Chapter 3

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN KERALA SOCIETY

3.1 Kerala: a society in transition

The earlier chapters provided the rationale for studying migration in general and peasant migration in particular; they also provided a theoretical focus for the present study. This chapter attempts to sketch the historical process of continuity and change in Kerala society — in order to place the accelerated rate of social change and population mobility in recent years compared to centuries of stagnation and immobility. The central argument is that changes in diverse spheres of the economy and society at different historical periods had differential impact on social groups and collectivities due to their structural compatibility or incompatibility to adjust to and take advantage of changes. Particularly important in this context were the family organization, attitudes to occupations, etc. of different social groups.

This chapter is divided into two main sections. In the first we present social organization and economic arrangements as they existed in the Malayalam speaking region at the arrival of the British. In the next section we unfold the changes which resulted directly or indirectly from the impact of British colonialism and other spontaneous developments.
3.2 Structure of society during Pre-British period

Political Structure

Modern Kerala was born in 1956 as a result of the linguistic reorganization of Indian States. At independence Kerala comprised three distinct political units: the Malabar district of the Madras Presidency of the British in the North; the princely State of Cochin in the Centre; and the princely State of Travancore in the South. Upto the 12th century Kerala experienced some amount of political unity under the Cheras. But after the decline of Chera power the land was divided into numerous petty principalities and the chiefdoms bounded by natural geographical barriers like rivers and hillocks. In the eighteenth century, however, three powerful local chiefs, namely the Zamorin of Calicut in Malabar, Shaktan Thampuran in Cochin and Marthanda Varma in Travancore were able to subjugate lesser chiefs.

Several factors are responsible for this long period of political disunity. One of them is Kerala's peculiar ecological character. The whole region is criss-crossed with rivers and rivulets which become virtually uncrossable during the monsoons. At a time when communications were poorly developed contact between the different regions was difficult, assisting the local chiefs to be independent of any central authority. A second reason is that since almost all the
cultivable land was well-supplied with rain water the need for the construction and maintenance of large scale irrigation works did not arise since pressure of population on land was not acute. In most oriental societies irrigation works was a major springboard of central authority and in Kerala this did not obtain. A third reason is that the Western Ghats effectively acted as an insurmountable barrier to aggressors from the rest of India and this preempted the need for uniting against a common enemy. This left Kerala to evolve its own personality and culture.

However Kerala was never entirely devoid of external influences. It had a long tradition of sea-borne trade with the Chinese, the Romans, the Arabs etc. From the very beginning of the Christian era Kerala had small Christian and Jewish communities. Later Islam came to Kerala via the Arabs and Jainism and Budhism through Ceylonese monks. With the arrival of Aryan immigrants from the North (who came to be known as Namboodiri Brahmins), Kerala came into contact with the larger Hindu culture and the earlier Dravidian, Jain and Budhist religions could not withstand the Aryan onslaught. Kerala was also the first entry point of colonial European powers. Vasco-da-Gama arrived at Calicut in 1498. Thereafter Kerala came under the influence of Portuguese, Dutch and British colonialism. Of these, the British alone were able to effect a 19th century onwards.
Social Organization

During the period of political disunity the only common thread in Kerala society was the Namboodiri Brahmin dominated feudal social arrangements, the chief feature of which was the *chathurvarnya* system of social differentiation. In this system the Brahmin was accorded the highest ranking in ritual as well as economic spheres. From the indigenous population they created a Warrior and ruling class of *Kshatriyas* who accepted the Brahmins as advisors and took upon themselves the task of protecting the ritual and economic position of the Brahmins. All the other classes of the population were treated as *Sudras*.

The *chathurvarnya* system as applied to Kerala, however, contained several functional lacunae. The *Kshatriyas*, a numerically insignificant section of the population could not supply the militia. A segment of the *Sudras*, the Nairs, hence developed into the warrior caste. Similarly, the Brahmin law givers did not provide for a trading or *Vaishya* community and this role was assumed by the communities outside the pale of Hindu society such as the Christians in Travancore and Cochin and the Moplah Muslims in Malabar. The Moplahs and the Christians also engaged themselves in cultivation as tenants of landlords.

Another major body of cultivators was provided by the Ezhavas (known as Theeyas in Malabar). They also engaged in coconut picking, toddy tapping and jaggery making. Their
touch would pollute the castes from the Nairs upwards and this restricted their contact with the 'superior' castes. The most depressed section of the population was the slave-castes comprising the Parayas, Pulayas etc, who were the argestic slaves of rulers, military men and landlords and agricultural labourers of superior tenure holders. Even their sight was considered polluting to the castes from Ezhavas upwards.

**Family organization**

The family organization of the different caste groups was also designed to meet the demands of a typical feudal society. The Namboodiris followed a form of patrilineal patrilocal joint family system in which only the eldest son was permitted to marry and a valid marriage could be contracted only with a Namboodiri girl; only his children could inherit joint family property. The other male members were permitted and even encouraged to enter into a type of liaison called *sambandham* with Nair females; children of this union belonged to the mother's Nair Tarwad. Namboodiri property passed along the male line. Property could not be sold though it could be leased or mortgaged. Children of most Namboodiri males would not become Namboodiris. This system had several consequences. Firstly it discouraged subdivision of family property. It also restricted growth of Namboodiri population because many females of this caste remained unmarried and offspring of most males were born outside the caste. Thirdly through the alliance with Nair females Namboodiris were able
to exert influence on the management of Nair property and customs. Accretion to Namboodiri land holdings through gifts and purchase, the virtual absence of population growth and the influence exerted on Nair affairs assured the Namboodiris virtual monopoly of land till very recent times.

The Nair matrilineal system of family and inheritance was complementary to the Namboodiri system. Descent was traced through a female ancestress, residence was matrilocal, family property was impartible and inherited through the female line and managed by the eldest surviving male member called the karanavan. Such a family and inheritance unit was called the tarwad which often consisted of several generations of descendants and several hundred members living under the same roof. The karanavan or the manager had very sweeping powers in the management of family property and enforcing discipline among the members but land could in no way be sold or perpetually alienated without the approval of all adult male members of the tarwad. Since the karanavan's wife and children belonged to and lived in another tarwad he could not provide for them from his tarwad property or even from his self-acquired income. This gave rise to very weak conjugal ties, the husband visiting his wife at her tarwad only at night. The union could be dissolved any time by the wife by symbolically placing her spouse's sandals outside her bedroom.
Though in the early times some of the castes such as Ezhavas followed the matrilineal joint family system, later on they changed over to the patrilineal, nuclear family. The Muslims except in South Malabar by and large followed the patrilineal system and the Christians were patrilineal throughout. As we shall see later on, the type of family organization had important consequences for the different caste groups in adjusting to the cash economy which was to develop in the twentieth century. Those communities which followed or changed over to the patrilineal nuclear family system were more favourably disposed to take advantage of the opportunities offered by a monetized economy.

Agrarian structure

The land tenure system of Kerala evolved through centuries of custom and usage. The myth that the land of Kerala was redeemed from the sea by Lord Parashurama and gifted to the Namboodiri Brahmins gained wide acceptance in Kerala, To transfer the land to the Namboodiris or to the temples controlled by them would be a token of respect to the Brahmin and thereby an assurance of salvation. It was stipulated that the original owners who now became tenants would be the actual occupants in perpetuity. There was an additional incentive to such voluntary surrenders since wars between rival chieftains was only too common and there was always the possibility of conversion of the land into the
personal demesne of the conquering chieftain. No chieftain would, however, dare attach the properties of the Brahmins (Brahmaswoms) and of the temples (Dewaswoms). The petty owners, as tenants of Brahmins and temples were assured uninterrupted access to land since the latter held the land in trust. By Logan's time the surrender of land to temples had become a common device of many janmis to escape land revenue assessment or to prevent family land from being sold or attached to meet debt payments. Thus throughout the length and breadth of Kerala the Brahmins, the temples, local chieftains and a few Nair military men who helped protect the interests of Brahmins and chieftains became the janmis (owners of land by birth right literally). This was a society where the right to own land was determined by caste status. Social relationships were governed by tenure status which in turn was governed by caste and kinship ties.

Part of a Namboodiri's exalted position stemmed from his status as a janmi; but the right of janman was defined in such a way as virtually to confine its enjoyment to Namboodiris and Nairs of the highest caste.

The janmis, however considered performance of manual field operations to be a demeaning occupation. In order to ensure cultivation of land and appropriate a share of the agricultural income, the janmis created a tenurial system called Kanom. Most of the kanom tenancies were conferred on the Nairs who, in their turn, created subtenancies such
as verumpattom (a simple lease). Most of the verumpattakkars, or actual tillers of the soil were Christians and Ezhavas in Travancore and Moplah Muslims and Theeyas in Malabar. Untouchable castes like the Parayas and Pulayas were argestic slaves or agricultural labourers.

This monolithic agrarian structure started undergoing dramatic changes in the 18th century. In Malabar, under the impact of the Mysorean invasion, several rajas and janmis fled to Travancore leaving their possessions with their Moplah tenants. In order to raise cash through land revenue, which was the prime motive for the invasion of Malabar, the Mysorean conquerors introduced a comprehensive land revenue assessment in cash and made direct settlements with Moplahas and Theeyas who were the actual tillers of the soil.

In Travancore, Marthanda Varma, the ruler of Venad, defeated the Dutch at Kolachal in 1741 and annexed the territories of rebellious local chieftains and converted them into sircar(government) lands. However, the territories of the loyal chieftains was left undisturbed. By the end of the eighteenth century about one half of the cultivated land of Travancore was under direct State ownership and the state was the largest Janmi. But it fully respected the customary rights of the tenants.
3.3 Changes during the British period

Towards the end of the eighteenth century Kerala came under the umbrella of British colonialism. The Mysore interregnum ended in Malabar in 1792 with the defeat of Tipu Sultan and Malabar was annexed to the Bombay Presidency. Treaty arrangements with Travancore in 1788 and with Cochin in 1791 brought these units under British suzerainty, though they were treated as princely States owing allegiance to the Paramount power. Thereafter British colonialism dictated the pattern and pace of social and economic developments in Malabar directly and in Travancore and Cochin indirectly. Below we trace the developments in Malabar and Travancore leaving out Cochin (since it is not relevant for purposes of our study) as we are dealing with migrants from Travancore region to Malabar.

(a) Developments in Travancore

Changes in Agrarian structure

The immediate impact of British colonialism on Travancore was the burden of annual cash indemnity payable to the British as per treaty arrangements. In order to meet this the State was compelled to levy land revenue even without systematic 'settlements' with land owners and tenants.
By this time 80 percent of the cultivated land and almost whole of the waste lands were under direct State ownership. Revenue assessment was very moderate, and the purest form of ryotwadi land tenure assessment was implemented for sircar land. Though the ryots had no ownership rights they enjoyed fixity of tenure.\(^{16}\) However one third of the cultivated land was under private janmis who were enjoying them as free-hold on favourable tenures with a slight assessment called rajabhogam. The tenants under them had no fixity of tenure and were harassed by their landlords in several ways.

However the janmis could not go too far in exploiting their tenants due to the easy availability of government wasteland which was tax free for the first ten years and claims for the cost of improvement of newly reclaimed waste land was readily accepted. The most dramatic change in the agrarian structure of Travancore took place in 1865 when full ownership right was granted to tenants who were holding over 20,000 acres of sircar patmom (pandarevaka patmom) land subject to the payment of land revenue assessment. The implications were far reaching. Since restrictions on transfer of land was removed land became a commodity that could be bought or sold in the market. Within one year of the Proclamation land valued at Rs.4.75 lakh was sold among the cultivators.\(^{17}\) The sellers were mostly Nairs who needed
cash for education, the performance of a costly ceremony like the telikettu kalvanam, or the repayment of an old debt. Christians, Ezhavas and other cultivating and trading communities benefitted from such transactions.

A proclamation in 1867 benefitted the kanom tenants of private janmis which prohibited eviction, provided the tenant paid rent and other dues in accordance with custom, usage and law. Recognizing that the inferior sub-tenants continued to be exploited the Janmi and Kudian Act of 1896 was enacted. The 1932 amendment to this Act converted kanom tenants into real proprietors under the only obligation of paying janvikaram.18

Another development having far reaching consequences was the creation of the Public Works Department (PWD) in 1863. It employed scores of labourers belonging to the backward castes such as Ezhavas, Pulayas, Parayas etc. on cash wages. Thus the lower castes who previously had to perform forced labour (uriyam) were now introduced to a cash economy and made relatively independent of their feudal masters.19 Landowners were forced to pay higher wages to their labourers. Another class which prospered were contractors and entrepreneurs, chiefly non-Malayali Brahmins, Christians and Tamil Sudras. Skilled staff like engineers, supervisors, clerks etc. also came from these sections.20
Within a short period the PWD was able to improve communications and road networks. The newly constructed Kottayam-Madura road was of immense use in establishing plantations by helping to bring cheap labour and Provisions from the Madras Presidency and to cart the estate produce to Kottayam. Betel nut, pepper and other cash crops of Kerala found their way to Madras through this road and Kottayam, a Syrian Christian centre, experienced unprecedented prosperity.²¹

Extension & Commercialisation of Agriculture

Several commercial innovations such as the abolition of the State monopoly in pepper and tobacco which had encouraged corruption and smuggling, abolition of import and export duties payable by Travancore ports etc. worked wonders. Alleppy grew into Travancore’s chief port and trading centre. Petty trade and retailing became profitable and benefitted Non-Malayali Brahmins, Muslims and Syrian Christians. There was a pepper boom in the 1880s. Export from Travancore increased dramatically and government were able to generate impressive budgetary surpluses in contrast to the deficit budgets which Travancore was used to previously.²²

From 1860 government offered all types of encouragement to induce European capital to the plantation sector. Forest land was leased out to planters on the High Ranges with a very light assessment which varied from five annas to ₹one per acre for coffee and tea and rupees two and three for
rubber and cardamom respectively. In 1926 for every acre of tea the value of exported tea was Rs. 500/- A major share of the income earned by government by way of sale of land and revenue assessment was spent on construction of roads, roadbuilding subsidies to planters and surveys.

These measures had the desired effect. In 1905 the plantation companies incorporated and working in Travancore were only three and the number incorporated outside but working in Travancore was not known. The figures rose to 89 and 19 respectively in 1945. Similarly there was a rapid increase in the area cultivated with plantation crops such as tea, coffee, cardamom and rubber. Thus plantations spread into the whole of the eastern high range areas of Travancore. The predominance of European capital can be gauged from the fact that the companies registered outside and working in Travancore had a paid up capital of Rs. 77 million as against only 28 million for the companies registered within Travancore.

Though a majority of plantation labourers were imported from the nearby Tamil districts, educated Malayalees, especially Syrian Christians, were able to occupy the managerial and clerical positions offered by the plantations. Planting was at its lowest ebb in 1885 but still there were 300 Christians, excluding coolies, on the plantations all the year round. Some of the Christians even opened up their own
plantations, and two of such holdings exceeded 500 acres.28

This period also saw great demand by peasants for reclaimable agricultural waste. This was aided by the numerous incentives offered by government for reclamation of wasteland and the example set by the planters. It was mainly on the dry areas in the midland and highland regions that this tremendous expansion was taking place. This was the region east of Kottayam, on the newly constructed Kottayam-Madura road, the heartland of Syrian Christians. One of the British Residents wrote in 1874,

that this road was changing the whole character of the country...... In some sections these roads traverse forests which along the intermediate line are rapidly giving way to a succession of clearings..... At other sections the country traversed is comparatively open, boldly undulating with valleys and slopes of considerable productiveness. But the people seem to have rested curiously remote from intercommunication.29

The reclaimed area was cultivated with cash crops like pepper, ginger, lemon grass and tapioca. Though reliable crop data are available only after 1920 it is reasonable to assume that from the second half of the 19th century cash crops constituted nearly 40 percent of total cultivated area of Travancore.30 On the midland and high land regions cash crops must have been three fourths of the total area.

There was an important reason for the expansion of cultivation on dry land. As the sample survey undertaken by Varghese31 has revealed the rate of exploitation by the land-
lord on dry land was not as high as on wet land. For while charging rent, the landlord had to allow for the greater cost of cultivation of cash crops on dry land.

Sometimes the reclamation of forest went on in an unauthorised way, leading to "the wanton destruction of forests" as observed by a government communique in 1899. Land offered for cherikal cultivation by certain local chiefs had led to the unauthorized permanent occupation particularly at Mundakayam, Peruvanthanam and Peerumedu etc. which were the possessions of the Vanjipuzha chief, and adjacent to the areas where Syrian Christians predominated. Government contemplated several measures such as acquisition of the chieftain's possessions to prevent deforestation.

In the low lands, though cultivable area had reached saturation point, there remained one more avenue which could be tapped - the backwaters. Reclamation of the backwaters for cultivation, popularly known in Kerala as kaval cultivation, began in right earnest at the beginning of the 20th century by the high price of rice and the inability of rice production to keep pace with population growth. Here again Syrian Christians took the lead, particularly the capitalists among them since reclamation of the backwaters is capital intensive. Kaval cultivation though subject to several risks, was extremely profitable. The surplus generated by these cultivators were reinvested in acquiring land and starting plant-
All these developments led to an average of nearly two percent per annum increase in cultivated area in Travancore between 1820 and 1911. The cadastral survey of 1911 revealed that out of the total surveyed area over 64 percent was cultivated and 23 percent was cultivable waste. Cultivated land came to about 72 percent of the arable lands, without counting the plantations and other cultivated area in the unsurveyed tracts. The cultivated area increased to 79.7 percent in 1921, to 96.3 percent in 1931 and 97.7 percent in 1941.

Caste, conversion and education

Ezhavas, Pulayas and Parayas in North Travancore and the Shanars in South Travancore suffered several injustices for centuries without questioning. In the middle of the nineteenth century, however, conversion to Christianity, chiefly Protestantism, offered them a possible chance of escape from traditional disabilities. Missionary work was carried on in South Travancore by the London Missionary Society (LMS) and in the North by the Church Missionary Society (CMS). The missionaries ardently supported their lower caste converts to fight against social discrimination. The chief issues around which they mobilized the lower castes were abolition of slavery and forced labour, freedom to use public roads, appear in public places and speak and dress like the highest castes. The missionaries politicized
the issues by publishing articles and pamphlets, petitioning the Madras Government and so on. The first victory was scored in 1885 when sirkar slaves were emancipated and legal recognition to all aspects of slavery withdrawn. As a result of missionary activity lower castes in general and converts in particular became restive and began to question traditional caste rules. Clashes between lower castes and higher castes erupted periodically, and culminated in the 'breast clothe disturbances' of 1859. In July of the same year an official proclamation permitted Shanar women to cover their breasts but the other lower castes had to wait till 1865 for the same prerogative. In 1870 certain roads designated as 'public' were thrown open to all castes. Judges were instructed to make alternative arrangements for hearing the cases of lower castes barred from certain offices and law courts near temples. But most of these concessions only remained on paper since the government officials, who belonged to the higher castes flouted them in practice giving rise to all round cynicism among the lower castes.

The missionaries did not remain content with agitating for the civil rights of their converts. In order to raise their economic position they imparted them education and employment. In those days even the higher castes had to depend on missionary institutions for education. English education helped to get employment not only in Travancore but also outside.
with a view to breaking the missionary monopoly in education Dewan Madhav Rao's administration patronized English and Vernacular education. Academic qualifications were made the basis for recruitment to certain posts in Government service. English schools were established in eight chief towns and by 1864 there were more than 1,500 students in these schools. By 1871 most of the 246 revenue villages in the state had vernacular schools and literacy increased rapidly. 42

However sirkar schools were open only to high castes and influential Syrian Christians, and this state of affairs continued for a long period. Missionary schools were the only recourse to lower castes. In 1860 LMS and CMS schools had an enrolment of about 10,000 students and the schools run by Jacobites, Roman Syrians, and Latin Catholics had 40,000 students. 43 It was at this period that the Roman Syrians began showing interest in the educational field.

During the 1870s and the 1880s, disputes and litigation between different denominations of Christians had the indirect result of expansion of educational institutions since each sect competed with the other in establishing educational institutions. In 1879 the Mar Thomas Athanasius faction of the Orthodox Syrians had 82 schools which received grants-in-aid. The Mar Dionysius faction had 52, all Roman Catholics nil and Protestants 207. This number increased to 103, 92, 49 and 468 respectively in 1895. 44
Education, Government service and Communal interests

The immediate result of Madhav Rao's new recruitment policy was the influx of non-Malayali Brahmins. This was resented by a wide section of educated Malayalees. The free boarding and lodging at government expense provided to the Brahmins, their dominance in the trade of rice, tobacco, and clothe, the fact of their being moneylenders and the influence exerted by the King's favourite, Saravanan Amud Narayana Ayyar on state affairs were other causes of popular annoyance with the non-Malayali Brahmins. 45

Within the context of their disintegrating family system and the fear of losing their economic dominance to the Christians, the Nairs hoped to retain their dominance through government service. Literacy among them rose from 21 percent in 1875 to 37 percent in 1891. 46 They were also successful in capturing more than a quarter of the choicest posts in government, but this was far less than their share in the total population. So, inorder to oust the foreign Brahmins there developed an alliance of the Nairs with Christians and other Malayali communities.

In spite of their achievement in the educational field Christians were kept out from government service. The refusal of government to offer employment to the first London educated Malayali lawyer (T.C.Poonen, a CMS Christian), demonstrated government's reluctance to employ anyone other
than caste Hindus. In 1872 only 10 out of 880 government jobs up to Rs.50/- a month and four out of 215 jobs on more than Rs.50/- a month were held by Christians. Educated Christians, however, were much in demand by European planters and merchants as clerks, supervisors and managers. The virtual Christian monopoly of the field of journalism enabled them to voice their resentment from exclusion from government service. By the beginning of the 20th century Christians of all denominations were ready for an alliance with the Nairs and the Ezhavas.

Though barred from government schools the converts had the benefit of missionary assistance in education. The missionaries also helped some converts to start plantations on the Ashambu hills. However, due to opposition from their Syrian adherents, the CMS converts could receive the same kind of patronage as the LMS converts only after the final break with the Syrians in the 1860s.

Though the Ezhavas did not convert in large numbers, the threat of conversion was used by them effectively to wrest concessions from caste Hindus till the 1936 Temple Entry Proclamation. Between 1870 and 1890 the Ezhavas experienced unprecedented prosperity due to the rise in the export value of coconut. Though the owners of coconut gardens were Nairs or Syrian Christians, coconut trade could not be carried on without the Ezhava skill in plucking,
processing and treating coconuts. This assured the Ezhavas almost full employment. Some prosperous Ezhavas also owned coir factories and acquired coconut gardens during this period. They also cornered large profits from the toddy and arrack trade.

Between 1875 and 1891 literacy among the Ezhavas increased from 3.15 percent to 12 percent inspite of their exclusion from government schools. The educated young men were also barred from government service. One of them was Dr. Palpu, a medical practitioner, who on refusal of a job in Travancore had to migrate to Mysore to get a job. He was later to lead the Ezhava movement as the lieutenant of Sri Narayana Guru Swamy.

Thus by the beginning of the 20th century interest was beginning to get articulated around communal lines which remains the characteristic feature of politics in contemporary Kerala. The broad anti Brahmin alliance of Nairs, Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims resulted in the Malayali Memorial presented to the Maharaja in 1891. As a result of the memorial and subsequent agitations, a truce was effected between the government and the Nair elite and Nairs got positions of influence with the Government.
Changes in social structure

(1) The Nairs

Inspite of their success in getting access to government service the Nair social organization was not equal to the demands of a growing cash economy. Several Nair tarwads became unmanageable units marked by internal dissension and lack of natural affection. Litigation regarding family property had become the order of the day especially after the Pattom Proclamation which had made tenants proprietors. In the year after the proclamation litigation in munsif's courts rose from 9804 to 18441 cases as people attempted to realise new values of land. Between 1879-80 and 1888-89 there was an average of 60 suits a year for partition of tarwads even without the consent of all adult members. The yearly suits between 1889-90 and 1898-99 was 80 and between 1899-1900 and 1903-04 was 96. Litigation and mismanagement led to the pauperization of many tarwads. The extent of mismanagement is indicated by the fact that during the 18 months of 1907 and 1908 property worth nearly 8.19 lakhs was alienated by the Nairs by sale, mortgage or hypothecation more than they acquired by purchase. This was at a time when joint property could not legally be alienated. Agreed partition rose from 301 in 1896-97 to 516 in 1906-07.
The abolition of slavery and the consequent rising cost of labour and rice further strained the resources of the _tampad_. Many families became indebted by borrowing for ceremonies like _talikettu kalvanam_ and for education of the children. Education brought about further dissensions on the question of which child was to be sent for education: often the _karanavan's_ children were preferred causing his nephews to revolt.

The Nair youth were painfully aware of the ridicule their family and marriage system was being subjected to by other communities and the restraints it placed on individual Nairs in their competition with Christians. They revolted against the old Nair elite who had found accommodation in government service and attempted to organize Nairs for social reform. Their efforts culminated in the founding of the Nair Service Society (NSS) in 1914 by Mannath Padmahabhan and others. It campaigned for abolition of the _marumakkathayam_ system of inheritance and Nair-Namboodiri marital alliances and for the partition of large Nair _tarmads_ into smaller units. It also strove for the educational and cultural revival of the Nairs.

Though attempts had been made to amend the Nair inheritance law as far back as 1890, no meaningful reform could be undertaken till 1925 due to intrigues by the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and conservative Nairs. The Nair Regulation of 1925 permitted partition of joint families...
into different subfamilies called tâivazhîs. It also
enabled the wife and children of any member of the joint
family to inherit the self-acquired property of that member.54
This latter provision accelerated the separation of the
nuclear units of the joint family and ultimately to the
disintegration of the entire tâwâd system.

The immediate consequence of this reform was a net
transfer of Nair property in favour of the Christians and
other communities.

(ii) The Christians & Ezhavas

Though peeved at exclusion from government jobs
inspite of their high educational attainment the Christian
community was spurred on to other fields of endeavour.
A section of them particularly the Shanar converts and the
C.M.S. Syrians sought employment from private sources,
chiefly European merchants and planters. Another section,
chiefly Jacobites and Mathomites, prospered in trade,
commerce and banking (kuris and chittis)55 and invested
their surpluses in plantations. The Catholics, who were
the most depressed sections among the Syrian Christians
since they had no link with English missionaries and through
them to the Empire, took to agriculture in a big way.
Since population increase had placed tremendous pressures
on land resources, the Syrian Christians, particularly
Catholics, began to reclaim agricultural waste land for
cultivation and began to push back the jungle eastwards to the High Ranges. In the plains itself lot of Nair land passed into Christian hands who were erstwhile tenants of Nairs.

These developments resulted in the all-round material and social progress of Christians. This was facilitated by the unifying role of church leadership which offered advise and aid. The family organization and the system of inheritance and succession were also conducive to the development of individual initiative. The Syrian Christians developed into a class of entrepreneurs motivated by the puritan ethic of material progress as an indicator of worldly success.

However, if a strict Protestant ethic was applicable for the Syrian Christian community in Kerala, it should have been limited to those sections of christians which came into contact with L.M.S and C.M.S missionaries. However, as we have seen, the Syrian Catholics did not lag behind. A partial explanation of this was the 'demonstration effect' of material progress of other Christians as also the role of reference group behaviour. A more important reason is suggested by George Mathew.

One definite conclusion is that they were driven to the corner by other communities and the sheer pressure of circumstances to survive made them to act. Perhaps an equally important explanation is that the Roman Catholics in Kerala,
because they belonged to the Syrian Christian Community, had the same social characteristics and outlook like the Jacobites, Marthomites and CMS Syrians. But even if we take Roman Catholicism as, according to Robertson, it has the potentiality to develop 'economic individualism'.

As Christians and Ezhavas became economically prosperous and socially aware they began to struggle against all forms of discrimination. In 1868 the Travancore and Cochin Christian Association, embracing all the Syrian Christian sects was formed and a memorial was presented to the government in the next year listing several instances of discrimination against the Christians. The Christian newspaper, Manorama warned of 'stronger measures if petitions failed' to achieve the results.

Several of its features highlighted the picture of the 'vanishing Christian graduate' forced to leave his native land. The over representation of the Nairs in the Sri Moolam Popular Assembly formed in 1904 was particularly unpalatable to the Christians. 31 taluks sent 65 representatives of which 12 were Nairs and 8 probably Nairs. Even in the Kottayam division where the Christians were in a majority, of the 361 landlords paying land tax of more than Rs.100/- a year, 154 were Nairs and only 98 were Christians. This resulted from the fact that landownership was the chief criterion of eligibility for membership in the Assembly.

Among the Ezhavas, Dr. Palpu was in the forefront of the attempt to organize them. Having failed to wrest any concessions through the Malayali Memorial, he submitted
Several petitions to the government providing unchallengeable statistics about the discrimination against Ezhavas. Disgusted with government's refusal to accede to the petitions, he joined forces with the greatest religious reviver of Kerala, Sri Narayana Guru and the greatest Malayalam poet, Kumaran Asan, both Ezhavas.

The Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalan Yogam (SNDP) was founded in 1902. The 1905 general meeting of the Yogam was followed by an industrial exhibition which proved a phenomenal success. Peeved at the new-found assertiveness of Ezhavas the Nairs clashed with them at several places. Indirectly the violent clashes helped the Ezhava cause by giving it wide coverage in the Madras press. In 1907 SNDP was given representation in the Sri Moolam Assembly.

The post-Malayali Memorial dominance of Nairs in government affairs and employment disappointed Christians, Ezhavas and Muslims and led them to a new anti-Nair alliance. In 1919 the Civil Rights league was formed which demanded the bifurcation of the Devaswom from the Revenue department. One of the chief reasons for the exclusion of non-caste people from employment in the Revenue Department, which was the largest State employer, was the combination of Devaswom and Revenue departments. Agitation by the League led to the separation of the two in 1922, but discrimination still persisted.
Avitation for constitutional reforms:

The retention of property qualifications as the basis for the right to contest elections led to the intensification of agitations for constitutional reforms guaranteeing political justice and equality of opportunity. The SNDP Yogam, the Ezhava Political League, Travancore State Catholic League, the Latin Christian Mahajana Sabha, and the All Travancore Muslim Service League were unanimous in rejecting the 1932 reforms as retrograde. On December 17, 1932, the Travancore Political Congress was formed as a joint political front of all backward communities. In January 1933 the Congress submitted a memorial to the Dewan and took the momentous decision to boycott the forthcoming elections to the Assembly based on the 1932 reforms. This movement came to be known as the Abstention movement. This movement received the unstinted support of the Congress Socialist Party which propagated it as a part of the national struggle for freedom.

Government branded the agitation as a sectarian movement launched by the Syrian Christians. It tried to woo the Ezhava community by giving it minor concessions. It also resorted to repression and banning freedom of expression and association. Inspite of this a vast majority of the voters boycotted the elections held in June 1933. After the elections the Joint Political Congress intensified the agitation demanding equal representation of all communities
in the military, adult franchise and responsible government. Government were forced to give some major concessions. 40 percent of the 'intermediate sector' of public service was reserved for the backward communities. The Nair brigade was reorganized and recruitment to the army and police force was declared open to all communities. The Temple Entry Proclamation was a major land mark of this period.

The Joint Political Conference was dissolved in 1938 and the Travancore State Congress was formed with the objective of attaining responsible government. Though most of the leaders of the new party were from the Joint Political Conference, it was able to draw in a wider section of the people including some enlightened Nairs. Along with the Youth League, an early form of the Communist Party, the Congress intensified the agitation for responsible government. A spate of repressive measures were unleashed and the Dowan Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer undertook several unscrupulous measures like wrecking the Travancore National and Quilon Bank owned by C.P. Mathen, a prominent leader of the Congress, and confiscating the property of the leaders. The Congress and the Youth League responded to repression by direct action and the two organizations were declared unlawful. A Civil Disobedience Movement was launched in 1938. Within a month 10,000 people broke the ban and courted arrest and a few persons lost their lives. Police fired at the striking factory workers at Alleppy and Shertalai which resulted in several martyrs of the Communist Party. On the advice of
Gandhiji the State Congress withdrew the agitation. This divided the Congress and the progressives joined the Youth League.

The State Congress actively participated in the Quit India movement. When independence arrived finally in 1947, the Dewan tried a last ditch attempt to stay on as the dictator by declaring Travancore as an independent State, but in the face of people's opposition he had to make an ignominious retreat. In 1949 Travancore and Cochin were merged to form the Travancore-Cochin State.

To sum up, though Travancore was never directly under British rule, social developments in Travancore were closely linked to British colonialism. A major impact was the spread of education due to missionary work. This conscientized the lower castes and they began to question caste disabilities. On the agrarian front, Legislation had the effect of encouraging the investment conscious classes of people. Due to introduction of cash crops and plantations the agrarian economy became highly monetized. The family organization of Nairs was unequal to the demands of a cash economy in which traditional caste restrictions were meaningless and the Nairs lost economic power to the Syrian Christians. The latter developed into a class of entrepreneurs and became leaders in education, trade, commerce, banking and agriculture. In the context of their rising material progress the Syrian Christians, allying with Ezhavas and Muslims began to agitate
for reforms in the employment and political spheres emphasizing merit rather than caste. By independence, they were able to achieve much of their objectives. The Nairs and other 'superior' castes had to adapt to the changed situation. Their family organization became more conjugal and nuclear. They also began to take up occupations like trade, commerce and agriculture. Today social life in Kerala is marked by an intense competition between the prominent communities - Christians, Nairs, Ezhavas and Muslims - in every sphere of social life and this accounts for the unstable nature of Kerala's coalition politics. Now we turn to the consideration of the Malabar situation.
(b) **Developments in Malabar**

Unlike Travancore, Malabar was under direct British rule. The British administrators were unfamiliar with age-old customs and usages regarding diverse spheres of social life in Malabar. Apart from this they were motivated to promote their own interests in interpreting local laws and introducing their own concepts of jurisprudence. These led to crucial differences between the developments in Travancore and in Malabar.

**Changes in agrarian structure**

The land tenure system which developed in Malabar under the British had three principal features which differentiated it from the pre-British system. Firstly, the British interpreted the *janmn* right as private property *a la Roman Dominium* devoid of the customary obligations of the *janmn* to the various right holders on the same plot of land. Every inch of land, including wastes were declared private property except in the Wynad where a new type of ownership called government *janmn* was created. Even *kanom* tenures were declared as mere usufructuary mortgages without even the right of occupancy. This policy was the result of political expediency rather than of principles. For, by reinstating the *janmis* who had fled Malabar in the face of the Mysorean invasion they hoped to create a class of supporters and agents. Declaring *kanom* as a usufructuary mortgage was a clever way of neutralizing
the power of the Muslims who were at that time holding large areas of land as virtual proprietors. The policy was also partly due to the unfamiliarity of British officials with the customary law of Malabar.

The second feature of the new land tenure system was the extreme concentration of land in the hand of a few janmis. The principal janmis were the Zamorin of Calicut, the Raja of Nilambur, Kavalappara Nayar, Kottakal Kizhake Kovilakam, the Raja of Kollengode, Poomali Namboodiri, Chirakkal Raja, Kalyat Esamanan, Vengayil Nayanar and a few temples and dehaswoms. In 1920-21, over 50 percent of the cultivated land was held by 32 janmis. The Zamorin paid nearly 1.25 lakh British rupees as land revenue every year, and his lands were spread over six taluks and 520 villages. The typical large estate owner leased out his land to thousands of immediate tenants and an unknown number of subtenants.

The third feature was the competition between the janmi and the kenakkar, an intermediary between the janmi and the verumpattakkar, the actual cultivator, for appropriation of the major share of the value added by the cultivator. The evolution was as follows: First, the regular collection of land revenue by the British in cash modernized the economy. Initially land revenue assessment was fixed quite high. Several landlords borrowed money
from merchants in return for "kanom" deeds. The kanakkar, in turn, sublet his land to another subtenant, the latter again to another one, so that, when it came to the actual cultivator, there were several intermediaries between the tiller and the State. The share of the State and the jumni together came to two thirds of the net produce after deducting an insufficient amount as expenditure on cultivation. In practice even the remaining share of the cultivator was appropriated by the jumni through various forms of feudal gifts such as nuri, vasi, mukkal, monni-dangazhi, vecchukanal, seevakashu etc. As Moore noted, the tenant was in fact a labourer on subsistence wages, though it suits his landlord to bind him by a contract. It happens not frequently that the rent which the tenant covenants to pay is more than the land can yield, and in this case the burden of debt accumulates around him.

It may be observed that the 'contract' was very often unrecorded and a form of leasing called 'vakkal charthu' (oral lease) gained currency in several parts of Malabar. Whenever the State or the jumni raised its demand for rent, the intermediary would pass on the demand to the cultivator. The rent extracted from the cultivator was 15 to 20 times the land revenue assessment. In this competition for rent, the non-cultivating kanakkaran appropriated 70 to 75 percent of the net produce while the
landlord's and cultivators share ranged between two and 12 and 15 and 25 percent respectively. The large lanakharas were also successful in pushing small lanakharas to the level of tenants-at-will. Thus alongside the tendency for the concentration of holdings at the janai's level, there was also a concentration at the lanakhar's level.

Thus the codification of land law by the British, instead of encouraging the investment conscious classes, regarded the parasitic classes of landlords and intermediaries.

It facilitated rack renting and wholesale eviction of peasants, imperilled the investment of lease holders and exacerbated the communal strife which had plagued agrarian relations since the time of the Mysorean conquest.

Organisation of the large estate

Being far removed from his subtenants, both physically and socially, it was not practicable for the large landlord to give any material assistance in cultivation and he was satisfied if he received his dues regularly. The mode of utilization of rental income also blocked capital accumulation. It was used,

(a) for the upkeep of temples and places, which required a large number of servants, priests and retainers;
(b) for the maintenance of a large joint family; and,
(c) for buying gold, land or luxuries.
The karanavan, usually an old man, had to depend on nominally paid agents called karyasthans, mostly east-coast Brahmins or Nenons, a subcaste of Nairs. The latter's role as rent collectors gave them tremendous power over the tenants and they extorted bribe on threat of raising rents or not assisting in obtaining renewal contracts. The karyasthans very often paid to the janmi only a part of the rent collected.

In respect of estates owned by Nairs, the conflict between the karanavans and their nephews was an additional factor leading to mismanagement. In order to hide his misdeeds the karavan would make the records unintelligible to his successor. Thus in Malabar it was not unusual to find landlords who did not know the exact boundaries of their possessions, the contracts by which they are bound, the debts they owe and so on and this was one of the perennial reasons for litigation regarding land which abounded there.

Commercialisation in agriculture

The introduction of land revenue assessment by the Mysoreans and later the British and its collection in cash accelerated the monetization of the Malabar economy. Throughout centuries the Malabar coast was producing cash crops like coconut, pepper, ginger etc. for export in small production units on garden or dry lands. A special tenure called
Kuzhikanom was developed by the landlords to bring forests under cultivation and during the early decades of the British rule, extensive areas of jungle appear to have been converted into garden lands.

Since the area that could be brought under paddy cultivation, or 'wet' lands had been exhausted even before the British annexed Malabar there was no significant increase in area under paddy. Available statistics show that while the area under food crops (wet land) remained constant up to 1941, cash crop area increased at the rate of about three percent every five years. Thus, while population density on cash crop land has increased only slightly, the pressure on food crop land has been dramatic making import of rice necessary.

Monetization went to a greater extent on the dry land than on wet land because money rent was prevalent in the former. Traditionally the rent extracted on garden land was less than on wet land and also higher compensation was paid for improvements on dry land. However, towards the beginning of the 20th century the odds were turning against the cultivator of dry land. The increasing trend for evictions in the wake of rise in the price of rice and the inadequate compensation paid on eviction snuffed out all incentive for reclamation of waste.
A major innovation of British rule was the introduction of plantations of tea, coffee, cardamom, etc. Plantations did not, however, replace the peasant production of coconut and pepper. Compared to Travancore, plantations did not make much headway in Malabar even though it was a British possession. This was probably because most lands fit for cultivation of plantation crops were with private janiis and the tenure terms offered by them were unfavourable to the planters compared to the all-out effort of the Travancore government to woo them. Still, plantations provided a substantial share of the agricultural output of Malabar though most of the profit was exported by foreigners. In 1951 plantations provided employment to over four percent of the work force of Malabar. 79 Besides, by opening up hitherto inaccessible areas, such as the Wynad, and improving communications and controlling epidemics like malaria, the plantations paved the way for peasant colonization of areas adjacent to them.

Development of banking companies and industries was very slow in Malabar. Those industries which developed were mostly agro-based such as coir and tobacco manufacturing, saw mills, brick and tile industry and handlooms. In 1951 only five percent of the labour force was engaged in industry. Other sectors of the economy which provided employment were fishing, commerce, transport and services.
Changes in social structure

During the Mysore interregnum continuous fighting had decimated population. By creating political stability, putting an end to internecine warfare and removing epidemic diseases like malaria, British rule paved the way for rapid growth of population. The period 1921-51 was one of accelerated population growth. Between 1911-21 the decennial rate of population growth was only 3 percent, while it was 14 percent between 1921-31, 11 percent between 1931-41, and 23 percent between 1941-51. During 1911-21 density per wet (irrigated) land was 5.75 and of total agricultural land was 2.2 which increased to 8.79 and 2.42 respectively in 1951. The density of population in 1951 was 870 persons per square mile. 80

However, the pressure of population was differentially felt by different communities. The peculiar system of primogeniture and inheritance among the Namboodiris, as noted earlier, helped their population to remain static throughout centuries and continued to remain so during the British period. 81 The group which was affected most adversely by pressure of population was the Nairs. Having been displaced by Tamil Brahmin and European officers from the bureaucracy and the military, the Nairs had to fall back on the agricultural resources of their taluks. The cash and kind payments which sovereigns made to their retainers and militia stopped being a source of income for the Nairs. The removal of war casualties,
which up to now had acted as a natural check on population growth, and the continuance of Namboodiri-Nair marital alliances, effected a net transfer of population of Nairs dependent on agriculture. The Nair youth displaced from war began to question the authority of the karanavans, demand increasing share in family property and decision making, and forge more permanent marital and filial relationships. Side by side they questioned the validity of Namboodiri alliance and began clamouring for the reform of Nair marriage and inheritance laws.

However reform took a much more tortuous course in Malabar than in Travancore because opposition from Namboodiris and Kshatriyas was stiffer and foreign rulers were not too keen to interfere in local customs. The Malabar Marriage Act of 1896 permitted Nairs to register their marriage. This legalized family as distinct from tarwad ties. It also ensured that the self-acquired property of any member who died intestate, but whose marriage was recorded, was inheritable by his wife and children. The Madras Marumakkathayam Act of 1933 which permitted partition of tarwads into different subgroups or taivazhees finally led to the disintegration of the tarwad system, as in Travancore.

The growing trend of young Nairs to get educated and enter the professions and services, however, partially offset the pressure on agricultural resources.
British policy did not advocate state aided education. But they gave all encouragement to Western missionaries to establish educational institutions. The Zamorin of Calicut and the Raja of Kollengode were great patrons of education. By 1891, 1.4 percent of the males and 0.66 percent of females were literate in the Madras Presidency. In the Malabar district the percentage of literacy must have been higher. But all castes did not embrace education readily. The Namboodiris, since they had large landed estates and whose socio-economic position was not threatened by the arrival of the British, did not have much incentive in sending their children to school. The Muslims, who had no hope of entering British bureaucracy due to their suspected disloyalty to the British had no use for Western education. It was the Nairs who had urgent need for education. This was because their traditional sources of income, namely, cash and kind payments by sovereigns had dried up. They had to look for alternative employment in the bureaucracy or in the professions. Performance of agricultural operations or trade were considered taboo. English education, and possible employment in Madras was the only way out.

Another group who became educationally advanced was the Theeyas. They received education at the German Basel Evangelical Mission School at Tellicherry established in 1839 and other schools run by this mission in the Northern parts.
of Malabar. This enabled them to get employment in British bureaucracy, plantations and military. Many Theeyas prospered due to this Western contact and started investing in land although traditionally they were not permitted to own land.

Throughout the British period, education was concentrated in certain urban centres like Calicut, Tellicherry and Palghat. Hence the spread of literacy in rural areas was very slow and limited to the rural elite. Besides, colleges on the Malabar coast were affiliated to the Madras University and did not offer professional courses such as law and medicine. Students desirous of higher education had to go all the way to Madras.

**Peasant Movements**

By 1831 agricultural prices showed a rising trend which continued for the next 50 years. This had several consequences. Firstly it lowered the proportionate incidence of land revenue assessment which hitherto had been a great burden on the agriculturists. In 1841 for example, the total value of the agricultural produce of Malabar was 10.3 million while land revenue assessment did not exceed ₹1.6 million, barely one seventh of the value of production. This helped landlords to accumulate enough money to pay off moneylenders and mortgages. And fully recognizing their new status as absolute proprietors of land they started
evicting their tenants on a wide scale, particularly their weak tenants. On eviction, the tenants were paid compensation at the old rates and not commensurate with the rise in prices. Law courts also generally went by the old rates.

Strong tenants, such as large kannakkars were able to withstand these pressures since they could outlast prolonged legal battles; in the event of eviction they could claim larger compensation through over utilization of land. So the latter invented an ingenious way to get out of this predicament. This was the melcharthu (or an overlease by the jami of a plot of land to a third party superseding the existing right in land). The melcharthu holder would sue the earlier title holder freeing the weak jami from legal proceedings. Other methods adopted by the jami were enhancement of rent and renewal fees, non-issue of rent receipts etc. Some jammis even made fake receipts stating that the tenant had received advance payment in lieu of future improvements.

This was the background to the various peasant movements which developed in Malabar. And agrarian legislations were the result of prolonged struggles by peasants unlike in Travancore. Political consciousness also developed as a result of peasant agitations whereas in Travancore it was the result of the movement for civil rights and political equality.
The struggle of Moplah verumpattom tenants of South Malabar occupied pride of place in the peasant movement of Malabar. Between 1830 and 1921 several spontaneous outbreaks of Moplahs had shook the exploitative land system of Malabar as well as their British protectors. In the absence of class consciousness and proper leadership, the ideological influence of religion provided the necessary moral force and justification to struggle against exploitation and oppression. The agrarian basis of the Moplah riots was amply proved by William Logan who inquired into the causes of the riots. He attributed it to the replacement of the traditional law of Malabar by the British and the consequent exploitation, rack renting and eviction of the peasants. While Logan's recommendation to give fixity of tenure to the verumpattam tenant was rejected by government, they went all out to bring about a compromise between the interests of the jammis and the kanakkars. This resulted in the largest of the Moplah riots in 1921 within the context of the Congress-Khilafat movement.

The second phase of the tenant movement was spearheaded by the kanom tenants, who had received certain concessions through the 1887 Act and its amendment in 1900. The kanakkars founded the Malabar Kudian Sangh (MKS) in 1915 and established its branches in several taluks. The organization was led by prominent Congress leaders like M. Krishnan Nayar, K.P. Ramam Menon and G. Sankaran Nayar and the movement received wholehearted support by the national leadership.
leading to the resignation of janmi representatives from the party.\textsuperscript{90} Krishnan Nayar, the MKS leader was returned to the Madras Assembly in the elections held in 1923. In 1926 he successfully piloted a bill protecting the interests of the \textit{kanom} tenants. The refusal of the Governor to grant assent to the bill drew wide spread protest and government were forced to pass the Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930. The Act imposed restraints on landlords from evicting certain classes of tenants. Though fair rents were specified their implementation was postponed for 12 years. Moreover the rights enjoyed by all tenants under the act were derived from the immediate landlords and if the latter's right lapsed under the act, the right of the subtenant's also would lapse. The Act was condemned by all classes of tenants.\textsuperscript{91}

In the wake of the Great Depression and the Second World War the conditions of the \textit{verumpattom} tenants deteriorated. Due to the stoppage of Burma rice prices skyrocketed and the landlords began to evict their tenants in large numbers in the guise of personal cultivation in order to assure themselves an adequate stock of rice or to profit from the anticipated price rise. Eviction suits filed increased from 1250 during 1940-41 to 2900 in 1945-46.\textsuperscript{92} This gave rise to the third phase of tenants' movement in Malabar under the leadership of the Congress Socialist Party and later the Communist Party of India.
The Kerala Karshaka Sangham (KKS) was formed in 1933 and its units were established in practically every village. The movement was particularly strong in Northern Malabar. The chief demands were abolition of feudal levies and illegal exactions, use of standardized measures in place of fake measures, rationalisation of rent, permission for peasants for pumam cultivation etc. The chief activities undertaken by the sangham between 1940 and 1950 were organizing peasants to forcibly occupy land for pumam cultivation if the request was not acceded to by landlords (in Payyannoor firka, Kayyoor village and Nilamboor and Amarambalam villages), agitate for the use of government tarishy (fallow) land (in Chirakal taluk and the Perambra and Balusseri firkas), agitate for the right of peasants to collect green manure from private forests (in Kasargodu taluk), preventing landlords from collecting paddy as rent for purposes of hoarding in the post-war famine conditions but forcing them to distribute among peasants at reasonable rates (the Chirakkal thampuran was prevented from collecting paddy from Karivelloor village, Payyannoor firka). The peasants were educated and the peasant cause was propagated through popular literature and the stage (K. Damodaran's dramas, Pattabakki and Raktapabam, were superhits). Congress Government then in power sided with the landlords to repress the movement. The Payyannoor, Irilikoor and Nileswaram firkas were turned into camps of the Malabar Special Police, peasants gatherings were fired
at, and most peasant leaders imprisoned and implicated in criminal cases. The manhunt for communist rebels culminated in the firing incident at the Salem jail which resulted in the death of 22 political prisoners, 19 of whom were arrested in Malabar. 96

Though repression was able to quell the movement for a time being, government were forced to amend the Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930 in 1951. But this did not satisfy peasant demands since several provisions of the act such as advance payment of one year's rent permission to evict tenants on several grounds and the lack of protection to landless homestead dwellers etc. With the release of their leaders from prison, the movement came back to life with renewed vigour and succeeded in bringing about several amendments to the 1951 Act. The Communist Ministry which assumed the helm of affairs in unified Kerala passed the Stay of Eviction Proceedings Act, 1957, pending a comprehensive agrarian relations bill aimed at reforming the agrarian structure as well as bringing uniformity of land tenures between the different political units of Kerala.

To conclude, British colonialism brought in far reaching changes in an apparently stagnant and inward looking pre-British Malayali society. However the course of developments in the different political units which comprise present day Kerala was different. In the agrarian sphere Travancore developed into a region of peasant proprietors while Malabar
developed into a region of landlords and intermediaries. In Travancore investment conscious and enterprising sections of rural society were encouraged while in Malabar a parasitic class of rent receivers was encouraged. In both regions institutional structures which could not withstand modern trends like commercialization and monetization of agriculture and the economy crumbled. Due to the lacuna in the traditional varna division of labour, certain groups outside the varna scheme took up occupations like trade, banking and transportation and this resulted in their economic prosperity. These were the Christians in Travancore and Muslims in Malabar with the Theeyas/Ezhavas occupying an intermediate position.

In the next chapter we attempt to show how changes in the socio-economic spheres affected and moulded patterns of population mobility in Kerala.
Notes and References


3. Some writers are of the view that all communities in Kerala are indigenous and not immigrants since there is no racial difference between them. See E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *op. cit.*, p.12


5. The simple and literary meaning of *varna* is the functional division of Hindu society into four orders, viz., Brahmin (priest or scholar), Kshatriya (ruler or soldier), Vaishya (merchant) and Sudra (peasant, labourer and servant). The first three orders are 'twice-born'. The untouchables are outside the *varna* scheme. However, as Srinivas has pointed out the concept of *varna* "subsumes values which are ideally complementary but, as a matter of actual and historical fact, have been competitive if not conflicting", and probably "does not reflect the social order as it existed everywhere and at all times".


7. *ibid.*, p.78


12. Kanom is a customary tenure interpreted by the British Courts as possessing the characteristics of both lease and mortgage. However it originated as a feudal tenure with right of permanent occupancy.

13. T.C. Varghese, op.cit., p.30
14. ibid. pp.29-32
15. ibid, p.19
16. ibid, p.31
19. Robin Jeffrey, op.cit p.91
20. ibid, p.92
21. ibid, p.94
22. ibid, p.97
23. G.C. Leiten, op.cit., p.114
24. ibid., p.115
26. T.C. Varghese, op.cit., p.117
27. ibid., p.118
28. Robin Jeffrey, op.cit., p.100
29. Letter by Ballard to the Acting Chief Secretary, Feb.13, 1874, quoted by Jeffrey, op.cit., p.85
30. Varghese, op.cit., p.109
31. ibid., p.180-183
33. Cherikal cultivation was a form of slash-and-burn cultivation on forest land practiced every 25 years. For this purpose landlords used to lease out land to cherikal cultivators. However, as population increased the frequency of cherikal cultivation increased and very often led to permanent occupation by cultivators.

34. Govt. of Travancore, op. cit., p. 984.

35. Kayal literally means backwater or lagoon which has a narrow outlet towards the sea.

36. T.C. Varghese, op. cit., p. 119

37. Ibid., p. 91

38. Robin Jeffrey, op. cit., p. 37

39. Ibid., p. 48

40. Ibid., p. 83

41. In 1856, Rev. John Russel pleaded with the merchants, planters and landlords of Ceylon to help "the educated Christians of South Travancore who were eager to escape to new opportunities". See Jeffrey, op. cit. p. 52.

42. Ibid., pp. 75-80.

43. The Christians of Kerala may be divided into three principal denominations. These are: (a) Catholics, (b) other Syrians; (c) Protestants. The Catholics recognize the authority of the Pope as the spiritual leader of the church. They follow three forms of religious worship: the Syro-Malankara rite (a section of the Jacobites who converted to catholicism but follow the rite of the Jacobites for worship), the Syro-Malabar rite (Romo-Syrians), and the Latin rite (principally those converted by Francis Xavier in the coastal areas). The other Syrians consist of Jacobites (Orthodox Syrians), Mar Thomaites, and Anglican (C.M.S) Syrians. The Protestants consist of Shanar converts of South Travancore (L.M.S) and Pulaya and Paraya converts of North Travancore (C.M.S). The term Syrian Christians is usually applied to Catholics of the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara rites, Jacobites, Marthomites and Anglican Syrians. See George Mathew, op. cit., p. 51-53. For the social background of the Syrian Christians see L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, Anthropology of Syrian Christians, Eranakulam: Cochin Government Press, 1926. For the historical background see C.P. Mathews and M.M. Thomas, The Indian

44. Jeffrey, op. cit., p.123
45. ibid., p.159.
46. ibid., p.107.
47. ibid., p.122.
48. ibid., p.139.
49. ibid., p.159-175
50. ibid., p.183.
52. Robin Jeffrey, op.cit., p.153
55. Kuries and Chitties were indigenous credit institutions peculiar to Kerala which mobilized savings and distributed credit. A few persons would organize under the leadership of a promoter to form such a credit organization. The early chitties and kuries were organized around Christian parish churches. Some of them developed into commercial banks, which were run by prominent Syrian Christians as family business. They were located mostly in villages around Thrivalla and other Christian centres and received deposits from and gave credit to small farmers and traders, accepting land as collateral. The expansion of trade during the 19th century, the sharp price rise in cash crops, and resultant prosperity of farmers gave a big push in the expansion of banking business. For details see M.A. Commen, "Rise and Growth of Banking in Kerala", Social Scientist, 5(3), October 1976, pp.24-38. Also T.C. Varghese, op.cit., pp.111-116.
56. After noting a heavy flow of people to the High Ranges for occupation of cultivable land, and the expansion of area under pepper, ginger, lemon grass and tapioca, Varghese says that this was the region adjacent to the predominantly Christian areas. "These Christian peasants
were largely responsible for bringing the new lands under cultivation". See Varghese, op.cit., pp.119.
Also George Mathew, op.cit., p.94.


58. Jeffrey, op.cit., p.128 says that the Syrian Christians who had a strong farming tradition were, unlike Nairs, unencumbered by an invariable joint family. In youth they had the advantage of a recognized parental obligation to provide education and a start in life; nonetheless, individuals were expected to make their own way later. See also T.C. Varghese, op.cit., p.100. George Mathew, op.cit., p.96.

59. This may be termed 'spirit of capitalism' à la Max Weber or 'economic individualism' à la Robertson. The latter has demonstrated how the industrial bourgeoisie in Catholic France was sought to be legitimized by the Jesuits. See H.A. Robertson, Aspects of the Rise of Economic Individualism. New York: Kelley & Millman, Inc., 1959, pp.166-167.

60. M.A. Comen, op.cit., p.115.
61. George Mathew, op.cit., pp.127-128
63. ibid., p.224.
66. ibid., p.64.
67. The Travancore National and Quilon National Bank in 1937 ranked first in India in terms of number of branch offices and third in terms of total volume of business. Inspite of this it was liquidated through a deliberate strategy engineered by Sir C.P.R. Aiyer. See M.A. Comen, op.cit., p.31. See also C.P. Mathen, I have Borne Much, Madras: Ampthill, 1951. Mathen, a Syrian Christian, was the moving spirit behind the bank and also an industrial entrepreneur.

68. Jannam is the alodial property right claimed by the Jannam (landlord) and recognized party by the British government.
69. The majority of kanom tenants were supervisory cultivators or rent receivers belonging to the Nair caste. However, during Tipu Sultan's invasion several Muslims acquired kanom rights, and began progressively to extend their control over land by advancing cash to the landlords.


72. Vasi refers to the quantity of grain set apart by the tenant for the Janmi as a margin to compensate for loss by drying. This was usually three tenths of the total rent. Nuri was a large pick of paddy set aside to mark counting while measuring out the landlords' share of produce. Vecchukanal, Seelakashu etc. refer to the gifts which were to be given to the landlord on special occasions and festivities. These included headloads of vegetables, fruits, butter, ghee, oil etc. See A.K. Gopalan, Mannini Vendi (Mal.), Trivandrum: Chinthan Publishers, 1975, p.14.

73. Quoted in Prakash Karat, op.cit., p.31.

74. K.N. Panikkar, op.cit., p.882

75. T.W. Shea, op.cit., p.136

76. ibid., p.147-153

77. ibid., p.69

78. Prakash Karat, op.cit., p.33.


80. ibid., p.64.

81. ibid., p.73-74.

82. ibid., p.75.

83. Lewandowski, op.cit., p.30

84. ibid., p.37.
85. Shea, op.cit., p.220
86. Panikkar, op.cit., p.885
92. Shea, op.cit., p.221
93. P. Radhakrishnan, op.cit., p.2098
94. Punam cultivation is periodic slash-and-burn cultivation of paddy on forest land similar to cherikal cultivation in Travancore.
95. For a first hand, participant's account see A.K. Gopalan, op.cit., p.25-29
96. Ibid., p.44.