

**SOCIETY AND ECONOMY OF LAKSHADWEEP DURING
THE LATE 18th AND 19th CENTURY A.D.**

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the work submitted in this thesis has been carried out in the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

This work is original and it has not been submitted, in part or in full, for any Degree or Diploma in this or any other University.


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P R E F A C E

This dissertation discusses different aspects of the society of Lakshadweep during the late 18th and the 19th centuries. The objective of the dissertation is to highlight historical events of a period in which some islands were ruled by the British and others by the Ali Rajas of Cannanore. During this period an overlapping of the two authorities can also be seen in some of the islands. This period is also important because it witnessed breaking of traditional economic rights of the upper classes.

An effort has been made to collect the source material available in various libraries and archival offices. Still a lot more effort is needed to unearth further information. Due to this reason this work can not be said to be definitive. I hope that my efforts will stimulate discussion on this neglected region of Indian History.

I must not fail to acknowledge the invaluable help received from a number of individuals and organisations. First of all, my thanks are due to the Government of the U.T. of Lakshadweep for sanctioning study leave for two years for this work. I also acknowledge the financial help extended to me by the ICHR, New Delhi.

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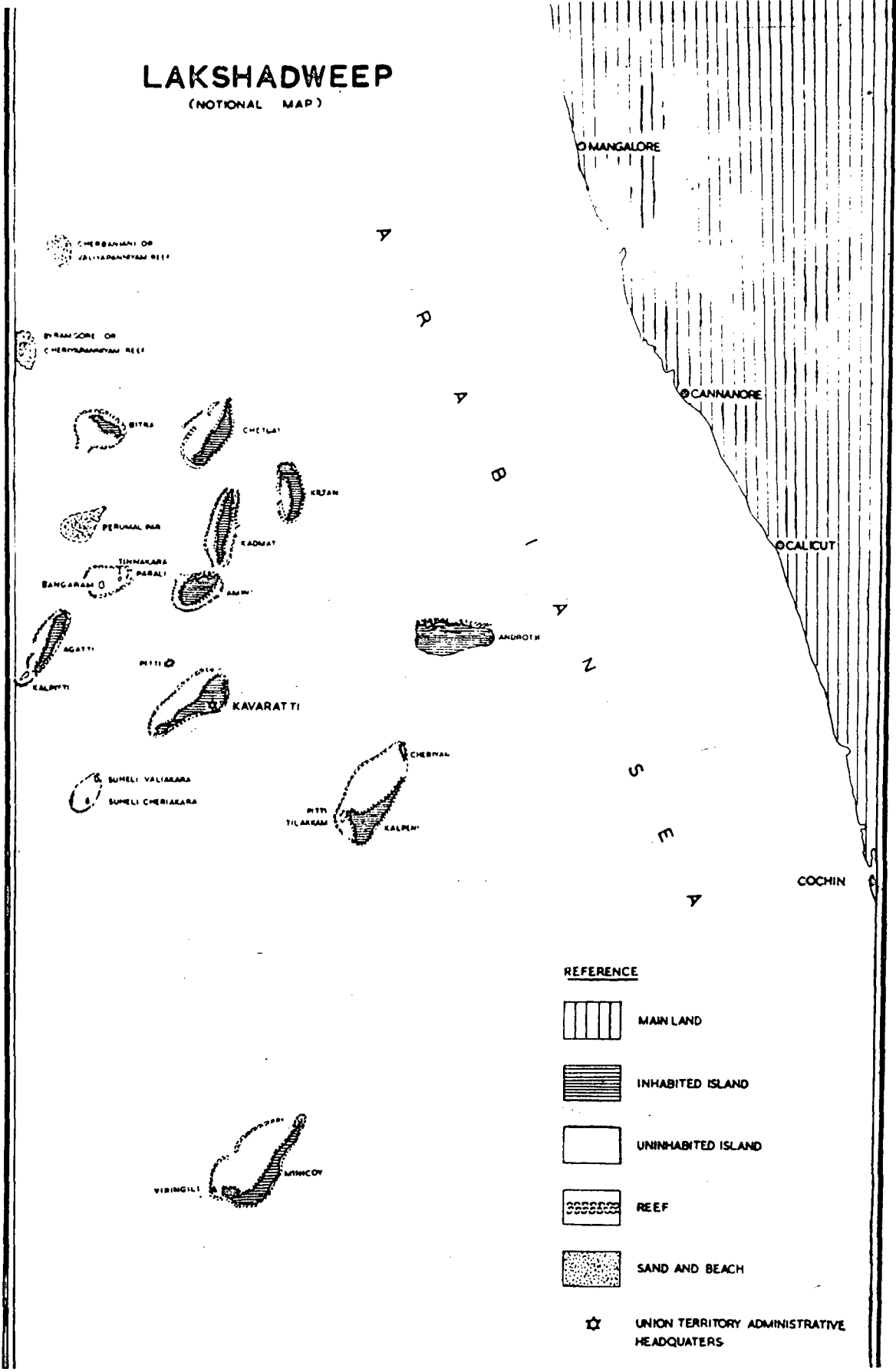
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LAKSHADWEEP

(NOTIONAL MAP)



CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION: TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

1. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Lakshadweep islands,¹ total 36 islets, atolls and submerged reefs, including ten inhabited islands, are scattered in the Arabian Sea between 8° and 12.30° north latitude and between 71° and 74° east longitude off the Malabar coast of the Indian subcontinent. The land space occupied by these islands comes to 32 sq.kms. including 28.5 sq.kms. of land use area.³ These islands are situated at varying distances of 9.6 to 183 kms. from one another and 201 to 402 kms. from Calicut, the port city on the Malabar coast which played an important role in the economic life of the people of these islands.⁴ The islands' soil is generally poor. Still the vegetation grows in luxuriance due to climatic influence of their insular situation, sufficient monsoonal rains and porous substratum.

Monsoon The islands experience two moonsoonal rains i.e. from the south-west monsoon in the months of June & July, and from the north-east monsoon in November and December. During the intervening period of two monsoons there is little rain but hurricanes and cyclonic storms are liable to occur. The most disastrous storms recorded in the history of the islands was on 15th April 1847. The storm was worst felt at

Kalpani and Androth islands with heavy toll of life and property.⁵

The availability of fresh water made the inhabitation possible and the rich growth of coconut tree favoured by natural circumstances served various needs of the settlers.

Flora Professor Gardiner's "Fauna and Geography of Maldives"⁶ gives a complete list of the plants grown in the islands. Most common tree is coconut. With a variety of vegetation other important plants found in the islands were that of bread fruit, limes or Morinda citron, a species of tree cotton (paruthi mara) on Kalpani and Androth and some true cotton growing wild on Bangaram, dense thickets of Chonam, a small fragrant shrub from which a sort of tea was made, and screw pine (Pandanus odoratissimus). Whereas in the tottan lands a little coarse paddy, ragi, varagu, cholam, beans and sweet potatoes were grown. In the courtyards of their houses⁷ the people cultivated chembu, a kind of yam.

Produce Produce of the islands was mainly coconut and coconut based manufactures such as coir, jaggery, mats and oil. Marine produce such as fish, cowries, Holothuria, ambergris, etc., also provided a part of subsistence to the people. The people cultivated coarse paddy, ragi, sweet potato, yams, etc., on a very small scale.⁸

2. EARLY HISTORY

In the absence of detailed documents a student of the history of the 19th century Lakshadweep finds himself handicapped. He is to depend heavily upon the documents written by British officers and the records of the Arakkal rulers, the Ali Rajas of Cannanore. Since the British and the Ali Rajas both had their own interests involved in the islands they had a tendency to over or understate the statistics according to their own convenience. Absence of independent sources is heavily felt. To reach an understanding an allowance is to be given to this factor. Due to the limitations of the original and contemporary sources a considerable information in this study is derived from the secondary sources and later works.

Prior to the arrival of the Portuguese the history of Lakshadweep is obscure and can only be found either in legends or in some direct and indirect references of the foreign travellers. These references only prove the existence of these islands on the map and fail to give any information about the inhabitants and their life styles. These references have been collected by Albert Gray in 'the Voyage of Francois Pyrard de Laval' .. But it is most probable that the earliest inhabitation was by accident followed by

voluntary immigration from the Malabar coast and Sri Lanka since the Ameni and Laccadive islanders resemble the Malayalam-speaking Dravidians of the Indian Deccan, more particularly with the mapillas of Malabar, while the Minicoyans belong to the Maldivian stock who resemble the Sinhalese-speaking Indo-Europeans of Sri Lanka.

Ever since their settlement the islanders remained somewhat dependent upon the chiefs and princes of the Malabar, since due to geographical limitations, they could not produce essentials of life., particularly upon the kolattiri family of Chirakkal and the admirals of their fleets, the progenitors of the Mapilla house of Cannanore. Both seems to have had mutually advantageous trade ties since long until, in 1509, the Portuguese Commander Albuquerque declared the islands to be the dominions of the Portuguese king and ordered to stop this trade. As Logan writes: The Portuguese permitted no native vessel to ply on the coast without their passes signed by the commandments either of Cochin or of Cannanore, Chenacheri kurup, the minister of the old kolattiri, had some years previously sent a memorial to the king of Portugal praying for an order to the Portuguese captains not to molest the Kolattiris petty islands, the Laccadive group....

Initially the Portuguese had good relations with the Kolattiri, the ruler of Chirakkal, and his admirals known

as the Mammali chiefs, progenitors of the Ali Rajas of Cannanore. They had a fortress, a trading centre and their christianized native families at Cannanore in 1504.¹³ But this relationship was not to last long. Already in 1503 the Portuguese had come to realise the usefulness of coir rope in shipping¹⁴ which led Albuquerque to declare, in 1509, these islands, precious for coir, to be the dominions of the king of Portugal. However, the Mammalis were permitted to trade with the islands on payment of a fixed tribute of 2000 bars (1 bar = 450 kg.) of coir every year. The islands came under direct administration in 1525 when the Kolattiri refused to fulfill the Portuguese demand of 1000 candies of coir per annum for non-interference in the islands. The Portuguese viceroy, Menzes, "stationed there forty soldiers and imposed an import duty on all rice taken to the islands. With the sum thus, collected, he was able to buy the coir required and to pay for the establishment"¹⁵. How long this arrangement continued is not clear but if a local legend is to be believed the Portuguese were exterminated in the middle of the 16th century by poisoning.¹⁶ The Portuguese retaliated with violence and massacred more than 400 of the islanders including the khazi Abu Bakr. "The date of this occurrence (A.H.966. A.D.1549-50) is fortunately preserved in an old Moplah song in honour of Abu Bakr, who is now regarded as a martyr"¹⁷. The Portu-

guese continued retaliatory expeditions against the islanders. One such expedition was led by Jorge de Sousa Pereira who¹⁸ came to the Island of Amani, the chief one of that group, where he landed and destroyed the place, killing a large number of people, besides making many prisoners ... After having punished the inhabitants, Jorge de Sousa Pereira, on the 4th February, 1560, concluded a treaty with the governors of those islands, whereby in the name of the inhabitants, they swore vassalage to the king of Portugal and his heirs, and undertook to pay an annual tribute of 500 bahars of¹⁸ "coir" to be delivered free of cost at Cochin¹⁹.

The oppressive Portuguese rule for about half a century¹⁹ led the people to seek assistance of the Kolattiri Raja which caused the opportunity for latter's consolidation of authority over these islands.²⁰ By the middle of the 16th century the islands were given in jagir to the Cannanore family with the title of the Ali Raja or Azhi Raja (The Lords of the Sea)²¹ stipulated peshkash being 6000 fanoms per year. The history of the inclusion of Minicoy into the possessions of the Cannanore family is still obscure but it seems that Minicoyans voluntarily surrendered to the Ali Rajas sometime after the latter's possessions of the northern islands. Logan writes:

"The Malikhans or chief men state that their forefathers

voluntarily surrendered the islands to the Cannanore Raja on his undertaking to protect them against pirates²².

Untill the arrival of the Portuguese, the administration, patriarchal in nature, was run by a Muthalal or the chief inhabitant and the heads of the principal families (Mookyas-thans)²³ on each island. The Portuguese ruled these islands, for the sake of economic exploitation, by appointing soldiers. With the firm consolidation of the Ali Raja's authority Muthalals were replaced by Karyakars, the agents appointed by the Ali Rajas,²⁴ Through various monopolies and royalties the Ali Raja economically exploited these islands, unquestioned till 1784, when the Ameni islanders revolted against his authority which led to the loss of Ameni group of islands to Tippu Sultan in 1787.²⁵

3. TRADITIONAL SOCIAL DIVISIONS

The native population of Lakshadweep is Islamic for a period that goes beyond its recorded history. Although, there are Ahmadiyas and Wahabis among them, yet a majority of them belong to the Shafi school of sunni sect. Until recently, the society was socio-economically stratified into different groups with a distinguishingly high degree of freedom for women in all the groups which is absent from the Hindus and Muslims in the mainland India. Limitations of

the contemporary sources do not permit detailed study of different sections of pre-nineteenth century society. On the basis of limited contemporary sources it is definite that the society was organised into three (or four) caste-class groups. These caste-class groups show strict overlapping of economic and social cleavages. The society of Ameni and Laccadive group of islands was constituted by following caste-class groups: the Karnavars²⁶ constituted the highest caste-class group who owned land and coast going vessels or odams and managed the affairs of the islands until a few years ago; the Malmis also owned some land but their main occupation was sea-faring. They navigated in the Odams i.e. country boats owned by the Karnavars and played an important role in the trade and economy still they were considered inferior to the Karnavars and, the Melacheris were the petty tenants, coconut tree climbers and domestic servants of the land owning class forming the lowest wrung of the society.²⁷ Somewhat similar to other islands the Minicoy society was stratified into four socio-economic groups: the Manikfang constituted the rich land owning class and corresponds to the Karnavars of the islands; the Thakurfans or Malumis were expert sailors; the Thakurus came next and lower to the Thakurfans in the socio-economic heirarchy; and, the Raveries or Kohls the domestic servants, coconut climbers, tappers, constituted the lowest stratum of

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the society.

4. THE BARTER SYSTEM

The island trade was based on barter system. The Karyakar exchanged essential food stuffs with the island produce. Ali Raja's boats carried essential goods from the mainland and brought island produce in return to mainland. These island products were sold in the mainland markets with high profits. The exchange rates were fixed by the Arakkal ruler arbitrarily.

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In the following chapters an attempt has been made to study in detail various aspects of the society and the changes that occurred during the 19th century. Second chapter of the study is devoted to the political hierarchy and administrative machinery existed in the islands. Social structures and their relationship is discussed in the third chapter whereas the fourth chapter gives details of trade. The last chapter traces changes occurred during the period and conclusions. This study, however, instead of being definitive raises more questions than answers.

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17. Ibid. p.17.
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19. W.Logan, Malabar Vol.I, p.325.
20. R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.17.
21. W.Robinson, Op.cit., p.11; R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.17.
22. W.Logan, Malabar Vol.II, Appendix xxi, P.cccii.
23. W.Robinson, Op.cit., p.11; W.Logan, Malabar Vol.II, Appendix xxi, P.cclxxv; R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.35.
24. R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.35.

25. Ibid, pp.17-18.
26. The word 'Karnavar' is a Malayam word meaning the head of a family. In the island the term is commonly used for the principal families or the families owning the property and coast-going vessels and other privileges in the society.
27. W.Logan, Malabar Vol.II, Appendix xxi, P.cclxxiv; R.H. Ellis, Op.cit., p.70.
28. W.Logan, Malabar, Vol.II, Appendix xxi, P.ccxix; R.H. Ellis, Op.cit., p.76.
29. Gazetteer of India, Union Territory of Lakshadweep, p.55.

* * *

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM1. POLITICAL AUTHORITY(A) THE ALI RAJAS¹ OF CANNANORE

After the revolt of 1784 and accession of the Ameni islands in 1787 by Tippu^{the} Ali Rajas of Cannanore continued to rule the Laccadive Islands and Minicoy until his second² defeat at the hands of Major Abercromby in 1791. The islands passed on to the British but the Ali Raja Beebi was allowed to hold these islands. In 1793 a treaty was signed between the two according to which Ali Raja Beebi agreed to pay Rs.15000/- as peshkash for her revenues and trade profits from her mainland property and the islands. The Ali Raja held these islands until 1854 when to recover the arrears of peshkash the islands were sequestered by the British. These islands were restored to the Ali Raja in⁴ 1864 but he failed to reestablish effective control over the islands. By 1869 the Ali Raja's authority seems to have been totally discarded by the islanders and former received⁵ no monopoly item from the islands. Steep decrease in the income caused piling of peshkash arrears and the islands⁶ were again attached for the same reason in 1875. After a long negotiation the Ali Raja was persuaded to give up the sovereignty claims over the islands. He gave away his "phantom sovereignty" in 1908 and the Government of India⁷ ratified the same in 1909.

(B) TIPPU SULTAN

The end of the 18th century witnessed the consolidation of the British in the Malabar coast which had wide ranging repercussions in the islands. The British forces under General Macleod defeated the Cannanore forces in 1783 and compelled the Ali Raja Beebi to sign an agreement of friendship.⁸ The Cannanore ruler had already thrown the yoke of the kolattiri of Chirakkal who had earlier given the Lakshadweep islands to the former in a jagir. The oppressive rule of Cannanore and weakening of power of the Ali Raja after defeat by the British prompted the Ameni islanders to revolt. In this revolt of 1784 the Ameni islanders discarded the trade monopolies of the Ali Raja and sold their articles elsewhere. They also insisted upon allegiance to Tippu Sultan who happened to be in Malabar at that time. Tippu agreed to accede Ameni Islands into his Sultanate in 1787 and attached these islands with Canara. For the loss of Ameni islands he compensated the Ali Raja by giving a jagir⁹ from the territory of the Chirakkal ruler. Tippu Sultan ruled these islands for twelve years until his defeat in 1799.

(C) THE BRITISH

Tippu's defeat by the British brought Ameni islands and Canara under British rule in 1799. Since the Islands had

earlier been a part of the Cannanore territory the Ali Raja Beebi claimed their restoration. The demand was not met by the British East India Company. However, after a long chain of correspon-dence for about 25 years, in 1822, an annual remission of Rs.5,250 was made in the peshkash to be paid by the Ali Raja to the British.¹¹ The islands were attached to South Canara District for the purpose of administration. The islands' affairs were controlled through a single office of the Monegar at Ameni. On occasions Special Officers were sent as Inspecting Officers to keep a watch on the Adminis-tration in the islands.

2. ADMINISTRATION

From 1787 to 1875 the people of Lakshadweep were governed by two sets of administrative machinery in two separate units viz. the Amindivi Islands or Ameni group of Islands, and, the Laccadive and Minicoy Islands. Until 1799 the Ameni Islands were under the control of Tippu Sultan who appointed a Monegar at Ameni to look after the administration. The Monegar was put under the control of his Governor of Canara. The British Administration in the island began in 1799 and continued till independence in 1947. Until 1875, except for the sequestration period, the other unit of Laccadives and Minicoy was under the direct adminis-

tration of the Ali Raja of Cannanore. 1875 onwards the administration of each islands was of similar nature.

The common feature of both sets of administrative systems was their motivation of economic exploitation. In the Ameni Islands the sole agency of exploitation was the British whereas in other islands, where traces of patriarchal administration could be seen, the upper class joined hands with the Arakkal rulers or the Ali Rajas. The upper class of the society acted as a subservient body of the ruler.¹² The Arakkal rulers in their turn had to feed the British and the latter lent helping hand for about sixty years in this venture by supporting the monopolistic trade of the former. This support to the monopolies of the Ali Rajas maintained regular supply of their own share.¹³ During this period, the British maintained law and order for smooth collection of revenues or profits from coir and other smaller monopolies at a profitable rate¹⁴, whereas the Ali Rajas were allowed to keep their monopolies and trade which made the administration itself a profitable business to the ruler.¹⁵ The British collected the revenues for their colonial motives and the Ali Rajas to maintain their own royal dignity.¹⁶ The revenues were never used for public or social works.

A. THE LACCADIVE ISLANDS AND MINICOY

(i) THE KARYAKAR

The Karyakar was the highest authority of the local administration, in the Laccadives and Minicoy Islands. The Karyakar acted as an agent of the Raja. He was appointed by the Raja and under the immediate orders of the rulers.¹⁷ The Karyakar remained generally unchecked in dealing with the subjects since neither the Raja nor his officers ever, except a single visit by the Raja in 1869¹⁸ when he had already almost lost his control, visited the islands to listen and solve the grievances of the people. The Karyakar controlled the whole administration of the Island. He was entrusted with the management of the personal property of the Raja or the Pandaram property and trade, maintenance and protection of the monopolies and petty criminal and civil justice.¹⁹ The Ali Raja Bebee, the ruler of Cannanore, explained to H.V. Conolly, collector of Malabar: "and as of an agent and an Accountant in the Islands for collecting the produce of the coconut trees as well as accrue from my trade with the Islanders, they also give their assent to the decisions of the principal Karnavars and Moopas of each Island in all disputes regarding trees or land".²⁰ At Minicoy due to the absence of monopolies, except that no cowries,²¹ and attiris and varangis, local institutions, looking after general law and order problems,²² the Karyakar's

duties were limited to the management of the Pandaram Pak²³ or the royal property and collection of the Poll Tax.

However, there are examples of members of important families of the island being appointed as Karyakar²⁴ at half the remuneration.²⁵ Generally they were selected from the mainland. He was paid 24 mudas of rice per annum while he had to pay a nazeranah to the ruler at his appointment and a further fees to Raja's minister which exceeded his one year's emoluments.²⁶ The appointment of the Karyakar was renewed on the payment of the same nazeranah whenever²⁷ he left the island and which occurred almost every year. To compensate these expenses the Karyakar was allowed to²⁸ levy cesses and contributions upon the subjects. These consisted in articles of consumption or commerce, such as daily supply of nuts, coir, oil, jaggery, meera (unfermented toddy), fish, ghee, milk, a quarter of every bullock killed, etc., according to circumstances and people of each island.²⁹ Subsequently, these cesses were levied at fixed rates. Further, the absence of the personal control of the Raja provided an opportunity for the abuse of power by the Karyakar and his subordinates who, to enhance their income, made several unauthorised and arbitrary exaction from the people.³⁰ After the first attachment (for arrears of Peshkash by the British from 1854 to 64) the Raja was allowed to be

represented by his agent or the Karyakar on the Islands which continued till 1875 when at the time of final attachment of the Cannanore islands the collector of Malabar appointed Amins to replace the same.³¹

(ii) THE ADMINISTRATIVE ESTABLISHMENT

With the Karyakar, an Accountant and three or four Nadpals (village runners or peons) completed the administrative establishment on the Laccadive and Minicoy islands.³² The allowances of the Accountant were half that of the Karyakar's and so was the nazeranah paid by him to the Raja.³³ He received equal to one half of the cesses and contributions exacted by the Karyakar.³⁴ The Nadpal whose pay was from 1 to 4 mudas of rice per annum also had claims of similar nature³⁵ on the people.

(iii) PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN ADMINISTRATION IN THE LACCADIVE ISLANDS

In the Laccadive Islands the Karyakars were helped in their work by the Principal Karnavars or Mookhyastans or Chief men of the Island and the Moopas or the elders from each cheri or sub-division of the island.³⁶ The Karyakars with the Mookhyastans sat in a Committee or Kacheri in the transaction of all business.³⁷ The Mookhyastan's office was hereditary by virtue of the succession to the headship of a chief family.³⁸ Their influence on the Islands was considerable since they owned almost all the land and shore-going

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boats, upon whom the rest of the people were dependent. They could employ a check upon the Karyakar's authority, instead they played hand in gloves with the latter for personal gains. To utilise their influence and services the Mookhyastans were conferred with petty dignities such as Bandor, Patlor, Mulanjee Roy., Cheve Anje, Rov etc., privileges and immunities.⁴⁰

(iv) LOCAL-SELF INSTITUTIONS IN MINICOY

The absence of coir monopoly reduced the necessity to control the day to day life of the people by the Karyakar at Minicoy island which permitted development of a kind of local-self government. The island of Minicoy was divided into nine villages or blocks each, for the purpose of administration, having its own attiri (sea-shore or male assembly)⁴¹ and varanqi (female assembly). Each attiri was ruled by a headman with an assistant and varanqi by a headwomen whose tenure depended upon the confidence of its members.⁴² The principal purpose of the organisation of the attiri and varanqi was public services and their members⁴³ were controlled by the respective heads. In every attiri the owner of the fishing boat received 14 per cent of the catch and the rest was divided equally among the members.⁴⁴ The Malikhan (chief men) and the Malumi (Pilot) castes⁴⁵ were independent of these organisations. All matters of

the attiri were settled in a public meeting, known as Vemadu, of the members and of the whole island in the meeting of all attiris known as Havar.⁴⁶ The women enjoyed much freedom and⁴⁷ were to be consulted in all matters affecting the island.

(v) JUDICIAL SYSTEM

The judicial administration was allied to fiscal machinery and all types of cases, excluding the religious delinquencies,⁴⁸ were settled by the similar officials. The office of the Kazi was hereditary but succession was to be confirmed by the Raja on the payment of a nazeranah varying from 300 to 500 rupees according to the circumstances and in virtue of this nazerana the kazi levied considerable contributions upon the people.⁴⁹ All matters of importance⁵⁰ of capital ones were referred to the Cannanore ruler. In all matters same summary proceedings were resorted to and in adjudication of petty civil cases oath, arbitration and ordeal were freely employed where the law of the Koran guided the spirit of the judicial system.⁵¹ For heinous crimes a system of organised plunder, by the people, of the criminal's property known as 'cowarchy'⁵² was employed. All cesses, contributions, judicial and fiscal fines were secured by attachments, confiscations and imprisonment⁵³ and whenever could not be fully recovered carried into accounts as debts⁵⁴ against the family and realised whenever possible. Arrears of pilot customs, rent of the Pandaram gardens and various

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nazeranas, which being large could seldom be paid in cash at a time, were also carried to these debt accounts against various families.⁵⁵

(vi) BRITISH ADMINISTRATION DURING ATTACHMENT AND CONDITION AFTER RESTORATION

The Laccadive and Minicoy islands were attached for the arrears of Peshkesh from 1854 to 64.,⁵⁶ and during this period the British did not make any major reform in the administration except abolishing some of the minor monopolies.⁵⁷ At restoration the Raja continued to be represented by his Karyakar but with eroded authority. The people started evading the monopolies of the Raja and by 1869 the latter could not collect any revenue from the same head which resulted into arrears of peshkash.

(vii) CHANGES MADE BY THE BRITISH DURING THE SECOND ATTACHMENT PERIOD

On 3rd April, 1875, the islands were again and finally attached for arrears of peshkash causing the establishment of similar system that existed in Amindivi islands under the British control. The collector of Malabar replaced Karyakars by Amins assisted by gumasta or gumasthan (clerk) selected from the mainland.⁵⁹ From 1877, on the recommendation of the Special Assistant Collector, H.M. Winterbotham, competent islanders were started to be appointed as Amin who were assisted by mainlander gumasthans.⁶⁰ The office of the Amin

was not hereditary but was to be filled from one amongst the Karnavarg.⁶¹ He had jurisdiction in petty civil and criminal cases with powers to a sentence of imprisonment upto 15 days and to a fine upto Rs.15.⁶² The Amin conducted his trial with the help of two or more assessors selected in turn from the listed Karnavarg.⁶³ Appeals from the Amin's decision could be made to the collector of Malabar who time to time delegated powers to his deputy or Inspecting officers on annual visit to the islands.⁶⁴

B. THE AMENI ISLANDS

(1) THE MONEGAR

In the Amindivi islands (Ameni, Kadmat, Chetlat, Kiltan and Bitra islands under the British administration since 1799), the highest office was that of the Monegar, residing at Ameni, assisted by a Karani or clerk and peons, permanently stationed at Ameni and one on each other island.⁶⁵ The office, existing during the whole of the 19th century, witnessed time to time improvements in the class of the person holding the office and in his powers. By 1845, he had the powers of an Amin of Police while the disputes of the civil nature were decided by the Karnavarg or Karomarg and the kazi.⁶⁷ He managed the administration of the islands, maintained the coir monopoly, put a strict check on clandestine traffic of coir from the islands. He had nothing to do with the accounts, for which Karani and peons were res-

possible, and his duties were exclusively Police. He had⁶⁸ to tour all the islands in the beginning of every season to settle various affairs under his province and make enquiries into what had happened during the monsoon.⁶⁹ He controlled the local body of the islanders in managing petty affairs of the island.⁷⁰ In 1863 a sub-Monegar was appointed for Chetlat but the post was abolished four years later and the Monegar was given the powers of a village Magistrate and a village Munsif as defined in the Regulations xi of 1816, iv of 1921; and iv and v of 1816 and the powers of levying fines under the Cattle Tresspass Act.⁷¹ The emoluments of the Monegar were paid in cash at the rate of 17½ Rs. per mensem,⁷² which was raised to Rs.70 in 1871.⁷³ Monegar's office was promoted to a third class Magistrate "provided that in cases beyond his jurisdiction under Regulation xi of 1816 and within his summary jurisdiction as third-class Magistrate he shall associate with himself as assessors not less than three of the Karnavarg of the island in which the trial is held, who shall record their view of the evidence etc. apart from the Monegar's finding".⁷⁴

(11) THE KARANI

The Karani or writer was the working man in the Amindivi administration. He kept the accounts of the trees and coir in the islands and the same brought to the coast from the islands, managing the chief source of revenue, i.e. the coir

monopoly, with the help of the Karnavars.⁷⁵ Subsequently, on the recommendation of W. Robinson and the Board of Revenue., a Karani was posted on each island, first raising the post and pay equal to that of the peon and then assimilating the post into the latter.⁷⁶ The Karani or the peon had no administrative powers and acted simply as channels of communication between the other islands and the Monegar, requiring orders of the latter for every action.⁷⁷

(114) PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN ADMINISTRATION

Although, many of the privileges of the hereditary Karnavars or Karomars of the Amindivi islands had fallen into disuse since the arrival of the British, still they continued to be a part of the administrative system substituting for the heads of the villages or Potails etc.⁷⁸ The institution of sitting in Koots by Karnavars played a subsidiary role in the administration and its control of the society.⁷⁹ In Ameni island twenty one koots existed which were divided into two classes viz., first, the heads of the four principal families of Padembelly, Poracat, Porart and Beamady, second, the seventeen others. With the permission of the Monegar they decided petty civil disputes and internal economic matters such as theft of fruits, day for killing of rats or the coconut beetle which were destructive to the trees.⁸⁰ They decided every nature of civil disputes according to custom and hearsay.⁸¹ The British exploited their influence upon

generality of the people, since the latter were all dependent upon either the one or the other Karomar who were the principal land owners and shore-going boat owners, in the management of coir monopoly.⁸² By custom they were to provide boats to take the Monegar on tour of the other islands.⁸³ They stood bails for criminals and had to bring the criminal to the coast for the trial before the Magistrate.⁸⁴

(iv) JUDICIAL SYSTEM

The kazi of the Amindivi islands; had considerable influence upon the people and was appointed by the collector on the recommendation of the islanders. He did a good deal of business of civil nature.⁸⁵ But the administration of justice was done by the Collector under Regulation V of 1822, a regulation which was in operation in the district of Canara.⁸⁶

3. NATURE OF APPROPRIATION OF SURPLUS

(i) UNDER THE ALI RAJAS

The above machinery was employed with the fundamental aim of fiscal management for the benefit of the Cannanore family. The Pandaram or royal exchequer derived revenue from monopolies in trade of coir, coconuts, cowries, tortoise-shell, holothuria, ambergris, salt and tobacco, and confiscations, escheats, nazeranas, pilot-customs.,⁸⁷ fines for criminal offences and for evasion of fiscal restrictions.⁸⁸

Besides, several other cesses and exactions were made by the Karyakar, his subordinates and the kazi, falling within their respective provinces and the people had to bear double⁸⁹ burden of the rule and of the system employed to rule them.

Various monopolies, discussed in detail in a separate⁹⁰ chapter, introduced by the Ali Raja were kept, until 1852, with as much rigour as possible, the least infringement being punished with all the severity. In cases beyond the control of the agents on the Islands, the Raja used to send special officers accompanied by musclemen to keep his writ and punish the defaulters and law-breakers.⁹¹ At Minicoy, where coir monopoly did not exist and most of the land belonged to the Pandaram, the revenue came from the Pandaram lands, managed by the Karyakar, in the form of the produce of the trees and taxes levied such as Valiyapattam or pattam payable by certain Malikhans, Attiri-Pattam or sea-shore pattam, Pattam on tottam or garden, Poll tax at the rate of 20 lbs of coir per male and 4 lbs per female, excluding one married female in each house, all unmarried adults and toddy drawers, tax in the form of rice on large vessels trading with Bengal and in the form of maas fish on fishing boats, and, from cowries monopoly⁹² and hire of Pandaram boats at 14 per cent on fish catch.

(ii) UNDER THE BRITISH

Soon after the acquisition by the British in 1799 the Islands were leased out to Chowakara Moossa at an average rate

of 8,400 rupees per annum.⁹³ The fiscal management of the islands was assumed by the British in 1804 when the whole system was revised.⁹⁴ All restrictions and monopolies, coir excepted, were abolished and rates for coir monopoly refixed.⁹⁵ The import and export duties were commuted to a fixed impost of half a maund or coir per muda of rice supplied.⁹⁶

Time and again the British thought of starting a scientific system of revenue realisation based upon land surveys but difficulties such as the absence of a strong sense of property in land among the people, scattered and mixed plantations of different owners and above all since the fundamental motive of the British was the profitability of the administration the expected expenditure upon such a system prevented them to do so.⁹⁷ The Government lands called circar gardens and the waste lands were generally leased out to the islanders under various systems such as Darkhast, Hossagamy and Amany⁹⁸ on a supply of certain quantity of coir to the Government., and in the Laccadive islands during past 1875 period the land was leased to the people under cowles.⁹⁹

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3. Diary of the Malabar Joint Commissioners, dt.13 April,1793; C.U.Aitchison, A Collection of Treatise, Engagements and Sunnads, Vol.V.P.294.
4. R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.20.
5. Logan's Report, 1869. quoted in R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.20.
6. W.Logan, Malabar, Vol.II, Appendix xxi, P.cclxxxiii; R.H. Ellis, Op.cit., p.21.
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8. K.K.N.Kurup, The Ali Rajas of Cannanore, p.45.
9. R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.18; K.K.N.Kurup, Op.cit; p.47.
10. W.Logan, Malabar, Vol.II, Appendix xxi, P.cclxxvi.
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12. Arakkal Records, Vol.2276, Part II, No.21, Nazarnamah by the Devee people, 1848; W.Robinson, Report on the Laccadive Islands, 19th May, 1848, Madras, 1874, Paras 177 and 178. p.43.

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14. W.Robinson, Report on the General Condition and Resources of the Admindivi Islands of the Laccadive group, 1846, Manglore, 1869 Hereafter as Robinson I. Paras 71 pp.39-40 (expenses of Sibbundy at an average of Rs.535 per year), 89 p.51 (concern for increased Sibbundy if the system was to be changed) and Appendix A. (Higher receipts over disbursement).
15. W.Robinson, Robinson II, pp.2-3.
16. Arakkal Records, 59, Letter from Adee Rajah Beebee to H.V. Conolly, Collector of Malabar dtd. 6th Jan.1853.
17. Arakkal Records, Vol.2276, Part-II, No.1, Letter from Adee Rajah Queen Beebe of Cannanore to H.V.Conolly, Collector of Malabar, dt.10 th Kumbomb, 1021 of Malayalam era.
18. Arakkal Records, Vol.2277, No.923, Letter from the Sultan Ali Rajah of Cannanore to A.McGregor. Collector of Malabar dt. 17th Sept. 1872.
19. Arakkal Records, Vol.2276, Part II, No.1, Letter from Addee Rajah Queen Beebe of Cannanore to H.V.Conolly, Collector of Malabar, dtd.10th Kumbom, 1021 of Malayalam era; W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 198 pp.49-50; W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, P.cclxxi.
20. Arakkal Records, Vol.2276, Part II, No.1 Op.cit. dtd.10th Kumbom 1021 of Malayalam era.
21. Ensign Bentley's Report dated 12th April 1795 quoted in Robinson-II, Appendix B, pp. 94-95; W.Logan, Op.cit. Appendix xxi, P.cccii; R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.62.
22. W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, P.cccii. "The Island is demarcated into nine large blocks:-
 - (A) The great north Pandaram.
 - (B) North Moiluth grant.
 - (C) Laper Settlement.
 - (D) South Moiluth Land.

- (E) Malikhan Land.
- (F) Central Pandaram.
- (G) Attiri Pandaram (containing most of the village site).
- (H) Eastern Block (containing rest of the village tottams and Pandaram plots).
- (I) Great Southern Pandaram.

Note: The village (Blocks G and H) is divided for purposes of administration into attiris (Sea-shore or male assemblies) and Varangis (female assemblies). Of the latter, there are ten, which lie in order from north to south, thus:- 1. Bodre, 2. Kudahe, 3. Punghilolu, 4. Aludi, 5. Setivalu, 6. Kandamatu, 7. Hanimager, 8. Olkkolu, 9. Digu, 10. Kolu. The Attiris correspond in name to the Varangis except that No. 7 lies in land from No. 6 and the head-man of No. 6 having charge of the attiri, that is, sea-shore, is head-man of both No. 6 and 7. To each Varangi there is a head-women. The Malumi (Pilot) and Malikhan (Chiefmen) castes are independent of these attiri and Varangi Organisations, which are formed exclusively of the two lower castes, viz., Takkarus (Sailors) and Melacheries (treeclimbers), and which exist for the Public services (male and female) of the community. Each attiri and Varangi has a special place of meeting and the sexes being told of to certain well-defined services, there is no clashing of authority. The head-men control all the men and youths of their attiris. The head-women exercise authority over all females and over boys until the latter are old enough to join in the services performed by the males of the attiris, that is, till they are about 7 years of age...

Each attiri has a number of maas fishing boats. The owner of the boat gets 14 per cent of the catch of fish, the rest is divided equitably among the attiri.²³

- 23. Ensign Bentley's Report dtd. 12th April, 1795, quoted in Robinson-II, Appendix-B, pp. 94-95; R.H. Ellis, Op.cit.p.62
- 24. Arakkal Records, Book No. 1034-38, Malayalam era,. One

Haidros Haji of Androth was appointed as Karyakar of Androth Island in 1860.²⁵

25. Ensign Bentley's Report dated 12th April 1795 quoted in Robinson-II, Appendix B, pp. 94-95.
26. W. Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 199 P.50.
27. Ibid.
28. Ensign Bentley's Report dated 12th April 1795 quoted in Robinson-II, pp. 94-95; W. Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 199, p.50.
29. W. Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 200, p.50.
30. W. Robinson, Robinson-II, Paras 200-201, p.50.
31. R.H. Ellis, Op.cit, p.37.
32. Ensign Bentley's Report dated 12th April 1795 quoted in Robinson-II, pp. 94; W. Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 198 pp. 49-50; W. Logan, Op.cit, Appendix XXI, P. cclxxxi.
33. Ensign Bentley's Report dated 12th April 1795 quoted in Robinson-II, Appendix B. p.94; W. Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 199, p.50.
34. W. Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 201, p.50.
35. Ibid.
36. Arakkal Records, Vol.2276, Part II, No.1, Op.cit. dtd. 10th kumbom 1021 of Malayalm era; W. Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, P.cclxxxi.
37. W. Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 207, p.52; W. Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, P.cclxxxii; R.H. Ellis, Op.cit., p.35.
38. W. Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, P.cclxxxii.

39. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 207, p.51; W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, P.cclxxxii; Arakkal -Records, Vol.2276, Part-II No.21, Nazeranah executed by the Devee people in the Huzzoor CutCherry, copy taken in the year 1023. "The Karlesthen of the Bebee of Cannanore having represented to the collector of Malabar that the Islanders are conducting themselves contrary to the established order of things which is subversive of peace, good order and prescriptive usages, and consideration having also been awarded to the statements made by the Islanders, and it appears necessary that a Keychit or deed or submission. Should be taken from our Mookiastans to provide against our departing from our former line of conduct we who have affixed our signatures to the foot of this document, shall conduct themselves as formerly and obey the order of the Bebee until a second order shall be issued on this subject. We will not prevent the Bebee from claiming the Avagusham due to her by us and conduct the management of her private property on the Islands. We will conduct ourselves according to the prescriptive usages of the Islands and will not prevent orders and peace to be preserved, moreover we will as far as it lies in our power persuade others also to pursue the same line of conduct. This Key chit was executed by our free will".
40. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Paras 178 & 207. pp.40 & 51.
41. W.Logan, Op.cit, Appendix XXI, P.ccciii.
42. W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, P.ccciii, R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.78.
43. W.Logan, Op.cit, Appendix xxi., P.ccciii.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.78.
47. Ibid., p.78-79.
48. Arakkal Records, Vol.2276, Part-II, No.1. Letter from Addee Rajah Queen Bebee to H.V.Conolly, collector of Malabar dated

10th Kumbom. 1021 of Malayalem era; Malabar Joint Commission, 1792-93, Para 248 p.165.

49. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 177, p.43.
50. Malabar Joint Commission, Op.cit., Para 248, p.165.
51. Arakkal Records, Vol.2276, Part-II, No. 1. Letter from Addee Rajah Queen Bebee to H.V.Conolly, Collector of Malabar dated 10th kumbom, 1021 of Malayalam era. "The Islands were from the beginning governed by the laws of koran and the inhabitants are ever since the date of the Treaty governed by the same laws".
52. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, pp.138-142. Letter from W.Robinson to H.V.Conolly, Magistrate of Malabar dated 26th Jan. 1848; W.Logan, Op.cit, Appendix xxi, P.cclxxxii.
53. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 202, p.51; W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, P.cclxxxii.
54. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 193, pp. 46-47.
55. Ibid.
56. R.H.Ellis, Op.cit. p.20.
57. Ibid, p.20.
58. Ibid, p.20.
59. W.Logan, Op.cit, Appendix xxi, P.cclxxxii; R.H.Ellis. Op. cit., p.37.
60. R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.37.
61. W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, P.cclxxxiii, R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.37.

62. W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, P.cclxxxiii., R.H.Ellis. Op.cit., p.37.
63. W.Logan, Op.cit, Appendix xxi., P.cclxxxiii.
64. W.Logan, Op.cit, Appendix xxi, P.cclxxxiii., R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.37.
65. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 71, p.39.
66. R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., pp.35-37.
67. W.Robinson, Robinson-I, Para 71, p.39.
68. Ibid, p.39.
69. W.Robinson, Robinson-I, Para 73, p.41.
70. Ibid, Para 72, p.40-41.
71. G.O.No.2045, 2nd Sept. 1867, and, G.O.No.186, 30th Jan.1872. quoted in R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.36.
72. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Notes alluded to different Paras No. 48, p.80, and, Robinson-I, Para 71, p.39.
73. G.O.No. 186, 30th. 1872, quoted in R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.36.
74. Ibid.
75. W.Robinson, Robinson-I, Paras 71 & 73, pp. 39 & 41.
76. Extract from the proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 2nd August, 1849, No.349; Extract from the Minutes of consultation dated 19th Oct.1849, No.1006.; E.H.Ellis, Op.cit., pp.36-37.
77. R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., pp.36-37.

78. W. Robinson, Robinson-I, Para 72, p.40.
79. Ibid, Para 72, p.40.
80. Ibid, Para 72, p.40.
81. Ibid, Para 72, p.40.
82. Ibid, Para 73, p.41.
83. Ibid, Para 73, p.41.
84. Ibid, Para 73, p.41.
85. Ibid, Para 73, p.41.
86. W. Robinson, Robinson-II, Appendix B, p.134.
87. W. Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 180, pp. 43-44. "The people of the group are skillful pilots, and were formerly employed as pilots to the Arabian coast; and they still frequently pilot Arab craft from the coast till they have cleared the group. The pilot fees, formerly high, are now reduced, and 35 to 40 rupees for longer voyage, and 5 to 10 rupees for the latter are received. The Malmi Maryadi (Pilot custom) is a regular head of collection on the Beebee's islands. It consist in a NAZERANAH which is now fixed at 4 rupees to $\frac{2}{3}$ to the Beebee, 1 to the Karyakar, and $\frac{1}{2}$ to the Accountant. On the other hand, inland import duties of 10 per cent are remitted, viz., on eight moodahs of rice in the first case and on four in the second.. The local officers being interested therein, its levy is carefully watched".
88. W. Robinson, Robinson-II, Paras 133 to 189, pp. 32-46; W. Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, P. ccixxvi.
89. W. Robinson, Robinson-II, Para, 199, p.50. "The appointment of the local officers has been made a source of revenue. The

karyakar and Accountant pay fine (NAZERANAH) on appointment, and the salary being small, their remuneration consist of cesses levied on the people". Para 177, p. 43. "On the succession of the heir to the kazeeship- which is a hereditary office- a NAZERANAH of 300 to 500 rupees is required before confirmation. The kazees on the Beebee's islands levies, in virtue of this NAZERANAH, considerable contributions from the people".

90. Arakkal Records, Memorial of Addee Rajah Beebee of Cannanore to the Special Commissioner of Malabar dated 10th August, 1852, complaining that withdrawal of British support has led to violation of the monopolies and other fiscal rules by the people.
91. Arakkal Records, letter No, 46 from Addee Rajah Beebee of Cannanore to H.V. Conolly, Collector and Magistrate of Malabar, dated 20th March, 1852. "From the misconduct of the Islanders generally and owing to the dishonest acts of which they have been repeatedly guilty, as especially brought to your notice lately, by my letters to your address of the 20th Madom and 8th, & 13th, October and 8th, 17th & 27th November, and to the Collector of Canara of the 28th April, and 20th October that, you are fully aware of the injury that has been done me. The islanders, aided and abetted by unprincipled native merchants on the Coast of Malabar, and Canara, have found opportunities, and every assistance, for defrauding me, by disposing of such articles as coir, Coconuts, Cowries etc/articles expressly stipulated for in my monopoly/ to other parties... that steps should be taken to prevent a recurrence of such acts, for which purpose, I dispatched my Carriasthan Coyah Cootty in December last, on a tour to all the islands under my control... General instructions were given to Coyah to enquire into, and put a stop to the illegal traffic that had been carried on, and to take efficient measures for the future protection of my interests, by visiting the delinquency of the really guilty parties, with such punishment, as their misconduct and dishonesty had deservedly exposed them to". Letter No. 49 dated 4th June, 1852. "That in this expedition he was attended by no more than 52 mopilas, 24 Palsars, in all 86 individuals independent of the crews of the three Manika Odies in which they had sailed amounting to 80 men. The people who had accompanied Coyah Cootty were sent to preserve order amongst the Islanders, and assist them in the culture of the soil which is but imperfectly understood by them".

92. W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, P.cccii.
93. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Appendix B, p.134.
94. Ibid., Appendix B, p.134.
95. Ibid., Appendix B, p.134.
96. Ibid., Appendix B, p.134.
97. W.Robinson, Robinson-I, Paras 85, 89 to 93, pp.49 to 52.
98. W.Robinson, Robinson-I, Paras 53 to 60, pp.27 to 34.
99. W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, P.cclxxx.

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CHAPTER-III

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS1. MEANS OF SUBSISTENCEA. AGRICULTURAL

The soil of the islands, being poor, was not fit for food crop cultivation but coconut trees grew in luxuriance. However, on some of the islands people had excavated, in a very limited area, in the Centre of the islands, to prepare artificial garden lands known as tottam on avals where a little paddy, ragi, sweet potatoes or yams were grown.¹ No detailed information is available on the extent of tottam lands and the system of cultivation employed thereon but it could be gathered that these lands were owned by the chief people and were either given to the tenants on share - and-share-alike system.² When cultivated by the owners it was tilled by the tenants as a part of obligation of service - tenure, discussed later in the chapter, without any return.³ The production of these tottams was too negligible to provide subsistence to the cultivator, except at Kalpeni islands where the tottams were extensive enough to produce food supply necessary for the support of inhabitants,⁴ a fact which is also borne by the absence of any taxation on such lands whereas even human labour, for example pilot customs, was taxed by the state. The staple agricultural production of the island was coconut and its bi-product

coir both of which provided the major portion of the subsistence to the islanders.

B. MANUFACTURES

(i) COIR

The manufacturers of these islands consisted mainly of coir-yarn and jaggery, and in Minicoy, curing of maas fish. Out of these most important industry of coir-twisting was carried on by the women of Melacheri⁵/class. The coconuts were plucked and husked by the men. The husk was then left for steeping in the pits for six or eight months after which the rotten husk was taken out of the pit and beaten by the women by a wooden beater on a flat stone. The product was then washed, dried and twisted entirely by manual labour using hands and feet or both.⁶ An average twister could produce a maund of coir in fifteen days or a candy of coir in a year.

(ii) JAGGERY

Jaggery was prepared from the meerah or sweet toddy drawn from the coconut tree by a process of evaporation. This coarse-article was manufactured mainly for home consumption. But when the price of coconut and coir fell considerably and the state monopolies of these articles were felt heavy in the Laccadive islands, jaggery manufacture was resorted to by the islanders, particularly at kavaratti, to evade the monopoly.⁸

(iii) FISH

A considerable amount of fishing was done and we come across many references of rights to levy contributions of a pick of fish,⁹ but there was no export of fish except from Minicoy where the industry of curing maas-fish and its export to Sri Lanka was quite an established occupation. Catching of maas fish was a joint effort in which 14 per cent of the catch went to the owner of the boat and the rest was divided equally among the members of the attiri or village and every attiri had a number of maas-fishing boats.¹⁰ Curing was done by the women and then sold to the traders who¹¹ exported it to Sri Lanka.

(iv) OTHERS

Although, some other services like that of fishing cowries, Tortoise-shell, manufacture of Holothuria etc. provided a part of subsistence to the people, their proportion was negligible either due to monopolies of the state or the total value of the produce. On the other hand a considerable number of people belonging to poorer section of the society looked towards coastal services for subsistence.¹² Thus narrates, about Agatti island, W. Logan. "Of the men belonging to the two lower classes only about half permanently reside in the island.. The others go and settle

on the coast, either in Malabar or Canara, as topee-makers (cap-makers), and as the price obtained for a topee varies from Rs.5 to Rs.15., this is a pretty profitable employment. As this occupation deprives the Karnavar (or headmen) to a large extent of the personal services of their dependents, it is not very popular amongst them. Besides, topee-making those who settle on the coast are in the habit of chanting the Koran at private houses, for which they get their food and a small present"¹³. On the other hand the rate of labour on the islands, in 1847, was only one seer of rice per day with other little necessities as settlenuts, tobacco., etc. altogether probably within an anna¹⁴ and that too with rare opportunities for hiring of labour.

2. LAND RIGHTS

Although the idea of property in land did not exist as strongly as today in the minds of the people,¹⁵ the proprietary rights were clearly defined and understood amongst the people.¹⁶ Thus, narrated by the Principal Collector of South Canara: "They possess no Sunnuds or grants for their lands similar to those in Canara, that I have discovered, at the same time they acknowledge that the boundary marks of each man's land are distinctly known & carefully preserved"¹⁷.

Traditionally, in the Laccadive islands, the body of the island was a fee-simple property held by the

Principal families and their branches as Jennum.¹⁸ The State also claimed, and acquiesced by the people, the Jennum rights over unoccupied lands,¹⁹ which were formerly waste lands and had been planted by the people, the state allowing the planters to hold the trees on payment of half the produce accrued from such plantations.²⁰

In Amindivi islands, under the British, the people were allowed to possess their lands on the basis of the principle that so long as they discharged their rent they were never removed nor their lands attempted to be set up for sale to the highest bidder,²¹ and, the former Pandaram lands were turned to be circar lands.²²

At Minicoy most of the land, except a small portion held as free hold by the people, belonged to the state or the Pandaram, a part of which was held by a few Malikhans on lease called "Valliya Pattom" and by some poorer people called "Attiri Pattom" on payment of a fixed rent.²³

3. THE JENMI-KUDIAN RELATIONSHIP OR THE SERVICE-TENURE

The landowners called the jenmis distributed their trees,²⁴ since trees were considered more important than land as property, on service tenures to their dependents called Kudians (tenants). A service tenure generally constituted 30 to 50 trees, however, a man could have one or more grants from the same or different jenmis.²⁵ The tenant

was to maintain these trees and was allowed to extend his
 plantations.²⁶ Though, a tenant could be sued for share
 and service,²⁷ he had a right of perpetual occupancy and
 was rarely ousted arbitrarily on the discretion of the land-
 lord thereby a service tenure having a tendency to become
 hereditary.²⁸ Money rents were unknown.²⁹ The tenant had
 to pay 1/10th of the produce and was bound to render various
 services to the jenmi.³⁰ The services required for a tenure
 included boat services: to sail one trip to mainland in the
jenmi's odam (vessel) or in the odam his jenmi shipped
 his own produce, to sail in the jenmi's fishing boat, to
 thatch the odam shed and to treat his jenmi's odam and
 fishing boat with fish oil; to till the tottam of the jenmi,
 to serve the jenmi at his house at festivals and other
 social occasions, and, to thatch the jenmi's house.³¹ In
 addition, a kudian was bound to ship his coir and surplus
 produce in his jenmi's odam or in the odam his jenmi shipped
 his own goods for export and 20 per cent of it, if the
jenmi did not own the odam 10 per cent i.e. half of the
 freightage went to the owner, was appropriated by the latter.
 By virtue of this the land lord acted as an agent in trade
 of his dependent.³² It further provided the landlord an
 opportunity of appropriation through unconstitutional ways.³³

4. STATE OWNED LANDSA. IN LACCADIVE ISLANDS

The state or Pandaram, in Laccadives, had asserted rights over a part of the land, formerly being waste and therefore, property of the Raja of Cannanore, but the planters³⁴ were allowed to hold them on payment of half the produce from such trees.³⁵ Such land, known as Pandaram Pak or forbidden ground or Padhi-Padhi (half and half) was separated by a wall and people were prohibited from visiting these plantations.³⁶ Breach of prohibition was punished severely.³⁷ Once in a month the holders and the state's servants³⁸ visited these plantations and divided ripe fruits. Further, though details are not available, a number of people obtained permission to plant trees in some of the Pandaram lands on share after deducting some manual.³⁹ But these Pandaram lands planted by the State were managed by the Karyakar.⁴⁰ Thus, the state acted as a landlord on its Jedmam property whereas on the whole as a sovereign by claiming rights in the form of various monopolies and royalties over the produce of the people.

B. IN AMENI ISLANDS

In the Amindivi islands also similar landlord-tenant relationship existed the distinction being only in the case of the state owned lands called as ciricar gardens where rent

was collected in the form of coir⁴¹ and plantations were managed under various systems. Firstly, the Durkhast system under which the trees earlier confiscated and managed by the state, under Cannanore rule, were given on a fixed rental.⁴² In 1845, according to W. Robinson this rent was about 1/5th⁴³ or 1/6th of the produce at Ameni island and 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent at kiltan island.⁴⁴ Secondly, under the Amany, the trees were held by the peasant on a fixed rent of nearly 1/5th of the produce.⁴⁵ And thirdly, under the Hossagamy, the waste land given on lease for new plantations for 10 or 15 years. When the trees came into bearing fruits the half of the plantation went to the Government with a condition that if any of the trees of the Government share went chowk the planter had to compensate from his own share and to deliver the coir produced from his share to the state monopoly. The state's⁴⁶ share was given to the highest bidder annually.

These Circar-Gardens or leases were generally held by the upper or land-owning class. Thus states W. Robinson in his reports: "The bidders are generally the richer inhabitants who can out-bid the planters or have interest to get their offers accepted, and to whom the nuts are more valuable, as they can afford to export them and get remunerating prices⁴⁷ while the poorer man is forced to consume them at home". These bidders sometimes succeeded in keeping the competition

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down, affecting the state's share.

C. IN MINICOY ISLAND

In Minicoy, except the land occupied by the village and a very small extent near it, the whole island was regarded as the Raja's jenmon property and was managed by the State officials.⁴⁹ The nuts from Pandaram or State lands were collected monthly after they had fallen to the ground on fixed payment in coconuts for the labour.⁵⁰ But the people had valuable rights in Pandaram lands such as to cut trees past bearing for timber, collect palm leaves for thatching their houses, cut the fire wood and collect the husks used in curing the maas.⁵¹

Details regarding system in vogue in plantations at Minicoy are not available due to source constraints. Only information arrived at is that a few Malikhans held certain land on Valiapattam or rent amounting to Rs.780 and poorer islanders cultivating a small strip on Attiripattam and paid a rent of 4 annas per tree.⁵² Anyone was allowed to plant a tree on the vacant ground in the Attiri Pandaram subject to the payment of rent when the tree came into bearing.⁵³

The people had to part with their earnings in produce from whatever sources in the form of poll tax, known as all-ara, at the rate of 20 pounds of coir per man and 5 pounds per ^{woman} ~~annum~~ whereas the Malikhans, the higher and richest class

one married woman in each family and all unmarried women
 and toddy drawers being exempted. ⁵⁴

5. SHIPPING RIGHTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON SOCIETY

Like any other Oceanic society shipping played a dominant role in the functioning of the society. Ownership of a boat, more particularly an Odam or large shore going vessel, was not only a matter of economic gains but also of authority in the society. Untill the middle of the 19th C. the right of ownership of Odam was strictly preserved by the land-owning higher class or Karnavars for example the Kadmat people, who all were Melacheries and thus tenants of Ameni Karnavars, were not allowed to build coast-going boats and their whole produce was to be shipped in the Odams of Ameni and only by 1869 they could succeed in building their own coast-going vessels. ⁵⁵ Since the very existence of life upon the islands was largely dependent upon the export of the produce of the islands and import of the rice and other food materials which could not be produced in sufficient quantity on the islands, and consumer articles, the whole economic activity revolved around the shipping which made the ownership of an Odam a valuable property. The significance of shipping in the economy is further emphasized by the status of the sailors who, though not land owners enjoyed higher status than the other working and non-land owning class

in the society. In generality people were dependant on either this or that jenmi or land owner either who himself or his kin owned an Odam upon which the produce of the first was to be shipped and for which the second not only reaped high economic profits.,⁵⁶ but also was able to regulate economic life of the people or tenants for his own benefit. This right of exclusive ownership of Odam was challenged by the class of sailors called Malumis, constituted the second class of the social heirarchy and sailed the Odams of the Jenmis. During the second half of the 19th C. some of them owned small shore going vessels and in this venture, perhaps, they succeeded due to their position of indispensibility, as⁵⁷ captains and navigators of the Odams, to the dominant class.

6. BOAT-BUILDING TECHNOLOGY

The islanders were fine boat builders and their vessels varied in sizes from small fishing boats and 1 to 1½ tons burthen vessels which were manned by 8 to 10 persons, also used for fishing purpose, to 6 to 15 tons burthen vessels⁵⁸ used for exports and imports to and from the coast. W. Robinson gives rupees 4 to 5 hundred as the cost of each shore going vessel.⁵⁹ The vessels were built with timber imported from the coast and the planks were sewed with coir twine and⁶⁰ caulked. The vessels were tarred and treated subsequently with fish oil at regular intervals.⁶¹

In boat-building technology Minicoy stood far advanced to the other islands. The vessels built at Minicoy traded with Ceylon, Bengal, Muscat and Surat when trade was unfettered until the middle of the 18th C.⁶² and during the third quarter of the nineteenth century the famous, in Lakshadweep islands, Dom Ali Malikhan had a small fleet of small quaintly rigged briggs which traded with Maldives, Ceylon and Bengal side.⁶³ The Minicoyans had a very good assortment of ship building tools.⁶⁴ The maas-boats were built with deep keels, fine lines and a large allowance of beam.⁶⁵

Although, sufficient data not available it is certain that during the 19th C., more particularly in the later half for which information to sufficient extent is available, the number of shore-going and fishing vessels generally increased at a moderate rate whereas the population, except at times of natural calamities, remained fairly stationary.⁶⁶ In Androt total number of vessels stood at 183 (31 large-coast going, and, 152 small and fishing boats) in 1848 which decreased to 162 (32 large-shore going, and, 130 small and fishing boats) in 1876 which further increased to 202 (40 large-shore going and, 162 small and fishing boat) in 1880.⁶⁷ In Kavaratti it was 128 (19 large shore-going and 109 small and fishing boats) in 1847 which rose to 156 (30 large-share-going and 126 small and fishing boats) in 1876.⁶⁸ In Agatty it was 68 (5 large shore-going and 63

small and fishing boats) in 1847 which increased to 121 (18 large-shore-going and 103 small and fishing boats) in 1876.⁶⁹ Whereas in Ameni, Kadmat, Kiltan and Chetlat islands in 1839 and 1844., the number, correspondingly, was 108 (17 large-shore-going or coast going of 6 to 15 tons, 14 small 1½ to 2 tons and 77 small rowing boats) and 133 (18+18+97), 12 (0+2+10) and 11 (0+2+9), 79 (8+12+59) and 96 (12+11+73), and 94 (8+20+66) and 97 (8+19+70).⁷⁰

7. ORGANISATION OF THE SOCIETY

In reports of the British officers several explicit references are present about the social groupings that obtained in the 19th and early 20th century.

A. SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIVISIONS

Though, notions of ritual purity and pollution did not hold, the society was organised by separate sections or groups having hereditary functions to perform in the body politic.⁷¹ The organisational pattern has not been uniform on all the islands, however, the society was broadly stratified into three (or four) caste-class groups i.e. the Karnavars, the Malumis subdivided into Malumis proper and Urukars, and, the Melacheries.⁷² These caste-class groups although generally endogamous, inter-marriage between the two upper classes, and, between the two lower classes in those islands where the society was distinctly organised

into four groups, was permitted.⁷³ These marriages were generally of hypergamous nature in which the male of the superior group married the female of the inferior group.⁷⁴ But intermarriage with the fourth or the lowest caste-class group by the upper two groups was strictly punished by the exclusion of the offender from his or her caste-class group.⁷⁵

(i) THE KARNAVARS

The Karnavars consisted of the families of the principal people also called as Tarwads who monopolised the right of ownership of the coast-going vessel and formed the principal land-owning class in the society.⁷⁶ The males of this group were distinguished by the title of 'Koya'.⁷⁷ The Karnavars enjoyed various privileges and formed the dominant section of the society. They also held various titles, during the Cannanore rule, of Bandor, Patlor, Mulanjee Roy, Cheye Anje Roy, etc., with small local dignities,⁷⁸ which confirmed their higher status in the society. Such titles, bought by payment of a Nazerana of 100-300 rupees, carried local privileges and a right to levy contributions⁷⁹ on the people in consumer and commercial produce. Thus, these titles were not only socially but also economically important. The Karnavars, also called Mookyastans in the Laccadive islands constituted a kind of catcherry for the transaction of local business⁸⁰ and the assent to their decisions given by the Karyakar⁸¹ made them a part of the

political apparatus. Whereas in the Ameni group of islands, the local dignities although absent, the status with reduced privileges was withheld by this group as Karomars, the hereditary heads of the families that formerly paid nazeranas,⁸² for their local honours and privileges, to the Arakkal rulers. They preserved their right to sit at the koots or assembly to decide petty matters of the islands and also had considerable control over the people of Kadmat, chetlat and kiltan, treating them as their tenant islands.⁸³ Whenever a Karyakar, subsequently in the late 19th century an Amin, was to be appointed from amongst the local inhabitants the choice went only to the Principal families⁸⁴ and this improved superior status furthered the domination by this group over the producing class politically and the selection of the kazi from amongst the same class⁸⁵ enabled them to control the religious and social affairs of the society. Their position in the social heirarchy can be judged by the fact that not only they stood bails for the criminals,⁸⁶ in Ameni islands, but also stood as the guarantors of the conduct of the islanders.⁸⁷ The corresponding group in Minicoy island was constituted by the Malikhans with the only distinction that though not the owners of the land similar to the Karnavars they did hold valuable property from the Pandaram upon a light quint rate.⁸⁸

(ii) THE MALMIS

The second endogamous group was constituted by the

Malmis or Malumis (pilots and sailors)who in some of the islands were divided into two sections i.e. Malmi proper (pilots and sailors) and Urukars (boat people or common sailors) in Laccadive islands, and, Malmi (pilots) and Takkru (sailors and boatmen) in Minicoy island. ⁸⁹ The Malmis were expert navigators and sailed the Karnavar's Odams to the mainland. Originally, pilots, they were in the process of acquiring land and thus trying to identify with the upper class. Mr.Robinson (1848)states about Kavaratti thus: "The Malimy or Pilot class is an important ⁹⁰ one, and possess considerable private property". And Mr.Logan (1887) informs about the changed status of the Malmis of Androth island that" The second class or Malumis are sailors and are engaged in exporting the produce of the island to - the mainland in the Karnavar's Odams; some of them also possess fishing boats and small Odams of their own, in which they made voyages to the coast, and this has excited the jealousy of the Karnavar class, who look upon them as interlopers and rebels. ⁹¹ There is thus ill-feeling between the two classes". But being the navigators they were indispensable to the Karnavars and though not a part of the aristocracy they enjoyed a fairly respectable status in the society. Some of the Malmis, who at times were called as urukars had various avocations from sailing the vessels to cultiva-

tion as tenants of the land-lords and therefore, generally dependant upon the Karnavars and Malmis proper.⁹²

(iii) THE MELACHERIS

The lowest caste-class group of the society was constituted by the Melacheries who were the petty tenants, tree-climbers, servants and toddy drawers and were universally dependants. The Melacheries formed the largest number of the population i.e., more than half in the main islands also known as the Tarwad islands and most of the population of the dependant or Melacheri islands i.e. Kadmat, Kiltan, Chetlat, and Agatti. W. Robinson (1848) states their condition thus: "In Cannanore Islands they are fully employed and well off. They receive a moiety of the juice drawn and one coconut in ten of those they cut, or one or two in every bunch, according to the custom of the islands. An able-bodied Melachery is able to keep on an average 20 to 25 trees cut for juice, he climbs twice a day, and the tree is exhausted within six months, and produces no fruit during the next six months. The 300 able bodied Melachery caste of this island probably keep from 12,000 to 15,000 trees of the better class bleeding throughout the year".⁹³ Thus, whatever their social condition the Melacheries who formed the lowest wrung of the society lived above starvation level. W. Logan (1887) narrated their economic activities as: "The Melacheries

or the third class are the hardest working population of the island. They alone climb trees and so pluck the nuts and draw toddy from the trees in the possession of the higher classes. For plucking nuts, a small percentage is given them as hire and the toddy which is drawn twice a day is given every other day to the Karnavar, i.e. half goes to the Melacheri and half to the Karnavar. Besides, their profession of toddy-drawing, they have to do Odam service for their lords and they also work in the tottam (in italics) and go fishing".⁹⁴ Though, most under-privileged and subservient the Melacheries played most important role in the economy of the islands. They continuously caused the extension of the cultivation and colonization of uninhabited islands, for example Kadmat, a Melacheri island, "was uninhabited in 1795 (see Lieutenant Bentley's Report) and within the recollection of many was in impervious jungle with four huts on it. It has now 200 inhabitants, 4000 or 5000 trees, and produces annually considerable crops of dry grain, and within a few years it will become a very flourishing island."⁹⁵ And though, the caste-class factor precluded them from becoming the masters of the land till the end of the first half of the 19th century, during the second half a few Melacheries succeeded in gaining ownership of the land and coast-going vessels. R.H.Ellis points out their changing conditions at Kadmat

island as: "The people who are all Melacheries are very poor. Until about 1860 no one on the island owned trees of his own. All were tenants of the Ameni people who exercised a kind of suzerainty over the island and in fact claimed that it was their property. They had until that time refused to allow the Kadmat people to build coast-going boats of their own and the whole produce of the island had to be shipped in the Ameni Odams. Every effort, however, was made by Government to break this tyranny and by 1880 the only rights remaining were the personal ones existing between tenant and landlord and the Ameni Khazi's religious jurisdiction over the Naib Khazi of Kadmath. It was not until 1869 that the Kadmath islanders succeeded in building three small coast going boats⁹⁶". Thus, in the second half of the 19th century the Melacheries succeeded in breaking the economic rights and control of the upper class still due to total exclusion from the political authority and social bondages they continued to be the most underprivileged and exploited by the dominant class.

B. FUNCTIONING OF MATRILINY

The striking feature of the Lakshadweep society was its organization on matrilineal lines within the fold of

Islam which in its ideology assumes a patrilineal social structure. Leela Dube (1969) concluded that the matriliney was "brought from the coastal regions of Kerala, and implanted on the soil of the Laccadive islands, this system seems to have persisted for centuries in relative isolation"⁹⁷. The family was organised into a Taravad or Tarwaad (matrilineal descent group) in which descent, inheritance and succession was traced through the mother but the property was managed by the eldest male member of the matrilineal group and the males having usufructuary rights over the Taravad property.⁹⁸

According to the island custom a woman lived in her mother's house even after marriage and the socially, through marriage, approved sexual relationship was effected by night visits of the husband.⁹⁹ The offsprings were maintained by maternal uncle.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the custom of marriage apparently completed according to sharia in reality did not conform to Islamic laws since separate residences of husband and wife and maintenance of offsprings by maternals neither permitted authority of the husband over his wief nor the responsibility of maintenance and protection of the family and wife by the former. But it appears that the effects of matrilinealism was limited upto the female lineage and freedom enjoyed by the women otherwise as far as the question of

authority was concerned in social, political and economic affairs the lead was kept by the men who held the political institutions such as Karnavar, Karomars, Karyakar and later on Amin, etc., managed the economic activities even when the women was the title holder of the family with a right to demand an account of the estate ¹⁰¹ and as a kazi he was in a position to dominate the social life. And though the contemporary evidences not available it is traditionally assumed that the private property, property other than that of the Tarvad and earned by a man by his personal effort of course for which opportunities were rare, was to be inherited by the children of a man according to the Islamic law, a system which is found on firm footing in the beginning of the 20th century. ¹⁰² But it is certain that the working field of this system remained extremely limited throughout the 19th century.

C. FUNCTIONING OF THE SOCIETY

The striking fact that emerges out of the above discussion is that the socio-economic system in which the Karnavars or highest group, who possessed land and coast-going vessels, and upon whom the lower groups depended for their livelihood, not only enjoyed extra-economic activities but also controlled political and social affairs of the society, was sustained by the maintenance of Landlord-

tenant relationship with a differential or no access of the lower class to the economic, social and political power. W. Logan (1887) states the status of the landlords thus: "it is somewhat difficult to define what is the occupation of the Karnavar class as they rarely do anything save bullying their dependents or quarrelling among themselves..."¹⁰³ The landlords by and large had been the representatives of the community and at the same time formed the integral part of the state apparatus at local level since they not only were associated in the administration of justice at small scale but also in the management of the state monopolies or the method employed for exacting the surplus produce by the state. They also had rights to claim a share in the produce of the lower groups or the producing section of the society by virtue of various titles conferred on them by the state, under kannanore rule, in lieu of nazeranas. And since the dominant section was associated with the management of the monopolies of the state, there was a tendency and opportunities too to shift the burden of their share on to the weaker sections.¹⁰⁴

The tenants known by generic term kudian constituted the producing class of the society. The kudians looked after the plantations of the landlord and he was paid marginally for his labour in the form of usufructs of a few trees.¹⁰⁵ The landlord also controlled the labour of the

kudian in the form of various services as a part of the
 tenure.¹⁰⁶ But major portion of this labour was not used
 in production but as a part of the manifestation to claim
 high status in the society which proved prohibitory to higher
 surplus production and accumulation of wealth. Through the
 working of the social organisation or caste-class division
 the kudians who belonged to the lowest division were denied
 to own land and coast-going beats.,¹⁰⁷ thereby keeping their
 labour reserved for the landlords. Existence of such medieval
 relationship was prohibitory for any radical change in the
 society. Further, the state for its own economic interest,
 did not encourage departures from customary practices and
 generally worked with the dominant section of the society
 thereby limiting the scope of social change.

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2. W.Logan, Malabar, vol.II., Appendix XXI, P.ccxcii.
3. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 130, p.32.
4. W.Logan, Op.cit, Appendix xxi, p.ccx cvi.
5. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Note 24, p.74, and, R.H.Ellis, Op.cit.,p.85.
6. R.H.Ellis, Op.cit.,p.86.
7. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Note 24, p.74. "Women alone manufacture coir, and entirely by manual Labour. An average twister takes about 15 days to make a maund of coir (a diligent work women would produce it in 10 days), or 2 maunds per mensem, and a candy a year".
8. Ibid, Para 91, pp.23-24. "Jaggery cannot be manufactured on islands where coconut trade is free and the coir is paid for at reasonable rates, except at a serious loss to the producer of those more valuable articles of commerce. But it is supposed that not less than one-fifth of the trees of this island are used for the production of this coarse article of local consumption. The effect of such mis-direction of the industry and enterprise of this island from the coir and coconut trade to jaggery, has been serious since the prices in 1826".
9. Ibid, Para 178 & 200, pp. 43 & 50.
10. W.Logan, Op.cit, Appendix xxi, pp.cccii-ccciii, and, R.H.Ellis, Op.cit, pp.83-85.
11. R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., pp.84-85.

12. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 70, p.18; and, Arakkal Records, Letter from Addee Rajah Bebee of Cannanore dated 23rd Vichigam, 1022 of Malaylam era i.e., 3rd Dec., 1846.
13. W.Logan, Op.cit, Appendix xxi, p.cclxxxvi.
14. W.Robinson, Robinson-I, Para 66, p.36.
15. W.Logan, Op.cit, Appendix xxi, p.cclxxv. "The land in particular appears to have formed a portion of the common stock, of the community - and, at the present time even, the idea of ownership of the soil has very imperfectly taken hold of the minds of these islanders... The trees growing on the soil are, however, strictly considered to be private property, and the islanders have marks which enable them to distinguish one man's trees from those of another".
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21. Malabar Distt, Records, Vol.4052, Op.cit, Letter from the Principal Collector of Kanara dated 17th Jan.1807.
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23. R.H.Ellis, Op.cit, Gazetteer, p.105.

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25. Ibid. p.75.
26. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 130, p.32.
27. R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.76.
28. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 130. p.32. R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.76.
29. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 130, p.32.
30. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 130, p.32; R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.75.
31. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 130, p.32; W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, p.ccxci; R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.75.
32. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 130, p.32; W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, p.ccxci; R.H.Ellis, Op.cit.,p.76.
33. W.Robinson, Robinson-I, Para 76, p.43. "The months of January and February are very busy ones on the islands, the accumulations of coir for the season are gathered, and made up into yarns of 70 to 75 fathoms long and brought by each family to the boat owner whom they are bound to employ; he receives their coir by weight but without reference to the quality, and undertakes to pay each on his return their due proportion of the price received from Government for the boat load, and this too is done without reference to the classification on the coast".
34. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 87, p.23 "These plantations were probably formed by the people while the system of imposing a certain sum, chargeable on the head inhabitants of each island, on account of all Pandaram property on the

island prevailed. The system of dividing produce was introduced, it is believed., by Hassan Karyakar, about 40 years ago, and is most popular on account of its novelty and severity".

35. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Paras 83 & 86, pp.22, & 23.
36. W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, p.cclxxxix; R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.56.
37. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 86, p.23.
38. Ibid, Para 86, p.23.
39. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 85, pp.22-23; R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.102.
40. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 85, p.22.
41. W.Robinson, Robinson-I, Para 53, p.27, "In each of the Islands there are so called circar Gardens, which consist of lots of trees held by islanders on a Darkhast to supply certain quantities of coir yearly to Government. There have been circar Gardens since the time of the Cannanore rule, when it was usual to confiscate property in place of penal punishments".
42. Ibid., Para 54, p.28. "The statement in the margin shows the names and condition of 7 lots of trees, called circar gardens in Amindivi. It appears that for several years after being confiscated, they were managed by the Beeby's monigar but subsequently given on a Durkhast of 4 Maunds of Coir. This was soon afterwards raised to 6 Maunds, which the former Durkhastdar consented to pay. In 1225/1816 Cooly Tirwa bid 16 Maunds which he paid till 1232/1825; when he offered only 12 maunds, the same year 18 Maunds were offered & accepted for the whole at which they

Contd..

Name of the Place	Durkhastdar name	Plantation		Rate of Durkhastdar
		Total trees	Bearing trees	
Badakand	Pallat pabby Malim	45	39	A fixed amount of 18 Mds. of coir per annum.
Kandana melt-tol		100	63	
Bachanpully		111	65	
Kullimake Kunna		34	30	
Kunhwardukul		5	4	
Chowddry		53	47	
Tekantatle		43	43	
		391	291	

now stand. They have been always let together".

43. Ibid., Para 54, p.28. "Eighteen maunds of coir, the amount bid will be less than 1/3 of the coir produce of the whole, and its value to Government about 20 Rupees. If we assume the value of the gross produce of trees to the islanders, at about 6 or 7 Annas each, the total average value of 300 productive trees will be about 115 to 120 Rupees. Government is therefore in enjoyment of about one fifth or sixth of the produce.
44. Ibid., Para 56, p.29. "They contain 380 trees, of which 228 are now in bearing, and 148 young trees that will soon be productive, four only of the whole number are chowk or barren. For the whole, 6 Bandies of coir worth about 6

- rupees are only paid. In the island of Kiltan the average produce of trees is 80 nuts per annum, at the rate of 13 Rupees per candy of coir, and 5 Rupees per 1000 nuts the value of gross produce of the whole would be upwards of 130 Rupees, and the quantity of coir produced should be about $3\frac{1}{4}$ candies. The bid as it now stands is below $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of the estimated gross produce, and only $\frac{1}{11}$ th of the coir which might be manufactured".
45. Ibid., Para 58, p.31. "In Chetlat there are 8 lots of Amany Trees held on a rent of $9\frac{1}{2}$ maunds of coir. The number of bearing trees amounts to about 150 which, at the rate taken for this island would produce about one candy and 6 maunds of coir, and 7,500 nuts worth in all about 45 Rupees of which $9\frac{1}{2}$ are paid to Government".
46. Ibid., Para 59, pp.31-33. "A small amount of coir has been collected from Hossagany for the last few years, some trees having been planted on land till then unoccupied"... "The system is to lease the whole expense and chances of 10 to 15 years cultivation on the ryot, and as the trees come into bearing, to apportion them equally between the circar and ryot-the ryot must deliver the coir produce of his share to the Government Monopoly, and is liable, should any of the Circar Trees become chouk to be called on to submit to a fresh apportionment. The Government share is given to the highest bidder annually"... "The rate is full half of the gardens after the trees have been brought into bearing, & might when all the disadvantages under which the planter labours are considered, be safely taken as equivalent to $\frac{2}{3}$ rd's of the gross produce".
47. Ibid, Para 59, p.33.
48. Ibid, Para 56, p.30. "The cause of this is to be found in the fraudulent combination of Mooktessars of the island. Five in number they have always bid in a body, and have had power to keep down competition".
49. R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.62.
50. Ibid, p.63.
51. Ibid, p.64.

52. W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, p.cccii, and, R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.62.
53. R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.63.
54. W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, p.cccii, and, R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.62.
55. R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., Gazetteer, pp.95-96.
56. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 130, p.32. "And, according to the custom of the islands, these dependants must export their coir and surplus produce in the boats of their landlord, who is generally a boat owner, and charges freight in kind. The landlords thus become the agents of their dependants, and as the protection of the monopolies requires the restriction of all export trade to these licensed and responsible boat-owners, a monopoly of the internal trade is practically established in the hands of a few families"; Robinson-I, Para 76, p.43; and, R.H. Ellis, Op.cit., p.76.
57. W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, p.cccxi.
58. W.Robinson, Robinson-I, Para 66, p.36.
59. Ibid, para 66, p.36.
60. Ibid., Para 66, p.36.
61. R.H.Ellis, p.81; Treating the vessels of the Jemmi constituted one of the services to be rendered by the tenant as a part of tenure.
62. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 38, p.12.
63. W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, p.cccii.

64. *Ibid.*, Appendix xxi, p.cccii.
65. *Ibid.*, Appendix xxi, p.cccii.
66. R.H.Ellis, *Op.cit.*, Appendix II, p.109.
67. W.Robinson, *Robinson-II*, Para 54, p.14; and, W.Logan, *Op.cit.*, Appendix xxi, p.ccxiv.
68. W.Robinson, *Robinson-II*, Para 80, p.21; and; W.Logan *Op.cit.*, Appendix xxi, p.cclxxxix.
69. W.Robinson, *Robinson-II*, Para 108, p.27., and, W.Logan, *Op.cit.*, Appendix xxi, p.cclxxxvii.
70. W.Robinson, *Robinson-I*, Para 66, p.36.
71. W.Logan, *Op.cit.*, Appendix xxi, p.cclxxv.
72. W.Robinson, *Robinson-II*, Note 16, pp.69-70, and, W.Logan, *Op.Cit.*, Appendix xxi, P.cclxxiv "The people belong, without exception, to the Mohamadan faith, but they are organised after the Hindu fashion into three simple classes or castes;-
- (1) Karnavar (soers, agents), consisting of the families of principal people who monopolise the boat-owning
 - (2) Malumis, subdivided into:-
 - (a) Malumis proper (pilots or sailors), and
 - (b) Urukars (boat people), employed formerly as common sailors, but now in various avocations, and;
 - (3) Melacheries (climbers), who are the tree-climbers and toddy-drawers and universally dependents of the higher classes^d.
73. W.Logan, *Op.cit.*, Appendix xxi, p.ccxci.

74. R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.69.
75. W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, p.ccxci.
76. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Note 16, p.69; and, W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, P.cclxxiv.
77. W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, p.ccxci; The use of the title Koya seems to have come in vogue during the later half of the 19th C. Since the suffix is noticed neither in the names given in early British officer's reports nor in the Arakkal records. Perhaps, the title came in use after the decline of the Arakkal rule. At the end of the 19th C. and beginning of the 20th C., however, a few Melacheries on the Melacheri islands also started using the suffix Koya but they did not receive the treatment equal to a Koya in the higher class or Tarwad Islands.
78. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 178, p.43.
79. Ibid, Para 178, p.43.
80. Ibid, Para 207, p.52.
81. Arakkal Records, Vol.2276 Part-II, Letter from Addeo Rajah Quessa Beebee of Cannanore dated 10th Kumbom 1022 of Malayalam era.
82. W.Robinson, Robinson-I, Para 72, p.40.
83. Ibid, Para 72, p.40.
84. Arakkal Records, Book 29, 1034-38 (Malayalam era); and, R.H.Ellis, Op.cit, p.37. "The Amin is almost always selected from among the Karnevars".
85. W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, P.ccxci.

86. W.Robinson, Robinson-I, Para 73, p.41.
87. Arakkal Records, Vol.2276, Part-II, Nazernamah executed by the Devee people in the Huzzoor Cutcherry, copy taken in the year 1023 (Malayalam era).
88. W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, P.ccxcix.
89. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Note 16, p.69; W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, P.ccxcix; and, R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.69.
90. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Note 16, p.69.
91. W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, P.ccxcii.
92. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Note 16, p.69; and, R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.70.
93. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Note 16, pp.93-94.
94. W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, P.ccxcii.
95. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Note 19, p.71.
96. R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., pp.95-96.
97. Leela Dube, Matrilliny and Islands Religion and Society in the Laccadives, p.3.
98. Arakkal Records, Vol.No.2276, Part-I, p.106. The humble petition of Perokee Oomah inhabitant of Agathy of the Laccadive group to H.V.Conoly, Magistrate of Malabar, dated 30th Kannee, 1029 (Malayalam era). "I am the only daughter of my mother whose elder sister Alima Oomah - a son and a daughter namely Ahmad and Maria and three of us were brought up in the same/Tarwaad/family. While

we were being maintained by my maternal grandfather and grandmother my aunt Alima Oomah died leaving her portion of the estate to my Parents who are her lawful heirs as her children the aforesaid Ahmad and Maria are excluded from the inheritance by the requisition of our law. Subsequently, there to my mother and her parents dying I become sole heir to their estate as there is no other heirs there to in our/Tarwaad/family but as I was very young at the time of their death, the aforesaid Ahmad the son of my aunt, managed the/Tarwaad/family affairs"; and, R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.77.

99. W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, P.ccc; and, R.H.Ellis, Op.cit, p.73.
100. Arakkal Records, Vol.No.2276, Part I, p.106. The humble petition of Perokee Oomah inhabitant of Agathy of the Laccadive group to H.V.Conolly, Magistrate of Malabar, dated 30th Kannee, 1029 (Malyalam era).
101. Ibid, pp.106-107. "New as I am come to age I demanded an account of the estate and the recognition of my right and title to the management thereof".
102. R.H.Ellis, Op.cit.,pp.74-75.
103. W.Logan, Op.cit., Appendix xxi, p.ccxci.
104. W.Robinson, Robinson-I, Para 76, p.43. and, Robinson-II, paras 130, 177&178, 199 & 200, pp.32, 43, 50.
105. W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 130, p.32; and, R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.75.
106. Ibid.
107. R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., pp.95-96.

TRADE1. ITEM OF TRADE OR MERCHANDISE

The society of Lakshadweep lived on trade which was characterised by monopolies of the state. The Exports from Lakshadweep included coir yarn, coconuts, Cowry, Tortoise-shell, Holothuria, lime or Morindacitron, Jaggery, mats, vineger, pindika (a kind of sweet-meat), shark and maas fish of Minicoy.¹ Out of these coir-yarn, coconuts and maas-fish formed the bulk of the total exports, the share of other articles being far less in quantity than making the list of exports impressive. Of the exports only maas-fish found its direct market in cylon and rest of the articles in Canara and Malabar coast.² Throughout the period most important ports of call for the vessels trading in Lakshadweep cargo had been Calicut, Manglore and Cannanore. The coir brought by the Company's Government from the Ameni islands under the monopoly was sold to the Government of Bengal and Bombay and through public auction³ whereas the Ali Rajas sold it to the native merchants.⁴ Non-monopoly items such as coconut, jaggery, pindika, vinager, etc., found market in Malabar.⁵ The imports included rice and other food materials, and, consumer goods such as clothes, cattle, ornaments, teak, mangowood and samboos.⁶

2. ORGANISATION OF TRADE

Since long the islanders had established trade contacts with trading centres such as Muscat, Surat, Ceylon and coastal India⁷ and it appears that the vessels from Malabar and Canara visited these islands loaded with materials and consumer goods, and, exchanged these with islands' produce with individual producer since there is no evidence of existence of wholesale traders in the island,⁸ or else, at the most they did business with the Karnavars. This trade was disturbed by the arrival of the Portuguese in the first decade of the 16th century which continued, for about fifty years, until the Chirakkal ruler in the middle of the 16th century gave the islands in a jagir to the Cannanore family with a title of Ali Raja. The Cannanore rulers traded with their island subjects on authoritative but somewhat equal⁹ and mutually advantageous terms. Introduction of European method of trade, backed by use of force, into the Indian Subcontinent and Indian Ocean posed new problems to the peaceful trade relations and this perhaps caused the establishment of exclusive trade of the Cannanore rulers and monopolies of the state in all the valuable products of the islands. Meanwhile, in 1738, an ambitious person named Bamaly Raja succeeded his uncle to the throne of Cannanore. His reign period witnessed major changes in the trade relationship of the islanders with the outer world. He, with

the help of his vazeer Kunjee Packy, increased his power¹⁰ by asserting independence from the Kolattiris of Chirakkal and accumulated wealth from successful trade with his subjects and abroad. He enforced monopolies of trade in principal products of the islands. W. Robinson (1848) gives details of the process thus: "Bomaly Rajah succeeded his uncle in M.K. 913 (A.D., 1738), and ruled till M.K. 953 (A.D. 1777-78). His intrigue with Hyder Ali, and the success of his trade with his subjects and abroad, under the vazeer Kunjee Packy, raised the power and wealth of the Cannanore family, and occasion was taken to enforce the monopoly of purchase of the principal products of the islands. The authoritative introduction of the coir monopoly took place between M.K. 937 (A.D. 1761-62) and 940 (1764-65)"... W. Logan (1887) and R.H. Ellis (1924) give the time of enforcement of monopolies as A.D. 1765.¹² Excessive exactions and abuses of the monopolies drove the Ameni group islanders to revolt in 1784 and subsequently loss of these islands to Tippu Sultan who made some reforms in the monopolies whereas the Laccadive islanders continued to be oppressed through these monopolies without any relief. Ameni islands came into the hands of the East India Company in 1799 and witnessed uniform and less controlled trade relations in the forthcoming period. The only monopoly, in the island produce, existed throughout this period was that of coir. On the other hand, after the

defeat of Cannanore in 1791 trade monopolies of the ruler were recognised by the British East India Company on an agreement with the Bibi on 13th April 1793 with the condition of payment of the half of the profit, to be accrued from her trade with the subjects, to the company. All Raja Bibi agreed thus. "I, Bebee Bulea, the Princess of Cannanore and of the Laccadive Islands, etc., do acknowledge and give in writing that I will pay to the Government of the Honorable East India Company the moiety of whatever is the produce of my country according to the funds thereof; and out of the 20,000 rupees annual profit which I reap from my trade with the Laccadives. I am also to pay the half to Government, besides of which I do stipulate to pay in like manner the half of whatever further income or profits from the said lands or trade shall be hereafter ascertained to accrue to me by the enquiries of the officers of Government".¹³

1825-28 witnessed price crisis when prices of coir fell considerably due to extended use of cable chains and cheaper supply @ Rs.25 per candy from other sources such as Colombo and Yot de Galle¹⁴ and the Cannanore ruler to compensate his income had already extended monopolies to other articles such as Coconut, in 1825, and decreased the prices of coir. Due to price reduction people of the Laccadive group of islands started seeking ways and means to

evade the monopolies of the state. Some started manufacturing jaggery which was not a monopoly item. W. Robinson (1848) narrates the effect thus: "The recent and unwise reduction of the prices paid, has much influenced the coir trade of this island, as of the others. It is confidently affirmed that the exports of coir have greatly fallen off within the last ten years, and certainly the manufacture of jaggery has largely increased"¹⁵. Other people resorted to smuggling of monopoly items with the connivance of the corrupt state officials. W. Robinson (1848) points out the case of Kalpeni island: "Indeed, though precisely on the footing of the other islands, and equally influenced by the reduction of the prices paid for coir, the lazy islanders have not sought to evade the pressure of the monopoly and the manufacture of jaggery has not gained the same footing as elsewhere but they have evaded in some measure the coconut monopoly and the smuggling was on the increase, for the people of Minicoy, over whom the Beebee has practically now little hold, anchor their boats off the island, and the whole surplus nuts are smuggled off with the connivance of the principal people and Beebee's servants by these active traders, who carry them to Ceylon and elsewhere..."¹⁶ Do further reductions in monopoly prices in 1832, 1830's and 40's caused large scale evasions of monopolies diminishing the profit of the Cannanore ruler who had been acting as a sovereign and a trader both. W. Robinson (1848) wrote about Agatti island thus: "Of late

years there has been a good deal of smuggling of coir from this island. While the trade in nuts has been chiefly clandestine and it is difficult to ascertain the quantity exported. The Beebee's monopoly is now but scantily supplied with nuts; and much oil is made on the spot, whereby the nut monopoly is evaded".¹⁷ Evasion of monopolies had diminished the income of the Cannanore ruler resulting in increasing arrears of the peshkash or moiety to be paid to the company and since the British always desired to put an end to the Raja's monopolies, the opportunity was utilised, on 29th June 1852 when the East India Company's Government withdrew the protection to trade monopoly of the Ali Rajas.¹⁸ Thus, the British provided protection to Ali Raja's monopolies for sixty years and although monopolies of the Raja continued but virtually it became impractical on account of the political situations. Upon the recommendation of W. Robinson coconuts, morinda citron, limes, Holothuria, salt and tobacco were released from monopoly in 1859, but the monopolies of coir, tortoise-shell, ambergris and cowries continued until 1909 when except on coir all other monopolies were abolished with the relinquishment of the "phantom sovereignty" by the Ali Rajas.

During the Cannanore rule the labour of weighing, beating and storing was performed by the islanders for which they

received batta or remuneration at a fixed rate. W. Robinson (1848), in his report mentioned thus: "It is alleged apparently with truth, that batta was paid originally during the whole time of detention in Cannanore, but it was reduced in 1826 to 12 seers of rice to each boat (they are manned with 15 to 18 men) for the three first days, after which the allowance is made every second day till the coir is stored¹⁹". Incentives in the form of allowances seems to have been given by the Raja to the vessel owner for bringing more coir to Cannanore. W. Robinson (1848) reported about such incentives thus: "Another allowance is made to boats fully laden with coir under the name batta for the passage to and from the coast; and varies according to the nazeranah, which may have been paid on the launch of boat in which exports are made²⁰".

3. TRANSPORT AND FREIGHT

Transport is the most important factor in trade, and, shipping was the only available mode of transport required for the island trade. As already stated the upper most section of the society owned the coast-going or trading vessels and the investment in these vessels can be considered as the capital invested for trade in the islands since money was not in circulation and business was carried on barter system and the Raja, who bought articles under monopolies, sold coir to the native merchants on earlier agreed

²¹
 bonds. Apparanly he also received some advances from them, for which evidences are plenty in Arakkal Records, and used these advances to buy rice and consumer goods to be exchanged for the island produce. The Raja acted as a wholesale trader at the coast. Thus, he could save capital to be invested in shipping for island trade and whatever articles he needed for retail business at the islands were shipped free in the vessels of the islanders. ²² All cargo from the islands was shipped in these vessels and the vessel owner acting as an agent of the cargo owners sold cargo to the Raja or wholesale trader through a middle-man and returned back with rice and other cargo loaded in the vessel. He charged 20% as freight on exports of his kudians or dependents which was levied on return cargo of rice. ²³ If the owner of the vessel was not the landlord of the exporter of cargo he received only 10% and rest of 10% was appropriated by the landlord who acted as an agent of his kudian. ²⁴ Thus, the landlord who sold the cargo in the coast received a fixed profit in the form of freight, his manipulative profits in the capacity of an agent notwithstanding. The vessels from every island generally visited the coast twice ²⁵ in a year for business.

4. CONDITIONS OF TRADE

The major portion of the island trade was monopolised

by the state. In the beginning, when the monopolies were first established, the people appears to have accepted them for dual reasons of Raja's economic and political might and geographical setting of the islands. The first provided, although with low profit, an easy and always ready market for the islanders whereas the second had created many difficulties in direct marketing of the island produce in the coastal markets. Further, after the arrival of the British, the monopolies of the Raja were protected and supported by the Company's Government by an agreement signed by the Bibi, the ruler of Cannanore, on the 13th April 1793²⁶ and this British protection continued until Madras Government withdrew it in 1852. The principal people of the islands were involved for the smooth management of the monopolies.²⁷ To keep these monopolies the vessels were asked to obtain documents, from the islands' highest authority, before sailing from the island. Arrangements were made to not to allow the lands of the island produce at other coastal ports than Cannanore, in case of the Laccadive islands, and ports under the British control for Ameni islands.²⁸ Serious offences against these trade monopolies of the state which generally occurred in the Laccadive islands, particularly after fall in prices of coir, were dealt with the use of the muscle power.²⁹

The most important factor involved in the movement

of goods for trade is profitability but in the case of the islanders the trade was not carried for the sole purpose of the profit but also to buy necessities of life. The possible opportunities of profit in this trade were curtailed by the state by means of the monopolies and arbitrary fixation of the prices without any consideration to the market trends of demand and supply. The profits accrued from the lower than market prices payment for the island products was theoretically claimed as state's share in the produce since no land revenue was levied in the islands. The prices received by the islanders were further lowered by fixing higher prices for rice given in exchange to the islanders.

5. INTERNAL RETAIL TRADE

In the Laccadive islands internal retail trade was in the control of the Pandaram who imported rice to the islands. Though, the Pandaram did not pay any freight charges for rice imported to the islands, on board of the vessels owned by the islanders, the exchange rates for coir at the islands were fixed lower than that existed at Cannanore. W. Robinson (1848) reported the rates of exchange: "Under the former rates (at 4 maunds of coir per moodah of rice) they received about 7½ to 9 rupees p.a. candy; but since 1826 (at 6 maunds of coir per moodah of rice) about 3-1/3

moodahs of rice are given for a candy of coir, or about 5 rupees per candy. The poor, who live from hand to mouth, avail themselves of these rates; the richer prefer exporting to Cannanore, by which they save about half a rupee on the candy. None other may trade with the people".³⁰

In the Ameni group of islands whenever and wherever possible the vessel owners brought back rice and other articles to the islands, and, stored and exchanged them for higher rates during the rainy season when islands were totally cut off from the outer world.³¹

6. TRADE MONOPOLIES OF THE STATE

The exclusive rights of the state to trade in various island products are discussed below.

A. COIR

(i) IN THE LACCADIVE ISLANDS

(b) INTRODUCTION OF MONOPOLY AND FIXATION OF PRICES

The most important produce of the islands was coir which was first monopolised in 1765 by Bamaly Rajah of Cannanore and the purchase price for coir at Cannanore was fixed at 30 to 35 rupees (Rs.30 according to W.Logan, Rs. 30 to 35 according to R.H.Ellis) per candy (1 candy= 560 lbs.) whereas the existing market value seems to have

been between 60 to 70 rupees per candy.³² The islanders were paid for their coir in rice at a commutation price of Rs. 2½ per robin or muda (supposed to contain 50 Calicut seers)³³ but the islanders received only 23½ rupee after several deductions made by the state. W. Robinson in his report (1848) gave the details of pricing thus: "The market value of coir was fixed at 30 to 35 rupees per candy imported into Cannanore; it was paid in rice at a commutation price of Rupees 2½ per robin. The duties on coir, & C., exported from the islands and on rice, i.e., imported were transferred to Cannanore, where they were charged as import and export duties, and deducted from the payments made for coir. The actual payment to the people thus became reduced (20 per cent) to about 24 rupees per candy. There were some further miscellaneous deductions, amounting to about one per cent on the whole, on account of expenses, nazeranah, i.e., and the people received about 23½ rupees worth of rice, at 2½ rupees per moodah for each candy of coir, which left a profit on a market value of 65 rupees per candy of coir- of about rupees 40 to 50 per candy".³⁴

These prices paid to the islanders and the commutation prices for rice which were fixed at 2½ rupees per muda in 1770 by the Cannanore ruler were maintained till 1827. However, the price for rice had fallen in the beginning of the 19th century and stood at an average of rupees 1-10-0

per muda, at Cannra from 1000 to 1826, which further reduced³⁶ the actual price paid for coir to the islanders. Thus, the benefit of change in market prices was appropriated by the monopolist and was precluded from reaching to the producer.

(b) QUANTITY OF TRADE

The total export of the coir at the time of imposition of monopoly stood at about 1500 candies, according to W. Robinson³⁷ (Leutenant Ensign Bently calculated the amount at 1560 candies,³⁸ and the Joint Commissioners at 2000 candies³⁹) whereas the Bibi claimed the figure as having never exceeded by 1000 candies.⁴⁰ This quantity of coir received at Cannanore might certainly have decreased by at least one-third after the loss of Ameni group of islands by the Arakkal rulers to Tippu Sultan and subsequently to the British.

(c) REDUCTION IN MONOPOLY PRICES

In 1826, the market price of coir fell considerably, from an average of Rs.60 to below Rs.20⁴¹ and fluctuated as low as 14 rupees per candy.⁴² The Cannanore ruler also reduced the prices of coir from the nominal Rs.30 to 22 rupees per candy with usual deductions and according to W. Robinson's calculation only 10½ rupees per candy of coir were paid to the producer at Cannanore: "as soon as the prices

began to waver in M.K.1002 (A.D.1826), the nominal price was reduced from 30 to 22 rupees per candy, subject to the same deduction, (about 21 per cent, on account of duties and expenses). The value continued to be paid in rice at the same commutation price-rupees $2\frac{1}{2}$ per moodah - although the market price fell to $1\frac{1}{2}$ rupees per moodah. The actual payment to the people became about $10\frac{1}{2}$ rupees per candy. Still as the prices of coir fluctuated as low as 14 rupees per candy, the profits of the Cannanore monopoly must have been small⁴³.

(d) INTRODUCTION OF DIRECT BARTER SYSTEM AND ITS IMPACT

In 1832 at Cannanore, the prices of coir, were further reduced which continued to obtain in the later rule period of the Ali Raja, and, a new system of direct barter of rice without commutation of prices was introduced. W.Robinson (1848) narrates the new system thus: "In M.K.1008 (A.D.1832) further reductions were made, and those changes of system were commenced, which still obtain. Cash rates and commutation prices are abolished, and $5\frac{4}{5}$ moodahs of rice per candy of coir was fixed as the prices, subject to the same deductions of 21 per cent, which left the actual payments about $4\frac{1}{2}$ moodah of rice (at $1\frac{1}{2}$ rupee per moodah) or rupees 6-6-0 per candy of coir"⁴⁴. One of the results of this reduction in prices was certainly the reduced quantity of the imports to the islands in lieu of the exports and impoverisation of the

islanders as a whole resulting into search for methods to avoid the monopolies such as smuggling, and, manufacture of items which were free from the monopolies such as jaggery and oil.

Meanwhile the British, since they always desired an end to the Raja's monopolies, had started entertaining complaints of the people against the monopolies of the Raja and covertly encouraged the defence of the same by the people. ⁴⁵ Some of the islanders, in these complaints, alleged that besides the starvation prices of coir they were subject to further hardships, in the words of W. Logan (1887)", because:-

- (a) The coir was dried again and beaten in bundles at Cannanore with a view to reduce its weight.
- (b) Deductions were made on account of old debts which were never proved to their satisfaction.
- (c) The Raja's agents exacted presents.
- (d) There was considerable delay in settling the accounts and allowing the vessels to return to the islands". ⁴⁶

W. Robinson (1848) also reported about drying and overweighing: "When coir is received, it is dried, beaten, and weighed, not by the candy, but each maund is separately

made up so as to turn the scale; a considerable excess is thus, secured on the candy".⁴⁷ "I have assumed throughout that the candy of 640 lbs. is used; but it is admitted that, for some years at least, a candy of 680 lbs. has been exacted, which places the monopolist in a better position by $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, and the people by the same amount, in worse one".⁴⁸ However, all these charges were denied by the Raja but the fact remains that the islanders have begun defiance of the monopolies in 1840's and on larger scale after the official withdrawal of the British protection in 1852. During sequestration of the Laccadive islands the Ali Raja's lost their trade monopoly as well. In 1865, after the restoration, the Raja increased the prices of coir to Rs.20 per candy and was prepared to raise it further to Rs.25 in 1869.,⁴⁹ when a complete anarchy and abeyance of trade monopolies of the Raja existed in the islands which led to their final sequestration in 1875.

(E) MONOPOLY UNDER THE BRITISH

The prices and system obtained for coir trade in Laccadives after sequestration is narrated by W.Logan thus: "The monopoly rates at which the islanders have been paid since 1st January 1878 for their coir are as follows:-

- (a) First sort of coir per candy of 560 lbs., Rs.6 plus
(in italics) four sacks or eight mudas of rice, nominally equivalent to Rs.22 in all, but actually, rising or falling above or below that sum according as the price of a mada of rice rises above or falls below Rs.2 per mada.
- (b) Second sort coir do, Rs.4 plus (in italics) $3\frac{1}{2}$ sacks or 7 mudas of rice, nominally equivalent to Rs.18 in all.
- (c) Third, sort coir do, Rs.4 plus (in italics) sacks of rice, nominally equivalent to Rs.14 in all. Each sack contains 100 Calicut seers of 65 to as of rice each".⁵⁰

(ii) IN THE AMENI ISLANDS

(a) QUANTITY OF TRADE AND PRICES PAID BY THE BRITISH EAST INDIA COMPANY'S GOVERNMENT

In Ameni group of islands, which exported, at an average 520 candies of coir annually,⁵¹ Tippoo Sultan had given fairer, than Ali Raja, prices (commutation prices for rice were fixed at 2 rupees per mada).⁵² The prices paid by him, perhaps, prepared foundation for slightly better than Ali Raja's prices paid by the British who succeed him in 1799. In the early years the British East India Company Government paid all coir at a uniform rate, of course, far lower than the existing market rates. The monopoly was employed as a

a method of revenue collection. In 1807, the Principal Collector of Malabar reported:

"I have simplified the mode of accounting for & paying the revenue by the inhabitants greatly since I received charge of the islands:-

1st they are bound to deliver the whole of their coir produce to Government at 25 rupees per Manglore Candy of 560 lbs.

2nd, Government agree to pay them for the above, 3/4th in rice at the rate of 2 rupees per mora of 42 seers & the remainder in money.

3rdly. Their produce in Coconuts - Gum & shells & c. which was formerly taken from them by the Sirkar is now restored them, & a more essential advantage granted them, that of exemption of Customs on the rice imported into their islands annually".
53

(b) INTRODUCTION OF THE SYSTEM OF CLASSIFICATION AND CHANGES THEREOF

These rates obtained till 1820 when a system of classification of coir into three grades was introduced under which the first grade coir obtained 25 rupees, second 20 rupees and third only 17½ rupees per candy.
54

The result of average payment of this classification

was found to be:

For Ameni and Kadmat Coir:-

66	per cent	was paid	as	first	class
22½	"	"	"	"	second "
11½	"	"	"	"	third "

For Chetlat coir (which was finer and whiter)-

77½	per cent	was paid	as	first	class
15	"	"	"	"	second "
7½	"	"	"	"	third "

For kiltan coir (finer and whiter)

75	per cent	was paid	as	the	first	class
15½	"	"	"	"	second	"
9½	"	"	"	"	third	"

This system of classification was, perhaps, generally used by the corrupt Company servants to manipulate lower payments for the island coir which led to complaints from the islanders, against the system, such as unfairness and delay in sorting. In 1837, on the recommendation of the Panchayat of the islanders and the merchants, though the recommendations were not accepted in toto, it was ordered that the classification was to be done on a fixed percentage, not as on the examination of quality, and the rates were fixed as following:-

For Ameni and Kadmat coirs:-

70 per cent was to be paid for as Ist class coir @ Rs.21-4-0 per Manglore candy of 560 lbs.,
20 per cent was to be paid for as IInd class @ Rs.17-8-0 per Manglore candy.

10 per cent was to be paid for as IIIrd class @ Rs.13-4-6 per Manglore candy.

Kiltan and Chetlat coir (being finer and whiten obtained better prices):-

80 per cent was to be paid for as Ist class
15 " " " " " IInd " 56 e
5 " " " " " IIIrd "

(C) METHODS APPLIED BY THE BRITISH TO MAINTAIN HIGH PROFITABILITY OF THE MONOPOLY

Like Cannanore ruler the British evolved methods of maintaining profitability of the monopoly trade which was decreasing due to fall in market prices of coir. First, since the market price of rice (one-fourth of the price was paid in cash and three-fourths in rice) were 25 per cent less than the commutation price @ Rs.2 per muda the Government saved 18-3/4 per cent of the price paid. Secondly, a charge of 1/2 maund of coir per muda of rice was levied as Sea Customs duty and placed in arrear against each boat and deducted next year before any coir was paid for, which

reduced the payment by another $18\frac{3}{4}$ per cent, making total saving of $37\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in all.⁵⁷

(D) RE-INTRODUCTION OF THE PRE-CHANGES CLASSIFICATION

The above system more or less obtained till 1896 when the system of classification abandoned in 1837 was reintroduced.⁵⁸ Due to fixation in classification the quality and quantity of coir produced in the islands went down. To keep the profitability the Government, on the recommendation of stokes, imposed a fine if less than 674 candies of coir were exported. According to classification re-introduced in 1896, which came into force in 1898, following prices obtained for Ameni coir:-

Ist class coir was paid @ Rs.21-14-0 per candy	
IIInd " " " " @ 17-8-0 " "	59
IIIrd " " " " @ 13-2-0. " "	

One fourth of the payment, as before, being paid in cash and three-fourths in rice.⁶⁰ In addition free of tax salt supply was raised from 1 maund for every candy of coir, first introduced in 1866, to $1\frac{1}{2}$ maunds.⁶¹

B. COCONUT

(i) FREE TRADE IN THE AMENI ISLANDS

Another important article of export from the islands was

coconut which found principal market in Malabar. Unfortunately detailed information regarding the market trends, amount of trade in the article from the Ameni islands, etc., is not available. W. Robinson also found himself handicapped on this account. He writes: "No account of this have been kept, and we must rely on the statements of the people, who seemed ready enough to tell the probable exports of their neighbours though willing to understate their own"⁶². He gives price for island nuts in the coastal market from 7 to 10 rupees per thousand.⁶³ The tentative average exports of surplus nuts from Ameni stood from between 1 Lakh to 1 Lakh 20 thousand, from Kiltan between 1½ lakhs to 2 lakhs, from Chetlat within 50 thousand per annum.⁶⁴ The Ameni islanders always brought rice in exchange of nuts and exchanged it at the rate of 3 to 4 maunds of coir per muda of rice thereby making nearly cent per cent profit.⁶⁵

(ii) INTRODUCTION AND REMOVAL OF MONOPOLY IN THE LACCADIVE ISLANDS

In Laccadives export of nuts was free until 1826 when, to compensate reduced profitability from coir occurred due to fall in its commercial value and steep fall in its commercial value and market price, delivery of all nuts to the Raja, at Cannanore, was made compulsory and trade in this article also became exclusive.⁶⁶ During pre-monopoly period the Raja gave advance⁶⁷ to the producers and the

system seems to be advantageous for the islanders.⁶⁸ The trade in nuts from Laccadives amounted from 10 to 15 Lakhs. After establishment of monopoly it decreased by fifty per cent to even as low as 2 lakhs⁶⁹ since the islanders had begun to manufacture jaggery, extract oil and resorted to smuggling to avoid monopoly which has reduced their profit. The price paid for the nuts under the monopoly was fixed at 5 rupees per 1,000 nuts delivered at Cannanore. The payment was done in rice, on the import of which into the islands a duty of 10 per cent was further charged, which reduced the actual price to about 4½ rupees per 1,000 nuts.⁷⁰ Free trade in coconut was re-introduced in the Laccadives in 1859 which certainly would have increased the quantity of export in the article.

C. COWRY MONOPOLY IN THE LACCADIVE ISLANDS

The cowry had long been an important article of commerce for Lakshadweep people which is found in considerable quantity in the island shoals. It is not known at what period the monopoly of cowry trade commenced in Lakshadweep. It was received by measure of exchange for rice. At the earliest fixed rates, two seers of rice (price of rice averaged 1½ rupees per muda) per seer of cowries were paid whereas market price ranged between 65 to 80 rupees per candy (1 candy = 312 seers).⁷¹ In 1826, when the market value of coir fell, the rates were reduced to 1 seer of rice

per seer of cowry, no change however had taken place in the market value.⁷² The decreasing supply under this reduction, however, forced the Raja to increase the payment to $1\frac{1}{2}$ seers of rice for one seer of cowries.⁷³ W. Robinson (1848) calculated average supply between 10 to 12 candies per year.⁷⁴ The monopoly continued into the next century. In Ameni group of islands, however, the trade was free but details are not available.

D. TOBACCO AND SALT MONOPOLIES IN THE LACCADIVE ISLANDS

Tobacco and salt monopolies were brought into the Islands after their introduction in the coast⁷⁵ but, unfortunately, no further information is available regarding salt monopoly. Tobacco monopoly was found difficult to maintain in the Ameni Islands since its consumption was optional.⁷⁶ However, in the Laccadive islands it was maintained through forced consumption. W. Robinson (1848) narrated the method thus: "When tobacco arrives, the chief people of CHERI (division) are assembled., and to them is made over the share to be distributed in their respective CHERI. These, then, with the help of the Karyakars, made the further distribution to the people. No option of receiving it whatever is admitted. As soon as the accounts are prepared coir is levied in lieu, or the value is set down as a debt for subsequent realization against the family of its recipient or his landlord (KEVY)".⁷⁷ Tobacco was

imported directly from Bengal in the Raja's ship or
 supplied to the islanders on account of the Raja.⁷⁸ Coir
 was received in exchange for tobacco originally @ 40
maunds of coir per three bundless of 3 maunds of tobacco
 each.⁷⁹ The rates were reduced to 75 maunds of coir per
 bundle of tobacco and these rates continued till the end
 of the monopoly in 1859.⁸⁰ The annual supply of tobacco
 according to W. Robinson (1848) was about 25 to 30 bundles.⁸¹

E. MINOR MONOPOLIES OF THE ALI RAJA

Ali Rajas earned profit from monopolistic trade of various other articles such as tortoise shell, Holothuria, ambergris, morinda-citron, etc. Trade in these articles was irregular and therefore difficult to ascertain the quantity of trade and income therefrom. The monopoly in these articles was formally discontinued in 1859.⁸²

The island of minicoy maintained its separate identity in trade relationship during the whole period and no monopolies, except that on cowries,⁸³ were imposed by the Raja. They were free to trade with the Maldives and Ceylon. Their staple export was maas-fish. W. Logan states this trade relationship thus: "Maas-fish is cured and exported largely to Ceylon. In 1876, there were 8 large and 33 small vessels. The former increased to 9 in 1882. Of these, two go to the coast, the Maldives and Ceylon, and the others, to the Bengal

side".⁸⁴ In a good year maas-fish trade fetched around
 25000 rupees.⁸⁵ But regarding various aspects of Minicoyan
 society even W. Robinson (1848) showed his helplessness thus:
 "I have no data on which I would be willing to hazard any
 conjecture as to the annual Value of Minicoy".⁸⁶ But a
 unique feature, of presence of rich local traders, not
 found in other islands of Lakshadweep, is noticed in
 Minicoy.⁸⁷

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32. "Malabar Joint Commissioners' Report", A Minut recorded on 19th October, 1792, quoted in Robinson-II, Appendix B, pp.86-87, "The benefit she derives from her islands, exclusive of the gardens valued at 2,400 rupees, are through the medium of trade; she supplies them with rice, cloths, etc., and receive in return the coir produced there at the low rate of Rs.35 per candy; the annual quantity is estimated at about 600 candies, and the market price being about Rs.65 to 70 leaves, after every deduction of charge, a handsome profit".; W.Robinson, Robinson-II, Para 133, pp.32-33, Para 142, p.35, W. Logan, Malabar, Vol.II, Appendix xxi, PP.cclxxvi & cclxxvii; and, R.H.Ellis, Op.cit., p.42.
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65. Ibid., Para 61, p.34.
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CONCLUSION

Although the 19th Century society of Lakshadweep did not witness radical changes, still it is true that the wheel of change which brought many transformations in the society in the coming century was set in this period. The discussion in the preceding chapters shows that while the highest political authority remained unchanged in the Amindivi islands and witnessed changes^s in other islands the motives of administration remained the same, namely the maximum exaction of the surplus produce which necessitated the perpetuation of socio-political and economic stratification of the society. The changes, if any, in the society were very few.

The share in political authority held by the Karnavars as a part of the administrative apparatus continued to be enjoyed by the same group. Their position in the society was further strengthened by the appointment^{of} the Amin from amongst them on Winterbotham's recommendation (1877) that the islanders should be appointed as Amins in the Laccadives and Minicoy. The lower groups did not find any representation in the political institutions and though in the last years of the 19th Century these people i.e. the Melacheries had begun to realise their exploitation by the upper, semi-

nant class and wished a share in political power, but the right appears to have been jealously guarded by the upper class. D. Cowries, in his report wrote about Amindivi islands thus: "There are no Moktessors to represent the lowest Melacheri caste. Some people of this caste hinted to me that they would like some to be appointed, but the Monegar's opinion is that the Moketessors of higher castes would strongly object to the innovation¹".

Originally the property consisted of only the trees and houses built upon the land and the land alone did not form the property, and, anyone had the right to plant a tree on a vacant plot of land. The formation of 'idea of property in land', not in trees, only was an important economic change established in the 19th century. Thus wrote R.H. Ellis, "On the other hand, there is growing tendency to demarcate the ground and to define plots of trees by boundaries in documents²". The reason for this change perhaps lies in the claim of land by the state and erection of boundaries around such lands.

Some individual Melacharies has succeeded in joining ownership of land and small coast-going vessels and improved their economic condition but their relationship vis-a-vis. the dominant class remained unchanged. Although some of them

have started even using the title Koya, used by the Karnavars, and dress like the upper class but they had to conform with the age old usage vis-a-vis. the upper class. But it is certain that the social status had begun to give way to economic status upto a certain degree. The Malmis, who earlier had been considered inferior to the Karnavars gained equality in status after accumulation of wealth and property.

But the most important structural factor i.e. the tenant-landlord relationship, on which the society was economically organised remained unchanged. The tenants continued to serve their landlords on similar terms and conditions and the landlord did not try to diversify his economic activities. Although the land-lord could have used free labour of his tenant for extra-productive purposes such as manufacture of coir etc. but the question that why he did not do so remains unanswered. The only possible answer to this question is perhaps this possible development towards capitalism was checked by the monopoly of the state.

The essential shift was in the field of exploitation of the labour market available in the coast which points towards a transitional phase from medievalism to modernism. Though capital formation to a considerable level could not take place due to exactions above the subsistence level by

the state and the absence of money economy, the upper class was successful inⁿ accumulation, upto some extent, in the form of increasing number of the coast-going vessels.

The trade relations did not witness any marked change except in prices or profitability and removal of various minor monopolies in the second half of the 19th century. But the characteristic feature of this trade relationship was the people's liveliness to the profitability and their willingness to resort to new methods to keep the profitability such as smuggling, jaggery manufacture, oil extraction etc.

Thus, though the society of Lakshadweep appears to be static during the 19th century, the waves of change and transformation were setting in. The clash of interests of various groups was becoming frequent, the dominant section trying to retain privileges and status and the lower classes endeavouring to get a share of the resources in order to improve their condition.

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