CHAPTER - I

A HISTORIOGRAPHIC CRITIQUE OF TRIBAL STUDIES

This chapter is a historiographic critique of the tribal studies in Kerala. Here the focus of analysis is how the tribe is represented in various writings. Literature reviewed here include, colonial ethnographic notes, administrative accounts, anthropological studies emerged from within the state, Malayalam fiction, subaltern literature, history works and folklore studies. My argument here is that, despite the huge amount of literature on tribals, in all these writings tribals were treated as mere objects of analysis. Moreover, these writings, by and large, remained within the colonial discursive paradigm. A close observation of the existing history works on tribals reveals that their main concern was in writing political history. The absence of dominant political institutions among the tribals give them hardly any space in such political histories. Writing social history is not a major practice in Kerala. This inadequacy has also resulted in eliminating a space for tribals in the existing historiography of Kerala. Folklore studies are interested in tribal studies. But, they are more interested in celebrating it as an exotic culture of the east. Another aspect which has been noted is that tribal studies in Kerala in the beginning was colonial ethnography. Then it moved to academic writings. But in the transition what happened was that the tribal studies gradually shifted their focus of attention from tribal as such to that of other institutions like villages and peasants. Below is a detailed review of such literature. I will begin with a discussion on colonial ethnography and then move on to other forms of literature, like history, fiction, and folklore.
Tribal studies in India are largely a product of colonial ethnography. Though the early sources for information about the tribals were the accounts of travellers, traders, administrators and Christian missionaries, a systematic study of these people in India begins with the establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Anthropological studies in India until independence were confined to the study of tribes and were geared largely to the need of colonial administration, with its years of experience in governing the 'nature' and some administrators realised fairly well the importance of anthropology in all works relating to the people under their charge. Colonial administrators-cum-scholars produced a good amount of writings on the tribals, perhaps their writings formed one of the discursive realms in constituting the people living on the margins as ‘tribal’. These writings include ethnographic notes, monographs, administrative reports, census, missionary reports and other informative reports. This is primarily meant to produce knowledge about these people, so as to enable colonial governance effective. In this sense anthropology can be said to have developed as part of the colonial administrative system. In order to implement imperialist and colonial policies in the countries they conquered and brought under their rule the compilation of knowledge about these people was necessary. Therefore, certain anthropologists turned to be the apologists of the colonial regimes. In the beginning it was mainly the biological studies of the tribal people and also was concerned with the origin, evolution and diversity of these people. It was concerned only with a limited and restricted study and never moved beyond the study of humans. Such studies lacked the understanding and interpretation in historical perspective, but only provided data for administrative purposes.

The extensive study about tribals in India was dominated by the colonial rule and the first users of anthropological knowledge were, of course, the colonial administrators and to a certain extent, the missionaries. Sociology and social anthropology found much of their impetus in the contribution they could make to the smooth running of colonial rule. Francis Buchanan's travelogue written in the early 19th century, B.H. Baden-Powell's pioneering work on 'Land system of British India', H.H. Risley's 'The people of India', the works of Nesfields and J.H. Hutton, the work on village communities by Henry Maine, Grieson's monumental work “Linguistic Survey of India”, all these were inspired by the same urge for basic data and information required by the colonial administrators.  

Another set of studies in the later half of the 19th century with ethnographic compilation of tradition, customs and beliefs of different tribes and castes in the three provinces has moved slowly to establish itself as an independent field of study and enquiry.

The first awareness about the tribes of South India came through the descriptive notes, published by colonial rulers and census officers stationed there. Most of the information about the tribals were hurriedly compiled by minor officials who had little idea and no special training for it. This led to a distorted picture in the works of early ethnographic writers on tribals by disregarding the basics. In the 20th century there had been a large amount of ethnographic literature on the tribal communities in Indian context, but such literature on tribes in Kerala are very few. Anthropometric studies in Kerala

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4 In the beginning, the British demarcated tribal zones and the people of each zone was studied by ethnographical scholars. The book dealing with the people of North-North-Eastern zone is *The Tribes and castes of North Eastern India*, by W. Crook. The work in the Central zone is *The Tribes and Castes of Central provinces of India*, by R.V. Russel. The Work dealing the people of Southern zone is written by Edgar Thurston, titled the Tribes and Castes in Southern India', in 7 volume.
started with Jagor and Koerbin prior to 1880. Since then a number of such studies on various communities including tribes have been published in Kerala. But it has to be admitted that except some scattered information there had been no historical works on tribes in Kerala. During the colonial period, ethnographic accounts of the communities of the three regions of Kerala, Travancore, Cochin and Malabar were written under the aegis of the ethnographic survey of India undertaken in 1901. Ethnographic accounts of the territory under British rule were incorporated in Edgar Thurston's work. It was in these two volumes of ethnographic notes on tribes of southern India in 1906 that he discussed the tribes of Kerala in detail. In this voluminous book Thurston has described the several customs like birth, marriage, death, slavery, sacrifices, infanticide and the like in a number of chapters. The customs of fire-walking, hook-swinging, earth-eating, fire-making, etc are also described in a series of chapters.

But a comprehensive study of tribes in Kerala appeared in Thurston's magnum opus, *Caste and Tribes of Southern India*, in 7 volumes. These volumes give accounts of all communities in south India, arranged alphabetically and these volumes are the first work of this kind in India. This work prepared under the scheme for a systematic ethnographic survey of the whole of India in 1907, records various customs and practices of the tribes and castes of south India.

Thurston had the advantage of being stationed in Madras as the superintendent of Government Museum and also as the superintendent of

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6 Ibid, p. xxi.
8 Edgar Thurston *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, New Delhi, 1975.
Ethnography. It is assumed that, in these capacities, he had the rare opportunity to become an authority of ethnographic study. Thurston had begun his field work as early as 1896 and the materials included in this work have been mainly collected during his visit to the tribal and rural villages both in connection with the collection of ethnological specimen for the museum as well as ethnographic investigation. The data collected by him were also supplemented by correspondence with district officers and private individuals.\textsuperscript{10} This might have been possible only in the case of elite communities in the plains.

It is said that the description of the people is based on personal observation and he has also made general observation which are of great sociological significance. He has given the description of the various tribes and their customs of all areas in Kerala, and thus has acquainted us with a first-hand picture, howsoever sketchy or elementary it may be in substance. The description on some tribes in Kerala like Paniyar, Kadars, Urular, Muthuvans, Kanikars and Kurichiyas were presented in a South Indian context. In fact, his advantage as superintendent of government museum did adversely affect his work. Since he combined the job of superintendent of Ethnography with that of his full time work as superintendent of museum he could not get much time to do research, approximately he got only three months in a year, and in view of this also he failed to give full details of the tribes and castes covered in this book.\textsuperscript{11} In such a critical moment, in data collection for fieldwork he was assisted by K. Rangachari, who had worked much in his absence. In Kerala too he was assisted by L. Ananthakrishna Iyer who was engaged in similar ethnographic work in Travancore and Cochin. As a project of South India it aimed for a horizontal spread and it covered all communities of the

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{11} L.P.Vidyarthi, \textit{n. 9}, p.279.
south and as such obviously lacked depth in description and interpretation of the customs and culture of the tribes and castes. His work is not a historical work, but it contains the raw materials for history rather than history itself. It serves as a reference book for research scholars rather than a history of the tribes.

The accounts of tribal people in colonial period were distinctly presented in the writings of William Logan. Malabar has been for many years a subject of profound interest and had attracted many distinguished scholars, explorers and missionaries and even in recent times a number of social scientists. But no detailed study of the weaker sections inhabiting this regions, especially Wynad taluk, has been attempted with the exception of a few studies. When the Government of Madras planned to bring out a district manual relating to history, culture and administration of each district, the writing of Malabar Manual was entrusted to William Logan. His rich experience in the district over a period of 20 years as collector, magistrate, judge and also as special commissioner made him a competent authority to shoulder this responsibility.

Many of such studies were conducted during the colonial period. Nevertheless, a few works are really academic and far beyond their original intent. For example, Malabar Manual, quite scholarly and comprehensive, is far more than a manual that the colonial administration required. As an official manual his study dealt with all important aspects of the district and it gives a geographical description and it also traces the religions, castes, tribes, manners, customs, etc., of the people. The expansion of European colonial power in Malabar has been extensively dealt with in this work. Colonial rivalry and British supremacy have been traced from contemporary writings

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13 Rajan Gurukkal, Social Formation of Early South India, New Delhi, 2000, p.6.
and other original sources. As a manual, in this book he gives emphasis to political development but he has not refrained from an analytical approach in explaining the life and culture of tribals and low castes.

In this extensive study of the popular upheavals in Malabar of the 19th century Logan gives a special place to Wynad, the revolt under Pazhassi and the Kurichias and the cause of tribal revolt as agrarian discontent. The influence of the true spirit of a historian made this work a good piece of historical writing on Malabar and to a certain extent it was an attempt to give the real picture of tribal Wynad. It is not just a compilation of the available materials on the history and administration of the district, but it also throws light on how the tribals have been treated by the colonial rule and how these people resisted the alien rule. His wide knowledge, administrative experience and sympathetic understanding of the land and its people made it a monumental work. The qualities of this work make it an indispensable one for the scholars to understand the tribal people in Malabar. It was Logan who for the first time described the sufferings of the tribals in Wynad under colonial rule and he recognized the historicity of the tribal revolt against the colonial power.

Although he was considered as an authority on Malabar he was not clear about the early history of the people of this area. With all his limited knowledge of the ancient history of Kerala he tried to give an account from the early sources then available. His keen interest in the folklore, folk life and customs and manners of the people made him particularly devoted to these people. His wide experience has also enabled him to edit a source book relating to British affairs in the district.14 These added materials on Malabar district also enriched the work of William Logan.

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Only a few books that deal with Wynad taluk in Malabar had appeared in the early part of the 20th century. A book that gives account of Wynad and its people is of C. Goplan Nair. It is one of the earliest writings on Wynad which gives a valuable collection of information regarding the hill tribes and other people. It also consists of a beautiful account of the geographical nature of Wynad a century age. There are other books that also give a passing mention of Wynad and its people. T.K. Gopala Panikkar gives only a meagre account of Wynad under Kottayam rule. In the discussion of the political aspects of Wynad it provides only a passing reference to the tribal people of this area.

All the taluks in Malabar District under colonial rule come under the description of Ward and Conner. This memoirs of Malabar can be considered as a pioneer socioeconomic survey of Malabar region in a uniform pattern of description. The survey was started by Lt. Ward in 1824 after the completion of the Travancore and Cochin survey and its report published in 1906. This work is mainly a geographical and topographical account and in the Wynad taluk only 85 castes are mentioned as per the census of 1827.

Though the literature dealing with Malabar is extensive, many of them are official compilations and there are only a passing reference about the tribal people. Malabar District Gazetteer, was originally written by a settlement officer in Malabar, C.A. Innes, in two volumes during 1904-05.

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16 T.K. Gopala Panikkar, *Malabar and Its Folk; A Systematic Description of the Social Customs and Institution of Malabar*, New Delhi, 1900.
As an administrative handbook it provides a brief account of its people for colonial purposes. In its taluk-wise description of people in Malabar it gives some idea about the tribals of Wynad in colonial perspectives. Unlike other writings, this book represents a period of transition in the historical writings of Malabar from manuals and legendary accounts to source-oriented study of the people, their institutions, and administrative systems under the British. C.A. Souter (Commissioner of Land Revenue and Settlement in Malabar) that some of their descriptions did not correctly apply to every parts of the Malabar district.

Another group that was involved in tribal studies under colonialism was the Missionaries. For centuries the tribals lived in remote areas almost uninfluenced by the main current of history and cut off from the mainstream of socioeconomic life. Due to extremely dehumanized and degraded position, they have always been a subject of interest for missionaries although they have their own particular interest.

The missionaries were the first to practice the philosophy of tribal welfare in the mid 18th century. Missionaries of various kinds were active in Wynad. The first group entered Wynad on 24th June 1796 under Rev. Dow, a servant of English East India Company. In the beginning their activities were in the form of periodical visit in different places of Wynad later they

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20 Ibid., pp. 134-38.
22 Archana Prasad, 'Reinterpretating Tribal livelihood system under development and the local political Economy in central India 1800-1940', in B.B. Chaudhary et.al., (eds.) Tribes, Forest and Social formation in Indian History. New Delhi, 2004.
built Churches at Sultan Batheri in 1841, Vythiri in 1845, Mananthavadi in 1847 and Meppadi in 1872.\textsuperscript{24}

Although the missionaries mainly concentrated on proselytizing, they have collected some data regarding the tribals. Later the writers on tribals by using the data collected by these missionaries have highlighted the welfare activities of the missionaries. But the intention behind these activities were ignored by them.

In comparison to the north-eastern part of India the contribution of missionaries to tribal historiography of Kerala is very less. The missionaries who claimed to have come close to the tribals were imaginative and their activities in Kerala caused a change in the course of history of the downtrodden. Social upheavals, growth of education and health status provided by these missionaries led to the breaking up of the forces of traditional Hindu caste control.\textsuperscript{25} But in the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century the Latin Diocese included the spread of gospel and conversion in their activities. Fr. Jefrino wrote some notes in the form of diary records about the Kurichias of Kambalakkad areas of Wynad. In Travancore, Samuel Mateer of London Missionary Society identified the wide sphere for the ethnologist to study the varied and mutually contrasting manners and customs of castes and tribes\textsuperscript{26}. Although he identified the hill tribes of Travancore with low castes he agreed that they should be regarded as outside the whole system of caste, in which it seemed rather difficult to assign to them their exact position.\textsuperscript{27} He gives a

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 207.


\textsuperscript{27} Samuel Mateer, \textit{The Land of Charity-A Descriptive Account of Travancore and its People}, New Delhi, 1991, p. 48.
brief description of the Kanikkars and Malayarars. In his description the tribes are described essentially as a simple and rather ignorant people.

The so-called reformist activities of the missionaries formed an integral part of the colonial rule. As colonies were conquered Christianity moved to 'civilize' the aboriginal race. Politically, the missionaries in close collaboration with the colonial administrators realized the raj and sought to create a new bastion of support for it among the backward communities of the native state.

Although the missionaries have been primarily interested in evangelization, it was followed by welfare activities. For both type of work, spiritual and material, they did realise the importance of understanding the people's culture and language. This awareness inspired them to write several original books on tribal culture. But in Kerala such approach did not enable them to introduce a local historical tradition and historiography dealing with the life and culture of tribes. It is stated that evangelization was inherently ethnocentric, but the strategy of proselytization was carefully worked out to cover the distant and sensitive region of major tribal communities. Although they could not write much about the tribals they developed a new attitude which was certainly better than suffering under the Hindu caste system.

In the beginning ethnography was the domain of colonial administrators, but later foreign as well as Indian scholars were involved in this field. A native scholar, Ananthakrishna Iyer was involved in anthropological studies in Kerala. In the capacity of an ethnographer he came in contact with British scholars like Frazer, Tylor, Marret, Revers and

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29 Nadeem Hussain, *Reading in Indian Anthropology*, New Delhi, 1998, p. 11.
developed a genuine interest and orientation in tribal studies.\(^{30}\) He studied the tribals mainly due to his interest in knowing about the development of human society. This experience prompted him to work for the ethnographic survey of Travancore and Cochin under the Diwan of Cochin. As a result of these survey and investigation he succeeded in publishing 12 monographs in between 1904 and 1906 and he continued to conduct a comprehensive ethnographic survey upto 1920, the result of which was embodied in two great volumes entitled “Tribes and Castes of Cochin”, published in 1908 under the patronage of Sir Alben Banerjee, the Diwan of Cochin.\(^{31}\) This work by a native scholar was a turning point in tribal studies in Kerala. As it deals with tribes and low castes of Cochin only Kadars, Malayans, Nayadis and Ulladans were mentioned among the tribes.\(^{32}\) The description was based upon his first hand knowledge, and it was rather different from the arbitrary and traditional approach of the colonial ethnographers. It brings out the traditional origin, ceremonial rites, religious beliefs and the occupations of several jungle tribes. It also describes the dynamics of culture in a manner which brings out the fact that the tribes it deals with were fast giving up their customs as civilization advanced and a few years later it might have been too late to get reliable facts about them.\(^{33}\)

An introduction to this volume by A.H. Keane drawn our attention to the "inestimable value of the great body of primitive customs and social institutions which Iyer has rescued from oblivion and placed at the disposal of ethical students."\(^{34}\) Although the description contained in this work is well digested and well presented in an agreeable form it lacks historical

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\(^{30}\) L.P. Vidyarthi, *n*. 9, p.278.


\(^{34}\) *Ibid.*, p. xiii
interpretation of many of the aspects of tribal life. He has not taken the objective view of describing the communities in alphabetical order as done by Thurston. He, on the other hand, selected the communities in turn of their importance and thus succeeded for the first time, in acquainting the ethnographers of the world with the life and culture of Cochin. The second volume of this work published in 1912 deals with the communities of higher status in society.\textsuperscript{35}

During this period he was invited to the Departments of Sociology and Anthropology of different Universities of the country. Thus he earned both national and international reputation in the field of ethnology. At the international level he was invited by several anthropological institutions in England and Europe for lectures on tribal life and cultures, and he left lasting impressions about Indian tribal study on foreign scholars. While he was at Calcutta University he accepted the offer of His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore to undertake the ethnographic survey of Mysore state. He published the result in the life of 'Tribes and Castes of Mysore' in four volumes between 1928 and 1935. The first volume is a summary of the condition of tribes and castes in Mysore and mainly deals with a general survey.\textsuperscript{36} The Volume II deals with only 15 tribes and castes.\textsuperscript{37} Volume third is a descriptive account of 34 tribes and castes.\textsuperscript{38} The last volume deals with the remaining 43 tribes and castes.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{36} L.A Ananthkrishna Iyer, \textit{Tribes and Castes of Mysore}, Vol I Mysore University, Mysore, 1938.
\textsuperscript{37} L.A Ananthkrishna Iyer, \textit{Tribes and Castes of Mysore}, Vol. II, Mysore University, Mysore, 1930.
\textsuperscript{38} L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, \textit{Tribes and Castes of Mysore}, Vol. III, Mysore University, Mysopre, 1931.
In addition to these full length handbooks, Iyer published several papers and monographs, especially on the religious and social aspects of the tribes in Kerala.\(^{40}\) In his paper on the *Kadukurumba*, the author describes the origin and early history of the tribe, their internal structure, habitation, marriage customs, puberty customs, family life, magico-religious beliefs, funeral customs, occupation, social status appearance.\(^{41}\) Though his papers lack an analytical appraisal of the tribal customs, he has taken pains to bring out the social implication of contact of the tribals with the high castes of the region. His contribution to South Indian tribal studies has made him a legendary figure to subsequent generations of anthropology as his work and example contributed substantially to the building of scientific tradition in modern India.\(^{42}\) A. Aiyappan, considering his contribution to the South Indian Ethnography, venerated him as the 'Father of Modern Ethnography'.\(^{43}\)

As regards Iyer's method of field investigation, he believed in staying in the field continuously, and he had an unusual method of extracting information from the people. It was because of his strictness in field studies, penetrating observations and sympathetic understanding of the tribals that his works qualifies for special mention.\(^{44}\) K.S. Singh in his review of literature states that Iyer does not tell us about the methodology he adopted for the study. All that he says is rather cryptic. But an important aspect of his


\(^{44}\) L.P. Vidyarthi, *n. 9*, p 282.
ethnographic investigation was the conceptual framework. Iyer himself has given something about his views. Accuracy in the statement of facts has all along been his aim, so that errors, he hopes, will be found to be neither numerous nor serious.

The tribal studies in modern Kerala were further accelerated by L.A. Krishna Iyer, the illustrious son of L.K. Krishna Iyer. It is a unique instance of a father-son continuum in the field of ethnographic research. His experiences in anthropology created new opportunities for service in the erstwhile Travancore State first as social ethnographer to the Census Commissioner in 1931, later as an officer in charge of the ethnographic survey of Travancore between 1935 and 1941 and still later as Head of the Anthropological Department between 1947 and 1950 in Madras University. In 1931 as special ethnographic officer Government appointed him to inquire into 'the effect of contact with civilization on the primitive tribes', and the result of this inquiry formed the subject of appendix to the Travancore Census Report, which was subsequently republished by Dr. J.H. Hutton in the Census of India 1931, Vol. Part III B.46

Krishna Iyer mainly concentrated his attention on hill tribes which were fast dying out or were getting assimilated with the castes of the plains. The task of conducting a detailed study was entrusted to him and the results of his research were embodied in the three volumes of Travancore Tribes and castes. His first volume under this scheme published in 1937 gives a considerably detailed descriptions of the manners and customs of the seven tribes, namely, Kanikkars, Malakuravas, Malapandaram, Malayupulaya,

47 L.P. Vidyarthi, n. 9, p. 284.
Malavedan, Malayuragana and Mannans. Many of these tribes presently are enumerated as scheduled castes. He meticulously presents the details about the origin and tradition of tribes, their sub-divisions, marriage practices, the material culture, physical characteristics as well as the changing social conditions of the tribes owing to their contact with other people. It was the first attempt to present the tribal culture in historical perspectives by a native scholar.

The second volume under this scheme appeared in 1939 which gives a descriptive account of Muthuvans, Nayadis Parayan, Pulayan, Ullatan, Urali and Vishawan. In a separate chapter of this volume on the physical anthropology of primitive tribes, he examines the position of these tribals among the general aboriginal population of India. The third volume in 1941 is quite different as it embodies the generalised statement about the tradition of the origin of the tribes and castes, their racial affinities, domestic life, exogamy, marriage customs and so on. He also examines the impact of modern forces on social organization, laws of inheritance, sexual chastity and taboos, etc. of the different tribes.

Apart from a mere description of tribes in Travancore there was a growing desire for research to relate the life and culture of the tribal people to historic tradition and social background of the state as a whole. With a comprehensive background of extensive researches for over three decades, Krishna Iyer wrote another historical work on the people of Kerala in 1961. A monumental work, it is a detailed study of the mode of living, occupation,

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taboos, marriage and rites of the aborigines of Kerala and their correlation to the most highly advanced groups, and has been enriched by a forward by Varrier Elwin. In Elwin's view the author treats his home state as a single entity, relating the life of the tribes with that of the most highly developed groups and reveals the rich tapestry of southern culture as a co-ordinate work of art. An equal portion of this book is used to explain the tribal people with special emphasis on their social and cultural development and they are described as isolated to a great extent, and that they form a part of our society and their civilization is very much of our own.

K.M. Panikkar in an Introduction to Iyer's book clearly evaluates that "though the historical chapters are based on legend and tradition and can hardly be considered reliable, the main body of the book which deals with social structure, marriage, institution, inheritance etc, many justly be called authoritative and present an authentic picture of Kerala past and present".

Since 1962 Iyer has been working in Kerala to portray the social history of this state in a proper perspective. With the financial assistance of Govt. of India he was engaged in writing a comprehensive social history of Kerala. It was planned as a five-volume series under a general title, “Social History of Kerala”. Among these five volumes only the first has been devoted to the hill tribes who are classified as pre-Dravidians and he regarded them as the states early inhabitants. Perhaps this is the only social history in which the tribal people are given in a commendable share although these

54 The contemplated five volumes are on (1) pre Dravidians, (2) Aspects of Dravidian culture, (3) The Aryan Elements, (4) Marriage and families, (5) Muslims, Jews and Syrian Christians.
55 Ibid., p. 1.
tribes are only few in numbers. Every aspect of tribal life in the state is briefly dealt with in the first volume. 'Social history of Kerala' covers a wide ground and touches on almost every aspect of social anthropological studies undertaken in this country.

With his long research experience with the tribes of Kerala, Iyer provides a lot of material on the geographical environments, modes of livelihood and other aspects of material culture. A full chapter has been devoted to serological work done in Kerala, and it makes a unique aspect of his research on tribes. He has identified the negrito-racial elements among some of the tribes in Kerala although it was never proved well. It is stated that the negrito elements are identified in many of tribes in India; but they use more conspicuously identified with the Urali of Travancore and Kadar of Cochin. The black skin, curly hair and flat nose etc as other identification marks are who conspicuously seen among the Paniyar of Wynad.\textsuperscript{56} He has substantiated his statement by the views of J.H. Hutton. The Dravidian is the second of five volumes sub-series entitled 'social history of Kerala' in the monographs on “Man in India” series which brings to specialists and amateurs the result of modern anthropological research in India.\textsuperscript{57} All his books have been written with full authority and acquaintance with the tribal material in Kerala. He has lived with the various tribes for decades, painstakingly collected a lot of materials and has tried to deal with several historical and sociological questions regarding the pre-Dravidian tribes of Kerala.

After independence or more precisely after the second world war the tribal research scenario underwent a qualitative change. A major change of orientation came about in the 1940s when anthropologists began to claim that

their discipline had a distinctive contribution to make in the understanding of not only tribes but also civilization.\footnote{Andre Beteille, \textit{Society and Politics in India}, London, 1991, p. 57.} This kind of change in the focus of study has given anthropologists a new awareness of the importance of history. The rich ethnographic tradition was further intensified analytical inquiry in addition to academic interest. The administrative purpose of tribal study has been fast replaced by academic interest, and with these new quests interdisciplinary approach to understand the various dimensions of the complex societies become evident.

It is in social history that the communities become a subject for study. Social history has to be viewed in terms of social formation, which is a theoretical notion of development. Social history is history of society done in social scientific perspective often made out to be in contra distinction to political history. Social history has to trace back its origin to colonial social anthropology before it formed as production of creative development and scientific rigour. In Kerala too, the course of social historiography started off more as a part of colonial anthropology rather than of history.\footnote{Rajan Gurukkal, \textit{n. 13}, p. 60.}

Since the 1960s, historiography has undergone a significant change and most of the earlier works have come to be classified as traditional and conventional, primarily to distinguish them from the new works based on an integrated approach to study of history providing fresh insight gained by more scientific methodologies and conceptually significant analytical framework. Simple descriptive approach of the constructive period was replaced by interpretative and analytical approach. As a result different and more meaningful perspectives have emerged which have led to refresh the new vision of the past. This new trend has succeeded in correcting our perception of societal organization and change and established the significance of inter
disciplinary method, eg, sociological, in understanding such regional differences. But these advances were first made in the studies on north India in which Marxist approach and comparative history with other regions of the world led to the emergence of a new perspective on society and economy.

Historiography in South India has taken a significant turn since Nilakanta Sastri came forward to create a new awareness of the need for both advanced methodology and sound empirical base to achieve a more meaningful and purposeful research. In such advanced methodology the writers focused their attention on other sections of society. Social anthropology now is considered not necessary to be a study of primitive tribe only. It appears that the purposes of anthropological study is not the same as it was fifty years ago. Its focus has changed to castes. Many tribal writers have turned their attention to the study of economic aspects of caste and the role of economic activities in the functioning of social system. From mid 1960s Burton Stein and his researchers turned to peasant studies and their historiographic perspectives were distinct with the striking features of conceptual pre-supposition drawn from cognate discipline like social anthropology.

The main contribution of social anthropologists are application of anthropological and sociological models for historical explanation. Some of the models introduced by these scholars in the field of historical studies are

61 *Ibid*.
63 Rajan Gurukkal, n. 13, p. 43.
really useful in understanding the nature of certain ideas, institutions, structures, relations, and processes of the past societies. 64

Thus social anthropology came very close to analytical social history and its focus was mainly not on tribal or low caste society. It is pointed out that a significant studies of social anthropology that enrich social history of modern Kerala are not on tribal communities but non tribal, especially elite communities. Major writers like E. Kathleen Gough,65 and P. Mencher studied the social aspects of Nayar communities in Kerala.66 Social scientists from other disciplines have also tended to accord too much respect to colonial traditions and generally shied away from an analysis of tribal ethos.67

The period also witnessed a group of writers breaking away from the tradition of ethnographic studies of tribes. The tribes in Kerala form a major part of its society but they were not included in the historical writings of Kerala's social perspectives. The differences and similarities among the tribal and non-tribal communities were emphasised in these studies. In the present context these developments are to be unreservedly welcomed, and it is also important to point out that, consequent upon it, the study of tribal culture has receded to the background. The new trend in village studies and castes has neglected the tribal studies.68 Now the social anthropologists are looking beyond even the mud wall of the villages to cities with their industries,
institutions and politics. But researches in the history of social process of the marginalised communities in Kerala have acquired a high level of conceptualisation heralding a breakthrough from the traditional anthropology of low castes’ experiences of colonial modernity by writers like Sanal Mohan.\textsuperscript{69}

The state of affairs of the community in the modern Kerala has prompted social historical analysis. Some of the scholars tried to identify the past of castes and community in terms of social system. It is generally assumed that no historical study on tribal culture can be complete without the collaboration of anthropological and social anthropological research. But the historical background of tribes has always been a matter of hazy generalization; notwithstanding lurking danger of anachronism, anthropologists and sociologists missed the entire diachronic processes of the tribal past.\textsuperscript{70} Tribal historiography is thus seen to suffer from lack of clarify and narrow views. Since the field of historical writings is dominated by elite classes this lack of clarity is expressed in their inability to unite the people around them.\textsuperscript{71} It is therefore in the name of fitness of things that elite historians and social anthropologists concentrate their attention on sophisticated and advanced sections of society instead of merely confining their attention to tribal communities. So the study about these people in historical perspective is still in its initial stage and there is scope for widely different views and interpretations at almost every stage.


\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Ibid.}

This shift in emphasis from data gathering to problem oriented analysis became more noticeable. The tribal research has attracted only a few native scholars. This trend is reflected in the writings of A. Aiyappan, a native scholar, with a strong background of functional theory of anthropology which he received at London from Malinoski. He initiated a systematic and scientific study of tribes in Kerala.

In independent India the researches and writings seem to be concerned with social dynamics. Since the link between a village and its vicinity has grown more intimate the village or village community becomes a favourable unit of study and factual description gradually and increasingly yielded place to analytical and theoretical interpretation. Social anthropologists of this period representing this new trend have been concerned with the study of tribal villages. Their economy, marriage, family and kinship structure, customs, tradition and folklore as well as changes in tribal societies resulting from the impact of Christianity and other reform movements, modern political developments or social and economic welfare measures of the State have been studied.72

Village studies have therefore a pronounced theoretical concern.73 Aiyappan has made a total study of the village, with his scheduled questions on demography, income, occupation, education, land holding, immigration and some indices of states, etc. His studies on cultural change date back to 1953 when he wrote his problem oriented monographs on the communities. He discussed the broad features of the social and cultural change undergone by the Erava Community during the 19th century.74 It was this study of tribes

72 D.N. Dhanagare, n. 3, p. 33.
74 A. Aiyappan, Irava and Culture, Bulletin of Madras Govt. Museum, General Section, 5 (i) 1-204.
in the South Indian context that he is noted for his application of different methods in South Indian tribal research.\textsuperscript{75}

It was his special interest on some tribes of Wynad that prompted him to write some genuine works on the tribes likes the Kurichias, the Pathiyans and the Urali Kurumans. As an authority on the Kurichias of Wynad he presents the Kurichia as a distinct tribe of India. His studies on Kurichias continued and he wrote a book with Mahadevan in 1900.\textsuperscript{76} This work is a complete anthropological study on Kurichias. In this work he has glorified the traditional past of the Kurichiar and has emphasised that 'honesty' permeates all aspects of Kurichia life.\textsuperscript{77} He also narrates several cases exaggeratingly to show the trustworthiness of Kurichia community of Wynad,. In another paper 'world view of the Kurichiar- A little known Matrilineal Tribe of Kerala', he states that the distinct features of Matrilineal system of the Kurichias and their matrilineal descent is the key rule deciding the composition of the basic organization, viz, Mittom. A detailed discussion on the socio-economic condition of the tribes in the Madras province is presented in another work where he discusses the various types of forced labour prevalent in the province of Madras during the 1940s.\textsuperscript{78} Then he concentrated on another tribe in Wynad, the Paniyar, one of the largest tribal communities in Kerala. He studied the condition of the Paniyar in detail before and after the abolition of bonded labour system.\textsuperscript{79} A true picture of the slave trade during the Valliyurkav temple annual festival is given in his

\textsuperscript{75} A. Aiyappan, \textit{The Tribe of South and South West India – the Adivasi}, 1951.
\textsuperscript{76} A. Aiyappan, \textit{et.al, Ecology, Economy, Matriliny and Fertility of Kurichiar}, Delhi, 1900, p. 73.
\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 74-75.
\textsuperscript{79} A Aiyappan, \textit{‘Paniyar- an Ex-slave of South India’}, Culcutta, 1992.
Some of his further studies on tribals of Wynad that recurrently appeared in 'Man in India' are 'Marriage by elopement among the paniyar' – 1936, 'Blood group of the pre-Dravidian of the Wynad Plateau’; (1936) and “Hand made pottery of the Uralikurumar of Wynad-South India,” (1947). During the 1970s, he has conducted many evaluation studies on the government policies and programmes for tribal people in Wynad. The studies were under the aegis of KIRTADS and most of them still remain unpublished. His studies on tribes of Kerala were not mere descriptive accounts but followed an analytical and interpretative approach. Thus the study of cultural changes on a scientific line was initiated by Aiyappan in South India, and he continues to lead the development of tribal studies in South India.

Following the footsteps of early native ethnographic scholars A.A.D. Luiz, former joint president of the Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh, Kerala wrote, 'Tribes of Kerala', a magnum opus of tribal studies in Kerala. This work covers the entire spectrum of traditions of 48 tribes and is a clear evidence of a great and painstaking study highly useful in understanding many unknown aspects of tribal culture which has never been mentioned anywhere in anthropological literature. In this respect it is different from those of Thurston and Iyer in that it is exclusively on various tribes of Kerala giving fairly good account of the changing pattern of their social life in the context of the socio-economic evolution of the state as whole. He further discusses the origin and growth of the social structure, religious beliefs, economic life and the institution of marriage of the tribes. The striking feature of this study is that it reflects the tribal situation of Kerala during the 50s and 60s and many of the tribes described here are not seen presently in Kerala. Some were later enumerated as scheduled castes category. The idea

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that emanates from this book is that the tribes are in transition and their characteristics are fast disappearing under the impact of the new forces of modernity. In such a context the book of Luiz is valuable in constructing the history of the early cultural aspects of tribes in correct perspective.

There is abundance of literature in social anthropology, but the economic life of the tribes has been totally ignored. Different from the social aspects of tribal life the economic aspects are discussed by Prof. M. Kunhaman. Perhaps it is only in the writings of Kunhaman that the tribal economic life in Kerala has clearly and largely been examined in its problems and perspectives. His views on the tribal economic life were published in 1989.\(^82\) It was in his research papers that he discussed the major problem of economic development in Kerala.\(^83\) The tribal Economy of Kerala is an inter-regional and intra-regional analysis and an attempt to present the problems in historical perspective.\(^84\) All these works throw insights into the fact how the traditional vulnerable sections which ought to have benefited more from various reforms became the victims of such development reforms in Kerala.

Economists have totally ignored tribal segments of economy. The inevitable results have been that economic planners in their attempt to formulate development as well as welfare plans for the ST, have perforce relied exclusively on sociological and anthropological studies, without a correct perception of the dynamic of the tribal economy. Consequently many of the programmes did not benefit the target groups to the extent they could have. An analytical discussion of the economic dimension of tribal land

\(^{82}\) M. Kunhaman, *Development of Tribal Economy*, New Delhi, 1989.


alienation\textsuperscript{85} and economic dimension of bonded labour among the tribals of Wynad makes a different perspective from the sociolinguistic aspects of tribal life. A critical view of the sources of information for tribal studies on Kerala and analysis of problems in the census enumeration of tribals in Kerala also make his studies authoritative on tribal economy.\textsuperscript{86}

In yet another work, titled \textit{Globalisation-A Subaltern Perspective}, Kunhaman discusses two categories of marginalised groups; traditionally marginalized and those who are marginalised in the wake of capitalist transformation.\textsuperscript{87} In his view there are many issues that remain to be studied and theorized on the latter category. In this work he brings to the forefront some of the most important aspects of the current of globalising inequality and means to reduce or overcome it. He views the adivasis and dalits as the most oppressed groups and victims of poverty, illiteracy, disease and various other disabilities, in addition to various social discriminations. He criticizes the Tribal Development Department as a big business and for showing least interest in developing the tribals.\textsuperscript{88} He substantiates that the State has completely failed in bringing welfare and carrying out the constitutional mandate of protecting these people from exploitation of various kinds.

After Thurston another comprehensive ethnographic survey was launched in 1985 by the Anthropological Survey of India entitled \textit{People of India}, a project work in 42 volumes, to generate an anthropological profile of all communities of India. It proposed to study the impact of development process on the tribals and wanted to highlight the links that bring them

\textsuperscript{86} M. Kunhaman, \textit{n. 82}, pp. 12-40.
\textsuperscript{87} M. Kunhaman, \textit{Globalisation-a Subaltern Perspective}, Trivandrum, 2002.
\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 52.
together. Unlike surveys in the colonial period, which covered only British India and a few princely states, the project covered the whole country, bringing within its ambit also those parts that had not been ethnographically surveyed earlier or where the survey had been done in a perfunctory way.

As part of this project the ethnographic survey of all communities of present day Kerala was taken up in collaboration with local scholars. The descriptive materials consisted of the three parts of the 27th volume of this project which dealt with a total of 225 communities in Kerala, including 40 SC communities and 34 ST communities. As an ethnographic survey this volume is a presentation of information regarding the socio-economic aspects of all communities in Kerala in alphabetical order. The data presented in this project have been supported with additional information from census reports and other secondary sources. The survey has pointed out the incidence of landlessness encountered among the tribals of Kerala and asserts that almost the entire tribal economy is in the vortex of market forces.

In the introduction to this comprehensive study Singh has differentiated the tribes on physical anthropological concepts. An exclusive volume for the scheduled tribes in India was published in 1944 as part of this project. The tribal people in his presentation tend to distinguish themselves by some peculiarities. A notable feature of his study has been the generation of information on language and dialects spoken by the different tribal communities. On ethnographic level his works are a mere reproduction of what Thurston had written nearly a century ago. It has to be pointed out that he has thoroughly failed to place the tribals in the changing socio-economic condition of post-independent Kerala.

89 K.S. Singh, People of India, 1-42 Volumes, New Delhi, 2002.
T. Madhava Menon in his three volume work titled *Encyclopaedia of Dravidian Tribes* discusses the socio-economic aspects of tribal culture. Here, the entries are given in alphabetical order of the names of tribes. He has also edited a 'Handbook of Kerala' (two volumes) for the International school of Dravidian Linguistics. Tribal communities described in the second volume are prepared from the perspective of ethnographical study and not from historical perspectives.

**Writing Kerala History and its Representation of Tribes**

A survey of the historical literature of Kerala could reveal that, it has not yet adequately included the tribal people and the composite nature of their cultural aspects in it. The present researcher feels that it is mainly due to two reasons. One is that historians treated tribal way of life and culture forms as distinct and isolated from the mainstream, therefore, gave little attention. The other reason is that, the historians representing statist histories are interested in searching for major political institutions, including state. Therefore, they were immersed in writing political history and not social history. This, I argue, naturally led to a neglecting of studying institutions and practices of the tribals.

The history of Indian historiography shows that till independence historian's interest was confined to political, constitutional or administrative history. Interestingly, in such histories the interests of the elites dominated. That is, the early history failed to reckon economy and social history of the people on the one hand, and on the other, they never perceived the political aspects from the perceptions of the marginalized or the common man. It is

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from this perception that I have reviewed below some of the major history writings on Kerala.

K.P. Padmanabha Menon was the first among the professional historians to think in terms of a comprehensive history of the land and people of Kerala, as early as the 1920s. Among the historians, he was certainly the icebreaker to conceive something close to the social history of Kerala. In his 'Kochi Rajya Charithram', in Malayalam, published in 1912, he sought to bring territory and people as the core of the subject matter of history. However, with all these advantages 'The History of Cochin' cannot be taken to represent an advanced state of historical studies. His 'History of Kerala' in English, Vols. 1-IV, published posthumously between 1924 and 1937 gives considerable attention to social history. This presented a new welcome trend in Kerala historiography. His writings were at a time when the implications of the Tamil Sangham works for the study of early Kerala history has not been grasped by scholars. The history that Menon attempted to focus was that of the settlers in the agrarian plains of midland Kerala and those in sea coast. The major nomadic tribes like the Ulladar and Kadar of Cochin are completely left out of the picture. It is mere descriptive and lacks the benefits of specialised knowledge. In such exclusion and superficial description, M.G.S. Narayanan argued that Menon's observation on later history of Cochin was also inadequate. Menon was criticised by later historians for his neglect of certain sections of society in historical writing. Menon mainly concentrated on the history of Brahmins in Kerala, but the problems and

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94 Rajan Gurukkal, n. 13, p. 60.
97 M.G.S. Narayanan, n. 95, p. 375.
98 Ibid., p. 378.
inadequate knowledge of the meaning of certain rituals of Kerala Brahmins have been pointed out by other writers like Kanippayyur Sankaran Nambudiripadu.

Prof. Elamkulam Kunhan Pillai has given valuable insights into the ancient history of Kerala. It was in his *Studies in Kerala History* that for the first time he tried to conceive the past society in terms of new perspectives. He moved from writing merely a political history to that of writing socio-economic history. However, he too failed to discuss the tribal life in Kerala, except tribal matriliny. In his writings Sangham literature has been used as a source to explain the historical background of Kerala. 'Chilappadikaram' (The Power of Anklet) composed by the Cera prince Ilango Adikal, a text belonging to Sangham literature, refers to mountain tribes of the Western Ghats. Woodcock also gives an account of the mountain tribes of Western Ghats who came to the prince’s brother King Shenguttuvan when he marched through their territory on a mythical journey to the Himalayas. Except such superficial references, their works too failed to account the tribal society and culture in its depth.

A group of new scholars interpreting history of Kerala from the perception of Marxist or Structural Marxist position has recently commented on the condition of the tribals of Kerala. Rajan Gurukkal, Raghava Varier and K.N. Ganesh are the scholars included in this category. K.N. Ganesh does not see the tribals of Wynad as successors of stone-age people. Moreover, it is practically difficult to reconstruct the pre-16th century history of these people

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using valid source materials. He views them as nomadic people coming into contact with other people living in southern India. Rajan Gurukkal and Raghava Varier are interested in reconstructing history using the well established sources like literary, archaeological, inscriptive and numismatic evidences. But they too fail to make any meaningful comment on the tribals of Kerala because they rely largely on the writings of the dominant classes in the society. The people living on the margins hardly get represented in such sources. Therefore, in their history it is hard to see reference on tribals.

The recently emerged Subaltern Studies Collective has given emphasis on studying the marginalized, including tribals. But, this school of historiography has not given much emphasis on the tribals of Kerala and their historical experiences. The early writings of the subaltern school had given emphasis on peasant uprisings. And the work of Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency*, had discussed the political nature of some of the 19th century resistance in Malabar as well. However, the historically significant movements like Kurichia Revolt (1812) still remain excluded from the studies of the Subaltern School.

**Tribal Communities in Malayalam Fiction**

The tribal people have always been a subject of interest for literary writers. In search for themes they have been attracted to the contemporary problems of tribes. They deserve attention since literature and the historical consciousness of literature, in fact, form a continuity, which literary history intercepts temporarily, and, thus creates fiction. That history deals with the real events and literature with imagined ones may now be seen as difference


in degree rather than in kind. Literary events differ from other historical events in that the material world in the same way as the 'real' historical events affect it. The difference between historical and literary events will always be there as a differential moment in terms of what is called 'the effect of the real'. History will always seem more real to us than what appears in literature. But the differences can never be exhaustively systematized. At the same time it has to be recognized that the writing of history and of literature have a social connotation even when these activities do not resemble what we understand by them today.

Uroob, Malayatoo Ramakrishnan, P. Valsala, K.J. Johny, T.S. Joshy and Narayan are the main writers who have depicted the aspects of tribal lives in their novels. Their works could be called writings from subaltern perspective, but, as far as students of history are concerned, they have value since there are hardly any other documents to reconstruct the tribal life. The writers of fiction use oral evidences as well as imagination in reconstructing their history and experiences. This genre of literature has much relevance while reconstruct the history of the tribals in the contemporary age.

These writers have thrown light on the problems of the present life and culture of the tribals and they are mainly centred around the question of exploitation of tribal people by non-tribals. The work of K.J. Baby, and T.C. John are best examples in this regard. In 'Uratti' the destitution of Paniyar and continuous exploitation of this tribe by non-tribes are discussed. Some of the social realities of tribal life have been thus explained without

much enquiry into the historical past. In their literary creations tribal realities has been transformed into fiction. Such a transformation might have helped to lessen the seriousness of tribal problems. In the absence of proper historical studies about these people these kinds of literature tend to create a distorted perspective about the tribal culture. There are some works that deals with the critical problems created by migration to these areas. Such problems are reflected in the work of Pottakkad. 109 But K.J. Baby deals with the same subject in a different perspective. 110 Though these works explain the socio-economic conditions created by the migrant people in Wynad they often conceal the deprivation and exploitation of the tribal people. 111 For example, land alienation and other factors detrimental to tribal life find no place in such literature.

A distinctive writer who wrote much about the tribals of Wynad is P.Valsala. Her literary representation of tribal life is the direct outcome of her prolonged contract with Wynad and tribal people. 112 It is because of this contact that her works reflect the climatic changes in Wynad and changes of tribal life. Poverty and exploitation are the major themes in her writings. The tribes discussed in her writings are the Paniyars, Adiyar, Kattunaikkan. In 'Nellu' she discusses the life and culture of Adiya community of Tirunnelli. 113 In other works she discusses the current problems of education, health and sexual exploitation of the tribal people. 114 Poverty as an existing reality among the tribals is the medium through which she presents the tribal problem. It is also stated that in the feudal perspective of Wynad poverty is

112 Interview with P. Valsala, Calicut, 10.10.2010.
113 P. Valsala, Nellu, Kottayam, 1999.
described as the reason for all ignorance and indebtedness of tribal life. In such a critical moment the feast for two weeks in Valliyoorkavu temple is nothing rather than a blessing.\textsuperscript{115} Nothing else attracts them to this temple than the need for food which finally enslaved them for years. Such views in her writing are an attempt to present the tribal problem in historical perspective.

Another writer who emerged from within the tribal community is Narayan. His works \textit{'Kocharethi'} (2000) and \textit{“Nissahayante Nilavili”} (2003) and \textit{Uralikudi} (1999) are depictions of reality in the light of personal experience. As a member of Malayaraya community he tries to transform the facts of personal experience (real events) to fiction (literary events). Though these works on tribal life might be sympathetic to the tribals, such an attitude would not help them improve their life in a practical sense.

K. Panoor’s \textit{Keralathile Africa} is a non-fiction that has attracted wider readership and is one of the most discussed works in Malayalam on the tribals of Wynad. Panoor’s work is a product of his prolonged personal connection with various tribes in north Malabar as he was an officer in charge of tribal affairs. His work deals with the story of enslavement of tribal people by migrant people.\textsuperscript{116} The existence of slavery among the tribals of Wynad even during the period of the 1960s has been well illustrated in his book. He vehemently criticised the concept of socio-economic development brought about by migration in tribal areas. In his yet another work titled \textit{Sahyante Makkal}, he vividly discusses the land alienation and its impact on the life and culture of the Paniyar and Adiyar.\textsuperscript{117} Tribal land alienation is a central theme in all his works. Panoor’s \textit{'Ente Hridayathile Adivasikal'} is a kind of re-

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{115} Interview with P. Valsala, Calicut, 10.10.2010.
\textsuperscript{116} K. Panoor, \textit{Keralathila Africa}. Kottayam, 1963
\end{flushright}

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reading of his earlier works. The Paniyar and Kurichias are the two major tribal communities that appear in his study. He perceives them as being occupying two extreme ends in the tribal world of Wynad. Overall, the value of Panoor's works rest upon the importance he has given in the narration to distinguish the socio-cultural differences between the Kurichias and the Paniyar. Of course, he often resorts to exaggeration while narrating the case of the Kurichias. Moreover, the sense of a philanthropist rules the overall frame of his narrative.

Yet another book that could fall under the non-fiction category of works dealing with tribals, especially the Kurichias, is D. Chacko’s “Kurichiarude Lokam.” It could be considered as an ethnographic explanation of social life of the Kurichias of Wynad. He identifies the Kurichias as a distinct tribe of Kerala. Their social norms and customary laws are entirely different from those of others. Though his work is written employing participation-observation method, it fails to present the social life of the Kurichias in a historical perspective. His excessive dependence on the mythical stories has prevented him to form a clear ideas of the Kurichias.

Another category of works on tribals in Malayalam are written by linguistic scholars. Among these scholars, Somasekharan Nair, Professor of Linguistic Department, University of Kerala, studied the different dialects within the Paniyar. In the 1970s he conducted another research to understand the evolution and the formation of the structure of their dialects. The work that discusses the features of the spoken dialect of the Paniya was

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published in 1977.\textsuperscript{121} His work titled \textit{Paniyar} is an elaborate version of the introduction he has written to his work \textit{Paniyabhasha}.\textsuperscript{122} The first part of this short book discusses the demographic description of all tribes in Kerala, the later part is a discussion of Paniya life and culture for which he excessively relied on the oral sources and the mythical concepts that already appeared in the former books. He also studied the dialectic differences and the kinship terms existing among the Adiya, another tribal community of Wynad.\textsuperscript{123}

K. Velappan is another scholar who has tried to study the tribal language from a social linguistic perception.\textsuperscript{124} In this work '\textit{Adivasikalum Adivasibhashakalum}' he made a historiographic review of the tribal literature in south India. He asserts that more study on Dravidian linguistics is needed to understand the socio-cultural life of the tribals coming under the Dravidian linguistic group.

P.G. Padmini through her two works titled \textit{Paniya Bhashayude Pradeshiya Vediyanangal} and \textit{Kattujeenvithathinte Spandanangal}, deals with two tribal communities of Wynad, Paniya and Kuruma respectively. In the former she discusses the dialectic differences between the southern and northern Paniya of Wynad. The reason for the difference was the emergence of their different economic conditions.\textsuperscript{125} In the second work she deals with Kuruma’s economic and cultural life. She argues that the geographical factor is crucial in determining the cultural and economic life of the Kuruma.\textsuperscript{126}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{121} P. Somasekharan Nair, \textit{Paniya Bhasha}, Trivandrum, 1977.
\item \textsuperscript{122} P. Somasekharan Nair, \textit{Paniyar}, Kottayam, 1976.
\item \textsuperscript{123} P. Somasekharan Nair, 'Kinship Terms in Adiya language', \textit{Proceedings of All India conference of Dravidian Linguistics-2}, Dravidian Linguistic Association, Trivandrum, 1975.
\item \textsuperscript{124} K. Velappan, \textit{Adivasikalum Adivasibhashakalum}, Trivandrum, 1994.
\item \textsuperscript{125} P.G. Padmini, \textit{Paniya Bhashayude Pradeshiya Vediyanangal}, Kottayam, 2005.
\end{itemize}
Folklore Studies

Life and Culture of the tribals has also received the attention of the folklorists of Kerala. Folklore studies in Kerala have often been seen as a new version of the colonial ethnography.

In addition to the literary sources there are other valuable oral traditions that give ideas about the tribal society. The history of socio-economic changes of tribals in Kerala can be constructed only on the basis of a very limited number of sources. In such a situation one has no other option but to fall back on what is claimed as tradition in the form of legend, folklore and oral sources. Oral history is a kind of recording and analyses of spoken testimonies about the past.\textsuperscript{127} It enables the lived experience to be recorded of those who lack education, leisure and influence to write. Almost all tribes of Kerala have their own tradition to show their origin and beliefs. But this traditional beliefs and practices are not collated with any literacy evidences but only with their mythical concepts. There accounts are perhaps not congruent with those of literary and official elites.

In the absence of written records the spoken words are perhaps the most well established of all sources. It refers to both a process of research in which the act of remembering is promoted as interview, and to genres writing-usually but not exclusively historical. The very act of interviewing is seen as empowering because it brings the historian into community and gives a voice to socially and historically marginalised group.\textsuperscript{128}

Unfortunately, the oral tradition of tribal people in Kerala could not be fully utilised for the formation of their history. It is one of the main methods


\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Ibid.}
of transforming the knowledge of oral tradition of the past in a non-literate society. It seems impossible to write a social history of non-literate people unless we utilize fully the oral sources. Since the oral tradition of tribal people in Kerala has been neglected by the elite historiography they could no longer be included in the general history of the state. As far as the tribes of Wynad are concerned, a rich oral tradition existed in their culture to regulate the system of social life of the people. Folklore is part of the oral tradition and it is widely accepted. Today folklore can stand on its own feet, though its definitions has been changed accordingly. Folklore is the study to understand a traditional group of people through everything coming under traditional life.129

The tribal people are the bearers of lustrous folklore heritage. As they are typical products of their age and their action have a bearing on the custom and beliefs which prevail in the contemporary society. Even if the folklore of Kerala tribes is rich and fascinating, only a small number of scholars have paid attention to this topic. A survey of tribal songs is essential for a proper understanding of their life and culture in historical perspective. Each tribe has its own songs that deal with particular events at a particular time. The rituals of tribes are also a kind of art form. A clear idea about these art forms is found in the work of Chummar Choondal.130 There are some other scholars who have also collected and studied tribal songs.131 These songs are the reflection of the cultural ethos of tribals like Adiyar, Paniyar and Kurichias. These songs, originated from primitive tribal psyche, are passed on to the next generation orally. But they may lose their original qualities, while being transmitted to generations. The songs of Paniyar and Adiyan highlight the

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miserable plight of tribals as traditional slaves to landlords or as victims of the worst afflictions of starvation. To form a social history of these people in a proper perspective the study of oral sources of tribal society has to be continued.

After independence there is much concern on tribal development policies, but no detailed works on the life and culture of tribals in historical perspective has ever been produced. All kinds of literature mentioned in the above review establishes the fact that the ethnographic literature has not discussed the tribal life in historical perspective and historical works on the other hand are silent on these people with the exception of a few studies. Even in the writings of modern historians the colonial concept and frame of reference continue to be echoed even after the dawn of independence.