Chapter III
Making of the ‘Modern Forests’ of Travancore: Colonization and Native Forests

Making of the modern forest of Travancore was initiated through the gaze and superior science of the British. The system of knowledge making instigated by the Empire made the woodlands of the native state perceptible to both the natives and the Europeans. This visibility together with the pace of industrial capitalism transformed the Kadu of Travancore, which was a treasure trove of diverse flora and fauna, into ‘Modern forest’ which was an abode of marketable timber. The forest policy legislations were introduced in the native state to gain access to these forests to meet the increasing demands of timber for the market. It was for this purpose that reservation of forests tracts and the subsequent laws and legislations were introduced. Scientific forestry was introduced for providing a methodical base for exploitation of forest resources.

The mechanism for acting with the forest policy started with the signing of the Subsidiary Treaty of 1795. Consequently, colonial policies along with its administrative machineries and sophisticated technologies entered the native state. Though the treaty and the policies at a glance signified political domination, the main target of the colonizer was the subjugation of the natural resources of the state especially of teak timber. Pursuant to that, unnoticeable attacks were made on the state forests in the form of a series of acts and proclamations. These acts were viewed as part of the better management of the state and the conservation of its valuable forests. Colonial forest policies were introduced in the name of scientific forestry. In reality, they actually proved to be cancerous to the state forest resulting in the silent death of the wealthy forests of Travancore and thereby, its rich biodiversity.

The Industrial Revolution and the subsequent process of colonialism led to the commodification of nature especially the forest. Nature and forests were the
worst hit by the colonial policies. Colonialism was termed as a watershed in the ecological history of India.\(^1\) It was ultimately the war needs of Britain that depleted the Indian forest. The navy had the strongest influence in the formal forest policy and legislation\(^2\) in the early phase i.e., till the middle of the eighteenth century. As Britain was a superior naval power, it required a large quantity of timber for the ship building process. Construction of a strong navy was a great necessity for Britain to win over the French naval force. Later, railways formed the pivot of the forest policies. The construction of railways was accelerated during the World Wars. In the Madras Presidency over 2,50,000 sleepers (3,500 trees) were required annually from indigenous sources. To meet this demand, contractors resorted extensively to sequential over exploitation of the forest.\(^3\)

As Ramachandra Guha remarked,

> “the landmark in the history of Indian forestry is undoubtedly the building of Indian Railways. The large scale destruction of accessible forest which in the early years of railway expansion led to the creation of a Forest Department and the first task before the new department was to identify the sources of supply of strong and durable timbers which could be used as railway sleepers.”\(^4\)

Bourdillion on the fuel consumption of railway says:

> “The estimated consumption of wood for fuel is 100 tones a mile. We should therefore keep for this purpose 5,000 acres of plantations or 20,000 acres of natural forest to maintain the supply.”\(^5\)

The thinning of Indian forests for the railway needs was enhanced during the First World War. A Timber branch for the Munitions Board was specially created

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during this period. Between April 1917 and October 1918, the records reveal that 2,28,076 tons of timber were supplied by this branch.\textsuperscript{6} About 1.7 million cubic feet of timber, mostly teak were exported annually between 1914 and 1919.\textsuperscript{7} For supervising the collection of timber from different provinces a Timber Directorate was set up in Delhi during the Second World War. The Middle East theatre and the Allied forces in Iraq and the Persian Gulf were hooked on the supply of timber from India.\textsuperscript{8}

The main agenda of the development of forestry was to provide the Imperial Forest Department with an uninterrupted supply of financial profit. The British began to consider the forests as a renewable resource to meet their timber needs and began to introduce a series of forest policies for the management of these forests. The concept of colonial scientific forestry denoted the process of application of scientific forestry practices by the colonial state in order to enhance the productivity and regeneration of forest potential.\textsuperscript{9} The revenue orientation of the colonial land policy also worked towards the denudation of forests.\textsuperscript{10} The dominant thrust for the contemporary agrarian policy was to augment the cultivated land and therefore, the watchword of the time was to destroy the forests with this end in view.\textsuperscript{11}

**Forest Policy: Definition**

A Forest policy is aimed at bringing the forest under the framework of certain rules and regulations. In other words it is a regulation on forest resources and a restriction on the people’s rights over it. According to William B. Greeley “the forest policy of any country is an outgrowth of the unremitting pressure of people upon natural resources.”\textsuperscript{12} A closer look reveals that colonial forest policies

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\textsuperscript{6} Gadgil and Guha, op. cit., p.138.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{10} Gadgil and Guha, op. cit., pp. 119 - 120.
were, in reality, born out of an encounter between a traditionally agricultural nation and an industrially highly superior capitalistic nation.\textsuperscript{13} Colonial forest policies were those regulations introduced by the colonial government over the Indian forests during their rule in the subcontinent. Identical to all other colonial policies, the forest policies were also aimed at benefitting the British at the expense of the Indians. It was intended for the consolidation and assertion of government rights over the forests of India. Their gaze fell on Indian teak, the most resilient of ship building timbers, with the waning of the oak forest in England.

Gadgil and Guha in their work observed that the world ecology had been profoundly altered by western imperialism. Around 1860, Britain had emerged as the world leader in deforestation, procuring timber for ship building and iron smelting and land for farming from around the world. The destructive energy of the British timber race rapidly converted forests into deserts.\textsuperscript{14}

**Beginning of Legislations in India**

Timber exploitation existed even before the advent of the British in India. Respective state governments had exploited timber for various purposes and it had been made a state monopoly. The local population had the right over land to utilize non-reserved produce and a fee collection was accorded.\textsuperscript{15} Nevertheless, the massive destruction of forest materialized with the arrival of the British in India. The wealth of the forest and above all the market value represented by certain trees on the west coast, did not escape the notice of the pioneer British who settled in South India. Stebbing noted that initially attempts were made to form a timber syndicate in Malabar in 1796.\textsuperscript{16} Private extraction of wood was made an offence punishable by law on 25 April 1806. Captain Watson was appointed the first Conservator of Forest, for both the forests of Malabar and Travancore on 10 November, 1806. He soon established a timber monopoly throughout Malabar and


\textsuperscript{14} Gadgil and Guha, op. cit., pp. 117 - 119.


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 13.
Travancore. During the time, the court of directors was concerned only about the supply of timber. The growth of forest exploitation gave rise to various obstacles and problems which led to the need for regulation and restriction. The repressive measures adopted by him resulted in the abolition of conservatorship in 1823.

A rethinking was made on the colonial usage of forest and for reviving the conservatorship due to the alarming pace of deforestation that took place during the early decades of the 19th c. The adverse effect of deforestation on the ecology produced serious debates and discussions during the period. As a result the post of conservator was revived and Dr. Gibson was appointed the first regular Conservator of forest in the Bombay Presidency. He reported the silting up of rivers in certain parts of the country due to the large-scale destruction of forests. It was with the annexation of Pegu by the British in 1852 that the forestry practices in India commenced. Instantaneously after the annexation all forests were declared to be government property. In 1855, Lord Dalhousie issued the Charter of the Indian forest after studying the report of McClelland. It outlines the forest conservation plan for the whole of India.

The rules that defined the authority of the Conservator, and the management and preservation of forests in the provinces of Malabar and Canara were set forth by the Bombay government in August 1815. The two objectives of these rules were to preserve the imperial forest from waste and to uphold the sovereign rights of the British government over timber resources.

The Imperial Forest Department was formed in 1864 and the foundations of scientific forestry in India were laid down with the appointment of Dietrich Brandis as the first Inspector General of Forests in India. However, during the introduction of scientific forestry in India the European scientific practices were found to be

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18 Marlene Buchy, op. cit., p. 15.
19 Berthold Ribbentrop, op. cit., p. 68.
20 Ibid., p. 72.
incompatible with the diverse environmental conditions of India. \textsuperscript{22} This led to the creation of a distinct Indian branch of scientific forestry by blending the European forestry experience with Indian environmental conditions. One of the most important features of this branch of forestry was that it ignored the ecological and social realities in favor of fast growing pure tree stand forests and plantations, managed with statistical tables in order to satisfy the economic objective set by the government. \textsuperscript{23}

Brandis introduced measures for the protection and improvement of forests. He introduced a system of valuation survey, which he named as the Linear Survey. \textsuperscript{24} Legal mechanisms were also forged to assert and safeguard state control over forests. The Indian Forest Act of 1865 was the first attempt at asserting state monopoly. \textsuperscript{25} “The process of alienating the forest dwellers from the forests was given legitimacy by the Indian Forest Act and the administrative processes were unleashed on the forest regions after its inception. Villages were established in deep forest regions to facilitate the labour needs in extracting timber. The Forest Act, the Forest Working Plans, the survey and settlement operations in the forest regions were all aimed at limiting the rights of the people and transferring ownership of forest to the state”. \textsuperscript{26} Alienation from the forest signified a mode of life in which, circumstances distorted the innate qualities of human beings, compelling them to act in a self-destructive fashion. \textsuperscript{27}

**The Indian Forest Act of 1865**

The British who heedlessly considered the value of forests in their native land emerged as the pioneer in the forest policy legislations in India. Based on the


\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{24} E.P Stebbing, *The Forests of India*, Vol. II, A J reprints Agency, New Delhi, 1982, p. 593. According to Linear Survey the trees along certain lines, roads, ridges, or streams were counted and classified according to their girth and ticked off on small pieces of Bamboo, split into 10 pieces which would be turned down one by one. Different pieces were carved for different classes of trees.

\textsuperscript{25} Gadgil and Guha, op. cit., p. 121.


\textsuperscript{27} Guha, op. cit., p. 58.
German forestry practices they passed the First Indian Forest Act in 1865. However it was an irony that in England forest legislations were enacted only in the 20th c. This substantiates the fact that the legislations carried out in India was born out of the utmost necessity of bringing the vast forest resources of the country under their subjugation to meet their growing industrial requirements.

The first attempt at forest legislation was the passing of the Indian Forest Act of 1865. The act invested the state government with the authority to declare any land enclosed with trees or brushwood as state forest, and to make rules concerning the administration of the same. It provided penalties for the breach of provisions or infringing rules. It also prescribed rules for the arrest of offenders. An attempt was made to regulate the collection of forest produce by forest dwellers. Thus socially regulated practices of the forest people were restrained by law. For effective control, the state would henceforth have the power to protect any forest in anticipation of its demarcation and management.

One of the major criticisms regarding the forest act was that it was mainly passed to expedite the procurement of the forest tracts that were assigned for railway supplies. The main agenda of the state was to establish control over those forests which it immediately required. A great debate emerged during the period regarding the state control over forest. The Annexationist school headed by Baden Powell argued for complete control by the state over the forests. The Populist school, on the other hand, rejected any kind of state interference and argued that the tribals and peasants must be given supreme rights over the forest. The moderate voice of the Pragmatic school headed by Dietrich Brandis advocated that ecologically sensitive and strategically valuable forests should be brought under state control.

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28 E.P. Stebbing, op. cit., pp. 8 - 11.
29 Ibid.
30 Gadgil and Guha, op. cit., p. 123.
31 Ibid., p. 124.
The Indian Forest Act of 1878

The laws for legislation and conservation reached its zenith in 1878 when the Second Indian Forest Act was passed. Under this Act, the forest area was divided into three categories: a) Reserved Forest b) Protected Forest and c) Village Forest. Reserved forest consists of the most economically valuable trees, and the local population was denied access to them. The Forest Settlement Officer was given the charge of demarcation of the forest. Thus, the Indian Forest Act of 1878 was principally concerned with clearly defining the powers of the state, and the officers of the Forest Department who were invested with absolute authority, free of any judicial proceedings.

Forest Policy of 1894

The Government of India declared the first forest policy on 19 October 1894 which constituted the base for the ensuing forest policies of India. Through this policy the government of India was guided by the following objectives:

1. The main object of the management of forest is to promote the general well-being of the country.

2. The maintenance of adequate forest is dictated primarily for the preservation of climatic and physical conditions of the country subject to these conditions.

3. Permanent cultivation should come before forestry.

4. The satisfaction of the needs of the local population should over ride all considerations of revenue.

5. After the fulfillment of the above conditions, the realization of maximum revenue should be the guiding factor.

32 Marlene Buchy, op. cit., pp. 24 - 25.
The state forests were classified with reference to their primary function as follows:

i. Forests, the preservation of which was essential on climatic or physical grounds.

ii. Forests that afforded a supply of valuable timbers for commercial purposes.

iii. Minor forests.

iv. Pasture lands.

**Early Commercial Orientations and Forest management in Travancore**

The history of forest management in Travancore can be traced back to the period of His Highness Karthikathirunal Rama Varma, popularly known as the Dharma Raja. He ascended the throne in the year 1758. Though in the early years of his reign he had to engage in wars with the Zamorin of Calicut and Tipu Sultan, he was always interested in the well-being and prosperity of the country. During his time, trade and commerce prospered, replenishing the Travancore treasury. In his task, the king was ably assisted by Raja Kesavadas, who gradually rose to the position of the Dewan of the state. It was under his Dewanship that many administrative reforms were introduced in Travancore. The prolonged wars waged by Marthanda Varma and Rama Varma in their early days had almost depleted the Travancore treasury.

Raja Kesavadas realized the significance of trade in recreating a war shattered economy. He was conscious that only a country pioneering in trade could gain respect from other countries. As trade depends on the naval facilities of a state, his interest was focused on developing a port and trading centre in Travancore. He selected Alleppey as the site of his plan on the advice of his friend Mathu Tharakan, a trader of timber and other forest produce who had gained enough knowledge and experience about the geography of foreign ports through his maritime travels. The Dewan made a personal visit to Alleppey and agreed on its trading possibilities. He set up a Pandakasala and many markets at government

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expense and increased the facilities of the port.\textsuperscript{35} He also constructed two parallel canals for bringing goods to the port. He offered infrastructural facilities to merchants and traders from Surat, Mumbai and Kutch to launch industrial enterprises, trading and cargo centres. Alleppey attained developmental progress and became the financial centre of Travancore during his time. The Dewan ordered the construction of the main central road (State Highway No.1) from Trivandrum to Karukutty, near Angamally, which remains as the main road in the hinter land of Kerala.\textsuperscript{36} The Patans from Tinnevelly and the Gauda Saraswathas from Mattancheri also came to Alleppey and entered into trade. Mathu Tharakan brought with him sixty-four Syrian Christian families from Thathampally and made them settle in Alleppey. He constructed a church there for them at his own expense.\textsuperscript{37} Thus, Alleppey developed into a commercial town.

Since then, all the produces from the hills were collected, bought and sold at Alleppey. A supervisor was appointed at Alleppey, for overseeing the stock. The town became a market for timber trade that was dominated by Mathu Tharakan. He collected the timber grown in Malayattur and other forests, and brought it to Alleppey for sale. \textit{Vicharippukars} were also appointed and stationed at various parts of the forests to collect and bring to Alleppey hill produces like cardamom, bee wax, honey, ivory etc.\textsuperscript{38}

Ship building was another income generating activity encouraged by the Dewan to replenish the royal treasury. He constructed three ships at government expense to maintain trade relations with Bombay and Calcutta. Ships were used as a major mode of transport for delivering the staple produces of the country to Bombay and Calcutta. Thus, Travancore maintained trade relations with these countries which earned a huge profit to the state.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{37} M. O. Joseph, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{38} Shungoonny Menon, \textit{History of Travancore from the Earliest Times}, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1998, p. 249.
\textsuperscript{39} M. O. Joseph, op. cit., p. 263.
Forest Policy in Travancore on Colonial Lines

An observation of the forest management practices of the native state before the intervention of the colonial administration reveals the extractive nature of the forest management practices followed by the native administration in accordance with the demand for timber from the European timber traders, especially the contractors for ship building industry. The native state had no definite forest policy, except the one facilitated by the western demand for timber. The emergence of timber traders like Mathu Tharakan during this period explains the nexus between the native authorities and the trader himself. Attempts made by the colonial authorities to streamline the forest administration and the evolving forest policy are to be seen against the background of plunder and devastation.

It is evident from historical records that the Supreme Government of the East India Company made several attempts to increase its authority and influence over the state of Travancore. It was with this purpose that they persuaded the Maharaja of Travancore to enter into a Subsidiary Treaty in 1795. The princely state of Travancore was brought under complete political subjugation of the British after signing the Subsidiary Treaty. As a result, the authority of the Political Resident at the Travancore court became unchallengeable even by the Raja of Travancore. The Governor General in Council issued orders:

“prohibiting all persons in the honorable company’s service and others enjoying the protection of the British government under the authority of the government of Bombay from holding any communication, correspondence, or personal intercourse whatever with the raja of Travancore or with any of the public ministers and officers of that state excepting through the official channel with the express consent and concurrence of the resident at the court. It was the Governor General in Councils intention that this

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40 Treaty between the East India Company and the Raja of Travancore on 17 November 1795 signed by Jonathan Duncan, Governor of Bombay, on behalf of the Governor General of India at the Bombay Castle, dated 21 January 1796, Secret Political File No. 50/1796.
prohibition should include all direct communication on the part of
the civil servants of the company with His Highness the Raja and
with his public officers on the subject of our commercial
engagements with His Highness.”

Pursuant to that, a series of changes were made in the forest landscape of
Travancore. In the name of systematic management and scientific forestry, they
activated commercial forestry. The techniques of scientific forestry reordered the
traditional and natural outlook of Travancore forest. The individual concept of
forest also changed from Kadu to ‘Forest’. The language of scientific forestry
worked to justify the shift towards commercial working.

The editorial of the Deepika on 15 November 1918, entitled ‘The Plan for
the Destruction of Forest’ vividly explains the colonial forest policy in British
India and in the princely states including Travancore. The editorial states thus,
the reconstruction of war torn houses in Mesopotamia demanded a huge quantity
of timber. So the British government sent messages to all the princely states in
India requesting to provide as much timber as possible to Mesopotamia. The
message received by the Government of Travancore was sent to the conservator
for his opinion. Accordingly, he recommended extracting all sorts of timber from
all government forests of the state, which according to him would yield a fair
profit of Rs. 45 lakhs to the government.

The Industrial Revolution had completely drained England out of
oakwood which was largely used for ship building and railway sleepers. With the
increasing demand for wood that possessed similar qualities to that of the oak,
the British were satisfied with the properties of teak timber available in
Travancore. As the base and superstructure of the British Empire building was
science and economy, they used the knowledge of science for finding out the
qualities of teak and their travelling gaze helped in finding out its quantity. For

41 Letter dated, 28th January 1803, from Lord Wellesley, Governor General in Council, Fort
William, Bombay Castle, Secret Political File No. 138/1803.
42 Guha, op. cit., pp. 59 - 60.
43 The Nazrani Deepika, titled The Plan for Destroying the Forests, Editorial, dated 15/11/1918,
Friday.
this purpose, the British sent many missions to different parts of India, and Travancore was one among the places where they found abundance of teak. Thus, it was the timber wealth of Travancore that attracted the attention of the British. A mission was sent under Edye to see whether a regular supply of teak timber could be obtained for the dockyard. Similar explorations and enquiries were continued until the middle of the century. Later, the Bombay syndicate suggested J.D. Munro to take hold of a large tract of land in Travancore for teak cultivation, but the proposal was neglected by the Travancore government.  

The timber exploitation under Mathu Tharakan had ruined the state forest of its teak. Therefore, the government revived its policy of timber extraction and took up the contract of cutting and storing the timber at Alleppey. This operation was entrusted in the hands of a Commercial Agent. Captain Robert Gordon was the Commercial Agent at that time. He performed multifarious duties as the Commercial Agent, the Conservator of Forest, and the Superintendent of the Cardamom Hills. During the 1830’s the posts of the conservator and the commercial agent were separated to make the office much more efficient. The duties of the conservator besides general conservancy, included supervision and entrapment of elephants, the collection of revenue from miscellaneous forest produces the supply of timber for government requirements etc.  

The Commencement of Legislations in Travancore

The first independent Conservator of the Forest of Travancore was U.V. Munro. It was under his direction that the hierarchic system of administration was launched in the Forest Department. Various posts were created on the basis of monthly salary. The establishments in 1844, under Munro, were as follows:  

For forest work, the posts of Aminadars, Pillays, Vicharippukarars, Accountants, Peons and Watchmen etc., were created at a salary of Rs. 420 per month. For cardamom works, positions for Aminadars, Sumprathy, Proverthykarars, Vicharippukarars, Pillays, Peons and Watchers etc., were created at a monthly  

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44 T.F. Bourdillion, op. cit., p. 158.  
45 Ibid.  
46 Ibid.
salary of Rs. 750.\textsuperscript{47} In this way, the process of institutionalization of forest gradually ensued during this period. Forest Departments confined its attention to working down teak on the Periyar and the Achencovil rivers. Between 1833 and 1842 the total number of logs delivered was about 1500 a year.\textsuperscript{48} In 1844, blackwood, \textit{anjily}, bee wax and cardamom were declared as state monopoly.\textsuperscript{49} The collection of wax was regulated by Proclamation No.1929 of 1 January 1838 (18 Dhanu 1013 ME).\textsuperscript{50}

Munro as the Conservator was instrumental in pointing out the over exploitation of forest by the contractors in Malabar and Travancore. For instance, Munro stated that a Parsee contractor had commenced devastating methods of extraction in some Travancore forest.\textsuperscript{51} This ruthless felling alarmed the necessity of conservation of forest.\textsuperscript{52} Munro died in 1844 and was succeeded by West and then by Kohlhoff. It was during his period that kol-teak was made a closer monopoly. In 1853, the royal proclamation No.143, dated 16 February 1853 (6 Kumbham 1028 ME), prescribed the following clauses:\textsuperscript{53}

1) A royalty of Rs. 2 per candy was to be levied on kol-teak.

2) Private persons had to obtain sanction first from the revenue authorities and then from the \textit{Huzur} for procuring kol-teak.

3) The average size of a kol-teak tree for mercantile purpose should be above 12 \textit{virals} (15 inches) quarter girth at the middle.

4) Seigniorage system was followed for the sale of other trees.

**The First Indian Forest Act and Its Impact on Travancore**

Until 1865, Travancore had its own system of import and export tariffs. The year was significant as far as British India was concerned, since the First

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item \textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p. 159.
  \item \textsuperscript{49} Administration Report of Travancore for the year, 1110 ME (AD 1934-35), Government Press, Trivandrum, 1936, p. 73.
  \item \textsuperscript{50} T.F. Bourdillion, op. cit., p. 152.
  \item \textsuperscript{51} E.P. Stebbing, op. cit., p. 592.
  \item \textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{53} T. F. Bourdillion, op.cit., p. 159.
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Forest Act was promulgated then. Nonetheless, the effect of the Act was reflected even in Travancore where a series of conciliatory Acts and Proclamations with regard to its forests and forest produce were prescribed. In the same year, an inter-portal agreement was signed with the British government. Under the directives of the convention, trade duty could not be charged on any other product except tobacco, salt, opium and spirits which were manufactured in British India and imported to Travancore and vice versa. These exceptions were extended to the imports from Cochin to Travancore and vice versa. Travancore adopted the British Indian tariff rates on all foreign goods imports except tobacco. Exports from Travancore continued to be charged with the existing tariffs but the rates were generally kept low.54

The transfer of Kohlhoff to the Judicial Department and the appointment of Vernede as his successor was an epoch making event in the history of Travancore forest. Various changes and improvements were introduced in the administration of the department. The year witnessed a series of rules and proclamations in Travancore. The first proclamation made on 20 June 1865, was regarding the sale of waste lands both in the low country and the hills.55 The archival document reveals that proposals were made by the government to sell coffee lands for a nominal price. One of the letters from the Resident of Travancore reads:

“The rate of one Rupee an acre will not, I think deter parties from taking up lands while it will greatly facilitate the disposal of conflicting applications and at the same time it will provide for the expense of the survey and tends also to create a further revenue to the state in case of any considerable competition arising.”56

54 The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Travancore to Zira, Vol XXIV; Oxford Press, London, 1908, p.1
56 Letter No. nil, dated 01/12/1864 from the Office the Resident, Trivandrum to the Dewan of Travancore, Cover File No. 4402, B - 39.
The draft rules framed by the government for the sale of waste lands fit for coffee cultivation were chiefly guided by the Coorg Rules.57 These rules were framed in favour of the British capitalists who were in search of large-scale lands for coffee cultivation. Thus the doors of Travancore were for the first time opened for plantation enterprises. Since then, lands were liberally given to capitalists, both native and foreign, for cultivation of coffee and other products.58

This was a policy continued by the government in Travancore for a long period of time. It became a subject of discussion in the assembly of 1922. Mr. R. Narayana Pillai, member of Vilavancode Taluk, had criticized this policy of the government. He argued that along with the increase in reservation, lands within the reserves were freely given out to foreigners for tea cultivation in preference to the claims of the natives59. He further contended that till the beginning of the 20th c, all foreigners including Europeans or Americans must have got permission to acquire property in the state. But this was now abrogated and a good portion of the lands in the reserves were registered away in their names in spite of the protest of the conservator and to make up this, more lands were declared as reserves.60

Under the same rules, ebony and sandalwood were declared as monopoly. A proclamation was issued in July 1865 by which the kudivila of the cardamom ryots were increased by one-third of the selling price. Felling of all jungle trees over 10 virals quarter girth was prohibited.61 Rewards were offered for the first time for providing information regarding illicit felling of teak and blackwood.62

Another important proclamation was issued on 30 January 1866 prohibiting the felling of teak, blackwood, ebony, and any other trees planted on the banks of rivers. Prohibition of felling was extended to taxable trees like mango, jackfruit,

58 T. F. Bourdillion, op.cit., p. 4.
59 Proceedings of the 18th Session of the Sri Moolam Popular Assembly of Travancore, representation by Mr. Narayana Pillai, Member of Vilavancode Taluk, on the subject of forest administration in general, Government Press, Trivandrum, 1922, p. 36.
60 Ibid.
61 T.F. Bourdillion, op. cit., p. 160. Para. 1133
62 Ibid., p. 161, para. 1134.
palmyra etc. The people had to obtain permission before felling these trees.\textsuperscript{63} This reveals the government encroachment over the rights of the people. This proclamation also insisted that hill men should not clear forests which were suitable for coffee cultivation.

A re-organization took place in the Forest Department in 1867, thereby increasing the number of staff. Eight \textit{Aminadars} and twenty four Peons were newly posted for the ‘conservation of forest and to catch elephants.’\textsuperscript{64} Attempts were made for starting settlements in the hills but failed due to the feverish character of the area. In 1869, the posts of the conservator and the superintendent of the cardamoms were separated. J.D. Munro was appointed as the first independent Superintendent of the Cardamom Hills. This was done to concentrate more on the cultivation of cardamom because by this time cardamom monopoly brought in a very handsome profit.\textsuperscript{65}

In 1045 ME (AD 1868 - 1869) two important proclamations were issued. One was the prohibition of the shooting of the elephants issued on 18 October 1869 (3 \textit{Thulam} 1045 ME). The second was the rule for hill cultivation by which the people were allowed to cultivate without permission grasslands, reed areas and marshy places belonging to government. At the same time they were prevented from clearing forests on the high ridges or low-lying forests with teak, blackwood and other government monopolized trees.\textsuperscript{66}

In 1047 ME (AD 1871 - 1872), certain changes were made in the administration of the timber depots. Until then the working of the depot was supervised by the Revenue Department. However, during the year, the charge of the timber depot at Shencottah was transferred from the revenue to the Forest Department.\textsuperscript{67} This was not the case of the timber depot alone. In Travancore the revenue from exports of firewood, charcoal and other minor products used to be collected by the Excise Department. Frequent letters were sent to the Chief

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., para. 1135.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{66} N.N. Menon, op. cit., p. 41.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
Secretary by the Conservator stating that the Forest Department should be entrusted with the authority to collect revenue from the minor forest products. One of his letters goes like this:

“… In Burma the duty on the forest produce were collected by the Customs Department and credited to the Forest Department. In Travancore hundreds of tons of firewood, charcoal and other minor products were exported yearly to foreign countries and the duty levied on these goods went to the Excise Department.”

He argued that these duties should be credited to the Forest Department.

The revenue from the Shencottah depot in 1046 ME (AD 1870 - 1871) was Rs. 9,521, but in 1047 ME (AD 1871 - 1872) it rose to Rs. 16,222. A road was opened to Shencottah in 1048 ME (AD 1872 - 1873) and this resulted in the surge of trade in the direction of the adjoining British provinces. In 1049 ME (AD 1873 - 1874) a change was effected in the working of the depot. Formerly all timbers felled from the forest were brought to the depot and sold by public auction. However now, private contractors were given liberty to cut out timbers and carry them away on payment of kuttikanam according to tariff rates. This led to the introduction of the permit system.

The Conservator was unhappy with the working of the Forest Department due to many reasons. Despite the introduction of many rules and regulations the reckless destruction of forests continued. It was extreme in the case of the Shendurney forest, where, in spite of the appointment of protection staff in the range, felling and smuggling continued. This necessitated an effective supervision over the forest which led to the introduction of certain legislations.

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68 Letter No. nil, dated nil, from the Conservator of Forests of Travancore to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 555/25, B - 48.
69 Report on the Administration of Travancore, 1048 (1872 - 73) and 1049 ME (1873 - 74), Government Press Travancore, 1875, pp. 84 - 85.
70 Ibid.
71 The system of felling and removing timber by obtaining a permit or a pass. A permit is issued by the government to those who apply for the purpose and remit an amount prescribed by the government.
1898 - 1899 a rule was passed according to which felling of trees below certain girth was prohibited. It was aimed at preventing the destruction of younger trees.\(^72\) In 1077 ME (AD 1901 - 1902) the Kulathupuzha Range which consisted of an extensive area and wherein lies the Shendurney forest, was split up into two ranges viz., Kulathupuzha and Quilon.\(^73\) It was done for the better administration of the ranges. In 1080 ME (AD 1904 - 1905) these two ranges were again divided into three, viz., Anchal, Kadakkal, and Quilon, and it was to the first Range that the Shendurney forest was attached. A new system known as Located Felling\(^74\) was introduced in 1076 ME (AD 1899 - 1900).\(^75\) Permit system proved to be a failure as the people began to fell trees indiscriminately and smuggled them into Tinnevelly without payment of dues to the Forest Department. As a result, the permit system was abolished and the depot system\(^76\) was again introduced in 1060 ME (1884 -1885) and a superintendent was appointed on a monthly salary of Rs.100. The opening of sub-depots at Shencottah in 1063 ME (1887 - 1888) increased smuggling.\(^77\) Later, the permit system which was once again revived was abolished in 1077 ME (AD 1901 - 1902) and the timber requirements of the general public were met from the timber worked down to the depots.

The introduction of the depot system was not a promising one as that of the seigniorage system. The poor people were the worst affected by this system. Earlier they could take permits for a small quantity of timber. Now, they had to travel for obtaining timber, but there was no guarantee that they would get wood according to their requirements.\(^78\) Under the depot system the monopoly of timber was held by the contractors, and they cut and brought only those timber which they could easily procure. The system was abolished in 1063 ME (1887 -

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\(^73\) Ibid.

\(^74\) Under this system, felling was restricted to blocks which were opened for the purpose every year.

\(^75\) T.S. Venugopala Iyer, op.cit.

\(^76\) The system of selling timber through the depots.

\(^77\) T.F. Bourdillion, op.cit., p. 164, para. 1140.

\(^78\) N.N. Menon, op. cit., p. 42.
1888). The seigniorage system was reintroduced with much higher rates, i.e., the price was fixed for the candies and not for the logs.

Another rule, empowered the Range Officers to register timbers intended for delivery at the depot and to issue passes to the contractors which was earlier made by the contractors themselves. Therefore, he felt the need of introducing forest laws and re-organization of the Forest Department with adequate staff. By another rule, the marking of trees before felling was introduced which was aimed at making the working of the forest more efficient. He was also not happy with the commercial agent at Alleppey, who was not cordial with merchants. As a result, timber began to be held over for long in the depot and was later sold at a very low price.

On 18 March 1881 (6 Meenam 1056 ME) a proclamation was issued defining the limits of the hill cultivation. In the next year on 26 April 1882 (15 Chitirai 1057 ME), a reward of one quarter of the value of the article was offered for any information regarding the smuggling of teak. The year 1882 was a dark year for the Forest Department. In the month of June, a very disastrous flood had struck Travancore, the impact of which was felt greatly in North Travancore. The Forest Department incurred a heavy loss as the flood swept away thousands of logs.

The year also witnessed the resignation of the Conservator from his magisterial powers for trying forest offences. In 1058 ME (AD 1882 - 1883) there was a complaint from the people of Tinnevelly that their water supply was reduced due to the unwanted destruction of the trees there. As a result the area in dispute, the Eastern slopes of the Mahendragiri hills was taken over by the Forest

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79 Ibid.
80 System by which merchants were allowed to fell timber on permits, after paying seigniorage fee.
81 T.S. Venugopala Iyer, op. cit.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
84 T. F. Bourdillion, op. cit., p. 165, para. 1142.
85 Ibid.
Department. Cultivation in that area was prohibited and an Aminadar and other staff were appointed to protect the land.\textsuperscript{86}

\textbf{Appointment of Forest Commission}

The management and conservation of forests were matters of great concern for the British in India as a whole and Travancore in particular. In the year 1884 a special Commission was appointed to bring up proposals for the better administration and management of the forest. It suggested the appointment of two Deputy Conservators, abolition of the seigniorage system and the establishment of the depot system for timber other than royalties.\textsuperscript{87} The suggestions also included remedies for better conservancy of the forests. One of the recommendations made by the Commission was that the forests of Travancore should be carefully explored and reported on.\textsuperscript{88} Bourdillion was appointed in June 1886 to make a thorough examination of the state forest. He was assigned with the task to mark and define those tracts which should be permanently reserved and to submit a report on their resources, especially noting the conditions and extent of the teak forest.\textsuperscript{89} When he started his work he was confronted with many difficulties which he overcame successfully. By February 1890 he had visited almost all the forests of North Travancore, including the Idiyara Valley, the Cardamom Hills, the High Range, the Anjanada valley etc.\textsuperscript{90}

\textbf{First Forest Act of Travancore}

The First Forest Act of Travancore was passed on 6 December 1887, as regulation IV of 1063 ME which was only a draft proposed by the Commission of 1884.\textsuperscript{91} “The Act proposed for the reservation of some forest tract, and the first Reserved Forest was created on 9 October 1888 at Konniyoor, with an area of 300 sq. miles. This was followed by a notice from the Conservator, prohibiting the felling of trees, cut on permits, which contained less than 2 ½ candies each.

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., para. 1143.
\textsuperscript{87} T. F. Bourdillion, op. cit., p. 165, para. 1144.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., p.1.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{91} N.N. Menon, op.cit., p. 42.
Four other forest sites were declared as reserves following Konniyoor. The forest in the neighborhood of Aryankavu and Kulathupuzha consisting of 121 sq. miles was declared as a reserve on 5 February 1889 and 116 acres of forest at Veil was declared on 26 March 1889 as Reserved Forest. This was not notified under the act until later, but it was closed at the date mentioned. In the same year the conservator of forest grabbed the right of issuing free permits to remove timber from taxpaying lands from the Revenue Department. The third Reserve was declared at Malayattur on 4 November 1889, consisting of 345 sq. miles. The fourth was declared at Mukkunnumala consisting of 5 sq. miles on 19 November 1889.⁹² In 1941 the area of Reserved Forest had reached 2,360 sq. miles and 412 acres. The receipts of the department in 1038 ME (AD 1862 - 63) amounted to over Rs. 1.75 lakhs.⁹³ In 1116 ME (AD 1940 - 41) it reached 18.55 lakhs. The department attributed the increase in revenue to their careful control and management. There was also an increase in the expenditure from Rs. 80,000 in 1059 ME (AD 1883 - 84) to 9.81 lakhs in 1116 ME (AD 1940 - 1941).⁹⁴ In June 1891 Vernede resigned from the post of Conservator and Bourdillion was appointed in his place.⁹⁵

As regards Travancore, it was during the period of Dewan T. Madhava Rao that Forest Conservancy Programme was issued. The reserved areas were again classified under two main heads, i.e., Timber Reserves, and Fuel and Fodder Reserves. The Reserve Forest then constituted 31.5% of the total area of the state. The Travancore Forest Regulation Act of 1063ME (AD 1887 - 1888) also provided for the creation of new posts to protect the forests.⁹⁶

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⁹³ Administration Report of Travancore for the year 1116 ME (AD 1940 - 41), Government Press, Travancore, 1942, p. 57
⁹⁴ Ibid.
⁹⁵ Ibid.
Fig 3.1
Map Showing the Increase in the Reserved Forest of Travancore from 1917

Source: Regional Archives, Ernakulam.
Fig 3.2:
Map Showing the Increase in the Reserved Forest of Travancore from 1931

Source: Divisional Forest Office, Malayattur.

Note: The map reveals the phenomenal increase in the extent of reserve forest within a period of twenty-four years. A comparative analysis of fig 3.1 and fig 3.2 implicates the motive of the forest department in monopolising timber resources for imperial as well as trading interests.
### Table 3.1:
Financial Position of the Konni Division from 1107 - 1121 ME
(AD 1931 - 1932 to 1945 - 1946)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (AD)</th>
<th>Revenue (Rs)</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Surplus Revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1107 (1931 - 1932)</td>
<td>3,05,232</td>
<td>1,57,472</td>
<td>1,47,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1108 (1932 - 1933)</td>
<td>2,46,126</td>
<td>1,38,213</td>
<td>1,07,913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1109 (1933 - 1934)</td>
<td>2,73,291</td>
<td>1,22,856</td>
<td>1,50,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1110 (1934 - 1935)</td>
<td>2,55,798</td>
<td>1,43,934</td>
<td>1,11,864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1111 (1935 - 1936)</td>
<td>3,04,793</td>
<td>1,36,150</td>
<td>1,68,643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1112 (1936 - 1937)</td>
<td>3,16,382</td>
<td>1,32,298</td>
<td>1,84,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1113 (1937 - 1938)</td>
<td>3,25,264</td>
<td>1,34,547</td>
<td>1,90,717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1114 (1938 - 1939)</td>
<td>3,16,153</td>
<td>1,32,308</td>
<td>2,28,845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1116 (1940 - 1941)</td>
<td>4,19,557</td>
<td>1,67,837</td>
<td>2,51,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1117 (1941 - 1942)</td>
<td>5,91,761</td>
<td>2,27,009</td>
<td>3,64,752</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EG**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue Rs</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Surplus Revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.44</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>9.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Fig. 3.3
Chart Showing the Financial Position of the Konni Division from 1107-1121

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97 N.N. Menon, op. cit p. 83.
The Second Forest Act of Travancore 1068 ME (AD 1892 - 1893)

The existing forest laws were insufficient to meet the needs of the time. The forest land was being freely granted by His Highness government for permanent cultivation. Any restriction in regard to the use of such land might be a restriction in regard to the use of cultivable land. The objective of the new rule “is to preserve from wanton havoc and destruction, first to the people, those very forests in which they wish to exercise certain necessary rights and then to the government, that forest wealth for which this country has been long famous.” If the forests were not conserved as they ought to be by proper rules they would cease to exist. New posts in the Forest Departments were created, such as the Dewan Peishkar and the Divisional Forest Officer. It also clearly defined the terms forest produce, timber, trees etc.

As per the Act, the power to constitute a reserve land was vested in the Dewan with the sanction of the government. He would publish a notification in the Government Gazette regarding the proposal to declare a land to be reserved. A Forest Settlement Officer other than a forest official was appointed to survey the forest and settle the disputes arising with regard to the proposed tract for reservation.

Chapter III of the Act empowered the government to make rules to regulate the use of pasturage or of natural produce of any land at the disposal of the government and not included in a Reserved Forest. If anyone committed an infringement on any of the rules prescribed by the government, he would be liable to imprisonment for a term of one month or for a fine of Rs. 100 or both. The Dewan had also the power to close lands against pastures for a period which he thought fit if any one put fire to any land willfully or negligently under section 23. Cattle trespassing in such land would be punishable under Cattle Trespass Act No.1 of

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99 Ibid.
100 Ibid., pp.161 - 162.
101 Ibid., p. 176.
102 Ibid., p. 177.
1056 ME (AD 1880 - 1881). Cattles were liable to be seized and impounded by any Forest Officer or Police Officer.\textsuperscript{103}

Chapter IV of the Forest Act of 1068 ME (1892 - 1893) allowed the government to restrict the breaking up or clearing for cultivation of certain forests and land not at the disposal of the government, in the name of protection against floods, landslips, storms, wind etc., for the preservation of soil, the maintenance of water supply, protection of roads, bridges, canals, etc.\textsuperscript{104}

The Forest Department was completely reorganized in the year 1072 ME (AD 1896 - 1897) on the line of the British Forest Administration. The whole forest of the state was divided into four Forest Administrative Divisions, the divisions were divided then into Ranges, and the Ranges into Beats. The prospects and emoluments of the staff of the Forest Department were increased.\textsuperscript{105} The first Reserved Forest was created according to the earlier act of 1063 ME (AD 1887 - 1888) and from that time onwards the area of Reserved Forests had increased tremendously. Though it has been given in the Administration Report that the policy of government was to refrain from further reservation, it can be seen that the area was increased every year. The objective of the government through reservation was to attain maximum possible yield from that part of a forest block which was commercially valuable.\textsuperscript{106} The other objects underlined by the government were the protection of the mountainous forest tracts to prevent landslips and erosion to preserve the sources of supply of small timber and fuel to the agriculturists and of fodder for the cattle.\textsuperscript{107}

**Introduction of Scientific Forestry**

Scientific forestry can be described as the systematic planning and execution of forestry activities with the aim of sustained yield. A sustained yield is a perpetual periodic out turn of timber, fuel, bamboos etc., resulting from a systematic treatment

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., p. 194.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., p. 178.
\textsuperscript{105} N. N. Menon, op. cit., p. 43.
of the forest crop. A sustained yield will be obtained from a forest which is so worked that it will continuously produce crops of wood, each portion as it is cleared being restocked within a reasonable time and young wood which sprang up being properly tendered. The most important aspect of scientific forestry was the preparation of the Working Plan. These plans were introduced for all the Forest Divisions of Travancore. For administrative convenience the forest was divided into several Divisions. In 1917 there were seven divisions in the state: (see Fig. 3.4.)

1) Malayattur Division
2) Kottayam Division.
3) High Range Division
4) Central Division.
5) Quilon Division.
6) Shencottah Division.
7) Southern Division.

**Agencies of Scientific Forestry**

**Working Plan**

For each Forest Division a separate working plan was prepared. It was outlined for a fixed number of years. According to the working plan, a Reserved Forest was divided into a certain number of Working Circles, i.e., felling series with an accurate data of its extent. It explains the number of trees existing in each Working Circle and the method of its extraction. According to the administration report, “Forest exploitation is regulated by working plans or working schemes so as to bring all important forests under systematic management, to ensure continuity of treatment and orderly and economic working on an organized basis as well as to ensure scientific forest regeneration designed in the interests of posterity.” In other words, working plans are Forest Regulations that prescribe the application of certain cultural rules and the execution of certain works in order to produce a given desired

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109 Ibid.
Out of the total area of 2,360 sq. miles and 412 acres, at the beginning of 1116 ME (1946 - 1947) working plans or schemes were sanctioned for a total area of 1035 sq. miles and 261 acres.\footnote{W.E. D’Arcy, op. cit., p. 15.}

\textbf{Fig. 3.4}

\textit{Map Showing the Forest Divisions in Travancore, 1917}

\footnote{Report on the Administration of Travancore for the year 1116 ME (AD 1940 - 41), Government Press, Trivandrum, 1942, p. 58.}
It is understood that the working plan was the most important aspect of scientific forest management. This was given due importance by early conservators. K.P. Raman Pillai, Member of Quilon taluk argued in the Assembly that Subramanya Aiyer, the Conservator of Forest considered the working plan as unnecessary and had sought to replace them with simple working schemes and this was approved by the government. From the records, it is evident that the conservator was a controversial personality whose work had been criticized and condemned on several grounds both in the press and on various platforms in and outside the country. It was Aiyer who had persuaded the government to start the preparation of working schemes in the place of regular working plans on the ground of paucity of accurate data. But it was evident that during the time of Bourdillion the working plans for the Shendurney forest and for the teak plantations were prepared. During the reign of Rama Rao working plans for Yerur, Kulathupuzha, Aryankavu Reserves and for the Anjanad Sandal Reserves were also prepared.

The Member of the Quilon Taluk also criticized the administrative measures adopted in the Forest Department during the conservatorship of Raman Menon. He had abolished the coupe sale system and had introduced a new method for working of timber which proved to be disastrous. He pointed out the scheme for the working of teak and blackwood trees in the Ettumanur Range. He argued that this method involving simultaneous and indiscriminate cutting down of both young and grown up trees would destroy the forest of the country, which in turn would lead to the total denudation of all forest growth.

**Working Scheme for the Meenachil Range**

This was aimed at the working of the whole of the Meenachil Range, i.e. for the extraction of timber from the three reserves in the Range, viz., Kuriyienkunnu, Kalaketty and Urumbikara, and also for the working of royalties.
from the assigned and unassigned lands outside the Reserves on a systematic basis.\textsuperscript{116} Establishments in the Range were so arranged that the area was under the control of a trained Ranger assisted by one Forester and six other Guards. According to the scheme the whole Range was divided into five Working Circles, which would be worked on simultaneously.\textsuperscript{117} To control smuggling in these regions Narayana Iyengar suggested for the appointment of permanent staff in the department. He wanted the appointment of a Deputy Ranger and four guards for the protection of royalties in the two \textit{Edavagais}.\textsuperscript{118} For this purpose a Deputy Ranger on a pay of Rs. 40 and two guards were posted.

\textbf{Working Plan of the Mahendragiri Fuel Working Circle}

This scheme was prepared by M.O. Oommen, Assistant Conservator. This particular circle formed a part of the Mahendragiri reserved forest. Frequent smuggling was prevalent in these forests for many years. The main reasons for drafting the plan were as follows:\textsuperscript{119}

1) Better protection of the forest.

2) To meet the demand of the British villages for timber and fuel.

3) To get a sustainable income in the future.

According to the working Scheme, the Working Circle would be divided into twenty coupes and the rotation was for twenty years. The method of working was coppice with standard.\textsuperscript{120} This was reserved as a fuel working circle by notification, under section 18 on 7 October 1902 (21 \textit{Kanni} 10790). A rough

\textsuperscript{116} Letter No. nil, dated 21 March 1922, from the Office of the Conservator to the Chief Secretary to Government, Trivandrum, Development File No. 1802, B - 84.

\textsuperscript{117} K.S. Narayana Iyengar, Divisional Forest Officer, Working Scheme of Meenachil Range, Kottayam Division, 1922, Development File No. 1802, B - 84.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{119} Letter No. nil, dated 24/06/1925 from the Conservator of Forest to the Chief Secretary to Government, Sub: Working plan of the Mahendragiri Fuel Working Circle, Development File No. 476/26, B - 55.

\textsuperscript{120} A Simple Working Scheme of the Mahendragiri fuel Working Circle, Development File No. 476/26, B - 55.
working scheme was drawn up for 750 acres and worked partially till 1096 ME (AD1920-1921). The quantity of fuel extracted during the period was as follows\textsuperscript{121}

**Table 3.2**

The Quantity of Fuel Extracted During 1916-1921

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year ME</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1092 (1916 - 1917)</td>
<td>89 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1093 (1917 - 1918)</td>
<td>153½ tons of fuel and 430 paras of charcoal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1094 (1918 - 1919)</td>
<td>500 tons of fuel and 232 paras of charcoal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1095 (1919 - 1920)</td>
<td>170 tons of fuel and 754 paras of charcoal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1096 (1920 - 1921)</td>
<td>115 tons and 15qrs of fuel.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Forest Department**

The British had well chalked out plans for the functioning of scientific forestry. Several agencies played their part for its successful working. The first step was the bureaucratization of the forest by establishing a Forest Department. For better administration, forests were divided into Divisions, Ranges and Beats. Separate officers were appointed for respective divisions. The management of the forest required a huge number of staff in each of the Divisions ranging from the Conservator to the Forest Watcher. In the initial stages, many programmes undertaken by the Forest Department ended in failure due to inexperience and inefficiency of the forest staff. This raised an alarm on the need of appointing trained officers and staff in the department. The effective management of forests could not have been achieved without a group of trained officers. Thus forest schools were established in Travancore for this purpose.

**Forest School**

The training of forest staff constituted an important aspect of the colonial forest policy. The first step towards this was the formation of a Forest school. This

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
school was set up on the model of the school established by the Madras Forest Department. The first Forest School in Travancore was established at Konni in Kumbhom 1099 ME (AD 1923 - 1924) with a staff of two instructors. In the first batch, twenty-five guards were given training. With the training given to the guards in the Forest School, there were improvements in the work and conduct of these men. As the institution proved to be a success the government decided to continue the school next year also. In their letter R. Dis. No. 2498/24, Dev, dated 22 December 1924, sanction was given to continue the school for another year. When the question on the continuance of the school arose the Conservator strongly recommended its existence stating that the Forest Department was rapidly expanding in several directions notably its teak plantations. The success of the teak plantation depended upon the service of the trained staff for doing the timely work it required. The continuance of the forest school was thus, necessary for giving training to the forest staff.

**Forest Roads**

Opening of roads connecting different parts of the forests was an important policy of the department. Working in the interior forests in Travancore was a herculean task as they were devoid of any roads or pathways. In 1902, a suggestion was made to open communications with all parts of the forests. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the existing river routes were not sufficient enough to transport timber from the interior forests. Moreover there were many obstacles in the interior parts of the rivers. Therefore, it became one of the most important policies of the government to open communication with all parts of the forests. The most heated discussion ensued about the Idiyara Range was that it was an incognito land and that

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122 R. Dhanukoti Pillai, Summary of Salient features of the Administration of the Department during 1099 ME, dated 16/08/1924, Development File No. 624, B - 81.
124 Ibid.
125 Letter No. 7, dated nil, from R. Dhanukoti Pillai, Conservator of Forest to Chief Secretary to the Government, Forest File No. 1707/29, B - 79.
126 Letter No. 1712, dated 20/04/1077 (AD 1902), from Ponnambalam Pillai, Conservator of Forests to Krishnaswami Rao, Dewan of Travancore, Cover File No. 10518, B - 256.
it contained valuable timber.\textsuperscript{127} The discussion for the construction of a tramway did not materialize. The Conservator proposed the construction of a bridle path from Kuttampuzha to Idiyara road which was a part of the high range road from Kothamangalam to Thattakal. He also suggested the construction of a cart road which joins the Main Central road with the Angamaly terminus, which according to the conservator would soon become a railway station.\textsuperscript{128}

**Forest Utilization Branch**

The discovery and propagation of each and every forest resource was one of the main agendas of the colonial forest policy. Their aim was to popularize the utility of every forest tree and other resources. For this purpose, they had taken great pains to discover the properties and uses of the still unknown forest resources, make it popular, and find out markets for these resources. With this aim, the Forest Department tried to set up a Forest Utilization Branch. This was sanctioned by the government in 1095 ME (AD 1919 - 1920). The first officer who was appointed for this task was Dhanukoti Pillai, the then Divisional Forest Officer of the Malayattur Division. As a first step, he engaged his attention to the investigation of paper pulp and the valuation of reed growth.\textsuperscript{129} During his investigation he found out the utilization of reeds for match splints, boxes etc. This resulted in the establishment of a match factory at Mudikkal near Perumbavur.\textsuperscript{130}

When Dhanukoti Pillai became the Conservator, K.S. Narayana Iyengar was appointed as the Forest Utilization Officer. As the demand for pulp increased, investigations were made to find out other products which would be suitable for pulp, besides reeds and bamboos. Five varieties of grasses Cycas stem wood, Kaivan sticks, stem of Lea Lambossina found in abundance in the forests were collected and handed over to the manager of Meenakshi Paper Mills, Punalur, for experimental purposes.\textsuperscript{131} As regards the Punalur paper mills, several recommendations were made by the Utilization Officer of the Economic

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{129} K.S. Narayana Iyengar, Divisional Forest Officer, Administration Report of the Forest Utilisation Branch for 1099 ME (AD 1923 - 1924), dated 18/03/1100, Development File No. 624, B - 81.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
Development Board etc., regarding the possibilities of the satisfactory working of the factory. Several reed forests in the state were surveyed and found to supply an adequate amount of reed per annum. Even then, there were stumbling blocks in the functioning of the factory and no adequate output was received by the government which could be evident from the criticism raised by the daily newspaper *The Citizen*.\(^{132}\)

During the period K. S. Narayana Iyengar realized the booming of the prospective use of reed pulp for gun cotton.\(^{133}\) As the cost of waste cotton was increasing the Superintendent of the Cordite factory at Aruvengad was trying to find an alternative raw material. He first experimented with Lemon grass but was not satisfied as it consumed more chemical, but was very satisfied with reed pulp. As a result, the valuation of the reed forest near the factory was made which showed that about 5,780 tons of reeds i.e., 2,335 tons of air dried pulp could be supplied annually.\(^{135}\)

The investigation of the possibilities of the reed areas in the Northern Division conducted by the Utilization Officer had the desired effect. Frederic A. Cox of Cochin had executed an agreement with the government for the extraction of *eatta* (Bamboo reed) for the manufacture of matches from an area of 8,000 acres which was till then inaccessible. It was expected that this agreement would bring minimum revenue of Rs. 10,000 per annum to the government.\(^{136}\)

Similar investigation was made into the use of woods. Some firms experimented with different woods to find their uses. One such firm Messrs John W. Robers & Co., at Madras wanted to try some of the fast growing light and straight fibred timbers for billiard cues. Among the six varieties of soft wood sent for experiments, Nedunar was found to be good, and the firm had placed an order

\(^{132}\) *The Citizen*, op. cit.

\(^{133}\) Gun cotton was mainly used in the cordite factory. It was a highly explosive compound prepared by treating cotton with nitric and sulfuric acid. It is also called nitro cotton.

\(^{134}\) A variety of smokeless powder consisting of cellulose nitrate or gun cotton nitro-glycerine and a mineral jelly used chiefly as propellant.

\(^{135}\) Administration Report of the Forest Utilization Branch, op. cit.

for 1,000 billiard cues at once.\textsuperscript{137} Another firm Messrs V. Perumal Chetty and Sons, Madras tried some soft wood for pencils. Cotton wood (Bombax) Cedrela (\textit{Madagirivembu}) Melia dubia (\textit{Malai Veypan}) Udi (Odina Wodier) were found suitable. They expressed their consent to pay Rs. 6 - 4 - 0 for 1000 slabs of 7 ½'' × 2 ½''× ¼''. When enquiry was made to Harissons and Crossfield, they demanded Rs. 7 - 12 - 0 and they were entrusted with executing the order.\textsuperscript{138}

Investigations were also carried to know the uses of minor forest products. For example the bark of \textit{Alstonia scholaris} was sent to Messrs Alfred Joensson & Co., at Cochin to know its commercial use as drug. A sample bark was also sent to America. They received enquiries from Messrs L. Mota & Sons, Merchants and Agents at Tuticorin for supply of Annatto seeds\textsuperscript{139} to make dye.

Another contribution made by the Utilization Officer was that he had prepared a hand-book on Forest Economic Products of Travancore. This book was a very important one as it dealt with the availability of the forest products, its commercial and economic value, feasibility of their exploitation and disposal. This was to be a boon to the department that would help them in the future to expand its revenue by utilizing several products which were not till tapped and worked.

Considerable propaganda work for the promotion of wood based industries was also made during the year. The following were few of the items:\textsuperscript{140}

1) Bent wood parts for furniture.
2) Wood wool slabs.
3) Pencil manufacture.
4) Toy manufacture.
5) School and office furniture.
6) Plywood.

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{139} Annatto seed is derived from achiote tree. It is an orange red condiment.
\textsuperscript{140} Report on the Administration of Travancore 1115 ME (1940), Government Press, Trivandrum, 1941, p. 55.
Almost all these items were tested successfully. The Travancore government decided to take up these items for manufacturing on a commercial scale anticipating the marketing facilities in India afforded by the war condition. The knowledge of the suitability of Travancore timber for manufacturing pencil was a great advantage to the government. There was a ready demand for timber from the pencil factories and about 4,800 pencil slats were supplied to the Madras Pencil Factory. As a result of the fall of Burma in the Second World War there was an abnormal increase in the demand for softwood from Travancore especially from the Supply Department. As a result enquiries were made for the possibilities of using softwood of the state for industrial purposes. This resulted in the establishment of a plywood factory in the state.

Investigations were also made in the prospect of trade for bee wax. This enquiry was made for the production of bee wax for foreign trade as there was great demand for this product in Russia for making candle. As a result, on the orders of the Conservator, a statement on bee wax collected during the last five years was submitted to him. After analyzing the statement the Conservator replied that the quantity was not sufficient to meet the local consumption and there for no scope for any foreign trade in respect of this commodity.

**Exhibition of Forest Species**

Another important policy of the government was the maximum exposure of the forest species of Travancore. The method evolved for this was the exhibition of marketable forest resources. One such exhibition was conducted at Trivandrum in 1099 ME (AD 1923 - 1924). Here, about 180 varieties of timber specimens were exhibited. Fifteen kinds of coloured and five kinds of scented woods available in Travancore were also exhibited. Other items exhibited were 34 varieties of fibers, 28 kinds of dyeing and tanning materials, 17 kinds of gum and resins, 12 kinds of

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141 Ibid., p. 56.
142 Ibid.
143 Report on the Administration of Travancore for the year 1118 ME (AD 1942 - 43), op. cit., p. 51.
144 Ibid.
145 Letter No. nil, dated nil, from the Conservator of Forest to the Chief Secretary to government, Trivandrum, Development File No. 2169, B - 43.
oil and oil seeds, 33 varieties of medicinal herbs, and some excellent furniture in teak and blackwood. Another important aspect of the exhibition was that after the exhibition, these specimens were taken to London and exhibited at Wembley. These specimens were highly appreciated and brought much prominence to Travancorean timber. The department participated in the industrial and agricultural exhibition held at Trivandrum in connection with the birthday of His Highness the Maharaja and was awarded a gold medal.

Table 3.3

Revenue Realized by the Forest Department from 1047-1111 ME (1872 - 1873 to 1935 - 1936)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gross Revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1047 (1872-1873)</td>
<td>16,252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1048 (1873 - 1874)</td>
<td>45,788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1049 (1874 - 1875)</td>
<td>39,269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1068 (1892 - 1893)</td>
<td>5,67,687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1069 (1893 - 1894)</td>
<td>4,57,685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1099 (1923 - 1924)</td>
<td>13,15,262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1100 (1924 - 1925)</td>
<td>14,07,851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1109 (1933 - 1934)</td>
<td>12,84,391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1110 (1934 - 1935)</td>
<td>13,46,279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1111 (1935 – 1936)</td>
<td>12,93,262</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

146 R. Dhanukoti Pillai, Summary of the Salient Features of the Administration of the Department during 1099 ME, op. cit.
147 Ibid.
150 Administration Report of Travancore Forest Department for the year 1069 ME (AD 1893 - 94), Government Press, Travandrum, 1895, p. 82.
The main causes for the decline of revenue in 1069 ME (AD 1893 - 1894) were the partial discontinuance of the auction system at the land depots, poor prices obtained by throwing a large quantity of rejected teak on the market beyond the requirement of the public, and the low demand in British India which was the principal market for Travancore timber\textsuperscript{154}.

It is evident that in spite of the damages caused by the floods of 1924 and other discomfiting market features of the year 1925, there was an increase in the revenue which was higher than the budget estimate. There was an increase of Rs. 30,151 more than the budget estimate.\textsuperscript{155} The surplus revenue realized per sq. mile of reserved forests was Rs. 241.1 which was higher when compared with other provinces in India.

The following table shows the surplus revenue per sq. mile of other provinces.\textsuperscript{156}

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Province} & \textbf{Surplus revenue per sq. mile of forest area} \\
\hline
Madras & - 12.7 Rs \\
Bombay & + 195.5 Rs \\
Bengal & + 57.5 Rs \\
United Province & + 166.8 Rs \\
Punjab & + 92.9 Rs \\
Burma & + 90.6 Rs \\
Behar & - 31.1 Rs \\
Central Province & + 71.6 Rs \\
Assam & + 14.2 Rs \\
Coorg & + 198.2 Rs \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{154} Administration Report of the Travancore Forest Department for the year 1069 ME (AD 1893 - 94), op. cit.
\textsuperscript{155} Report on the Administration of Travancore for the year 1100 ME, op. cit
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
Conclusion

Though an extractive forest management system existed under the native rule which functioned on meeting the British demand for timber, it was not at par with the scientific exploitation launched by the British administration. A definite departure from the earlier administration can be observed in the making of the modern Travancore forests. The large-scale exploitation of Travancore timber was encouraged for railway expansion, shipbuilding and plantation industries. The numerous forest policies and acts were the result of the colonial attitude towards forests which were seen as timber and plantation enterprises. Legislations were made to regulate the forest and they were in tune with the British Indian Forest Policy.

The colonial Forest Policy was followed by the government in Travancore for a long period of time. It even became a subject of discussion in the Assembly of 1922, wherein the Member of Vilavancode taluk, R. Narayana Pillai had criticized the forest policy of the government. He argued that along with the increase in reservation, lands within the reserves were freely given out to foreigners for tea cultivation in preference to the claims of the natives.\(^{157}\) He further contended that until the beginning of the twentieth century, all foreigners including Europeans and Americans had to get permission to acquire property in the state. However, this practice was now abrogated and a good portion of the lands in the reserves were registered away in their names in spite of the protest of the Conservator; and in order to alleviate the situation, more lands were declared as reserves.

The true nature of the government’s Forest policy can be observed from the criticism raised by K.P. Raman Pillai in the Sree Moolam Popular Assembly against Subramanya Iyyer for neglecting the working plan and for making material changes in the plan without government approval on several occasions. Aiyer persuaded the government to start the preparation of working schemes in the place of regular working plans on the ground that there was a paucity of accurate data. Nonetheless, it can be discerned that working plans were in fact prepared during the period of Bourdillion and Rama Rao. A careful analysis shows that this was a period when the Forest Department was at its infancy, facing numerous problems.

\(^{157}\) Proceedings of the 18th Session of the Sri Moolam Popular Assembly of Travancore, 1922, op. cit.
like lack of communication and transport facilities to the interior forest, paucity of adequate staff for undertaking the works, lack of funds etc. If the working plans were drawn during this period, the argument of Subramanya Aiyer that due to the absence of accurate data working plans were not possible, could be viewed only with suspicion.

The Conservators of Travancore were severely criticized by different bodies for following an unscientific system of forest administration. The editorial in the Deepika corroborates this statement. The decision of the Conservator when the government asked for the possibility of providing timber for the reconstruction of war torn houses in Mesopotamia, was criticized by the Deepika, stating that it was really surprising that the conservator of Forests who was appointed for the protection of the forests and thereby the well-being of the country made such a wonderful recommendation. Thus it is clear that commercialization of timber was the hidden agenda behind the colonial forest policy.

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