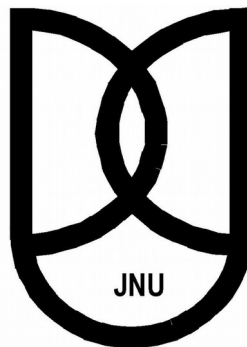


**EVOLUTION OF “GRAGARA” SETTLEMENT SYSTEM
IN KERALA (800 - 1921 AD)**

**Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
for the award of the Degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Date : 2nd November, 2016

DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the thesis entitled "EVOLUTION OF "GRAGARA" SETTLEMENT SYSTEM IN KERALA (800-1921 AD)", submitted by me to the School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi for the award of the degree of "DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY" embodies the result of bona fide research work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any degree or diploma of this university or any other university or institution.

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Acknowledgement

The person who wished utmost for my thesis to see light of the day is not amidst us now. I dedicate this work to my mother for her undaunting courage which saw us through the most difficult times of life.

This thesis would not have been possible without the constant encouragement and suggestions from my supervisor Prof. Atiya Habeeb Kidwai. Prof. B. S. Butola and Dr. S. Sreekesh also extended continuous support in the pursuit. I gratefully acknowledge the timely support given by many others, including the Director (Kerala State Archives), Mr. R. B. Pandey (ORGI Library), Joint Director (Census Operations, Kerala), in official as well as technical matters. I sincerely thank my colleagues in the CSRD, Mr. Suresh Das, Mr. Sandip Tanu Mandal and Ms. Rebati Sinam for the invaluable help they extended in cartography. I have immensely benefited from the JNU central library, Teen Murti library, CDS library, State Archives department libraries and Calicut University library.

The intellectual antecedents for a work of this nature have been acknowledged throughout this thesis. I owe much for the practise of engaging in critical social science to our university and the vibrancy of its student movement.

Lastly a second coming to the field of research after a stretch of socio-political activity was made possible by the support of my family all through. The support from the extended family of Varkeys was also no less.

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Chapter-1

1 Introduction

1.1 The Problem

Kerala's settlement pattern in the modern period is characterized by 'dispersed, linear, and continuous' stretch of habitation. The state also has a unique village and urban system with very little rural-urban differences in its specific 'geographical form'¹. This has prompted many scholars to call it a '*Gragara*' settlement system². There have been many studies with varied theoretical backgrounds which looked at this phenomenon. Studies have tried to understand this pattern through various prisms, such as environmental factors, state's colonial dependency or functional specialisations of the early towns. The most recent ones have tried to look at the political economy aspect especially the labour-capital conflict which contributed to this pattern. The present study tries to make a clear departure from this trend by looking closely at the social structure in order to get an idea of the contemporary settlement pattern. The period covered by the study is the early medieval to the early modern period in the state. The absence of notable precedents with this proposed theoretical perspective has made the probing of the theoretical linkages between space and society also a major part of this study. A related aspect that was covered by many earlier studies was the understanding of the Asian-African societies in

¹

The tendency of studying 'form' at the expense of 'substance', see Chambakalakshmi, R, *Trade, Ideology and Urbanisation – South India 300 BC to AD 1300*, Chapter 1, p.24, (1996), OUP.

² For the evolution of the term, see Casinader, Rex, *Enigma of Kerala Spatial Formations : Gragara as an invalidation / Recovery of the Desakota Hypothesis*, Paper Presented at the ICKS, (1994), AKG Centre for Research and Studies, Trivandrum.

terms of the progress of their modes of production prior to the European plunder and colonisation. Before bringing in the multifarious aspects of these basic premises a detailed understanding of the region under study is given to provide a close perspective.

1.2 The Evolution of Kerala's *Gragara* Spatial Formation

1.2.1 Urbanism in the Ancient Period

Historians have identified three major periods of urbanisation in pre-medieval (pre-sultanate) India³. The first period is represented by proto-historic cities of *Harappan* / Indus valley culture assignable to a long period from 2500 BC to 1500 BC. *Mohenjo-daro* on Indus proper and *Harappa* on Ravi, a major tributary of Indus represented archaeological remains of a spectacular urban culture. No other Indian city even up to the modern period could possess the planned urban infrastructure and amenities of the Indus valley towns. The Bronze Age culture of the same was attributed to the arid to semi-arid climate without thick vegetation in the region. The influence of the Indus valley culture extended up to Lothal but the larger part of the subcontinent including Kerala remained unaffected by this early urbanism, which in fact left no legacy beyond 1750 BC.

The second period of urbanism heralded the maturity of the Iron Age which resulted in both the clearance of the dense vegetation and increased agricultural production. The numismatic evidences signalled the growing trade and commerce during this phase. Southern India also felt the impact of this second face of urbanism. A minimal impact of the Mauryan polity and greater impact of the Indo-Roman trade was felt in the upcoming urban centres in Deccan, Andhra and Greater Tamilakam⁴. The early macro Tamilakam included the

³ Sharma, RS, *Urbanism in Early Historic India* in *The City in Indian History*, Ed/ Banga, Indu, (1991), Manohar.

⁴ Chambakalakshmi, R, *Trade, Ideology and Urbanisation – South India 300 BC to AD*

present Kerala region as well till about the seventh to eighth centuries AD. Thus the first urban centres in ancient Kerala evolved during this period. Historians have argued that the decline of this face of urbanism preceded the collapse of the early historical social order vividly described in the puranas as the crisis of the Kali age (*Kaliyuga*)⁵. The theory of the decline of this second face of urbanism traces the prime causal factor in the decline of long distance trade especially Indo-Roman trade and trade with south-east Asia. A general paucity of Roman coins after third century stands in support of this argument. Another implication of the theory of urban decay being self-sufficient villages becoming production centres. Although the phenomenon of the decline of urban centres is generally accepted among historians, many of them have raised doubts about the validity of its generalisation for the whole of the subcontinent.⁶ The crisis of *kaliyuga*, establishment of the *varnashrama dharma*, brahmin migration from towns to rural areas and feudalism as a mode generated intense debate.⁷

The understanding of the concept of *tinai* or ecozones vividly described in the ancient Tamil writings is necessary to get an idea of the development of urban centres in ancient Keralam. The five *tinai*s were *kurinji* (the forested hilly tracts), *palai* (dryland), *mullai* (intermediate grasslands), *marutam* (plains) and *neital* (coastal tracts). The products of these ecozones were largely dependent on the specific ecological characteristics. Thus the plain *marutam* tracts were the rice bowls, *kurinchi tinai* was rich in forest resources / aromatic woods / pepper, *neital* products were majorly fish and salt and *mullai* region was meant

1300, Chapter 1, p.26, (1996), OUP.

⁵ Sharma, RS, *Urban Decay in India – c 300 to c 1000*, Munshiram Manoharlal (1987), New Delhi.

⁶ Chambakalakshmi, R, *Trade, Ideology and Urbanisation – South India 300 BC to AD 1300*, Chapter 1, p.17, (1996), OUP.

⁷ See Gurukkal, Rajan & Varier, Raghava, *Kerala Charithram*, p. 280, Vallathol Vidyapeedom, Sukapuram.

for dairying activities. The inter *tinai* exchange relations were the primary inducements for early urban centres. The earliest towns arose in the fertile agricultural tracts of *marutam* as well as in *neital* / coastal areas. The earliest ruling families or "crowned kings" (*vendars*) emerged in the *marutam tinai*. The inland towns of *marutam*, and commercially important coastal towns of *neital* were both dominated by the *Cheras* in the Periyar valley. Thus *Muchiri* / *Musiris* or the modern day Kodungalloor became the commercial and political capital of the *Cheras*. In the songs of early Tamil anthologies Vanchi, Thondi and Maanthai towns were mentioned. The impact of trade, particularly 'maritime trade', led to the intensification of the inter-*tinai* exchanges. Inter-tribal warfare over exchange of products among '*vendars*' or crowned kings was significant and it imparted an element of competition and hostility over the differential productivity of the respective *tinais*. The settled agricultural activity and related evolution of crafts had brought about a social stratification in both *marutam* and *neital* tracts. The presence of smiths, carpenters, jewellers, goldsmiths, weavers and metal workers were constantly referred to in early *marutam* literature. The relatively undifferentiated tribal society was slowly disintegrating with trade ventures introducing a further element of diversification. The evolving '*vanikacharthu*' or groups of merchants, '*valinar*' and '*paratavar*' for fishing and selling of salt, salt trading '*umanar*' and outside trade ensured the presence of '*yavandar*' (people of west Asian and Mediterranean origin). The craft specialisation was at a primary level with the absence of artisan or craft guilds. Hoards of punch marked and Roman coins were archaeological evidence of larger transactions and long distance trade⁸.

Tributes, warfare for loot and plunder as well as hegemony, moneyed long distance trade and inter-*tinai* barter were the major forms of revenue and exchange developed along with the urban growth during this period. Under the '*vendar*' the tribal system never developed into a state, the reasons of which

⁸ Ibid, Chapter-3, p. 81

may be the withdrawal of western trade, lack of coercive power and institutional control and predatory raids of ambitious chiefs of other eco-zones. Unlike other parts of India where long distance trade could induce formation of the state, that was not the case in ancient Keralam. The social organisation was at a tribal stage in the *mullai* and *kurinchi* regions and an incipient stage of urbanism developed in *marutam* and *neital*. Although the production system of *marutam* was much superior it could not gain supremacy among the inter-*tinai* productive complex. These inherent contradictions paved the way for the breakdown of these earlier tribal forms. These periods of socio-political transition is attributed in the later brahminical records to the onslaught of evil kings (*Kaliarasars* or *Kalabhras*). But nonetheless, this period cannot be considered to have adapted an unchanging social organisation. The slow changes in the tribal social organisation in the form of concentration of land in the hands of a few families were the first forms of private property. It is generally believed that migration of brahmins from the neighboring states to Keralam also occurred during this period.

1.2.2 Market Centres of the Medieval Period

The medieval history of Keralam is characterised by a greater agricultural expansion and consequent availability of a surplus, both regarded crucial for the growth of pre-industrial towns⁹. There was visible agrarian expansion in the *marutam* region as evidenced in the greater *Tamilakam* by the *Pulankurichi* records of the early *brahmadeyas* (fifth century AD)¹⁰. In the greater *Tamilakam* land relations came to be organised around the *brahmadeya* and the temple on the basis of the land grants. Their specialised knowledge in astronomy, yield predictability, sowing and cropping patterns and water resource management also might have been of use. The *brahmana* participation

⁹ Sjoberg, Gideon, *Pre-industrial City : Past and Present*, (1965), Free Press.

¹⁰ Nagaswami, R, *An Outstanding Epigraphical Discovery in Tamilnadu*, Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference Seminar on Tamil Studies, Madurai, (1981).

in the production system was not quite different in the Kerala region as well. The institutional support they enjoyed more than their intellectual contribution made the earlier advanced production systems to evolve along the brahmin settlements. These settlements simultaneously developed different occupational groups and the principle of heredity inherent in the *varna* framework was stretched to bring all these social groups under the *jati* (caste) label. The *Tharisappalli* copper plate inscriptions of 849 AD¹¹ which speak of a grant by *Venad* rulers to a foreign merchant at Kollam informs us that necessary occupational groups such as carpenters, washer men, coconut pluckers / toddy tappers, oil mongers, were also being transferred along with the land. The *Kollur matham* plates speak about making provision for the expenses of various temple services and servants like washer men, garland maker, potters, buttermilk suppliers and other temple staff¹².

Thus production relations were closely developed along with the ownership of the land, as land still remained as the chief instrument of production in an evolving agricultural society. The ownership was mostly concentrated among the brahmins, then the rulers (*Cherikkal*) and lastly the temple trustees or *devaswom*. Although the ownership of the land was with the above communities it was rented out to another intermediary section called *kaaralers*. Their right over the land rent which was hereditarily exchanged was called *kaarayma*. The land owned by the temple trustees and *cherikkal* was also rented out under the *kaarayma* system. The owners were given 2/5, 1/3, 1/5 of the yield in the respective cases. Ownership of the land by the land-owning classes was called *oorayma*. The other occupational groups which were conducting the services of the temple were also given land as wages called

¹¹ See translation in, Rao, TA Gopinatha, *Travancore Archaeological Series (TAS)*, Vol-2, pp. 60-86, (1992 reprint) Dept. of culture, Kerala State.

¹² See translation and relevance in, Aiyar, KV Subrahmanya, *Travancore Archaeological Series (TAS)*, Vol-4, Part I&II, pp. 22-65, (1999 reprint), Department of Culture, Govt. of Kerala.

viruthi. This land also was rented out under the *kaarayma* system. All occupational groups which directly involved in agricultural activity were considered below the *kaaralers* in the social strata. The lower most groups were called *adiyaars*. They were represented by the *pulaya/paraya/cheruma* castes. The earliest plate inscriptions do not say much about the wages given to them. Hence possibly they were not given any wage. The yield at the first stage was distributed among the occupational groups who were involved in production. A significant part of it then went to the *ooralers* as land rent. The traditional *devaswoms* or temple trusts also could amass a huge amount of revenue from the *kaaralers*. The next stage of resource generation and distribution was at the level of the rulers of the different principalities called *naduvazhis*.

Thus the increased agricultural surplus from ploughing could maintain the services of certain permanent occupational groups followed by rent seeking ruling classes at three levels - the *ooralers*, the *naduvazhis*, the *perumals* and their fellow men. This formed the social structure of Kerala during the medieval period with commodity production not becoming an organised affair. The port of *Muciris / Muchiri* continued to be the chief exchange centre followed by a southern centre at Kollam. The trade and commercial activities of the state were headed by two organisations, namely *anchuvannam* and *manigramam*, owned by foreign merchants (Jews and Syrian Christians respectively). Arab traveller Sulaiman's writings¹³ mention about the state's trade contacts with the Arabs and the Chinese during this period.

The late medieval period, spanning since the fall of the *Perumals* of *Mahodayapuram* till the arrival of the Europeans, was considered to be a period of vast agricultural expansion. Increased population demanded a much bigger agricultural surplus which made agricultural expansion possible in the

¹³ *Silsilat-al-tawarikh*, Tr./ Renaudot, Eusebius, p.9, <https://archive.org/details/ancientaccountso00sira>.

kari lands in the coastal areas as well as in the hilly forest tracts. The cultivation of cash crops supplemented the growth of foreign trade. Pepper was the major crop among the other cash crops like cardamom, ginger, clove, turmeric and cinnamon. This necessitated the growth of many ports and market towns. The different principalities or *nadus* which had fine production and exchange centres prospered during this period. There were substantial changes in the land and agricultural relations¹⁴ from 1200 AD to 1500 AD. An expansion in the class of middlemen who happened to be temporary land owners (through the *pattom-panayam* system), the rise and practice of land relations which helped in increasing the productivity and gross output, the widespread use of money in land tenures, the practice of the right of heredity and the system of land security for extending interest loans were the highlight of this period.

A major change in the power structure from the pre and early medieval times was the formation of a class of middlemen called *kuzhikkaana kudiyaars*. An assemblage of many landlords who happened to be next in the hierarchy formed the individual *desoms*. The revenue collection for the official treasuries of the *naduvazhi swarupams* was done by the respective *desavazhis*. Venad, Nediyruppu and Kolam were the most powerful and efficient *naduvazhi swarupoms* or principalities during this period. These principalities generated their income from individual landlords. A number of taxes and fines from the market centres and a share of the farmer's produce (*komuraippaadu*) formed the income of the king. There are records of well-developed coinage and official mints from *Nediyruppu*¹⁵.

Evidence from this period show the formation of a state which predates the

¹⁴ Varier, MR Raghava, *Madhyakala Keralam – Sampathu, Samooham, Samskaram*, Chapter-1, pp 21-22, Chintha Publishers, Trivandrum.

¹⁵ Gurukkal, Rajan & Varier, Raghava, *Kerala Charithram*, Chapter-5, pp. 242-50, Vallathol Vidyapeedom, Sukapuram.

earlier societies based on tribal and individual structures. Tributes, gifts, loot and plunder, unpredictable income sources, gave way to predictable collections. Although far from the custom of levying land revenue or taxes, it was an improved version of a system of payment in kind. The earlier *swarupam* records¹⁶ give ample evidences of the existence of a bureaucratic class looking after these affairs. One can surmise that, there were many characteristics of a matured state formation during this period, except for a full-fledged army. This period can be more or less explained by an evolving centralised power structure justified at the same time by officialdom as well as by an array of institutions and rituals.

The result of all these changes was a spectacular growth in productivity and agricultural expansion. A substantial increase in non-farming population also demanded more revenue from the land. At the same time unchanging traditional labour bondages increased the toil of those who were working on the land. *Kuzhikkaana kudiyars* were instrumental in developing vast tracts of garden lands and orchards during this period. The existence of local markets and a moderately developed coinage promoted the exchange of products including pepper from these garden lands. Pepper was the principal exchange commodity for maritime trade. Trade relations with the Chinese in the middle period were evidenced by the availability, of the remains of Chinese porcelain ware of 12th century AD throughout the state¹⁷. The literary evidences from old Malayalam works of the middle period also suggest the development of market centres and ports throughout the state. Trivandrum, Kollam, Puthidam, Kochi, Kodungallur, Mathilakom, Calicut and Panthalayanikollam were some of those towns.

¹⁶ Ibid, Chapter-5, p. 250.

¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 225-26

1.2.3 Colonial Influence on Urbanisation

The 15th and 16th centuries saw the increasing conflicts among *naduvazhis* for better farmlands and resources. Many of the major river terraces which were used for inland navigation and coastal areas became the centres of these conflicts in North Kerala. The crisis in the production relations led to a virtual anarchy in Venad. By this time the Europeans were able to monopolise the foreign trade from the state. Trade relations with the Portuguese rose to a peak by the early decades of the 16th century. By 1662-63 the Dutch captured Kollam and Kochi and by the end of the 17th century the British also established their trade posts at Anchengo and Thalassery. Pepper trade increased steadily during the 18th century when the Dutch-British conflicts were at their peak.

The three princely states of Travancore, Kochi, and Malabar had followed different trajectories in production relations during this period. In Travancore, king Marthanda Varma had introduced a range of reforms which helped in the commercial production of pepper and coconut, and an easy exchange of commodities. This led to the formation of a class of farmers from the small and middle income groups who heralded qualitative as well as productivity improvements in agriculture. Agricultural surplus had paved the way for the growth of small scale agro industries as well. The inner conflicts and power struggle within the princely family had made Kochi a dependent state of the Dutch. Consequently the decline of Dutch trade had its worst impacts on it. In Malabar, after the British capture in 1792, the newly introduced changes in land tax (first imposed by Tipu Sultan) as a permanent institution had changed the existing relations of landownership. The earlier precedents (*keezhmaryaada*) had given way to more heavy tax burdens upon the landlords, who transferred it wholly to the labouring classes. These taxes were high when compared to that imposed on the other Indian states by the British¹⁸. The new

¹⁸ Namputhiripad, EMS, *Kerala – Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, Chapter-6, p.94,

law which empowered the landlords to evict the indebted tenants increased the pressure on them. The British interpretation of tenancy in the subsequent decades made the landlords absolute masters of the land. Although the British made efforts to salvage the situation, these could not arrest the progressive pauperisation of the peasants. Thus the new laws enacted by the British were only to be blamed for the inadequate growth of commercial agriculture in Malabar. Although the British were initially interested in the forest and spice products, their new interest was plantations which saw the first signs of big capital formation and wage labour. By the 20th century almost 75% of the farmers in Travancore had their own land, but were asked to pay only 15% of the total income from agriculture as land tax. On the other hand, in Malabar independent farmers were only 8% but they were forced to give 60% of the income from agriculture as land tax¹⁹.

A comprehensive policy for the industrialisation of the state was drafted by Travancore by 1930. The government invested in power, transport, fertilisers, rubber works and porcelain. The number of operational joint stock companies increased during this period²⁰. Although all round progress was evident in the industrial sector in Travancore the stress on heavy engineering was lacking which might have made possible the independent development of the colonial country. The case of Malabar was not even comparable with Travancore during this period, with 48% of the agricultural income concentrated with the landlords even until 1940. The absence of an agricultural base, technical knowledge for industrial development and independent capital formation remained major challenges of the day.

The colonial influence on the production relations and overall polity of the

National Book Agency, Calcutta.

¹⁹ Ganesh, KN, *Keralathinte Innalekal*, Chapter-8, p.173, (1990) Cultural Department, Govt. of Kerala.

²⁰ Ibid, p.178.

state during this period can be summarised as follows.

i) The British system of administration made the earlier ascending political hierarchy consisting of *jenmi*, *desavazhi*, *naduvazhi* and the *raja* / king defunct and superfluous. Their functions were entirely taken over by the British civilians and with their help the British could squeeze the surplus generated by the peasants. Thus the old political order became merely a rent receiving hierarchy at different levels.

ii) The foreign trade on spices, plantation crops, and later agro products was monopolised by the British.

iii) Handlooms, construction, tile factories, coir based industries, tea and coffee plantations, were the important non-agricultural activities and agro based industries which came up during this period. The British could introduce, although to a limited extent, production relations based on wage labour and capital in plantations and *kol-kayal* cultivation.

iv) The surplus generated by the British consisted of various taxes, value generated as owners of means of production (plantations and small scale manufacturing), and merchant profits (via trade monopoly). A substantial part of the surplus was drained away to the metropolitan economy.

Economists have identified three levels of organisation of production in the state during the colonial rule²¹. The first category was large scale capitalist production with marginally superior technological foundations and modern infrastructure (coir weaving in Alleppey, tile manufacturing of Malabar and cashew processing in Quilon). The second was small scale capitalist production without change of technical foundations (toddy tapping, coir processing and beedi making) and lastly household or artisanal production (consisting of mainly fishermen, carpenters and blacksmiths). Throughout the twentieth

²¹ Kannan, KP, *Of Rural Proletarian Struggles*, OUP, Delhi.

century less than 60% of Kerala's working population was engaged in agriculture. Since the 1930s the state had an increasing number of towns and urban growth. The level of urbanisation increased from 6.6% in 1881 to 13.48% in 1951 just after independence.

1.2.4 The Post-Independence Period

The pre independence socio-political movements triggered by a powerful anti-feudal, anti-imperialist tradition and an enlightened consciousness influenced the post-independence development history of the state. The decision to pursue comprehensive land reforms and an increase in social expenditure was a few of its policies. Indeed, the strength of it owed much to the context in which it developed. An all-powerful central government making common cause with the national bourgeoisie which was fearing pressures from below at a time when capitalist system the world over was being politically challenged, dismissed a popular government in 1957. That was not over while the central government 'settled for a rural capitalism from above' allying with the landlords, Kerala took a different path at the state level. The path of indigenous capitalist development pursued by the national bourgeoisie was the following.

...its political instinct was to ally itself with the landlords and after some patchy land reforms settle down to the business of promoting a sort of rural capitalism from above. Since the surplus value generated within the tiny capitalist sector was inadequate, primary accumulation had to supplement it and took the form of a drastic squeeze on the consumption of the masses, i.e. the poor peasantry and the landless labourers. In addition, where the resulting development was concentrated in a certain region, the old metropolis-periphery relationship was reproduced within the country²².

²² Patnaik, Prabhat, *On the Political Economy of Underdevelopment in Whatever Happened to Imperialism and Other Essays*, p.56, Tulika, New Delhi.

Kerala's independent development path pursued at the state level suffered, although it had been able to provide impressive levels of health, education, and nutrition to its population. The per capita state domestic product was low and even stagnant for a long period of time. This also provided a contrast to the traditional view which sees development as a sequel to growth²³. The production of almost all major crops with the exception of rubber suffered an absolute decline since the mid-1970s and even until the late 1980s. The economic crisis was camouflaged in the 1970s by the inflow of remittances from non-resident Keralites working in the countries of the Middle East. The virtual stagnation of all the material commodity producing sectors till the late 1980s owed much to the context in which it developed. The central government policies always found to be in contradiction with the development strategy adopted by the state. The remittances from abroad aided the growth of construction and services. The state which had only 4% of the country's population, accounted for 14% of the Indian consumer market²⁴. The valuable foreign exchange earned by the spices and through remittances never aided in its capital formation.

The problems faced by the state in the earlier regime of economic nationalism gave way to a crisis in the more 'liberal' economic regime pursued by the central government since 1991 as this resulted in further cuts in social expenditure. The prices of cash crops had been affected since it was open to the vagaries of international capital. The growth rates in the gross state domestic product (GSDP) since 1987-88 increased quite dramatically and have overtaken the country average in recent years. The trend growth rate between 1987-88 and 2002-03 was as high as 5.2%.

²³ Patnaik, Prabhat, *The International Context and the Kerala Model*, Social Scientist, Vol-23, Nos.1-3, Jan-Mar, 1995.

²⁴ Mohan, KT Ram, *Understanding Keralam : The Tragedy of Radical Scholarship*, Monthly Review, December-1991.

The result of these policies on the level of urbanisation was that after initial low levels and slow growth there were two decades (1981-91, 2001-11) of phenomenal growth (Table 1.1) of which the latter has been attributed to 'census activism'²⁵ as well.

Table 1.1 Level of Urbanisation & Annual Exponential Growth Rate – India and Kerala (1901-2011)

Year	Level of Urbanisation		Annual Exponential Growth Rate	
	India	Kerala	India	Kerala
1901	10.8	7.11	-	-
1911	10.3	7.34	0.03	1.54
1921	11.2	8.73	0.79	2.98
1931	12.0	9.64	1.75	3.46
1941	13.9	10.84	2.77	3.46
1951	17.3	13.48	3.47	3.27
1961	18.0	15.11	2.34	3.99
1971	19.9	16.24	3.21	3.05
1981	23.3	18.74	3.83	3.19
1991	25.7	26.39	3.09	4.76
2001	27.7	25.96	2.73	0.74
2011	31.1	47.72	2.76	6.56

Source : Census of India-2001 & 2011, General Population Tables

The share of various classes of towns in the total urban population, which had been quite evenly distributed in the earlier periods, is steadily showing a concentration towards class I cities by 2001 (Table 1.2). The increased share of urban population in class III towns in the state compared to national level since 1961 is also seen to be getting lower and closer to national average by 2001.

²⁵ Kundu, Amitabh, *Exclusionary Cities : The Exodus that Wasn't*, Infochange Agenda, CCDS, (2013), Pune.

The key social indicators such as infant mortality rate, birth and death rates and rural and urban sex ratios show a much equitable distribution in the state compared to the wide gulf at the country level (Table 1.3).

Table 1.2 Distribution of Urban Population in each Size Class of Urban Centres – India and Kerala (1901-2001)

Size Class	Year	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Class I	India	45.03	51.88	57.16	61.21	64.35	68.62
	Kerala	38.20	52.87	57.34	65.17	52.8	68.84
Class II	India	9.92	10.96	10.97	11.47	10.99	9.73
	Kerala	16.07	7.96	7.6	9.51	6.6	11.37
Class III	India	15.6	16.53	15.70	13.77	13.45	12.29
	Kerala	13.36	20.16	24.68	22.03	22.26	13.98
Class IV	India	13.47	12.70	11.00	9.36	8.09	6.80
	Kerala	19.3	16.46	8.31	2.77	15.44	4.99
Class V	India	12.85	7.00	4.57	3.59	2.74	2.33
	Kerala	9.88	2.55	1.94	0.52	2.9	0.82
Class VI	India	3.13	0.93	0.60	0.60	0.38	0.23
	Kerala	3.19	-	0.13	-	-	-

Source : Census of India 2001, General Population Tables, (Table A-4, Part II)

Table 1.3 IMR, Sex Ratio, Birth & Death Rates for Rural and Urban Areas- India & Kerala

Country/State		IMR			Sex ratio			Birth rate			Death rate		
		1981	1991	2001	1981	1991	2001	1981	1991	2001	1981	1991	2001
India	Rural	119	87	72	952	939	946	35.6	30.9	27.1	13.7	10.6	9.1
	Urban	62	53	42	880	894	900	27.0	24.3	20.3	7.8	7.1	6.3
Kerala	Rural	40	17	12	1034	1037	1059	26	18.4	17.4	6.7	6.2	6.8
	Urban	24	16	9	1021	1034	1058	23.5	18.1	16.7	5.8	5.3	6.2

Source : Sample Registration System, Registrar General & General Population Tables, India.

1.2.5 Historical Leads to the Theoretical Framework

The duality in social division of labour between urban and rural areas was not so evident the world over before the Industrial revolution. The ancient period in

Kerala saw the combined growth of agriculture and trade in *marutam* lands, and fisheries, salt making and trade along the *neital* coastal tracts. The growth of brahmin settlements in the medieval period ensured outside kin occupational groups which helped to generate a surplus so as to defend a feudal parcellisation. After the fall of perumals the major principalities of Travancore, Cochin, Malabar and Kolathunad pursued different trajectories but included the European trading interests. The crisis in the feudal order was manifested in a variety of ways and was resolved by side-lining the feudal nobility (in Travancore), building a centralised bureaucratic structure (both in Travancore and Cochin) and intervening in long distance trade. But by the dawn of the 19th century these principalities had been forced to serve British colonial interests and since then and until independence the British policies had a lasting effect on the evolving settlement pattern. The alternate policies of the state government post-independence also have contributed to the spatial formation in the modern period.

1.3 Literature Survey

Although there is no dearth of studies concerned with the economic and social history of the state, the spatial dimension has not been stressed in a majority of them. The methodological problems in the interpretation of spatial differences have contributed to these lacunae. A materialistic interpretation based on a scientific theory is a prerequisite for any spatial analysis, otherwise one runs the risk of theoretical interpretations becoming disconnected with the ground reality.

The early observations of the geographical variations in the state come from the early Tamil anthologies and of diaries of Arab-Chinese travellers but most of these remained at the level of symptomatic impressions. Raghava Varier (1997), while attempting a historical interpretation of the middle period, has given due recognition to the spatial aspect²⁶. Isaac (1982), while analysing the

²⁶ See for a collection of his essays over the medieval period, Varier, MR Raghava,

class struggle and structural changes in the coir and matting industry, suggests that decentralisation was a strategy of capital to 'by-pass the social limits imposed by an organised working class to capitalist exploitation'²⁷. Kannan (1988) has also mentioned about the minimal differentiation of the rural and urban areas of the state²⁸. He argues that rural areas in Kerala are more urban in terms of access to basic modern amenities and urban areas are more rural given the low level of modern industrialisation.

On the other hand, studies on urbanisation and socio-spatial structures in Kerala could not articulate the links between space and production in the region. Sankaranarayanan (1977) is the first to pick up the 'conspicuous absence of city dominance', 'diffused urban influence' and 'blurred urban-rural distinction' of the state²⁹. The state has been left out of the national level studies for the definitional problems it created due to its high population densities³⁰. Chattopadhyay (1988) attributes the genesis of early urban settlements to trade, administrative and religious functions³¹. Sreekumar (1990) devotes the reason for the specific urban forms of the state to the colonial initiative and hence treats it as a dependent one³². He further looks at the functions and the resource base of towns and the role of various migration streams. The dispersal of the

Madhyakala Keralam – Sampathu, Samooham, Samskaram, Chintha Publishers, Trivandrum.

²⁷ Isaac, TM Thomas, *Class Struggle and Structural Changes-Coir mat and Matting Industry in Kerala, 1950-80*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol-17, No.31, July 31, 1982.

²⁸ Kannan, KP, *Of Rural Proletarian Struggles*, Introduction, pp. 24-26, OUP, Delhi.

²⁹ Sankaranarayanan, V, *Urbanisation in Kerala and Tamilnadu – Some Contrasts*, p.26, Working Paper No. 57, (1977) Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum.

³⁰ Mohan, Rakesh & Pant, Chandrasekhar, *Morphology of Urbanisation in India*, Vol XVII, No.37, September 11 & 25, 1982, Economic and Political Weekly.

³¹ Chattopadhyay, Srikumar, *Urbanisation in Kerala*, Geographical Review of India, Vol-50, No.2, June (1988).

³² Sreekumar, TT, *Neither Rural Nor Urban : Spatial Formation and Development Process*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol-XXV, Nos 35 & 36, pp. 1981-1990.

settlement pattern is attributed to its physical geography and socio-economic organisation. But he concludes that '*it is under development and deprivation rather than economic development which led to this unique spatial ordering*' vaguely justifying his theoretical framework. Casinader (1994)³³ argues that political economy is critical to make *Gragara* intelligible in the state and doesn't attribute the existence of high rural population densities as the sole reason, as neither the dense river basins nor the mega city EMR's of India share 'desakota/gragara' character thus underlining Kerala's uniqueness. He raised a critique of the absence of political economy in many similar studies on Asia about such mixed formations especially in Indonesia³⁴. He also examines the other facilitating factors like minimal spatial differentiation in collective consumption facilities, dispersed settlement patterns, population density and forced commerce.

It is clear from the above survey that the studies on the rural-urban forms and urbanisation of the state are of two genres, one concentrating on the symptomatic uniqueness of it and the second attempting a deeper socio-political understanding. In fact, the theory behind many of the former studies lies in 'the ecological movement and its functional determinism'³⁵.

The urban organisation is then explained by an ensemble of processes that shape, distribute and relate 'ecological units'. The principal ecological processes are, concentration (namely an increase in the density of population in a certain space at a certain moment), centralisation (the functional specialisation of an activity

³³ Casinader, Rex, *Enigma of Kerala Spatial Formations : Gragara as an Invalidation / Recovery of the Desakota Hypothesis*, pp.9-11, Paper Presented at the ICKS, 1994, AKG centre for Research and Studies, Trivandrum.

³⁴ McGee, TG, *The Emergence of Desakota Regions in Asia : Expanding a Hypothesis* in N. Ginsburg, TG McGee, B. Koppel (Eds), *The Extended Metropolis in Asia*, (1991), University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu.

³⁵ Castells, Manuel, *The Urban Question – A Marxist Approach*, p. 118, (1977) MIT Press.

or network of activities in the same space with its hierarchised articulation over the whole regional territory), decentralisation (processes of mobility of the urban structure), the functions of circulation in the broad sense, segregation (system of stratification or space becoming of homogenous social content) and lastly invasion-succession (a new population takes root in a previously occupied space).³⁶

Sreekumar cites the absence of a strong central political power structure as one of the reasons for urban deceleration during the medieval period. Chattopadhyay's stress on functions of early urban settlements is clearly of the above genre. The man-environment school attributes the state's dispersed settlement pattern to its physical geography.

1.4 Research Questions

The dearth of literature on the inter-linkages between space and society necessitates that a theoretical enquiry of this relationships is made an integral part of this work. The social structure of Kerala during the ancient period was characterised spatially by a dispersed settlement pattern which was transformed into concentrations of settlement on riparian rice producing lands due to the *brahmadeyas*. A further stratification imparted the society feudal characteristics similar to many other regions in India and the feudal world. It created a decentralised spatial structure with inherent tendencies of crisis as well as possibilities of reaching a higher stage in the order of social progress. This process was aided by overseas trade in caravans/peddling until the beginning of the 16th century (rather than *per se* changing the structure) throughout Kerala. The role of the European traders had a decelerating impact on this process and subsequently the British colonial supremacy by the end of the 18th century either stunted the onward progress or reversed it. In fact, early capitalist

³⁶ Ibid, pp. 118-20.

development in Travancore was halted by colonial intervention. The measures of the monarchy in Travancore towards non-agricultural pursuits like trade, commerce and small scale household industry centered on a few ports and the capital city, which was inland, suffered. The development of towns as independent centres acting as centres to fight the feudal “unfreedom” and caste bondages was halted in the middle. The return to agriculture in fact consolidated the decentralised *gragara* pattern. The feudal exploitation reached new levels in Malabar. The trading towns or emporia developed during the earlier period declined during the British period. The extreme caste exploitation that set in during the early medieval period continued unabated during the British period. The obvious outcome was that the level of urbanisation either remained stagnant or became negative. The occupational structure of towns also showed a dominant presence of the primary sector and a declining secondary sector (agro-based products, hand crafts and ware) in towns. The spurious non-productive tertiary sector proliferated in the towns which were stagnating and the secondary sector in towns got decentralised to become service tenures in the countryside. This contributed to the current dispersed settlement pattern of *gragara*. Based on this understanding the following four research questions are posed in this study.

- 1) How is ‘space’ understood in theories of social structure based on historical materialism?
- 2) What were the historical changes which were responsible for the evolution of the mode of production and spatial transformation under the Perumals?
- 3) What similar transformation took place under the sovereign *nadus* and later under the colonialists?
- 4) How did these factors consolidate in the late medieval and the colonial period?

5) What are the implications of the historical trajectories on the contemporary relationship between space and society?

1.5 The Period

The present study from 800 to 1921 AD covers mostly the early medieval to the late medieval/early modern periods of Kerala's history. Although there is no dearth of debates on situating the medieval in the Indian context³⁷, the present study fixes the medieval period with the establishing of the second Chera dynasty (referred to as Cheras of Makotai³⁸) to the maturing of the British colonial supremacy. The justification being agricultural production was moving towards non-kinship based organisation as well as plough based since the 8th century and the establishment of capitalist enterprises mainly British investments became widespread by the first quarter of the 20th century. Of course, such periodisation would also be marked with the co-existence of earlier as well as later social formations, the current period shared many characteristics of feudalism³⁹ with a few historians⁴⁰ depicting it as one. The simultaneous existence of agrestic labourer/slave as a reality, the role of spices in long distance trade and existence of British owned plantations were clear pointers of the co-existence of the ancient, medieval and modern characteristics during the medieval period.

The state which is a true representative of a typical resource rich region to start with like any other Asian-African region, tends to pass through the early

³⁷ Veluthat, Kesavan, *The Early Medieval in South India* (2009), pp. 19-21, OUP.

³⁸ Narayanan, MGS, *Perumals of Kerala*, (2013), Cosmo Books.

³⁹ Viewed essentially as a relationship between an enserfed/subject peasantry which is obliged by extra-economic coercion to part with economic surplus to a class of overlords with the form of payment in labour/product/cash, use of service tenements in lieu of cash, a class of specialised warriors etc. (after Marc Bloch, refer Veluthatt pp-214, 226)

⁴⁰ Veluthat, Kesavan, *The Political Structure of Early Medieval South India*, pp. 257-67 (1993), Orient Longman.

maritime circuit with flourishing trade, subsequently falls into European trade ventures to finally become a British colony, exhibits an ideal case to study closely the various modes and the accompanied spatial form it has passed through during this period. Along with the various characteristics the state shared with the parallel formations that existed the world over, its evolution, sequence that was followed and independent growth would also be analysed. The debate over the various social formations that occurred the world over during the medieval period, the strengths and weaknesses of each, and most importantly the role of class struggle in the sustenance of the formation would be brought in, to analyse where the state stood spatially in the order of stages of social progress during the period.

1.6 The Database

As far as the data base for the medieval period is concerned it is strewn over various kinds of sources. The absence of systematic and comparable time series data draws almost up to the first comprehensive census of 1881. But there were attempts to arrive at total population data in 1816 followed by 1836 and 1854 in Travancore. A systematic land survey could be conducted almost a century before in Travancore. It certainly is a handicap for a study of the settlement pattern but nonetheless the following sources have been rigorously looked for a concrete analysis.

1.6.1 Inscriptions and Manuscripts

The primary sources for the early medieval period consisting of more than 150 inscriptions in copper or stone and voluminous palm leaf manuscripts are available with modern interpretations as part of various archaeological publications. The Travancore Archaeological Series covers most of the important inscriptions. The selections from the Mathilakam records (palm leaf records preserved by the Padmanabha temple) were still preserved in original with many important ones been transliterated from *vatteluttu* to Malayalam

script. The Travancore State Manual (Ed/ TK Velu Pillai) has also reproduced many of these records.

1.6.2 The Literary Sources

The literary tradition mainly consisted of Arab-Chinese traveller diaries, *Granthavaris*⁴¹, *Keralolpatti*, *Mushakavamsa kavya*, and *Tuhfat-Ul-Mujahidin*, of which, almost all were available in original as well as with secondary interpretations for the period. The earliest writings of Arab travellers (majorly Sulayman and Abu Zayd) up to 851 AD are available in *Silsilat-al-tawarikh* and the travellogues of Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta also for the forthcoming period. The *Manipravala* (indigenous) tradition also has contributed many primary materials like *Ananthapuravarnanam* for the period between 12th to 15th century.

1.6.3 Census of India

The census data were available from 1871 onwards for Malabar as it was part of the Madras Presidency. The first comprehensive census started in the year 1875 for the state of Cochin and Travancore. The census reports from 1881 to 1921 have been used in this study. The data on towns classified by population, the number of workers in occupational groups of respective states and major towns and chief occupations followed by various castes are used in this study. The time series data was available only for towns classified by population. The definitional changes adopted for each census up to 1901 and even further made time series comparisons irrelevant at many instances. The definition of towns underwent substantial changes during the period 1871-1921. The occupation data was collected in various broad 'classes' and disaggregated further down to 'orders', 'suborders' and 'groups'. The time series for various occupations at the level of major groups could be collated for 1901-21.

⁴¹ These are lines written or inscribed on palmyra leaf as a record of events occurring every day. In the case of a landlord it would be 'a register of agreements'.

1.6.4 Manuals, Gazetteers, Memoirs and Surveys

The writings of the officials of the European companies for administrative purposes released at various periods were used in the study. Writings of Duarte Barbosa, the 16th century Portuguese official, memoirs of the Dutch official Captain John Neuhoff, Priest Canter Vischer, Lieutenants Ward & Conner, all of which shed light on the Portuguese, Dutch and British periods were used here. The information from the British settlement records, various district/state manuals and gazetteers were also available for the period since the end of 18th century. William Logan's Malabar manual released in 1887 with one of the volumes devoted to the original treaties of the British period is comprehensive. The Travancore state manual by V Nagam Aiya (1906) and TK Velu Pillai (1940), Cochin state manual by C Achyuta Menon (1911) and Malabar gazetteer by CA Innes (1908) give systematic overview of the period. The Travancore Land Revenue Manual gives out the details of the records of even the earliest of land surveys that under took in Travancore. The district gazetteers also have been extensively made into use. There is a sizeable amount of secondary material including research over the late medieval period.

1.6.5 Maps

The original town maps available with the state archives department for Alleppey (1867) and Kollam (1894), the town map of Trivandrum (1901) from the census report were reproduced digitally to arrive at an understanding of the town morphology of thence. The ancient towns and medieval trade centres are located in terms of the most recent archaeological evidences and depicted in various maps.

1.7 Organisation of the Study

The current chapter introduces the theme of the study and its relevance in the region in the first part. The current level of empirical and theoretical research

on the theme and the need for new synthesis is stressed in the next section. The basic formulation or hypothesis of the study is put forward. The reason behind choosing the particular period of study is explained next. The possible database to hinge upon and its absence in certain fronts are underlined. The organisation of the study is dealt in the last part.

The second chapter concentrates on the theoretical framework of the present study. It has not been the case that all hitherto interpretations of space since the ancient travellogues to the various strands in the modern period do not have any socio-theoretical basis or it was devoid of social theory. On the other hand, it willy-nilly served either the dominant interests of the time or followed an independent trajectory at specific instances. Hence a history of the growth of spatial theory, a historical materialist understanding of the spatial structure, the various debates, its application to the Indian conditions, an understanding of colonialism and imperialism, and the geography of modern capitalist accumulation are examined under the various sub sections of the chapter.

The third chapter tries to analyse the socio-spatial structure of the state for the period between 800 and 1150 AD. This period covers the consolidation of the Chera *perumals* till their downfall, the evolution of feudal forms in agriculture centered around the brahmin *urars* and more systematic efforts to tap the overseas trade by handing over such outposts to trader guilds. The early formation of the spatial divisions of *nagaram* and *ur/gramam* is explained and its economic basis is also attempted.

The fourth chapter (1150-1870 AD) covers the period of vast agrarian expansion through land mortgages, flourishing overseas trade leading to emporia throughout the state and the fragmentation of the state into various *nadus* after the fall of the *perumals* in the first phase. The second phase analyses the evolution of the agrarian structure along with the tenurial forms, the sharing of the surplus among various classes, the crisis of the centralised

state and growth of principalities, crisis tendencies or challenges to the *naduvazhis*, forms of class struggle, role of Europeans in overseas trade and the British policies under direct rule or tributary states. The decentralised spatial order in the first phase and the efforts towards centralisation in Travancore in the second phase are also analysed. The morphology of Alleppey, a built up port city, and Trivandrum, the capital of the Travancore state, are looked into.

The fifth chapter analyses the empirical evidences emanating from the census data for the period 1871-1921 based on the conclusions drawn in earlier chapters on how space and society were interlinked during the medieval period. The occupational structure is analysed to get an idea of the spread of non-agricultural occupations. The nature of the economy is understood by analysing the agrarian structure. The occupation of selected castes is done to estimate the social character of the economy. All of this is done separately for three states to fully understand and appreciate the finer differences in their socio-economic structures. The level of urbanisation, spread of towns, their occupational structures and structure of towns and villages are analysed for all states combined to get a comparative picture of the spatial dimension. The morphology of a few select towns is analysed with the help of maps to get a finer picture of the spatial outcome at the lowest level.

The summary of findings and conclusions are listed in the last chapter.

Chapter-2

2 Space and Social Structure - Theoretical Premises

One of the objectives of this study is to critically review the literature on the theoretical explanation of the linkages between space and society as well as the theories of social structure based on historical materialism. Hence this chapter is divided into three sections. The first section deals with the major theoretical trends in the understanding of space within geography especially the socio-spatial systems that were prevalent during the period under investigation in this study. The second section deals with a historical materialist understanding of space. The geography of capitalist accumulation is covered in the last section.

2.1 Space within Geography

The form and content of our understanding of space has evolved with the growth of human civilization. Hence this understanding depended on the growth of different societies, classes and social groups. Harvey⁴² assigns all societies a distinct “geographical lore” consisting of a working knowledge of their territory, spatial configuration of use values relevant to them and its concurrent use to shape use values for their own purposes.

“This lore acquired through experience, is codified and socially transmitted as part of a conceptual apparatus with which individuals and groups cope with the world. It may be transmitted as a spatial environment imagery or as a formal body of knowledge - geography - in which all members of society or a privileged elite receive instruction. It can also be used in the struggle to liberate people from so called natural disasters and from internal and

⁴² Harvey, David, *Geography in A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (2000), Ed/ Bottomore, Tom, pp.216-19, Maya Blackwell.

external oppression.”⁴³

This working knowledge depended to a great extent on the given mode of production which every society was passing through. Thus throughout the ancient period the understanding was present only within the trading empires centered around Rome, the Middle East and China. These empires were mainly concerned with the movement of commodities, the paths of conquest, migration of people and their own formation and expansion. In the medieval period a few of these empires based on slavery were tending to collapse and give way to feudal forms, of course with an increased surplus.

The transformation from feudalism to capitalism in Europe brought in a revolution in geographic thought and practice. Colonialism based on conquest and trade monopoly proved to be the initial basis over which capital and labour power became the pivots of construction of geographical knowledge in the evolving capitalist centres. The major part of the colonies remained within the pre-capitalist mode with the existence of a few trading 'enclaves of capitalism'⁴⁴. Harvey⁴⁵ underlines two broad currents of thought in geography since this era, the former deeply materialist, based on environmental/spatial determinism and the latter an idealist one, propagated as 'the white man's burden', 'civilizing mission' and the like. Both these currents were to be seen in the practice as well as in the legitimization of colonial/imperial advances. The developments during this phase were essentially mapping and cadastral survey for the purposes of smooth navigation, 'the exploration of earth in all directions'

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Patnaik, Utsa, *Neo-Marxian Theories of Capitalism in Lenin and Imperialism* (1986), Ed/ Patnaik, Prabhat, p. 337, Orient Longman.

⁴⁵ Harvey, David, *Geography in A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (2000), Ed/ Bottomore, Tom, pp.216-19, Maya Blackwell.

to further 'universal exchange of the products of all alien climates'⁴⁶ and hence 'the development of the natural sciences', frantic search for exploitable raw materials and use values to aid the primitive accumulation for the metropolis, knowledge about the geographical variations and finally the division of the world among imperial powers. The development of the natural sciences produced scholars like Alexander Von Humboldt (1769-1859) and Carl Ritter (1779-1859). The former had political positions opposed to slavery⁴⁷ and exposed the practise of Spanish slave code in Cuba.⁴⁸ The era of Sir Halford Mackinder (1861-1947) and Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904) saw legitimization of colonial-imperial ventures in different ways. Mackinder never concealed his liberal imperialist view that,

“we (British) are essentially the people with capital, and those who have capital always share the proceeds of the activity of brains and muscles of other countries”⁴⁹.

while Ratzel opted for 'organismic analogy of Spencer'⁵⁰ for his defence. The coining of the word *lebensraum*⁵¹ for rationalising the imperial expansion of

⁴⁶ Marx, Karl, *Grundrisse*, p.342, Marxists Internet Archive, www.marxists.org

⁴⁷ Foner, Philip S, *Alexander Von Humboldt on Slavery in America*, Science and Society, Vol-47, No.3, pp. 330-342, (Fall 1983), Guilford.

⁴⁸ Humboldt, Alexander Von, *Essai politique sur Vue de Cuba* (1826), Paris.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Semmel, Bernard, *Sir Halford Mackinder – Theorist of Imperialism*, The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, Vol-24, No.4, Nov-1958, p. 556, Wiley.

⁵⁰ Peet, Richard, *The Social Origins of Environmental Determinism*, Annals., Vol-75, No.3, (Sep. 1985), pp.309-333, Taylor & Francis Ltd.

⁵¹ “Every new form of life needs space in order to come into existence, and yet more space to establish and pass on its characteristics”, Ratzel quoted in Bassin, M, *Imperialism and the Nation State in Friedrich Ratzel’s Political Geography*, Progressive Human Geography, 11, pp 473–495, 1987.

Germany was used by the Nazis later. Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921) and Elisee Reclus (1830-1905) brought in an ingenuous anarchist and radical tradition to the history of spatial sciences. The former idealised the concept of 'mutual aid'⁵² of the medieval period while it was fashionable to opt for social Darwinism towards colonial ends. While he reinterpreted⁵³ Darwin's stress on the 'significance for the associated struggle against the environment' as required by the theory of natural selection, there was no inclination towards the further developments of the social dimension and formation of 'second nature' in his analysis. Reclus continued the Humboldtian tradition which saw the publication of '*The Universal Geography*' (1876) and '*The Earth and its Inhabitants*' (1878). The survey redrew the reigning picture of the colonies as evident from the following excerpts from '*The Universal Geography*' about Malabar.

*Vasco de Gama cast anchor in the road stead—the most memorable event in the history of India since the Macedonian expedition. Calicut suffered much at the hands of the strangers whom it had so hospitably welcomed. In 1501, 1502, and 1510 it was bombarded by Cabral, Gama, and Albuquerque, and it was, later on, burnt and plundered by French, English, Danes, and other Europeans.*⁵⁴

Ellen Semple (1863-1932) as a student of Ratzel upheld his theoretical legacy in defence of the US imperialism which was experiencing its youthfulness during this period. The man-environment school prospered under her as the

⁵² Kropotkin, Peter, *Mutual Aid in the Medieval City* in *The Nineteenth Century*, (Aug-Sep, 1894), Anarchy Archives, dwardmac.pitzer.edu

⁵³ Kropotkin, Peter, *The Theory of Evolution and Mutual Aid* in *The Nineteenth Century*, (Jan. 1910), p.87, Anarchy Archives, dwardmac.pitzer.edu

⁵⁴ Reclus, Elisee, *Universal Geography*, Vol-8, India & Indo-China (1876), p. 342, JS Virtue & Co., London.

following excerpts from 'Influences of Geographic Environment' (1911) shows,

Man is a product of the earth's surface. This means not merely that he is a child of the earth, dust of her dust; but that the earth has mothered him, fed him, set him tasks, directed his thoughts, confronted him with difficulties that have strengthened his body and sharpened his wits, given him his problems of navigation or irrigation, and at the same time whispered hints for their solution. She has entered into his bone and tissue, into his mind and soul.⁵⁵

She drew upon nature to explain temperament of the races as the following excerpts suggest,

The influence of climate upon race temperament, both as a direct and indirect effect, cannot be doubted.... In general a close correspondence obtains between climate and temperament. The northern peoples of Europe are energetic, provident, serious, thoughtful rather than emotional, cautious rather than impulsive. The southerners of the subtropical Mediterranean basin are easy-going, improvident except under pressing necessity, gay, emotional, imaginative, all qualities which among the Negroes of the equatorial belt degenerate into grave racial faults.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Semple, Ellen C, *Influences of geographic environment on the basis of Ratzel's system of Anthropogeography* (1911). Chap.1, New York, Russell and Russell.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.620, Quoted in Peet, Richard, *The Social Origins of Environmental Determinism*, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol-75, No.3, (Sep. 1985), pp.321-22, Taylor & Francis Ltd.

The culmination of the First World War or the settling of the immediate imperialist concerns inaugurated a few more culturalist critiques⁵⁷ against environmental determinism to the further development of regional, urban and environmental managerial concerns of the evolving states post the Second World War⁵⁸.

Karl Wittfogel (1896-1988) tried to introduce a spatial element in his analysis of the arid, semi-arid vast agrarian tracts in China and Egypt. He preferred to call it 'hydraulic societies' as according to him the management of the vast agrarian tracts demanded a despotic ruler/bureaucracy and also tried to find parallels with Marx's concept of Asiatic mode. Wittfogel's concept of 'large scale irrigation and flood control through massive mobilisation of men by the state' in India (which covered a major part of the Orient) was based on slender evidence and his knowledge of its historical geography also came under question⁵⁹. Owen Lattimore's (1900-1989) works covered the reigning theoretical span with some based on ecological determinism still others in location theories and to culminate in studies based on modes of production⁶⁰.

2.2 Historical Materialist Understanding of Space

The works of Marx and Engels devoted little attention to geography, and their historical materialist texts had only passing mention of the works of Geographers. Although both accepted the heterogeneity of the geographical circumstances of humankind, they usually downplayed its importance in order

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 328.

⁵⁸ Harvey, David, *What kind of geography for what kind of public policy?* Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers (1974) 63 : 18-24. Royal Geographical Society.

⁵⁹ Habib, Irfan, *An Examination of Wittfogel's Theory of Oriental Despotism in Enquiry*, No-6, pp.57-59, Delhi.

⁶⁰ Rowe, William T, *Owen Lattimore, Asia and Comparative History*, The Journal Of Asian Studies, Vol-66, No.3, (2007), Association for Asian Studies.

not to succumb to its determinist current⁶¹. Marx while proposing the historical periodisation in which he sought to 'trace the path by which, in Western Europe, the capitalist order of economy emerged from the womb of the feudal order of economy', did not consider the variations of uneven capitalist penetrations in different societies. He accepted that Asiatic society had a different mode of production while he analysed the various pre-capitalist modes. He criticised those who transformed his 'historical sketch of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe into an historico-philosophic theory of the *marche generale* [general path] imposed by fate upon every people.⁶²'

Marx, while analysing capitalism's historical dynamic recognised the production differentials arising out of differing environmental conditions which later in turn formed the basis for the social division of labour.⁶³ A number of classical concepts describing geographical nature had undergone a materialist analysis. Thus soil fertility, it was stated, could be created or destroyed through the circulation of capital and did not have an unchangeable status. The reduced turnover time due to developments in transport and communications or 'the annihilation of space by time'⁶⁴, crises tendencies within capitalism and its spatial outcome to tide over as colonialism and imperialism, and as 'developed versus under developed', also followed.

For Marx the 'productiveness of labour served as the foundation and starting point for progress' and it was 'not a gift of Nature but of history embracing thousands of centuries'. He found the tropics to be the hearth of progress where the reproduction of the producer was easier. He simultaneously drew attention to the necessity of bringing 'a natural force under the control of society, of

⁶¹ Harvey, David, *Geography in A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (2000), Ed/ Bottomore, Tom, pp.216-19, Maya Blackwell.

⁶² Marx, Karl, *Letter from Marx to the Editor of the Otecestvenniye Zapisky*, (Nov-1877), Marx-Engels Correspondence, International Publishers (1968).

⁶³ Marx, Karl, *Capital*, Vol-1, Chap-16, p.481, (1974 reprint) Progress Publishers.

⁶⁴ Marx, Karl, *Grundrisse*, Notebook 5, Circuit and Turnover of Capital, www.marxists.org

economising, of appropriating or subduing it on a large scale by the work of man's hand, that first plays the decisive part in the history of industry'⁶⁵.

By 1960s radical critique to traditional conceptions in geography and parallel reconstitution of such understandings from a socialist perspective added a new life to the subject. Henri Lefebvre (1970) repeatedly drew attention to the importance of the role, production and politics of space. The penetrating contributions of Harvey (1973) on the space economy of urbanism and Castells's (1977) rich literature on urbanisation were among the important works during this period.

2.2.1 Space in Social Structure

Space for any society at any particular moment is considered as a material product of its social structure. Hence 'there is no theory of space that is not an integral part of a general social theory'⁶⁶. The Marxist approach underlines the materialist conception of the historical evolution of the social structure at its core. 'Historical materialism contends that class conflict and the basic trajectory of human history is accounted for by the advance of the productive forces'. 'Their advance, however must be understood in terms of a theoretical model that reveals the character of the specific modes of production involved'⁶⁷.

2.2.2 Mode of Production – Concept and Relevance

The concept of modes of production for any society is explained through its production relations especially the way in which the surplus is produced and its use controlled. A working definition of it can be,

⁶⁵ Marx, Karl, *Capital*, Vol-1, Chap-16, pp.480-83, (1974 reprint) Progress Publishers.

⁶⁶ Castells, Manuel, *The Urban Question - A Marxist Approach*, p.115,(1977), The MIT Press.

⁶⁷ Shaw, William H, *Historical Materialism in A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, pp. 234-38, (1991) Ed/ Bottomore, Tom, Blackwell.

The specific economic form, in which unpaid surplus-labour is pumped out of direct producers, determines the relationship of rulers and ruled, as it grows directly out of production itself and, in turn, reacts upon it as a determining element. It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers — a relation always naturally corresponding to a definite stage in the development of the methods of labour and thereby its social productivity — which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure⁶⁸

The concept of modes of production was integral to the material interpretation of history. A classic statement appeared in the preface to Marx's *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* in which he stated that:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or – this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms – with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution⁶⁹.

⁶⁸ Karl Marx, *Capital*-Vol.III, Chapter-47- *Genesis of Capitalist Ground Rent*, p.791

⁶⁹ Karl Marx, *Preface to a contribution to the critique of political economy*, www.marxists.org

Marx has tried to explain the evolution of mankind through the dialectics or conflict existing between the social forces of production and the relations of production and designated the various epochs as:

In broad outline, the Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production may be designated as epochs marking progress in the economic development of society⁷⁰.

The insights of Marx on the labour process after the publication of a hitherto little known manuscript '*Results of the immediate processes of Production*' have thrown much more light on the various modes. The distinction he made between the formal and real subsumption of labour under capital after the formation of absolute and relative surplus value was an answer to the further evolving and varied nature of the social formations.

In any case, if each of the two forms of surplus value — absolute and relative — is considered for itself, in its separate existence and absolute surplus value always precedes relative — we can say that two separate forms of the subsumption of labour under capital, or two separate forms of capitalist production, correspond to the two forms of surplus value. The first form of production always constitutes the predecessor of the second, although the second, which is the further developed form, can in turn form the basis for the introduction of the first in new branches of production⁷¹.

The situations under which capital tends to confine to subordinate functions

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Marx, K. & Engels, F. (2010), *Collected Works*, Vol. 34, (1861-1864), (Tr) Ben Fowkes. Lawrence & Wishart.

like the usurer and merchant to a formal subsumption working parallel with the old mode to gravitate towards the real subsumption or the specific mode of capitalist production is dealt in detail. The publication of his manuscripts in preparation of *Critique of Political Economy* and *Capital* mainly on the *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations* (more on which in the next section) made it clear that he was not referring to a chronological succession (which prompted the deterministic current) but to an evolutionary process in a more general sense.⁷²

2.2.3 Periodisation, Evolution and Spatial Manifestation of Various Modes

Marx and Engel's views on historical periodisation and evolution of different modes were majorly dealt in *German Ideology* (1845-46) and *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* (1857-58)⁷³. The historical basis of the first remained slender compared to the second which preceded the drafting of *Capital* and hence indicates the full maturity of his thinking.

German Ideology projects the stages of social division of labour and the corresponding form of property with the first stage signifying elementary division of labour and tribal ownership with openings towards slavery in course with increased population and external relations (war/barter).

The division of labour is at this stage still very elementary and is confined to a further extension of the natural division of labour existing in the family. The social structure is, therefore, limited to an extension of the family; patriarchal family chieftains, below

⁷² EJ Hobsbawm, Introduction to the *Pre-capitalist economic formations*, p.36 (1964), Lawrence & Wishart.

⁷³ Which remained unpublished until a German edition in 1953.

*them the members of the tribe, finally slaves. The slavery latent in the family only develops gradually with the increase of population, the growth of wants, and with the extension of external relations, both of war and of barter.*⁷⁴

The second form, the communal and state form of antiquity, signifies private property subordinate to the communal with the antagonism between town and country through developed division of labour and class relations between the slaves and the citizens. The third form of ownership was the feudal or estate property with the nobility and armed body of its retainers standing against the enserfed peasantry as the directly producing class. Its counterpart in the towns, swarming under escaped serfs, formed the feudal organisation of trades under guilds.

*Thus the chief form of property during the feudal epoch consisted on the one hand of landed property with serf labour chained to it, and on the other of the labour of the individual with small capital commanding the labour of journeymen. The organisation of both was determined by the restricted conditions of production – the small-scale and primitive cultivation of the land, and the craft type of industry. There was little division of labour in the heyday of feudalism.*⁷⁵

The transition from feudalism to capitalism begins with the division of labour first between town and country with the development of craftsmen with their labour as their sole property and the existence of small capital in the former. The further division of labour with the separation of production and commerce,

⁷⁴ Marx, Karl *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, pp.122-23, (1964), Lawrence & Wishart.

⁷⁵ Ibid p. 126

production outgrowing the guild system, the inventions of the productive forces acquiring permanence through world commerce and increased volume of movable capital in the form of merchant capital to start with and later manufacturing as against natural capital were the forms acquired during this transition.

*Manufacture and the movement of production in general received an enormous impetus through the extension of commerce which came with the discovery of America and the sea-route to the East Indies. The new products imported thence, particularly the masses of gold and silver which came into circulation and totally changed the position of the classes towards one another, dealing a hard blow to feudal landed property and to the workers; the expeditions of adventurers, colonisation; and above all the extension of markets into a world market, which had now become possible and was daily becoming more and more a fact, called forth a new phase of historical development;*⁷⁶

Marx's thought by the time of the *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* had widened much both in terms of the various routes out of a primitive communal system (viz., *oriental, ancient, germanic* and *slavonic* forms), as well as its evolution towards forms which ensure a separation of the inorganic conditions of human existence to himself (which is only fully completed towards a relationship between wage labour and capital). Thus finally the free labourer confronting the objective conditions of production as his non-property, as value existing for itself, as capital.

Marx's further elaboration of the *oriental* form in which “the self sustaining unity of manufacture and agriculture” which is resisting the “disintegration and

⁷⁶ Ibid, pp. 135-36

economic evolution more stubbornly” represents a progress from his earlier thought. The *ancient* form is characterised by its city concentration, small scale agriculture for immediate consumption, manufacturing or craft as domestic subsidiary (spinning and weaving) with surplus labour time going for commune or war. The *germanic* form consists of individual household property forming an independent centre of production with common land supplementing it.

The property mediated by its existence in a community may appear as communal property, which gives the individual only possession and no private property in the soil (oriental); or else it may appear in the dual form of state and private property, which co-exist side by side, but in such a way as to make the former the precondition of the latter, so that only the citizen is and must be a private proprietor, while on the other hand his property qua citizen also has a separate existence (ancient). Lastly, communal property may appear as a supplement to private property, which in this case forms the basis; in this case, the community has no existence except in the assembly of its members and in their association for common purposes (germanic).”⁷⁷

The *germanic* system forms the socio-economic formation of feudalism in conjunction with the medieval town and emerges as the third phase with bourgeois society emerging out of feudalism as the fourth.

Ancient classical history is the history of cities, but cities based on landownership and agriculture; Asian history is a kind of undifferentiated unity of town and country (the large city, properly speaking, must be regarded merely as a princely camp, superimposed on the real economic structure); the Middle Ages

⁷⁷ Ibid p.82

*(germanic period) starts with the countryside as the locus of history, whose further development then proceeds through the opposition of town and country; modern (history) is the urbanization of the countryside, not, as among the ancients, the ruralisation of the city.*⁷⁸

The evolution of mankind from a nomadic pastoral tribe to whom the inorganic condition of its existence appear in its elementary boundlessness further to a settled life which would demand expansion as a result of population increase through conquest/war and hence the transition towards slavery/serfdom is explained further in the following words,

*The fundamental condition of property based on tribalism (which is originally formed out of the community) is to be a member of the tribe. Consequently, a tribe conquered and subjugated by another becomes propertyless and part of the inorganic conditions of the conquering tribe's reproduction, which that community regards as its own. Slavery and serfdom are therefore simply further developments of property based on tribalism.*⁷⁹

Thus Marx defines property as,

Property — and this applies to its Asiatic, slavonic, ancient, classical and Germanic forms — therefore originally signifies a relation of the working (producing) subject (or a subject reproducing himself) to the conditions of his production or reproduction as his own. Hence, according to the conditions of

⁷⁸ Ibid, pp. 77-78

⁷⁹ Ibid p. 91

*production, property will take different forms.*⁸⁰

Marx further elaborates the forces of production dissolving the different forms in which the labourer is an owner and the owner labours, hence a dissolution of the relation to the earth, to land or soil. This dissolution also involves the living units of labour power that are still part of the objective conditions of production as slaves or serfs. The relations in which man appears as the proprietor of the instrument in the form of handicraft labour and other means of subsistence also tends to get dissolved.

The age of dissolution of earlier modes were production for immediate use or use value is replaced with exchange value and further development of monetary wealth towards its transformation into capital is also explained. The formation and accumulation of capital is further illustrated as:

*Its original formation occurs simply because the historic process of the dissolution of an old mode of production, allows value, existing in the form of monetary wealth to buy the objective conditions of labor on one hand, to exchange the living labor of the now free workers for money, on the other. It is certainly not by creating the objective conditions of such laborers' existence, but rather by accelerating their separation from them — i.e., by accelerating their loss of property.*⁸¹

As it is understood from above, Marx sees the original formation of capital does not proceed by the accumulation of food, tools and raw materials (objective conditions of labour) but rather by accelerating their separation from labour.

⁸⁰ Ibid p. 95

⁸¹ Ibid p. 110

2.2.4 Historical Materialist Interpretations

There were many further studies in the 1950s along the historical materialist tradition both on the various pre-capitalist modes as well as on the transition towards higher forms. Perry Anderson⁸² deals extensively with the dual predecessors of the feudal mode of the Roman Empire as well as the Germanic invaders under the slave mode of production. The material wealth which sustained the intellectual and civic vitality of the Roman empire was drawn overwhelmingly from the countryside so much so that while the city trade was subjected to imperial levy by the 4th century AD, the income from this duty in towns never amounted to more than 5% of the then prevailing land tax.⁸³ The agriculture of the ancient period was based on the slave mode with the ratio of slaves to free citizens were about 3:2 in Periclean Athens⁸⁴ or 'until there were three for every Athenian citizen'.⁸⁵

*“ in Roman theory, the agricultural slave was designated an instrumentum vocale, the speaking tool, one grade away from the livestock that constituted an instrumentum semi-vocale, and two from the implement which was an instrumentum mutum. ”*⁸⁶

The slave mode although could introduce some technical advances in the form of rotary mills for grain and hence the improved quality of bread and more profitable wine and oil cultures, its typical path of expansion remained as lateral or conquest. This labour additive type of growth was not only resistant to technical innovations but got dried after the empire reaching its final

⁸² Perry Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism*, Verso, 1974.

⁸³ AHM Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, Vol.1 p.465 (quoted in Ibid p. 20)

⁸⁴ A Andrews, *Greek Society* (quoted in Ibid p.22)

⁸⁵ Aristotle, *Politics*, (quoted in Ibid p.23)

⁸⁶ Perry Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism*, pp.24-25, Verso, 1974.

frontiers. The large scale use of slaves in public works retarded the growth of the manufacturing sector as well.

“The one truly large scale manufacturing sector was thus to a great extent subtracted from commodity exchange altogether. The permanent and direct use by the Roman state of slave-labour – a structural feature that lasted right down and into the Byzantine empire – was one of the central pillars of the political economy of late Antiquity. Thus the state could expand, but the urban economy received little benefit from its growth: if anything, its size and weight tended to suffocate private commercial initiative and entrepreneurial activity. There was thus no increase of production in either agriculture or industry within the imperial borders to offset the silent decline in its servile manpower, once external expansion had ceased.”⁸⁷

Once the slave demand could not be met the landlords established them on small plots from which they collected the surplus produce. In the decades to come the material basis for a social unity of fighting and tilling was broken as military campaigns became longer and lengthier gravitating towards a feudal unit of production, tilled by a dependant peasantry.

Under the feudal mode agrarian property was controlled by a class of feudal lords who extracted a surplus from peasants (serfs) who were tied to the soil (serfdom) through an extra-economic coercion. It had a chain of dependent tenures linked to military service from landlords upwards to the monarch, a parcellization of sovereignty⁸⁸.

⁸⁷ Ibid p.82 (quoted substantially from Finley, The Ancient Economy)

⁸⁸ Ibid p.148

Feudalism in Western Europe heralded technical innovations in agriculture⁸⁹ so much so that between the 9th and 13th centuries, the average harvest / seed yield increased at a minimum from 2.5:1 to 4:1.⁹⁰ The exhaustion of the last reserves of rural reclamation and the black death of the 14th century signalled a general crisis of feudalism since then. The closest parallel to European feudalism was in Japan under Tokugawa shogunate with remarkable agricultural productivity and with the emergence of a market centred landlordism⁹¹.

In fact while interpreting the Chinese medieval period Needham⁹² finds the state apparatus to be non-hereditary bureaucratic in character upon self-governing peasant tribal communities with practically no division of labour between agriculture and industry. The form of exploitation was essentially taxes for the centralised state which looked after construction and maintenance of public water works majorly. He finds the bureaucracy inhibited the growth of modern science in the medieval period and absence of mass chattel slavery fostered pure and applied science in the earlier centuries.

The transition from feudalism to capitalism generated intense debates after the publication of Maurice Dobb's *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* in 1946. Dobb found the decline of feudalism in the inefficiency of it as a system coupled with the growing needs of the ruling class for revenue which put pressure upon the producers which turned the system to be unendurable.⁹³ He

⁸⁹ The technical innovations which were the material instruments of this advance were, essentially, the use of the iron plough for tilling, the stiff harness for equine traction, the water mill for mechanical power, marling for soil improvement and the three field system for crop rotation (after Ibid, P.183).

⁹⁰ Ibid p.190 (quoted from Duby, *Rural Economy and Country Life in Medieval West*)

⁹¹ Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, Conclusions p. 415, Verso.

⁹² Needham, Joseph, *The Grand Titration-Science and Society in East and West*, pp. 193-209, (1969), George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

⁹³ Maurice Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, Chap.2, p. 42,(2007 reprint)

found the disintegrating influence of commerce as secondary and cited the revival of 'second serfdom'⁹⁴ in Eastern Europe at the end of the fifteenth century along with the growth of production for the market in defence. Sweezy (1950) in his critique explained that feudalism is a system of *production for use* signified by *no boundless thirst for surplus labour from the nature of production*⁹⁵ and thus long distance trade could be a creative force, bringing into existence a system of production for exchange.⁹⁶ Dobb (1962) while concluding the debate has touched upon the wide differences existed in the form of extraction of feudal rent in the form of labour rent in Western Europe and a tribute form in Asia. He found the essential conflict throughout the period as between direct producers and their feudal overlords. The revolt among the petty producers and their partial emancipation laid the basis for some accumulation, class differentiation within the sector and the genesis of capitalism.⁹⁷ Dobb also stresses on the time lag for its maturity, the arresting of it in Italy and Flanders along with the feudal crisis of the 14th century and develops further Marx's thinking that a shift to bourgeois methods of production 'from above' would halt the transition half way paving the way for the old mode to get preserved rather than supplanted.⁹⁸ Hobsbawm (1962)

Routledge.

⁹⁴ Marx-Engels correspondence, December 15, 1882, International Publishers (1968).

⁹⁵ Marx, Karl, *Capital* Vol.1, Chap-10, p.226 ("It is, however, clear that in any given economic formation of society, where not the exchange value but the use value of the product predominates, surplus labour will be limited by a given set of wants which may be greater or less, and that here no boundless thirst for surplus labour arises from the nature of the production itself.")

⁹⁶ Sweezy, Paul, *A Critique in The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, p. 42, (1976), Verso.

⁹⁷ Dobb, Maurice, *From Feudalism to Capitalism in Marxism Today*, September 1962 (Reprinted in *Ibid*, pp.167-68)

⁹⁸ After Marx, Karl, *Capital* Vol. III, Chapter 20, p.334 ("The transition from the feudal mode of production is two-fold. The producer becomes merchant and capitalist, in contrast to the natural agricultural economy and the guild-bound handicrafts of the

joining the debate also stressed upon the net effect of the rise of European capitalism in intensifying 'uneven development' and to divide the world into 'developed' and the 'under developed' countries.⁹⁹ The growth of towns also more or less followed the same trajectory with leaps and reversals with much depending upon the 'solidity and internal structure of the mode'¹⁰⁰. The case of reversal in Italy and Flanders which was inhabited by 40-50 thousand people in the fourteenth century was precisely in the fact that the bourgeoisie was in a political alliance¹⁰¹ with the feudal elements against the urban craftsmen and the peasants inhibiting further evolution there.

2.2.5 India in the Modes of Production Debate

Marx's early thought on the oriental community and further on the Asiatic mode had generated intense debate. Marx envisaged a higher unity/despot realising all the surplus under communal ownership in all Asiatic forms. This made all the subject communities under it as hereditary possessors of land or to a legal absence of property.

The individual is then in fact property-less, or property — i.e., the relationship of the individual to the natural conditions of labor and reproduction, the inorganic nature which he finds and makes his

medieval urban industries. This is the really revolutionising path. Or else, the merchant establishes direct sway over production. However much this serves historically as a stepping stone witness the English 17th century clothier, who brings the weavers, independent as they are, under his control by selling their wool to them and buying their cloth it cannot by itself contribute to the overthrow of the old mode of production, but tends rather to preserve and retain it as its precondition".)

⁹⁹ Hobsbawm, Eric, *From Feudalism to Capitalism in Marxism Today*, August, 1962 (Reprinted in *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism p.164 (1976) Verso*)

¹⁰⁰ Marx, Karl, *Capital-Vol-3*, Chapters XX, p.332, Progress Publishers.

¹⁰¹ Hilton, Rodney, *Capitalism – What is in a name?* in *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism (1976) p.157, Verso*.

own, the objective body of his subjectivity — appears to be mediated by means of a grant from the total unity to the individual through the intermediary of the particular community. Oriental despotism therefore appears to lead to a legal absence of property. In fact, however its foundation is tribal or common property, in most cases created through a combination of manufacture and agriculture within the small community which thus becomes entirely self-sustaining and contains within itself all conditions of production and surplus production.¹⁰²

This status of the labouring individual makes him a 'general slave'¹⁰³ of the despot and thus detaches him from the form of property under slave mode and restricts the evolving to a secondary stage of social relation¹⁰⁴.

In the self-sustaining unity of manufactures and agriculture on which this form is based, conquest is not so essential a condition as where landed property, agriculture, predominate exclusively. On the other hand, since the individual in this form never becomes an owner but only a possessor, he is at bottom himself the property, the slave of that which embodies the unity of the community. Here slavery neither puts an end to the conditions of labor, nor does it modify the essential relationship.¹⁰⁵

Thus Marx depicts the Asiatic form to be resistant to change with 'large cities as merely princely camps superimposed on the real economic structure' and 'large scale irrigation, road building and other public works as the contribution

¹⁰² Marx, Karl *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, p. 69, (1964), Lawrence & Wishart.

¹⁰³ The slave of that which embodies the unity of the community, Ibid, p. 92

¹⁰⁴ The individual neither become independent of the community nor 'property less and part of the inorganic conditions of the conquering tribe's reproduction'.

¹⁰⁵ Marx, Karl *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, p. 91, (1964), Lawrence & Wishart.

of the higher unity or the despotic government'.

The first familiar interpretation of the Indian situation on the footsteps of Marx came from Kosambi and Sharma.¹⁰⁶ Both gave evidences from the first millennium to argue for a case of 'Indian feudalism', a 'political decentralisation accompanied by the sovereign's alienation of fiscal resources through hereditary religious and secular grants' with 'the Indian knight or *Rajaputra* at the bottom as the basic unit of military and political power'.¹⁰⁷ This was to be followed with an analogous condition like of Medieval Europe of a steady contraction of money and commerce, decay in towns and the isolation of the self-sufficient village. Habib holds that the difference with the classical case was, its inability to establish a somewhat similar agrarian labour process of serfdom and the visible evidence of a strong centralised power replacing the 'feudal' ruling class to a subordinate position of the zamindars as its successor. Habib¹⁰⁸ argues that Marx's own rather 'mystical view of property' was apparently abandoned by him later and quotes the following *Tribune* piece which talks about the Indian land tenures in detail.

*...alleged property in the government (is) nothing more than the derivation of the title from the sovereign, theoretically acknowledged in all countries the codes of which are based on the feudal law and substantially acknowledged in all countries whatever in the power of the Government to levy taxes on the land to the extent of the needs of the Government.*¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Kosambi, D.D., (1956) *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Popular Prakashan & Sharma, R.S. (1965), *Indian Feudalism 300-1200* University of Calcutta.

¹⁰⁷ Habib, Irfan, *Classifying Pre-Colonial India* (1999) in *The Feudalism Debate* Ed/ Mukhia, Harbans, p. 193, Manohar (1999).

¹⁰⁸ Habib, Irfan, *Marx's perception of India* (1983) Published in *The Marxist*, Vol.1, No.1, July-September 1983.

¹⁰⁹ Marx, Karl, *Lord Canning's Proclamation and Land Tenure in India*, New-York Daily

He further quotes Marx's view on 'Oriental despotism' also essentially as a rent receiving sovereignty from the following ideas made explicit in *Capital III*.

... in Asia ..(where the state) stands over them (the direct producers) as their landlord and simultaneously as sovereign, then rent and taxes coincide, or rather, there exists no tax which differs from this form of ground-rent (labour rent converted into tributary relationship). Sovereignty here consists in the ownership of land concentrated on a national scale. But on the other hand, no private ownership of land exists, although there is both private and common possession and use of land.¹¹⁰

Habib further argues that Marx was aware of the existence of a definite social class appropriating the surplus with the *zamindars* entering into a triangular relationship between the peasant and the state in pre-British India. He sums up his conclusions as follows:

(a) The peasant raised a part of his produce for his own subsistence, and this did not go on the market. The combination of agriculture with handicraft ensured that the peasant did not buy anything on the market. He himself lived in a 'natural economy'.

(b) Of the remainder of the produce – the surplus product – the peasant parted with a portion in payment of rent-in-kind. This, Marx thought, the normal mode of surplus acquisition in Asia. The part of the product taken in rent was put on the market after it had been obtained by the state, and thus was converted into commodities

Tribune, June-7, 1858, www.marxists.org

¹¹⁰ Karl Marx, *Capital-Vol.III*, Chapter-47- *Genesis of Capitalist Ground Rent*, p.791, Progress Publishers (1974).

outside the village.

(c) Another portion of the surplus (presumably the smaller) became a commodity inside the village in that it was raised for sale on the market by the peasant who then paid money-rent; the market for the product, however remained outside the village.¹¹¹

Habib made valuable reconsideration of Marx's concept of the Asiatic Mode as well. He established from Marx's later writings that the pre-colonial Indian society was clearly a developed class society shedding the doubts of many¹¹² who had considered it until then, at best, as a primitive form of it. Its place in the order of stages of social progress either beyond or at a par with the slave and feudal societies respectively has also been argued. He has shown that production for the market in both agricultural and non-agricultural segments formed a large sector during the Mughal period. The *Khwud-Kasht* based on hired labour was certainly an advance towards capitalist farming besides the individual petty production creating an economic differentiation on its own and lastly the merchant capital was able to develop handicraft production through a putting out system. The village community harping on individual peasant production was forced to meet the tax claims from above during the Mughal period. But at the same time the community more or less worked within the purview of a natural economy meeting most of its needs from within. A network of caste divisions ensured artisans and labourers with the former getting customary payments/shares¹¹³ and the latter been constituted predominantly from the lower or menial castes who were obliged to perform forced labour to zamindars and upper caste peasants. Hence not only the

¹¹¹ Habib, Irfan, *Marx's perception of India* (1983) Published in *The Marxist*, Vol.1, No.1, July-September 1983.

¹¹² EJ Hobsbawm, Introduction to the *Pre-capitalist economic formations*, p.34, (1964), Lawrence & Wishart.

¹¹³ Buchanan, Francis, *Journey from Madras*, I, pp65-8, 299-300, 337 (quoted in Habib, Irfan, *Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707*, p 156).

'village community' was much more stratified than Marx thought, even the claimants of the surplus it generated also were varied between the zamindars, village servants/artisans and the state¹¹⁴.

Looking specifically at the forms of pre-colonial accumulation which made Marx comment as a 'reproduction on a progressively increasing scale' of course without any capital accumulation, argues Habib, as still 'the expansion of land tax or rent and not the cyclical investment of capitalist profits'¹¹⁵. The further reinforcing of the original non-economic / caste dominance over a class of wage labourers and intensification of the differentiation among the peasantry during this period with the introduction of money has also been mentioned. In the non-agricultural segment both the aristocratic *karkhanas* as well as the putting out system maintained by the merchants were measures to transfer artisans' surplus product either as 'surplus value' into the hands of the aristocratic class as use values or as profits to the merchants. The parasitical character of the economy under the Mughals with a system of direct agrarian exploitation by a small ruling class with crafts being denied a rural market and the continued dependence of the merchant capital on the tax-rent circuit led to a crisis following agrarian revolts and subsequently, the English appropriation of the tribute.¹¹⁶

The argument¹¹⁷ over the medieval southern formation under the Chola-Vijayanagara period that essentially these states had only a ritual existence and

¹¹⁴ Habib, Irfan, *Classifying Pre-colonial India in The Feudalism Debate* Ed/ Mukhia, Harbans, pp 189-192, Manohar.

¹¹⁵ Habib, Irfan, *Processes of accumulation in pre-colonial and colonial India in Essays in Indian History – Towards a Marxist Perception*. p 261.

¹¹⁶ Habib, Irfan, *Potentialities of Capitalist Development in the Economy of Mughal India in Essays in Indian History – Towards a Marxist Perception*. pp231-232, p 271.

¹¹⁷ Stein, Burton, *Peasant, State and Society in Medieval South India*, p. 257, (1980), OUP.

the *nadu* was politically an enlarged substitute for the 'self-sustained village'¹¹⁸, was summarily rejected by many scholars citing proofs for a centralised apparatus during the Chola regime¹¹⁹ and disproving Stein's assumptions on *nadu*¹²⁰.

2.2.5.1 Colonial Period

The first period in British colonialism in India from the battle of Plassey in 1757 to the Charter Act of 1813 saw the 'tribute phase'¹²¹ of primitive accumulation (mainly the sheer plunder¹²² of accumulated treasures and revenues of Indian potentates to start with and later the taxation revenue of the East India company) for English industrial revolution. The East India Company enjoyed the monopoly of trade until 1813. By 1801 the tribute amounted to 2% of the British national income or equivalent to 30% of the British domestic investment at that time¹²³. The Indian cotton and silk goods were imposed an import duty of 70-80% in Britain as it was 50-60% cheaper than domestic

¹¹⁸ Karashima, Noboru, *History and Society in South India*, Introduction pp xxv to xxvii, (2001), OUP.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p xxvi.

¹²⁰ Veluthat, Kesavan, *The Role of Nadu in the Socio-Political Structure of South India (AD 600-1200)* in *The Feudal Order – State Society and Ideology in Early Medieval India*, Ed/ Jha, DN, (2000), Manohar.

¹²¹ Habib, Irfan, *Processes of accumulation in pre-colonial and colonial India* in *Essays in Indian History – Towards a Marxist Perception*. p 271, (1995), Tulika.

¹²² “They forcibly seize the belongings and goods of the peasants, traders and others, at a quarter of their value, and by means of violence and oppression they make them pay five rupees for goods that are worth no more than one” (Excerpts from the complaint of one of the Nawab of Bengal's administrators quoted by H Verelst in *A View of the Rise of English Government in Bengal* (1772), Quoted in Mandel, Ernest, *Marxist Economic Theory*, Vol- 2, p.446, (1968), Merlin Press.)

¹²³ Habib, Irfan, *Colonisation of the Indian Economy* in *Essays in Indian History – Towards a Marxist Perception*. p 296-335 (1995), Tulika.

substitutes¹²⁴. After the success of the Industrial revolution in Britain, its colonial relationship with India entered the 'opium phase'¹²⁵ of free trade, with Indian peasants being forced to cultivate opium which was imposed on the Chinese people. The British benefited a lot from this three way trade. In 1855 while Britain consumed majorly tea and silk worth £ 8.5 million from China and could export in exchange goods worth only a mere £ 1 million, the balance was made up with Indian opium exports worth £ 6.23 million.¹²⁶ This period also saw the entry of the merchant capital and the local usurer into *zamindari*. The second phase initiated the 'de-industrialisation' followed by an urban decline majorly in eastern India. The spread of railways at the cost of Indian taxpayer inaugurated the 'free trade phase' with a gradual shift to the procurement of country's agricultural goods as raw materials for British industrial revolution. The post-mutiny years heralded the growth of indirect taxes also aiding the full-fledged primitive accumulation with the last three decades of the eighteenth century registering a mere less than one per cent increase in the net national product annually and the simultaneous drain of wealth from India amounting to 4.14% of the British national income in 1882-83.¹²⁷ The British expropriation of the pre-capitalist country resulted in not only turning the petty producers into a pauperised lot but at the same time pushing the domestic capital further into serving subordinate functions like usury and limiting merchant capital within a few export items like cotton, opium and indigo. The prospects for any capitalist development were dimmed.

The changes in the agrarian scene¹²⁸ during the colonial period consisted of a

¹²⁴ Mandel, Ernest, *Marxist Economic Theory*, Vol-2, p.446, (1968), Merlin Press.

¹²⁵ Habib, Irfan, *Colonisation of the Indian Economy in Essays in Indian History – Towards a Marxist Perception*. p.277, Tulika.

¹²⁶ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p 325.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p 280, p360.

¹²⁸ Patnaik, Utsa, *The Process of Commercialisation under Colonial Conditions in The Long Transition – Essays on Political Economy*, (1999), pp. 252-297, Tulika.

further fragmentation of the holdings; entry of commercial crops resulting from the strategy of the British to access raw materials for its industrial revolution from India; obtaining a substantial part of the surplus as rent or revenue to the state; converting caste bondage into debt bondage to moneylender/trader and isolated capitalist investment in dairying, garden crops and plantations owned by the British administrators/servants. The British allowed for proprietary rights for *zamindars* and *raiyyats* with free transfer, subject to their revenue requirements and took it over whenever arrears got into non-payment hence assuming the sovereign right when required¹²⁹. The tax exaction under the British was not only harsher than the Mughals¹³⁰ it turned land into an alienable commodity. Capitalist investment did not prevail in either of these areas with the British policies pushing the pre-capitalist ground rent upwards pauperising¹³¹ the peasantry. The experience with the usurers and merchants capital¹³² was that both existed independent of the mode. The former appropriated the surplus without inducing any change in crops/technology and the latter although helped in altering the structure, siphoned off the surplus through very low contract prices. In fact the first Tenancy Act was passed much later only in 1859. The second arm of public works of irrigation canals also broadly helped in pushing the cultivation of commercial crops for exports.

2.3 The Geography of Capitalist Accumulation

The geography of capitalist accumulation is significant as it brought in enormous changes unlike the preceding modes. With some broad abstraction it can be said that feudalism, viewed essentially as a relationship between an

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 255

¹³⁰ Bagchi, Amiya Kumar, *The Political Economy of Underdevelopment*, p.79, (1989), Orient Longman.

¹³¹ Rather than proletarianisation, See Patnaik, Utsa, *The Process of Commercialisation under Colonial Conditions in The Long Transition – Essays on Political Economy*, (1999), p. 291, Tulika.

¹³² Ibid, pp. 275-78.

enslaved peasantry and a class of overlords appropriating the surplus through extra economic coercion engulfed many parts of the Old World by the end of the 15th century. There are scholars¹³³ who do not see much evolutionary difference in terms of the technology and levels of commodity production in the social formations between Europe and other major regions prior to 1492. These regions of proto-capitalist centres were either well connected through long distance trade or been seats of power saddled with large agrarian surplus. Nonetheless the cardinal role of the merchant capital as the forerunner was evident.

*Aside from the fact that it (the merchant capital) exploits the difference between the prices of production of various countries, those modes of production bring it about that merchant's capital appropriates an overwhelming portion of the surplus-product partly as a mediator between communities which still substantially produce for use-value,..and partly, because under those earlier modes of production the principal owners of the surplus-product with whom the merchant dealt, namely, the slave-owner, the feudal lord, and the state represent the consuming wealth and luxury which the merchant seeks to trap.*¹³⁴

The primitive accumulation from the Americas, 'the circumnavigation of Africa and the establishment of sea link with India, Indonesia, China and Japan'¹³⁵ strengthened the trade monopoly of the merchant capital centered around Europe and ensured super profits in long distance trade. They could effectively counter and minimize the effect of 'Egyptian-Venetian monopoly' from Asia and Africa. The trade monopoly enjoyed by the European countries post the

¹³³ Blaut, JN, *Where Was Capitalism Born?* Antipode 8, No.2, (1976), Wiley.

¹³⁴ Karl Marx, *Capital-Vol.III*, Chapter-20- *Historical Facts About Merchant's Capital*, pp.330-31, Progress Publishers (1974).

¹³⁵ Mandel, Ernest, *Marxist Economic Theory*, Vol-1, p.106, (1968) Merlin Press.

end of the 15th century ensured further capitalist growth there with the parallel impoverishment of Asian, African and Latin American colonies. The initial phase of primitive accumulation from the colonies to finance the industrial revolution was followed by using them to access primary commodities, raw materials and simultaneously flooding them with the manufactured goods from the metropolitan country. This has ensured an international division of labour 'which converts one part of the globe into a chiefly agricultural field of production, for supplying the other part which remains a chiefly industrial field'¹³⁶. The future of capitalist development in these colonies remained stunted which was later known by the euphemism of underdevelopment. Capitalism has also engendered uneven development due its inherent differentiation tendency confining primarily within a capitalist economy. In fact uneven development is the spatial outcome of capitalism along with 'semi starvation level of existence of the masses'¹³⁷. By 1900 colonisation of the whole of Africa, two-third of Asia and a major part of the Americas¹³⁸ were completed. Lenin called not only this tendency of territorial division but also the emergence of monopolies, the creation of a financial oligarchy, the export of capital in place of export of commodities (during colonialism) and the formation of international monopolist associations¹³⁹ together as imperialism. Harvey saw¹⁴⁰ 'Marx's theories of transportation relations, location and geographical concentration, expanding spheres of realisation and the likes as comprising his own theory of imperialism'. But this could only be considered

¹³⁶ Marx, Karl, *Capital* Vol.1, Chapter-15, p.425, (1974) Progress Publishers.

¹³⁷ Lenin, VI, *Imperialism-The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, in *Selected Works*, Vol-1, p.679, Progress Publishers.

¹³⁸ Supan, Alexander Georg, *The Territorial Development of The European Colonies*, (1906), quoted in *Ibid*, p.690.

¹³⁹ Lenin, VI, *Imperialism-The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, in *Selected Works*, Vol-1, p.700, Progress Publishers.

¹⁴⁰ Harvey, David, *The Geography of Capitalist Accumulation : A Reconstruction of the Marxian Theory*, *Antipode* 7, No.2, (1975), Wiley.

as a sort of 'crude economic determinism' as it doesn't counter-pose the political activity of an imperial state¹⁴¹.

In fact along with the idea of imperialism there were many critiques of the mode of capitalist development followed in the erstwhile colonies of Asia, Africa and Latin America. There were a flurry of new concepts like 'unequal exchange', 'world capitalist system', 'centre versus periphery' and 'metropolis versus satellite' in order to interpret the relation between the developed capitalist countries and those under developed. However, the failure to critically evaluate the 'sphere of production'¹⁴² remained as a major weakness of many of these concepts.

2.3.1 Commodity Fetishism and Reification of Space

The progress of the output of any society from a mere use value to an exchange value and further to a fetishised commodity under generalised commodity production not only ensures an abstraction of human labour universally but also reduces space and time to a common denominator¹⁴³. Thus 'the social relations between individuals in the performance of their labour' with regard to pre-capitalist societies 'appear at all events as their own personal relations, and are not disguised under the shape of social relations between the products of labour'¹⁴⁴. With capitalism the rational objectification conceals the character of commodities and makes it acquire 'a phantom objectivity'¹⁴⁵. The point is to travel beyond this reification to expose the real capitalist foundations of its

¹⁴¹ See, Bagchi, Amiya Kumar, *Towards a Correct Reading of Lenin's Theory of Imperialism*, in *Lenin and Imperialism – An Appraisal of Theories and Contemporary Reality*, Ed/ Patnaik, Prabhat, p.27, (1986), Orient Longman.

¹⁴² Patnaik, Utsa, *Neo-Marxian Theories of Capitalism and Under Development-A Critique* in *Lenin and Imperialism- An Appraisal of Theories and Contemporary Reality*, Ed/ Patnaik, Prabhat, p.334, (1986), Orient Longman.

¹⁴³ Lukacs, Georg, *History and Class Consciousness*, p-89, (1993), Rupa & Co.

¹⁴⁴ Marx, Karl, *Capital*, Vol-1, Chap-1, p.82, (1974 reprint) Progress Publishers.

¹⁴⁵ Lukacs, Georg, *History and Class Consciousness*, p-83, (1993), Rupa & Co.

structure in time and space.

2.4 Relevance of the Theoretical Framework to the Study

A historical materialist approach has been adopted in this study to understand the socio-spatial systems historically prevalent in Kerala because it replicated many such systems which existed the world over during the period under investigation. The early tribal societies in Kerala were settled in the different *tinais* or regions. The production differentials of the *tinais* warranted transactions between them and the increase in population may have culminated in mutual wars thus ensuring slavery. The *brahmin* in-migration from the 6th century transformed the slave mode into a feudal one with the *brahmadeyas* located along the river terraces. The role of overseas trade led by Arab peddlers and the Chinese led to the development of emporia throughout the *natus*. This has led to the weakening of the feudal mode with some *natus* turning out to be independent monarchies. The role of European colonialists since the 15th century brought in an element of struggle to retain sovereignty among the *natus*. The struggle for independent trajectories as well as the nascent prospects towards capitalist development dimmed after the British established their trade monopoly by the end of the 18th century. As it would become clear from the discussions to follow in the subsequent chapters the social systems which Kerala had undergone were either not full blown with its classical counterparts or expressed profound spatial variations in its evolution.

2.5 Conclusions

1. Historical materialism can be used as a tool to understand evolving society and its material expression the space.
2. The analysis of the evolution of the various modes throughout the world has made clear that their different spatial manifestations at various historical junctures were dependent upon many material factors. The leaps and reversals

of the growth of towns, villages or their admixture ultimately were dependent upon the solidity and the internal structure of the mode of production.

3. A specific look at the Indian medieval social formation not only revised the earlier understanding of the 'orient' but put it at par or beyond the slave and feudal societies. It also had a visible potential towards capitalist development in the medieval period.

4. The British intervention, rather than aiding the dissolution of the earlier modes helped in its preservation in India resulting in reversals in spatial forms.

Chapter-3

3 Space and Society in Medieval Kerala – The Period of the Perumals (800 to 1150 AD)

3.1 Early History

The early history of Kerala and the larger Tamilakam in particular has been drawn from a wide range of sources. The Iron Age relics, punch marked coins both of the pre-Mauryan age as well as Indo-Roman trade found as hoards at many locations, writings of the Roman travellers and the Sangam literature throw light on this period. The early Tamil anthologies or Sangam literature consisted of mainly the *Ettuttokai* (the eight anthologies), *Pattupattu* (the ten idylls) and *Patinenkilkanakku* (the eighteen didactic texts). Although these poems were not contemporaneous¹⁴⁶ and had a time lag of three or four centuries, they are considered to be a minefield of information on modes and the patterns of subsistence and social relations of this period¹⁴⁷.

The Tamil poems mention the *aintinai*, the broad physiographic divisions of the period. The Kerala region consisted of mainly the *kurinji* (the hilly forested tracts), *neital* (the coastal and backwater zone), and *marutam* (plains located in the midland and the alluvial zones). The other two *palai* (the dry lands) and *mullai* (the grasslands) were absent or rare. The occupation of the people was also related to the *aintinai* as the hilly forested tracts promoted hunting and gathering; fishing and salt making survived in *neital* and plough agriculturists earned their subsistence from *marutam*. As mentioned, pastoralists (in *mullai*)

¹⁴⁶ Kailasapathy, *Tamil Heroic Poetry* (1968)

¹⁴⁷ Gurukkal, Rajan, *Social Formations of Early South India* (2010), p. 27, OUP. This view has been contested both on the premise of archaeological finds and a re-reading of the Sangham literature in Tamilnadu. See Devadevan, Manu V, *Lying on the Edge of the Burning Ground: Rethinking Tinais* (2006), *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 49, No. 2, pp. 199-218, BRILL.

and robbers or fighters (*palai*) had a marginal presence. The organisation remained at the level of kinship both agnatic and affinal and production was largely for subsistence without much surplus.

The three categories of chieftains in the ascending order namely *kilar*, *velir* and *ventar* were linked through a redistributive social relationship¹⁴⁸. The *Chera*, *Chola* and the *Pandyas* were considered the *muventars*. War, plunder/pillage and barter remained the means to extract resources as well as exchange.

The nature of internal exchange was barter based on use value and the Kerala region was well connected through ports like Muchiri (Muziris) and Tondi. Ports which were situated at the river mouths had access to the products of both riparian plains as well as the spices from the hills. Evidence of the Roman trade was established through the hoards of coins found from Kottayam (Malabar) and Valluvally near Paravur. Tamil songs of the period as well as writings of Pliny mention export of pepper, ginger, cardamom, cloves and similar spices as well as ivory, sandal and teak. Imports consisted of large amounts of gold and silver coins, and copper as well¹⁴⁹. The Palghat gap land route was also used during this period for communication between the Arabian Sea and the east coast¹⁵⁰ as evidenced by the abundant Roman coinage in the Kongu country¹⁵¹ which linked the rich Kaveri delta with Muchiri via Palghat gap. The recent excavations in Berenike, Egypt found many contemporaneous commodities imported from South India. The discovery of the 'Vienna papyrus indicating a

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 207

¹⁴⁹ Chambakalakshmi, *Trade, Ideology and Urbanisation-South India 300BC to AD 1300*, (1996), OUP.

¹⁵⁰ Deloche, Jean, *Roman Trade Routes in South India : Geographical and Technical Factors (C 1st Century BC to 5th Century AD)* in *Indian Journal of History of Science*, 45.1 (2010), P. 33-46, INSA, New Delhi.

¹⁵¹ Vaidyanathan, KS, *The Ancient Geography of the Kongu Country*, pp. 234-37, Bangalore, (1983).

large trading contract between an Alexandrian shipper and a Muchiri trader'¹⁵² signal the foundations of the Indo-Roman trade and the role of Muchiri. The fact that a major share of these Roman coins discovered from south India came from hoards and not from any occupational levels¹⁵³ indicated that these coins were not used as a medium of exchange. Hence historians have argued that the Indo-Roman trade contributed to the development of these ports only as enclaves¹⁵⁴ unlike the widespread belief that South India enjoyed much favorable terms in those years¹⁵⁵.

The differential access to basic resources in the *tinai*s had contributed to an uneven development of the same. The riparian *marutam* plains had a twin advantage as it could control the production from the plains as well as benefit out of the trade using the river mouths. In fact, the substance behind the differential treatment of the *ventars* and *velirs* as *muventar* (three crowned kings) and *kurunilamannar* (lesser kings) in the Tamil songs lies precisely in this uneven development.

However by 3rd century AD there was a marked disjunction both at archaeological sites as well as in the literary tradition. While some have argued that the basis of the crisis is in the inter *tinai* material contradictions in the

¹⁵² Devadevan, Manu V, *Lying on the Edge of the Burning Ground: Rethinking Tinai*s (2006), Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, Vol. 49, No. 2, p. 204, BRILL.

¹⁵³ Chambakalakshmi, *Trade, Ideology and Urbanisation-South India 300BC to AD 1300*, (quoted in Veluthat, Kesavan, *The Early Medieval in South India* (2009), p. 26, OUP.)

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, pp 97-174.

¹⁵⁵ Pliny's reference to the anxiety of the senate was countered with his own reference that Indian spices were sold at hundred times their original cost. *Natural History*, VI. 26 (quoted in Gurukkal, Rajan, *Social Formations of Early South India* (2010), p. 33, OUP). In fact historians like Romila suspects that hoards of Roman coins were a sort of protection money to ensure a safe passage for their goods. (Thapar, Romila, *Black Gold*, *Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol-15, Issue-2, 1992, pp.13-14, Taylor & Francis.)

economy,¹⁵⁶ others have associated this interrugnum with predatory raids of the *Kalabhras*¹⁵⁷ who belonged to the uplands of Karnataka. The ascendancy of Buddhism and Jainism also characterises this period¹⁵⁸. Comparisons have been made between the *Kali* age of the subcontinent which was a serious challenge to the *varna* order and its ideology, from the *vaisyas*, *sudras* as well as *antyas*¹⁵⁹ (untouchables) around the same period. Since the latest excavations in *Pattanam*¹⁶⁰ find a similar discontinuity, the Kerala region also must have undergone such a crisis. While *Manusmriti* and *Santiparva* recommended coercive measures¹⁶¹ to cope with the situation in the subcontinent, the *Kilkkanakku*¹⁶² emphasized the significance of peace, obedience, loyalty and morality in society. There was migration of people to evade the social turmoil to all parts of the country and epigraphic evidence suggest of land grants to brahmins. In fact such land grants absolved the responsibility of the kings of collecting revenue and the maintenance of the bureaucracy¹⁶³. Thus the Kali age modified the classical *varna* model into a feudal type¹⁶⁴. The Kerala region

¹⁵⁶ Gurukkal, Rajan, *Social Formations of Early South India* (2010), pp. 212-13, OUP

¹⁵⁷ Sastri, KA Nilakanta, *The Cholas* (1975), Madras University, pp 101-2.

¹⁵⁸ Sastri, Nilakanta, *History of South India* (2009), OUP.

¹⁵⁹ Sharma, Ram Sharan, *The Kali Age : A Period of Social Crisis in Early Medieval Indian Society*, (2001), Orient Longman.

¹⁶⁰ The modern *Pattanam* (which many argue as the ancient Muchiri/Makotai) excavations have yielded many artefacts and its 'peak activity phase' was supposed to be between 1st century BC and 4th century AD. The evidences for Indo-Roman trade from here been fragments of Roman Amphorae jars (used for storing and transporting wine, olive oil and fish), Terra Sigillata (Roman ceramic) and Turquoise Glazed Pottery. (Cherian, PJ, Papers of the International Seminar on Muziris Heritage Project and the Archaeological Research at Pattanam 2007 & 2008, KCHR.)

¹⁶¹ Sharma, Ram Sharan, *The Kali Age : A Period of Social Crisis in Early Medieval Indian Society*, p. 63, (2001), Orient Longman.

¹⁶² Gurukkal, Rajan, *Social Formations of Early South India* (2010), p. 41, OUP

¹⁶³ Sharma, Ram Sharan, *The Kali Age : A Period of Social Crisis in Early Medieval Indian Society*, p. 74, (2001), Orient Longman.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 75

was also marked with the proliferation of *brahmadeya* villages of which the *pulankurichchi* rock inscription¹⁶⁵ of the fourth century was a confirmation. The earlier kinship based production complex disintegrated to pave the way for an occupational hierarchy ossifying into caste and initiating appropriation based on extra economic coercion. The transition did not cause much change in the spatial location as the *brahmadeyas* were situated mostly in the riparian plains¹⁶⁶. The socio-spatial structure was certainly moving towards feudal forms from its tribal past. The characteristics of which were, the establishment of a brahmin propertied class and their proliferation through *brahmadeyas*, the formation of artisanal/occupational groups as castes around temples and *brahmadeyas* as well as the development of a decentralised settlement structure along fertile-riverine plains. The only evidence of its early occurrence is attributed to the Iron Age relics from the state.¹⁶⁷

3.2 The Period of the Cheras of Makotai (800 – 1150 AD)

Unlike the earlier period the sources hinge heavily upon epigraphy and literary output. Archaeologists and historians have found more than 150 inscriptions¹⁶⁸ in stone and copper belonging to this period. A great majority of them written in either Tamil or *Vatteluttu* are resolutions of village assemblies with occasional royal grants and charters. Atula's *Mushakavamsa kavya* in Sanskrit composed in the first half of the eleventh century provides valuable historical

¹⁶⁵ Nagaswami, R, *An Outstanding Epigraphical Discovery in Tamilnadu*, Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference Seminar on Tamil Studies, Madurai, (1981), (quoted in Veluthat, Kesavan, *The Early Medieval in South India* (2009), p. 26, OUP.

¹⁶⁶ 'Eight settlements out of the thirty two are found on the *Pampa* valley, thirteen on the greater *Periyar* and five on the *Perar*', says Veluthat, Kesavan in *Brahman Settlements in Kerala*, p. 26, 2013 (revised edition), Cosmo Books.

¹⁶⁷ Varier, Raghava, *Village Community in Pre-Colonial Kerala*, p. 23, KS Haridas Bhatt Endowment Lecture, (1992).

¹⁶⁸ Narayanan, MGS, *Perumals of Kerala*, (2013) p. 42, Cosmo Books.

information in its last four *sargas*. The absence of monuments in the Chera country is attributed to the shortage of quality granite which can weather the heavy monsoons. Among the literary tradition the traveller diaries of the Arabs and the Europeans, *Granthavaris* of the medieval principalities and *Keralolpatti*¹⁶⁹ written in Malayalam language in the 14th century were of principal importance. The historical information about the period from the middle of the eighth century to the twelfth century depends to a considerable extent on the writings of Arab travellers. The foremost among them is the writings of Sulaiman which, now is broadly considered as the repository of the Arab understanding of the East prior to 851 AD.¹⁷⁰

The era of Cheraman perumals (see Figure 3.1) started with the beginning of the ninth century and ended with the first quarter of the twelfth century (1122 AD). The whole period went through ups and downs following wars with the Pandyas and Cholas. The Chera capital was identified as Muchiri or Makotai or Mahodayapuram, the modern day Kodungallur. The structure of the state was characterised by the *perumal* at the centre and seven major subsidiary principalities or *natu* (district) with respective *natu utaiyavar* / *natu valumavar* in command. The Kerala region had witnessed a steady immigration of brahmins by the fifth century AD. Going by the *Keralolpatti* saga they set up a titular sovereign *perumal* of kshatriya origin to rule the country shedding their brahma-kshatra status. The *perumal* was advised on matters of religion as well

¹⁶⁹ Historians have taken contradicting views on the veracity of this chronicle as Logan puts it as '*a farrago of legendary nonsense*' (Logan, William, *Malabar Manual*, pp. 221-245, (2000 new edition), Kerala Gazetteers department.) and Elamkulam as '*one fine morning in the 17th century a Nambudiri wrote some stories to support the legend of Parasurama*' [Kunjan Pillai, Elamkulam PN, *Charithrathinte Paschathalathil*, (1961), Kottayam.]. But MGS suggests that some later day epigraphic findings corroborates with the *Keralolpatti* tradition [Narayanan, MGS, *Perumals of Kerala*, (2013) p. 42, Cosmo Books].

¹⁷⁰ Nainar, S Muhammad Husayn, *Arab Geographers' Knowledge of Southern India*, p.12, (1942) University of Madras.

as taxes¹⁷¹ by a permanent council called *Nalu Tali* (temple) consisting of the representatives/*taliyatiries* of the four main temples around the capital. The saga also indicates that *Nalu Tali* was the representative body of the thirty two brahmin families which had migrated to the Kerala region as they were allotted four settlements of Mulikkalam, Airanikkalam, Paravur and Irinjalakkuda around the capital. A standard practice or rule (*kaccam*) followed by one of these settlements, Mulikkalam was accepted throughout Kerala. The Chera state did not have an official bureaucracy or a military but the *ayiram* (one thousand) recruited from the nair caste served as bodyguards¹⁷². The natu udaiyavars also had their respective *nurruvar* (hundreds) for the same. This was also a continuation of the early medieval trend of the state being dependent on vassals and landed magnates for a 'feudal soldiery' from below¹⁷³.

The brahmin migration from the west coast post the third century interregnum in Kerala and with the subsequent land grants along the riparian rice producing lands established either the ownership or control of majority of these areas with the brahmins. Historians¹⁷⁴ have pointed out that the introduction of the extra kin labour by them proved to be the thin end of the wedge resulting in eroding the old system. Their role in the expansion of the agrarian settlements and acculturation/assimilation of backward tribes¹⁷⁵ is an established fact. Patronage to the tribal matrilineal system enabled their entry into the local power structures in the region¹⁷⁶. The views that the brahmin settlers met with

¹⁷¹ According to the Perunna inscriptions [quoted in Narayanan, MGS, *Perumals of Kerala*, (2013) p. 163, Cosmo Books]

¹⁷² Logan puts the most acceptable function of the nair caste in protection duty and trust. (Logan, William, *Malabar Manual*, Vol-1, p. 111, (2000 new edition), Kerala Gazetteers department.)

¹⁷³ Sharma RS, *Urban Decay in India 300-1000*, P. 167, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi.

¹⁷⁴ Veluthat, Kesavan, *The Early Medieval in South India* (2009), p. 250, OUP.

¹⁷⁵ Sharma, Ram Sharan, *The Kali Age : A Period of Social Crisis in Early Medieval Indian Society*, p. 74, (2001), Orient Longman.

¹⁷⁶ Narayanan, MGS, *The State in the era of Cheraman Perumals of Kerala in State Society*

relatively under developed megalithic people here¹⁷⁷ or the absence of an elite which might seek to preserve its identity through a putative caste status¹⁷⁸ need to be discussed here. This resulted in an uncritical acceptance of *jati* and *varnshramadharma* in the state. The use of technologically superior iron implements and the use of extra kin labour paved the way for additional surplus as well as stratification on above mentioned *jati* lines. The primary producers, mostly the non-brahmana tenants, and *ilavas/thiyas* and the bonded labourers/slaves from the untouchable castes (*pulaya/cheruma/paraya*) were used extensively as *al/al adiyars*. Records show, expansion of agriculture by clearing forests and reclaiming water logged areas with the extensive use of agrestic labourers/slaves from the *pulaya* caste.

The land owned by the king was called *cherikkal*¹⁷⁹ to which were associated the *karalar* or the tenants and the *kutiyalar* or the occupants. The agrestic slaves/labourers called the *atiyalar* were below the *kutiyalar*. The service tenure of religious and other functionaries called *virutti* were also brought under the *karalar-kutiyalar-atiyalar* set up. The brahmin cultivators as well as the trading corporations were handed over a proprietorship in the land called *uranmai* and *kanam* respectively as their relative position came as an intermediary between the king or the *natu udaiyavar* and *karalar* under the above mentioned hierarchy. A hierarchy with the king at the top, brahmin property owners in the middle, non brahmana tenants and untouchable atiyalar castes/agrestic slaves as the producing classes below was the order. Among the other land tenures, *kilitu* and *itayitu*, a subordinate and intermediary leasehold

in *Pre-Modern South India*,(2002) Champakalakshmi, R et.al, p. 117, Cosmo Books.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, p.116

¹⁷⁸ Jaiswal, Suvira, *Caste* (1998), pp. 68-70, Manohar Publishers.

¹⁷⁹ Baden Powell ascribes it as the earliest Dravidian idea of allotting land to the King/his grantee, village founders/officers and priest than receiving a share in the produce for their revenue. Baden-Powell, B. H., *Land Systems of British India*, Vol-3, Book-IV, p.159, (1892) Low Price Publications, Delhi.

respectively finds mention in many inscriptions of this period¹⁸⁰. The repression of the menial castes¹⁸¹ made available the cheap labour for the ensuing huge agricultural expansion.

The evidences from the inscriptions do not validate a developed coinage based on the Chera period but payments in terms of gold are seen in many instances. Frequent mention is made about the required weight of *kalancu* or *kanam* of gold¹⁸². It also means that the routine transactions in goods and services were still on barter. The equivalent prices between articles then were like 10 *nali* paddy equal to 1 *nali* pepper and 10 *nali* rice equivalent to half *nali* ghee¹⁸³. One of the inscriptions of Bhaskara Ravi Varman puts the rate of interest in gold at '*pattu arai*' or half per ten (5%)¹⁸⁴. The daily wages given at the Trikkakkara temple according to an inscription of tenth century AD¹⁸⁵ puts it at 4 *nali* of rice for the sanctum keeper and 2 *nali* for the priest (*santi*). The Thiruvalla copper plates of 9-10th centuries dealing with temple¹⁸⁶ committee resolutions provide a record of a typical temple oriented brahmana settlement of the period. The plates enlist¹⁸⁷ the allotted lands and the income from it for conducting various rituals and services of the temple, the annual pay for the servants, special pay during auspicious occasions and festivals and even for the

¹⁸⁰ Few historians find it as a pre-cursor to the *kanam* tenure of the later days. See Veluthat, Kesavan, *The Early Medieval in South India* (2009), p. 286, OUP.

¹⁸¹ See Habib, Irfan, *Essays in Indian History*, pp.161-179, (1995), Tulika.

¹⁸² Ten *kanams* of gold made one *kalancu* as referred in Narayanan, MGS, *Perumals of Kerala*, (2013) p. 306, Cosmo Books.

¹⁸³ Tiruvalla copper plates (quoted in Narayanan, MGS, *Perumals of Kerala*, (2013) p. 310, Cosmo Books.)

¹⁸⁴ Rao, TA Gopinatha, *Travancore Archaeological Series* (TAS), Vol-2, p. 181, (1992 reprint) department of culture, Kerala State.

¹⁸⁵ *TAS*, Vol.3, pp. 186-88

¹⁸⁶ Temple dedicated to Vishnu, locally known by the name *Thiruvallai-appan*.

¹⁸⁷ See, Rao, TA Gopinatha, *Huzur Office Plates, Travancore Archaeological Series* (TAS), Vol-2, Part-3, pp. 131-207, (1992 reprint) department of culture, Kerala State.

running of a place of education (*salai*) and hospital (*atiracalai*) under it.

The Chera reign had seen the growth of agrarian villages (*Ur/Grama*) under the leadership of the brahmins as well as urban centres (*Nagaram*) along the ports/entrepôts under *anchuvannam* and *manigramam* trading groups. In fact the *anchuvannam* was headed by the Jews and the *manigramam* by the Syrian Christians in the absence of the traditional four fold varna system in Kerala¹⁸⁸. Both these corporations enjoyed the rights of collection of various types of revenue, settlement of disputes and even imposing punishment as fines.

3.2.1 *Nagaram* (Urban Centres)

The Syrian Christian copper plates¹⁸⁹ of Sthanu Ravi (849 AD) and Jewish copper plates¹⁹⁰ of Bhaskara Ravi (around 1000 AD) provide information about the trading settlements led by the *manigramam* and *anchuvannam* in Kurakkeni Kollam (modern day Kollam) and Muyirikodu (Kodungallur) respectively. In the Syrian Christian plates *anchuvannam* and *manigramam* are described as the *karalers* (possessor of the freehold) of Kollam. The handing over of the occupational groups (*Ilava* and *Vannar* families) by foregoing their taxes and prohibiting the governmental authority of otherwise the *Tiyamalvan* and *Matilnayakan* in the territory of Maruvan Sapir Iso signifies the establishment of an independent authority. The two were allowed to collect the *patipatvaram/pattam* (the chieftain's share of one tenth taxes) and the services of the *nurruvar* (in this case the *arunurruvar* or the six hundreds of Venad) were also rendered for defending their properties. The daily toll (*ulku*) was

¹⁸⁸ For a discussion on only the bipartite brahmana-sudra division in the south, see Jaiswal, Suvira, *Caste* (1998), pp. 68-70, Manohar Publishers.

¹⁸⁹ See translation in, Rao, TA Gopinatha, *Travancore Archaeological Series* (TAS), Vol-2, pp. 60-86, (1992 reprint) dept. of culture, Kerala State.

¹⁹⁰ See for translation, Logan, William, *Malabar Manual*, Vol-2, collection of deeds, p. cxix, (2000 new edition), Kerala Gazetteers department.

collected and sealed by them. The second plate mentions that Maruvan Sapir Iso founded the *nagaram* of Kollam as well as their defined role in trade through various rights. This plate also indicates the *kon* or king or perumal's share of revenue as *Kopatvaram* and the encouragement of foreign merchants to settle in the state for a steady as well as increased long distance trade. Of the thirty odd articles in the writings¹⁹¹ of Arab travellers that speak about trade, thirteen find mention of Kollam signifying its importance in long distance trade, the major items of this trade being pepper, rice, bamboo, coconut, banana and teak. The predominant role of ports of the Persian Gulf before the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate ensured sail between Bussora and Hormuz to Kollam¹⁹². It also became the centre of the eastern trade dominated by the Chinese.

Kodungallur as the capital of the Chera *perumals* emerged out of a feudal complex with the four *taliyatiries* seated around in four temples. Its location at the estuary of Periyar river gave it the advantage of coastal and inland navigation. The Jewish copper plate accorded to Joseph Ramban, the head of the *anchuvannam*, does not talk about the management of the capital Muyirikode of the Cheras. However, he was granted with the seventy two privileges enjoyed by the elites then. His group must have enjoyed the trading privileges of its counterpart in Kollam here as well. *Laghu Bhaskariyam* talks¹⁹³ about a functioning observatory and cantonment as well in Kodungallur by the 9th century.

An inscription¹⁹⁴ during the tenure of Bhaskara Ravi (962-1021 AD) mentions

¹⁹¹ Nainar, S Muhammad Husayn, *Arab Geographers' Knowledge of Southern India*, p.181, (1942) University of Madras.

¹⁹² Das Gupta, Ashin, *Malabar in 1740 in Merchants of Maritime India 1500-1800*, p. 90, (1994), Variorum

¹⁹³ Pillai, PK Narayana, Ed/, *Laghu Bhaskariya Vyakhya of Sankaranarayana*, Manuscript Library, Trivandrum (1949), Verses 18,20,22 & 26.

¹⁹⁴ Varrier, MR Raghava, *Aspects of Urbanisation-Case of Pantalayani Kollam*, Revised WP,

the name of Pantalayani Kollam (26 km north of Calicut) in which the members of *manigramam* and *valanciyar* are referred to as *nagarattilullor* (members of the *nagaram*). This fragmentary inscriptional evidence was followed by Idrisi's (1154 AD) account¹⁹⁵ of '*Fandarina*' with rich inhabitants, well supplied markets and flourishing trade.

Mushakavamsa kavya mentions of *Murahi* (present Madayi) at the mouth of the river *Killa* (Kuppam) replete with merchandise from distant lands brought by foreign merchants during King Valabha's reign.¹⁹⁶ The construction of a fort with high walls and lofty towers in Valabhapattanam (Valapattanam) is also mentioned.

A record from Talakkad¹⁹⁷ also mentions about the privileges handed over to the *manigramam* people as part of the establishment of a new trading centre there. The *urar* or the village assembly levied tax in kind from the stalls. It is considered to be a movement of itinerant traders breaking the myth of isolated, subsistence oriented and self-sufficient village communities¹⁹⁸. Various fragmentary records¹⁹⁹ refer to the trading corporations of *valanciyar* and *nanadesikal* which were prevalent in Alatur.

3.2.1.1 Revenue Sources from Nagaram

Department of History, (1990), Calicut University.

¹⁹⁵ Nainar, S Muhammad Husayn, *Arab Geographers' Knowledge of Southern India*, pp. 34-35, (1942) University of Madras.

¹⁹⁶ See a study in, Rao, TA Gopinatha, *Travancore Archaeological Series (TAS)*, Vol-2, Sarga-XIV, pp. 112-13, (1992 reprint) department of culture, Kerala State.

¹⁹⁷ Unpublished inscription, quoted in Narayanan, MGS, *Perumals of Kerala*, (2013) p. 208, Cosmo Books.

¹⁹⁸ Abraham, Meera, *Two Medieval Merchant Guilds of South India*, p. 34, Manohar (1988).

¹⁹⁹ Inscription quoted in Narayanan, MGS, *Perumals of Kerala*, (2013) p. 314, Cosmo Books.

There were more sources of income from *nagaram* than *gramam* in the Chera period²⁰⁰. Although there is no source to ascertain the amount of income generated during this period, the inscriptions underline the various channels through which it was mobilised. Customs duty (*ulku*) for incoming and outgoing articles was charged and it was one-sixtieth of the price of the article²⁰¹. In the capital city the trading group was given an exemption for *ulku*, but in Kollam the royal representatives oversaw the assessment of the value of the commodities and the two corporations were asked to seal the *ulku* collected every day²⁰². *Tulakkuli* and *niraikkuli* were the weighing fee and the measuring fee and it was one-twentieth and one tenth of the merchandise respectively²⁰³. *Talaikkanam*, *enikkanam* and *valappanam* were the three types of professional dues levied. The first two were from *ilavar* for climbing the coconut, palm trees and pepper vines and the third was from the fisher folk. There was cess on vehicles both on land and water named *pakutam*. Thus merchants had to pay 8 *kasu* on land and 4 *kasu* on water both at entrance and exit from the town²⁰⁴. *Kutanali* meaning a *nali* per *kutam* was charged as the authorities' share of the toddy tapper's produce²⁰⁵. The same was applicable on oil as well. For building temporary sheds and strong rooms also the merchants had to pay *pantalkkanam* and *tattarakkuli*²⁰⁶. A type of tax payable at the time of the renewal of the thatching of the house²⁰⁷ as *manai meyypan kollum Irai* is also mentioned. Sulaiman refers that Chinese ships used to pay a thousand dirhams (Drams)

²⁰⁰ Apparently Kautilya in *Arthashastra* narrates more sources of income from town, its period been considered as pre-feudal by Sharma. (Sharma, RS, *Urban Decay in India 300-1000*, p. 149, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi.)

²⁰¹ Quoted in Narayanan, MGS, *Perumals of Kerala*, (2013) p. 240, Cosmo Books.

²⁰² MGS quotes from *BhasaKautaliyam* of the existent practice then of putting the royal seal (*ilaccina*) to avoid wrongdoings, Ibid, p. 240

²⁰³ Ibid, p. 241.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 241.

²⁰⁵ TAS, Vol-2, p. 64.

²⁰⁶ Narayanan, MGS, *Perumals of Kerala*, (2013) p. 243, Cosmo Books

²⁰⁷ TAS, Vol.2, p. 64.

and others 1-10 dinars as duties to Kollam (*Kaucammali*)²⁰⁸.

While the above dues/taxes were based on the evolving functions of the *nagaram*, there were a handful of civilian dues as well. *Alkasu* was a payment made by the owners of the slaves to the king²⁰⁹. *Talaivilai* and *mulaivilai* were translated as the head price and breast price respectively, first a fine for a person getting transferred / killed and the second when a girl was married off²¹⁰. There were *menippon* and *polippon* where the occasional gold payments got realised from *canran* heads for the position and the title they enjoyed²¹¹. Merchants were asked to pay *onanel* and *pataiyaninel* in kind on festivals and occasions for entertainment²¹² respectively. The *nagaram* dues show an expansion with urban functions and professions and a decreasing role for various rents. Although there is no evidence anywhere in the current sources to establish the relative importance of the *nagaram* dues compared to those of the *gramam*, its net indicates a sizeable share. The experience from elsewhere in this period indicates that a major chunk of the taxes came from the *gramam* because it involved a share of the produce.

The growth of *nagaram* during this period was limited within the overall 'parcellisation of sovereignty'²¹³ to the trading communities of *anchuvannam* and *manigramam*. Nevertheless, the independent character²¹⁴ of these

²⁰⁸ *Silsilat-al-tawarikh*, <https://archive.org/details/ancientaccountso00sira>, (Tr./ Renaudot, Eusebius, p.9).

²⁰⁹ Logan talks about an annual payment of 1 or 2 panams which the *Adiyan* is obliged to pay to his respective patron, Logan, William, *Malabar Manual*, Appendix XIII, p ccxxx, (2000 new edition), Kerala Gazetteers department.

²¹⁰ Narayanan, MGS, *Perumals of Kerala*, (2013) p. 243, Cosmo Books.

²¹¹ See, *Ibid*, p. 242 for the evolving of the term.

²¹² *Ibid*, p.243.

²¹³ See Merrington, John, *Town and Country in the Transition to Capitalism in The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, Hilton, Rodney, p. 178, Aakar (2006).

²¹⁴ Comparison can be made with the *taniyur* status given to *nagaram* in medieval Tamilnadu. See Champakalakshmi, R, *Urbanisation in Medieval Tamilnadu in Situating*

communities is evident from many jurisdictional dues of the period giving way to functional ones with Kollam registering spectacular growth as a port or entrepôt between Persian Gulf and the easterly trade dominated by the Chinese.

3.2.2 *Ur or Gramam*

The brahmins formed literally the *uralars* (proprietors) of the agrarian villages, the land of which was constituted under *devaswom*, *brahmaswam* and *cherikkal*. Although the original land grants or charters of many of these villages were unavailable, probably, because of their establishment earlier than the period from which land records were maintained, those established later had a profound brahmin presence²¹⁵. These *urars* met at the temple and their duties involved collection of the governor's/king's share of the produce (*Attaikkol*), the settlement of disputes and the management of the *karalars* or peasants. All important decisions had the consent of the representatives of the Chera *perumals* (*Koyil Adhikarikal*) and the governors of the districts and the decisions were called *kaccam* or *vyavastai*. They tend to take unanimous decisions ('*avirodhathal*') and abrogation of it was dealt ruthlessly. Defaulters of fines were ostracised and their property confiscated and added to the common pool of 'god's property' controlled by the governor/king.²¹⁶

3.2.2.1 Revenue Sources of *Ur or Grama*

The Chera establishment had the practise of fixing an annual lumpsum income from the *gramams*. The authorities took care of the exigencies and their relative devotion to the brahmin *urars* of the respective *gramam* was evident. The Perumal or his nominee fixed the *attaikkol* dues from these village settlements in return for protection and supervision. It was not more than one sixth of the

Indian History - for Sarvepalli Gopal, Ed/ S Bhattacharya and R Thapar, pp 34-51, OUP.

²¹⁵ Devideveswaram temple settlement renewal,(referred in Narayanan, MGS, *Perumals of Kerala*, (2013) p. 209, Cosmo Books.)

²¹⁶ Veluthat, Kesavan, *The Early Medieval in South India* (2009), p. 255, OUP.

produce (16.7%) but emergency collections like *arantai* existed during misery/wars²¹⁷. Imposition of *tantam* as fines for various offences committed has also been recorded.

Table 3.1 Revenue Sources - Nagaram vs Gramam in the 9th Century

<i>Nagaram Sources</i>	<i>Gramam Sources</i>
<i>Ulku</i> (customs duty)	<i>Attaikkol</i> (protection/supervision)
<i>Tulakkuli</i> (weighing fee)	<i>Arantai</i> (during wars/misery)
<i>Nirakkuli</i> (measuring fee)	<i>Tantam</i> (fines)
<i>Talaikkanam</i> (for climbing)	
<i>Enikkanam</i> (for climbing)	
<i>Valaippanam</i> (for fishing)	
<i>Pakutam</i> (cess on vehicles)	
<i>Kutanali</i> (on toddy/oil)	
<i>Pantalkkanam</i> (for temporary sheds)	
<i>Tattarakkuli</i> (for strong rooms)	
<i>Manaimeyppan kollum irai</i> (for fresh thatching)	
<i>Alkasu</i> (for slave owners)	
<i>Talaivilai</i> (on death/transfer)	
<i>Mulaivilai</i> (on marriage)	
<i>Menippon / Polippon</i> (for conferring various titles)	
<i>Onanel</i> (on festivals)	
<i>Patayaninel</i> (on entertainments)	

Source : Narayanan, MGS, *Perumals of Kerala*, (2013).

3.2.3 Grama-Nagara Continuum

The evidences of the main functions limiting to non-agricultural ones in certain

²¹⁷ Narayanan, MGS, *Perumals of Kerala*, (2013) p. 245, Cosmo Books.

nagarams was clear while in some other cases there was a curious admixture. Pantalayani Kollam is referred to in yet another stone inscription²¹⁸ of 1089 AD (Rama Kulasekhara) as granting a share of its *attaikkol* to the *Ural* (village assembly). The Talakkad record also showed the *urar* collecting dues in kind from the *manigramam* stalls. This sort of intermix was interpreted by many scholars as 'the distinction was only one of degree and not of kind'²¹⁹ about such phenomenon in medieval Karnataka. According to Merrington the limits of the social autonomy of the 'Eastern city' in its social structure, based on clans, lineages, religious sects, were extensions of that of the countryside like in the European feudal system.²²⁰ The classical case of the growth of towns is the availability of an agricultural surplus and hence the importance for commodity production and exchange. The Kerala case during the medieval period had overseas trade maintained by its exports of exclusive spices which had a rural origin and imports of staples like rice.

3.3 Conclusions

1. The *marutam* or the riparian plains became the centres of early tribal concentrations in Kerala armed with agrarian surplus as well as the hill produce for overseas trade.
2. The Chera period saw a further evolution with the bringing in of outside kin labour under a feudal caste structure in *brahmadeyas*. The spatial location of settlements did not undergo any change as the *brahmadeyas* were along the riparian plains. It ensured, for the first time, a hierarchy with the brahmin land owning class extracting the surplus by extra economic coercion from the producing classes consisting of non-brahmin tenants and untouchables.

²¹⁸ Ibid, *Index to Chera Inscriptions*, A. 72, p. 470.

²¹⁹ Kuppaswamy, GR, *Economic Conditions in Karnataka (973 to 1336 AD)*, p. 95, (1975), Dharwar.

²²⁰ See Merrington, John, *Town and Country in the Transition to Capitalism in The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, Hilton, Rodney, p. 178, Aakar (2006).

3. The founding of the Kollam *nagaram* as well as the handing over of the trade and commerce functions to a few merchant guilds occurred during this period. The analysis of the revenue sources from *nagaram* and *gramam* showed early functional specialization in the former.
4. The *nagaram* trade was dependent upon the *gramam* hill produce/spices established strong linkages unlike an 'undifferentiated unity' and there is no evidence to suggest that long distance trade exacerbated a change in the mode.
5. A mix of rural and urban functions could be observed at some towns.

Chapter-4

4 Space and Society in Medieval Kerala - The Period of Naduvazhis and European Colonialists (1150-1870 AD)

Introduction

The period of the Cheras ensured all the preconditions necessary for state formation such as agrarian surplus, caste stratification and a minimal class differentiation. The central authority of the *perumals* stood heavily upon the ritual authority exercised through the *brahmadeyas* as well. The minimal dues collection from below ensured more resources at the local level as the *perumals* were engaged in continuing wars with the Cholas. The further feudal development of a powerful intermediary class which later became a challenge to the naduvazhis must have made the revenue collection stagnant and with further concessions to trading groups the central authority even lacked the resources to wage wars which became the burden of the naduvazhis. Literary evidences from multiple sources²²¹ suggest a mysterious disappearance of the last Chera king after dividing his kingdom among relatives and dependents. The end of the *perumal* reign is placed at A.D. 1124. The references of *Mulikkalam kaccam* as well as *nalu tali* do not find mention in any record after the *perumal* period. The respective *naduvazhis/nadu udaiyavar* who already inherited a different path under the *perumals* claimed either a sanction or descent of the *perumals* to further their rule. Thus the Eralnad chief entailed the donation of the sword of the last *perumal* with the sanction to 'die, kill and annex', Venad claimed to be descendants of a son of the last *perumal* and Kochi claimed matrilineal ancestry. These three and Kolathunadu formed the major sovereign *natus* of the later years. The archaeological finds were either minimal

²²¹ *Keralolpatti* as well as *Tuhfat-Ul-Mujahidin* (referred in Narayanan, MGS, *Perumals of Kerala*, (2013), p. 144, Cosmo Books.)

or of recent origin for the period between the end of the perumal reign up to the 15th century or until the arrival of the Portuguese.

4.1 Phase - I (1150-1500 AD)

4.1.1 Agrarian Expansion and Evolving Spatial Relations

The expansion of agriculture towards the forested tracts and reclamation of the water logged areas was an on-going process in Kerala and it was further consolidated during this period. The new found *purayidams*/garden lands could meet the trade requirements in spices and the reclamation catered to the deficit in food surplus. The *al / al adiyars* consisting mainly of the untouchable caste remained as agrestic slaves/labourers in the reclaimed lands with no claim over the produce. They were transacted along with the land. The various *granthavaris* talk about remuneration in kind offered to *ilava* coconut climbers as '*rantu kareri onnu*' (one for climbing two) and '*munu kareri onnu*' (one for climbing three)²²². This shows the further development of the *purayidam* system. The importance of pepper is evident in many traveller diaries. Marco Polo (1293) asserted that it was not a wild crop, Ibn Battuta (1342-47) called Malabar as the country of black pepper and Marignolli (1347) explained it as planted by christians²²³. Spices like cardamom and cinnamon also find mention in these traveller diaries.

The brahmin agrarian complexes had developed into huge corporations called *sanketams* by this period and its liaison with the political class continued unabated. The status given to the *tamprakkal*, the head of the Azhvancheri

²²² *Vanneri Granthavari* (quoted in Varier, Raghava, *State as Svarupam : An Introductory Essay in State and Society in Pre-Modern South India* (2002) Champakalakshmi, R et.al, p. 117, Cosmo Books.)

²²³ Varier, Raghava, *Unit-1, Socio-Economic Structure in Perspectives on Kerala History*, State Editor, Kerala Gazetteers Department, 1999 p. 87.

house to convert the Venad chief into kshatriya hood speaks of the continued ritual authority which the feudal class wanted to pursue. The protection of the *sanketams* was with the *changatams*, a newer formation in place of the hundreds and they were given a share of the produce as *rakshabhogam* or *kavalpalam*. *Sanketams* paved the way for a feudal landlordism dictating the tenures deviating from the Chera tradition of fixity of tenures. The old *kaccam* regulations were giving way to *kilmaryada/kiliyakkam* (custom/practice of a feudal nature).

The land tenure²²⁴ developed into a lease cum mortgage form in which the lease holder hands over '*artham*' in cash to the landlord and receives the land temporarily for cultivation. The landlord receives a share of the produce minus the interest of the '*artham*' by year end. This form was called *kanam* in Malabar and *otti* in Thiruvitancore. In practise it was a lower version of a usufructuary mortgage. The lease holder could control the land more effectively and produce more against the interest over '*artham*'. Another form which developed during this period was the *kulikkanam* in which the share of the produce for the *janmi* was reduced for improvements in land made by the holder. These features helped in the extension of the cultivable land, enhancement of production and emergence of money transactions in land.

4.1.2 Trade Contacts and Emporia / Centres

The further feudal consolidation and decentralisation of the polity to the *natu* level only contributed to the growing strength of the non-cultivating and intermediary classes below. It generated further demand for food and luxury

²²⁴ The land tenure described in the *Keralolpatti* tradition was that *sudra* tenants been allowed a lower share (*kilaykkuru*) and brahmanas retaining the upper share (*melaykkuru*), a system of *kanam-janmam* hence defined. (after Veluthat, Kesavan in *Brahman Settlements in Kerala*, p.121, 2013 (revised edition), Cosmo Books.

consumption which could be met only via import of rice through inland trade and overseas trade in spices. Village level periodic markets catering to local trade based mostly on barter exchanging produces of use value are reported from many literary works of those periods. The *al / al adiyars* also used to exchange their short term produces like tubers and vegetables in these fairs. The *Valanciyar* and *Nanadesikal* were also involved along with the *Anchuvannam*, *Manigramam* and Tamil brahmins in long distance inland trade involving rice, cotton, silk, fabrics and chillies. The transport was done over animals and as head loads. Evidence of wheeled carts is not found in this period. A mid-14th century poem *Ananthapuravarnanam* (consists of 186 verses about the Sree Padmanabha Temple and its surroundings which was the central place of the then Trivandrum) talks about the existence of separate streets for the trading of various articles like gold, vegetables and fish. It has mentions about both foreign traders from Europe and Turkey (Muslims), Indian traders from Orissa, North Bengal, Tamil Nadu and brahmins from Kudagu assembling in the trade centre in Trivandrum²²⁵. The coins in use then were *Anayachu* (gold coin with the elephant symbol), *Panam* and *Thiramam*²²⁶. It also speaks about artisans selling polished mudwares²²⁷ and the existence of barter and bargain.²²⁸

There is fair evidence from the writings of the Arab travellers that the Malabar region had trade contacts with the Arabs as well as with the Chinese during this period. Al-Qazwini (1263-75) talks about the pepper trade and Battuta (1342-47) about the large Chinese ships with over a thousand men with sails made of cane reeds stationed in Calicut/Kozhikkode²²⁹. Historians have suggested the

²²⁵ *Ananthapuravarnanam*, Verse 101, Retnamma, Dr. K, Compilation and Commentary (1997), p.41, Kerala Bhasha Institute.

²²⁶ Verse 70-72, p.31, Ibid.

²²⁷ Verse 65, says the mud wares is so polished that it looks like it is made of ivory, p.29, Ibid.

²²⁸ Verse 30-32, 79, p.15, 34, Ibid.

²²⁹ Logan, William, *Malabar Manual*, Vol-1, p. 290, (2000 new edition), Kerala Gazetteers

existence of many 'trade diasporas' throughout the coast of Malabar²³⁰ as their presence as a locally stationed group was necessary for Arab traders in order to get access to pepper and other spices. In fact, the large scale draining of Chinese gold/currency was stopped after the intervention of the Southern Sung government (1127-1279) and in its place silk fabrics and porcelain were bartered.²³¹ Recent archaeological findings of Chinese ceramics along the Malabar Coast revised the earlier view that it catered to the then Muslim ruling class only²³². Kozhikkode was the third major port to be developed during this period under the Samutiris of Nediyruppu *Svarupam*. Although the coastline did not provide any anchorage, the presence of mud banks²³³ and the presence of river mouths which ensured cheaper inland navigation were advantages for Kozhikkode. The natural advantage for salt panning, a forest rich hinterland and presence of fine quality clay and minerals also aided the growth of the town. Ma-Huan (1413-33) wrote extensively²³⁴ on *Ku-Li* (Kozhikkode) and according to him it was constituted by Muslims, nan-k'un (brahmin/kshatriya), che-ti, ko-ling, and mu-kua people. The mode of doing business during this period was that whenever a treasure ship arrived at the coast it was attended by a chief, che-ti and a broker and they would fix up a further date for exchange

department.

²³⁰ Varier, Raghava, *Unit-1, Socio-Economic Structure in Perspectives on Kerala History*, State Editor, Kerala Gazetteers Department, 1999 p. 105.

²³¹ Zhiyan, Li and Wen, Cheng, *Chinese pottery and porcelain* (1984), p.102 (quoted in Ibid, P 106)

²³² Varier, Raghava, *Vol-1, Socio-Economic Structure in Perspectives on Kerala History*, State Editor, Kerala Gazetteers Department, 1999 p. 109.

²³³ Mud banks along the Kerala coast during South-West monsoon season are a phenomenon of spreading of fine sediments over the entire thickness of water layer forming an effect of a colloidal suspension (of approximately 7 kms length and 5 kms wide) hence smoothening the anchorage of ships. See Deloche, Jean, *Geographical Considerations in the Localisation of Ancient Sea-ports of India*, IESHR, Vol-20, No-4, 1983.

²³⁴ Mills, JVG, Ma-Huan, *Ying-Yai Sheng-Lang, The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, (1433), Cambridge University Press, 1970.

and it would be completed in certain 'moon days'. Each one *po-ho* (a measure) of pepper was sold for two hundred gold coins²³⁵. The *Keralolpatti* tradition explains that property was made secure in Kozhikkode and a Muslim officer designated as 'Shah Bandar' was appointed by the Samutiri to regulate the affairs of the port. Abdur Razzak (1443) mentions that in Kozhikkode 'officers of the custom house have it (merchandise) under their protection day and night and levy a duty of 1/40 on sales with no charge on unsold articles'²³⁶ in Kozhikkode. Various literary traditions of the period also say that property was made secure here which led to an increase in the trading settlers.

Mahodayapuram/Kodungallur, the capital of the Cheras which broadly catered to the trade of luxury items in the earlier period had shown clear signs of change in its merchandise during this period. The Vira-Raghava inscription of the thirteenth century refers to the rights granted to the *manigramam* merchant Iravi Kortan. It shows the importance of overseas trade and the continued role of the town. But the occurrence of a cataclysmic flood in 1341 led to the silting of the port at Kodungallur and simultaneous creation of a new port at *Kochazhi* and an all new island called *Puthuvaypu* (meaning new formation). This new port eventually became Kochi, the capital of the Perumpadappu *svapuram*. The *Vembanadu* backwater gave it access to the country side even upto Kollam. Ma-Huan (1413-33) is the first traveller to write about Kochi and talks about the presence of the trading communities of che-tis and Muslims²³⁷.

Kollam being the capital of the Venad had a definite advantage in the sea borne trade with the Chinese and the Arabs. Arab traveller Yaqut (1179-1229),

²³⁵ One *po-ho* measured 526.2 pounds or 238.7 kg and 200 gold coins would have 1.439 ounces troy or 44.7579 grams of gold. A comparison of the pepper-gold prices on rupee terms currently (March 2016) shows a difference of rupees 31,459 in favour of pepper.

²³⁶ Sastri, Nilakanta, *History of South India* (2009), p.219, OUP.

²³⁷ Mills, JVG, Ma-Huan, *Ying-Yai Sheng-Lang, The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, (1433), Cambridge University Press, 1970.

mentions about the products from Kollam and quotes Abu Dulaf 'of the inhabitants choosing a king from China'²³⁸ which was interpreted later that it must have been the presence of a Chinese settlement or factory governed by them in Kollam.

The presence of active horse trading in Kolathunadu region catering to the Vijayanagara Empire is also noted. Both ports near the capital Eli mala, Marahi (Madayi) and Valabhapatnam (Valapattanam) acquired importance due its resourceful hinterland. A further development of this period was the guilds getting replaced with individual merchants. This period has seen the development of trading centres like Matilakam, Pantalayani Kollam (see Figure 4.1) and many small centres throughout the length and breadth of the major *natus*.

This phase saw an increased trade with the east as well as the west with the joining of the indigenous trading communities. There was no evidence of towns exercising monopoly²³⁹. This was much dependent upon the character of the Arab trade as it was settled and essentially peaceful²⁴⁰. The Chinese also did not show any interference in trade unlike their practice in the rest of South East Asia.

²³⁸ Nainar, S Muhammad Husayn, *Arab Geographers' Knowledge of Southern India*, p .40, (1942) University of Madras.

²³⁹ See Merrington terming 'the position of the town as a collective seigneur', Merrington, John, *Town and Country in the Transition to Capitalism in The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, Hilton, Rodney, p. 180, Aakar (2006).

²⁴⁰ Not only peaceful but paid the native traders the best price, quotes Ashin from Panikker, KM, *Malabar and the Portuguese*, p. 41 in Das Gupta, Ashin, *Malabar in 1740 in Merchants of Maritime India 1500-1800*, p. 92, (1994), Variorum.

4.2 Phase - II (1500-1870 AD)

4.2.1 Changing Political Authority

The political authority of this period suffered retrogression to a few powerful matrilineal joint families establishing their hereditary and juridical hold over a large number of small territorial units. These families were known by the name *svarupam* and its *kurvalcha* was defined by the order of seniority or *muppumura*. In one way the senior and junior positions of chief (*muthakuru* and *ilamkuru*) by ensuring certain powers and privileges could accommodate more than one centre of power and it resembled a feudal parcellisation. Matrilineal system as a vestige of the tribal order was adopted to preserve the family rights. The order of seniority was challenged only when disputes arose among mother's lineages (*tayvalis*).

The earlier brahmin representative bodies also made way for the dominance of single families. These units either under the temples or the families were called *sanketams*. The role of agrarian class differentiation in the growth of a few powerful families at the local level in the absence of a central authority could be visualised. The earlier *ayiram/ nurruvar* (thousands/hundreds) got replaced by the local level groups of militia called *changatam / akampadikkar / janam* and an administrative class of *svarupi nairs*.

4.2.2 Further Development of the Agrarian Mode

4.2.2.1 Production and Technology

Food crop cultivation got extended to the *kari* as well as *kayal* lands with the agrestic labour class of the pulayas putting in the slave labour and it furthered the growth of new *svarupams* along such regions. There exists no evidence to

show any marketable surplus and the historians²⁴¹ have speculated that it might have kept pace with the growing population. Pepper and ginger were the two most mentioned items in the writings of foreign travellers among the spices exported. As a continuation of the Chera legacy of *thottams*, coconut plantations continued to thrive along coasts and *kayal* lands. Barbosa has talked about trade in coconut²⁴² in the 16th century. It must have been necessary to meet the oil requirement for lighting

The fertile river valleys yielded two summer crops and a third crop was grown in some areas which were water logged. The harvest, on an average, varied from 3-6 times of the seed sown. High yielding land or varieties fetched 5-10 times²⁴³. Most of the implements were made of wood with an iron tipped point and did not show much improvement in technology. Low quality oxen and buffaloes were used as draught animals. Under Thiruvitancore, the Nancinad region benefited (especially the Kalkulam and Eraniel taluks) with the construction of Puthen dam and Padmanabhapuram Puthenar canal in 1735²⁴⁴. A decade later the construction of Nancinad Puthenar²⁴⁵ from Bhuthapandi to Kanyakumari and many tanks throughout the region also improved the prospects of agricultural lands. The *kayal* lands needed regular removal of excess water during monsoons for which water wheel was used besides *Ettam/thekkukotta*. The availability of labour in the form of the untouchable *adiyar* caste as agrestic chattel slaves must have been the reason for inhibiting

²⁴¹ Ganesh, KN, *Agrarian Society in Kerala 1500-1800* in *Perspectives in Kerala History* (1999), Kerala Gazetteers department.

²⁴² Barbosa, Duarte, *A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar*, (1970 reprint) Hakluyt Society, London.

²⁴³ Buchanan, Francis, *A Journey from Madras through Malabar*, (1981) Vol-2, p.137, Kerala Bhasha Institute.

²⁴⁴ In fact the earliest dam in the Nancinad region was the Pandian dam of the 10th century. (see *Kerala Land Revenue History*, Collection of Documents, Vol-4, p. 88.)

²⁴⁵ *Mathilakam Granthavary*, Kerala State Archives, Trivandrum.

the growth of technology in agriculture in a region where metallurgy was known since the preceding era for making various utensils and arms. The usage of slave rent continued over this period as evidenced from various later documents during the British period²⁴⁶.

4.2.2.2 Land Ownership and Control

The ownership of land was still with the naduvazhis (*cherikkal*), temples (*devaswom*) and brahmins (*brahmaswam*) with some non-brahmanas claiming land with their own effort²⁴⁷. The *uralar* bodies were replaced by *yogam* or *samudayam*. The leaseholders or *kudiyars* were supposed to pay *padvaram* or *pattam* which was from 20 to 50% of the produce. This was paid in kind in grain lands and both cash and kind in garden lands. But remarkable changes occurred during 16th and 18th centuries with the growth of mainly a lease-cum-mortgage land tenure which was prevalent in Nancinad (southern Thiruvitancore) to start with. This *kanam/otti* involved paying an amount of security in cash or kind to get the control of the land for a stipulated period. The interest on security was reduced from *padvaram/pattam* and hence the balance *michavaram* was paid after every crop. The security given for the land or *artham* amounted up to three-fourths of the value of land and mortgage period lasted 36-48 years at some places²⁴⁸. Mortgaging and pledging of land in various forms existed throughout Kerala as in Kochi direct pledges called *panayam/padukalam* were also in place and by 18th century a birth right called *kudijenmam* were conferred on a type of *otti* settlers. Garden lands were also brought under new systems with *tengupattakkanam* or *kettuthengu* developing

²⁴⁶ A proclamation dated 18th August 1800 orders mandatory registration of the sale and purchase of *Cherumars* (the slave caste), CCXVII, p. 337, Logan, William, A Collection of Treaties ..., *Malabar Manual*, Vol-3

²⁴⁷ Ganesh, KN, *Agrarian Society in Kerala 1500-1800* in *Perspectives in Kerala History* (1999), p. 140, Kerala Gazetteers department.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.143.

in Venad and Kochi in coconut gardens. A further tenure to promote bringing in fresh land or planting perennial crops was *kulikkanam* in which a reduction in rent was offered for a stipulated period for various improvements made in the land. This reduction which came up to one-third of the rent was called *naduvukkur* or *kulikkur*. The right to gather forest produce also involved a rent called *kuttikkanam*. The *virutti* holdings given out for various services offered in the temple as well as administration also became hereditary and hence permanent by the 18th century. Soldiers of the newly created Thiruvitancore army were allotted *irayili* land on reduced rent and post retirement *irayili aduthoon* (pension). The customary share of the ruler, *komuraippadu* was supplemented with extra cess whenever invasions or special services were offered.

The societal transactions were dependent upon inviolable *mariyadai* (custom) and *kiliyakkam* (practice) away from *kaccams*. The further developments of mortgaging and pledging in agriculture, the rights of control even in forest lands raised fresh challenges to such systems as all of which demanded some concrete assessment for land owners in order not to lose their land. The commutation of rent from produce to cash and evidences of usury practised by several communities was existent in this period. But such transactions could not transcend the inviolable medieval ties of dependence, thus inhibiting any trend towards land becoming a commodity²⁴⁹. The earliest such developments took place in Thiruvitancore only by the 19th century.

The changes in the agrarian front brought about some changes in the social division of labour with the tenant classes being freed a little under the new tenures. However, there was no substantive change in the status of the adiyar castes as direct sale of them along with the land were mentioned in records even up to the 18th century. The improvements in agricultural output at various

²⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 150.

localities created a pull for various artisan castes as they started migrating from their temple/town centered localities²⁵⁰. The above changes drew people from Christian and Muslim communities as tenants. In fact, petty merchants also might have ventured into cash crop cultivation enthused by the *kulikkanam* and *otti* tenures. Historians²⁵¹ cite that the communities of West Asian origin were not confined within caste rigidities vis-a-vis occupation and social mobility.

4.2.2.3 New Developments in the Agrarian Mode

The decentralised polity and further developments in the agrarian front demanded a class to perform the executive, military and accounting functions of these principalities. The growth of foreign trade, in fact, generated a petty merchant class as well. The intermediary tenants found the lease-cum-mortgage (*kanam/otti*) to be a better option than simple lease to exercise their independence. Customary landlords (*janmam* right holders) found it convenient to leave the management to them as well. In fact, both the above mentioned classes found the new land mortgage helpful in order to consolidate their position, so much so that the lands transferred by the princess of Attingal to the Padmanabha temple in 1668 included *otti* holdings²⁵². This new development, started in Thiruvitancore in the 14th century, spread to Kochi and Malabar by the 17th century. The interest over *artham* varied from $\frac{3}{4}$ to 2 panam per 10 panam (7.5 to 20%)²⁵³. The garden lands under *otti* were also given incentive through *kulikkanam* and non-brahmana landholders. Christians and *ilavas* also responded to this incentive.

The ruling families had a wide network of accountants and officials (*karyakkar*). Their collection of rent and dues were not always without force.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 153

²⁵¹ Ibid, p.153.

²⁵² Ibid, p.157.

²⁵³ Ibid, p.158

There were complaints from landholders of Nancinadu about royal representatives collecting *vayyavari* (back breaking dues) and adopting *seyyamurai* (repressive forms)²⁵⁴. The series of resolutions²⁵⁵ of the *nattar*, a collective body of the landholders in Nancinadu (from Mangalam to Manakudi), from the beginning of the 18th century complain of the great damages inflicted by the mercenary armies and royal representatives or *madampis* over their land and property. The resolutions also suggested extreme measures like leaving the field uncultivated for the whole year (1721 AD). At the same time there was evidence from Thiruvitancore that the royal representatives were indulging in large scale acquiring of land through mortgages and pledges. The evidence of rising conflict between this class and those who held customary rights (temples/brahmins/rulers) were established throughout Kerala²⁵⁶. There was a further development of *Kanam/Otti* holders subletting their land for mortgage as well as simple lease. The extension of cultivation and a rise in the margin must have been the reason for such subinfeudation²⁵⁷ of the period. The *adiyars* and *verumpattakkar* (simple lease holders) were reeling under the customary landlords/*janmis* and at some instance under the new *kanam* holders.

The 18th century (see Figure 4.2) saw the maturing of the *janmam-kanam* system with mortgage tenures acquiring a permanency and *kulikkanam*

²⁵⁴ TAS, Vol-5, pp. 217-19, (referred to in Ibid, P.162)

²⁵⁵ Aiya, V Nagam, *The Travancore State Manual*, pp.319-323, (1906), The Travancore Government Press

²⁵⁶ Ganesh talks about two forms of right, one customary based on territorial /hereditary /ideological control and the other rights based on actual management of the land. In Nancinad this customary authority was even weaker. (Ganesh, KN, *Agrarian Relations and Political Authority in Medieval Travancore (AD 1300-1750)*, p. 268, 366, Unpublished PhD dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University.)

²⁵⁷ See Patnaik, Utsa, *The Process of Commercialisation Under Colonial Conditions in The Long Transition*, p. 261, (1999), Tulika.

ensuring expansion²⁵⁸ as well as promotion of cash crops. This contributed to the rising contradiction between the rulers and the intermediary classes consolidated by their role in the administration as well as on the agrarian front. Moreover the erstwhile *mariyadai* (custom) and *kiliyakkam* (practice) were becoming redundant amidst the rising commercial interests of these sections.

4.3 Thiruvitancore – A Case of Weakening Feudal Relations

4.3.1 Consolidation of the Centralised Monarchy

A crisis brewed with the accountants (*karuvukarattil pillaimar*) led by the *Madampis* in Thiruvitancore in the 17th century. The companions of honour (*akampedijenam*) also played active role in it and Martanda Varma (1729-58) started the expropriation of these *Madampis*²⁵⁹. In fact he conducted a fresh *kandeluttu* (land survey) in 1737 AD after eliminating the rebellious landholding class followed with a land revenue settlement in 1739. This was a clear measure to suppress the feudal nobility. The survey made records of the extent of land, type of produce, right of ownership or control, the current tenure and an estimate of the dues to be realised.²⁶⁰ A vertical order of salaried officials without hereditary rights were made starting with *provertikar/adhikari* from villages to *karyakkar* at *mandapathumvathukkals* (district) and *sarvadhi karyakkar* who reports to the king.²⁶¹ The survey covered all

²⁵⁸ The *Thirattu* (accounts of the *adhikaram* showing mainly paddy and cash) of Thovala taluk for 1774 shows increase in the waste lands brought under cultivation. (*Travancore Land Revenue Manual*, Vol-4, p.139.)

²⁵⁹ Ganesh, KN, *Agrarian Relations and Political Authority in Medieval Travancore (AD 1300-1750)*, p. 481, Unpublished PhD dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University.

²⁶⁰ *Travancore Land Revenue Manual*, Vol-4, pp.89-96.

²⁶¹ Ganesh, KN, *Agrarian Relations and Political Authority in Medieval Travancore (AD 1300-1750)*, p. 514, Unpublished PhD dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru

mandapathumvathukkals (traditional districts). However in Nancinadu the traditional land divisions of *pidagai* and *kelvi* continued. The rent which was normally collected in cash was fixed after considering the type of crop, yield and fertility of the soil. The control over conducting the fairs and markets were handed over to merchants as *kuttakai* (monopoly). A fixed payment had to be made to the king with permission to collect tolls and dues.

Table 4.1 Markets and Fairs in Trivandrum Mandapattumvatukkal

	Markets/Fairs	Kuttakai (In Panam)	
		1746 AD	1747 AD
1	Nellaman Fair	84	60
2	Iravipuram Fair	-	12
3	Vattiyurkavu Fair	120	120
4	Vellayambalam Fair	180	150
5	Thonakkal Fair	50	50
6	Chalai Market	2620	2710

Source : Computed from Ganesh KN, (PP. 535-36)

Marthanda Varma changed the agrarian organisation to suit the evolving forms as the medieval customary authority of *mariyadai/kiliyakkam* was overhauled. The king/monarch was made the complete overseer of lands with various officials and a separate military which numbered more than 50,000²⁶². He recruited his military from small cultivators by handing them over *irayili* (tax deductions) and *irayili aduthoon*²⁶³ (a pension for retirees). They were trained under four broad divisions of cavalry, infantry, fire arms and archery under the supervision of the *adhikaris* below²⁶⁴. The recruitment to the army was from

University.

²⁶² Velu Pillai, TK, *The Travancore State Manual*, Vol-2, History, 1996 (Reprint), Kerala Gazetteers Department, Government of Kerala.

²⁶³ *Mathilakam Records*, C.915, 0.672, 931 K.E.

²⁶⁴ Referred in Ganesh, KN, *Agrarian Relations and Political Authority in Medieval Travancore (AD 1300-1750)*, p. 514, Unpublished PhD dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University.

peasant classes and the incentive was either a share of or a relief from the feudal rent, seemingly the promotion of the same class which benefited out of the lease-cum-mortgage as well. Thus a 'feudal soldiery' by recruitment turned into a modern professional one with the pepper trade adding into its firepower with most of the commanders being 'sons of soil'. The fortifications were made stronger and the northern border was sealed off with a 'Travancore Line'²⁶⁵.

Marthanda Varma assumed the title of *Padmanabhadasa* by the act of *trippadidhanam*²⁶⁶ on 17th January 1750 thus dedicating his kingdom to the deity of Sree Padmanabha temple, he being the ruler as a representative. This act was seen as more of an invoking of a simultaneous ritual authority as well in the functioning of his kingdom. The new administrative and military organisation was dependent on the agrarian surplus or enhanced land revenue through *otti/kulikkanam* measures of expansion and procurement *kuttakai* over pepper. There was encouragement to take to commercial agriculture and trade through these interventions. There were successive land surveys in 1751-54 and 1773-74 which formalised the land ownership under *pandaravaga* (government owned), *sree pandaravaga* (temple owned) and *madampimarvaga* (held by landlords or *madampis*). The earlier autonomy of the *devaswom / brahmaswam* gave way to treating them on par with the tenants paying dues to the king. The progress of the land settlements were such that certain irrecoverable lease cum mortgage tenures (*chora otti*) and century old *ottis* were considered *kudi-jenmom* (permanent tenure)²⁶⁷ as a recognition to

²⁶⁵ The Travancore Lines from the description of George Powney (British Resident 1788-1800) is that 'they run from west to east, commencing at Vypeen and extend upto Anaimalai'. 'The lines consist of a ditch, about 16 feet broad and 20 feet deep, with a thick bamboo hedge in it'. From the letter to the Governor of Madras dated 17th February 1790, quoted in Menon, C Achyuta, *The Cochin State Manual*, (1995 reprint), p. 150, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Government of Kerala.

²⁶⁶ *Travancore Land Revenue Manual*, Vol-4, pp.101-4.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 94-96.

tenant proprietors. These measures would have certainly augmented the land revenue as well. The developments in the irrigation front in the Nancinadu region was financed by various methods like creating a special fund, through additional levies upon peasants and by going for fresh assessments in land.²⁶⁸ The developments in the agrarian front in Thiruvitancore with expansion through *otti* and *kulikkanam*, improvements in tenancy contracts and money rent at par with produce as well as monopoly procurement of pepper and other commodities of commercial value through petty traders, allowed a propertied class, some amount of accumulation within the petty mode paving the way for class differentiation²⁶⁹. Thus two more claimants to the surplus were added during this period, those of the tenant proprietors and traders, who were promoted through various monopolies from pepper procurement to the conduct of fairs and markets.

The promotion of 'industrious tenantry' continued with two major proclamations²⁷⁰ in 1865 and 1867 which called for enfranchisement of *sircar* (state) pattam lands and fixity of tenure for tenants through the *jenmi-kudiyam* one. The first gave the right of property (heritable and saleable) to tenant/*ryot* who were cultivating *sircar* lands and the second defended them from the ejection by the *jenmis* at will. In Nancinadu, the agricultural district, land taxes were reduced and made reasonable. All new towns and highways had prominent *Ootupuras* (feeding houses) to cater to brahmin travellers and neighbourhood poor.

²⁶⁸ The *Puthenar Eadumvaippu* was the name of the fund created along with the opening of the Nancinad Puthenar and it was recouped with the increased produce. See *Travancore Land Revenue Manual*, Vol-4, pp. 95, 145 & 148.

²⁶⁹ See more on class differentiation, Dobb, Maurice, *From Feudalism to Capitalism in The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, p.167, (1976), Verso.

²⁷⁰ Pillai, TK Velu, *The Travancore State Manual-Vol-2*, pp.602-04, (1996 reprint), Kerala Gazetteers Department, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram.

4.3.1.1 The Development of Trivandrum as Capital City

The first measures in developing Trivandrum came in the form of various improvements in the Sree Padmanabha temple premises such as the construction of the stone corridor which was a laborious work spanning over more than seven months. The further development as a capital city came during the reign of Dewan Madhava Rao (1857-71) with the construction of three ambitious public buildings. The public offices complex which cost 1.5 lakhs to the treasury (which currently serves as the state secretariat), the general hospital to the west of this complex and the Maharaja's college were buildings which made Trivandrum represent the 'Victorian idea of a capital'²⁷¹. The expansion of communication facilities along with public investments brought in people from outside the district in search of quality education, healthcare and other services.

4.3.2 Interventions in Long Distance Trade

Pepper procurement and distribution was brought under *kuttakai* (monopoly) by 1743 with *adhikaris* made in charge of supervision at major places²⁷². The state procurement of pepper was handed over to the merchants as they paid a share of the profit to the state²⁷³. By 1748 the merchants headed the list of suppliers and pepper began to flow to the state depots/warehouses at Thuckalay, Kilikollur and Mavelikkara. The state could bargain with the Dutch and the English, the then major stakeholders of pepper trade of Thiruvitancore. Private traders were not allowed to send pepper to these companies directly. In fact, it was the pepper monopoly and not the battle of Kolachel that forced the

²⁷¹ Jeffrey, Robin, *The Decline of Nair Dominance – Society and Politics in Travancore 1847-1908*, p. 90, (2014 reprint), Manohar.

²⁷² *Mathilakam Records*, C 802, (quoted in *Ibid*, p. 552.)

²⁷³ *Mathilakam Records*, C.1595, 0.189-90 (quoted in *Ibid*, p.169)

Dutch to come to terms with Thiruvitancore²⁷⁴. In fact various agreements with the Dutch, to supply pepper, were in place during this period, first in 1743 [to deliver 1200 candies (a candy being 560 lbs) @ Rs. 54 a candy] and an elaborate one in 1753²⁷⁵ which took care of the expansion plan of Thiruvitancore with Dutch support. The supply was always irregular owing to the eastern trade which fetched prices to the tune of Rs. 173 a candy of 500 lb²⁷⁶ (in 1763) which was ensured through both 'passes' issued by the Dutch as well as smuggling through the land route by the state trading department. Hence pepper trade with the Dutch went in accordance with the pepper monopoly terms of Thiruvitancore.

The state's commercial department was located in Mavelikkara to ensure the collection and storage of pepper and other articles (tobacco, cassia and areca) which came under *kuttakai*. The articles were purchased at rates fixed by the *sircar* through a royal proclamation and exporters/people had to purchase from *sircar* agencies as private wholesale trade was prohibited²⁷⁷. Some studies

²⁷⁴ Iyer, Dr. S Krishna, *The Dutch in Kerala 1663-1795 in Perspectives in Kerala History* (1999) p.252, Kerala Gazetteers department.

²⁷⁵ As part of the treaty of Mavelikkara, the Dutch promised assistance against external aggression and agreed to supply arms and ammunitions worth Rs. 12,000 every year. In return Marthanda Varma agreed to supply 3000 candies of pepper @ Rs. 65 from the already annexed lands and 2000 candies @ Rs. 55 from lands yet to be. The Dutch agreed for an export duty of one shilling sterling per candy as well [referred in Dasgupta, Ashin, *Malabar in Asian Trade 1740-1800*, p.43, (1967), Cambridge University Press & Aiya, V Nagam, *The Travancore State Manual*, p.349 (1906), The Travancore Government Press].

²⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 47, the other interest of the Dutch being a major part of this eastern trade was used to buy up tobacco from Jaffnapatnam which was under their sovereignty, hence benefits out of the little circuit says Dasgupta, Ashin, *Malabar in 1740 in Merchants of Maritime India 1500-1800*, P. 103, (1994), Variorum.

²⁷⁷ Pillai, TK Velu, *The Travancore State Manual-Vol-2*, p.346, (1996 reprint), Kerala Gazetteers Department, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram.

cite²⁷⁸ the basis of the pepper *kuttakai* as the exclusion of the merchants and the compulsion to sell cheap at the producers' end. The trend continued with the Dutch and the English factors being supplied with their quota of pepper and the *kuttakai* being expanded to cover many more commercial commodities and the parallel development of the Alappuzha port. The Dutch had partially ceded to allow free trading of items concerning the Thiruvitancore king through Alappuzha in 1788²⁷⁹ and this heralded the state's direct participation in the Asian trade.

The English not only managed a tough bargain unlike the Dutch but could also enforce market prices 40-50% lower the normal market price for pepper and could engage in a profitable arms trade²⁸⁰. The per candy price of pepper in Thiruvitancore varied from Rs 82/- to 165/- with an average of Rs 115/- during the period between 1794 and 1804²⁸¹. The British period saw the part payments

²⁷⁸ Ashin quotes from the secret documents of the *Kolonial Archeif* in support of his argument that pepper was procured at Rs. 30-32 a candy (560 lbs) so as to provoke even local revolts thence. It was sold over double the price to the Dutch and 5 times more at the Coromandel coast. (Das Gupta, Ashin, *Malabar in Asian Trade 1740-1800*, pp.46-50, (1967), Cambridge University Press.) But a document of 1743 suggests the pepper procurement price at 7 ½ panam per tulam (14.4 lbs), the selling price being 10 panam added up with 1 panam for the merchant and 1 ½ panam for the state. Hence the per candy procurement charges comes up to Rs. 62-63 (6¼ panam is equivalent to 1 Rs) with the cultivators been given Rs. 46-47. [*Mathilakam Records* C. 1595, 0.189, quoted in Ganesh, KN, *Agrarian Relations and Political Authority in Medieval Travancore (AD 1300-1750)*, pp. 539-40, Unpublished PhD dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University.]

²⁷⁹ Ibid, Dasgupta, Ashin, pp 71-72.

²⁸⁰ Kurup, KKN, *Introduction to Logan, William, A Collection of Treaties ...*, *Malabar Manual*, Vol-3, p. xxxii (2000 new edition), Kerala Gazetteers department.

²⁸¹ Treaties : XVII (10th September 1791), XXVIII (28th January 1793), LXXVII (21st March 1794), LXXIX (9th August 1794), XCV (26th August 1795), Logan, William, *A Collection of Treaties ...*, *Malabar Manual*, Vol-3, P. 165, 175, 217-18, 236, (2000 new edition), Kerala Gazetteers department.

of pepper trade in arms and certain luxury items, the penal provision in contract on both sides to take care of deficiency or payment defaults and even loans on interest as part of it²⁸². In fact, the king through his representative Krishna Annavy expressed the demand to '*supply one musket per candy of pepper and other war like stores and ammunition on reasonable terms*'²⁸³. Hence the *mulaku madissila* (pepper treasure) was used for territorial expansion as well as for administrative expenses certainly during the Dutch trade.

4.3.2.1 Construction of Alleppey Port

The construction of the Alleppey port started in 1762. Its main artery was an artificially dug canal connecting the Thuthampally backwater with the Arabian sea (see Figure 4.3). All trading establishments and allied infrastructure were housed on either side of this 'commercial canal'. Land was given free and rental for the state bankshall/warehouses kept low²⁸⁴, to ensure the presence of a business community. The geographical advantage of the new port was the presence of smooth waterways for inland trade via the Vembanad Lake, a necessity during those days to have an outreach to the pepper-coconut hinterland in the absence of cheaper inland transport facilities. The principal mode those days were the *wallums*, small backwater crafts which could move either sides with a curved bow and stern and an arched bamboo roof for protection.

The state encouraged traders to sail past Cochin to visit Alleppey.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ *Anjengo Factor Records*, Entry for August 7, 1744, Vol-1A, (1744-47), TN Archives, (quoted in Ganesh, KN, *Agrarian Relations and Political Authority in Medieval Travancore (AD 1300-1750)*, p. 514, Unpublished PhD dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University.)

²⁸⁴ See Schenk, Hans, *Views on Alleppey*, p. 65, Netherlands Geographical Studies (4), University of Amsterdam, 1986.

Simultaneously the Dutch resistance against Alleppey port grew with the Malabar Council deciding²⁸⁵ to check smuggling of spices (pepper and wild cardamom) between Cochin and Porka (Purakkad). The Dutch commandeur Angelbeek agreed to exempt king's trade from duties after prolonged consultations and in the following years when the export trade from Travancore increased. The British later insisted on the pepper demand (3000 candies) initially and posted a junior merchant in Alleppey to check smuggling. Alleppey trade was increasingly getting streamlined into British interests with French, Danes, Portuguese and German traders also visiting in search of pepper. However, after the withdrawal of the monopoly (*kuttakai*) procurement enjoyed by the state since 1750s, the role of Alleppey was in for a major change.

4.3.2.2 Morphology of Alleppey Town (1867)

In the 1800s there was further tightening of the colonial extraction of Travancore's produce and Alleppey became the centre stage with the British commercial agent posted there. The free trade phase, post the 1860s, could draw some foreign investments in certain areas like coir matting. The manufacturing technology for coir mats and mattings brought by James Darragh (see Darragh's manufactory in Figure 4.3) used steam power in the 1860s. Coir matting principally catered to the American markets. The exports were in for a major boost in the following decades with the share of coir and coconut products becoming dominant. The opening up of the plantations²⁸⁶ also kept Alleppey port busy with its efficient connectivity with the hill stretches.

²⁸⁵ On 31st December 1787, see Das Gupta, Ashin, *Malabar in Asian Trade 1740-1800*, pp.46-50, (1967), Cambridge University Press.

²⁸⁶ In the early 60s, 86,000 acres of land were sold to European planters. See Pillai, TK Velu, *The Travancore State Manual-Vol-3*, p. 18, (1996 reprint), Kerala Gazetteers Department, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram.

Table 4.2 Land Use of Alleppey Town (1867)

Land Use	In Percentage
Gardenland (including built up area)	81.33
Sand	7.7
Canals	4.8
Roads	4.05
Waterbodies	1.4
Paddy fields	0.4
Swamps	0.25
Total	100

Source : Computed from the Figure 4.3.

The land use of Alleppey in 1867 shows that 81% was garden land planted with tree crops of coconut, areca and palmyrah which do not need continuous care (see Figure 4.3). The secondary activities of toddy tapping as well as coir making were supported by these coconut gardens (see Figure 4.4). Alleppey, since its establishment a century ago, had been supporting non-agricultural occupations. The canal-road connectivity for the port is shown in Figure 4.5. The port infrastructures (see Figure 4.5) like the lighthouse were constructed in 1862 and its cost was imposed on shipping traffic. The first modern post office (1857) and the telegraph office (1863) were also established. The custom house, commercial agent's office and bankshall or warehouses for salt, pepper, cardamom and tobacco (see Figure 4.5) were lined up near the port. The state administration report²⁸⁷ 1865-66 puts the traffic at Alleppey port as '*1 steamer, 79 ships, 10 barks, 38 brigs, 23 schooners and a number of small vessels*'; the total tonnage being 74,028. Alleppey's trade became increasingly dependent on the British. As noted by scholars, the trade and transport component had been the core and symbol of the early town with the absence of religious institutions and forts found in other contemporary cities.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ Schenk, Hans, *Views on Alleppey*, p. 44, Netherlands Geographical Studies (4), University of Amsterdam, 1986.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 76.

4.3.3 Towards a Tributary State of the British

While the Mavelikkara treaty was considered the *coup de grace* to Dutch influence²⁸⁹, the treaty of Srirangapatnam (1792) more than the battle of Plassey (1757) consolidated the British East India Company's influence in the state. The interceding of the Company in favour of the Nawab of Arcot versus Travancore, the denial of the Company troops to fight Tippu in spite of the wholehearted participation of the Travancore army along with the British to fight Hyder before,²⁹⁰ the reduced trade prospects especially of pepper under the British and increased burden of tributes sapped the independent foundations of Thiruvitancore built up under Marthanda Varma.

The 1795 treaty²⁹¹ with the East India Company cost Thiruvitancore, Rs. 3,81,456/- in tribute as '*a sum equivalent to three of the Honourable Company's battalions of sepoy, one company of European artillery and two companies of Lascars*'; '*any new engagements with European or Indian states*' demanded '*previous concurrence of the British government*'; and the treaty '*was principally to provide for the purposes of external defence*' with the clause that '*the Company engage not to impede in anywise (way?) the course of the rule or*

²⁸⁹ Logan, William, *Malabar Manual*, Vol-1, p. 391, (2000 new edition), Kerala Gazetteers department.

²⁹⁰ See Aiya, V Nagam, *The Travancore State Manual*, pp.413-416, (1906), The Travancore Government Press. While this has been one view the other was that the British had reservations against provoking Tippu as Lord Cornwallis himself wrote '*by making collusive purchase of forts or places in the territories of one of his tributaries...he will justly draw Tippu's resentment upon himself and at the same time forfeit all right to the Company's friendship or interference in his favour*' see Kunju, AP Ibrahim, *Relations between Travancore and Mysore in the Eighteenth Century in Resistance and Modernisation under Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan*, Ed/ Habib, Irfan, IHC, pp 82-83, 1999, Tulika.

²⁹¹ Aiya, V Nagam, *The Travancore State Manual*, pp. 401-02, (1906), The Travancore Government Press.

of the administration or enter upon any part of what regards the management of the present Raja's or his successor's country'.

By the treaty of 1805, 'a sum equivalent to the expense of one regiment of native infantry' costing Rs. 4,01,655/- was added making the total of Rs. 7,83,111/- in tribute²⁹², with clauses²⁹³ like 'the said Governor General in Council shall be at liberty and shall have full power and right either to introduce such regulations and ordinances as he shall deem expedient for the internal management and collection of revenues or for the better ordering of any other branch and department of the government of Travancore, or to assume and bring under the direct management of the servants of the said Company Bahadoor such part or parts of the territorial possessions of His Highness The Maharajah Ram Rajah Bahadoor as shall appear to him'.

The further tightening of the East India Company rule led to 'Velu Thampy's insurrection'²⁹⁴ and Colonel Munro, the former British Resident, took charge as the Dewan of Travancore in 1811 and continued to rule for three years before handing over charge to a native. Munro established courts and initiated the temple administration. He ensured the detachment of the commercial department from the military and with its virtual disbanding and destruction of

²⁹² Treaty CCLIII, Logan, William, A Collection of Treaties ..., *Malabar Manual*, Vol-3, pp. 365-66, (2000 new edition), Kerala Gazetteers department.

²⁹³ Aiya, V Nagam, *The Travancore State Manual*, pp. 425-27, (1906), The Travancore Government Press.

²⁹⁴ Velu Thampy was *diwan* of Travancore (from 1802-1809) under whom the 1805 treaty was in force. He put forth his best effort to get a remission of the increased subsidy which further aggravated his relations with the British Resident. The Resident wanted the *diwan* to retire and he repulsed it by organising a bid on Resident Macaulay's life with the help of his Cochin counterpart Paliyath Achan. Although the bid failed the further events including the Kundara Proclamation and subsequent suicide of Velu Thampy lasted a few months. See Pillai, TK Velu, *The Travancore State Manual-Vol-2*, pp 458-492, (1996 reprint), Kerala Gazetteers Department, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram.

the ' Travancore Lines', smuggling from Malabar and Tinnevely increased. The commercial department of Travancore was taken over by a nominated British commercial agent stationed in Alleppey.²⁹⁵ The diabolic effort of the British to encourage smuggling through Cochin and forcefully depreciating the procurement price²⁹⁶ drew success with the government ceding to the demand of replacing more than a century old pepper monopoly with an export duty (Rs. 15/- per candy or 20% *ad valorem* on a valuation of Rs. 75/- per candy) only to be lowered later to the standard export duty of 5%.

Table 4.3 Purchase Price of British East India Company for Pepper from Travancore and Malabar 1759-1860

Years	Travancore (In Rs per Candy)	Years	Malabar (In Rs per Candy)
1759	85		
1764-83	82		
1784-92	105		
1793	116.85		
1794	121.75	1794	200
1795	129.7	1802	120
1796	115	1848-52	51
1797-99	118.75	1852-57	85
1800-04	115	1857-58	100
1860	75	1858-59	95

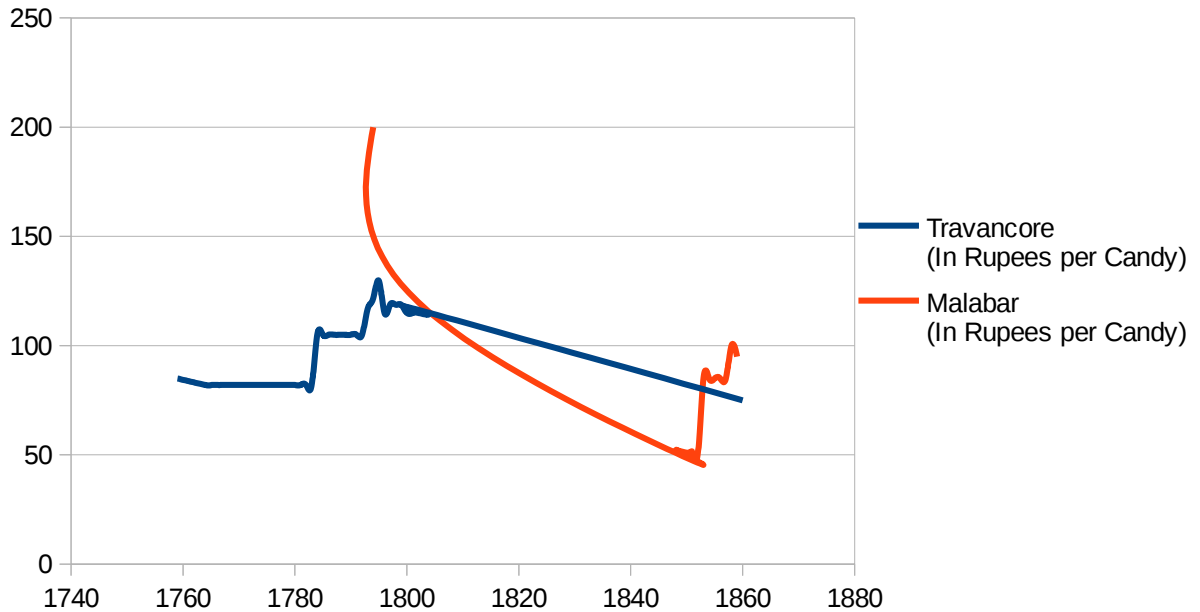
Source : Computed from various Treaties, (see footnote)²⁹⁷.

²⁹⁵ Captain Robert Gordon was the first to act as the commercial agent sharing the duty of the local police superintendent as well. His sole concern been to increase the pepper trade for East India Company and control its price. See Schenk, Hans, *Views on Alleppey*, p. 33, Netherlands Geographical Studies (4), University of Amsterdam, 1986.

²⁹⁶ Calculated from the figures supplied from, Vishakam Thirunna, Rama Varma, A Native Statesman, *Calcutta Review*, p.246, V 54-55 (1872),

²⁹⁷ Computed from various Treaties, Logan, William, A Collection of Treaties ..., *Malabar Manual*, Vol-3, pp. 109, 113, 165, 175, 185, 217-19, 212, 236, 349 , Vol-1, p. 718 (2000 new edition), Kerala Gazetteers department and Aiya, V Nagam, *The Travancore State Manual*, p.519, (1906), The Travancore Government Press.

Pepper Price 1759-1860



The plight of various other monopolies like tobacco also followed suit with the net revenue from tobacco not even able to keep pace with the 1856-57 levels even after twelve years and trebling of tobacco import by 1868-69²⁹⁸. The passage of the British Indian Trade Act of 1848 which freed the coastal trade within British India created problems for Travancore as it had to pay foreign duty at British ports. In subsequent deliberations, Travancore made a plea to continue the import duty on cotton, cotton goods and metals along with tobacco, opium and spirit. In 1862 the volume of imports of cotton thread, piece goods and other sorts claimed 45% of total imports²⁹⁹ to Travancore. The

²⁹⁸ The net revenue from tobacco in 1856-57 was Rs. 8,48,978 against an import of 3460 candies which stood at Rs. 8,36,684 against 8150 candies after doing away with monopoly. (referred in Pillai, TK Velu, *The Travancore State Manual-Vol-2*, p.595, (1996 reprint), Kerala Gazetteers Department, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram.

²⁹⁹ See *Ibid*, Vol. 3, pp. 15-17.

duty on cotton, cotton goods and metals was finally rejected and the Interportal Convention which followed in 1864 turned out to be '*an agreement between the paramount power and a protected state*'³⁰⁰. The treaty³⁰¹ which dealt with the 'arrangements for removal of fiscal restrictions on trade with British India' fixed British Indian tariff and rates of import duty for all articles. It placed an upper limit of 5% on all ordinary exports, 10% on timber, Rs. 15 a candy on pepper, British valuations for export and the rates of salt at inland depots at par with the British Indian rates. The successor Maharaja Sri Visakam Thirunal observed in 1872³⁰², '*this interportal arrangement ensued considerable fall in the customs revenue*'. '*While in the year 1862-63 this item showed a revenue of Rs. 5,30,443 in 1869-70 it stood so low as Rs. 3,63,822. With what elasticity trade has risen under the above arrangements will be seen by noticing that in 1861-62 the exports were to the value of Rs. 35,44,653 while in 1868-69 they went up to Rs. 72,76,200 showing an increase of more than cent percent. Under the interportal agreement an evil was certainly inflicted upon the people of Travancore, viz., the enhancement of the price of salt. No financial argument, founded though it may be on statistics, can morally justify this heavy tax on a strict necessary of life. Travancore was comparatively taxed lightly in this aspect; but owing to British interference, the people of that State have been laid under this the worst of all indirect taxes*'. By 1923 the duty from imports stood at a paltry 3% of the total share of customs duty bucking the trend of increased import duties and reduced export duties elsewhere in the world.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 598.

³⁰¹ Treaty No. CCLXXXIII, Logan, William, A Collection of Treaties ..., *Malabar Manual*, Vol-3, p. 395, (2000 new edition), Kerala Gazetteers department.

³⁰² Vishakam Thirunnaal, Rama Varma, *A Native Statesman*, Calcutta Review, p. 249, V 54-55 (1872),

4.4 Malabar – Strengthening of Feudal Relations Under the British Raj

4.4.1 Early European Trade

By the time the Portuguese arrived at the Malabar Coast the political authority had got dismantled into many feudal principalities. The Portuguese interest³⁰³ in trade was mainly pepper and they wanted to replace the hold of the Arabs with whom the Samutiris had established relationship since the middle of the thirteenth century. Their factories only ensured storage facilities which could last a monsoon season as ships could sail thereafter. It was Francisco Almeida, the Portuguese viceroy, who developed the 'blue water policy' of controlling trade by patrolling the sea and issuing passes (*cartazes*)³⁰⁴. The pass system also aimed at directing trade to ports under Portuguese control which affected Calicut's importance. But it was bound to collapse as the vastness of seas and subsequent loss to the crown from smuggling indicated. Portugal, at a point, managed to control up to 75% of the European spice trade and the profits were up to 90%.³⁰⁵

Table 4.4 Portuguese Pepper Trade from Kerala (In tonnes)

Years	Kannur	Kochi	Kollam
1515	67.90	258.85	-
1516	25	258.85	269.27
1517	25	258.85	496.74

Source : Computed from tables quoted in Mathew.

The French trade started in 1617 and they could establish their 'loge'

³⁰³ Dobb says Vasco da Gama returned to Lisbon in 1499 with a cargo which repaid sixty times the cost of the expedition. See Dobb, Maurice, *Studies in the development of Capitalism*, pp. 192-93, (1946), Routledge.

³⁰⁴ Sudhakaran, PP, *Portuguese Relation of the Chiefs of Kerala in Perspectives in Kerala History* (1999), p.233, Kerala Gazetteers department.

³⁰⁵ Scammell, GV, *The Patterns of European Trade in Indian Ocean 1500-1700*, (1989) Souvenir, Pondicherry University (quoted in Ibid, p.237, Kerala Gazetteers department.)

(*pandikasala* or factory) in Mahe as well as Kozhikkode by the first half of the 18th century. In fact, the French East India Company could earn up to 250% profits in their ordinary trade by 1691³⁰⁶. The European intervention, however, had reduced the income of the Samutiris from trade³⁰⁷ significantly.

Table 4.5 Purchase and Selling Price of French East India Company (1691)

	Purchase Price (£)	Selling Price (£)
White Cotton Cloth and Muslin	327,000	1,267,000
Silks	32,000	97,000
Pepper (per lakh pound)	27,000	101,000
Raw Silk	58,000	111,000
Saltpetre	3,000	45,000
Cotton Thread	9,000	28,000
Total (including other smaller items)	487,000	1,700,000

Source : Mandel³⁰⁸ p. 109.

The Dutch weren't interested in protecting the high seas unlike their Portuguese counterparts. The fortunes of Calicut got revived after Portuguese decline as the following findings of 'alarming behaviour of the price of pepper' of the Dutch commander at Cochin indicates.

Table 4.6 Per Candy (560 lbs) Price of Pepper at Calicut Port

Year	Price (In Rs)
1722-30	60-62
1731-34	70-78
1735-39	88-90
1740-50	80-78
1751-53	100-95
1754-56	125-105

Source : Dasgupta, p110.

³⁰⁶ Mandel, Earnest, *Marxist Economic Theory*, Vol-1, p.109, (1968), Merlin.

³⁰⁷ Ganesh, KN, *Agrarian Society in Kerala 1500-1800 in Perspectives in Kerala History* (1999), p. 175, Kerala Gazetteers department.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

Overall, the Dutch trade was at its peak when it loaded 2 ½ to 3 million pounds of pepper in their ships during 1724-30 and its profitability was guaranteed by the 5-6 times return it fetched in European markets³⁰⁹. By 1733 it came down to a little over 8.2 lakh pounds and still further down to 5.3 lakh pounds by 1736.

4.4.2 Effects of British Policies on Agrarian Expansion

Agrarian expansion was limited to the new *janmam-kanam* tenure owing to the absence of large scale forest clearance and parallel tenures in Malabar. The *Chera* practice of *mupra* (the three *paras* per ten *para* produce in wetlands) and *ettukkonnu* (one eighth in garden lands) as *kon's* share was appropriated by *nurruvar/ayiram* classes³¹⁰ under the *naduvazhis*. Later with the development of the *janmam-kanam* tenure this turned out to be part of the customary sharing. The Mysorian conquest brought back the government share as a land tax out of the *pattam* to the *jenmi*. In fact, Tippu's governor Arshad Beg Khan proposed 5½ *paras* to the cultivator, 1½ to the *jenmi* and 3 to the government out of 10 *paras* of gross produce³¹¹. The provision for commuting it into money (Rs. 40 per thousand seers of paddy) and a reduction of up to 20% *jama* as a channel for conciliation in the wake of crop failures or floods was recorded during that period. Cash crop production was encouraged and state monopoly extended to tobacco, sandalwood, teakwood and coconut besides pepper.³¹²

The British supplanting the western idea of the soil³¹³ made the *jenmis* the

³⁰⁹ Iyer, Dr. S Krishna, *The Dutch in Kerala 1663-1795 in Perspectives in Kerala History* (1999), Kerala Gazetteers department.

³¹⁰ Logan, William, *Malabar Manual*, Vol-1, p. 601, (2000 new edition), Kerala Gazetteers department.

³¹¹ Kareem, CK, *Kerala under Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan*, pp.149-50, (1973), PAICO.

³¹² *Ibid*, pp.165-66.

³¹³ Logan, William, *Malabar Manual*, Vol-1, p. 603, (2000 new edition), Kerala Gazetteers department.

owner of land upsetting the customary practice of their right of only a share of the produce and hence the basis of *janmam-kanam* tenure as well as various further commercial forms of *otti* and *kulikkanam* which had developed during the medieval period. In fact Logan comments³¹⁴ that the '*harmonious interdependence between two classes*' for '*mutual advantage*' '*fell to pieces*' once the civil courts started recognising the *jenmi* as '*dominus*' and stated that '*the court has virtually expropriated the CO-PROPREITORS*'.

The British land revenue proposal in 1805 assigned one-third of the net produce (33%) to the cultivator, two-fifths to the government (40%) and four-fifteenths (27%) to the *jenmi*³¹⁵. The *kanakkar's* share wasn't accounted and *jenmi* was made the owner of the soil. Since then the system of land revenue adopted was somewhat similar to *ryotwari* adopted in the country with the *jenmi* at majority places and *kanakkar* at times been considered as the *ryot*. It promoted an absentee landlordism to the scale of a few families owning majority of the cultivated area³¹⁶.

The first census reports of 1871 revealed that the proportion of owner cultivators to the total male population in Malabar was almost half compared to the proportion of agricultural labourers to total male population that was double in the whole of Madras Presidency³¹⁷. In fact, Logan critically views the failure

³¹⁴ Ibid, pp 606-08.

³¹⁵ Logan, W, *Malabar Manual*, Vol-1, Revenue Assessments, pp 613, 665, & Vol-2, Appendix XV, P. ccl,(2000 new edition), Kerala Gazetteers department.

³¹⁶ By 1920-21, 50% of the cultivated area was owned by just fewer than 33 families. Quoted in Panikker, KN, *Agrarian Legislation and Social Classes – A Case Study of Malabar*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 13, No. 21 (May 27, 1978), P. 881.

³¹⁷ In 1871 the proportion of owner cultivators to total male population in Madras Presidency was 31.3% to 15.9% in Malabar and the proportion of agricultural labourers was 13.1% to 27.4% correspondingly. Quoted in Dhanagare, DN, *Agrarian Conflict, Religion and Politics: The Moplah Rebellions in Malabar in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth*

in identifying the actual cultivator and ascribes the growth of insolvent cottierism among cultivators in Malabar³¹⁸ due to it. The land revenue was oppressive in the beginning as indicated by the remissions on gardens³¹⁹ but was collected with ease following the higher prices for grains as well as garden products since 1831-32³²⁰. But once the *jenmis* and the *kanakkars* started realising their relative position vis-a-vis the new British interpretation, a host of changes occurred. To begin with, the oppressive land revenues forced the *jenmis* to raise rents and to abandon the *kanam* tenures in favour of shorter leases. The ensuing higher prices pushed up a further rise in rents with *jenmis* opting for rack rents and *kulikkanam* losing sheen against the *jenmis* power to ouster tenants.

Table 4.7 Eviction Suits (1862-1880)

	Quinquennial periods	Average annual number of		
		Suits of eviction	Persons against whom eviction was decreed	Persons against whom rent was decreed
1	1862-66	2039	1891	1473
2	1867-71	2547	3483	2549
3	1872-76	3974	6286	4314
4	1877-80	4983	8335	6498

Source : Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol-1, p 619

The increasing number of eviction suits during 1862-80 (Table 4.7) gives a fair picture of the status of uncertainty of the tenures and further alienation of land³²¹. Logan's commission (Table 4.8) reports shows that 35.3% of the

Centuries, Past & Present, No. 74 (Feb., 1977), p. 118.

³¹⁸ Logan, W, *Malabar Manual*, Vol-1, pp 679-683, (2000 new edition), Kerala Gazetteers department.

³¹⁹ Mr. Hudleston, the Principal Collector in 1830-31 had to give no less than Rs. 69,317 as remissions on gardens. See *Ibid*, Vol-1, p. 718.

³²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 718.

³²¹ The obvious corollary been throughout the country whether in *zamindari* or in *ryotwari* under the British the effort was 'to make land an alienable commodity without creating

cultivators turned out to be tenants at will and the majority (56%) had held possession of their lands for less than 12 years by 1881. They also show the changing position of the intermediaries after being denied a share of the produce as they make their living by opting for leases at will (63%) (rack renting) vis-a-vis cultivators. Thus each holder would extract a higher share from those below with a chain of sub-infeudation with small tenants and agricultural labourers suffering the most.

Table 4.8 Land Tenures in Malabar (1881)

	Land Tenures (percentages in brackets)	Cultivator held land from		Tenure of the intermediary with the <i>jenmi</i>
		<i>jenmi</i> directly	via intermediary	
1	Permanent tenures with/without rent	338 (3.3)	7 (0.2)	86 (2.3)
2	Tenures with full advances liable/unliable for renewal fee at intervals (<i>Otti</i> & quasi <i>Otti</i>)	59 (0.5)	19 (0.5)	140 (3.7)
3	Tenures with advances as well as rent liable/unliable for renewal fee at intervals (<i>Kanam</i> & quasi <i>Kanam</i>)	3495 (33.8)	443 (11.9)	3054 (82.4)
4	Mortgages with or without rent for definite/indefinite periods (<i>Panayam</i>)	123 (1.2)	399 (10.7)	194 (5.3)
5	Leases for 12 years or more (<i>verum Pattam</i>)	972 (9.4)	245 (6.6)	86 (2.3)
6	Leases for 1-12 years	2752 (26.6)	233 (6.2)	109 (2.9)
7	Leases for one year or at will	2589 (25.1)	2360 (63.7)	37 (1)
8	Total number of pieces of land	10328 (100)	3706 (100)	3706 (100)

Source : Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol-1, pp 618-19

full private property in it, and providing a large surplus in the hands of the British rulers with very little expenditure in recompense'. See Bagchi, Amiya Kumar, *The Political Economy of Underdevelopment*, p.81, (1989), Orient Longman.

Logan underlines 'the insecurity thus created among the ryots' as one of the reasons behind the 'fanatical outrages of the *Mappilas*' in Malabar³²². Thus the British interpretation of the *janmam* rights as equivalent to absolute ownership only helped to intensify the feudal exploitation in the countryside, unlike the diametrically opposite strategy of the Thiruvitancore monarchy to ease out the intermediary landlords and to encourage the tenants which subsequently ensured some class differentiation in the society. In fact, Thiruvitancore gave occupancy right to tenants by 1867. In Malabar the land tenures committee of 1885 found it justifiable 'neither by historical considerations nor by political necessity'³²³.

4.4.3 Integration of the Local Economy to Colonial Interests

The British act, of playing into the Malabar-Mysore rivalry at first and later persuading the Northern Rajas to ultimately be allied against Tippu in 1790 in proclamation of the readiness to restore the country to them for a moderate tribute and commercial monopolies³²⁴, fell flat after the treaty of Srirangapatnam³²⁵. The main difference in the colonial policy with the British supremacy post 1792 in Kerala was the extraction of land revenue along with establishing their monopoly hold in trade. The land revenue was collected

³²² Logan clearly admits that the *Mappila* rebellion was in the context of the *jenmi*-tenant struggle post the British interpretation of land rights as it was also considered 'a religious merit to kill landlords who might eject tenants'. (Ibid, pp.616, 621.)

³²³ Dhanagare, DN, *Agrarian Conflict, Religion and Politics: The Moplah Rebellions in Malabar in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, Past & Present, No. 74 (Feb., 1977), p. 127.

³²⁴ See, *The Poona Residency Correspondence III* quoted in Nightingale, Pamela, *Trade and Empire in Western India (1784-1806)*, p. 59, CUP, 1970.

³²⁵ Treaty XCV & Treaty of Seringapatnam, Logan, William, *A Collection of Treaties ... Malabar Manual*, Vol-3, pp. 85, 138-146, (2000 new edition), Kerala Gazetteers department.

directly from Malabar and through treaties with the other two princely states of Kochi and Thiruvitancore. The annual assessment for Malabar in 1800 went up to 16 lakhs per annum³²⁶; 8 lakhs³²⁷ for Thiruvitancore in 1805 and 2.7 lakhs for Kochi in 1809. In Malabar, the trade monopoly was first secured by entering into various treaties with the Rajas of the ceded states. The smuggling of pepper, the principal item, was prohibited in 1793 with effective measures of rewards up to 50% of the smuggled good to the secret informers³²⁸. The temptation of the merchants to sell outside, whenever the free market prices of pepper rose high, was controlled by incarcerating them on the reason of inability to fulfill their contracts with the company³²⁹. In fact, the British pepper policy was influenced by a few mercantilists³³⁰ as well. The trade monopoly which the Portuguese and the Dutch were enjoying before was not only transferred to the British but under them the trade pattern showed (Table 4.9) obvious bias towards exports in primary products from both Kozhikkode and Thalassery and towards cotton piece goods in imports.

³²⁶ Varghese, TC, *Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences : Land Tenures in Kerala 1850-1960* (1970), p.25, Allied Publishers.

³²⁷ Rupees 7,83,111 to be precise, Logan, William, *A Collection of Treaties ... , Malabar Manual*, Vol-3, p. 365, (2000 new edition), Kerala Gazetteers department.

³²⁸ Ibid, pp. 174-75

³²⁹ Logan, W, *Malabar Manual*, Vol-1, p. 384, (2000 new edition), Kerala Gazetteers department.

³³⁰ Nightingale, Pamela, *Trade and Empire in Western India (1784-1806)*, pp. 73-127, CUP, 1970.

Table 4.9 Products and Value of Items Exported and Imported from Kozhikkode and Thalassery from May 1828 to April 1829

Exports				Imports			
Kozhikkode		Thalassery		Kozhikkode		Thalassery	
Articles	Value (In Rs)	Articles	Value (In Rs)	Articles	Value (In Rs)	Articles	Value (In Rs)
Teak wood planks	2,28,105	Black Pepper	2,08,589	Cotton piece goods	62,543	Cotton piece goods	1,56,074
Teak wood timber	1,68,470	Wynad Cardamom	59,949	European piece goods	14,951	Drugs and Medicines	17,469
Coconuts (dry)	1,26,476	Sandalwood	58,415	Madder	12,838	Shawls	11,116
Cotton piece goods (silk bordered)	38,671	Betelnut	25,311	Soft Sugar	11,229	Silk piece goods	9,684
White and Black Kopra	26,077	Coorg Cardamom	13,482	Silk piece goods	8,691	Tutenague	6,193
Ginger (dry)	22,800	Arrowroot flour	7,738	Chinaware	6,746	Soft sugar	5,227

Source: Ward and Connor, p. 116³³¹

Malabar region saw a continuation as well as a renewal of the feudal exploitation leading to a notable decline of the various Malabar ports which flourished during the earlier period.

4.5 Cochin-A Tributary State of the European Colonial Powers

The Rajas of Cochin held the right of descent from the last of the Perumals and stood on their feet by siding with the Portuguese in their trade rivalry with the Arabs who had long standing relations with the Zamorin. The chief sources of revenue were from *kandukrishi* or crown lands, customs³³² and monopolies

³³¹ Computed from Ward and Connor, *A Descriptive Memoir of Malabar*, pp.16-24, (1995 reprint), Government of Kerala.

³³² A duty of 10% was levied on all imports and 6% on all exports. See, Menon, C Achyuta, *The Cochin State Manual*, (1995 reprint), Kerala Gazetteers Department, Government of

over pepper and other spices. The Portuguese could attain their zenith of commercial prosperity under Albuquerque till 1515 and by the turn of the century the Dutch came calling with the assistance of the then Raja to oust the Portuguese. Internecine feuds within and wars from outside with the Zamorin, Haidar and Tippu continued until 1791. Cochin had been gradually reduced to a tributary state of the British.

The system of land tenure in Cochin remained feudal as it was centralised among *Naduvalli / Raja*, the nampudiri brahmins and temples. Land tax was first levied in 1762 to meet the requirements of an on-going war with the Zamorin/Travancore. *Muppara*, *kavalpalam* and *ettilonnu* for garden lands were charged. Land surveys were conducted from 1781 onwards on wet lands and dry lands and most of the land were under *verumpattom* (simple lease) tenure, as *kanam*, the refined version, which was always of secondary importance. Among the coercive measures adopted to deal with defaulters were *nadupattam* or transferring the land to a mediator, which was done with the least possible loss to the ryot. The feuds within the ruling family gave way for a system of administration with *proverthicers* below to *karyakars*, *sarvadhikaryakar* and *valiya sarvadhikaryakar* (official secretary of the king or chief minister). The centralised state did not have the benefit of pepper trade, as in accordance with the 1761 treaty³³³ Travancore was buying up all pepper from the kingdom except 500 candies reserved for the Cochin king.

The British tribute³³⁴ for the first year (1791) was fixed at Rs. 70,000 and thereafter an increase of Rs. 10,000 was made each year up to Rs. 1,00,000 in the fourth year. The role of the British created discontent as Paliath Achan, the

Kerala.

³³³ Treaty No. CXXIV, Logan, William, A Collection of Treaties ..., *Malabar Manual*, Vol-3, pp. 110-11, (2000 new edition), Kerala Gazetteers department.

³³⁴ *Ibid*, Treaty No. CI, pp. 91-92.

prime minister of the Raja joined Velu Thampy's insurrection. The immediate aftermath of it was the raising of the tribute to Rs. 2,76,037 and handing over of all military stores and fortresses to the British by a fresh treaty in 1809.³³⁵ The treaty also allowed the company 'to assume and bring under the direct management of the servants of the said Company Bahadur such part or parts of the territorial positions of the Raja of Cochin as shall appear to the said Governor in Council necessary to render the funds efficient and available either in time of peace or war'³³⁶. The resident, Colonel Munro took over as chief minister / *diwan* in 1812. He conducted *kandezhuttu*, (direct inspection and assessment) of garden lands in 1814 and wet lands in 1820 so as to improve the land revenue. The state's customs duty was practically abolished, so was the tobacco monopoly after the Interportal Convention of 1865³³⁷. The British government agreed to compensate a share of the loss of customs revenue up to a lakh of rupees and an import duty on tobacco of not less than Rs. 10,500. This made the customs revenue to stagnate around this figure since then. Cochin got exemption only for its pepper export (Rupees 15 per candy), only to be abolished later in 1884.³³⁸ Salt prices doubled after equating it with the imported British Indian Bombay salt. The revenue³³⁹ from salt tripled by 1901 with the per head consumption declining by 15%. As the traditional revenue sources dried up due to British intervention the state had to opt for taxes from *abkari* (alcohol and spirits), tobacco, plantations, *peedika* (shops), *pura* (houses), *anjali* (post), stamp and registration, *aala* (smithy), *chulha* (kilns) and the fisheries sector.

³³⁵ Ibid, p. 378.

³³⁶ See, Menon, C Achyuta, *The Cochin State Manual*, (1995 reprint), p.185, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Government of Kerala.

³³⁷ Ibid, p. 395.

³³⁸ Ibid, p. 434.

³³⁹ Census of India, 1901, Vol-XX, Cochin, Part-1, Report, *Introduction*, p. Xlv, Government Press, Cochin (1903).

4.6 Conclusions

1. The period after the fall of the perumals saw a decentralisation of the feudal structure to the already existent *natus* and later to a few powerful matrilineal joint families or *svarupams* gained ascendancy.
2. The development of the usufructuary mortgage of *kanam* and its variants ensured both enhanced production and expansion of agriculture to *kayal* and forest lands during this period. A class of middlemen, the result of various sub-infeudation making the best use of the inner fights in *kurvalcha*, also got strengthened during this period.
3. A series of local emporia or trade centres developed throughout Kerala with Calicut becoming the third major port after Kollam and Kodungallur. The peaceful nature and better terms of the overseas trade dominated by the Arab and the Chinese also contributed to the growth of these emporia.
4. The fissures in the ruling class who had allied with the middle men and the continued dependence on redundant customs and practices led to a feudal crisis in Thiruvitancore by the 17th century. The royal power seized the first opportunity to weaken the rival sections of nobility and effectively replaced the customary authority which sustained the medieval economy.
5. Thiruvitancore maintained more of a tribute structure rather than trade with monopoly in procurement of all major commodities and various rights to conduct markets and fairs. The monarchy adopted self-government in part and was conscious of the need for more commercial effort in agriculture as well as in the development of ports under its regime. There were efforts to create towns with some amount of economic independence as trading centres. These efforts to reconfigure the society from the top got substantially weaker after the British intervention by the end of the 17th century.
6. Thiruvitancore saw the promotion of tenants in the second half of the 18th century although the promotion of craftsmen and traders suffered due to the

policy measures forced upon the state by the interportal agreement. The revenue of the state suffered and the fortunes of the indigenously developed port city of Alleppey as well as Trivandrum, the capital, depended much upon British trade monopoly and their policies.

7. The agricultural advance in Malabar was seen to be more of a lateral one growing in the strength of the agrestic slaves than the varied commercial tenures which signified expansion in Travancore. The rise of Calicut from the 13th century owed much to the Arab pedlars as their caravans could find a secure place for trade.

8. The unfavourable terms of trade with the Europeans, internecine wars with Cochin and the return of the government share of land revenue after Mysore conquest damaged the growth prospects of Malabar. The British act of making the *jenmis* the owner of the soil and the *jenmis* in turn opting for rack renting followed by the revision in land revenue without any public investments in irrigation, sealed all avenues of progress. The producing classes of tenants and agrestic/chattel slaves were reeling under the *jenmis* who were mostly absentee landlords.

9. The Malabar economy was thus tailored to meet the British needs for land revenue and cotton piece goods imports. A number of ports and nascent towns which developed during the earlier period were out of race due to losing trade prospects under the British alliance with the landlords.

10. The native state of Cochin, although had tried to come out of the customary authority prevailing in the middle period, could not succeed due to wars with neighbours, loosing of the pepper monopoly to Travancore, the higher British tributes and lowered customs duty after the interportal agreement.

Chapter-5

5 Space and Society in Medieval Kerala- Empirical Analysis (1871-1921)

Introduction

In this chapter empirical evidence is given to support the broad conclusions drawn in the earlier two chapters. The analysis is based on the census data for the years between 1871 and 1921 available for the Malabar and South Canara districts of Madras Presidency. The census operations started in the native state of Cochin as well as the princely state of Travancore in 1875 and the data has been available for all census years thereafter. The crucial definitional changes adopted at various census years are explained whenever comparisons are affected (see Appendix-1). The Kasargod taluk of the South Canara district which later became part of modern Kerala and five taluks³⁴⁰ of Travancore which later became part of Tamilnadu were added or avoided (as the case may be) depending on the availability of taluk level data.

5.1 Thiruvitancore

5.1.1 Internal Reforms

The continuing British interventions in the state's matters, although greatly affected its independent trajectory, could not hinder the internal reform measures at some fronts. The industrial and commercial sectors suffered greatly due to the policy shifts under the British so much so that commercial agents and local traders returned back to agriculture. The road towards capitalist

³⁴⁰ The five taluks were Agastheeswaram, Kalkulam, Thovala, Vilavancode and Shencottah (portions of). Census of India, 1961, Kerala, Vol-VII, General Report, p.38, Manager of Publications, Delhi.

development was blocked with the state being forced to depend on export duties including manufactured articles. Indirect taxes like those on salt started draining the country side. The lightening of the burdens on agricultural land by expediting the requests for fresh ones, fixing an average rent of one rupees per acre by 1893 and removing various tenures like *kuthakapattam* and *kulachukututhal*, which were based on produce and had given scope for irregularities, promoted tenants as well as European planters who opened up the hills for tea, coffee and rubber. A new agricultural department was constituted in 1908 including extension of veterinary services. Agricultural loans were extended and stringent regulations on money lenders were initiated to help the ryots. Irrigation was extended to the drier southern Travancore regions as its financing included an additional levy within its *ayacut*.

By 1920 an economic development board was constituted to co-ordinate the activities of the several development departments. A 'sinking fund' was constituted to provide for the funding of the Shenkotta-Quilon-Trivandrum railway and the rates of the state run *anchal* (postal) department were lowered than the prevailing British Indian rates. In order to circumvent the covenant of the Interportal Convention on salt, the *sircar* promoted the manufacture of indigenous salt which made the fish curing industry also viable. The revenue from excise was also put to best use by starting state run distilleries and auctioning the selling rights. All this was necessitated primarily because of the doing away of the import duties under the Interportal Convention and the inability to raise the export duty which was already 97% of the total customs duty by 1923. The later strategy was to reduce the number of dutiable articles especially under state's manufacturing and raise these for raw produce. The stamp act and the court fee act also opened up alternate avenues to raise funds.

Table 5.1 Status of Primary Education in Travancore

Years	Number of Schools (both private and government)	Number of Pupils (under instruction)	Gross Expenditure (incurred by government in Rs)
1885	896	49,077	99,857
1923	3426	4,54,465	35,21,497

Source : Pillai, p.672.³⁴¹

The efforts in education had seen a host of measures like encouragement of private effort, pushing for free primary education, encouragement for technical education, special schools for backward castes and appointment of director of public instruction for co-ordination. This brought in tremendous improvement in the educational status of Travancore (see Table 5.1).

The Travancore legislative council was constituted in 1887 with the final assent for any bill remaining with the Sovereign. Sri Mulam Assembly was ushered in by 1904 in order to include people's representatives and by 1921 the 50 member assembly had 28 elected representatives. The qualification for voting was set as payment of an annual tax of at least Rs 5, with women allowed to vote. However, the electorate was just 2.5% of the total population³⁴².

5.1.2 Occupational Structure

The sector-wise distribution of workers in Travancore between 1901 and 1921 shows that 38.9-46.5% workers were in primary, 15.9-17.2% in secondary and 20.3-27.9% in tertiary sectors out of 80.8-84.2% coverage for the major groups (Table 5.2). The twin importance of the cultivating landholders and general labour not attached with land is evident in its topmost ranks. The first was the direct result of supporting

³⁴¹ Calculated from Pillai, TK Velu, *The Travancore State Manual-Vol-2*, p. 672, (1996 reprint), Kerala Gazetteers Department, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram.

³⁴² Ibid, p. 686.

Table 5.2 Travancore – Workers in Major Occupational Groups (1901-1921)

	1901			1911			1921		
	Number of Workers	Percentage to Total	Rank	Number of Workers	Percentage to Total	Rank	Number of Workers	Percentage to Total	Rank
General Labour	264414	20.78%	1	218915	15.40%	2	202858	13.69%	2
Cultivating Landholders	196677	15.46%	2	361827	25.45%	1	341842	23.06%	1
Cultivation Unspecified	96263	7.57%	3						
Field Labourers	89345	7.02%	4	133576	9.40%	3	108585	7.33%	3
Rope, Sacking and Net makers	80416	6.32%	5	81829	5.76%	4	102634	6.92%	4
Growers of Special Products (Miscellaneous)	43712	3.44%	6						
Toddy Drawers	39312	3.09%	7	45251	3.18%	6	47824	3.23%	7
Cultivating Tenants	27668	2.17%	8	38583	2.71%	7	59288	4.00%	6
Fish Dealers	27031	2.12%	9	30565	2.15%	8	27745	1.87%	9
Shop Keepers	23689	1.86%	10						
Fishermen & Fish Curers	22701	1.78%	11	28090	1.98%	9	33402	2.25%	8
Non-cultivating Landholders	18906	1.49%	12	25031	1.76%	10	18137	1.22%	15
Baskets, Mats, Brooms makers and sellers	16803	1.32%	13	20383	1.43%	13	21623	1.46%	11
Washermen (cleaning & dyeing)	15472	1.22%	14	17082	1.20%	14	18195	1.23%	13
Carpenters	15415	1.21%	15	21507	1.51%	12	18172	1.23%	14
Uncertain labour or not returned	15230	1.20%	16						
Rope, Sacking and Net sellers	13323	1.05%	17						
Rice Pounders and Huskers	12335	0.97%	18	14098	0.99%	16	15449	1.04%	18
Barbers	11718	0.92%	19	12897	0.91%	17	16619	1.12%	17
Cotton Weavers and Hand industry	11248	0.88%	20	14572	1.03%	15	14713	0.99%	19
Grain & Pulse dealers	10789	0.85%	21	11937	0.84%	19	12037	0.81%	
Vegetable, Betel leaf growers				73833	5.19%	5	81124	5.47%	5
Vegetable, Betel leaf sellers				12305	0.87%	18	19438	1.31%	12
Trade in Piecegoods/textiles				22393	1.58%	11	24583	1.66%	10
Grocers and condiment sellers				10999	0.77%	20	13964	0.94%	20
		82.72%			84.10%			80.84%	
Total Workers	1272354			1421646			1482242		
		Primary			Secondary			Tertiary	

Source : Census of India 1901, Travancore. Provincial Tables, Vol-XXVI-B, Part III. Vol-XXIII (1911), Part-II. Vol-XXV (1921), Part II.

tenants and the proclamation of giving ownership rights to them in 1865. The state also had contributed to the increase in general labour by employing *ezhava* and slave caste coolies as workers on daily wages to the public works department³⁴³. The rates paid were three to four times more than the earlier rates as there was labour shortage in 'carrying men/women in chairs'. The reduced role of indoor servants and head load workers are all indications of newer occupations away from those involving drudgery. The abolition of slavery in spirit and statute labour (*virutti* or *oozhiyam*) by 1894³⁴⁴ paved the way for the practice of wage labour. The decline of the rentier class in agriculture ever since the efforts of Marthanda Varma (1729-58 AD) is clear with cultivating landholders, field labourers and cultivating tenants forming the major groups in order of importance.

The industrial sector was sizeable compared to the other regions in the state and was confined mostly to small producers and petty manufactures. A virtual absence of division of labour might have put the makers and sellers together at most of the instances. Rope makers and toddy drawers formed the major groups in industry. Basket makers, carpenters, washer men, weavers, rice pounders and barbers constituted the remaining major groups. The women workers were more than the men in rope making, basket weaving and rice pounding. The number of weavers stagnated and many settled as agriculturists as competition from machine made clothes of Europe prevailed. The imported clothes even replaced³⁴⁵ the traditional *kattimundu* and *neriathu* an item of the middle-high income groups of Travancore. Fish dealers, traders in piece goods

³⁴³

See Jeffrey, Robin, *The Decline of Nair Dominance-Society and Politics in Travancore 1847-1908*, p. 83, (2014 reprint) Manohar.

³⁴⁴ Schenk, Hans, *Views on Alleppey*, P. 33, Netherlands Geographical Studies (4), p. 67, University of Amsterdam, 1986.

³⁴⁵ Census of India 1901, Volume XXVI, Travancore, Report, Chapter XII, p 403, (1903), Malabar Mail Press, Trivandrum.

and textiles, sellers of betel leaf, vegetable, grocers and condiments formed the remaining major groups in the tertiary sector.

5.1.3 Agrarian Structure

We have seen in the last chapter that the efforts to isolate the feudal nobility started by the 1730s in Travancore and thereafter the promotion of an 'industrious tenantry'. The granting of full ownership rights to holders of two lakh acres of *sircar pattam* (under state lease) land³⁴⁶ in 1865 and its follow up again in 1911 caused the number of cultivating landowners to be more than 3.5 lakhs by 1911 (see Table 5.3). The cultivating landowners constituted 65% of the total number of workers in agricultural sector. The proportion of landowners vis a vis tenants was 88.6 to 11.4 in 1901 which shows an inverted pyramid structure (see Figure 5.1). In other regions of Kerala the reality was reverse. A minority of land owners were exploiting the producer classes of cultivating tenants and field labourers. The rentier element (non-cultivating) among the landowners which was 8.77% in 1901 was reduced further to 5% by 1921. The minority tenants were under various leases like *otti*, *kanam* and *verumpattom* with the agrestic labour class of *pulayas* contributing heavily to the reclamation of the waterlogged areas adjoining the backwaters.

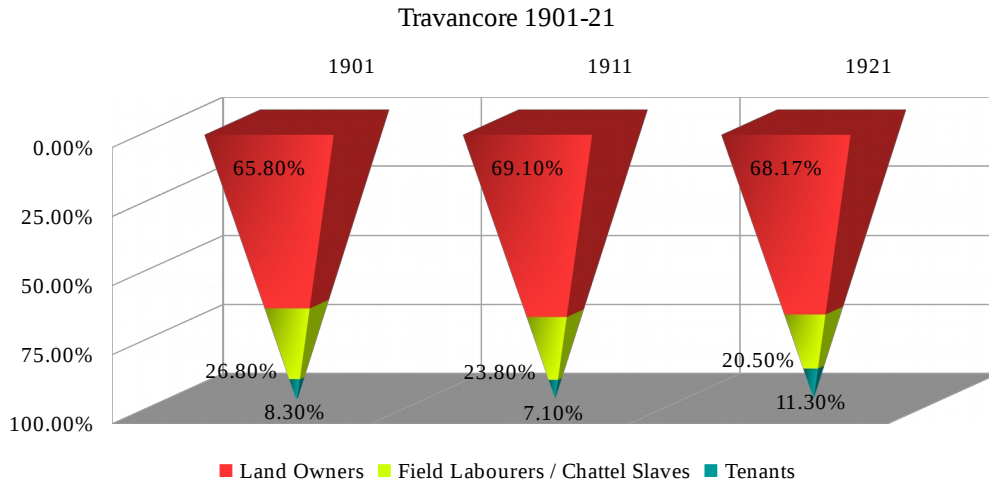
Table 5.3 Workers in Agricultural Sector - Travancore (1901-21)

Groups	1901	%		1911	%		1921	%	
<i>Non-Cultivating landowners</i>	18906	7.8	5.7	25031	5.8	4.5	18137	4.3	3.4
<i>Non-Cultivating Tenants</i>	-	-	-	1340	0.3	0.2	591	0.1	0.1
<i>Cultivating Landowners</i>	196677	80.9	59.1	361827	84.9	64.6	341842	81.5	64.7
<i>Cultivating Tenants</i>	27668	11.3	8.3	38583	9	6.9	59288	14.1	11.2
Sub-Total	243251	100	73.1	426781	100	76.2	419858	100	79.4
<i>Field Labourers</i>	89345	26.8		133576	23.8		108585	20.5	
Total	332596	100		560357	100		528443	100	

Source: Census of India 1901, Travancore. Provincial Tables, Vol-XXVI-B, Part III. Vol-XXIII (1911), Part-II. Vol-XXV (1921), Part II.

³⁴⁶ See Jeffrey, Robin, *The Decline of Nair Dominance-Society and Politics in Travancore 1847-1908*, p. 80, (2014 reprint) Manohar.

Figure 5.1
Workers in Agricultural Sector



5.1.4 Occupations of Selected Castes

The Travancore figures show a sizeable section of the *Nampudiris* in their traditional vocation of priesthood, although their numbers were falling through the decades (see Table 5.4). The figures for agriculture, trade, professions and administration show mobility across sectors for this highest caste in the hierarchy during the feudal period in Travancore. The status of the lowest, the untouchable caste of *Pulayars* shows a decline, but a sizeable section of 73%, were still confined to their traditional occupation as agricultural labourers. The only mobility was towards general labour as well as artisanship and cultivation. As in the case of intermediary castes of the *Izhavars* is concerned there is reduction in the percentage of workers in the traditional occupation of toddy tapping as well as field labourers. Those engaged in trade, artisanship, cultivation and general labour show an evident advance of the community towards newer sectors.

Table 5.4 Chief Occupations Followed by Major Castes in Travancore (1911-21)

	<i>Nambudiri Brahmins (Priest hood)</i>				<i>Pulayar (Agricultural Labourers)</i>				<i>Izhavar (Toddy tappers)</i>			
	1911		1921		1911		1921		1911		1921	
	Number of workers	Percentage to total	Number of workers	Percentage to total	Number of Workers	Percentage to total	Number of workers	Percentage to total	Number of Workers	Percentage to total	Number of workers	Percentage to total
Traditional Occupation	3114	14.70%	2397	10.95%	110273	91.93%	57477	73.03%	30436	11.04%	14821	5.59%
Income from rent on land	779	3.68%	1215	5.55%							4845	1.83%
Cultivators of all kind	3998	18.88%	5838	26.67%	929	0.77%	2372	3.01%	45039	16.33%	47967	18.09%
Artisans & Workmen	792	3.74%			1000	0.83%	2951	3.75%	59040	21.41%	77456	29.21%
Trade	2600	12.28%	3660	16.72%					2600	0.94%	42138	15.89%
Public Administration	2498	11.80%	2343	10.70%								
Lawyers, Doctors and Professionals	2783	13.14%	4209	19.23%								
Domestic service	2205	10.41%										
Field Labourers & Wood cutters									45749	16.59%	7386	2.78%
Labourers unspecified					5945	4.96%	14941	18.98%	50386	18.27%	53113	20.03%
Boatmen, Carters											8515	3.21%
Total actual workers	21178	100.00%	21889	100.00%	119950	100.00%	78700	100.00%	275725	100.00%	265213	100.00%

Source : Census of India 1901, Travancore. Provincial Tables, Vol-XXVI-B, Part III. Vol-XXIII (1911), Part-II. Vol-XXV (1921), Part II.

5.2 Malabar

5.2.1 Occupational Structure

The analysis of the major occupational groups of workers in Malabar during 1901-21 indicates that the primary sector represented at 60-63%, secondary sector at 9-14.5% and tertiary 7-9% within an overall percentage coverage of 79.8-81.2% (of the major groups) during the period. The agrarian base of Malabar district is indicated by the field labourers and cultivating tenants, two of the most depressed classes due to the feudal exploitation of the countryside sharing the first two ranks in the worker population. The field labourers consisted of *cherumars*, the agrestic labourer / chattel slave of Malabar as they were transacted along with the land although a virtual ban on using them had been in force since 1843.³⁴⁷ The tenantry suffered the worst forms of rent under the agrarian structure.

The industrial population essentially consisted of makers and sellers of rope, sack, net, basket, mat and broom, toddy drawers, carpenters, rice pounders, washer men and weavers. The tile factories started by the Basel mission saw the first seeds of capitalist production with marginally superior technological foundations³⁴⁸. Soap manufacturing also started by 1914-15³⁴⁹. The introduction of a few rice mills reduced the number of rice pounders and kerosene imports (see Table 5.10) affected the oil pressers. The exports of coir increased in the period 1901-11 (see Table 5.5) and this was reflected in the number of workers (see Table 5.10). The exports came down during the war period (1914-19) and

³⁴⁷ The slavery abolition act of 1843. See for more Dhanagare, DN, *Agrarian Conflict, Religion and Politics: The Moplah Rebellions in Malabar in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, Past & Present, No. 74 (Feb., 1977), p. 123.

³⁴⁸ See for more on adopted technologies of thence, Kannan, KP, '*Of Rural Proletarian Struggles*', p. , 1988, OUP.

³⁴⁹ Innes, CA, *Malabar Gazetteer*, Vol-1 & 2, p. 251, Kerala Gazetteers Department, (1997 reprint), Government of Kerala.

so did the number of workers in Malabar. The forests of the Western Ghats made Kallayi in Calicut as the timber mart of Malabar. It also supported a sizeable number of carpenters, turners and joiners. The extraction of coconut oil, its by-product *poonac* and copra (dried coconut) employed many as these constituted the major items of export from all major ports (see Table 5.7 and 5.8).

The number of weavers suffered a major drop during 1911-21, but the handloom census showed an increase of 1558 looms over the two decades³⁵⁰. Manchester *mulls* were replacing (see imports in Table 5.7 and 5.8) the traditional *mundus* and *thundus* (the long and short varieties) widely used in the state. The period 1911-21 registered a fall in worker population for all major industrial groups as an outcome of the decline in trade.

Table 5.5 Total Coir Exports from Cochin and Calicut Ports (1901-21)

Years	Quantity (In tons)	Value (In Rupees)
1901-02	19151	3581685
1905-06	26755	5301459
1910-11	31730	6869887
1914-15	23550	5595000
1915-16	26800	6315000
1916-17	27900	6345000
1917-18	19000	4350000
1918-19	13090	3480000
1920-21	29360	9653000

Source : Census of India, Madras, Vol-XII (1911), Vol-XIII (1921), P.209, P. 193-94.

The custom of transporting produce by head-load is indicated by the higher number of porters. The presence of indoor servants, a hallmark of the feudal period, still continued to be sizeable. The general labour and dealers of groceries, condiments, grain, pulse and fish constituted the major groups under

³⁵⁰ Census of India, Madras, Vol-XIII (1921), p.196, Government Press, Madras.

the tertiary sector. The presence of rural *angadis* (markets) catering weekly to a group of villages, lasting for 3-5 hours a day and with 300-30000 buyers and sellers was found at many places. The profits were 6-12% for normal wares and about 25% for specialised and luxury wares. The professional classes were marginal as is indicated by the status of the elementary education (see Table 5.6).

Table 5.6 Status of Elementary Education in Malabar (1912-13)

Number of Schools (Private & Government)	Number of Scholars	Net Government Expenditure
1922	1,30,082	2,17,892

Source: Innes, CA, *Malabar Gazetteer*, Vol-2, P. 64-5, Kerala Gazetteers Department, (1997 reprint), Govt. of Kerala.

Table 5.7 Chief Exports and Imports from Calicut Port (Average of Five years between 1908-1913)

	Exports (In Rupees)		Imports (In Rupees)	
	Articles	Value	Articles	Value
1	Black Tea	26,21,075	Rice	12,73,393
2	Copra or Dried Coconut	23,27,659	Rice with husk	7,25,175
3	Coffee	20,59,585	Cotton twist and yarn	5,73,604
4	Coir (manufactured)	14,28,751	Kerosene	5,60,547
5	Ginger	12,25,944	Salt	5,30,603
6	Raw Coconuts	7,69,918	Pulse	5,28,697
7	Pepper	5,16,900	Sugar (Dutch)	4,62,221
8	Timber (other than teak)	4,37,688	Piece goods (white)	3,67,330
9	Coconut oil	3,18,729	Piece goods (grey)	2,52,315
10	Sandal wood	2,99,216	Wheat flour	2,39,856
	Total (including others)	1,46,01,828	Total (including others)	88,92,641

Source: Innes, CA, *Malabar Gazetteer*, Vol-2, P. 52-7, Gazetteers Department, (1997 reprint), Government of Kerala.

The trade from the ports of the Malabar region showed a dominance of primary sector in exports and that of textiles, kerosene, metals and machinery in imports. The imports of rice, pulses and salt were the major components of a thriving coastal trade throughout the region. The share of the Malabar district

in the average annual trade of the Madras Presidency was nearly 25% and the trade gap in the foreign trade front was a whopping 84% with imports constituting just less than 8% of the total (see Table 5.9). Tea, coconut, coffee, coir, ginger and pepper were exported to America, Germany, UK, France and other European countries. While Calicut remained the export hub of various primary commodities accessed from Coorg, Nilgiris and Anamalais, the Tellicherry and Cannanore ports led in pepper and tea exports from Wayanad (see Table 5.7 & 5.8).

Table 5.8 Chief Imports and Exports from Tellicherry and Cannanore Ports (Average of Five years between 1908-1913)

Imports				Exports			
Tellicherry		Cannanore		Tellicherry		Cannanore	
Articles	Value	Articles	Value	Articles	Value	Articles	Value
Rice	13,70,082	Rice with husk	8,33,500	Coffee	47,10,708	Pepper	5,56,123
Rice with husk	3,74,660	Cotton piece goods	6,96,561	Pepper	21,50,374	Coconuts	1,44,692
Kerosene	1,60,639	Cotton twist and yarn	6,78,152	Copra	5,86,081	Textiles	1,36,365
Sugar	1,44,120	Rice	6,27,975	Sandal wood	2,57,564	Rice	60,983
Salt	1,43,987	Salt	1,62,597	Dry fish	1,60,019	Fish dry (salted)	47,865
Textiles	90,668	Sugar	1,22,640	Fish manures	87,557	Rice with husk	41,458
Total (including others)	31,54,386	Total (including others)	38,27,001	Total (including others)	86,43,331	Total (including others)	12,37,141

Source: Innes, CA, *Malabar Gazetteer*, Vol-2, P. 52-7, Kerala Gazetteers Department, (1997 reprint), Govt. of Kerala.

Table 5.9 Malabar Trade in Madras Presidency (1899-1903) (Average in Rs. lakhs)

	Madras Presidency			Malabar (includes Cochin)		
	Imports	Exports	Total	Imports	Exports	Total
Foreign	806	1290	2096	22	254	276
Coasting	615	506	1121	275	212	487
Total	1421	1796	3217	297	456	763

Source: Innes, CA, *Malabar Gazetteer*, Vol-2, P. 52-7, Kerala Gazetteers Department, (1997 reprint), Govt. of Kerala.

Table 5.10 Malabar – Workers in Major Occupational Groups (1901-21)

	1901			1911			1921		
	Number of Workers	Percentage to Total	Rank	Number of Workers	Percentage to Total	Rank	Number of Workers	Percentage to Total	Rank
Field Labourers	499419	38.39%	1	457459	35.53%	1	420373	35.47%	1
Cultivating Tenants	258893	19.90%	2	252911	19.64%	2	245906	20.75%	2
Rope, Sacking and Net Makers	29899	2.30%	3	48249	3.75%	3	35180	2.97%	3
Cultivating Land Owners	27638	2.12%	4	21838	1.70%	9	24402	2.06%	4
Basket, Mat, Brooms makers and sellers	24653	1.90%	5	24850	1.93%	5	17197	1.45%	7
Porters	22052	1.70%	6	17941	1.39%	14	13352	1.13%	15
Rice Pounders and Huskers	21959	1.69%	7	24131	1.87%	7	16721	1.41%	8
Grocers and General Condiment dealers	19127	1.47%	8	23447	1.82%	8	10551	0.89%	18
Cooks and Indoor Servants	18947	1.46%	9	19152	1.49%	11	12675	1.07%	16
Non-cultivating Land Owners	18402	1.41%	10	16640	1.29%	15	17877	1.51%	6
Washermen, dyers	17602	1.35%	11	18352	1.43%	13	15777	1.33%	10
Toddy Drawers	16972	1.30%	12	25668	1.99%	4	21624	1.82%	5
Fishermen and Fish curers	16009	1.23%	13	18455	1.43%	12	14577	1.23%	11
Cotton Weavers, Hand Industry	15568	1.20%	14	20852	1.62%	10	14457	1.22%	12
Carpenters, Turners, Joiners	15328	1.18%	15	24176	1.88%	6	16256	1.37%	9
Grain and Pulse Dealers	13977	1.07%	16	11671	0.91%	17	9288	0.78%	19
Fish Dealers	10670	0.82%	17	11440	0.89%	18	12426	1.05%	17
General Labour (unspecified)	8446	0.65%	18	11689	0.91%	16	13734	1.16%	13
General store & Sundry bazaar keepers							13497	1.14%	14
		81.15%			81.47%			79.82%	
Total Workers	1300814			1287444			1185004		
		Primary			Secondary			Tertiary	

Source : Census of India, Madras, Vol-XV-A (1901), Vol-XII (1911), Vol-XIII (1921).

5.2.2 Agrarian Structure

It was concluded in the last chapter that the agrarian structure by the middle of 1850s intensified the feudal exploitation of the countryside in Malabar due to the British interpretation of the *janmam* rights. The strategy of the Thiruvitancore monarchy was its opposite, namely, that of handing over occupancy rights to tenants. Ejection of tenants was made illegal in 1867. Malabar in 1881 saw a push for rack renting from the side of the *jenmis* after they were recognised as '*dominus*' by the courts. The proportion of landowners to tenants was 15 to 85 in 1901 showing clear trends of land concentration with the *jenmis* (Table 5.11). The rentier element among the cultivating land owners was as high as 40%. It increased over the decades signifying absentee landlordism. The majority of the tenantry would have been under leases for less than 12 years going by Logan's³⁵¹ conclusion in 1881. The proportion of landowners, tenants and field labourers shows a typical pyramidal feudal structure (see Figure 5.2). The agrestic labour class majorly consisting of *cherumars* constituted the base of the pyramid as field labourers.

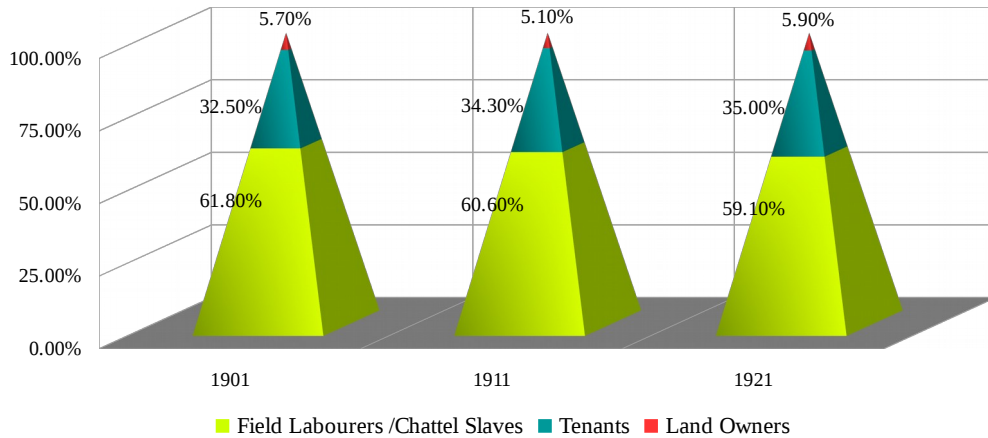
Table 5.11 Workers in the Agricultural Sector - Malabar (1901-21)

Groups	1901	%	%	1911	%	%	1921	%	%
<i>Non-Cultivating landowners</i>	18402	6	2.3	16640	5.6	2.2	17877	6.1	2.5
<i>Non-Cultivating Tenants</i>	3911	1.3	0.5	5939	2.0	0.8	6347	2.1	0.9
<i>Cultivating Landowners</i>	27638	9	3.4	21838	7.3	2.9	24402	8.3	3.4
<i>Cultivating Tenants</i>	258893	83.8	32	252911	85.1	33.5	245906	83.5	34.1
Sub-Total	308844	100	38.2	297328	100	39.4	294532	100	40.9
<i>Field Labourers</i>	499419		61.7	457459		60.6	420373		58.2
<i>Farm Servants</i>	778		0.1	-		-	6908		0.9
Overall Total	809041		100	754787		100	721813		100

Source: Census of India, Madras, Vol-XV-A (1901), Vol-XII (1911), Vol-XIII (1921).

³⁵¹ . Logan, W, *Malabar Manual*, Vol-1, Revenue Assessments, pp 618-19, (2000 New Edition), Kerala Gazetteers Department.

Figure 5.2
Workers in Agricultural Sector
Malabar 1901-21



5.2.3 Occupations of Selected Castes

The occupations of selected castes for 1901-11 for Malabar represent the continuing feudal vestiges of the caste system (see Table 5.12). The share of people from the high caste *Nambudiri* brahmins who got stuck to their traditional occupation of priesthood in 1901 was 23.8%. Still worse, the share goes up to 26.9% in 1911. The majority of them (48.3%) lived off the rent on land in 1911. This suggests a clear indication of the continuation of the absentee landlordism, a remnant of the land grants of the early medieval period in the state. The share of workers in the untouchable agrestic labour class of *Cherumars* working in their traditional callings increased from an already alarming share of 93.4% to 95.6% in 1911. The only minor openings for these castes were the artisan and workmen class of occupations. The situation looks different among the intermediary *Thiyars*, as the share of those engaged in toddy tapping lowers from 7.4% to 7.2%. A sizeable section still lived as agricultural labourers with tenantry and artisanship contributing to the mobility.

Table 5.12 Chief Occupations Followed by Major Castes in Malabar (1901-11)

	<i>Nambudiri Brahmins (Priest hood)</i>				<i>Cheruman (Agricultural Labourers)</i>				<i>Thiyan (Toddy tappers)</i>			
	1901		1911		1901		1911		1901		1911	
	Number of workers	Percentage to total	Number of workers	Percentage to total	Number of Workers	Percentage to total	Number of workers	Percentage to total	Number of Workers	Percentage to total	Number of workers	Percentage to total
Traditional Occupation	1574	23.81%	1511	26.88%	143312	93.49%	149058	95.63%	20515	7.41%	20218	7.20%
Income from rent on land			2715	48.30%							306	0.11%
Cultivators of all kind			401	7.13%			502	0.32%			57343	20.43%
Landholders	3583	54.20%							4925	1.78%		
Domestic servants	376	5.69%	237	4.22%								
Tenants	279	4.22%			854	0.56%			50565	18.27%		
Money lenders	132	2.00%										
Public services	99	1.50%										
Trade			257	4.57%								
Basket & mat makers					2714	1.77%						
Herdsmen & Sheperds					1686	1.10%	1033	0.66%				
Artisans & Workmen							2532	1.62%			49445	17.61%
Coffee Estate Coolies					1147	0.75%						
General Labourers					779	0.51%						
Agricultural Labourers									139097	50.25%	122398	43.60%
Coir Manufactures									22497	8.13%		
Carpenters and Sawyers									4646	1.68%		
Total actual workers	6611		5621		153289		155877		276788		280708	

Source : Census of India, Madras, Vol-XV-A (1901), Vol-XII (1911), Vol-XIII (1921).

This shows that the Malabar region despite being home to one of the centres of long distance trade in Calicut since 13th century, could not break out of feudalism. Those castes exposed to intellectual spheres considered their activity in agriculture, manufacturing and trade to be polluting as well as demeaning while those engaged in such activities remained as destitutes both economically and intellectually.

5.3 Cochin

5.3.1 Occupational Structure

Cochin had 47.1%- 48.3% of workers in primary, 16.7%-19.1% in secondary and 12.6%-16.1% in tertiary sectors out of 79.5%-80.9% of workers in major groups during 1901-21 (Table 5.14). As already established in the case of Malabar the continuing feudal structure boosted the number of field labourers and cultivating tenants in Cochin as well. The cultivating landlords, fishermen, growers of fruit, vegetable and betel vine constituted the remaining major groups in the primary sector. The industrial sector which recorded a higher percentage of workers compared to the other two regions had makers of rope and basket-mats, rice pounders, toddy drawers, carpenters, weavers and workers in precious stones and metals as the major groups. The majority of the above did not have any spatial constraint as they made up the non-agricultural pursuits in rural areas, especially coir in the coastal taluks. The makers of the traditional *pavu mundu* made with 60-100 count yarns were faced with stiff imports from England. The tertiary sector was constituted majorly by the general labour and dealers of grain, fish, pulses, betel leaf and vegetables. The teachers and those engaged in religious services formed the major groups among the professionals.

Table 5.13 Chief Imports and Exports from Cochin Port (Average of Five years during 1908-1913)

	Exports (In Rupees)		Imports (In Rupees)	
	Articles	Value	Articles	Value
1	Coconut Oil	1,02,58,548	Rice (with husk)	87,63,093
2	Manufactured Coir	71,26,315	Rice (unhusked)	64,61,381
3	Copra or dried Coconut	47,80,936	Kerosene	16,00,393
4	Black Tea	32,02,415	Textiles piece goods (grey)	11,03,591
5	Oil Cakes or Poonac	11,40,770	Pulses	8,99,521
6	Pepper	10,31,464	Iron and Steel	6,30,228
7	Raw Rubber	7,47,364	Textiles piece goods (white)	5,33,270
8	Rope and Cordage (veg. fibre)	6,38,122	Wood and Timber	4,62,403
9	Ginger	3,82,434	Cotton twist and yarn	3,12,435
10	Rice (un husked)	3,81,810	Sugar (Dutch)	2,82,529
	Total (including others)	3,28,77,700	Total (including others)	2,58,61,267

Source: Innes, CA, *Malabar Gazetteer*, Vol-2, P. 52-7, Kerala Gazetteers Department, (1997 reprint), Govt. of Kerala.

Cochin port accounted for the highest amount of trade from the region with a sizeable amount of articles of exports accessed from Travancore (Table 5.13). The increased volume of trade could not contribute much to the revenue of the state as the customs duty was allowed to stagnate at the 1865 level³⁵². The trade gap on the foreign trade front was hugely in favour of exports while coasting trade was evenly poised (Table 5.9). Cochin had fourteen European mercantile firms, a chamber of commerce and a conservancy board by 1901³⁵³.

³⁵² The customs component of the total excise duty was 1,10,500 and 1,10,546 in 1899-1900 and 1909-10 respectively. See, Menon, C Achyuta, *The Cochin State Manual*, (1995 reprint), p.435, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Government of Kerala.

³⁵³ Innes, CA, *Malabar Gazetteer*, Vol-1, p. 428, Kerala Gazetteers Department, (1997 reprint), Govt. of Kerala.

Table 5.14 Cochin – Workers in Major Occupational Groups (1901-21)

	1901			1911			1921		
	Number of Workers	Percentage to Total	Rank	Number of Workers	Percentage to Total	Rank	Number of Workers	Percentage to Total	Rank
Field Labourers	106676	28.40%	1	94300	25.11%	1	100671	23.59%	1
Cultivating Tenants	61166	16.28%	2	60648	16.15%	2	74427	17.44%	2
Rope, Sacking and net makers	25676	6.84%	3	24438	6.51%	4	25605	6.00%	3
General Labour	19288	5.14%	4	27357	7.29%	3	19561	4.58%	4
Rice pounders and huskers	13649	3.63%	5	9790	2.61%	6	10083	2.36%	6
Toddy drawers	10114	2.69%	6	6985	1.86%	8	9605	2.25%	7
Basket, Mat, Brooms makers and sellers	6355	1.69%	7	8872	2.36%	7	8972	2.10%	8
Carpenters & Joiners	6198	1.65%	8				7374	1.73%	10
Grocers and General condiment dealers	5860	1.56%	9	5362	1.43%	12	4645	1.09%	17
Fishermen & Fish curers	5611	1.49%	10	6315	1.68%	9	6582	1.54%	11
Fish Dealers	5321	1.42%	11	4378	1.17%	14	4372	1.02%	18
Washermen & Dyers	5219	1.39%	12	5502	1.47%	11	5819	1.36%	13
Toddy Sellers	4982	1.33%	13						
Coconut growers	4530	1.21%	14						
Herdsmen	3480	0.93%	15	1456	0.39%				
Grain and Pulse dealers	3242	0.86%	16	5827	1.55%	10	5355	1.26%	15
Boat and Bargemen	3229	0.86%	17	2659	0.71%		3164	0.74%	
Cotton Weavers and hand industry	2832	0.75%	18	3177	0.85%	19	2164	0.51%	
Religious Services	2676	0.71%	19	2943	0.78%	20	2527	0.59%	
Indoor Servants (cooks & door keepers)	2599	0.69%	20	3583	0.95%	18	3684	0.86%	
Cultivating Landowners				11499	3.06%	5	10508	2.46%	5
Vegetable, Fruit, Betel vine growers				5278	1.41%	13	8918	2.09%	9
Shopkeepers (unspecified)				4345	1.16%	15	2028	0.48%	
Vegetable, Betel vine sellers				4109	1.09%	16	5186	1.22%	16
Stone & Marble workers				3813	1.02%	17	3863	0.91%	
Professors & Teachers of all kinds							6173	1.45%	12
Unclassified non-productive industries							5776	1.35%	14
Sawyers							4352	1.02%	19
Workers in precious stones and metals							3943	0.92%	20
		79.53%			80.59%			80.94%	
Total Workers	375604			375513			426680		
		Primary			Secondary			Tertiary	

Source : Census of India, Cochin, Vol-XV-A (1901), Vol-XII (1911), Vol-XIII (1921).

5.3.2 Agrarian Structure

The percentage share of landholders was woefully low at 4.5% to 95.5% of tenants in Cochin in 1901 (Table 5.15) which amounted to an absolute concentration of land among the *jenmis*, *devaswom* and the state. The fact that among the landholders almost half were non-cultivating or mere rent receivers, contributing neither labour nor capital, shows the feudal character of the production structure. The sizeable section of the tenants spending their own labour in addition to the agrestic labourers were mostly holders of *verumpattom*, *kanam* and such leases. The agrestic labourers/chattel slaves were the biggest class within the sector with negligible remuneration in cash and kind. The granting of occupancy rights to holders of government lands improved the percentage share of landholders to 18.8% and tenants reduced to 81.2% by 1911 reducing the disparity.

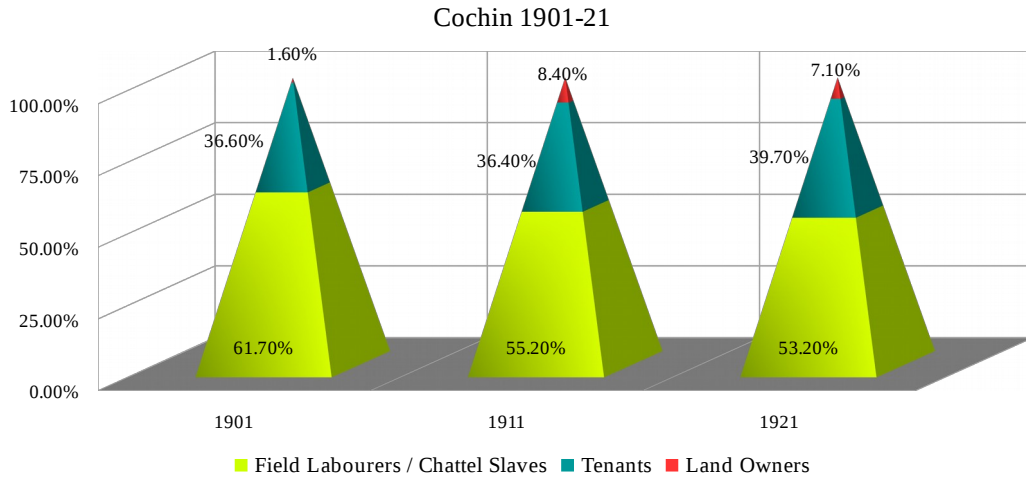
Table 5.15 Workers in Agricultural Sector - Cochin 1901-21

Groups	1901	%	%	1911	%	%	1921	%	%
<i>Non-Cultivating landowners</i>	1448	2.2	0.8	2854	3.7	1.7	3093	3.5	1.6
<i>Non-Cultivating Tenants</i>	2141	3.2	1.2	1543	2	0.9	1045	1.2	0.5
<i>Cultivating Landowners</i>	1502	2.3	0.8	11499	15	6.7	10508	11.8	5.5
<i>Cultivating Tenants</i>	61166	92.3	35.4	60648	79.2	35.5	74427	83.5	39.2
Sub-Total	66257	100	38.2	76544	100	44.8	89073	100	46.8
<i>Field Labourers</i>	106676		61.7	94300		55.2	100671		53.1
Total	172933		100	170844		100	189744		100

Source: Census of India, Cochin, Vol-XV-A (1901), Vol-XII (1911), Vol-XIII (1921).

The feudal structure is evident in the occupational structure in the agricultural sector (Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3
Workers in Agricultural Sector



5.4 Urbanisation in Kerala

5.4.1 Level of Urbanisation

The custom of living in scattered homesteads embedded of course, in the feudal caste bondage with its varying degrees of 'atmospheric pollution'³⁵⁴ prevented the average Malayali from moving to towns and villages. As noted by scholars '*an essential correlate of this form of organisation was a system of territorial segmentation, which limited the spatial range of the individual caste*'³⁵⁵. While it was necessary for caste Hindus to keep certain sections as

³⁵⁴ Pollution was practised in feudal Kerala not merely by a touch but even by staying within a distance. A *nambudiri* brahmin should not touch a *nair*, should keep thirty six paces away from an *izhavan* and ninety six paces away from a *pulayan* and likewise for all castes down the hierarchy. See Jeffrey, Robin, *The Decline of Nair Dominance-Society and Politics in Travancore 1847-1908*, p. 9, (2014 reprint) Manohar.

³⁵⁵ Miller, Eric J, *Caste and Territory in Malabar*, *American Anthropologist*, Volume 56, Issue. 3, pp. 410-20 (1954).

untouchables/unseeables, for the lower castes it was exclusion from most activities other than being an agrestic labourer / chattel slave. The first social change occurred with overseas trade, trade diasporas and further with the collapse of the feudal order and growth of other religions. The progress of this depended much on the internal structure and solidity of the mode in the respective regions. The existence of non-Malayali brahmins and mappilas has also been cited as reasons for the growth of big towns of Trivandrum and Calicut in 1891³⁵⁶.

The urban population and levels of urbanisation (Table 5.16) across districts / feudatory states during 1871-1921 clearly establishes a state of stagnation in Malabar, spurts of growth in Travancore in 1891-1901 and 1911-21 and a low growth throughout in Cochin. An agrarian structure dominated by the feudal mode and a ruling establishment in no mood to alienate the landlords³⁵⁷ even by freeing the *cherumars*, contributed to this urban atrophy in Malabar.

Table 5.16 Level of Urbanisation 1871-1921

	Travancore		Cochin		Malabar	
	Population	%	Population	%	Population	%
1871	-		-		122317	5.4
1881	-		-		161918	6.8
1891	107693	4.2	50547	7	193769	7.3
1901	183835	6.2	87478	10.8	218007	7.8
1911	212090	6.2	109952	12	234516	7.8
1921	404654	10.1	127141	13	235079	7.6

Source: Census of India (various volumes 1871-1921)

5.4.2 Spread of Towns

The population of towns of Travancore does not show any negative growth

³⁵⁶ Census of India – Cochin, 1891, Report, p.42, (1893) Cochin Government Press.

³⁵⁷ B Hjejle, *Slavery and Agricultural Bondage in South India in the Nineteenth Century*, SEHR, XV (1967), pp. 99-100.

except that for Kottayam in 1911 (Table 5.17). The huge variation during 1891-1901 for Trivandrum is attributed to the non-inclusion of certain *provertis* in 1891³⁵⁸. Alleppey and Quilon had serving ports and Trivandrum was the capital of Travancore princely state. The industrial base of Alleppey attracted the largest immigrant population³⁵⁹ as compared to any other town in the state.

Table 5.17 Population of Towns Established Since 1891 with Variation up to 1921 - Travancore

Towns	Population				Variation (+ or -)		
	1891	1901	1911	1921	1891 to 1901	1901 to 1911	1911 to 1921
Trivandrum	27887	57882	63561	72784	29995	5679	9223
Quilon	15375	15691	18839	25135	316	3148	6296
Alleppey	22768	24918	25665	32074	2150	747	6409
Kottayam	7090	17552	15141	18833	10462	-2411	3692

Source: Census of India (various volumes 1891-1921)

The population of most towns of Malabar, with the exception of Calicut and Palghat, showed deceleration in their population by either not keeping pace with the overall population growth or by suffering exodus, during different decades in the decades between 1871 and 1921 (Table 5.18). This is a clear evidence of urban deceleration or atrophy due to the strengthening of the feudal structure under the British. The majority of the towns that decelerated during this period had served as minor ports for overseas and inland trade in the preceding centuries. The major towns of Calicut and Palghat also showed growth not keeping pace with the overall population in the region after 1901. The negative growth of Cannanore town between 1871 and 1921 was also attributed to losing its populous cantonment³⁶⁰. The decade which saw the First

³⁵⁸ Census of India – Travancore, 1901, Report, Volume XXVI, Part-1, pp. 58-59, Malabar Mail Press.

³⁵⁹ Census of India, 1931, Report, Volume - XXVIII, Part-1, p. 71.

³⁶⁰ Innes, CA, *Malabar Gazetteer*, Vol-1 & 2, p. 404, Kerala Gazetteers Department, (1997 reprint), Government of Kerala.

Table 5.18 Population of Towns Established Since 1891 with Variation upto 1921 - Malabar

Towns	Population						Variation (+ or -)				
	1921	1911	1901	1891	1881	1871	1911 to 1921	1901 to 1911	1891 to 1901	1881 to 1891	1871 to 1881
Calicut	82334	78417	76981	66078	57085	47962	3917	1436	10903	8993	9123
Palghat	45487	44319	44177	39481	36339	30752	1163	142	4696	3142	5587
Tellicherry	27576	29258	27883	27196	26410	20504	-1682	1375	687	786	5906
Cannanore	27705	28957	27811	27418	26386	31070	-1252	1146	393	1032	-4684
Badagara	9804	11149	11319	9195	8336	7718	-1345	-170	2124	859	618
Ponnani	13345	13984	10562	9194	12421	11472	-639	3422	1368	-3227	949
Tanur	8191	8409	7152	6801	6148	6283	-218	1257	351	653	-135
Kasargod*	7314	8295	8207	7198	6115	4991	-981	88	1009	1083	1124

Source : Census of India, 1921, Vol-XIII, Part-1.

Table 5.19 Population of Towns Established Since 1891 with Variation upto 1921 - Cochin

Towns	Population						Variation (+ or -)				
	1921	1911	1901	1891	1881	1871	1911 to 1921	1901 to 1911	1891 to 1901	1881 to 1891	1871 to 1881
Trichur	27897	23574	15585	12945	10822		4323	7989	2640	2123	
Mattancherry	24664	23508	20061	17254	14634		1156	3447	2807	2620	
Ernakulam	23192	21195	21901	17870	15467		1997	-706	4031	2403	
Irinjalakkuda	9457	8699	8420	7334	6606		758	279	1086	728	
Chittur-Tattamangalam	18150**	8523	8095	7496	6698		9627**	433	599	798	
Kunnamkulam	8517	8336	7194	5632	4988		181	1142	1562	644	
Cochin*	20637	20023	19274	17601	15698	13840	614	749	1673	1903	1858

Source : Census of India, 1921, Cochin, Imperial Tables Part-II

* Cochin town is under Madras Presidency. ** Tattamangalam was merged with Chittur in 1921.

World War registered negative growth for majority of the towns as it was marked by recession in cottage industries. The towns in the native state of Cochin also did not keep pace with the population growth during the period and Ernakulam suffered reversal in 1901-11 (Table 5.19). The port town of Cochin was under the direct rule of the British and it experienced a steady population growth.

5.4.3 Occupational Structure of Towns

The occupational structure i.e., workers in major groups of important towns in Kerala in 1901 (Table 5.20) indicates the presence of the primary sector in urban areas. In Trivandrum, 7.5% of the workers had some agricultural pursuit. Their share in Kottayam was much higher (29.8%). In the secondary sector the lowest share was recorded at Kottayam (10.1%) which is lower than the share of the primary sector. The highest proportion of workers in the secondary sector was in Calicut (21.5%). A substantial tertiary sector was present in all towns, the lowest being in Kottayam (32.2%) and the highest in Alleppey (53.7%).

The higher secondary (21.6%) and tertiary sector (38.5%) shares for major groups in Calicut town in 1901, when compared to the Malabar region indicates the presence of town centered populations or trade diasporas. The dominance of the tertiary sector in Travancore towns is evident with an average of 43% in all towns compared to 27.8% (Table 5.2) in the state as a whole. This must have been due to the declining status of the feudal agrarian structure in the countryside which released the agrestic labourer classes and the encouragement of the state in employing them as wage earners.

The major groups in Trivandrum were general labour which catered to 13% of the workers in the town. Being the capital of the princely state of Travancore, it catered to a sizeable number of workers in state establishments (12.46%).

Table 5.20 Workers in Major Occupational Groups in Towns (1901)

	Trivandrum			Quilon			Alleppey			Kottayam			Calicut		
	Number of Workers	%	Rank	Number of Workers	%	Rank	Number of Workers	%	Rank	Number of Workers	%	Rank	Number of Workers	%	Rank
General Labour	3073	12.99%	1	950	12.24%	1	2189	21.06%	1	920	14.67%	2	375	1.22%	21
Indoor Servants	887	3.75%	3										1769	5.78%	3
Rice Pounders and Huskers	822	3.47%	4	231	2.98%	6	247	2.38%	10	147	2.34%	7	154	0.50%	
Shop Keepers	753	3.18%	5	516	6.65%	3	736	7.08%	4	253	4.03%	4	406	1.33%	19
Workers in precious stones, metals	687	2.90%	7	68	0.88%		118	1.14%	16				211	0.69%	
Religion related services	600	2.54%	9							74	1.18%	18			
Cultivating land holders	580	2.45%	10	90	1.16%	16	202	1.94%	11	565	9.01%	3			
Non-cultivating land holders	567	2.40%	11	132	1.70%	13	156	1.50%	13				409	1.34%	18
Fishermen & Fishcurers	494	2.09%	12	663	8.54%	2	739	7.11%	3				1136	3.71%	6
Sweet meat sellers	489	2.07%	13	165	2.13%	10	519	4.99%	5				465	1.52%	15
Road, Canal, Railway labourers	481	2.03%	14												
Washermen	432	1.83%	15	84	1.08%	17	92	0.88%		164	2.61%	5	324	1.06%	25
Professors & Teachers	380	1.61%	16	67	0.86%					158	2.52%	6	366	1.20%	23
Fish Dealers	353	1.49%	17	482	6.21%	4	1001	9.63%	2				294	0.96%	
Barbers	353	1.49%	17	63	0.81%					85	1.36%	14			
Carpenters	318	1.34%	19	96	1.24%	14	134	1.29%	15	93	1.48%	13	381	1.24%	20
Cultivation unspecified				213	2.74%	7				99	1.58%	12			
Rope, sacking and net makers				182	2.34%	8	272	2.62%	8				2944	9.61%	1
Grain & Pulse dealers	220	0.93%		176	2.27%	9	282	2.71%	7				297	0.97%	
Boat and Bargemen	177	0.75%		147	1.89%	12	334	3.21%	6	60	0.96%				
Tailors	154	0.65%		77	0.99%	18	265	2.55%	9				459	1.50%	17
Baskets, mats, broom makers				40	0.52%		196	1.89%	12	77	1.23%	16	340	1.11%	24
Piecegood dealers	226	0.96%		65	0.84%		101	0.97%					241	0.79%	
Field Labourers	146	0.62%					75	0.72%		1123	17.90%	1	1217	3.97%	5
Toddy drawers	53	0.22%								120	1.91%	8	256	0.84%	
Cooks	144	0.61%		43	0.55%		67	0.64%		102	1.63%	11	853	2.79%	7
Cultivating tenants										83	1.32%	13	599	1.96%	11
Stone & Marble workers										75	1.20%	17			
Porters													2574	8.41%	2
wood cutters and sawyers	58	0.25%					33	0.32%		40	0.64%		789	2.58%	8
Grocers & General condiment dealers													740	2.42%	9
Cotton weavers and hand industry	87	0.37%								28	0.45%		631	2.06%	10
Cotton mills (ginning and cleaning)				237	3.05%	5									
Constables, Messengers, warders	1598	6.75%	2	157	2.02%	11	104	1.00%	17	107	1.71%	10	483	1.58%	13
Mariners and others in Ships													1228	4.01%	4
Drivers, stable boys(not private)	364	1.54%											471	1.54%	14
Clerks and Inspectors	661	2.79%	8	92	1.18%	15	143	1.38%	14	112	1.79%	9			
Army non-commissioned officers	692	2.92%	6	20	0.26%		40	0.38%							
Managers, Accountants and Clerks													464	1.52%	16
Mendicancy	176	0.74%		36	0.46%		74	0.71%		37	0.59%		503	1.64%	12
Pressers of vegetable oil for lighting													375	1.22%	21
		67.73%			65.58%			78.10%			72.09%			71.04%	
Total Workers	23660			7764			10396			6273			30624		
				Primary			Secondary			Tertiary					

Source : Census of India, Travancore, Vol-XXVI-B (1901). Madras, Vol-XXV-A (1901).

Quilon town also had a sizeable general labour (12.24%) along with fishermen, curers and dealers (14.75%). The town had one of the earliest established cotton mills. The general labour presence was the highest for Alleppey (21%) due to its thriving port followed by those who carved out a living with fish, boat, barges and rope makers. The total tonnage of the port had grown to 1,79,345 by 1920-21,³⁶¹ growth of more than a lakh tonnes compared with 1865-66. There were eighty two steamers and more than a hundred country crafts calling at the port. The primary sector outweighed all other sections in Kottayam which makes it an extended agricultural village. The rope makers, wood cutters and weavers constituted the secondary sector in Calicut. The higher number of porters has been attributed to the presence of head-load workers and indoor servants due to the vestiges of feudal caste system under which *jenmis* were served. The maintenance of one of the busiest ports in the region necessitated the presence of mariners and staff in ships. Most of the cities had a sizeable chunk of workers in the non-agricultural pursuits.

5.4.4 Structure of Towns and Villages

The villages as the lowest administrative units were more of an assemblage of individual homesteads unlike the larger Indian type of a cluster of houses with common facilities and surrounded by a large arable land. Thus each *kara* as it was locally known, ideally contained in the feudal past individual houses of the caste Hindus, sufficient number of field labourers from the depressed classes, a few washer men, barbers, carpenters, smiths and artisans.

The above structure was evidently breaking up in Travancore (Table 5.21) as there was a steady growth of larger concentrations up to the higher town classes, while Cochin showed a slow growth. In Malabar villages retained their hold. The clusters of higher population among villages in all the three regions

³⁶¹ Census of India, 1931, Report, Volume - XXVIII, Part-1, p. 71

are attributed to the high population density of the coastal taluks.

Table 5.21 Number of Villages and Towns Grouped According to Size 1901-21

Size (in '000s)	Travancore			Cochin			Malabar		
	1901	1911	1921	1901	1911	1921	1901	1911	1921
Villages									
>0.5	2006	1867	1670	222	9	8	664	587	567
0.5-1	952	951	937	207	24	21	693	654	659
1-2	694	789	847	129	78	74	517	593	583
2-5	225	327	414	78	129	130	296	323	339
5-10	8	20	28	16	28	33	36	44	48
10-20	0	0	9	0	7	7	2	6	7
Towns									
Class vi (>5)	0	1	9	0	2	2	0	0	0
Class v (5-10)	1	2	7	2	2	3	2	2	3
Class iv (10-20)	4	4	7	2	1	1	3	2	1
Class iii (20-50)	1	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	3
Class ii (50-100)	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1

Source : Census of India (various volumes 1901-1921)

5.5 Morphology of Select Towns

5.5.1 Quilon (Kollam) 1894

Kollam was one of the oldest towns of the state. In fact, by 1894 a millennium had passed after its establishment by the chief of *anchuvannam*, one of the two merchant guilds of ninth century³⁶². The town had spread towards south since its beginning along the arterial roads which connected it with Trivandrum, capital of Travancore.

³⁶² The location of the old town as mentioned in the syrian christian copper plate was broadly around the Thevalli area although tharisappalli which is now known as the kadeesa church is further south of it.

Table 5.22 Land Use of Quilon Town (1894)

Landuse Types	In Acres	%
Dry Cultivation	907.85	46.9
Plains	395.95	20.5
Wet Cultivation	219.07	11.3
Backwaters	136.75	7.1
Roads	54	2.8
Sand	36.59	1.9
Tanks and Ponds	9.59	0.5
Swamps	1.47	0.08
Others including waste	171.1	8.8
Total	1932.36	100

Source: Computed from Fig. 5.4

The land use of Quilon town in 1894 (see Figure 5.4 & Table 5.22) shows the predominant role of agriculture (see Figure 5.5). The dry cultivation is mainly under coconut, palmyrah, areca and unspecified crops. The first two supported a secondary occupation of toddy tapping. Coconut husk remained the principal raw material and encouraged the coir industry.

The areas under wet cultivation are paddy fields which produced the main staple, rice. Quilon was the seat of the British resident and Travancore dewan until 1829 and it housed a cantonment of the subsidiary force maintained by the state. The residency, sepoy lines and cantonment area formed part of the area covered under plains (see Figure 5.4).

A cotton mill for spinning and weaving and tile factories were the industrial establishments (see Figure 5.4). The minor curve/perturbation towards the sea at Thangassery in the north and Warkallai in the south gifted a minor bay at an otherwise roadstead Kollam port. The port is connected with inland Ashtamudi backwater with the Kollai *aur* (river) with landing places for small boats at two

locations (see Figure 5.6). On either side of the *aur* a chowkey, unjel (post) office, salt and tobacco warehouses/bankshalls, coffee store, tile manufactory and other minor port infrastructure are located. The port also supported a large fisher men and fish curing population (see Table 5.23). The land use resembles with other medieval towns of the period with a sizeable agricultural area, a cantonment and port infrastructure with inland connectivity for overseas trade. Kollam had many centralised amenities like hospitals (3), schools and a reading room by 1894.

Table 5.23 Workers in Major Occupational Groups (Quilon 1901)

Occupational groups	Number of Workers	%	Rank	
General Labour	950	12.24%	1	
Fishermen & Fishcurers	663	8.54%	2	
Shop Keepers	516	6.65%	3	Primary
Fish Dealers	408	5.26%	4	
Cotton mills (ginning and cleaning)	237	3.05%	5	Secondary
Rice Pounders and Huskers	231	2.98%	6	
Cultivation unspecified	213	2.74%	7	Tertiary
Rope, sacking and net makers	182	2.34%	8	
Grain & Pulse dealers	176	2.27%	9	
Sweet meat sellers	165	2.13%	10	
Constables, Messengers, warders	157	2.02%	11	
Boat and Bargemen	147	1.89%	12	
Non-cultivating land holders	132	1.70%	13	
Carpenters	96	1.24%	14	
Clerks and Inspectors	92	1.18%	15	
Cultivating land holders	90	1.16%	16	
Parpadam dealers	88	1.13%	17	
Washermen	84	1.08%	18	
Tailors	77	0.99%	19	
Tobacco sellers	76	0.98%	20	
Workers in precious stones, metals	68	0.88%	21	
Professors & Teachers	67	0.86%	22	
Bookkeepers in hotels, lodges, bars etc.	65	0.84%	23	
Piecegood dealers	65	0.84%	24	
Barbers	63	0.81%	25	
		65.79%		
Total Workers	7764			

Source : Census of India, Travancore, Vol-XXVI-B (1901).

5.5.2 Trivandrum (1901)

Trivandrum, capital city of Thiruvitancore since the 12th century, was known even before as the seat of *Ananthapadmanabha*, after a Vishnu temple. The 14th century poem in *manipravala* (indigenous language) talks about the temple and the market nearby in its 186 verses. The temple got renovated many times and during Martanda Varma's reign (1729-58 AD) a stone corridor was constructed which claimed the labour of four thousand masons and six thousand workers daily for seven months.

The land use of the town in 1901 (see Figure 5.7 & Table 5.24) showed 68% area under garden land and houses. The garden land (*purayidom*) has been put under agriculture (see Figure 5.8) with tree crops like coconut and areca dominating. The paddy fields are well spread out in the town and together with *purayidom* upland signifies the importance of agriculture. Canal, rivers and other water bodies are spotted along the agricultural land.

Table 5.24 Land Use of Trivandrum Town (1901)

Landuse	In Acres	%
Garden land & Houses	4433	68.1
Paddy fields	1326.6	20.4
Sand	260	4
Non-residential	416.1	6.4
Canal	21.45	0.3
Tanks & Waterbodies	31.7	0.5
Rivers	22.6	0.3
Total	6511.45	100

Source : Computed from Fig. 5.8

The old city consists of the fort area with the royal palace and the Padmanabha temple (see Figure 5.7) and its adjoining market at *chalai*. The entry to the fort area was restricted to the high castes. The cantonment area housed the infantry,

cavalry, ammunition depot (powder magazine) and a military hospital. The port area in Valiathura had salt bankshall and *anchal* (post) office (see Figure 5.9). The city had schools, colleges (one specifically for women), a school of arts, an official mint, a museum, an observatory, libraries, hospitals (one each for maternity care and mental health), a central jail and a lithography centre. The headquarters of the various administrative wings of the state like courts, registration, printing, treasury, census and other public offices were also located in the city. The city also housed number of palaces at various locations, *sathrams* (inns), religious places and public amenities like markets, parks and halls. Trivandrum did not have many industrial establishments but it had all amenities of a capital city.

The occupational structure of Trivandrum was dominated by those working for the state apparatus and its services, the city being the capital of Travancore. The primary sector was dominant and rice pounding and husking were major secondary activities. The western and eastern corridors of the town from the fort area were lined with many nair *taravads* and brahmin official establishments. The higher number of non-cultivating landholders assumes significance since many would have owned land outside the town boundary. The Trivandrum port facility in Valiathura catered to the requirements as the southernmost point in the inland navigation circuit which Kerala had in those days. It also catered to fishermen and a fish curing population.

Table 5.25 Occupational Structure of Trivandrum Town (1901)

	Number of Workers	%	Rank	
General Labour	3073	12.99%	1	
Constables, Messengers, warders	1598	6.75%	2	
Indoor Servants	887	3.75%	3	Tertiary
Rice Pounders and Huskers	822	3.47%	4	Secondary
Shop Keepers	753	3.18%	5	Primary
Army non-commissioned officers	692	2.92%	6	
Workers in precious stones, metals	687	2.90%	7	
Clerks and Inspectors	661	2.79%	8	
Religion related services	600	2.54%	9	
Cultivating land holders	580	2.45%	10	
Non-cultivating land holders	567	2.40%	11	
Fishermen & Fishcurers	494	2.09%	12	
Sweet meat sellers	489	2.07%	13	
Road, Canal, Railway labourers	481	2.03%	14	
Washermen	432	1.83%	15	
Professors & Techers	380	1.61%	16	
Cart owners and drivers	364	1.54%	17	
Fish Dealers	353	1.49%	18	
Barbers	353	1.49%	18	
Carpenters	318	1.34%	20	
Pensioners (civil & military)	304	1.28%	21	
Piecegood dealers	226	0.96%	22	
Grain & Pulse dealers	220	0.93%	23	
Boat and Bargemen	177	0.75%	24	
Mendicancy	176	0.74%	25	
Tailors	154	0.65%	26	
Field Labourers	146	0.62%	27	
Cooks	144	0.61%	28	
		68.18%		
Total Workers	23660			

Source : Census of India, Travancore, Vol-XXVI-B (1901).

5.6 Conclusions

1. The empirical evidence from the occupational structure as well as the distribution of workers in the agricultural sector based on an analysis of the

census data from 1871 to 1921 substantiates the breaking up of the medieval order based on feudalism in Travancore. The occupation of selected castes showed movement away from traditional callings for most of the castes. The changes effected after becoming a tributary state would have caused the lower share of non-agricultural pursuits, since the role of the new towns as magnets to the rural population was greatly affected after losing independence and becoming a junior partner in British trade.

2. The evidence from Malabar suggests that the occupational structure itself was dominated by the two most depressed classes, the agricultural labourers and tenants. The agrarian structure showed 40% of the landlords as absentees who were the beneficiaries of the surplus along with the British who usurped a substantial share of the land revenue. The agrarian structure, graphically, was a true pyramid with the chattel slaves forming the base.

3. The Cochin state had an agrarian structure similar to that of Malabar but differed in the number of workers in the non-agricultural sector. The secondary sector permeated beyond the towns to the coastal villages.

4. The level of urbanisation showed clear signs of deceleration in Malabar and Cochin. The trade centres or the emporia of the earlier period atrophied as Cannanore could not maintain in 1921 the population it had achieved in 1871.

5. The towns under the Travancore region maintained their population with Alleppey showing the maximum workers under non-agricultural pursuits. The towns showed higher tertiary sector presence. The secondary sector had craftsmen located in towns selling their wares in the market away from feudal obligations.

6. The morphology of Quilon and Trivandrum indicated a mix of agriculture, trade and military functions which characterized the medieval period in other parts of India and the world.

Chapter-6

6 Summary of Findings and Conclusions

A historical materialist approach has been adopted in this study to understand the socio-spatial systems historically prevalent in Kerala because it replicated many such systems which existed the world over during the period under investigation. The early tribal societies in Kerala were settled in the different *tinai*s or regions. The production differentials of the *tinai*s warranted transactions between them and the increase in population may have culminated in wars thus ensuring slavery. The *brahmin* in-migration from the 6th century transformed the slave mode into a feudal one with the *brahmadeyas* located along the river terraces. The role of overseas trade led by Arab peddlers and the Chinese led to the development of emporia throughout the *natus*. This has led to the weakening of the feudal mode with some *natus* turning out to be independent monarchies. The role of European colonialists since the 15th century brought in an element of struggle to retain sovereignty among the *natus*. The struggle for independent trajectories as well as the nascent prospects towards capitalist development dimmed after the British established their trade monopoly by the end of the 18th century. As it would become clear from the discussions to follow in the subsequent chapters the social systems which Kerala had undergone were either not full blown with its classical counterparts or expressed profound spatial variations in its evolution.

The conclusions which are drawn from the analysis in the thesis are as follows:

6.1 Space and Social Theory

1. Historical materialism can be used as a tool to understand evolving society and its material expression the space.
2. The analysis of the evolution of the various modes throughout the world has made clear that their different spatial manifestations at various historical junctures were dependent upon many material factors. The leaps and reversals

of the growth of towns, villages or their admixture ultimately were dependent upon the solidity and the internal structure of the mode of production.

3. A specific look at the Indian medieval social formation not only revised the earlier understanding of the 'orient' but put it at par or beyond the slave and feudal societies. It also had a visible potential towards capitalist development in the medieval period.

4. The British intervention, rather than aiding the dissolution of the earlier modes helped in its preservation in India resulting in reversals in spatial forms.

6.2 Evolution of *Gragara* Settlement System in Kerala (800-1921 AD)

5. The *marutam* or the riparian plains became the centres of early tribal concentrations in Kerala armed with agrarian surplus as well as the hill produce for overseas trade.

6. The Chera period saw a further evolution with the bringing in of outside kin labour under a feudal caste structure in *brahmadeyas*. The spatial location of settlements did not undergo any change as the *brahmadeyas* were along the riparian plains. It ensured, for the first time, a hierarchy with the brahmin land owning class extracting the surplus by extra economic coercion from the producing classes consisting of non-brahmin tenants and untouchables.

7. The founding of the Kollam *nagaram* as well as the handing over of the trade and commerce functions to a few merchant guilds occurred during this period. The analysis of the revenue sources from *nagaram* and *gramam* showed early functional specialization in the former.

8. The *nagaram* trade dependent upon the *gramam* hill produce/spices established strong linkages unlike an 'undifferentiated unity' and there was no evidence to suggest that long distance trade exacerbated a change in the mode.

9. A mix of rural and urban functions could be observed at some towns.

10. The period after the fall of the perumals saw a decentralisation of the feudal structure to the already existent *natus* and later to a few powerful matrilineal joint families or *svarupams* gained ascendancy.

11. The development of the usufructuary mortgage of *kanam* and its variants ensured both enhanced production and expansion of agriculture to *kayal* and forest lands during this period. A class of middlemen, the result of various sub-feudation making the best use of the inner fights in *kurvalcha*, also got strengthened during this period.

12. A series of local emporia or trade centres developed throughout Kerala with Calicut becoming the third major port after Kollam and Kodungallur. The peaceful nature and better terms of the overseas trade dominated by the Arab and the Chinese also contributed to the growth of these emporia.

13. The fissures in the ruling class who had allied with the middle men and the continued dependence on redundant customs and practices led to a feudal crisis in Thiruvitancore by the 17th century. The royal power seized the first opportunity to weaken the rival sections of nobility and effectively replaced the customary authority which sustained the medieval economy.

14. Thiruvitancore maintained more of a tribute structure rather than trade with monopoly in procurement of all major commodities and various rights to conduct markets and fairs. The monarchy adopted self-government in part and was conscious of the need for more commercial effort in agriculture as well as in the development of ports under its regime. There were efforts to create towns with some amount of economic independence as trading centres. These efforts to reconfigure the society from the top got substantially weaker after the British intervention by the end of the 17th century.

15. Thiruvitancore saw the promotion of tenants in the second half of the 18th century although the promotion of craftsmen and traders suffered due to the policy measures forced upon the state by the inter-portal agreement. The revenue of the state suffered and the fortunes of the indigenously developed

port city of Alleppey as well as Trivandrum, the capital, depended much upon British trade monopoly and their policies.

16. The agricultural advance in Malabar was seen to be more of a lateral one growing in the strength of the agrestic slaves than the varied commercial tenures which signified expansion in Travancore. The rise of Calicut from the 13th century owed much to the Arab pedlars as their caravans could find a secure place for trade.

17. The unfavourable terms of trade with the Europeans, internecine wars with Cochin and the return of the government share of land revenue after Mysore conquest damaged the growth prospects of Malabar. The British act of making the *jenmis* the owner of the soil and the *jenmis* in turn opting for rack renting followed by the revision in land revenue without any public investments in irrigation, sealed all avenues of progress. The producing classes of tenants and agrestic/chattel slaves were reeling under the *jenmis* who were mostly absentee landlords.

18. The Malabar economy was thus tailored to meet the British need for land revenue and cotton piece goods imports. A number of ports and nascent towns which developed during the earlier period were out of race due to losing trade prospects under the British alliance with the landlords.

19. The native state of Cochin, although had tried to come out of the customary authority prevailing in the middle period, could not succeed due to wars with neighbours, losing of the pepper monopoly to Travancore, the higher British tributes and lowered customs duty after the interportal agreement.

20. The empirical evidence from the occupational structure as well as the distribution of workers in the agricultural sector based on an analysis of the census data from 1871 to 1921 substantiates the breaking up of the medieval order based on feudalism in Travancore. The occupation of selected castes showed movement away from traditional callings for most of the castes. The changes effected after becoming a tributary state would have caused the lower

share of non-agricultural pursuits, since the role of the new towns as magnets to the rural population was greatly affected after losing independence and becoming a junior partner in British trade.

21. The evidence from Malabar suggests that the occupational structure itself was dominated by the two most depressed classes, the agricultural labourers and tenants. The agrarian structure showed 40% of the landlords as absentees who were the beneficiaries of the surplus along with the British who usurped a substantial share of the land revenue. The agrarian structure, graphically, was a true pyramid with the chattel slaves forming the base.

22. The Cochin state had an agrarian structure similar to that of Malabar but differed in the number of workers in the non-agricultural sector. The secondary sector permeated beyond the towns to the coastal villages.

23. The level of urbanisation showed clear signs of deceleration in Malabar and Cochin. The trade centres or the emporia of the earlier period atrophied as Cannanore could not maintain in 1921 the population it had achieved in 1871.

24. The towns under the Travancore region maintained their population with Alleppey showing the maximum workers under non-agricultural pursuits. The towns showed higher tertiary sector presence. The secondary sector had craftsmen located in towns selling their wares in the market away from feudal obligations.

25. The morphology of Quilon and Trivandrum indicated a mix of agriculture, trade and military functions which characterized the medieval period in other parts of India and the world.

In conclusion, the prospects of a spatial order concentrating on a few port towns and capital cities based on non-agricultural pursuits was existent in

Travancore. Although subsequently the partial emancipation of tenants and releasing of craftsmen from the service tenures had occurred at a slow pace, the independent authority of the state in trade and commerce suffered greatly under the British. In Malabar, the British preservation of the earlier agrarian relations, i.e., of keeping a sizeable section of the producer class as agrestic/chattel slaves, no public investments and overall technological backwardness must have extended the durability of the medieval feudal system. This resulted in the atrophied trade emporia of an earlier period. Cochin also could not break out of the colonial pattern vis-a-vis its agrarian structure. Thus the settlement pattern forced upon the individual tributary / princely states during the colonial period must have contributed to the present 'dispersed, linear and continuous' stretch of *gragara* habitation of Kerala.

Appendix – 1

Definition of Urban during Census period 1871-1921

The 1871 census returned any village over 5000 population as a town. Thus Malabar had 186 townships and many did not contain a single street. The 1881 census defined 'a town as a collection of numerous dwellings near each other within a limited area having shops which provide a continual open market, for the supply of goods especially manufactured goods'. This interpretation was rigidly followed in Malabar and the number of towns came down to 5. In 1891 'all municipalities of whatever population and every other continuous collection of houses, permanently inhabited by not less than 5000 persons, which the Provincial Superintendent, having regard to the character and relative density of its population, its importance as a centre of trade and its historic associations might decide to treat as a town'. This definition continued in 1901 with the 5000 limit was rigorously adhered to. In 1911 census, towns included 'all municipalities and cantonments and every other continuous collection of houses inhabited by not less than 5000 persons, which the provincial superintendent may decide to treat as a town'. From 1921 every town with more than 100,000 population was regarded as a city and the 1911 definition for census town continued.

Scheme of Classification of Occupations during 1901-21

The scheme of classification of occupations in 1871-91 were compiled on totally different principles each decade forcing comparisons inappropriate. The occupational classification in 1901 were firstly, a division into 8 classes, followed by 24 orders, 79 sub-orders and 520 groups. The eight broad classes were government, pasture and agriculture, personal services, preparation and

supply of material substances, commerce transport and storage, professions, unskilled labour not agriculture and lastly means of subsistence independent of occupation. It gives the actual workers and dependents and further distinguishes the partial agriculturists among actual workers.

In 1911 the number of occupational groups was reduced to 169 under 55 orders, 4 classes and 12 sub classes. The four broad classes were production of raw materials, preparation and supply of material substances, public administration and liberal arts and miscellaneous. In 1921 the number of orders went up to 56 and the occupational groups to 191 due to splitting and amalgamation of orders and groups.

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