Chapter III
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

An important characteristic of systems of stratification is the extent to which mobility is possible from one status to another. The study of such movement -- the sources, patterns and consequences -- is the study of social mobility. In every society, people and groups find themselves confined within orderings of status. The obstacles which confined thus result from the differential distribution of abilities, differential knowledge or evaluation of opportunity structures and the unequal distribution of resources. People occupying high status positions always have an interest in maintaining and creating barriers to the upward movement of other groups. As change occurs, old roles may lapse and new ones may arise.

Administrative or political changes may wipe out old institutions and establish new ones. The skills and resources and the social standing associated with particular roles may change. Occupational groups and strata in a society may undergo rearrangements. The study of social mobility involves consideration of the strategies which individuals and groups use.1
Social mobility is a complex phenomenon. Movement could obviously occur in three directions, from lower to higher, higher to lower, and between positions at the same level. These three types of mobility are termed upward, downward (both examples of vertical mobility) and horizontal mobility respectively. In addition, there is the aspect of time to be considered. Changes may occur from one generation to another, that is, intergenerational mobility. It may occur within an individual’s lifetime, that is, intragenerational mobility. Another dimension is the context in which mobility occurs. Here reference is to occupational or educational mobility or changes in material resources or power. The mechanisms of mobility form an important aspect, that is, how persons move from one position to another -- by achievement or ascription, for instance. The unit of mobility, whether individuals, families or whole groups move, is important. Lastly, an important feature of the study of social mobility is the distinction between objective and subjective aspects of status change. An increase in salary would be an objective change. The person’s feelings about this change would be the subjective aspect -- does he consider the change an improvement, is it desirable?

The extent of social mobility in a society depends on two things -- the total amount of mobility the society can
support and the conditions under which people are allowed to be mobile. In traditional agricultural societies, with fewer numbers of statuses, mobility was somewhat limited. By contrast industrial societies offer greater opportunities for mobility because they contain a number of different statuses. Given its characteristic division of labour, a modern industrial or industrializing society would have an increasingly differentiated set of roles; consequently individuals may be able to rise in one of several mobility domains.

The second factor affecting social mobility is the condition under which people are allowed to be mobile. Some societies place greater restrictions on change in status than do others. In societies where most statuses are ascribed, the rate of mobility is likely to be lower. In the modern world, many societies contain minorities who are set apart from the majority by physical appearance or cultural practice. Frequently, the denial of equal access to power, wealth and prestige to minorities has meant that social mobility for such groups is difficult.

The question of social mobility and minority groups is particularly relevant in a country like India, and this is the area that interests us in this study. In the case of India, discussions on social mobility have long hinged
around the ascription based caste system. Within this system, where caste and occupation were inextricably bound, social mobility would be limited. Traditional societies like India were suddenly opened up to major changes through colonialism. With increasing opportunities available, and the increased specialization required for occupations in the new environment, avenues for the upwardly mobile were plenty. Those who had the skills in demand were bettering their status. Yet for a time it appeared that old inequalities continued to persist, and high caste status appeared to simply become high class status in the new situation. The new mobility indicators were either education, or through the policy of preferential discrimination, using education, employment and politics. Against the background of the dominant Hindu group, what did mobility come to signify for the minorities? It is interesting that in the Indian context, several groups thought of as upwardly mobile were minority groups, for example, the Parsis, Jews and Jains.

To handle adequately the problem of understanding the complex process of social mobility, choices must be made. What aspects or sources of mobility are to be considered? What is the rationale behind these choices? For the purposes of this study, three sources of mobility have been identified as being important and consequential in the study
of social mobility -- occupational change, education and migration.

OCCUPATIONAL CHANGE

Social mobility has come to be defined in terms of movements of individuals along the single vertical dimension of overall social status, on which an individual's status is almost always assessed in terms of the occupation he pursue. Occupational change and mobility are, of course, two different things. Occupational change need not be accompanied by mobility, either upward or downward. Job changing is a fairly common phenomenon, but changes in job level are less common. But where occupational change is accompanied by changes in occupation level, we see in such occupational change an important indicator of mobility.

With societies divided into various occupational groups, each having a status and prestige evaluation in the perception of a particular society, changes in occupation from traditional to non-traditional, manual to non-manual, leading to change in social stratum are seen to be instances of mobility, and occupational change an important source. Several studies of social mobility in the industrialized west, and particularly the United States of America, have concluded, by and large, that the overall pattern of mobility appeared much the same in these industrialized countries,
determined far more by occupational structures than by value orientation.

But the impact of mobility will differ in countries with different traditions. Where social and economic climbing are seen as aberrant, both the patterns of climbing and the consequences are likely to vary considerably from those of Western societies. Even greater differences are likely to be found in societies characterized by a high degree of traditionalism and an economic distribution which includes a very small elite and a large mass of underprivileged people. In such societies, status is ascribed and mobility is objectively difficult and devalued. As we saw earlier in Chapter I, in societies like India, traditionally the caste bound Hindu society had a clear association between caste and occupation. As we have already seen, this rigidity regarding occupation did not apply to many minority groups who took advantage of changing situations to be mobile. Yet, although they were not bound to the same extent as caste Hindus in the choice of occupation, religious minorities like the Jews, Jains, Parsis, Sikhs and Syrian Christians were careful not to engage in unclean occupations. For these groups, occupational change was an important source of mobility. In the case of the Parsis and the Jains, they were already poised to take advantage of the new economic opportunities that required the trading skills and capital
base that these communities had. In any case, occupational change for these groups had already meant a linear displacement of occupations, from traditional to non-traditional. This corresponded with the sequence of occupational change traditionally perceived as leading to mobility.

Despite the diversity of interests, mobility has been studied in a limited and traditional way. Namely, that mobility involves a major change up or down in an individual's occupational position. Change in occupational position is a statement usually about objective aspects of class position, that is, in terms of income changes. Yet higher or lower are defined in terms of the prestige ratings of occupations. A person's conception of the occupational structure and his position in it is important, and an individual's occupational history is likely to be significant. The preoccupation with occupational change has led to studies of various aspects of occupational mobility and the problems related to them. Despite these, occupational change is still considered to be the single biggest source of mobility.

In Kerala, the new opportunity structure saw more and more, the decline of traditional Hindu dominance and greater access to resources for communities like the Syrian Christians. Minorities in India like the Parsis or Jews, for example, took advantage of new opportunities and became what
Saberwal calls "mobility leaders". They had the advantage of acceptance by the Hindu society with which they lived. As small traders and artisans they practised no unclean occupations. At the same time they were not constrained in terms of occupation in the way that their Hindu brethren were. This did a great deal to help their mobility. This was in contrast to several upper caste Hindus regarding the occupations they could pursue when caste boundaries began to crumble. In Kerala, the Christians were kept out of government jobs which were the monopoly of Hindu upper castes, and also out of ownership of land which was in caste Hindu hands and not saleable. Trade and business being relatively open occupations became their major interests. With the opening up of the economy in the 19th century, this stood them in good stead.

The new business personnel and leadership that emerged in British India were from traditional business communities and the Parsis in particular. Their continuing mobility from the 17th century onward involved the movement from manual to non-manual, from artisan crafts to trade and industry. Also, because of their close links with the British and the great degree of westernization they achieved, especially through education, they also began taking to the professions. Although the Jains followed different occupations, by the 20th century, they had clus-
tered about money-lending, banking, and later industry. 5

The case of the Muslims presents a contrast. Before independence, the economic mainstay of the Muslim upper classes was jagirdari, that is, they were feudal. With the abolition of the jagirdari, the Muslim occupational base disintegrated. Scions of these classes did take to higher administrative and professional jobs. They never developed a mercantile or entrepreneurial class before or after the advent of the British. The bulk of the Muslims, being poor, remained associated with agricultural labour and other lowly occupations.

For the Baha'is and the Buddhists, as we discussed earlier, the stigma of their origins as scheduled castes continued to be a serious obstacle to mobility. They were poor and engaged in agricultural labour and occupations of low prestige. Little changed for them after conversion. Relative to their earlier position, they may have improved their lot, but not substantially, and not in relation to other groups.

Groups like the Sindhis, a linguistic-religious group were caught in the maelstrom of partition and forced to seek refuge in India. With no homeland in India, they were scattered across urban centres. Here, they met the resulting social and economic challenges by taking successfully to
business enterprise. Stephen Keller has analyzed three stages of refugeeism: 1) the actual flight, 2) reaching the destination and the subsequent horror of life at refugee camps and gratitude for what is given to them locally, 3) once resettlement takes place, a number of developments take place which endure. Of these, an important one is a sense of invulnerability that grows with the realization that they have survived the trauma. This, Keller says, is manifested in a heightened willingness to take risks. In an economy of scarcity, where others don't share risk taking sentiments, this may lead to individual gain and community wide economic development.

The Sikhs were also refugees as a result of partition. Yet the major difference was that they had a ready homeland in the Punjab and so a bulk of the Sikhs were able to pursue their traditional occupation of farming. But because partition had meant that geography was rewritten, this ready homeland, the Punjab, was a truncated one. Economic necessity and population pressures on land forced many Sikhs to move out. Many took to farming in areas contiguous to Punjab. Others moved in the direction of urban areas and took to a range of occupations, from business and professions to services.
EDUCATION

Apart from occupational change, education is another indicator, which is significant for social mobility. In pre-industrial societies, schooling was reserved for children of a privileged elite. Schooling did little or nothing to increase a person's productivity and was thus, in an economic sense wasteful. Education was of little practical value and was undertaken only by those with the time and the money to pursue it for its own sake. With rising industrialism, however, mass schooling became a necessity. The pace of social change increased and many new roles were created which required specialized knowledge and skills. Education came to be regarded as an important avenue to social mobility and finally to a truly egalitarian society.

There is, however, a long and virulent debate about education and mobility. One group supports the position that education is inextricably linked with occupational change as an avenue of mobility, with education being the single largest determinant of occupational achievement. The crucial insight of the other group which has an increasing number of supporters, is that people do not have equal access to education. In practice, accessibility to education is strongly influenced by the social class of the
family they were born into. Social stratification distributes educational opportunities as unequally as it does wealth, power and prestige. By reinforcing the advantages that the elite already have over others, education, it is believed, only reinforces the status quo, that is, the existing inequalities. Boudon also explains that there is an increasing inequality in education. That is, the higher the social class background of the child, the more likely he or she is to stay on in school -- consequently, the more stages and choices there are in schooling, the more likely are children from higher social class backgrounds to predominate in the later stages of education.

No one denies the close correlation between education and social mobility, however. Studies have shown that the most prestigious jobs in a society are not only those that yield the highest incomes, but also the ones that require the longest education. The more education that people have, the more likely they are to obtain good jobs and enjoy high incomes. A high level of education is a scarce and valuable resource and one for which people compete vigorously.

Perhaps the clearest example of such education linked constraints is provided by post-restoration Japan where career advancement was specific to three more or less distinct channels -- a labour or production channel (elementary
school), a lower administrative channel (middle school graduates) and a higher executive channel. Many studies dealing with the determinants of mobility deal with education as an important one. Thomas Fox and S.M. Miller\textsuperscript{12} analyzed intergenerational changes in occupation as defined by the flow between manual and non-manual occupations for twelve countries, and amongst their conclusions, were the fact that school enrolment is the single most important determinant of upward mobility from non-manual occupations. Educational levels are also related to occupational prestige. Hodge, Siegel and Rossi\textsuperscript{13} offer some speculations: 1) that there is an important structural interdependence between the social evaluation of a job and its educational prerequisites, and any dramatic shifts in prestige structure of occupations would upset this interdependence, 2) the perceived meanings of such factors as achievement and mobility would be changed if occupational prestige itself were to undergo large scale changes. The importance of education in relation to mobility makes it an important indicator to study.

In traditional societies like India, the opening of up of new avenues, economic opportunities and access to widening occupational openings were in many ways linked to education. Education helped individuals abandon traditional roles and take to new ones. For India in particular, the most effective agent of socio-cultural changes proved to be
the educational system. Minority groups responded to modern education in different ways and in differing degrees.

To reiterate our remarks of the introductory chapter, the 19th century saw the introduction of western education to India. Indian society consisted of many religious groups, some of which had their own methods of education. Hindu society confined formal education to the twice born castes who, given their literate background were subsequently the first Hindus to take to western education. The Muslims also had a traditional system of education, but one which resisted and opposed the onslaught of Christian linked western education, so that Muslims remained educationally one of the most backward communities. The Muslim elite did take to western education, albeit later than other groups. But because the bulk of Muslims were poor, very few could afford to go in for higher education.

The Parsis are perhaps the best Indian example of a minority group experiencing social mobility as a result of education. They had dissociated themselves from the domination of the clergy prior to the 19th century and were thus free from what might have been opposition to the new educational environment. With their increasing concentration in urban areas they were quick to see the advantages to be gained by taking to western education. Education meant
access to new occupational roles in the administrative, health, legal and commercial occupations. The higher than average number of Parsis who acquired these new qualifications explains the lead and exceedingly high participation of the Parsis in the higher professions from the 19th century onwards. What was also important was that the community stressed the importance of mechanical, technical and commercial education. Of course, the Parsis already had a critical minimum level of material advantages, and hence could take to education, unlike the Muslims.

For the Jains, the level of literacy was fairly high specially among males. But this was not true of the education standard in general. In fact, although several Jains did take to higher education, and enter professions, the general educational standard was not only not advanced, but there was a great deal of variation between various Jain castes.

Other groups did not react to education in the same way. Traders turned industrialists like the Harwaris, a regional caste group were one example. Their mobility was not linked to education in the same way that the Parsis' was. They took to education, but primarily those aspects that would help them in their traditional occupations, like arithmetic, book-keeping and so on. Now they have taken to business management. Even when school and college education
became a basic requirement, greater stress was laid on practical training than formal education. Sons started this training as apprentices in the family business.\textsuperscript{16}

For the Buddhists and the Baha'is, despite conversion, they continued to be socially and economically deprived. This was true of converts to Christianity who were from the scheduled castes. The one avenue of mobility which has been of particular importance for such groups has been education. But there are distinct differences between these groups in this regard. Scheduled castes who are Hindu and Sikh are entitled to benefits of education, employment and political representation under the reservation policy. This is true of the Buddhists as well. But converts to religions of alien origin forfeit all claims to special protection. In the case of the Christian scheduled castes, the missionary association with education has been an important source of mobility.\textsuperscript{17}

The Sikhs, particularly the most populous group among them, the Jats, had established themselves as a powerful group by the time the British took over the Punjab. Regarded by them as the foremost farming community, they bestowed on them special treatment in terms of education. Missionary activity, manifest in the setting up of schools, colleges and hospitals was marked in the Punjab in the 19th century.
Further, from 1908, under the Singh Sabha, an educational conference was convened every year to take stock of the progress of literacy in the community, and to collect money to build schools. The publication of books and newspapers was stimulated by this impetus to education. With this response to modern education, it is hardly surprising that by the time of partition, they were one of the most literate groups in the state.

The third source of mobility selected for this study is also an important one, and closely linked with occupational change and education, namely migration.

**MIGRATION**

Migration is closely linked with the other two sources of mobility. Men move from one place to another for very different reasons and under varying circumstances. Migration takes place for various reasons, but one of the primary ones is the economic factor based on perceived prospects for upward mobility through occupational change. Persecuted people seek refuge, those with commercial interests try to expand them by moving elsewhere. Both lack of education and employment opportunities at home may make an individual move. Likewise, education itself may be a factor in prompting an individual to seek better employment opportunities elsewhere.
There has been a great deal of work done on migration as a source of mobility. The fundamental question concerns why people move from one place to another. The push and pull theory\(^{20}\) of migration has, perhaps, been the most discussed. It brief, migration may occur as a search for a better chance in life for an individual. In this case, the destination exerts a pull on the migrant; he migrates because of need. On the other hand, migration may be an attempt to flee from an undesirable social or economic situation which makes for the push factor, that is migration takes place out of necessity. While some theorists consider the push factor alone relevant to migration,\(^{21}\) others\(^{22}\) argue that it is a combination of push and pull factors.

Why do people migrate to a particular place? Wolpert's\(^{23}\) 'place utility' concept states that the perceived utility of a particular place should be greater than that of the place of origin for a person to migrate there.

Sociologically, migration as a source of mobility can be discerned in three contexts. First, individuals make decisions independent of each other. But insofar as they are from the same group or community, these independent actions have a conjoint impact, the synergistic perspective.\(^{24}\) Second, migrations sponsored by one's kin, ethnic or religious networks. This sponsored migration
leads to mobility of the group. Third, a group decides to migrate due to hostile conditions in the present home, that is, group migration may take place due to economic, political or cultural factors.

Migration and social mobility may be associated in characteristically special ways in traditional societies that were suddenly opened up to new ideas and opportunities in colonial periods. Harvey and Riddell\textsuperscript{25} talk of the introduction, in such periods, of a centralized administrative system, establishment and gradual spread of educational and medical facilities, cash crop production, construction of railways and roads, all of which aggregatively caused sequential changes in traditional systems. They made it easier for people to move, and with the concentration of education and medical facilities in some centres, people began to cluster about these areas, and this led to increasing urbanization and a growing movement from rural to urban areas as an avenue of mobility.

In the context of India's traditional society also, in the colonial period, the opening up of new economic opportunities particularly in urban areas, generated much migratory movement. The fact that certain groups as we have already mentioned, seemed to possess the requisite skills and resources required in the new environment meant that for them the continuing rural-urban migration was an important factor.
in their mobility.

The Parsis trace their very origins in India to being a migrant group. As we saw earlier, until the 17th century, they lived primarily in rural Gujarat. Then began a continuing rural-urban migration as well as urban-urban migration to emerging commercial, administrative and military centres, particularly Bombay. By the 19th century they were an urban group.26

The Jains, by the 20th century, had become a largely commercial community. With their existing interests in trade, they migrated to many parts of India, especially from Rajasthan to east India and became dominant in the local economy, and their success was sought to be emulated by others. With the introduction of the railways in the 19th century, the migrations received further impetus.27

The Marwaris originally come from Rajasthan, but today they are found all over India, particularly in the four metropolitan cities. In fact, the term Marwari has little association today with the place of origin beyond ties of sentiment. There are instead the Delhi Marwaris, the Calcutta Marwaris and so on. The trading history of the community is to be found in migration. The ancestors of the Marwaris of today took goods from one place to another to sell them and this gradually led to migration. They tended
to migrate on account of economic opportunities elsewhere, and on account of famine and exploitation at home. The migration gained momentum between 1860 and 1900, when the Marwaris sought favourable conditions in Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi and Madras. Initially they confined their interests to the cotton cloth trade, banking and related occupations, and after 1910, they took to industry. In this century, many Marwaris have also migrated to the Middle East.

The Indian Baha'is and Buddhists are hardly migrant groups. Given their stigmatized status as ex-untouchables, and their corresponding economic and social disabilities, they have remained essentially rooted in rural areas.

At the end of partition, about six million Muslims left India and became part of Pakistan. Those who remained, as we have seen are largely poor and illiterate. They are scattered across the country, divided by language and culture. Within India, they have not been associated with much migrant behaviour. They have been strongly associated with the migration of skilled and semi-skilled labour to the Middle East from the 1970's onward. They were the earliest such migrants to the Gulf, and they were predominantly from Kerala.

Until 1947, only individual Sikhs left the Punjab. As a community, they originated in the Punjab and continued to
live there. It was mainly in pursuit of employment that they moved out. A small number were in Bihar and Maharashtra and there was some migration to the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada and Kenya. After 1947, there were marked changes. Virtually every Sikh left Pakistan and the majority settled in East Punjab. In the trauma of partition, Sikhs became uprooted migrants, but, unlike the Sindhis, they had an identifiable homeland in Punjab. Most of them could pursue their old occupation of farming. Others undertook new occupations, migrating in this process to various urban centres in India. They also migrated abroad in substantial numbers. South East Asia witnessed greater immigrations of Sikhs after 1947. But the bulk of overseas migration took place to the United Kingdom. Sikhs form about one-third of the over one million Indian population there. Prompted by economic adversity, they emigrated. But the Sikh who emigrated either to a foreign land or another part of India, never planned to give up his plot of land at home. In almost all cases, he returned, either with what he had earned or penniless.

The preceding pages have been an attempt to establish the rationale of selecting the three sources of mobility, namely occupational change, education and migration. Whether the Syrian Christians conform to the theories discussed, or are distinctive remains to be seen in the
following chapters and forms the essence of this study.

METHODODOLOGY

One of the overriding problems facing a student of the Syrian Christian community is the paucity of definitive source material, particularly prior to the 17th century. As we have seen earlier, this has meant that for the best part, the early history of the community has been somewhat hazy. Subsequent to European colonization and missionary activity, documentation has been far more systematic. Much of the literature, however, pertains to the work and the history of the church itself, and its sectarian history, with only brief references to the Syrians as a community. Most of these books have been authored by people associated with the church, for instance, C.B. Firth\textsuperscript{33} and Rev. F.E. Keay.\textsuperscript{34} It is surprising that, considering that the Syrians were, like the Parsis, were in many ways pace setters of change and innovation in Travancore, there has been no great interest in studies of the community. The two most definitive works, to this researcher's mind, are Leslie Brown's \textit{The Indian Christians of St. Thomas}, and L.K. Ananthakrishna Ayyar's \textit{The Social Anthropology of the Syrian Christians}. Ayyar's book is difficult to locate, and was eventually traced to the United Theological College Library in Bangalore. Other published works on the community are available, but the bulk
of this literature concentrates primarily on eulogizing the community's history and seeks to corroborate the St. Thomas legend and the community's Brahmin origins. Histories of several Syrian Christian families exist and often provide interesting material on the changes occurring within these groups. Many wealthier families have such histories, but their chief limitation is the attempt to glorify individuals.

The Travancore Government records offer useful material on the Syrian Christians who were such an important group in the state. The Census reports, the Travancore Administrative Reports, the Report of the Marumakkathayam Committee (which cited Syrian prosperity in order to highlight the corresponding decline of the Nairs), the Reports of the Revenue Settlement of Travancore, the Travancore Banking Enquiry Committee, and the Backward Classes Reservation Commission were important and valuable primary sources. The Economic Review of the Government of Kerala which is published annually, provides important information on key areas of the state's development. The annual reports of the C.M.S. provide some vivid accounts of the Syrian Christians through the eyes of C.M.S. missionaries. The Malayalam newspaper, the Malayala Manorama, which began publication in 1898, and devoted considerable attention to the Syrian community, has beautifully preserved all its editions, the
very early ones on microfilm, in their Kottayam office.

This research study was begun in 1985. The first year was spent in combing all available source material, both on the Syrian Christians as well on religious minorities in India. The United Theological College in Bangalore has a comprehensive collection of relevant material. Other libraries which had material in varying degrees of relevance to our study, were the Vadavathur Seminary, the Mar Thoma Seminary, the C.M.S. College, and the Public Library in Kottayam. The Public Library and the Government Archives, as also the library of the Centre for Development Studies, all in Trivandrum were useful repositories of interesting material.

Once the initial material collection was over, fieldwork was begun in earnest. Since Syrian Christians belong to Kerala, that was the universe of our study. Within Kerala, Kottayam district was the focal point. In many ways, it was the most logical focal point to have. While in Kerala Christians number 20.5% of the total population, they are particularly concentrated in Kottayam district, comprising 47.48% of the total population, coming a close second to the Hindus who form 47.54%. Kottayam has the largest Christian population among all the districts in Kerala. It was part of the erstwhile state of Travancore. The C.M.S. concentrated much of its work in this region. It
was here that pioneering work in education and publishing took place. Schools, colleges, printing presses, newspapers, banks and plantation agriculture have all made Kottayam a thriving centre of Syrian Christian activity. The Syrian Christians held a pre-eminent position in the public life of the district. For these reasons we selected Kottayam district for our fieldwork.

Kottayam District

The District of Kottayam is situated between the Western Ghats on the east and the Vembanad Lake and the paddy fields of Kuttanad, the famed rich bowl of Kerala, on the west. (See Map 4.) The total area of the district is 6,35,449 square kilometres. At present it consists of five taluks, Changanacherry, Kottayam, Vaikom, Meenachil and Kanjirapally. Prior to 1972, the district was larger, consisting of eight taluks. In 1972, the district was bifurcated into the Kottayam and the newly formed Indukki districts.

According to the 1981 census, the total population of the district is 16,97,442. Of these, the overwhelming majority live in rural areas. Kottayam, Palai, Changanacherry and Vaikom are the only Municipal towns. The density of population in Kottayam district is only 326 persons per square kilometre. Kottayam is least populous
among the district of Kerala in regard to density of population. The district itself came into existence in 1949 after the integration of the states of Cochin and Travancore in the same year. The predominant language spoken is Malayalam. Other languages spoken are Tamil, Telugu, Konkani, and Kannada, but in insignificant measure, Tamil.

Table III.1: Kottavan: Distribution of Population by Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother Tongue</th>
<th>Total Speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malayalam</td>
<td>1,550,336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>174,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telugu</td>
<td>3,599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Konkani</td>
<td>1,735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kannada</td>
<td>1,288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thulu</td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,732,445</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, 1961. These figures indicate the figures prior to the formation of the Idukki district.

The district falls into three natural divisions: (1) the lowland, bordering the Vembanad lake on the West, (2) the Midland, consisting of the undulating country east of the lowland and (3) the high land on the east, covered by thick forests.
The most important religious communities of the district are the Hindus, Christians and Muslims. As mentioned earlier, Kottayam district has the largest Christian population among the districts of Kerala. Apart from the communities mentioned, there are a few Jains, Sikhs and Jews.

Table III.2: Kottayam 1981: Distribution of Population by Religion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Religions</td>
<td>16,87,442</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>8,07,014</td>
<td>47.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>84,217</td>
<td>4.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>8,05,953</td>
<td>47.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikh</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religious Persuasions</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion not stated</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


FIELDWORK

Having selected Kottayam District as the area of fieldwork, the question confronting us was what the entry point to this community was going to be. The late Dr. Mathew Kurien of Kottayam was to be a key figure in the early days of fieldwork, which commenced in August, 1986. Not only did he run an institute for studies in economic development, he had a wide knowledge of the area. He was able to give us
details of local Christian history, much of which we were already familiar with. More important, he gave us a graphic picture of the occupational, educational and migration background of Syrian Christians, which he said, could be generalized in terms of geographical area. Accordingly, for instance, the Tiruvalla-Kozhencherry belt was the area from where migration to the Middle East had been significant, particularly of skilled and semi-skilled manpower. The hill areas, for instance, Kanjirapally, consisted of groups who had invested in land there. The Thodupuzha area had seen large scale migration of peasants to Malabar. In Kuttanad, families were traditionally associated with paddy cultivation. The Kozhencherry area was also the area where several families had been involved in banking. Much of this was known (see Chap.II). But what had happened to individual members of these families?

We decided to use this information for a reconnaissance. Dr. Kurien was kind enough to accompany this researcher virtually across Kottayam and neighbouring Pathanamthitta district. Every where, we were introduced to one or two individuals, who served as informants. Through conversations with these persons, we were able to get an idea of the families in the area, and the informant's own perceptions of uniformities in mobility patterns and exceptional cases. We went to Kanjirapally in the foothills
of the high ranges, Kumarakom in the Kuttanad belt, Kozhencherry and Thazhathangady in Kottayam, where some of the oldest families in Kottayam live, and where the town is said to have originated, and Kottayam town itself. Having contacted these informants and promised to return, we returned to our base in Kottayam to plan our strategy.

This research study essentially follows the extended case study method. It was intended to be an analysis which was qualitative in nature. We believe that this method plays a valuable role in paving the way for later generalizations. Quantitative analysis has the benefit of large scale comparability and generalization. Qualitative research has the benefit of being more indepth, and alleviating the anonymity which affects individuals in quantitative research. This involved lengthy interviews with respondents, with a view to getting a detailed life history of the individuals in order to trace varying mobility patterns.

In this analysis of mobility among the Syrian Christians, this approach has meant the use of life histories of respondents and their published family histories if any. These have been used to highlight the role that occupational change, education and migration have played as sources of mobility, and what the patterns of this mobility have been. The use has also been made of information given by respond-
ents' friends, neighbours or family, if this information highlighted a particular attitude or reaction that seemed relevant.

Thirty nine respondents were interviewed. They included at least five from each of the areas we visited. They covered landed individuals as well as agricultural labourers, with or without small holdings of their own, white collar and blue collar workers. The cases which have been used in the subsequent chapters are those which illustrate very clearly the role of occupational change, education and migration.

One of the most encouraging aspects of our fieldwork was the degree of assistance and kindness shown by virtually every respondent. The initial introduction of the researcher by one person was a great advantage. One of the dubious offshoots of this kindness was, often, an anxiety to any what the respondent felt the researcher wanted to hear. This included most frequently an extolling of family traditions on the one hand, and a depreciation of their general situation on the other. In the early days of fieldwork, this researcher was always prepared for some reluctance on the part of the respondent. For the most part, respondents were most forthcoming. This made the researcher's task much easier. To be sure, this was not always so. In one or two
cases, there was a certain amount of initial hesitation in conversing with the researcher. Once a greater rapport had been established, it was revealed that this hesitation had been as a result of the apprehension that the researcher was from the Income Tax department! Considering that Kanjirapally, where these respondents live, is one of the chief contributors to the Kerala exchequer, and its residents among the wealthiest in the state, perhaps this was a natural precaution.

The presentation of data in each of the following chapters adheres to a given format. The chapters deal with the three indicators of mobility, occupational change, education, and migration respectively. Each case cited in the chapter have been referred to by the letter R (respondent) in capital type. The three sources of mobility are indicated by the following in small type, o.c, e and m, indicate occupational change, education and migration respectively. More than one case per source of mobility have obviously been used. Numbers 1, 2, 3, ... will be used to differentiate a case of one kind of mobility from another of a similar kind. To illustrate, therefore, Roc1 refers to respondent 1 of occupational change as an avenue of mobility; Re2, case 2 of education, Rm3 case 3 of migration and so on. Also, o.c, e, and m refer to the major source of mobility in the particular case referred to. Therefore, Rm1, for
example, may well be quoted in the chapter on education as a source of mobility. This would mean that education may have played a role in Rml's life, but the pre-eminent source of mobility has been migration.

Having outlined the methodology on which this study has been based, chapters four, five and six deal with the three indicators of mobility that have been discussed -- respectively, occupational change, education and migration.
Notes


7. For example, R.K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, Free Press, New York, 1968, and others of the functionalist school.


24. The concept of synergy was first postulated by Ruth Benedict, Patterns of Culture, Houghton Mifflen, Boston, 1934, and later expanded by Abraham H. Maslow, "Synergy in the society and the individual", in Journal Humanistic Psychology, IV, 1964. Each individual in synergistic situation, in maximizing his personal gains, benefits society. Synergy thus refers to a socially shared world view that sees competition as legitimate.


27. Surendra Gopal, "Jain merchants in eastern India under the Great Mughals", in Dwijendra Tripathi, op. cit., p.77.


29. Ibid., p.33.


31. Ibid., pp.424-441.

32. Keller, op. cit., p.86.
