinds of arecanuts are grown in Wellassa. The generally grown in every village is native arecanut or country side arecanut. The other kind is 'Kaiper' arecanut and the third is Battevi arecanut, a big size one. In all places these three kinds of arecanuts are grown. Of these Battevi arecanuts are big in size, brought from Battevi, (an ancient historical place in Indonesia) and was produced in Wellassa, is the story from the village people. These observations indicate that the ancient times, Muslims settlements have taken place in Wellassa.

During the period of Dutch regime Muslims have widely settled in Wellassa region, is a fact available from the evidences. There are ancient tools, used utensils and other ancient goods that were used by those Muslims. These are preserved and kept in the ancient mosque of Bakinigahawela. The ceramic plates, tea shed cups of Hollandaise and porcelains items are to show that large number of Muslims as a big society lived in Wellassa, during the Hollander (Dutch) regime (1656-1796). Similarly, during the period of British regime Muslims have lived in Wellassa as rich people. There are some old used articles which printed of British regime stamps and preserved in some Wellassa permanent residences. This is an indication of how rich and wealthy the Muslim people when they were living in Wellassa.

The age old man called Abdul Kuthoos Lebbai born in 1916, has said that 04 persons from Akurana in Kandy came to Bakinigahawela (It is noteworthy another person's statement that the Muslims have migrated to Wellassa, to village-Bakinigahawela from the present village called Udathalawinna in Kandy region). Of these 04 people Wappukkandu Maraikkar-the father of Segumadar is also one. Before the arrival of this group, there were Muslims living too as a society. Having come to know this matter they have come here and later on started to live with the people of Bakinigahawela. These settled people have received donation of 360 acres of land from the Sinhalese. Of these 360 acres, 03 portions were included in the area of Udagamgoda Panguwa, Moragahamada Panguwa and Walawwatha Panguwa. To these 03 Panguwa areas, 03 Rala Lords were appointed. They are Muslims and contributed them best and sincere services and loud supports to the Kandyan kingdom and the kings. To these 03 areas, 03 Rala Loads were appointed and these areas were given to these Ralas as reward. So later on the Muslims have come to have colonization widely. Besides, in 1800, Segu Mathar, Meera Sahibu Appa, Wappukkandu Marikkar, Meera Sahibu Abdullah Mathicham, Periya Thambi Mathicham, Ali Uthuman Mathicham, these Muslims were appointed as societal leaders. Also the families of Kariyappar living at present in eastern province belong to Wellassa region. Kalanthan Walawwa and Kunji Walawwa are the areas where they lived. A.K. Kariyappar, Aaruviral Kariyappar, M.S. Kariyappar were living in Wellassa 250 years ago.

Also, about 09 males have visited Wellassa from Kandy probably around 400 years ago. They came with the bullocks carrying loads, as merchants or traders, and reached the village called Eechanawattha (present Yalkumbura) and Dodangolla. These village areas were found covered with floods and muddy lands, so they left those villages and reached Katabowa village through Iwela area. In this village area they stayed with their bullocks and tied up them at the old post office compound. They prepared then meals and used to have food and they rested peacefully; after a few minutes a European group moving to Kandy from Eastern province happened to meet these travellers resting in that old post office compound. These European-white men group from these resting Muslims wanted to know the name of that place. At that time these traveller looked around and suddenly saw a Peepal tree with block of wood and gave them the name as 'Kotabow' (a Sinhala word of

Peepal tree block). The European-white men noted this name in their record book as 'Kotabowa'. One of the residents in that village told that this historic event was told by their ancestor took place about 400 years ago. So it is possible to assume that these European must be Portuguese, because of holding this event during 1600s.

It is possible to support with documents information that Muslims of Monaragala district have originally come from Kandy to settle in these areas. There are names indicating administrative posts ancient family names, descendant names and other agricultural products names, commercial products names available as evidence. Besides some of the Muslims are having their names with the surname as Pelwaththegedara Mudiyansele, Herath Mudiyansele, Disanayaka Mudiyansele, indicatingly their Kandyan Sinhalese descents. For example, Disanayak Mudiyansele Segu Madar Pakeer Saibo Sithy Fareeda Umma, Herath Mudiyansele Siddeque Muhajireen are the names found in large numbers in Wellassa. Besides, the post names of Kandy are also assigned to the Muslims in this area. As the post of Muhandiram was awarded to the person called by name as Hajji, so even today in history books, he is mentioned as Hajji Muhandiram. He had connections mostly with Wellassa region. The estate supervisors were called in Tamil as 'Kariyathikari', so they were called as Kariyapperuma in Sinhala. Later on this name is deviated as 'Kariyappar'. This was an important big post of the government. These posts were given to the Muslims of Wellassa region. Later on this title of the post became family name in Eastern province, with great respect and became a famous name. Besides, some more other posts were given to Muslims. They are the Gammuladaniya, Town Arachi, Ralahami, Madige Vidana and Costapal. These are names of posts of Kandyan government. In 1925 Pakeer Saibo was occupying the post of Costapal. His office log books are still preserved by his relatives. The Kanulwela old mosque was put up by Madige Vidana Appa. He had been servicing as Vidana attached to the Vidana institution for long period.

Mohammad Casim (1904-1993) in Kotabowa was holding the post of Gammuladaniya under the British government and also performed many services till 1963, the post of Town Arachi, Gammuladaniya and Costapal were given the Muslims. After that a new post known as 'Grama Sewaka' (G.S.) was started from the British colony. Ismail, Meeran Costapal, Mamma Costapal are some of them to be mentioned. The names used by the Muslims in outside districts such as Kandy, Batticaloa and Matara in the early period were found in Monaragala district too. The chairman of the mosque trustee board was called as 'Mathicham' in outside districts mentioned above. The same name was here also used. The people who served as Mathicham in this area are Umar Lebbai Mathicham, Ismail Mathicham, and Ali Uthuma Mathicham. Similarly, 'Marikkar and Podiyar' names were used in outside districts and were brought to this district too. But now these names are ignored.

The Muslims are of view that the abandoned village called Malgasthalawa, was the mother village of Wellassa. However, when and from where these Muslims have come to settle in Malgasthalawa are not known well because of the lack of evidences. But some are opinions that the many Muslims were colonized by the king Senerath in Kotabowa village. Because of Kotabowa and Malgasthalawa are located very close by. Also the many Muslims from Kotabowa have come to settle down in Malgasthalawa for Chena cultivation.

Generally, it cannot be said that in which area in wellassa, the first Muslim settlement took place. It is possible to say that there 04 villages and in one of which is the area for the Muslims to have settled namely Alupotha, Bakinigahawela, Kotabowa, Malgasthalawa. In the history it is there 04 villages are standing as the oldest villages in this district. It is from these villages that, the Muslims have gone to settle down in other places. Many villages have come to exist around Alupotha, as the pivoted place. These villages found around it are Badalkumbura, Buttala, Wellawaya, Ilukkumulla. Similarly Medagama town located in the centre and there are villages Kotabowa, Malgasthalawa, Bakinigahawela, 10th mile post formed around it. In the same manner the village Boragoda and Kanulwela formed around Kotabowa. According to residents point of view, this is how establishment of the Muslim villages in Wellassa area. In this manner Muslims are living in many villages spread around, but it is seen that the majority of Muslims are living in Bible electoral division.

6. Conclusion

The density of Muslim population in Wellassa till 1920 was heavily, but after 1920, and in the consequent years of periods, the density set decreased in number in Wellassa. They enjoyed popularity and respect before 1820 but after that their numbers were decreased due to their migrations to other districts and settled down, especially to Ampara district in Eastern province. They were happened to face sufferings from the conflict of 1818 in Uva, which held between Sinhalese and Dutch, also faced Kandyan conflict in 1915, and in 1920 faced Cholera disease. Because of these incidents, Muslims had to leave, many of them to the Eastern province of Sri Lanka and to settle down there and in some other places causing decrease in density in Wellassa region.

Taking all in all, evidently it can be said that the Muslims of Monaragala district, during the time of Portuguese regime, settled down in Wellassa from Kandy and Southern province and from that period onward they have reached a stage of historic appreciation, noted for their own identity. In spite of various crises, directed towards these Wellassa Muslims, they could maintain their social status, and their own identity. The history of which has come to display their Islamic bondage and integrity and cohesion withstands as an example. For many centuries the Muslims of Monaragala district have been peacefully living among the Sinhalese majority

community while having faith in maintaining their religious, cultural and traditional practices and habits. In this way, they were living at the same time among the Sinhalese majority community with mutual understanding and co-existence with good will and tolerance. These are significant features in their traditional history.

Therefore, the Monaragala Muslim society have to keep steps on the past history and to move forwards, onwards and towards the future history as a guide. As far as the history is concerned this is the service of the history. This conception is strengthened on the foundation of the Persian poet and the philosopher Allama Iqbal, as he said that each society carries its load of history on its back and take good strides towards the future for the survival of mankind.

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Appendix I

The List of Interviewees

1. Abdul Kuthoos Lebbai, A.H., Former Khatheeb, Muslim Marriage Registrar, Bakinigahawela.
2. Abdul Cafoor, K. Bakinigahawela.
3. Ameenullah, M.S.M., Retired Principle, Bakinigahawela.
4. Ariff, A.K., SLTS, Bakinigahawela.
5. Ubaid, A.B.M., Retired CTB Officer, Bakinigahawela.
6. Aamedhu Lebbai, M.K., Kanulwela
7. Salsabeel, M.S.M., Moulavi, I.S.A., Bakinigahawela.
8. Sakariyya, M.H.M., Principle, Salahiyya Arabic College, Godigamuwa, Kotabowa.
9. Sirajudeen, H.L.M., Wellawaya.
10. Muhammadu Abukakkar, Muaddin, Jumma Masjid, Kanulwela.
11. Razick, A.L., Retired Moulavi Teacher, Bakinigahawela.
12. Rizan Ali, A.U.M., SLTS, District Organizer, Muslim League, Alupotha.
13. Farook, M.H.M., Bakinigahawela.
14. Jameel, S.H.M., Former Secretary of Ministry of Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs.
15. Hasanar, M.K., Godigamuwa, Kotabowa.
16. Yaseen, M.I.M., Retired Grama Sewaka, Bakinigahawela.
17. Safarullah Khan, M., Auditor, Southern Province Development Authority.
18. Dr. Shukri, Director, Jamiah Naleemiah Institute, Beruwela.
19. Najmudeen, A.M., magistrate's courts, Kandy.
20. P.S.S. Fareeda Umma, Bakinigahawela.
21. Sulaiha Umma, Bakinigahawela.
22. Hawwa Umma, Kanulwela.