Chapter V

The Second Phase of Timber Trade: Railways, Wars and the Raj of Timber Merchants

Timber trade in Travancore which was on track from the middle of the 18th c intensively escalated by the middle of the 19th c. This period (1850 - 1947) can be definitely regarded as the second phase in the history of timber trade of the native state. During this phase the timber industry seemed to be outfitting the needs of the railways and the World Wars. The massive timber demands of the period witnessed the emergence of a powerful timber lobby who were in pace with the dominant capitalist economy of the world. The effects of industrial capitalism that was set in motion by the western world became evident in the timber trade scenario of Travancore during this phase. The native state tuned its forest policy according to the demands posed by the timber magnates of the time who were both native and foreign. The main agenda of this phase was the maximum extraction of timber under the guise of scientific forestry. Timber plantations, working plans, trained Conservators and forest officials, and timber contractors all worked as a coherent unit for maximum exploitation of timber from the forests. More structured and well organised forest management practices resulted in massive deforestation instead of the proclaimed goals of conservation.

By the middle of the nineteenth century the railway was introduced in India and it developed its scope at a reckless pace. The introduction of railway was a turning point in the history of timber trade in the native state. The technological explosion from ships to railways materialized the field of transportation and they demanded a huge quantity of timber for its expansion. Pursuant to that the native state entered into the second phase (1853 - 1947) of its timber trade. The South Indian Railway Company set up for the expansion of the railways in southern states of India put forth a huge demand for timber from Travancore.
The construction of railways in India was a watershed in the history of Indian Forestry. The large scale destruction of accessible forests in the early phase of railway expansion led to the speedy creation of the Forest Department.\(^1\) The network of tracks increased from 32 km in 1853 to over 51,650 km in 1910. The construction of railways required a huge quantity of timber since, it took almost 900 sleepers to build 2 km of tracks.\(^2\) Consequently, there was an increased demand for timber from Travancore for the laying of railway sleepers. The best materials used for sleepers were teak, *kongu* or *kambagom* etc. The augmented demand for timber continued in the twentieth century. During the First World War, the food crisis in England necessitated the import of food items from India, which led to an increased reliance on roads and railways for transportation. It was a period of rapid development particularly for the railways which evidently called for an unprecedented demand for railway sleepers. In 1075 ME (AD 1899 - 1900) 11,68,932 cu ft. of timber was removed from the forest which was sold at Rs. 4,77,259 while in 1088 ME (AD 1912 - 1913) 12,17,595 cu ft. of timber was sold for Rs. 10,85,395.\(^3\)

In Travancore, several railway lines were extended, primarily from Quilon to Trivandrum, from Angamally to Edappally and from Shencottah to Trivandrum. The introduction of railways into Travancore was first proposed by the Madras Government in 1873. On 26 October 1886 the first railway route was determined by the government as the Tinnevelly-Quilon route via Aryankavu.\(^4\) It had a total length of 108.27 miles out of which 50.33 miles lay in British territory and 57.94 miles in Travancore. By September 1900, after the survey work had finished, construction began and was completed on 26 November 1904.\(^5\) The South Indian Railway Company was responsible for these developmental works.

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\(^3\) Proceedings of the Travancore Sree Moolam Praja Assembly, submission by Mr. T. Kumara Pillai, Member of Kalkulam taluk, Session 12, Subject - Forest, dated 2/02/1916, p. 31.


\(^5\) Ibid., p. 235.
Most of the timber extracted during this period was to cater to the needs of the railway. In 1916, the Governor’s address to the Travancore Assembly stated that they had acquired all lands for the extension of Quilon-Trivandrum railway.\(^6\) The amount spent by the government up to the end of 1915 was British Rupees (hereafter Bh Rs) 23,86,436. However, as it was found inadequate, the estimate was revised to Bh Rs. 54,02,579.\(^7\)

**Structure and Organisation of Timber Trade**

During the early nineteenth century the EIC was found trying every means to get control over the natural resources of the Malabar Coast. For that they established a timber monopoly on the Malabar Coast in 1807. A Forest Department was created and Joseph Watson was appointed the first Conservator of Forest for both Travancore and Malabar. But their ambition to get maximum timber resources proved to be a failure as they were not able to break the indigenous trading structures. “Just as the Forest Department had to be given up because of gross inefficiency, the control of timber trade had to be abandoned owing to the lack of power to influence well-established trading patterns. Instead the colonial regime had to rely on local structures. Accordingly the timber trade was partially organised with the help of large timber traders and additionally, through individual contracts negotiated with smaller merchants”.\(^8\)

By the 1830’s the EIC lost its interest in timber trade and forest management. Nathaniel Wallich who was the superintendent of Calcutta Botanical Garden, on the wake of timber shortage suggested state intervention for protecting the forests. But all the governments turned a deaf ear to his ideas. It was a letter from the resident of Travancore regarding the large scale deforestation happening in that country along with the acute timber shortage experienced by the British navy that made a rethinking for a better management.

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\(^6\) Proceedings of the Travancore Sree Moolam Praja Assembly, Governor’s Address, dated 2/02/1916, p. 9.

\(^7\) Ibid.

of forests and an organised timber trade. A new system of timber trade and forest policy was introduced in the Malabar Coast from 1840’s onwards, the pioneers in this being Dr. Alexander Gibson and his assistant Hugh Cleghorn.

Thus the second half of the 19th c witnessed a well-organised timber trade. With the transferring of power from the EIC to the Crown the trade increased in every means controlled by certain rules and regulations. With the growing appeal of the trade, the number of traders increased in a geometrical progression. This increase in traders testifies to the timber policy followed by the government of Travancore especially during the World Wars, a period when there was a heavy demand for valuable timber for the extension of railways and other imperial exigencies connected with the war. According to Gadgil and Guha, the strategic value of Indian forests was made evident first through the construction of railways and it was highlighted during the wars. During the First World War timbers and bamboos were supplied for the construction of bridges, piers, wharves, buildings, huts and ships. Private traders as well as the companies frequently persuaded the government to facilitate the attaining of their target amount.

This chapter will attempt to highlight the timber trade and traders of this phase and their influence over the policies of the government. Specific facts regarding the working area, channels of trade, volume of timber trade, the problem of timber smuggling, etc., are also detailed in this chapter. The most important traders during this phase were Angoor Rowther, Harrisons and Crossfield Ltd., Messrs Wallibhoy and Khaderbhoy Co., South Indian Railway Co., Subramania Karayalar, Muthuswami Karayalar etc. There were also a host of other timber traders in Travancore.

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10 Michael Mann, op. cit.
11 Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha, This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India, Oxford University Press, California, 1992, p. 138.
Timber Traders during the Second Phase
Angoor Nynar Rowther

Angoor Nynar Rowther was an influential timber contractor of Travancore who undertook the business of timber trade from the middle of the nineteenth century. He hailed from Rajapalayam in Tamil Nadu.\(^{12}\) His father was Meeravoo Rowther who settled in Travancore by clearing the jungles. He conducted trade in areca nuts and pepper through Kumili and Peermade. Angoor Rowther followed in the footsteps of his father.\(^{13}\) He was a tax payer to the British government to the extent of Rs. 1,100 yearly and Rs. 600 to the Travancore government.\(^{14}\) With the opening of roads at Peermade in about 1050 ME (AD 1874 - 75) he had taken the contract of supplying cardamoms from the hills to the Alleppey Commercial Department. As soon as the construction of public offices and other buildings began at Peermade and Kumili he supplied all the coolies (labourers) with living essentials.

When he found that the government gained no particular profit from the trees of the forests in the region, he put forward the idea to the then Conservator of Forest, R. Vernede, to allow him to cut the timber on the hills at his expense, and sell the same to himself on payment of the premium fixed by the department. At the suggestion of the Conservator, the government approved the contract. Through this arrangement the government began to realize revenue of 10 lakhs of rupees per annum without incurring any expense.\(^{15}\) Since then, Rowther served the Forest Department and the government in different ways, besides the role of a mere contractor. He focused his business in the High Range Division especially in the Ayyappancoil forest and conducted trade through the Kumili depot. He played an important role in the development of Peermade and Kumili. Besides opening the cart roads, he was responsible for opening the Kumili-Kottayam Road, Cumbam- Cumbammettu road upto Kattappana etc., mainly for the

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\(^{12}\) Personal testimony with Haji A.M. Sultan, Kandathil Veedu, Kumily, Aged - 75, Interview conducted on 09/07/2016.

\(^{13}\) Petition from Angoor Nynar Rowther to His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore, dated August 1907, Revenue File, B - 162.

\(^{14}\) Ibid.

\(^{15}\) Ibid.
transportation of timber. He was a reliable contractor of the department and fulfilled the terms of his contracts to the department’s full satisfaction during the period of Vernede and that of Bourdillion. It is said that he had been instrumental in colonising the Peermade district and the present prosperity of the district can be owed to him.

Angoor Nynar Rowther requested the government to grant him and his family 101 acres of land, free of tax on Kudumba Poruthi tenure in the Cardamom Hills. The land was to be considered as a token of His Highness’ appreciation of the loyal services rendered to the state by the petitioner and his father. The Sarvadikaryakar wrote to the government that it was not an usual practice to give the particular land applied for by Angoor Rowther, free of tax. He suggested that 101 acres of waste land could be given to him, taxed at the rate of 8 chakrams per acre. But the petitioner pointed out that His Highness the Aiyilliam Maharaja had granted 500 acres of land to Maltby, the late Commercial Agent at Alleppey, in consideration of the services rendered to the state by his father. Later His Highness the Raja had sanctioned the applied acres to Angoor Rowther. The letter from the Chief Secretary reveals this: “As a token of his Highness the Maharaja on appreciation of the loyal services rendered to the state by Mr. Angoor Rowther of Kumili on several occasions, His Highness had been pleased to sanction a gold bangle being awarded to him and the grant of 101 acres of land.”

As a contractor of the Kumili depot he opened several forest roads leading to Kumili depot, which made the high range forest accessible to carts. Between 1076 (1900 - 1901) and 1078 ME (AD 1902 - 1903), during one of his contract periods, he

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18 Petition, dated 21 October 1916, from C.A. Meera Rowther to His most Gracious and Royal Highness, the Maharaja of Travancore, , Forest File No. 803/15, B - 113.
19 Petition, dated 11/10/1905, from C.A. Angoor Nynar Rowther, op. cit.
20 Letter No. 6457/1907, from Ayyappan Pillai, the Sarvadikaryakar to the Government, Revenue File B – 162.
21 Letter No. 6559, dated 28/10/1907, from the Chief Secretary to the Superintendent and Magistrate of Cardamom Hills, Revenue File, B - 162.
22 Petition dated 11/10/1905, from C.A. Angoor Nynar Rowther, op. cit.
opened a new cart road from Kumili to Chengra and to Ayyappancoil, a distance of 25 miles, at the cost of Rs. 12,500. This made the Kumili depot more appealing to bidders in auction.\textsuperscript{23}

Interestingly, a boundary dispute which had ensued between the British government and Travancore was settled in favour of Travancore in 1845 as per of the evidences produced by Angoor Rowther and his family.\textsuperscript{24} The boundary dispute arose when the British administration in Madras put forward a claim over the high ranges, with the intention of grabbing vast forest area which belong to the state of Travancore. If they had acquired this land area they would have exploited it at their will and pleasure and could have extracted an enormous quantity of timber from the area free of cost. Thus he and his family emerged as the kingpin in the trade between North Travancore and the British territories of Madura and Tinnevelly.\textsuperscript{25}

The role played by Angoor Rowther and his family was very important in establishing the sovereignty of Travancore over the high ranges. Hence, the Travancore government gave him great consideration in all their dealings with him and his family. In all his business dealings, he actively engaged his brother C.A. Meera Rowther and both of them carried the business forward until the death of Angoor Rowther. The government and the Forest Department actively supported them by providing all facilities for the exploitation of the forest in the High-Range Division.

One of the agreements entered into with Angoor Rowther was for the collection and delivery of teak, blackwood and other jungle wood from the forest of the Thodupuzha Range, Kottayam Division. The contract was given for an approximate amount of Rs.38,000.\textsuperscript{26} An agreement was made with Angoor Rowther, for the collection and removal of teak timber on payment of

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Petition from C.A. Meera Rowther, op. cit. The Rowther family presented the evidence that the Cardamom grown in the high range were collected and handed over to the government of Travancore as \textit{kudivila}. This served as important evidence in the determination of the dispute in favour of Travancore.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{26} Letter No. 882, dated 22/11/1904, from the Conservator to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 60, B - 1.
Mel-labhom\textsuperscript{27} for three years from 1088 ME (AD 1912 - 1913).\textsuperscript{28} Even after the execution of the agreement it was evident that the government and the Forest Department were very eager to make changes in the agreement at the demand of the contractor. In the above mentioned agreement, Rowther made a demand for a change in the size of various timber parts according to the local demand, which in turn regulated the business and profit of the contractor.\textsuperscript{29} His petition was to change the dimensions of the felloes and spokes from $2\frac{1}{2}'\times4\frac{1}{2}''\times2\frac{1}{2}''$ and $2\frac{3}{4}'\times4''\times3'''$ respectively which was the earlier accepted dimensions, to $3'\times6''\times2\frac{1}{2}''$ and $3'\times 3\frac{3}{4}''\times2''$ respectively.

The influence of such favours can also be perceived in the changes made in the methods of extraction. For example Kadir Sheik Meera Rowther and his partner made a complaint against the coupe sale system\textsuperscript{30} since it proved to be a great loss to them while working in the high ranges. At their petition, the government cancelled the coupe sale system and sanctioned the working on the previous Mel-labhom system. Though the contract was for three years they were allowed to remove 25,000 cu ft. of timber every year paying a Mel-labhom at 9 annas and 6 pice per cu ft. for teak and blackwood sawn, and 3 annas and 9 pice for teak and blackwood axed and Re 1 and 1 anna per dozen of teak felloes.\textsuperscript{31}

When Angoor Rowther complained about the hardship and heavy cost due to the levy of toll at Kumili frontier, the Conservator made a recommendation to the government for some concessions, as a result of which the government allowed a deduction in the Mel-labhom, due by the contractor, to the extent of toll paid by

\textsuperscript{27} It can be defined as the price the Department gets for the produce collected by the contractor at his expense and risk. This system though it appears simple, affords scope for malpractices and is therefore, seldom resorted to. Mel-labhom is calculated as the tariff value minus the kole-vila due to the contractor.

\textsuperscript{28} Letter No. 2292/89, dated 10/06/1914, from the Conservator to Chief Secretary to Government, Trivandrum, Forest File No. 803, B - 113.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{30} Under the coupe sale system, the contractors had to pay for the whole of the marked trees in a coupe. As the purchaser paid for the whole of the marked timber it was in his interest to attempt the maximum utility of the purchased timber.

\textsuperscript{31} Letter No. nil, dated nil, from the Conservator to the Chief Secretary to government, Development File No. 272/23, B - 23.
Later during the time of his brother C.A. Meera Rowther, the Conservator requested sanction for concession to the inhabitants of Kumili in the matter of payment of tolls, which was purely aimed at mitigating the sufferings of the contractors. This can be understood from the words of the Chief Engineer of Kumili in response to the letter from the government which enquired of him about the need for the concession. He stated that Kumili was a small village with everything contained within the two gates and the residents of the village other than the timber contractors had no business or public avocation to conduct outside the gates. Timber contractors were the only men who suffered any hardship. The best way out of the difficulty was that the Conservator of Forest should give rebates to the contractors on whom it pressed hard. If we analyse all the correspondence between the government and the Forest Department it will be clear that the conservators often made recommendations on behalf of the contractors to get sanction from the government on those matters which made the conditions favourable and profitable to the contractors.

While the correspondence between the Forest Department and the government was ensuing on the issue, Angoor Rowther died on 27 May 1913, even before the first sanction for the reduction in the Mel-labhom came. So another letter was sent to the government by the Conservator to sanction the amount of Rs. 220 to be reduced from the Mel-labhom of the late contractor’s legal heir Anumanthamkudi Meera Rowther.

Another example of the breach of agreement can be evidenced in the document that spoke of the contractor cutting more quantities of timber than those prescribed in the agreement. As per the agreement the contractor could remove a
minimum of 40,000 cu ft. In contrary to the agreement the contractor and his agents had removed 56,108.4 cu ft. of timber, for which no action seemed to have been taken in the records against the late contractor’s brother, who by then had taken over the contract of Angoor Rowther.

On 7 Kanny 1089 M E (AD 23/09/1913) a contract was drawn between Anumanthamkudi Meera Rowther and the Conservator of Forest who represented the Travancore government. According to the agreement, the contractor could collect from the Nagarampara and Cardamom Hills reserves, in the High Range Division, 40,000 cu ft. of teak axed and 50,000 cu ft. of teak sawn annually. He could collect them for two years on the payment of Mel-labhom at the rate of 7 annas 7 pice per cu ft. for axed logs and 8 annas per cu ft. for sawn materials.

First World War and Timber Working

Mel-labhom

Around 1914 -1915, the Conservator frequently wrote to the government to introduce changes in the existing method of working timber. A keen analysis shows that during this period there was a great demand for timber due to the First World War, and the Forest Department was very eager to get external contracts and increase the maximum profit. One suggestion from the Conservator was to change the existing Mel-labhom system of timber sales. He stated that this system was an obsolete and wasteful one. This system was to be withdrawn and a more modern and popular system of selling ‘tree-stands’ in coupe should be introduced.

A letter from the DFO disclosed the limitations of the system. The letter reads:

“I went and inspected his felling area as also the materials collected by him. The timber is felled from a place 6 miles from

37 Letter No. 2292/89, from the Conservator, op. cit.
38 Ibid.
39 Timber agreement between Meera Rowther and the Conservator of Forest, Forest File No. 803, B - 113.
40 Letter No. 3334 of 1090, dated 04/10/1915, from the Conservator to the Chief Secretary to Government, Trivandrum, Forest File No. 803, B - 113.
Ayyappancoil and 25 miles from Kumili. The forest here is very rich and abounds in teak, blackwood, venteak, irul and other species. But at present teak alone is felled by the contractor as there is no demand for any other species in the British market. Even in the case of teak, as the contractor has only to pay the Mel-labhom at the depot, only the best portion of a tree is converted and taken to the depot. The top ends and other smaller or slightly unsound portions being in most cases rejected.\textsuperscript{41}

The contractor enjoyed the monopoly of collection and purchase of timber under the Mel-labhom system. Under this system he had to pay only fixed rates of royalty to government on the timbers actually removed through the depot, either in logs or in material.\textsuperscript{42} The financial aspect of this system was not advantageous to the government. Hence, it is suggested that its continuance could not be justified even on consideration of income or profit.\textsuperscript{43}

**Coupe Sale System**

Under the coupe sale system, also called the lump sum sale system, the contractors had to pay for the whole of the marked trees in a coupe. As the purchaser paid for the whole of the marked timber it was in his interest to attempt the maximum utility of the purchased timber.\textsuperscript{44} In the words of the Conservator “to secure fair competition and give petty contractors and small capitalists, a chance of purchase, the coupe may be had in one or two small lots, and sold away.”\textsuperscript{45} Until this time, the period of contract was for two or three years. But at present, the Conservator raised the objection for selling the coupe contracts for several years in advance. He stated that “the whole world is in demand of timber and timber value

\textsuperscript{41} Letter No. 5137 of 1090, dated nil, from the Divisional Forest Officer, High Range Division to the Conservator, Forest File No. 803, B - 113.
\textsuperscript{42} Letter No. 3334 of 1090, from the Conservator, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
is day by day increasing and if we bind ourselves at a fixed rate for so many years the government may be losing heavily."

From analysing the documents, one can understand that other contractors were also coming into the business against whom Meera Rowther sent a long petition to the government, along with a testimony of Angoor Rowther. In the petition he stated the services rendered by him and his family, especially those by his brother Angoor Rowther, to the government of Travancore.

Thus it is evident that the contractor tried his maximum to influence the government through various means to increase his own profit. For example, when Pakir Meera Rowther complained that the coupe sale system in the high ranges incurred great loss to him, the government readily sanctioned to work by the Mel-labhom system.

In 1918 the Maharaja had sanctioned an agreement with Anumanthamkudi Meera Rowther for the purchase of 701 marked trees from a compact block opposite Thattathicooty in the Ayyappancoil forest for a lump sum of Bh Rs.32,000. In the same year another contract was sanctioned by the government regarding the sale of marked teak trees in the Ayyappancoil forest and at Perinjerikutty in the Vandanmedu Range of the High Range Division to Anumanthamkudi Meera Rowther and Messrs Kadir Sheik Meera Rowther and Kala Rowther respectively for lump sum offers. In 1915, His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore granted a contract for the purchase of 800 teak trees in a coupe in Ayyappancoil forest in the High Range Division to Meera Rowther at the rate of 15 annas and 9 pice per cu ft.

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46 Letter No. 985/tim of 1095, dated 29/10/1920, from the Conservator to the Chief Secretary to Government, Trivandrum, Forest File No. 576/1919, B - 138.
49 Letter No. 361, dated 06/02/1918, from the Trivandrum Palace, Forest File No. 79/1918, B – 134 A.
50 Letter No. 644, dated 20/02/1918, from Mahadeva Iyer, Chief Secretary to Government to the Conservator of Forest, Travancore, Forest File No.79/1918, B – 134 A.
51 Letter No. 3759, dated 06/12/1916, from the Trivandrum Palace, Forest File No. 795/1916, B - 117.
Harrisons and Crossfield Ltd.

Messrs Harrisons and Crossfield Ltd., was established in Travancore in January 1911. In May 1911 they purchased the saw mills at Quilon belonging to Messrs Cameron & Co., with its headquarters in London. This commercial house was employed in the manufacture of tea chests from cotton wood and of furniture from teak and rosewood. The sawmill company had two branches in the Malabar Coast, one at Quilon and the other at Calicut. It was a big firm which made agreements with the Travancore government to procure large quantities of soft wood timber from Travancore forests. They received uninterrupted supply of softwood species till 1916.

A petition from the company to the Dewan of Travancore reveals the inadequate supply of timber to them, in spite of frequent requests sent to the Conservator. The company went out to the extent of saying that if the Forest Department was not able to find out the extent of timber resources in the forest, the company would be prepared to do it themselves. In his reply to the government the Conservator explained that the Forest Department could not supply timber on the basis of Mel-labhom for which the company was frequently requesting. The reserves of the Pathanapuram Range, the Shaliakkara, Punnala, Chithelvetty, Kadakkamon, Piravanthur, and Piravanthur extension were already exploited annually for the supply of softwoods to Messrs Harrison and Crossfield Ltd., and the indiscriminate felling of soft woods from wherever they were available, also prevailed.

53 Ibid., p. 556.
54 Letter No. nil, dated 15/12/1916, from Harrisons and Crossfield Ltd., to the Dewan of Travancore, Forest File No. 795/1916, B - 117.
55 Ibid.
56 Letter No. 1838/tim of 1092, dated 29/01/1917, from the Conservator to the Chief Secretary, Forest File No.795/1916, B - 117.
According to the Conservator, “the Forest Department cannot, in the interest of forest conservancy, meet them any way in this direction.”\(^{58}\) Nevertheless from the petition of the company, it was clear that earlier contracts were made with the company on this basis and the proposal of the present contract on *Mel-labhom* basis from coupe Nos. III and V of Shendurney forest was agreed to and put forward by the Conservator as far back as February 1916.\(^{59}\) Another feature of the company’s proposals to the government was that they specifically pointed out the sources of supply for the prescribed quantity of timber.

The company protested that the Conservator was not willing to provide any timber from the Shendurney forests because of the recent agreement drawn with the South Indian Match factory. They also insisted that it was not fair to reserve timber for an industry which had not yet started while local industries which had been running for a considerable number of years were starving.\(^{60}\) This seemed to be true from the Conservator’s letter when he replied to the government that the hands of the government were tied down by the undertaking with the match factory.\(^{61}\) He referred to the government order No. 4086/ F&MR dated 16/10/1916, that in the face of the undertaking with the South Indian Match factory to supply softwood, it was undesirable to sanction a *Mel-labhom* contract for the removal of softwoods from areas in close proximity to the match factory.\(^{62}\)

Other reasons which were cited by Harrisons and Crossfield Ltd., for the refusal by the Forest Department to supply them timber were as follows:

1) The contract with the Hind Candle Factory by the Forest Department for twenty years lease for the fruit production from pine trees.

The Harrisons and Co., complained that it was they who had introduced the utility of these species to the Indian market with great pain, and now they were

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\(^{58}\) Letter No. 1838/tim of 1092, op. cit.

\(^{59}\) Letter No. nil, dated 15/12/1916, from Harrisons and Crossfield, op.cit.

\(^{60}\) Ibid.

\(^{61}\) Letter No. 1838/tim of 1092, op. cit.

\(^{62}\) Ibid.
refused its supply. In his reply the Conservator stated that the object of the government in granting the lease was to exemplify the utility of the produce for some industry and thereby, to show their own subjects, the prospects of starting and maintaining such industries locally, and securing economic advantage to the country.

2) A contract entered by the Forest Department with Aspinwall and Co., in Cochin for a particular quantity of timber (given as 3000 candies in the petition).

The Conservator in his concluding remarks however, assured the government that he would legitimately consider the issue and extend fair cooperation warranted under the existing forest policy, in order to accomplish the Company’s industrial needs.

In 1917, the company was given the contract for working coupe No I of the Yerur Working Circle. Two agreements were signed between the company and the Forest Department. One for the purchase of fine species of softwood like elavu, pala, cheeni, mavoo, venkottah, thondy, aranthal, pine and muringila for a lump sum of Bh Rs.17,500 which was sanctioned by the government. The second agreement was to purchase 644 marked trees of maruthi for a lump sum of Bh Rs. 18,750. Government order for this was sent by telegram and the sanction was confirmed by the Forest Department. The agreement was for two and a half years and it was later approved by the Maharaja.

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64 Letter No. 1838/tim of1092, op. cit.
65 Letter dated, 15/12/1916 from Harrisons and Co., op. cit.
66 Letter No. 1838/tim of 1092, op. cit.
67 Letter No. 5019, dated 13/08/1917, from the Conservator to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 485/17, B - 116.
68 The contract agreement was sanctioned in the G.O No. 2365/F &MR, dated 05/07/1917, as shown in the Letter No. 5019, dated 13/08/1917, op.cit, Forest File No. 485/17, B - 116.
69 Letter No. 2998, dated 16/08/1917, from the Conservator to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 485/17, B - 116.
70 Letter No. 2687, dated 30/08/1917, from the Trivandrum Palace, Forest File No. 485/17, B - 116.
Another agreement was approved by the Maharaja with Messrs Harrisons and Co., Quilon for the purchase of 24,000 cu ft. of cheeni logs from the Veapram depot at Bh Rs. 6 and 8 annas per candy.\textsuperscript{71} In the same year another agreement with the company was approved by the Maharaja. It was for the purchase and delivery of 32,000 cu ft. of cottonwood at the Veapram depot for two years from 1094 - 1096 ME (AD 1918 - 1919) to (AD 1920 - 1921) at the value of Bh Rs. 16,000.\textsuperscript{72}

In 1919 the contractors engaged in the Northern Division were working down cottonwood logs for Messrs Aspinwall and Co., in Cochin and Harrisons and Co., in Quilon. Nonetheless, the contractors failed in their undertaking as per the agreement and a balance of 7,500 candies of cottonwood was still to be supplied to them.\textsuperscript{73} Though fresh tenders were invited for the balance working and two tenders were received, these did not satisfy the Forest Department. Therefore, on the recommendation of the DFO a new contract agreement was made with Uthuppan Ittivirah, who was a regular contractor of that Division.\textsuperscript{74} This contract was for collecting 7,500 candies of cottonwood (1,17,187.5 cu ft.) from Neriamangalam and Idiyara Range and to deliver at Verapuzha depot within two years at a kole-vila rate of Bh Rs. 4-1-6\textsuperscript{75} per candy.\textsuperscript{76} The Administrative Report shows that there was collection of a large quantity of teak and cottonwood to meet the demand of the Public Works Department and to fully supply the balance softwood to Messrs Aspinwall and Co., and to Harrisons and Crossfield Ltd.\textsuperscript{77}

In the Kulathupuzha Working Circle, coupe No I of the felling series A, the marked trees were sold to the company. This was also previously worked and the present contract was extended up to 1096 ME (AD 1920 - 1921). Coupe No I,  

\textsuperscript{71} Letter No. 617, dated 16/02/1919, from the Trivandrum Palace, Forest File No. 139/17, B - 119.
\textsuperscript{72} Letter No. 2000, dated 11/06/1919, from the Trivandrum Palace, Forest File No. 787/1916, B -117.
\textsuperscript{73} Letter No. 1588/tim of 1095, dated 03/12/1919, from the Conservator to the Chief Secretary to Government, Trivandrum, Forest File No. 817, B - 130.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75} British Rupees 4, 1 anna and 6 pice.
\textsuperscript{76} Letter No.1588/tim of 1095, dated 03/12/1919, from the Conservator, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{77} Administration Report of the Travancore Forest Department for the year 1095 ME (AD 1919 - 1920), Government Press, Trivandrum 1921, p. 19.
felling series B of the same Working Circle was also given out for contract up to 1096 ME (AD 1920 - 1921).  

Messrs Wallibhoy, Khaderbhoy and Co.

This was one of the earliest firms which had maintained trade relations in timber with the Maharaja of Travancore. In 1051 ME (1875 - 1876) they entered into an agreement with the government of Travancore. They agreed to purchase 14,000 candies of teak at the rate of Rs. 17 per candy for first class, Rs. 13 per candy for second class and 10 per candy for third class, and 2,000 candies of black wood at the rate of Rs 12 to 20 according to the quality of the timber. In 1053 ME (AD 1877 - 1878) and 1056 ME (AD 1880 - 1881) two contracts were made with the same company for 30,000 candies of teak at the same rate and 1,00,000 railway sleepers at 1 ¾ rupees each. In 1058 ME (AD 1882 - 1883) the same firm entered into a contract for ten years at the same rate, not for any fixed quantity of timber, but as much as the Forest Department could deliver to them within that time. This contract expired on 1 November 1892 (17 Thulam 1066). But they agreed to purchase another lakh of railway sleepers for Rs. 2 each. As per the agreement it was also decided that the delivery should be taken directly from the Forest Department and not from the commercial agent at Alleppey, which resulted into a breach between the Forest Department and the agent.

At the time of T.F. Bourdillion, frequent complaints were received from the public about the insufficient quantities of teak and Blackwood sold to them. The cause of their complaint was that Messrs Wallibhoy & Co., was securing an undue proportion of the deliveries of timber. As part of an enquiry, the Conservator demanded a statement of account for timber transaction of five years, from 1076 - 1080 ME (AD 1900 - 1901 to 1904 - 1905), from the DFO.

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78 Ibid., p. 7.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
82 Letter No. 3506, dated 16/03/1907, from the Conservator of Forest to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 311/1907, B - 9.
The DFO submitted the accounts as follows:\(^{83}\)

**Table 5.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement of Account of Timber Transaction of Five Years, from 1076 -1080 ME (AD 1900 - 1901 to 1904 - 1905)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teak</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Messrs Wallibhoy &amp; Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To the Public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Conservator’s letter revealed that the Forest Department received a sum of Bh Rs. 16652-12-06 from Messrs Wallibhoy and Co., on account of the value of timber measured over to them from Veapuram depot.\(^{85}\)

**Timber to South Indian Railway Company**

The Travancore government had invited tenders for the preparation of 15,000 *kongu* metre-gauge sleepers (6 ft×8”×4 ½”) from the trees marked for felling in coupe No V of Shendurney Working Circle and 1000 *candies* of depot materials.\(^{86}\) The contract for the supply of *kongu* sleepers to South Indian Railway was given to S. Punnavana Moopanar of Thenkasi and the approximate amount of the contract was Rs.35,700\(^{87}\) Another agreement with him was for the disposal of boles and materials of *kulavu* and *karanjili* and *gnaval* species worked down from coupe No II, felling series B of the Yerur Working Circle to Thenmalai depot for Bh Re. 1, 4 *annas* and 3 pice and Re. 1, 4 annas and 0 pice per cu ft. of materials and boles respectively.\(^{88}\)

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\(^{83}\) Ibid.

\(^{84}\) Quantity of timber shown as per the record.

\(^{85}\) Letter No. 4958/1082, dated 06/05/1907, (23 *Chitrai* 1082) from the Conservator of Forest to the Chief Secretary, Forest File No. 339/1907, B - 9.

\(^{86}\) Letter No. nil, dated 08/08/1914 (24/12/1089 ME), from the Conservator of Forest to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 321/1914, B - 48.

\(^{87}\) Ibid.

\(^{88}\) Letter No. 5316/tim of 1095, dated 16/07/1920 (1 Karkadagom 1095 ME), from the Conservator of Forest to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 568/1919, B - 138.
The South Indian Railway Company had engaged into several agreements with the Forest Department of Travancore for the supply of sleepers, timbers, fuels etc., and usually engaged sub-contractors for the working of the coupes. During 1918, the Conservator made a new proposal through his letter ROC No 74/Tim of 1094 ME, dated 14 September 1918, to sublet the fuel supply contract entered into with the Railway Company to a third party. The department would get a small profit in the nature of commission and assume the role of a middle-man.\(^{89}\)

However, in the government draft sent to the Conservator of Forest, the Chief Secretary vehemently criticised the new proposal as he stated that “to take up such a position was undesirable and inexpedient.” \(^{90}\) But as the Conservator had already concluded the transaction, the government gave approval. This sanction for sub-letting the fuel contract to Muthuswami Karayalar of Shencottah was later approved by the Maharaja.\(^{91}\) The agreement with the Railway Company was to supply 2000 tonnes of fuel wood at the Thenmalai railway depot within four months from 1 September 1918 at the rate of Bh Rs. 8 per tonne.\(^{92}\)

There was a heated debate in the Sree Moolam Popular Assembly of Travancore regarding sub-contracts for delivering sleepers to the Railway Company. K.P. Raman Pillai, member of the Quilon Taluk criticized the sub-contracts given by the department, for the supply of sleepers by a man called Chotani. He contended that if the contract was directly taken from the Railway Company the government would gain over a lakh of rupees which now went to Chotani’s firm, as a middleman’s share.\(^{93}\)

Frequent enquiries were made by the Resident H.L. Braidwood about the quantities and species of trees, which the government of Travancore would be able to supply for the sleepers to the British railways. From the reply of the

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\(^{89}\) Letter No. 4068/F&MR, dated 08/10/1918, from Chief Secretary to the Government to the Conservator of Forest, Forest File No. 606/1918, B - 127.

\(^{90}\) Ibid.

\(^{91}\) Letter No. 3227, dated 27/09/1918, from the Trivandrum Palace, Forest File No. 606/1918, B - 127.

\(^{92}\) Letter No. 4068/F&MR, from the Chief Secretary, op. cit.

government, the railway authorities came to know that *kongu* and teak were the best species for sleepers besides *karimarudu* and *irul*. Regarding the quantity which could be supplied, the Forest Department stated that they would be able to supply 20,000 cu ft. of *karimarudu* at the Kulasekharam depot. From the Yerur Working Circle, Muthuswami Karayalar was willing to supply 8,000 *Karimarudu* metre gauge sleepers, for Rs.2, 12 *annas* and 0 pice per sleeper. Again from the Peechippara they would be able to supply 3,000 *candies* of seasoned Thembavu which could yield 5,000 broad gauge sleepers at the rate of Rs. 6 and 8 *annas* per sleeper or if the company required them in round logs at Re. 1 per cu ft. The Conservator also stated that in 1916 they had supplied only *kongu* sleepers, both broad gauge and metre gauge, to the South Indian Railway at Rs.7, 8 *annas* and 0 pice and Rs. 3, 4 *annas* and 0 pice per sleepers respectively.

By 1925, there was a wide spread enquiry for sleepers by the Railway Company. They established a ‘Sleeper Enquiry Committee’ which strongly recommended that wherever possible forest owners and Railways should join together to make arrangements for the supply of sleepers. For better communication between the railway authorities and forest owners the Railway Board decided to appoint a forest officer on the staff of the Railway Board. The post was known as the Timber Advisory Officer under the Railway Board with its headquarters at Simla. His main duty was to advise the best procedure to coordinate the demands of railways for sleepers after consulting the forest and railway authorities and enquiring into the possibilities and local conditions in each area. Another task of this officer was to consider the question of utilising other timbers in place of teak for such work as carriage building. The first

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94 Letter No. nil, dated 28/08/1917, from the Office of the Conservator to the Chief Secretary to the Government, Trivandrum, Forest File No. 478/1917, B - 116.
95 Letter No. nil, dated 04/09/1918, from the Office of the Resident Trivandrum to the Dewan of Travancore, Forest File No. 478/1917, B - 116
96 Letter No. nil, dated 08/09/1917, from the Conservator to the Chief Secretary to the Government, Forest File No. 478/1917, B - 116.
97 Letter dated 28/08/1917, from the Office of the Conservator, op. cit.
98 Letter dated 08/09/1917 from the Conservator, op cit.
99 Letter No. R. Dis. 2207/24, dated 06/06/1925, from the Agent of the Governor General, Madras State to the Dewan of Travancore, Forest File, B - 49.
Timber Advisory Officer was R.C. Marriot, IFS. The Railway Board also wanted to install a Sleeper Treating Plant in Travancore for which they had written a letter to the government. The government which was very eager to help the Railway Board sent a correspondence to the Conservator of Forest stating that all necessary assistance should be rendered to the Timber Advisory Officer.

**Chackay - Thampanoor Railway**

During the construction of the Chackay - Thampanoor railway line there were frequent requests from the Railways for the reduction of the rates of the sleepers. There was a ready response from the government which sanctioned to reduce the rate of *irul* and *thambagom* sleepers to Rs.3 and 12 *annas*, and Rs. 4 respectively. Nevertheless, for teakwood sleepers, the rate was increased from Rs. five to Six. The rate for ‘points and crossing’ sleepers of *thambagom* remained at Rs. 2 and 13 *annas*.

**Quilon –Trivandrum Railway**

During the year 1090 ME (AD 1915 - 1916) there was a large scale removal of timber from the forests, which was 2,66,173 cu ft. more than in the previous year. There was an increase of sawn or axed timber and this was due to the very large quantities of *kongu* and *irul* timbers sawn as sleepers from the forests of Shencottah, Quilon, Central and Northern Divisions, in connection with the supply of sleepers for the Quilon - Trivandrum railway extension. To meet the demand from the railways even a deviation was made from the sanctioned working plan. According to the sanctioned working plan, coupe Nos III and V of the Shendurney Working Circle was not supposed to be opened yet. However, to meet the demand for railway sleepers, these two coupes were worked down as a special case in that year. The total quantity of timber removed from these two coupes was 1,19,514 cu ft. of which only 89,443 cu ft. sent to the

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100 Ibid.
101 Letter No. 1283/25, dated 01/07/1925, from the Government to the Conservator of Forest, Forest File, B - 49.
102 Letter No. 724, dated 13/03/1929, from the Trivandrum Palace, Development File No. 524/29, B -76.
depots. Out of this, 46,636 cu ft. was sold for Rs. 80,978 leaving a balance of 42,807 cu ft. in the depots.\textsuperscript{104} There was virulent criticism against the Conservator, Subramania Aiyer, for deviating from the existing working plan and allowing felling in four unopened coupes of Shendurney Working Circle, among which one was to be opened fifteen years later. K.P. Raman Pillai, member of Quilon Taluk in his motion in the Sree Moolam Assembly criticised that the working plan once sanctioned would lose its importance as material changes had been allowed in it without the sanction of the government.\textsuperscript{105} The Conservator had also permitted unsystematic and desultory felling in the Aryankavu forest.\textsuperscript{106}

S. Subramania Karayalar

S. Subramania Karayalar of Thenkasi was an important contractor of Travancore whose working area was the Shendurney forest. In 1917 he was given a contract to work down to Thenmalai depot all saleable sleepers left unremoved in the coupe.\textsuperscript{107} However, when he faced the difficulty in getting carts into the coupe at the usual rate of 6 \textit{chakrams} per mile, he requested that the rate should be enhanced to 7 \textit{chakrams} which was later sanctioned.\textsuperscript{108} Later in 1920, he made another complaint to the government about the objection raised by the Conservator against stacking timber in the coupe and its premises after felling, for which the Conservator demanded a ground rent to be paid. The ground rent was at Re. 1 per a cent of land. But the contractor complained that it was illegal and unreasonable.\textsuperscript{109}

The Conservator in his reply to the government stated that it was at the repeated request of the contractor that he was allowed to stack his timber in the

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., p. 16.
\textsuperscript{105} Proceedings of the Sree Moolam Popular Assembly, 18\textsuperscript{th} Session, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{106} Petition dated 15/06/1918, given by the People of Travancore regarding the Forest Administration in the State to His Excellency the Governor of Madras in Council, Forest File No. 220 of 1918, B - 124.
\textsuperscript{107} Letter No. 3792/tim, dated 06/07/1917, from the Office of the Conservator to the Chief Secretary to government, Forest File No. 410/1917, B - 120.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109} Copy of Petition No. 130, dated 26/07/1095 ME, from Subramonia Karayalar Purchasing contractor Coupe III, Shendurney Working Circle, to the Dewan of Travancore, Forest File No. 176/1920, B - 135.
premises of the depot and that he was informed earlier that he would have to pay a fine which would be decided by the Forest Department later.\textsuperscript{110}

According to the Conservator,

“...the existence of such a large quantity of private timber at the depot premises not only inconvenienced the department in properly stacking their timber and exercising careful supervision on it but also adversely affected the auction sale. The contractors who got large quantities at cheap cost even compete with the department and reduce our sales by conducting auction side by side with our sales.”\textsuperscript{111}

He further stated that from the coupe purchased by the contractor and others, they had made enormous profit. Therefore, he requested the government not to consider Karayalar’s petition. He also informed the government that the ground rent for ten months from Chingom to the end of Edavom 1095 ME (AD 1919 - 1920) for an area of 60,600 sq. ft. of land used by him was Bh Rs. 12 and 12 annas.\textsuperscript{112}

**Illegal Fellings in the Shendurney Working Circle**

In 1919, Assistant Conservator of Forest, Narayana Iyyengar, was deputed on special duty in connection with the sleeper supply to the Quilon-Trivandrum Railway line from the Shendurney circle. The contract was given to Subramania Karayalar, who was permitted to work coupe Nos III and VI.\textsuperscript{113} But while inspecting the site Iyyengar found that coupe No IV was illicitly felled. On inquiry he understood that felling was done with the help of Ranger Venkatarama Iyer, who repeatedly insisted that felling was done within the prescribed coupe. He also added that many forest officials including Messrs.

\textsuperscript{110} Letter No. 2701, dated 03/05/1920 from the Conservator of Forest to the Chief Secretary, Forest File No. 176/1920, B -135.

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{112} Letter No. 3302, dated 20/07/1920, from the Conservator to the Chief Secretary to government, Forest File No. 176/1920, B - 135.

\textsuperscript{113} Letter No. 2494, dated 05/02/1919, from the Conservator of Forest to the Chief Secretary to Government, Trivandrum, Forest File No. 172/1919, B - 132.
M. Velu Pillai, Thanu Pillai and M.P. Jacob repeatedly visited the site and they had never raised any objection.\textsuperscript{114} When Iyyengar visited the encroached area (coup IV), he found sixteen \textit{kongu} trees and stumps marked; some of them were felled and sawn. The sawn materials had been removed partly, while some other marked trees which were found hollow were allowed to stand. The contractor Karayalar, who conducted felling in this area, was safe, as the trees here bore stump marks.\textsuperscript{115}

However, Iyyengar vehemently criticised this as negligence on the part of the subordinate officers, and stated that besides the forest officers mentioned above, other subordinates viz. Deputy Ranger Siva Ram Krishna Iyer; Foresters Gomez, Krishna Pillai, Zachariah etc., were also guilty.\textsuperscript{116} The records reveal that the Conservator was also an accomplice in the indiscriminate felling. A petition from the public reveals that the Conservator, Subramania Aiyer, was vehemently criticised for supporting Subramania Karayalar in the felling within the Shendurney Working Circle by deviating from the existing working plan.\textsuperscript{117}

The statements given by the DFO was also in favour of the culprits.\textsuperscript{118} Every point raised by the DFO alluded to an unobvious boundary description in the working plan, which according to him had led to the encroachment. The unintentional encroachment as claimed by the DFO was vehemently criticised by Narayana Iyyengar who argued against his justifications.\textsuperscript{119} This example evidently demonstrates the large lobby of the forest officials who readily acted at the will of the contractors.

\begin{footnotesize}
\item[114] Ibid.  
\item[115] Letter No. 4, dated 26/09/1916, from Narayana Iyyengar Assistant Conservator of Forest on special duty, Thenmalai to the Conservator of Forest, Forest File No. 172/1919, B - 132.  
\item[116] Letter No. 2494, from the Conservator, op. cit.  
\item[117] Petition dated 15/06/1918, from the people, op. cit.  
\item[118] Letter No. 645, dated 06/10/1916, from the Divisional Forest Officer, Shencottah Division to the Conservator of Forest, Forest File No. 172/1919, B - 132.  
\item[119] Letter No. 15, dated 13/10/1916, from Narayana Iyyengar, Assistant Conservator of Forest on Special Duty, Thenmalai to the Conservator of Forest, Forest File No. 172/19, B - 132.  
\end{footnotesize}
S. Muthuswami Karayalar of Shencottah

One of the agreements was contracted with Muthuswami Karayalar in 1917. According to this contract, the Conservator had proposed to dispose the whole of the marked standing trees belonging to the remaining species in coupe No I, Yerur Working Circle (after excluding the ten species sold to Messrs Harrissons and Company) to Muthuswami Karayalar, for a lump sum of Rs. 25,000. This was sanctioned as per G.O No. 2992/F &MR, dated 15 August 1917. The contract for removing 2,517 marked trees of various species (2,63,291 cu ft.), was approved by the Maharaja. This system of the wholesale disposal of large stock of timber from the depot and enormous quantities of standing tree growth in extensive areas of reserved and unreserved lands for ridiculously low sums of money, was introduced by Conservator Subramania Aiyer, for which there was a great deal of public criticism against him. It was argued that he had also allowed the sale of over 40,000 logs to a Cochin contractor for a paltry sum of Rs. 40,000. The worst of this was that these sales were, according to the petition, conducted by private negotiations instead of the proper method of calling for tenders.

Another contract which was made by the Forest Department and the South Indian Railway Co., for the supply of 2,000 tonnes of fuel wood had been sub-let to Muthuswami Karayalar by the department on the following condition:

1) The supply should be made out of his own stock in the coupe purchased by him and through the medium of the Forest Department.

2) He should pay the department a commission of Bh Re. 1 per tonne of fuel wood so supplied to the company.

3) In the event of default, he will pay such damage as may be imposed upon the department by the company.

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120 Letter No. 5019, dated 13/08/1917, from the Conservator, op. cit.
122 Petition dated 15/06/1918, from the People, op. cit.
123 Ibid.
124 Letter No. 4068/F &MR, from the Chief Secretary to Government, op. cit.
Lonen Lonen

In 1904, tenders were invited for the delivery of teak and blackwood at the water depots of Veapuram and Verapuzha. At Verapuzha, two tenders were received and the tender of Lonen Lonen was accepted. The agreement with him was at the rate of Rs. 13 for first class teak and blackwood, and Rs. 9 for second class teak and blackwood. The contractor had to fell timber from the interior of the forest, where there were no transport facilities.

At the Veapuram depot, twenty tenders were received. The Conservator, however, selected only three from among them, as he did not favour too many contractors since he believed that employing too many contractors would lead to extensive and indiscriminate felling of valuable trees. The three chosen contractors were Kochu Thommen, Domen Varghese, and Koshi Kochu Koshi.

In 1081 M E (AD 1905 - 06), the contract for the delivery of teak and blackwood at the Verapuzha and Vettikad depots in the Northern Division expired. New tenders were invited for the supply of timber for the next five years. Three tenders which seemed profitable to the department were selected. At the request of the Divisional Forest Officer (hereafter, DFO) of Northern Division, the Conservator issued licences to the contractors for work in anticipation of government sanction, as the time allowed for felling of timber would be over by the month of Thye and as the timber had to be dried before floating. Nevertheless, he was vehemently criticised by the government for his action. In his explanation, he stated that his act was not to disregard the orders of the government, but if the licence had not been issued on time the contractors would

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125 A village in the district of Alappuzha, situated near Harippad town, between the Pampa and Achencovil rivers. Presently, it is the only existing forest in Alappuzha district.

126 A northern town in Ernakulam district which has a timber depot under the Forest Department.

127 Letter No. 953 A of 1080, dated 16/11/1904 (1 Karthigay 1080 ME), from the Conservator to the Dewan of Travancore, Forest File No.114, B - 3.

128 Ibid.

129 Letter No. 4199 of 1082, dated 08/04/1907 (26 Painguni 1082 ME), from the Conservator to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 794, B - 130.

130 Tamil month corresponding to Malayalam month of Makaram. It corresponds to English months from mid-January to mid-February.
not have been able to deliver any timber that year which meant a fall in the revenue of the Division in the respective year. \(^{131}\)

V. Parameswara Iyer

The first contract was signed with Parameswara Iyer for the delivery of 39,000 cu ft. of teak and 3,900 cu ft. of Blackwood at the Verapuzha depot for five years from 1082 - 1086 ME (1906 - 1907 to 1910 - 1911). \(^{132}\) However, the contractor had sought permission from the Conservator to work down to the Vettikad depot a portion of the timber i.e., 386 teak logs which made 6,386 cu ft. deliverable at Verapuzha. This was because of the transportation of timber from the felling site to the Verapuzha depot was very difficult due to the interruptions of hills and absence of waterways. He also, offered to reduce his rate of *kole-vila* for this purpose. \(^{133}\) The Conservator wrote to the government that he was permitting the contractor to do so in anticipation of government sanction, as the timber demand at both the places were the same and that the reduction in the rate would bring in an extra profit of above Rs. 230 to the government. \(^{134}\)

**Cha Rama Iyer**

The Second contract was signed with Cha Rama Iyer on 28 *Margali*\(^{135}\) 1082 ME (AD 1906 - 1907) for the delivery of 31,250 cu ft. of teak at the Vettikad depot during 1082 - 1086 ME (AD 1907 - 1911) at a *kole-vila* of 21 ½ *chakrams* per cu ft. for first class, 14 ¼ for second class and three-fourths of the sale proceeds for rejected logs. \(^{136}\) This agreement was sanctioned by the government. \(^{137}\) However, the DFO reported that the contractor had collected 9,092 cu ft. in

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\(^{131}\) Letter No. 4199 of 1082, dated 08/04/1907, op. cit.

\(^{132}\) Letter No. 7193/1085, dated 06/07/1910 (12/12/1085 ME), from the Conservator to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 794, B -130.

\(^{133}\) Ibid.

\(^{134}\) Ibid.

\(^{135}\) Tamil month corresponding to the Malayalam month of *Dhanu* and English months from mid - December to mid – January.

\(^{136}\) Letter No. 7325, dated 02/08/1911, from the Conservator to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 794, B - 130.

\(^{137}\) Government Letter No. 2377, dated 22/05/1907, seen in letter No.7325 dated 02/08/1911, Forest File No. 794, B - 130.
excess. Though the Range Officer was under the shadow of suspicion, no action was taken against him. Moreover, when the contractor agreed a reduction in the *kole-vila* by one *anna* per cu ft. on the excess quantity collected, the Conservator readily accepted it by stating that this reduction was reasonable and that the government would realise a saving of Surat Rupees (hereafter S Rs.) 578-11-2 on the original *kole-vila*, and requested government sanction for the same.

Here it is evident that the forest officials unduly favoured the contractors. Their actions revealed their interest in the welfare of the contractors than in the protection of the forest. Instead of imposing due punishment on the contractors for illegal felling, they requested sanction from the government to save the culprits.

**Raja Ram Rao**

The Travancore government entered into an agreement on 8 *Kumbam* 1094 ME (1918 - 1919) with Raja Ram Rao to work down 23,000 cu ft. of royal trees and jungle wood to the Trivandrum town depot. The prescribed quantity of timber was to be felled from Neyyatinkara and Nedumangadu Range and the amount of contract was Rs. 8,882.

**Kannan Devan Hill Produce Company**

The KDHP Company was given an area of 500 acres registered in their name at Pallivasal and they could remove timber from this land for several of their works at Munnar and at other places by paying a seigniorage for the timber removed. However, they frequently sent complaints to the DFO of the High Range Division about the delay incurred in getting their timber registered by the Poopara Range Officer as he was far away from the felling place. They demanded

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138 Ibid.
139 Surat Rupees 578, 11 *anna* and 2 pice.
140 Government Letter No. 2377, dated 22/05/1907, op. cit.
141 Malayalam month corresponding to English months from mid-February to mid-March in the Gregorian calendar.
143 Letter No. 651, dated 02/03/1917, from the Trivandrum Palace, Forest File No. 795/1916, B -11.
144 Letter No. 84/tim of 1094, dated 19/10/1918, from the Conservator of Forest to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 696, B - 126.
a solution, which according to the DFO was to allow the company to register the timber, and issue passes by themselves and send the duplicate of the pass to the Range Officer with the list of measurement and to have the account adjusted and the money paid at the end of the month.\textsuperscript{145} The DFO requested the Conservator for permission on the ground that the company was a respectable firm and that the government had placed full confidence in them in the matter of payment of export duty on tea and accepted as correct the invoices issued by them. According to him, there was no need to mistrust them.\textsuperscript{146}

The Conservator, on the other hand, made some changes in the recommendations made by the DFO. He reported that the sawn timbers which were brought to the company’s depot at Pallivasal would be first measured by the concerned Range Officer and paid for by the company, only after which it would become their property. After that they could register their property mark and issue their own passes.\textsuperscript{147} The KDHP was also expected to keep a separate record of the transactions thus made and deposit a certain amount as credit, in advance. This solution was accepted by them and they were ready to remit an amount of Bh Rs. 500 in advance.\textsuperscript{148}

\textbf{Tata Oil Mills Company Ltd., Ernakulam}

This was another firm which entered into contracts with the government of Travancore for the supply of softwood timber. During 1936 - 1937 3,000 \emph{candies} of \emph{elavu} and \emph{cheeni} were supplied to the company from the Varapuzha depot with the sanction from the government.\textsuperscript{149} As per the requirement of the government, the Conservator furnished a statement of the supply of softwood to the above firm for the past four years.\textsuperscript{150} According to the Conservator Dhanukoti Pillai, the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{145} Letter No. 3877, dated 25/06/1918 (11/11/1095 ME), from the DFO High Range Division to the Conservator, Forest File No. 696, B -126.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{147} Letter No. 84/tim of 1094, from the Conservator of Forest, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{149} Letter No. 2182, dated 19/07/1936, from the Palace, Trivandrum, Confidential File No. 1216, B - 33.
\textsuperscript{150} Letter No. 518/36/C.S, dated 28/07/1936, from the Chief Secretary to Government to the Conservator of Forest, Confidential File No. 1216, B - 33.
\end{flushright}
supply of softwood timber to Tata Oil Mills Company began from 1107 ME (AD 1931 - 1932) when Harrisons and Crossfield Ltd., stopped purchasing softwood from the Northern Division.\textsuperscript{151}

The table showing the species and quantity of soft wood timbers supplied to the Company is given as Table 5.3.

\textbf{Table 5.2:}
\textbf{Table Showing the Species and Quantity of Soft Wood Timbers Supplied to Tata Oil Mills Co.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (ME)</th>
<th>Species and Quantity</th>
<th>Rate per cu ft. Supplied to the Contractor</th>
<th>Rate Supplied to the Company</th>
<th>Net Profit to Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1107-1108</td>
<td>1000 candies of cheeni</td>
<td>Annas 3 Pice. 8</td>
<td>As. 8</td>
<td>Rs. 4,232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1108-1109</td>
<td>3000 candies of elavu and cheeni</td>
<td>As. 3</td>
<td>As. 8</td>
<td>Rs. 14,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1109-1110</td>
<td>2500 candies of elavu and cheeni</td>
<td>As. 3</td>
<td>As. 8</td>
<td>Rs. 12,207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1110-1111</td>
<td>1500 candies of elavu and cheeni</td>
<td>As. 6</td>
<td>As. 8</td>
<td>Rs. 4,232</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{Messrs Ouseph Cherian and Ouseph Kochu Ouseph}

The contract entered with them was to work down 2,446 teak and black wood trees from their land at Ranni to the Veapuram depot before the close of 1095 ME (AD 1919 - 1920).\textsuperscript{152} Nevertheless, they could work down only 1,241 teak and 11 black wood logs of 17,488.06 cu ft. against the expected quantity of 50,974 cu ft.\textsuperscript{153} Hence, they applied for an extension of time to the next year which was forwarded to the government by the Conservator stating they should be

\textsuperscript{151} Letter No. nil, dated 31/07/1936, from the Conservator of Forest R. Dhanukoti Pillai to the Chief Secretary to Government, Confidential File No. 1216, B - 33.

\textsuperscript{152} Letter No. 2583, dated 27/06/1920, from the Trivandrum Palace, Forest File No. 826/1919, B - 131.

\textsuperscript{153} Letter No. 274/tim of 1096, dated 28/09/1920, from the Conservator of Forest to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 826/1919, B - 131.
granted the same. He also insisted that “if we stuck to the condition 14 (c) of the agreement, which read as, the contract is liable to be cancelled if the quantity collected has fallen short of fifty percent of the stipulated quantity, it would greatly affect the contractors and scare them away.”\textsuperscript{154} As a result the government gave sanction for the extension of the period so as to enable them to complete the work, subject however to the payment of a penalty of half a \textit{chakram} per cu ft. on the shortage of quantity delivered at the end of 1095 ME (AD 1919 - 1920).\textsuperscript{155}

\textbf{Ummar Rowther}

The contract for working down coupe No II, felling series B, of Yerur Working Circle to Thenmalai depot during 1095 ME (AD 1919 - 1920) was given to Ummar Rowther. His contract was for working down 50,000 cu ft. of jungle wood logs at the \textit{kole-vila} fixed for each type of wood.\textsuperscript{156}

\textbf{Messrs K. Babji Miah Sahib and Lekshmi Narayana Iyyengar}

The contract for working down coupe No II, felling series B, of Yerur Working Circle for two years from 1096 - 1097 ME (AD 1921 - 1922) was given to Messrs K. Babji Miah Sahib and Lekshmi Narayana Iyyengar.\textsuperscript{157} Their contract for working down 50,000 cu ft. jungle wood was sanctioned by the Maharaja.\textsuperscript{158}

\textbf{Pappanasa Nadar and Vasudeva Iyer}

Both these contractors, who were non-natives entered the scene of Travancore timber trade as a result of a special sanction by the Travancore government. Accordingly, the sale of timber at Kulasekharam depot was to be held at prescribed tariff rates, and it was open to foreign merchants till the end of 1093 ME (AD 1917 - 1918).\textsuperscript{159} Out of the 4,645 logs of all species, Pappanasa Nadar

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{155} Letter No. 4251, dated 02/11/1920, from the Trivandrum Palace, Forest File No. 826/1919, B -131.
\textsuperscript{156} Letter, No. 1593, dated 04/04/1920, from the Trivandrum Palace, Forest File No. 178/1920, B - 135.
\textsuperscript{157} Letter No. 5679/tim of 1095, dated 30/07/1920, from the Conservator of Forest to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 178/1920, B - 135.
\textsuperscript{158} Letter No. 2938, dated 15/07/1920, from the Trivandrum Palace, Forest File No. 178/1920, B - 135.
\textsuperscript{159} Letter No. 2173, dated 13/07/1918 from the Trivandrum Palace, Forest File No. 644/1917, B - 121.
purchased 2,008 logs and Vasudeva Iyer purchased 2,609 logs.\textsuperscript{160} As per rule they were bound to remove all the logs within one month. However, at their petition, the DFO made a request to the Conservator of Forest for sanctioning six months extension for them.\textsuperscript{161}

\textbf{T.K. Kochu Thommen}

A contract was signed with Kochu Thommen for the collection and delivery of 45,000 cu ft. of teak timber from some reserved land and private compounds in the Manimala Range during 1093 - 1094 ME (AD 1917 - 1918 to 1918 - 19).\textsuperscript{162} As per the agreement the timber should be worked down to Alleppey depot. Another contract was signed with him for the working down of 60,000 cu ft. of teak and 6,400 cu ft. of blackwood logs from the unreserved land and the private compounds in Alappara and Karikkattoor in the Manimala Range to Alleppey depot on \textit{Mel-labhom} basis from 1094 to 1097 ME (AD 1918 - 1919 to 1921-22),\textsuperscript{163} which was given approval by the Maharaja.\textsuperscript{164} The \textit{kolevila} rate demanded by the contractor for teak of class I and II was 16 \textit{chakrams} per cu ft. and for class III was 15 \textit{chakrams} per cu ft. For blackwood, the Kolevila demanded was 17 \textit{\frac{1}{2} chakrams} per cu ft. irrespective of class distinction.\textsuperscript{165}

\textbf{Kuruvila Unnithan}

The agreement executed with Unnithan was for the purchase of 26,951.43 cu ft. of teak timber viz., 1,725 \textit{candies} nearly at the current tariff rate.\textsuperscript{166} The letter from the Conservator stated that the contractor wished to have the logs delivered at Tuet sales depot. In a statement given before the DFO, he also agreed that he

\textsuperscript{160} Letter No. 137 of 1094, dated 12/10/1918 (26/02/1094 ME), the Divisional Forest Officer, Southern Division to the Conservator of Forest, Forest File No. 644/1917, B - 121.

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{162} Letter No. 1710, dated 19/05/1919, from the Palace, Trivandrum Forest File No. 541/1917, B - 118.

\textsuperscript{163} Letter No. 861/tim of 1095, dated 29/10/1919 (12/03/1095 ME), from the Office of the Conservator to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 146, B - 132.

\textsuperscript{164} Letter No. 4240, dated 28/11/1919, from the Palace, Trivandrum, Forest File No. 146, B - 132.

\textsuperscript{165} Agreement entered between Kochu Thommen of Thamarapallil (H), Mazhukirnol Muri, Vadakkakara Proverthy, Chengannoor, and Swaminatha Iyer, DFO Kottayam Division on behalf of the Maharaja of Travancore, Forest File No. 146, B - 132.

\textsuperscript{166} Letter No. 1174, dated 29/03/1919, from the Palace, Trivandrum Forest File No. 146, B - 132.
would not demand any increased *kole-vila* for transporting the logs from Alleppey to his original destination at Tuet.\textsuperscript{167}

**Raman Venkitachalam Iyer**

The agreement with Raman Venkitachalam Iyer was for the collection and delivery at the Verapuzha depot of not less than 300 *candies* of *agil*, 500 *candies* of *kambagom* and 500 *candies* of *anjily* at a *kole-vila* of 66% of the sale proceeds from Kuthirakuttykanam forest of the Malayattur reserve.\textsuperscript{168} As per the agreement, the contractor was allowed to collect 25 *candies* of ebony, not less than 100 *candies* of blackwood and 500 *candies* of venteak at a *kole-vila* rate of 60% and 70% of the sale proceeds respectively from Kuthirakuttykanam and Kulamankuzhuykanam. He was liable for *Mel-labhom*, together with 10% of tariff value of all logs felled by or for him. However, as he was not able to deliver 300 *candies* of timber stipulated for delivery in 1093 ME (AD 1917 - 1918), he requested the Conservator for exempting him from the penalties prescribed in the agreement which was in turn considered by the Conservator who sent it to the government for sanction.\textsuperscript{169} The government gave approval for the exemption.\textsuperscript{170}

**Tharayil Ouseph**

The contract for exploiting 3000 *candies* of jungle wood from coupe V of the Bhagavathikulam felling series was given to Tharayil Ouseph. This was sanctioned by the government for two years at a *kole-vila* of Bh Rs. 12 per *candy* and the condition of paying an advance of Rs. 6 per *candy* to the contractor when the logs were brought to Paneli, as proposed by him was also approved.\textsuperscript{171} Here the proposed coupes for felling as per the working plan were coupes III and IV but owing to a lack of roads enroute, a deviation was made in the plan. Other conditions which were put forth by the contractor were:

\textsuperscript{167} Letter No. 13/tim of 1094, dated nil, from the Office of the Conservator to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 146, B - 132.

\textsuperscript{168} Letter No. 2437, dated 10/08/1917, from the Palace, Trivandrum Forest File No. 427/1917, B - 120.

\textsuperscript{169} Letter No. 2965/tim of 1094, dated 15/04/1919 (02/09/1094 ME), from the Conservator to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 427/1917, B - 120.

\textsuperscript{170} Letter No. 1545, dated 29/04/1919, from the Palace, Trivandrum Forest File No. 427/1917, B - 120.

\textsuperscript{171} Letter No. 2182, dated 18/01/1928, from the Palace, Trivandrum Forest File No. 172/28, B - 67.
1) To pay him charges for opening roads.
2) To grant him permission for scooping out boats.
3) To grant him extension of time if the work was delayed due to bad weather.\(^{172}\)

The Conservator sanctioned his second demand and deemed the other conditions unnecessary.

**Great Demand for Elavu Planks in 1940**

A letter from S. Kamesan revealed the huge demand for the *elavu* planks and he constantly requested the government to pass orders to extract 1,30,000 cu ft. of *elavu* logs.\(^{173}\) He had also sent a letter to Thomas Cook & Son Ltd., Bombay mentioning that he had confirmed the following:

1) To transfer the wood-wool machinery to Bombay as early as possible.
2) Travancore would supply 50,000 cu ft. of suitable timber in five month time, provided a month’s notice was given at a rate of Rs. 2 per cu ft. paid at Bombay.
3) Travancore would supply 30,000 cu ft. of suitable timber for the manufacture of pencils at a rate of 2 rupees and 8 annas per cu ft.
4) If Australia put forth a request for *elavu* logs, 40,000 cu ft. of unseasoned timber in sizes 14”×3”×8’ at a rate of Rs. 2 per cu ft. would be supplied.\(^{174}\)

Besides *elavu*, there was also a large demand for *shenkurinji*,\(^{175}\) teak, rosewood and *thembavu*. The government, eager to exploit the demand, enquired of the Conservator, as to whether the exploitation could be taken up.\(^{176}\)

\(^{172}\) Letter No. 508/Tim, dated 28/09/1927, from the Conservator of Forest R. Dhanukoti Pillai to the Chief Secretary to government, Forest File No. 172/28, B - 67.

\(^{173}\) Letter No. 604/40, dated 11/04/1940, from S. Kamesan to the Dewan Ramaswami Aiyar, Confidential File 277, B - 54.

\(^{174}\) Letter No. nil, dated 11/04/1940, from S. Kamesan, Director of Development to J. Warden of Messrs Thos. Cook & Sons Limited, Bombay, Confidential File No. 277, B - 54.

\(^{175}\) *Gluta travancorica*.

\(^{176}\) Letter No. 604/40/CS, dated 17/04/1940, from the Government to the Conservator of Forest, Confidential File No. 277, B - 54.
the government in the first instance. He substantiated his claim on the ground that the department had made commitments to the already existing companies in Travancore and other contractors. From the letter, we can observe that S. Kamesan, Director of Development had already made direct negotiations with Harrisons and Crossfield Ltd., for the supply of 15,000 candies of timber, by reducing the rate to 9 annas for the last 3,000 candies. The budget of the year provided for the extraction of only 11,000 candies of softwood. But the department had to supply 15,000 candies to Harrisson & Crossfield, 5,000 candies to Messrs Tata Oil Mills Company Ernakulam, 6,000 tons of sawn materials to the wholesale purchasing contractors and also had to supply steadily to the government of India timber sawn to sizes for a considerable period of time. The other reason the Conservator himself claimed was that it was not possible to supply such a large quantity of sawn timber at a short notice. Nevertheless, he wanted to know the proposed price in order to compare and find out which supply would be more advantageous.

**Timber Contract for the Meenachil Range**

The working scheme of the Meenachil Range in the Kottayam Division was raised to control the unsystematic felling done in the region by the contractors and to systematise the method of working in the area. It was from here that large quantities of royalties were supplied to Parampuzha and Alleppey depots. The scheme proposed the division of the whole range into five Working Circles which were further subdivided into coupes. The working scheme proposed for the working of the area under the system known as improvement felling, consisted of the felling of all dead and useless trees, as well as first and second class trees of and above 50" in girth at breast height. Here no systematic working was adopted in the past. Since 1086 ME (AD 1910 - 1911) royal trees were also worked down

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177 Letter No. 414/tim/115, dated 20/04/1940, from the Conservator of Forest to the Chief Secretary to Government, Confidential File No. 277, B - 54.
178 Ibid.
179 K.S. Narayana Iyengar, Assistant Conservator of Forests, *Working Scheme of the Meenachil Range, Kottayam Division*, 1922, Development File No. 1802, B - 84.
180 Letter R.O.C. No. 964 of 25/DEVL, dated 09/12/1925, from K. George, Ag. Chief Secretary to Government to the Conservator of Forest, Proceedings of the Government of Her Highness the Maha Rani Regent of Travancore, Development File No. 1802, B - 84.
181 Ibid.
at the request of the planters from areas proposed to be planted with rubber in *Edavagai* land. As per the working scheme it was evident that most of the royal trees extracted from the land were worked by the contractors and not by the departmental agencies.

The statistics of the working of the Range for nine years is shown below.  

**Table 5.3:**

*Table showing the statistics of the quantity of timber worked from the Meenachil Range*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (ME)</th>
<th>Contractors</th>
<th>Departmental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910-11</td>
<td>9707.19 cu ft.</td>
<td>8050.83 cu ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-12</td>
<td>3636.41 cu ft.</td>
<td>1908.34 cu ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912-13</td>
<td>20,000 cu ft.</td>
<td>1937.77 cu ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913-14</td>
<td>1500 cu ft.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914-15</td>
<td>50,000 cu ft.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915-16</td>
<td>10,000 cu ft.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916-17</td>
<td>21,770 cu ft.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918-19</td>
<td>32,390.94 cu ft.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919-20</td>
<td>47,000 cu ft.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,96,004.53 cu ft.</strong></td>
<td><strong>11896.93 cu ft.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The working scheme proposed that the work would be done by contract agencies and that tenders should be invited one year before the proposed felling. The tender was for the complete working of one coupe.

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182 K.S. Narayana Iyyengar, op. cit.
183 Ibid.
184 Ibid.
Working of Timber in the Shendurney Forest

The first working plan on scientific basis was formulated for the Shendurney forest. It was evident from the working plan that until the onslaught of coffee plantations, the forest of this region was devoid of wood cutters and timber traders. One of the causes that made the forest inaccessible for the merchants was the absence of roads and other means of transport facilities. Coffee plantations paved the way for the forests in this region to be cleared. \(^{185}\) Several cart roads were constructed through or along the forest after the introduction of the coffee plantations. This attracted the attention of timber traders from different parts of the country. Accordingly, felling in this circle began and was carried on under permit system, on payment of a seigniorage rate prescribed by the government. \(^{186}\) This too, was generally low. As there was no authority to control the protective staff of the department and as they were getting only a very small salary, they never cared for government interest. \(^{187}\) As a result, the forests in this area were under the mercy of the timber contractors who never bothered about forest conservation and felled timber at their will. Taking advantage of the situation the contractors started to remove more than the quantity prescribed in the permit. They also left many felled trees unremoved from the site if any defect was identified after felling. \(^{188}\)

The bulk of the timbers from Shendurney were taken to the Shencottah and the Puliyara depot. From there most of the timbers such as \textit{anjili, thembavu, vengai, maila, venteak, maruthu, kambagom} etc., were sold to merchants for export to Tinnevelly and Madura. \textit{Agil} was exported to Cochin where it was largely used for casks. Redwood was send to Quilon at the demand of certain European companies. There was a large demand for fuel wood at Quilon and Madura, i.e., more than 3,000 tonnes were consumed monthly at both places. \(^{189}\)


\(^{186}\) Ibid.

\(^{187}\) Ibid.

\(^{188}\) Ibid., p. 17.

\(^{189}\) Ibid.
The following table (Table 5.5) shows the revenue from the Shendurney forest before the preparation of the working plan.\(^\text{190}\)

**Table 5.4:**
Table Showing the Revenue from Shendurney Forest before the Preparation of the Working Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Total Quantity of Timber in cu.ft</th>
<th>Total Amount of Revenue Realised</th>
<th>Working Charges Paid</th>
<th>Net Revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1072</td>
<td>24,219</td>
<td>33,596</td>
<td>11,548</td>
<td>22,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1073</td>
<td>34,391</td>
<td>46,955</td>
<td>23,478</td>
<td>23,477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1074</td>
<td>18,063</td>
<td>23,680</td>
<td>11,840</td>
<td>11,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1075</td>
<td>59,219</td>
<td>76,391</td>
<td>34,782</td>
<td>41,609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1076</td>
<td>53,734</td>
<td>69,333</td>
<td>31,502</td>
<td>37,831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1077</td>
<td>52,203</td>
<td>61,184</td>
<td>29,814</td>
<td>31,370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1078</td>
<td>43,015</td>
<td>61,200</td>
<td>29,822</td>
<td>31,378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1079</td>
<td>21,594</td>
<td>24,837</td>
<td>11,740</td>
<td>13,097</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Installation of a Saw Mill at Shendurney**

The cost of sawing timbers in the Shendurney forest became very expensive as there was an abnormal hike in the wages of the local sawyers. This made the Conservator to think of an alternative to reduce the cost and increase the output of sawn timber.\(^\text{191}\) He decided to purchase certain machinery for sawing in the Shendurney coupe which would cost Rs. 9,140 and he sought government sanction for the same. The coupe contractor Karayalar agreed to put up a shed for the mill.\(^\text{192}\) Thus a saw mill was installed at Shendurney.

\(^{190}\) Ibid., p. 18.
\(^{191}\) Letter No. nil, dated 27/11/1911, from the office of the Conservator to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 496/1915, B - 98.
\(^{192}\) Ibid.
 Timber Working in the Ranni Reserve

Though the forest in this division was reserved, they were indiscriminately worked down even before the preparation of a working scheme. This resulted in the dominance of inferior tree species over valuable ones.\textsuperscript{193} Two working plans had been prepared before this working scheme. Though both of them had advocated for nominal selection of the trees it was not adhered to. Felling was purely based on the demand for timber and monetary benefits were given precedence over the cultural norms.\textsuperscript{194}

 Timber Working in the Central Division

Except for the eastern portion of the Konni Reserve, all other forests were heavily worked over before the preparation of the working scheme. These forests were worked for the most valuable species such as teak, blackwood, \textit{kambagom}, \textit{agil}, and \textit{anjili}. Until its abolition in 1077 ME (AD 1900 - 1901), these forests were worked under the permit system and later the appointment of government contractors was instituted for the collection and felling of the timbers.\textsuperscript{195} As most of the people in this region were agriculturists, scarcity of labour was an important problem in the working of forests. Thus, the department found it better to give the work on contract even at the expense of a higher rate. The using of elephants also became very costly as the owners demanded large advances.\textsuperscript{196}

The contract for the sale of 340 teak and blackwood trees from 150 acres in a pepper farm at Konni was given to Mathai John. A request to the Conservator for the removal of these trees including the saplings standing in the area was made by the Director of Agriculture and Fisheries.\textsuperscript{197} As per the notification published in the Government Gazette dated 29 May 1928 for auction sale, Mathai John offered

\textsuperscript{193} M.O. Oommen, Assistant Conservator of Forest, \textit{A Simple Working Scheme for the Exploitation for Reserved Forests in Kottayam Division}, 1922, Development File No. 446/26, B - 55.

\textsuperscript{194} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{195} M. Velu Pillai, \textit{A Simple Working Scheme of the Reserved Forests of the Central Division} - 1922, Development File, B - 55.

\textsuperscript{196} M. O. Oommen,op.cit.

\textsuperscript{197} Letter No. nil, dated nil, from the office of the Conservator of forest to the Chief Secretary to the Government, Development File No. 1589, B - 72.
Bh Rs. 500 for tree growth which was accepted by the Conservator.\textsuperscript{198} He then wrote for the government’s sanction which was granted to him.\textsuperscript{199}

**Timber to the Division Cutchery**

A complaint was sent to the government by the senior Dewan Peishkar in Trivandrum, stating that in spite of the repeated indents for timber sent to the Forest Department no arrangements were made by the Conservator to provide the required supply.\textsuperscript{200} In an earlier letter, the Chief Engineer of Trivandrum had also complained about the negligence on the part of the Forest Department. He added that during the last two or three years there had been a steady deterioration in the quality of the teak timber supplied to the department and this had led to a heavy wastage amounting to nearly fifty percent.\textsuperscript{201} He continued that according to the report of the various Tahsildars, it was evident that only sixteen candies of teak had been supplied to the Chirayinkil Tahsildars, while the Neyyatinkara Tahsildars was informed by the Southern Divisional Forest Officer that the exploitation of teak in the Division was very much limited and even could not meet the demands of the Panivagai and other departments. Hence, it was not possible to meet the Tahsildars’ requisition. The reply to the Trivandrum Tahsildar was also similar.\textsuperscript{202} The Senior Peishkar stated that if the supply was still delayed a large number of the sanctioned work would remain stagnant and the sanctioned grant would have to be surrendered as unexpended.\textsuperscript{203}

In spite of the repeated letters sent to the Conservator, another correspondence from the Huzur Cutcherry\textsuperscript{204} reveals that not even one cubic feet of timber had yet been supplied to them so that many of their works were

\textsuperscript{198} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{199} Letter No. 3576, dated 27/08/1928, from the Palace, Trivandrum, Development File No. 1589, B - 72.
\textsuperscript{200} Letter No. 365, dated 05/02/1920 (23/06/1095 ME), from the Senior Dewan Peishkar, Trivandrum to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 131, B - 132.
\textsuperscript{201} Letter No. 213, dated 06/02/1919, from the Chief Engineer, Travancore PWD to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 131,B - 132.
\textsuperscript{202} Letter No. 365, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{203} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{204} Cutcherry refers to ‘office’ in Malayalam.
held in abeyance. It added that there was ample fresh logs in the Alleppey and the Vettikad depots in the Kottayam Division and therefore, requested the Conservator to give them the required timber from the above mentioned depots.\textsuperscript{205} It also requested the government to issue urgent instructions to the Conservator to arrange for the first selection of timber to be allotted to their department.\textsuperscript{206}

The Conservator corresponded with the Dewan Peishkar in Trivandrum, about the arrangements he had made to supply the indented quantity of timbers to the various \textit{Tahsildars} from Neyyatinkara, Alleppey and Vettikad depots.\textsuperscript{207}

\textbf{Timber Smuggling}

Timber smuggling was a common feature, prevalent in Travancore. The smugglers included common people, \textit{Edavagai} chief, forest officials, contractors etc. The \textit{Edavagai} chiefs entertained one or two \textit{Vicharippukars} in order to ensure that they rarely go about and check smuggling. This situation was compounded by forest subordinates who were few in number and could not adequately do patrol work.\textsuperscript{208} During the time of T.F. Bourdillion, he wrote letters to the Dewan to obtain sanctions for the cost of maintaining a patrolling staff in the Northern Division to prevent smuggling.\textsuperscript{209} He mentioned that, “considerable smuggling is going on in places near Muvattupuzha and the smugglers freely avail themselves of the facilities the inhabitants of the places have of exporting materials by carts to Tripunitura and other parts of Cochin.”\textsuperscript{210} He requested for the appointment of a patrolling staff at a cost of Rs. 153.

\textsuperscript{205} Letter No. 732, dated 21 \textit{Edavom}1095 ME, from the Huzur Cutcherry Trivandrum, Forest File No. 131, B - 132.
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{207} Letter No. 4841/tim of 1095, dated 11/06/1920, from the Conservator to the Dewan Peishkar of Trivandrum, Forest File No. 131, B - 132.
\textsuperscript{208} Simple Working Scheme, Meenachil Range, op. cit., p. 2.
\textsuperscript{209} Letter No. nil, dated nil, from the Conservator of Forest to the Dewan of Travancore, Cover File No. 10600/1903, B - 277.
\textsuperscript{210} Ibid.
The Conservator’s letter of 1925 bolsters the fact that large scale smuggling of timber and fuel was prevalent in the Mahendragiri reserved forests. This was carried out by smugglers from Panagudi and they sold it on the other side of the ghats.211

Illicit Felling at Erumeli

Jacob Thomas of Kanjirappally presented a petition to the Conservator alleging that illicit felling was being carried on by P.T. Thomas, an influential and rich contractor of the Kottayam Division and his agent Kadamapuzha Pappan, in Erumeli and other places.212 The petition read that P.T. Thomas had entered into a contract with Chotani’s firm in Bombay for the supply of 1,500 candies of timber. For supplying the above quantity, he got sales deeds from the owners of the registered holdings on payment of a nominal price and on the strength of such sales deeds, appropriated large quantities of timber from the government forest nearby, as the registered holdings did not contain any timber.213 On receiving the petition, the Conservator ordered an enquiry led by the DFO of Kottayam. The preliminary report of the DFO stated that he had inspected the logs collected by P.T. Thomas on the Erumeli side and those lying in Peroor thode and Erumeli thode and that he found a good many logs felled from the Ranni government land and Paschima devaswom land, even before the registration and recovery of tree value was completed.214

It was evident that such large felling in government land could not happen without the help and connivance of a forest officer. On enquiry the DFO realised that it was the Range Officer who had defrauded the government. The Range Officer of that Division during the period was C.S. Viraraghava Iyer. The DFO reported that the man was an accomplice and abettor in various illicit

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212 Letter No. 2/confidential of 1095, dated 29/09/1919, from the Conservator to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 720/1919, B - 130.


214 Letter No. 2/Confidential of 1095, from the Conservator, op. cit.
activities of the accusers and that he was actively conniving against government interest. In his report the DFO also stated that the Range Officer had, in spite of several petitions regarding illicit felling by P.T. Thomas and his agent Kadamapuzha Pappan, studiously kept silent over the matter, while on the other hand, he had hastily recommended the issue of passes for logs felled from localities mentioned in the complaint. The Range Officer had recommended to issue an export pass for 974 jungle wood logs of different species such as venteak, irul, thembavu, maruthi etc. Furthermore, several offences of illicit felling on government lands by the very same persons which was brought to his notice by foresters and guards, were not enquired into by him.

The Conservator remarked that the case would likely be developed into a sensational one as the culprit was very influential and rich and backed by very good legal assistance. He further added that it was clear from the DFO’s report that nearly 20 - 40 elephants and 200 coolies with a dozen agents were employed for the felling process and that this could not have happened without the knowledge and connivance of the Range Officer. The DFO in his report strongly recommended for his immediate suspension, and to obtain government sanction to prosecute him along with P.T. Thomas and Kadamapuzha Pappan, against whom there were ample evidences. More than forty witnesses gave evidence against the Range Officer and the culprits. The Conservator in turn, recommended the government sanction for prosecuting him, on the ground that unless such steps were taken, the morale of the department would not improve.

215 Letter No. 1843/mis of 1915, dated 17/02/1920 (5 Kumbhom 1095 ME), from the Conservator to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 720/1919, B - 130.
216 Letter No. 432 of 95, dated 25/06/1095 ME (AD 1919 - 1920), from the Divisional Forest Officer, Kottayam to the Conservator, Forest File No. 720/1919, B - 130.
217 Statement dated 24/06/1095, provided by the Range Officer C.S.Viraraghava Iyer, before the Divisional Forest Officer, Kottayam, Forest File No. 720/1919, B - 130.
218 Letter No. 432 of 95, from the DFO, op. cit.
219 Letter No. 2/Confidential of 1915, from the Conservator, op. cit.
220 Letter No. 432 of 95, from the DFO, op. cit.
221 Letter No. 284, dated 26/08/1920, from the Additional Head Sirkar Vakil, op. cit.
and he stated that such punishments would be an example to others in the department with such tendencies.222

The alleged felling was made on three distinct lands, viz., unreserved government forest, reserved forest and devaswom lands. The government sought the opinion of the Head Sirkar Vakil regarding the case. He stated that if prosecution was to be held under forest regulations, the maximum punishment given would be a motely fine of Rs. 100.223

The analysis of the whole issue reveals the defects of the forest law that even for such a huge devastation of forest the punishment under the forest law was so simple. He further stated that regarding the unreserved lands, a strong prima facie case could be placed before a court. He recommended for a police investigation than opting for the forest law in view of the nature and extent of the damage done to the forest.224 As regards the reserved forests he advised for a charge either under the penal code or under the forest regulation, and regarding the exploitation of devaswom lands for a charge under the penal code.225

Another document reveals the illicit felling of trees on the banks of Thalliyar by a PWD contractor, Krishna Nadar with the knowledge of the Forest Department. A letter from Robinson, the Income Tax Commissioner of Travancore to the Chief Secretary mentioned a certain letter he received from the Commissioner of Devicolam which stated that the felling area included the Kannan Devan Hills Concession. The Manager of the Company complained that the felling was done without their knowledge and also against clause 17 of the agreement entered into with them. The clause stated that the company was liable to protect the forest trees growing on the banks of the principal streams running through the concession to the extent of 50 yards in breadth on each side

222 Letter No. 1843/mis of 95, from the Conservator, op. cit.
224 Ibid.
225 Ibid.
of the stream.\textsuperscript{226} The Conservator in his reply to the government stated that clause 5 of the rule clearly allowed the government to exploit any timber from the unassessed forest within the concession, as well as freely exercise its rights over the tree growth to suit its interest.\textsuperscript{227}

Export Duty on Timber

The export duty on timber was abolished in 1087 ME (AD 1912 - 1913) but was reimposed in 1119 ME (AD 1943 - 1944). All timbers sold from Travancore were subject to this duty at the same rate. The existing records reveal that an amount of Rs 83,675 was realised by the excise department by way of duty on timbers, exported from this state during 1119 ME.\textsuperscript{228} Export duty was also imposed on mangowood and jack wood at the request of the Conservator. He stated that a large quantity of mango and jackwood planks roughly estimated at Rs 1 lakh were exported from Travancore every year.\textsuperscript{229} Since no restriction was imposed on the felling, utilisation and transport of this species, there would be a rapid disappearance of this species. Consequently, he recommended the imposition of a small export duty of 1 anna and 6 pice per plank.\textsuperscript{230} A plank in the size of 6'×12"×1' fetched Bh Rs. 1 ½ to Bh Rs. 2 ½\textsuperscript{231} in British India. Tariff value introduced for mango wood planks was Bh Rs. 2 per cu ft. and jackwood planks Bh Rs. 3 per cu ft. The tariff value for the fire wood of mango and jackwood was Bh Rs. 18 per tonne.\textsuperscript{232}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{226} Letter No. nil, dated 10-06-1929, from the Land Revenue and Income Tax Commissioner of Travancore, SCH Robinson, to the Chief Secretary to Government, Trivandrum, Development File No. 117/30, B - 80.
\textsuperscript{227} Letter No. nil, dated 18/09/1929 from R. Dhanukoti Pillai, Conservator of Forest to the Chief Secretary to Government, Development File No. 117, B - 80.
\textsuperscript{228} Report on the Administration of the Forest Department for the year 1119 ME, Government Press Trivandrum, 1945, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{229} Letter No. nil dated nil, from the Conservator of Forest to the Chief Secretary to the Government, Development File No. 677/1924, B - 37.
\textsuperscript{230} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{231} Letter No. nil, dated 05/02/1924, from the Excise Commissioner, to the Chief Secretary to the Government, Development File No. 677/1924, B - 37.
\textsuperscript{232} Letter No. 677, from the Conservator, op. cit.
\end{flushleft}
### Table 5.5
Value of Timber Exported During Various Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Value in Rs</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1048</td>
<td>(1872-73)</td>
<td>1,08,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1049</td>
<td>(1873-74)</td>
<td>96,000²³³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1068</td>
<td>(1892-93)</td>
<td>2,86,083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1069</td>
<td>(1893-94)</td>
<td>2,84,134²³⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1070</td>
<td>(1894-95)</td>
<td>3,41,691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1071</td>
<td>(1895-96)</td>
<td>2,98,407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1072</td>
<td>(1896-97)</td>
<td>2,21,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1073</td>
<td>(1897-98)</td>
<td>2,56,081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1074</td>
<td>(1898-99)</td>
<td>2,63,716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1075</td>
<td>(1899-1900)</td>
<td>2,64,544²³⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1076</td>
<td>(1900-01)</td>
<td>4,88,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1077</td>
<td>(1901-02)</td>
<td>4,84,952²³⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1078</td>
<td>(1902-03)</td>
<td>4,19,828²³⁷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1079</td>
<td>(1903-04)</td>
<td>3,79,000²³⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1084</td>
<td>(1908-09)</td>
<td>4,57,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1085</td>
<td>(1909-10)</td>
<td>4,93,010²³⁹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1086</td>
<td>(1910-11)</td>
<td>3,76,816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1087</td>
<td>(1911-12)</td>
<td>5,24,633²⁴⁰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1089</td>
<td>(1913-14)</td>
<td>3,51,04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1090</td>
<td>(1914-15)</td>
<td>6,60,105²⁴¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1101</td>
<td>(1925-26)</td>
<td>9,06,404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1102</td>
<td>(1926-27)</td>
<td>12,49,693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1103</td>
<td>(1927-28)</td>
<td>11,99,329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1104</td>
<td>(1928-29)</td>
<td>12,06,156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1105</td>
<td>(1929-30)</td>
<td>12,41,359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1106</td>
<td>(1930-31)</td>
<td>11,17,774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1107</td>
<td>(1931-32)</td>
<td>26,27,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1108</td>
<td>(1932-33)</td>
<td>10,28,003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1109</td>
<td>(1933-34)</td>
<td>10,10,839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1110</td>
<td>(1934-35)</td>
<td>9,93,632²⁴²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1111</td>
<td>(1935-36)</td>
<td>9,08,252</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

²³⁶ Report on the Administration of Travancore for the year 1077 ME (AD 1901 - 02), Government Press, Trivandrum, 1903, p. 22.
²³⁷ V. Nagam Aiya, op. cit.
²³⁹ Report on the Administration of Travancore for the year 1085 ME (AD 1909 - 10), Government Press, Trivandrum, 1911, p. 37
²⁴⁰ Report on the Administration of Travancore for the year 1087 ME (AD 1911 - 12), Government Press, Trivandrum, 1913, p. 41.
²⁴³ Ibid., p. 625.
Table 5.6:
Revenue of the Forest Department during Various Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quantity of Timber cu ft.</th>
<th>Revenue in Rupees</th>
<th>Expenditure in Rupees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>74,702</td>
<td>4,37,127</td>
<td>2,31,769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>73,718</td>
<td>4,22,344</td>
<td>2,89,984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>1,295,657</td>
<td>12,49,091</td>
<td>7,69,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>1,479,833</td>
<td>14,18,308</td>
<td>8,08,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>1,240,208</td>
<td>13,56,296</td>
<td>7,24,848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>14,92,452</td>
<td>14.14 lakhs</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>15,44,170</td>
<td>16.72 lakhs</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>2,281,700</td>
<td>24.96 lakhs</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>1,567,561</td>
<td>27.53 lakhs</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>1,652,616</td>
<td>46.15 lakhs</td>
<td>14.34 lakhs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.7
Table Showing the Exponential Growth Rate of Timber Extracted and its Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quantity of timber cu ft.</th>
<th>Revenue in Rupees</th>
<th>Cu. ft. Revenue</th>
<th>Expenditure in Rupees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EG</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>23.04</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: From the table one can observe that the Quantity of timber cut shows a growth of 31.7% over the period considered whereas the growth in Revenue in and Expenditure are 23.04 and 18.6. One can also observe that the cu. ft revenue or price shows a decreasing growth rate of 8%. From the analysis we can conclude that the cu. ft price is decreasing whereas the revenue is increasing, this can be achieved only by increasing the quantity of timber. In short the data gives a clear picture of unregulated timber extraction which led to severest degree of deforestation.

244 Report on the Administration of Travancore for the year 1073 ME (AD 1897 - 98), Government Press Trivandrum, 1899, p. 70.
245 Report on the Administration of Travancore for the year 1110 ME (AD 1934 - 35), Government Press Trivandrum, 1936, pp. 75 - 76.
246 The year was unfavourable for the disposal of timber due to trade depression and also the decrease in revenue during the year was due to the closing down of the Malabar Match Factory.
249 Report on the Administration of Travancore for the year 1119 ME (AD 1943 - 44), Government Press Trivandrum, 1945, p. 54.
Note: The above graph represents the trend value of the period under study. This clearly indicates that the revenue shows an increasing trend whereas cu.ft price shows a decreasing trend. So to generate an increasing income in the scenario of decreasing price the quantity of timber has to be increased.
From 1942 onwards, there was an abnormal increase in the demand for teak, blackwood and various other kinds of soft wood from Travancore, due to the fall of Burma in the war to the Japanese. This demand was particularly to meet the requirements of the Supply Department of the government of India. We can also observe an abnormal increase in the revenue for the year 1944. This was due to the high prices obtained for all classes of timber and the supply of a large quantity of timber to the Defence Department of the government of India.

Table 5.8:
Scientific Forestry and Network System of Timber Extraction- Modalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System of timber extraction from coupe</th>
<th>Rotation of tree removal: A system of 20 years for rotation was followed. Plantations were divided into blocks and a cycle of tree cutting was devised to ensure sustainable supplies of timber.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technologies for extraction</td>
<td>Introduction of saw mills instead of axe-cutting: It was expected to save time and reduce the damage to timber. Saw mills were established in different parts of the state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood storing</td>
<td>Establishment of wood depots: For storage purpose several wood depots were created for proper storage of valuable timber in Travancore.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport of timber</td>
<td>Two methods were used: Elephant dragging, and floating timber downstream through a river.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservation of timber</td>
<td>Earlier wood seasoning was used, and later AsCu treatment and other chemical treatment of timber existed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Channels of Trade

Travancore had all the natural advantages necessary for the development of commerce. It had a long uninterrupted coast line with several ports. The

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251 Ibid.
backwaters formed a cheap line of communication. There exists many rivers and canals in this region by which boats can ply throughout the year. Most of the forests are conveniently situated around the banks of rivers.

**Channels of Shendurney Valley**

The main channels of trade leading from the forest of Shendurney were:

1) The Shendurney River: This river though fit for timber floating could be used only for a distance of 12 miles and it could be used for timber floating only during rainy season.

2) The cart road to Manimuttar.

3) The cart road to Rockwood estate.

4) The Kunnimanthodu stream.

The government which was very anxious to improve the transport facilities into the interior of Shendurney forest frequently wrote to the Conservator for his suggestion. As a result, the Conservator suggested the construction of a buffalo tramway to tap the resources of the interior forest. According to him depending on roads and rivers alone for transporting timber would help only exploiting fine timbers. The cost of transport through either of these agencies would negate the working down of inferior quality timbers and fuel. Moreover, the construction of more roads would become a huge burden on the government. Opening a buffalo tramway was therefore suggested to be the only feasible means for reducing the cost of timber transportation in the valley.

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252 T.K. Velu Pillai, op. cit., p. 579.
253 T.S. Venugopala Iyyer, op. cit.
254 Letter No. 372/ mis/1099, dated 05/07/1924, from R. Dhanukoti Pillai, the Conservator of Forest to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 1309/27, B - 63.
255 Tramway pulled by Buffalo.
256 Letter No. 372/Mis/1099, op. cit.
A proposal was made in the working plan report of the Shendurney forest to open a large depot at Tenmalai near the railway and to get the Railway Company to run a short track on the side of the railway line leading to the depot. It was also proposed to open a cart road from Tenmalai to Kulathupuzha lower crossing. From there, an already existing road ran up to Shendurney valley. These would be used for bringing timber to the depot from blocks 1, 2, 3 and 4. There was also a proposal to construct a tramway along the bank of the main river for transporting timber from the remaining 11 blocks.

For this purpose the Conservator stated that it was necessary to enumerate and determine the value of the resources of the forest coupes in the Shendurney valley through which the tramline would pass. This was to know whether the proposal would be a success financially. In this light, he wrote to the government to sanction the work of enumeration of trees. Further he stated that, several species which were not considered utilisable at the time of the original enumeration now proved to be useful. The tramway was proposed for coupe Nos. VIII - XV which, according to the sanctioned working plan of the Shendurney valley, was 13,811 acres. Out of this only 3,000 acres were exploited. The Conservator was also of the opinion that if the tramway was constructed it would also benefit the match factory in the locality which may also contribute to the expenditure. The government had readily sanctioned the deputation of special staff of one Assistant Conservator, two Deputy Rangers, two Foresters and four Guards for the careful enumeration and valuation of the stock, and sanctioned an expenditure of Rs.1,150 for the purpose.

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258 Ibid.
259 Letter No. 2182/24, dated 05/09/1924, from the Conservator of Forest to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 1309/27, B - 63.
260 Letter No. 372, dated 06/12/1924, from R. Dhanukoti Pillai to the Chief Secretary to Government, Forest File No. 1309/27, B - 63.
261 Letter No. 1499/24, dated 07/05/1925, from the Dewan to the Maharani Regent, Forest File No. 1309/27, B - 63.
262 Letter No. 2645/25, dated 13/05/1925, from the Trivandrum Palace, Forest File No. 1309/27, B - 63.
The proposal of the tramway though suggested, was not even investigated due to two reasons:263

1) Introduction of coupe sale system.
2) Financial difficulties due to the war.

Another proposal made was to have a wire-rope worked by a stationary engine to transport timber from Parapar up to Tenmalai.264

The major centres of consumption from this forest were Quilon, Shencottahh, Tenkasi, Tinnevelly, Tuticorin, Madura, and Cochin. All these places were large commercial centres and required abundant timber supply.265

It was said that during the period of the preparation of the working plan for the Shendurney forest, there was a shortage of timber from Travancore to be supplied to the above mentioned places due to contract agreements entered into by the Forest Department Nagaraja Rao, a timber contractor.266 According to the agreement all timbers worked down to the Shencottah Depot would be sold to him. Thus, the merchants from Tinnevelley during the time had to depend on Malabar and Tinnevelley forests. The department anticipated that after the termination of the contract with Nagaraja Rao they would be able to divert the whole market towards them and that there would be a steady and continuous demand forever.267

**Kottayam Division**

The whole Forest Division of Kottayam was brought under one Working Circle known as the Ranni Working Circle. This was further divided into two blocks viz. Azhutha and Pampa. The chief lines of export from Azhutha were rivers and roads. River was the only means of export from the Pampa block.268 During the time of the preparation of the working scheme for these forest Divisions the Azhutha-Perunthode cart road was under construction. The aim of this road

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263 Letter No. 372/Mis/1099, op. cit.
264 T. S. Venugopala Iyyer, op. cit.
265 Ibid.
266 Ibid.
267 Ibid.
268 M.O. Ommen, op. cit.
was to connect the forest with Cheruvally estate road via Erumeli and Vellanadi estate road to Mundakayam.\(^{269}\) Cochin, Alleppey and Quilon were the main markets centres to which timber from these divisions were channelled. From these forests, timber could be directly floated through rivers to these market centres.\(^{270}\)

**Meenachil Range**

In the Meenachil Range, timber was worked down to Parampuzha depot via the Meenachil river and its tributaries and through Manimala river to Alleppey depot. The removal of timber from some places like Melukavu and Edavaga land had to be done by *coolies* by headload after converting into scantlings and sleepers.\(^{271}\) The existence of roads like Nellapara, Ponkunnam road, Ramapuram, Pezhagu, Erattupette-Kanjirapalli road, Peermade-Kottayam road, Melukavu-Anthianad road were also advantageous in the transport of timber.\(^{272}\)

**Central Division**

Rivers were the main means of transport at that time. The main rivers that drained the forest area were the Pamba, the Kakkaud, the Kallar, and the Konni or Achencovil rivers.\(^{273}\) Besides the rivers there were cart roads and forest traces for transportation. The chief market centres for the product of this division were Quilon, Alleppey, Cochin, Trivandrum, and the British Districts on the other sides of the ghats.\(^{274}\)

About forty five percent of Travancore’s trade was conducted through backwaters and canals. Connecting these internal water ways and ports, many arterial roads existed throughout the state, to which a network of subsidiary and feeder roads was also linked. Several roads were also constructed in order to connect important planting areas and industrial centres.\(^{275}\) The branches of the

\(^{269}\) Ibid.
\(^{270}\) Ibid.
\(^{271}\) T. S. Venugopala Iyyer, *op. cit.*
\(^{272}\) Ibid.
\(^{273}\) Ibid.
\(^{274}\) M.O. Ommen, *op. cit.*
South Indian Railway ran “from Angamally to Edappally in the north and from Shencottah to Trivandrum, directing rail-borne trade to the harbours of Cochin and Trivandrum respectively.”

In Travancore the major portion of timber felled was exported to foreign countries. Pondicherry, Tuticorin and the region north of Madura took large supplies, chiefly of vengai, kambagom and thembavu. Most of the teak and blackwood were taken to Cochin and were then exported to Bombay and other parts. White cedar was largely used for manufacturing casks for the export of coconut oil to Europe.

Conclusion

The lucrative timber trade in Travancore was inevitably the result of the industrial capitalism that had engulfed the entire world. The native state which skidded into the process witnessed the scaling up of timber trade during the second phase. The presence of dominant and powerful timber barons points to the emergence of a phase of mercantile capitalism in the state. All the agencies of scientific forestry found yielding to the excessive timber demands thereby giving way to commercial forestry. Scientific forestry in Travancore was utilized as an unchallenged means to meet the extreme timber demands from the world market. Department mechanisms and forest rules and regulations were all supporting the money spinning lumber trade of the state. Departures from the already signed timber agreements on demand from the merchants, deviations in the working plan to cater the unexpected and excessive timber demands, unduly support extended by the conservator to the big barons, the excessive freedom they enjoyed in the power circle all bring to light the nature of colonial scientific forest policy in the native state. The native state, the native merchants, foreign merchants, and the European timber markets were all benefitted at the cost of the native forests.

What made this phase different from the earlier one was that the process of exploitation was made systematic under the rubric of scientific forestry. Forest Department, Forest Schools, Forest Exhibitions, Working Plans - all worked as

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276 Ibid.
277 The Imperial Gazetteer of India, op. cit.
different agencies for controlling, training, taming and exhibiting the forest and forest resources of the native state and meeting the timber requirements of the world market. Industrial capitalists, both native and foreign, were making deep inroads in the forest policy matters of the state which could not have happened without the patronage of the government. The state government which was very anxious to increase the material prosperity of the country went out of the box to help these merchants. The native state by this time had become a docile ally of the British and all trade practices including timber were decided in tandem with the interests of the Empire.