DESAKOTA IN KERALA: SPACE AND POLITICAL ECONOMY IN SOUTHWEST INDIA

by

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ABSTRACT

McGee in his recent writings on Asian urbanization highlights extended metropolitan regions and proximate non-urban settlement systems with an intense mixture of agricultural and non-agricultural activities. The latter McGee terms as desakota, a neologism coined in Bahasa Indonesian, to signify the fusion of desa (rural) and kota (urban).

Some of the ecological preconditions for desakota are high rural population densities; labour intensive rice cultivation with agricultural labourers in need of non-farm work in the off seasons and/or labour shedding by green revolution effects. McGee however recognizes that desakota can also occur in other ecologically dense habitat of non-rice crops with high population densities. Kerala State in India is one such region with a mix of rice and non-rice crops.

This study examines the urban-rural fusion that is observed in Kerala and provides an empirically informed assessment of the McGee desakota hypothesis. While basically affirming the desakota hypothesis, the study at the same time raises some caveats. First, desakota in Kerala is not dependent on any central urban system and intra-desakota dynamics are significant. While McGee has recognized that such desakota do occur, his writings tend to neglect this type of desakota. Second, McGee's writings on extended metropolitan regions and desakota are increasingly associated with the recent rapid economic growth occurring in some of the Asian countries. Desakota in Kerala blurs this characteristic as it appears to have occurred beginning in the late colonial period of the British Raj. Third, a unique mix of factors in Kerala make the political economy central to making desakota in Kerala intelligible. Undoubtedly in the specificity of the Kerala context the political economy is important. Nonetheless this study raises a critique of the underemphasis of the political economy in McGee's work on extended metropolitan regions and desakota.

The research on desakota in Kerala involved the examination of the regional geography of Kerala. Kerala with its radical politics and remarkable social development in a context of low economic growth, attracted the attention of social scientists. But in these studies the spatial dimensions were largely ignored. This study emphasizes that geography matters in understanding Kerala, and that there is an important nexus between the space and political economy of Kerala.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY

Abstract	ii
Table of contents	iv
List of tables	xii
List of maps	xv
List of figures	xvi
List of appendices	xvii
Acknowledgement	xix
Introduction	**1**
Chapter 1 - Desakota and southwest south Asia	1
Part I - Towards understanding Kerala	**62**
Chapter 2 - Region and social change in Kerala	62
Chapter 3 - Kerala a distinct society in India	107
Chapter 4 - The spatial order in Kerala	159
Chapter 5 - Kerala urbanization: A literature survey	204
Part II - Kerala desakota: A macro presentation	**238**
Chapter 6 - Sectoral profile of economic activity in Kerala, 1901 to 1981	238
Chapter 7 - A closer look at non-agriculture	274
Part III - Case studies of Kerala industrialism, political economy and space	**334**
Chapter 8 - Coir, space and political economy	334
Chapter 9 - Beedi industry: A complementary study	394
Conclusion	**435**
Chapter 10 - Affirmation of desakota in Kerala	435
Bibliography	458
Appendices	483

CHAPTER ONE - DESAKOTA AND SOUTHWEST SOUTH ASIA ***1***

Introduction 1

Kerala: The focus and lived experience 4

What is the urban-rural dichotomy 6

The desakota hypothesis 11

The main characteristics *11*

Rurban, an inappropriate term *12*

The use of an Asian vernacular neologism *14*

The dispersed metropolis as an alternate term *16*

Megalopolis, dispersed metropolis and desakota *17*

The expanding desakota hypothesis and shifts in emphasis *19*

Space, political economy and desakota 22

Geographical perspectives of McGee, Harvey and Massey *22*

Character of capital in Kerala *30*

Forced commerce *35*

Labour process and the capital-labour conflict *39*

[1] Low wages and poor working conditions *39*

[2] Labour concentration and capital's use of space *40*

[3] Literacy levels and labour *41*

[4] Impact of the caste reform movement *42*

Labour process, deskilling and organized labour *43*

Organized labour and State power *44*

Mobility in Kerala *46*

Minimal differentiation *47*

Collective consumption *49*

Summing up space, political economy and desakota 50

The characteristics of desakota in the McGee hypothesis and in Kerala 51

Objectives of this study 55

Presentation of the study 58

PART ONE - TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING KERALA **Chapters two to five**

CHAPTER TWO - REGION AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN KERALA ***62***

Ecology and region 62

The regional identity: A historical sketch 68

Cultural institutions, change and consequences 72

Late pre-colonial period in the making of colonial and contemporary Kerala 78

Travancore land policies and their implications 86

Expansion of cash crops and its implications 97

Social change and the region 105

CHAPTER THREE - KERALA A DISTINCT SOCIETY IN INDIA ***107***

Land use patterns 107

Land use: Kerala and other States *108*

The significance of coconut *108*

Land use and desakota *111*

The significance of tapioca *115*

Size of operational holdings *117*

Summing up *118*

Demographic features 119

Population growth *119*

Population density *120*

Historical demography *126*

Fertility decline in Kerala *139*

Summing up the demographic features *143*

Non-agricultural activity in rural areas 144

Enigma of economic backwardness & social development 150

Economic backwardness *150*

Social development *153*

Higher wages in Kerala *155*

Political economy and spatial order 156

CHAPTER FOUR - THE SPATIAL ORDER IN KERALA ***159***

The rural settlement pattern 159

The isolated rural homesteads *159*

Newly emerging urban residential landscape in India *164*

Implications of the settlement patterns for desakota *167*

The urban order 169

The urban ratio *169*

Definition of urban in India and Kerala *171*

Historical geography of the urban system in Kerala *173*

Contemporary urban systems *181*

Kerala urban system as a variant *192*

Transport, communications and the spatial order 198

CHAPTER FIVE - KERALA URBANIZATION: A LITERATURE SURVEY ***204***

Kerala in the urbanization trends of India 204

Kerala as case and comparative study in urbanization 209

Other literature of relevance 229

Summing up 234

PART TWO - KERALA DESAKOTA: A MACRO PRESENTATION Chapters six and seven

CHAPTER SIX - SECTORAL PROFILE OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN KERALA, 1901 TO 1981. ***238***

The rationale for the use of Census data 238

Census data, definitions and concepts 242

Nineteenth century censuses *242*

Twentieth century census definitions and concepts *243*

The workforce, agriculture and non-agriculture 249

A preliminary broad categorization of the workforce *249*

Casual labour and its significance *251*

Census classification and the floating labour *254*

Agricultural labourers *258*

The significance of the floating labour pool *260*

Mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activity 261

Sectoral overview of the Kerala workforce 267

CHAPTER SEVEN - A CLOSER LOOK AT NON-AGRICULTURE ***274***

Introduction 274

Manufacturing 275

The nature of the industrial response in Kerala *275*

Organized labour, a feature of Kerala industrialism *288*

Non-urban character of manufacturing *292*

Household and non-household sectors *297*

Bricks and tiles manufacturing *303*

Cotton textiles manufacturing *306*

Cashew processing industry *315*

The other industries *319*

Some summing up observations 322

Trade and commerce 324

Service Sector 325

PART THREE - CASE STUDIES OF KERALA INDUSTRIALISM, POLITICAL ECONOMY AND SPACE **Chapters eight and nine**

CHAPTER EIGHT - COIR INDUSTRY, SPACE AND POLITICAL ECONOMY ***334***

Introduction 334

Coir market in the 19th century 336

The production process 338

Early phase of growth and emergence of the coir belt 339

Coir yarn spinning *339*

Trading networks and coir yarn petty production *341*

Coir mats and matting industry *344*

Towards an understanding of the concentration in Alleppey *346*

The inter-war years : Expansion and industrial unrest 354

Growth, depression years and small entrepreneurs *354*

Travancore Labour Association *358*

Emergence of organized labour and radical hegemony *362*

The 1940s: Coir in the political economy on the eve of decolonization 366

The early phase *366*

Labour relations *367*

The armed struggle *369*

Post-independence : Forced commerce challenged 373

Coir mats and matting *373*

Coir yarn sector *380*

Coir trading networks *384*

Coir trading networks as forced commerce *386*

Artisans-merchants networks and perception of space *390*

CHAPTER NINE - BEEDI INDUSTRY: A COMPLEMENTARY STUDY ***394***

Introduction 394

The product and production process 396

The beedi making workforce in India and Kerala 398

Beginnings of the beedi industry in Kerala 402

Examining the concentration in Cannanore District 405

Labour-Capital conflict and restructuring 412

Political economy and restructuring *412*

Establishment and expansion of large-scale factories *414*

Decentralization and down-scaling by branch system *415*

The third phase: Small-scale factories *419*

The crisis of 1968 and subsequent trends *422*

Census data on restructuring 425

Towards an understanding the space and political economy nexus 430

CONCLUSION **Chapter ten**

CHAPTER TEN - AFFIRMATION OF DESAKOTA IN KERALA ***435***

The significance of this study 435

Characteristics of desakota in the McGee hypothesis and in Kerala 439

Demographic and agro-economic conditions *439*

Transport infrastructure and mobility *440*

Women's participation in the workforce *441*

Kerala desakota, not a recent phenomenon *442*

Mix of agriculture and non-agriculture 445

Cultural and ecological factors 448

Integrated and transactive environments 449

Space and Production 450

Geographical Perspectives 452

BIBLIOGRAPHY **458**

APPENDICES **483**

LIST OF TABLES

Number	Title	Page
1.01	Non-agricultural workforce in five major States in India: 1961 - 1981	21
2.01	Distribution of land holdings in Travancore, Cochin and Malabar in 1959	88
2.02	Agricultural population by relationship to land	89
2.03	Operational holdings and area cultivated by size class	90
2.04	Kerala by Caste and Religion in 1901	92
3.01	Land use by food grains and oil seeds in total cropped area in India by States	109
3.02	Travancore land use patterns in 1815-16	113
3.03	Area under principal crops: Travancore 1816-1978	114
3.04	Average size of holdings in India by States	118
3.05	Some demographic features of Kerala, 1901-1981	120
3.06	Kerala and India: Population growth 1901-1981	122
3.07	Population density of India by States	124
3.08	Kerala: Population density by districts, urban and rural areas in 1981	125
3.09	Demographic data of 19th century on Travancore, Cochin, Malabar and Thanjavur	129
3.10	Population density of Kerala districts, selected Tamilnadu districts and the States of Kerala, Tamilnadu and West Bengal: 1901-1981	132
3.11	Fertility rate in India by States: 1972 & 1978	140
3.12	Workforce by agri; non-agri; and casual labour in India and Kerala: 1901-1981	146
3.13	Non-agricultural workforce in India by major States, sex and rural: 1961-1981	148
3.14	Sectoral state domestic product and workforce in Kerala: 1961-1981	151
3.15	Per capita domestic product in India by States	153
4.01	Urban ratios of India and Kerala: 1901-1981	169

Number	Title	Page
4.02	Urban ratios in India by States: 1901 and 1981	170
4.03	Kerala cities with population over 100,000: 1981	174
4.04	Number of urban centres in Kerala by size class	182
4.05	Basic amenities in villages in India by States	194
4.06	Registered motor vehicles in Kerala: 1960-1982	202
6.01	Kerala agricultural, non-agricultural and casual as a percent of total workforce: 1871-1981	250
6.02	Workforce: Agri; Non-agri; Urban and Rural: Kerala 1951-1981	264
6.03	Non-agricultural workforce by urban and rural areas in Kerala: 1951-1981	266
6.04	Sectoral distribution of Kerala workforce: 1901-1981	268
6.05	Kerala workforce by sectors and urban and male component of each sector: 1951-1981	270
7.01	Kerala manufacturing sector by major industries workforce in 1911, 1931 and 1951-1981	276
7.02	Kerala manufacturing sector by urban-rural, sex, household & non-household workforce: 1951-1981	292
7.03	Kerala manufacturing sector by major industries and components of males, urban and household categories: 1961-1981	293
7.04	Kerala major industries workforce by household, non-household non-factory and factory categories: 1961-1981	299
7.05	Kerala service sector by sub-sectors	326
7.06	Kerala service sector by sub-sectors and urban & male component in each sub-sector: 1951-1981	328
8.01	Coir workers and dealers by Travancore taluks, Cochin State and Malabar district in 1901	350

Number	Title	Page
8.02	Coir weaving units and looms in 1980 in Alleppey district by year of establishment	376
8.03	Coir weaving units in 1976 in Alleppey district established prior to 1970 by number of looms	377
9.01	Beedi manufacturing workforce in India by major beedi manufacturing States and sex together with household and urban in each State: 1961-1981	399
9.02	Kerala beedi manufacturing workforce by sex, rural-urban and household & non-household sectors: 1961-1981	402
9.03	Kerala beedi manufacturing workforce by district and male component in each district: 1961-1981	406
9.04	Kerala beedi rural manufacturing workforce by districts	426
9.05	Female participation rate in Kerala beedi manufacturing in selected districts, household & non-household and rural-urban sectors: 1961-1981	427
9.06	Household sector in Kerala beedi manufacturing workforce in selected districts by sex and rural-urban sectors: 1961-1981	429

LIST OF MAPS

Number	Title	Page
2.01	India: States and Administrative Districts 1981	63
2.02	Kerala: Administrative Districts 1981	64
2.03	Kerala: Ecological Zones	65
2.04	Four Major Principalities of the Malabar Coast: Circa late Pre-Colonial Period	70
2.05	British Expansion: South India 1750-1820	71
2.06	Kerala (1961) showing areas that were formerly Travancore, Cochin, Malabar and South Canara	73
2.07	India under later Mughals	81
3.01	Kerala: Population density by Taluks	134
4.01	Kerala: Location of Towns, 1981	184
4.02	Kerala: Interaction Zone of Class I and II Urban Centres	191
7.01	Weaving Centres in Medieval South India, Circa A.D. 1000-1500	307
8.01	Kerala: Coir Belt by Taluks (Sub-districts)	347
8.02	Railway on the east of Lake Vembanad	349
8.03	Alleppey and Hinterland	352
8.04	Alleppey Town and Waterways	353

LIST OF FIGURES

Number	Title	Page
6.01	Agriculture, non-agriculture and casual labour as components of total workforce in Kerala: 1881-1981	262
6.02	Graph of non-agricultural workers as a percent total workers in Kerala: 1871-1981	262

LIST OF APPENDICES

Number	Title	Page
1.01	Sectoral workforce, population size and density by regions: Italy 1987	483
3.01	Agricultural workforce in Kerala by sub-categories: 1981	484
3.02	Population density of Kerala districts and selected Tamilnadu districts in rank order of density: 1901-1981	485
4.01	Sectional Town Plans showing Ground Plan of South Asian Court Yard Street Houses and Bungalow type houses	486
4.02	Kerala 1981: Standard Urban Areas and Urban Agglomerations	487
4.03	Consumer Expenditure in Kerala by Urban and Rural Areas	488
4.04	Kerala: Road accessibility 1980	489
4.05	Kerala: Railway accessibility 1983	490
6.01	Agricultural, Casual and Non-agricultural Workforce as percent of Total Workforce in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore: 1871-1941	491
6.02	Kerala: Agr: and Casual Labour, 1901-1981	492
6.03	Kerala: Agricultural and Non-agricultural Workforce by Urban Rural areas, 1881 to 1981	494
7.01	Brick and tile manufacturing units in Kerala by number of workers, use of power and urban-rural location: 1961	495
7.02	Brick and tile workforce in Kerala by districts, sex and urban-rural location: 1981	496
7.03	Cotton textile industry workforce in Kerala by sub-categories and urban-rural location: 1961 and 1981	497

Number	Title	Page
7.04	Cotton textile industry workforce in Kerala by districts and percent rural, males, household and using power in each district: 1961 & 1981	498
7.05	Cotton textile manufacturing units in Kerala by urban-rural locations, use of power, number of workers and manufacturing operation: 1961	499
7.06	Cashew processing units by number of workers, district and urban-rural location: 1961	500
7.07	Cashew processing workforce by districts, sex and urban-rural location: 1981	501
7.08	Cashew cultivation and yield in India by States: 1970/71 - 1979/80	502
7.09	Kerala: Cashew cultivation by districts: 1978	503
7.10	Average earnings for an eight hour shift by cashew workers in the household and factory sectors in Kerala and Tamilnadu: 1976/77	503
7.11	Distribution of seafood processing, tailoring, wood based industries, jewellery and vegetable oil processing in Kerala by districts: 1981	504
7.12	Population of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar classified by caste and religion: 1901	505
8.01	Coir workers as percentage of Non-agricultural workers in Kerala: 1901-1981	508
9.01	Urban Agglomeration and Standard Urban Areas of Cannanore and Tellicherry.	508

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CHAPTER ONE

DESAKOTA AND SOUTHWEST SOUTH ASIA

Introduction

Ten years ago, in 1981, I had my first encounter with Kerala. I was travelling to Coimbatore in Tamilnadu, via Kerala, to attend a seminar on land reform. I had left Colombo in the late afternoon, and in a forty-five minutes flight, I had crossed the Palk Strait and was in Trivandrum, Kerala. Compared to the recently built International Airport of Colombo, the then Trivandrum Airport looked like a railway station. But this was merely a first impression. Once outside, the similarity of the landscape of southwest India to southwest Sri Lanka was striking.

It was not merely the similarity of the physical landscape that was intriguing, and the obvious explanation that before the continental shifts both lands had been part of one formation. It was the similarity of the socio-spatial landscape that was more striking and less explainable. Kerala, located in Southwest India, is described in many academic studies and travel brochures as different from the rest of India. This is an issue that shall be examined later in this study. But many of the features of Kerala that are claimed as distinctive from the rest of India, are invariably present in Sri Lanka, my country of origin. The socio-spatial landscape is one such feature.

My academic work and participation in development programmes since the late 1970s had been in the field of urban issues in Sri Lanka. It is possible to identify certain areas as distinctly urban and some others as distinctly rural in Sri Lanka. But in many parts of the southwest quarter of Sri Lanka it was difficult to distinguish the urban from the rural. From Negombo, about thirty kilometres north of Colombo, to Matara one hundred and fifty

Kilometres south of Colombo, it was not possible to determine where one settlement, be it designated town or village, ended and another began. This stretch along the coast and a good part of the hinterland was interspersed with commercial centres and bazaar areas, but a good portion of the rest of this region, a virtual continuous settlement area, appeared to be both urban and rural at the same time.

This same socio-spatial landscape was present in the Kerala coastal and/or lowland and midland area. As I journeyed north from Trivandrum, spending a little time at Quilon, Alleppey, Cochin, and Trichur the same landscape unfolded. It was only after I had left Trichur behind and was journeying towards Palghat, close to the highlands and Kerala's eastern border with Tamilnadu, that one could see distinct settlements both rural and urban. This journey set me off on another journey, a mental one. A journey to document by descriptive analysis and make intelligible the settlement pattern that was both rural and urban at the same time.

In spite of my academic work and interests being urban, or perhaps because it was so, it was problematic to accept the dichotomous urban-rural conceptualization of social space and/or human settlements, in the context of my lived experience in southwest Sri Lanka and exposure to Kerala in 1981.[1] Few years later, the tragic ethno-political strife in Sri Lanka saw the scrambling of my life span trajectories. I took up abode in Canada, in a kind of involuntary self-exile from my native land. [2] In a scrambled state, the proverbial caution of the angel is

1. Mick Moore (1985 p123-7) recognizes that it is problematic to see a neat dichotomous division of urban and rural within the Sri Lankan southwest quarter. But in his efforts to understand the political economy of Sri Lanka he replaces one dichotomy with another pair, the urban-rural with core-periphery. This is unsatisfactory, because a dichotomous conceptualization of social space once again neglects the intervening space, and a substantial and important one at that in Sri Lanka, lying between the pair of opposites.

2. If I am to believe my family genealogy, Sri Lanka has been the native land of my family for the last three hundred years.

It may be of interest in this study of urban-rural social space that we had been urban dwellers for these three hundred years and before that in South India as well. From what was once the domain of the Chola Kingdom in southeast India, many merchants in the trading diaspora of the centuries that followed the decline (circa 13th and 14th centuries) of the Chola Kingdom, settled down in some of their trading entreports in Gujarat, Malabar, Bengal, Sri Lanka and southeast Asia. Those who did in Colombo came to be Known as the

perhaps absent, and I sought and found admission as a graduate student at U.B.C. Sitting one day at a graduate seminar of Professor Terry McGee, I heard him refer to the mix or juxtaposition of urban and rural in Java, and coining the term desakota [3] to hypothesize or conceptualize this mix. He coined the word using the terms desa (rural) and kota (urban) in Bahasa Indonesian. To me desakota offered itself as a conceptual hook to fathom the character of the social space of the southwestern corner of south Asia.

For a good part of the past five years I have grappled with this effort, amidst life's other chores. This study is the result of this endeavour. The writing up of the study is nearing completion and I wish I could say that the journey that was commenced ten years ago has been completed and I have arrived at the destination. But in a south Asian world view the journey is the destination and the separation of the two is taking apart that which is one. This study documents the journey and the destination.

---

ethnic group "Colombo Chetties". They are perhaps distant cousins of Malacca Chitties and the communities of pre-colonial south Indian descent in Aceh. By the 17th and 18th centuries with the Dutch occupation of the maritime provinces of Sri Lanka, the trading activities of the community were brought to an end, to make way for Dutch monopoly in trade (Arasaratnam. 1967) The Dutch however recruited many from this community to junior and middle level administrative positions. In time they became converts to Presbyterian Christianity. But they were clever enough when the Dutch were replaced by the British as the colonial power, to replace Presbyterian (Dutch Reformed Church) affiliation with Anglicanism and Methodism. Using their favoured position as Christians in the colonial context and their positions in the administration and newly emerging professions they found easy entry into the emerging Sri Lankan urban middle class of the 19th and 20th century. Their descendents in recent years have been less clever and did not become converts to Buddhism. They have joined the Sri Lankan minority diaspora. There are now perhaps more "Colombo Chetties" in Toronto and Sydney than in Colombo and Batticaloa, the latter a Sri Lankan east coast town which had a concentration of this ethnic community.

3. Initially the term coined by McGee was Kodesasi.(1984. p14) and revised later as kotadesasi (1987 p3; 1989 p93-94) But it was argued that the components of the term should be rearranged so as to form the word desakota for settlement and desakotasi for the process.(Ginsburg, Koppel and McGee 1991. p xvii).

Kerala: The focus and a lived experience

The focus of this study is on Kerala. The urban-rural fusion is more pervasive and extensive in Kerala than in any other part of India. It is present virtually in the entire lowlands and midlands of Kerala, a coastal strip that extends about fifty to sixty kilometres from the seashore to the interior, and runs along the entire coast of about 550 kilometres. Moreover the absence of primacy in the urban system of Kerala, in contrast to Sri Lanka, had implications. It permitted the processes and dynamics of the urban-rural fusion to be internal and less influenced or distorted by an urban primate centre. This will be examined in detail later in this study. Suffice to state that for these reasons, and the unsettled conditions in strife torn Sri Lanka that made field work difficult, Kerala was a better choice for this study of urban-rural fusion in southwest south Asia.

A doctoral fellowship award from the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute made it possible for me to reside for one year in Kerala. The lived experience, which should be distinguished from travel experience, with my family as a household, in Ulloor, close to Trivandrum, was an important facet of the research process for this study. The lived experience as a householder; the observations of everyday life; empathy with the everyday life of the locality; travel by public transport throughout the length of Kerala; short stays at Quilon, Alleppey, Kottayam, Cochin, Trichur, Kozhikode, Cannanore and Thekkady; and the sociological and geographical imagination that is part of such experience have been extensively used as a research tool for this study. They however remain intangible and difficult to put down as a list of "sources" or "methodology". A central thrust of the research process was the interface between a growing understanding of a lived experience of a real life or reality in Kerala and social scientist disciplinary knowledge about Kerala society. The latter was greatly advanced by my affiliation, during the one year stay, to the Centre for Development Studies, a research and graduate studies institution of eminence in Kerala, and in India as well.

The ability to read, write and speak Tamil, a language spoken to some extent in southern Kerala, and to develop a rudimentary functional knowledge of Malayalam, the language of Kerala and a close affine of Tamil, also facilitated the research process. It extended the limits of the Kerala world beyond the limits of the English literate population in Kerala. Being of south Asian origin I was also able to move unobtrusively without provoking expected responses to "foreigners". This however was to deprive me of some advantages that a visible foreigner can obtain in south Asia. The relationship between my own understanding of the Kerala context as a south Asian and a social scientist knowledge and analysis of this context is of significance in this study. This is not to assert that this study has elements of the qualitative feel of Johan Turi in *The Lapps and Their Land* (Buttimer 1983. p1) or Domitila Barrios de Chungara in *Let me Speak.* (1978) Nor does this study claim an insider view of desakota. Even my long lived experience in Sri Lanka was mostly, but not entirely, as an urban dweller, though intimately aware of the desakota milieu in Sri Lanka. But overall I have attempted to infuse into the study a sensitivity to the perception of social space in the region that comes from an intimate understanding of the cultural and linguistic mode in which it is presented, being culturally a person of the region.

This semi-autobiographical entry to introduce this study is not merely because the study was part of the author's, (albeit scrambled), life journey but also as an invitation to the

> reader to become so involved in the puzzle of interpretations, that anxieties over subjectivity and objectivity recede and one engages in a shared inter-subjective task to clarify relationships between geographic thought and practice and the lived geographical experiences of humankind. (Buttimer 1983. p3)

Having made this introduction, it is appropriate to discuss the objectives of this study. Such a discussion may be facilitated if the meaning of the term desakota as enunciated by McGee is first spelt out. But as the term is hinged on to the meaning of urban and rural, the preliminary task is to deal with the definitions of urban and rural.

What is the urban-rural dichotomy ?

To understand the definitions of urban and rural, let us briefly examine the various justifications for the urban-rural divide. For they have given the urban-rural dichotomy multiple dimensions of meaning that together compose the definitions of urban and rural. The first and of central importance for an understanding of the urban-rural dichotomy, is the economic dimension. Economic activities in an urban area are predominantly non-agricultural, while in a rural area they are predominantly agricultural. Moore (1984) argues that the roots the urban-rural divide may be traced to the classical economists, James Steuart, Adam Smith, Ricardo and Marx.

> Most of what Smith had to say on the rural-urban question closely parallels Steuart's work. The first point that they have in common is that, like all the classical economists, their basic unit of economic analysis is the nation state....Within this 'nation state' context, Steuart does not appear to have felt any necessity to justify either his use of a basic dichotomy between 'agriculture' and 'industry' or the identification of agriculture with the countryside and industry with towns [Stewart, 1767; 40 passim]. And this despite a recognition that at the time a great deal of manufacturing actually took place in the countryside on a domestic basis. [e.g. Steuart 1767;90]. (Moore 1984. p7)

Moore believes, that as a corrective to the excessive pro-agriculture bias of the Physiocrats and as a defence of new industrialism, the classical economists underemphasized the quantitative significance of domestic or household manufacture. Sectoral division of the economy into primary, secondary and tertiary was not fully developed by classical economists as they tended to define productive activities as the production of goods. In the absence of such categorization the urban-rural divide gained importance for the classical economists. Moore goes on to argue that Ricardo:

> Among his basic assumptions, so evident to him as not to require justification, was a Smithian model of society....one in which the main classes were capitalists, landlords and labourers and which was in turn categorized into an urban manufacturing sector, populated by capitalists, landlord and labourers, and a rural agricultural sector in which landlords featured prominently alongside capitalist farmers and rural labourers, [Ricardo, 1817:passim] (Moore 1984. p10)

These classical economists also seemed to view rural and urban as historically universal and invariant categories. Marx as Moore points out set this correct by emphasizing the change that was possible and taking place, the replacement of rural household manufacture by urban factory manufacture.

> The irrational old fashioned methods of agriculture are replaced by scientific ones. Capitalist production completely tears asunder the old bond of union which held together agriculture and manufacturing in their infancy. But at the same time it creates the material conditions for a higher synthesis in the future. (Marx 1867.p505)

Marx was giving expression to the rural-urban categories being historically variant. But he was at the same time establishing that under capitalism the economic character of rural would be agriculture production and of urban, non-agriculture production. But capitalism of the West itself is a historically specific phenomenon, just as European feudalism. One of the issues that the desakota hypothesis raises is the variations of the urban-rural divide, its trajectory and/or transition, outside the historic specificity of the capitalist society of the West. The manner in which capitalism penetrates and functions in other societies, as well as the internal conditions of these societies, may vary the urban-rural dichotomy and urban transition.

The second dimension on which urban-rural distinctions are made is demographic. Urban areas or settlements are both in terms of population size and density always much higher than rural settlements.

Third, urban settlements and residents are described as having a distinct lifestyle which is very different from that of their rural counterparts. Louis Wirth's (1938, 1964a, 1964b) studies brought out this distinction and conceptualized the urban life style as urbanism. This view emphasized the cultural and sociological dimensions.

Fourth, the politico-administrative structure or systems of urban and rural settlements were different. Urban settlements often had some form of local government or political system. Rural settlements were invariably part of a larger political-administrative unit. This was at the simple political-administrative level. At the more complex level of political economy, cities were seen as units of collective consumption. Castells argued that cities as centres of capitalist industrial production required the reproduction of labour. The class character of the state power, he argued, ensured that cities provided the collectively consumed goods and services, (education, health care, public transport, etc) for the reproduction of labour. (Castells 1976. p74-75)

Fifth, the urban landscape and built environment was identified as different from the rural. Within the urban realm, morphological and/or ecological categorization, taking into account physical and social characteristics, were sometimes made. The Chicago School which depicted ecological communities of concentric circles from core downtown area was one such effort at classification.(Hannerz 1980. p19-76)

Lastly, urban areas had functions that were distinct and only minimally, if at all, present in rural areas. Namely, urban areas functioned as central places of transport, communications, trade, administration, capital accumulation, collective consumption services etc.

This definition of the rural and urban was believed to have universal application in describing settlements in all societies that practiced settled agriculture, and/or were becoming

industrialized. This industrialization was to eventually encompass agriculture, as it is now beginning to occur in the advanced economies, particularly in North America. This is perhaps the synthesis that Marx envisaged. Obviously at this stage urban-rural distinctions should disappear. A recent assessment of census operations and approaches in U.S.A does suggest that urban-rural distinctions are becoming minimal, if not disappearing in U.S.A. (Lang. 1986) The nexus between industrialization and urbanization is obvious in the context of this definition.

Given the assumption that industrialization is a fundamental mechanism of development, urbanization, or the urban transition, in development theory and thinking became an indicator of, and stimuli for, development. In the last few decades studies of urbanization of developing countries have however shown that urbanization had occurred without pronounced industrialization. The causes and consequences of such urbanization are many and need not be examined here. Suffice to state that these findings question the basic linkage between urbanization and industrialization. Nonetheless urbanization; urban centres as growth poles; urban or rural bias in policy and planning; problems specific to urban or rural locations, particularly in housing and transportation; continue to be significant in development theory. The concepts of urban and rural have thus remained important. But as Moore observes:

> What is for everyday purposes a very convenient economy in vocabulary may however pose considerable problems for scholarly analysis. Not only is one virtually forced to use the same terms to describe very different entities, but one is also discouraged from asking whether the basic dichotomy between urban and rural is always appropriate. Admittedly terms like 'sub-urban' and 'peri-urban' permit some categorization of urbanness, and in any particular circumstance one can class towns by size. But for any general conceptual discussions vocabulary does not permit any alternative to the rural-urban dichotomy without recourse to neologisms or specialists' jargon. (Moore 1984. p6)

Desakota as developed by McGee is a neologism. McGee's use of the term desakota was to develop a third category of space for a theoretical understanding of Asian spatial phenomenon. Before we deal with McGee's desakota hypothesis, it is useful to briefly discuss some of the implicit approaches to the study of socio-spatial phenomenon or the the urban-rural dichotomy.

The classical economists' view, particularly reinforced by Marx, was to the see urban as a distinct economic, political and ideological configuration. A Weberian approach was similar, but saw urban as part of a wider social process and not specific to urban areas. From this position, a neo-Weberian perception that emerges, particularly in the context of some of the urban-rural distinctions disappearing in the countries with advanced economies. This is the devaluing of the social relevance of the urban-rural construct. Saunders' expression of this view has been summarized by Bassett and Short as follows.

> Saunders lists four attempts over the past 70 years to identify particular social processes with the distinct spatial form of the city. These attempts have found expressions in the view of the city as an ecological community (Chicago School), as a cultural unit (Louis Wirth), as system of resource allocation (Pahl) and as a unit of collective consumption (Castells). All these attempts, Saunders argues, have failed. He concludes by relegating much of the traditional concern with the influence of space on social relations to a minor category of inquiry - 'spatial sociology'. The major themes of social inquiry are reserved for 'urban political economy' (the significance of urban space for capital accumulation) or for 'non-spatial sociology' (the study of social consumption processes, competitive struggles and local politics). (Bassett and Short 1989. p191).

This criticism poses the question of the role of space in social relations and structures. In the context of the advanced economies Harvey's writings have addressed this issue among other matters. In McGee's desakota hypothesis too the role of space emerges when he refers to time-space collapse as a factor in the emergence of desakota. We will examine in this chapter how Harvey and McGee address this issue, after setting out in some detail the desakota hypothesis of McGee.

The desakota hypothesis

The main characteristics

As indicated earlier, desakota is a neologism. McGee's work on Asian urbanization, particularly in Indonesia and Taiwan, (McGee 1984, 1987) led him to the desakota hypothesis. It is an effort to flex conceptually and theoretically the urban-rural dichotomy to make the Asian socio-spatial phenomenon intelligible. What makes McGee's conceptualization different from earlier attempts with concepts such as peri-urban, rurban, etc was that he hypothesized that desakota regions have dynamics of their own, they are not a "dependent variable", as the term peri-urban by its very nomenclature and semantics suggests. The appropriateness of rurban and other suggested terms will be examined once the basic or main characteristics of desakota are set out.

The main characteristics of desakota as delineated by McGee (1991a. p16-17) are

1. A large and dense population engaged in smallholder cultivation of mostly rice who in the pre-World War II period had considerable interaction through accessible transportation routes.

2. An increase in non-agricultural activities in areas which have been previously largely agricultural, often bringing about a mixture of economic activities by members of the same household. This situation creates economic linkages within the desakota region which may be as important as the dominance of a central urban system on its periphery

3. Extreme fluidity and mobility of the population within the region, as well as to centres outside, facilitated by easy transport.

4. Intensive use of land with agriculture, cottage industry or domestic production and other uses existing side by side.

5. Increased participation by women in non-agricultural labour associated with greater industrial activity linked to the changing patterns of agricultural production.

6. They are "grey zones" where statutory urban regulations cannot be applied, thus allowing informal and 'illegal' activities to grow up.

In expanding the hypothesis, McGee links it to what he describes as region-based urbanization, as opposed to city based urbanization. Rather than drawing a population from rural areas to a city, this process of region based urbanization is utilizing an in-situ population. This spatially extended urbanization which is named as extended metropolitan regions (EMRs), incorporate within them desakota. (McGee and Greenberg 1991. p3). Having summarized the characteristics of desakota and its position within EMRs as set out by McGee, let us turn to some issues that are important in examining the validity and relevance of the desakota hypothesis and terminology.

Rurban, an inappropriate term.

Rurban is an English term, and its very nomenclature suggest a fusion of rural and urban and would seem to be the appropriate term. But rurban has had shifts in meaning.[4] The term rurban was first used in American rural sociology by Galpin to describe the interdependent nature of rural and urban space. (1922. p64) Later the term rurban acquired a slightly different meaning. It referred to the periphery of a city, where the city influences led the area to exhibit a mixture of both urban and rural characteristics. (Sorokin, Zimmerman and Galpin. 1932. p642; Bergel 1955 p135). It has also been used to describe the persistence of rural features in an urban setting.

In the Indian context Fox has used the term rurban to describe the presence of mud fortressed enclaves[5] of lineage elite in a rural setting, particularly of the Rajputs in what was

4. The term ruralization, as distinguished from rurbanization, has been used recently in India to describe the process of some old colonial towns or parts of it, some of them old civil lines or cantonment areas, in urban decay becoming rural in character. This is particularly on the economic dimension. The low income residents living in blocked out portions of old colonial bungalows and compounds in decay, resort to vegetable patch gardening, poultry keeping, cattle rearing and other livestock keeping, for a survival livelihood. This it is argued had led to the process of ruralization. (Misra 1983)

5. Such enclaves were called Kotta or Kotte, the word kotta or kotte meaning fort in many Indian languages. As historically many towns were enclosed within forts in most parts of India, this term acquired synonymous usage with the word town. "In Vedic literature the word pura, the modern Sanskrit synonym of town, was used in the sense of a fort or stronghold" (Berry and Spodek 1971. p267). Sometimes it is used as a suffix to a place

the Oudh region in North India.[6] These were semi-urban in character and stood, Fox argues, intermediate between the village and the pre-industrial city. He used it to describe their low order urban character relative to the pre-colonial Indian cities that were court, trade or temple centres. (Fox 1970. p180) Fox argues that his use of term rurban stems from the early meaning given to it by Galpin. He states that Galpin's notion of the integration of rural and urban sectors is present in the lineage mud forts. This is not in the sense of their being in the geographical periphery of a city. But rather because of their combination of a rural kinship base with a political emulation of larger urban centres. (Ibid. p181) The differing meanings attributed by different scholars to the term rurban has now rendered it of loose definitive meaning and so inadequate to describe the rural-urban fusion or mix occurring in Asia that McGee is concerned with. McGee makes this clear when he was developing the desakota hypothesis.

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name to denote it was a fortressed town or community. Obviously the Bahasa Indonesia term kota for urban or town is of Indian origin. Kota in the Indian languages is more a colloquial term for town, the formal term being pura, puram, nagar, nagara, nagaram or pattinam. These terms also denote a higher order urban character. It would appear from a reading of Tamil epics that pattinam referred to port cities, while nagar, nagaram referred to court and temple cities in South India. (Ramanujan 1970)

Geertz recognizes the Indian origin of some of these terms used in Indonesia.

> **Negara (nagara, nagari, negeri), a Sanskrit loan word originally meaning "town", is used in Indonesian languages to mean, more or less simultaneously and interchangeably, "palace", "capital", "state", "realm". It is, in its broadest sense, the word for (classical) civilization, for the world of the traditional city, the high culture that the city supported, and the system of superordinate political authority centred there. Its opposite is desa-also a Sanskrit loan word - meaning, with similar flexibility of reference, "countryside", "region", "village", "place", and sometimes even "dependency" or "governed area"....(Geertz 1980.p4)**

When the author was in India and had occasion to talk of the concept of desakota, or kotadesai as first termed by McGee, some Indian academics said it would make sense in India, as a term denoting a mix of urban and rural characteristics. Desa or desam in Indian languages refer to country, land or nation and makes sense as rural. The formal term for rural in the Indian languages is grama, gramam, kiramam, ur etc

6. Fox states:

> **In terms of morphology, military and protective functions, market activities, caste leadership and determination of caste rank, and role as craft and sumptuary centers, such lineage locales stood much above and beyond the rural villages which surrounded them, even though they hardly duplicated quantitatively the pre-industrial cities at the state level. (1970. p180)**

> Kotadesasi is a coined word joining kota (town) and desa (village) to make up a word which carries the concept of urban and rural activity occurring in the same geographic territory. This is not the same as "rurbanization", a term never precise in its meaning, which has generally meant some persistence of rural traditions and values in urban settings. (McGee 1987 p3-4; 1989 p93-94)

The use of an Asian vernacular neologism

McGee's coining of the term desakota[7] is a fresh initiative for a clearer conceptualization of the urban-rural mix seen in the Asian context. The coining of the word with Bahasa Indonesia terms for rural and urban is dictated, as McGee acknowledges, by the need for the social sciences to be sensitive to Asian vernacular perceptions and terminology.[8] Ginsburg however observes:

> Kotadesasi was greeted with mixed feelings on two grounds: First, being derived from a foreign language not well known to most readers, its use might obscure more than reveal; second, it was argued that the components of the term be rearranged so as to form the word desakota for the settlement and desakotasi for the process. The debate remains unresolved.....However the need for an English-language term remains (Ginsburg et al 1991. p-xvii)

Desakota is the term now in use and kotadesasi has been dropped. This resolves the second issue referred to by Ginsburg. It is difficult to concede to the other objection of desakota being derived from a foreign language and to the need to have an English-language term. The English language had absorbed many foreign words in the course of its contact with many cultures during the period of the imperial expansion of the British Empire.[9] South Asian

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7. See footnote 3 on page 3 for change from Kotedesasi to desakota.

8. "The use of Indonesian terms to describe these processes is deliberately adopted. The language and concepts of Western Social Science have dominated the analysis of Third World societies leading to a form of 'knowledge imperialism'. There is a need to develop terms and concepts in the language of the Third World which more accurately reflect the conditions of their societies. It is natural that these terms should be borrowed and utilized by Western Social Science". (McGee 1987. p46 f1)

9. A classic example of such incorporation into the English language, in the field of social space, is bungalow and compound. Bungalow is derived from the Bengali word bungaloo for a Bengal house type characterized by a verandah running round the house to keep it cool in summer. (King. 1984 p18-30) Compound is derived from the Malay word kampong.

academic publications are substantially in English and in the process have incorporated many vernacular words into use in the English language publications.[10]

McGee's argument that western social sciences should be sensitive to vernacular terms that better reflect local conditions was in a sense vindicated by coining of a term in Malayalam by a Kerala scholar to describe the regions of urban-rural fusion in Kerala. Issac (1986. p121) writing in Malayalam, coined the phrase gragaram, combining "gra" from gramam (rural) and "garam" from nagaram (urban), to describe the mixed urban-rural character of most of Kerala's habitated regions. The coining of the term was almost identical to the manner McGee coined the word desakota. This was independently and uninfluenced by McGee's writings. It was also coined at about same time that McGee was developing this term.

Issac however used the term gragaram to describe a context where farm families had access to non-agricultural income due to the gragaram character of their localities. Though the modification of the urban-rural dichotomy is implied in Issac coining of the term, his conceptual focus was not on the socio-spatial character of Kerala but on the agrarian issues and the importance of non-farm income. Issac also fails to develop the gragram term in his work on the coir industry.[11] It will be demonstrated in this study that the character of the coir and other agro-processing industries are an important factor in the presence of desakota in Kerala.

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10. Vernacular words incorporated to the English language by the south Asian academia are raj, dalit, harijan, gherao etc.

11. Issac's influential work and publications on the coir industry pre-date the publication where he coins the word gragaram. This perhaps explains the absence of the gragaram concept in his work on the coir industry.

The point being made here is that a social scientist writing in a vernacular Asian language had developed a term to describe a local condition.[12] There is an element of an organic intellectual character about this usage. Organic intellectual here refers to the concept used by Gramsci, (Gramsci 1983. p5) and also in its extended use with a variation by Petras. (Petras 1989. p719).[13] McGee too had perceived and developed a vernacular term. This reflects his keen sensitivity and ability to develop a term in the organic intellectual climate and mode of the region he has been researching on, viz southeast Asia. All this suggests the appropriateness of the term desakota to describe the urban-rural fusion or mix observed in some parts of Asia.

The dispersed metropolis as an alternate term

Ginsburg also examines the suitability of the term dispersed metropolis first used to describe the case of Okayama in Japan. It sought to describe a multi-nodal system, with a number of centres joined into an operational entity, "separated from each other by considerable amount of non-urban space, and in fact without an urban centre, in other words,

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12. It is interesting and pertinent to note that the Japanese have used the term konjuka to refer to landscapes that have a mix of small holdings, industry and residences. These are rural in character but with the presence of non-agricultural activities. (Oshima 1986. Cited by McGee 1991a. p8)

13. Gramsci's concept of organic intellectuals has to be read along with his concept of traditional intellectuals. According to Gramsci, "Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give homogeneity and awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields". (Gramsci 1983, p5) These were organic intellectuals whom Gramsci distinguished from traditional intellectuals. They are organic because they are organically allied with the common people, in ideology and practice. In contrast the important characteristic of the traditional intellectuals is that they "experience through an esprit de corp their uninterrupted historical continuity and their special qualification, they thus put themselves forward as autonomous and independent of the dominant social group" (Gramsci 1983, p7) An example of traditional intellectuals are the medieval European ecclesiastics and in the Indian context the Brahmins. (See Kameshwar Choudhary (1990) for a discussion of these concepts and examples). Petras uses the term organic intellectual retaining the essence of Gramsci's use but contrasting it with intellectuals who are conditioned (and funded) by a Western agenda. "Two diametrically opposed intellectual types serve as the model of Latin America's new generation of the 1990s - the organic intellectuals of the 1960s and the institutional intellectuals of the 1980s". (Petras 1989. p719) Torri uses the Gramsci concept in his study of the "Westernized Middle Class, Intellectuals and Society in Late Colonial India". (Torri 1990. pPE6) Also see Kannan (1990. p311-12) and Kameshwar Choudhary (1990).

a metropolis without a core". (Ginsburg 1991. p32) Some of these features are present in the overall Kerala spatial context, and do warrant an examination of the suitability of the term for the Kerala context. Later in this study (chapter four) the spatial order of Kerala will be dealt with at length. Some of the salient feature are the absence of primacy and the linking of a number of cities, (none of them with more than about half million population), and towns with a substantial intervening non-urban space. These features are very suggestive of the description given of the dispersed metropolis. The non-urban space in Kerala however is desakota. In the dispersed settlement description the non-urban space is left open ended. It is not clear whether it is rural or a mix of rural and urban. Dispersed metropolis appears inappropriate for the Kerala context for another reason as well - the incorporation of the word metropolis in the term. In the Kerala context as this study will strive to show the urban sector is not primate. An apt description of Kerala settlements, "sans" its highland region, is that the whole State is a desakota region, encapsulating a network of commercial centres and bazaars. The desakota and the urban nodes are in symbiosis, neither subordinate to the other. This being the case the word metropolis within the term dispersed metropolis appears inappropriate for it suggests an urban dominance or an overall urban character.

Megalopolis, dispersed metropolis and desakota

There is some similarity between the dispersed metropolis and megalopolis (Gottman 1961) conceptualizations. In the Bos-Wash corridor of the northeastern megalopolis of the U.S.A. there is no one urban core. There is also intervening non-urban space. The dispersed metropolis it may then be argued is a lower order version of the megalopolis. It is significant in this context that McGee in developing the desakota hypothesis referred to Gottmann's concept of megalopolis in northeast U.S.A.. One of the features that the megalopolis concept brought out, among others, was the increasing disappearance of the rural-urban divide in advanced capitalist societies, and its probable replication in other regions of the world.

> The symbiosis of urban and rural in megalopolis, creating new and interesting patterns of multiple-purpose land use over large areas gives to this region a rather unique character. Like the downtown business districts with powerful skylines, this aspect of the megalopolis will probably be repeated in slightly different but not too dissimilar versions in many other regions of the rapidly urbanizing world. (Gottman 1961. p257)

McGee (1987) in putting forward the hypothesis of desakota relates it to Gottman's prediction. But he later cautions that

> there are some distinct facets of the phenomenon in the Asian context which reflect the different patterns of development and incorporation of these countries into the international system (McGee 1989 p93)

The core of the desakota hypothesis is the mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activity within the desakota region. McGee argues that during the last twenty years many countries in Asia, while exhibiting an increase in urbanization levels, have also been characterized by a growing number of regions in which agricultural and non-agricultural activity occur side by side, and there is an intense interaction of commodities and people. (McGee 1991a p16-17)

An intriguing question is whether desakota has occurred in parts of the world other than Asia. On the face of the arguments that McGee makes as the ecological pre-conditions for desakota, the suggestion is that it can occur only in Asia. Some of the features of the McGee desakota hypothesis include elements that are distinctively Asian. Chief among them are high rural population densities; rice cultivation with agricultural labourers in need of non-farm work in the off season and/or labour shedding by green revolution effects. McGee did recognize that while desakota may commonly occur in rice bowl regions, it can also occur in other ecologically dense habitat of non-rice crops together with high rural population densities. Kerala in fact is one such region, for though rice is an important crop, the region cannot be described as a rice bowl. Part I of this study addresses this issue.

This feature of Kerala suggests that until research is done on this question in non-rice growing regions with high rural population densities, such as West Africa, no definitive statement is possible. But it has to be emphasized at the same time that the presence of desakota is not based only on visual impressions, and that the mix of agriculture and non-agriculture in desakota is not merely in land use. Of central importance is the mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activity, indicated in terms of work force, gross domestic product etc. This suggests that it is unlikely to occur in the industrialized countries, even though some countries and regions such as Netherlands and parts of Italy may visually, in terms of land use patterns exhibit a mix of agriculture and non-agriculture. The reason is that in Netherlands only 5.5 percent of the work force are in agriculture (World Bank 1991. p422-3) and in Italy only 10.4 percent. (ISTAT 1988. p45) Such low agricultural work force activity makes it extremely unlikely for even pockets of areas with desakota characteristics to occur in these countries. The urban ratio, or urban population of these two countries are also high. Of their respective national populations 88.5 percent in Netherlands and 68.4 percent in Italy are urban populations. (World Bank 1991. p334-5)[14]

The expanding desakota hypothesis and shifts in emphasis

It is important to recognize that McGee in his early writings on desakota (1984, 1987 and 1989) did not describe the rural-urban fusion in desakota as purely a semi-urban phenomenon. McGee recognized that the desakota region unlike the megalopolis region is not always dominated by the activities of a central urban system. (McGee 1986. p3, 1987 p4))

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14. In the case of Italy, since there are regional variations the national averages may not be a reliable guide. But even regionally disaggregated data, on labour force by activity and population size and density, were examined. (See Appendix 1.01). They suggest that desakota is unlikely to be present in any region. Only in four of the twenty two administrative regions, namely Molise, Basilicata, Puglia and Calabria, did agriculture work force as a percent of total work force show a significant deviation from the national average of 10.4. percent. But even in these regions the percent of work force in agriculture to the total work force was not high or comparable to Asia. The population densities were also low unlike desakota regions in Asia.

In his more recent writings, (McGee 1991a, McGee and Greenberg 1991, McGee and MacLeod 1992), expanding on the desakota hypothesis, McGee has been paying less emphasis to independent internal dynamics of desakota. By incorporating desakota within the mega-urban or EMRs, desakota is seen to be part of, or dependent on a urban system or complex. The independent and internal social and economic dynamics of desakota has become a less significant feature. McGee does recognize that desakota can occur outside EMRs. The examples suggested are Kerala, Jogjakarta region in Java, Bangladesh and Sichuan basin in China. (McGee 1991a. p9) Sri Lanka's south, specifically Galle and Matara districts which are outside the periphery of Colombo, though not listed by McGee may also be included in this group. There is little to dispute in the characterization of this group as regions close only to secondary urban centres. They also share according to McGee the characteristics of slow economic growth, a labour surplus economy, low productivity and high population density.[15]

But in contrast to McGee's emphasis one of the significant features of these regions is that the desakota is not a dependent variable of an urban system. This is perhaps most clear in Kerala and one of the objectives of this study is to demonstrate this. Kerala desakota region is also a large region. For these reasons the Census category of rural in Kerala State, which includes desakota regions, has the highest non-agricultural work force among the Indian States, surpassing the rural areas of Maharashtra, West Bengal and Tamilnadu. This is in spite of these States incorporating rural and/or desakota regions within or on the immediate periphery of the mega-urban or extended metropolises of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras respectively. It must be noted here that through out this study in identifying non-agriculture,

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15. High population density seems a more appropriate description, than high population growth as given by McGee, (1991a p9) in view of the fertility decline observed in Kerala and Sri Lanka since the mid 1970s. (Zachariah 1984. p xxiii)

agriculture has been defined in its broadest sense. In terms of census categories this means that agriculture includes cultivators, agricultural labourers, and all those engaged in forestry, livestock farming, plantation and/or orchard agriculture, fishing, hunting, and unspecified or casual work.

TABLE 1.1

Non-agricultural work force as a percent of total work force in the first five States ranked on this basis of non-agricultural work force to total work force - 1961 to 1981

States	Rank	Rural plus Urban			Rural Only		
		1961	1971	1981	1961	1971	1981
Kerala	1	44.5	44.5	47.7	39.5	38.0	40.9
West Bengal	2	42.2	38.6	40.7	23.2	18.2	21.8
Punjab	3	33.3	36.4	38.4	21.5	20.5	21.0
Tamilnadu	4	36.5	35.6	35.2	24.5	19.1	18.5
Maharashtra	5	27.7	33.5	33.8	11.3	12.7	13.5
INDIA	-	27.1	27.9	29.4	17.3	15.2	15.8

Source: Table 3.13 in Chapter Three.

The criticism that may be raised when desakota formation is increasingly emphasized in its formation within or on the peripheries of EMRs, is that the distinction of desakota from peri-urban become blurred. The distinction between megalopolis and EMRs with desakota also becomes less clear. Desakota, conceptually has to be is distinguished from peri-urban. Peri-urban is a geographical conceptualization in a morphological sense. Desakota is more than this. It brings in the geographical significance of space and economy. Technological advances in communication and transport and affordable versions of it becoming available in the Asian context brings about what McGee articulated as a time-space collapse. (McGee 1991a.p4)

> The considerable advances in transportation technology, particularly in relatively cheap intermediate transportation technology such as two-stroke motorbikes, greatly facilitate the circulation of commodities, people and capital in such regions, creating in turn large mega urban regions. (McGee 1991a. p5)

The geographical friction of distance is reduced. This is an important factor in desakota. But are only transport and communication technology and its impact on economic activity the only critical factors ? Desakota in Kerala suggests the importance of the political economy[16] as well in the mix of factors that contribute to desakota. We discuss these issues in the next section.

Space, political economy and desakota

Geographical perspectives of McGee, Harvey and Massey.

Geographers (Philbrook 1957; Janelle 1968, 1969) for some time have recognized the importance of technological advances in transportation for reduction in the friction of distance

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16. Political economy in here used in its contemporary meaning. For the uninformed this may be described in short hand as the linkages between the economy and politics in the public domain and/or civil society. An extended discussion of the concept would take us to the work of Adam Smith, and his concept of an autonomous, self-regulating economy described as civil society. In arguing that individuals, in pursuing their self-interest, indirectly and unintentionally promoted the collective interest, Adam Smith developed the concept of civil society as a self-regulating and beneficial arrangement. But Hegel saw a contradiction between civil society as the sphere of selfish interest and political society as a sphere of public interest. In criticizing Hegel's theory, Marx counter-posed universal franchise, the proletariat and democracy as the triad which, unlike Hegel's could supersede the contradictions of civil society by ushering in communism. Thus Marx called his work the critique of political economy because he showed its basic categories were historical and not universal.

> In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces.... At a certain stage of development, material productive forces of society come into conflict with existing relations of productions, or - this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms - with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. (Marx 1859. p20/21)

Marx's views influenced the viewing of social change as resulting from interaction between classes of people grouped according to their relationship to the means of production. Keynesian economics also questioned the equation of individual good and public good and argued for state intervention. Thus the contemporary meaning of political economy may be broadly defined as a theory of civil society, taking into account the interplay between economic and political factors.

or the aggregate time-expenditure (cost and/or effort) on transport. (Janelle 1969 p349). But it is in Harvey's recent work that there is an effort to bring together advances in transportation and communication technology and changing economic conditions over space. To examine this we need to review briefly his theory of accumulation. According to Harvey the process of accumulation of capital is not merely temporal but geographical as well. This geography for Harvey has two components: a focus on place which is static and resistant to change and a focus on space which is dynamic and in constant transformation. (Harvey 1985a. Chapter 2; 1988. p122-127)

Places function as centres of accumulation and production. Here Harvey emphasizes the differentiation tendency of capitalism that seeks to make distinct places which are different from one another. To facilitate expansion and reproduction capitalism requires large urban centres as workshops of capitalism. The infrastructural and manufacturing features of urban centres represent massive investments of fixed capital. (Harvey 1988. p115-127)

In a capitalist economy, production is always for profit. This is realized when the product or service is sold. If the turnover time between the investment of capital and the sale of the finished product is shortened greater profits or surplus value can be obtained because for a given period of time the same amount of capital can be used more frequently. But a major obstacle to reducing turnover time is space, for example the time taken to transport goods from point of production to point of sale. To overcome space or the friction of distance capital attempts to "annihilate space through time". (Harvey 1985b. p28)

Place and space coexist but there is tension. Harvey describes this relationship as both creative and destructive or "creatively destructive". Barnes and Hayter observe:

> Although the relationship Harvey develops in his earlier work between space and place is complex, there are gaps in his account. First it is not clear what

> enables a rational landscape to be rational for so long given the powerful forces of dissolution. Second, the precise mechanisms that trigger the annihilation of space is left vague. Third, Harvey's notions of space and place remain for the most part undertheorized, physicalist conceptions. Space is often equivalent to physical distance, and place the physical deposit of fixed capital. Finally, the specific geographical variations in creative destruction are often left unexplored. (Hayter and Barnes 1991. p6-7)

Barnes and Hayter concede that Harvey in his recent writings has addressed some of these issues. What is important for this study is Harvey's more explicit statement in his recent writings about the mechanisms that allow the annihilation of space through time. For the most part they are a series of technological advancement and use in transportation and communications. (Harvey 1988.p122) Harvey for time-space compression or annihilation of space and McGee for time-space collapse are both referring to the increased use of technological advances in transport and communications. But they are at different scales, levels and cost. Harvey refers to advances in use in the advanced economies and McGee to what he terms as "relatively cheap intermediate transportation technology" increasingly used in parts of Asia. But both refer to mechanisms that enable capital to use space to its advantage.

This is of importance in this study. Capital's[17] use of space makes desakota intelligible in Kerala. However in Kerala, capital's use of space was triggered not merely by the mobility made possible by recent developments in transport and historical geographical features of waterways transportation. The political economy of capital-labour conflict in Kerala was an

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17. The use of the term 'capital' in this study is in the customary social science usage, and is not reified. To clarify this usage here it may be appropriate to cite Bhaduri:
Capitalists are capitalists because a particular set of production relations bestows on them the right to own 'capital' and the economy is capitalist because it operates on the basis of the rules set by 'capital'. How do we define 'capital' then ? ....'Capital' is not just produced means of production. For, produced means of production is a universal concept applicable to all forms of society; the self-employed artisan under simple commodity production uses his implements as a means of production and so does a slave. 'Capital', therefore, has to be a concept more specifically related to the production relations under capitalism. Means of production become 'capital' only when (a) they are separated from wage labourers who work with them, and (b) they provide income namely profits to those who own the means of production, entirely by virtue of that ownership right.....In other words, 'capital' is also a social relation specifically embedded in capitalist relations of production. (Bhaduri 1986. p9)

important factor as well. Both Harvey and McGee neglect or underemphasize the political economic factors. Harvey does recognize, that organized labour is under attack; the rise of neo-conservatism; privatization; and pressure against State intervention. But in his theorization, the emphasis on capital accumulation leaves labour immobilized and appears of little consequence.

At the same time the direction of McGee's work on desakota and extended metropolitan regions in southeast and east Asia suggests an increasing attention to the purely technological and economic factors. There is an inadequate treatment of the implications for spatial structures by the nature of capital, its industrial or financial components, and the relationship between these two components. And little attention is paid to capital-labour relationship and its implications for spatial structures. These features of the political economy are not addressed.

The under emphasis on the political economy is apparent in a recent paper (McGee and MacLeod 1992) on the "growth triangle" of Singapore, Johor and Riau as an extended metropolitan region. Capital is undifferentiated with no attention paid to the different forms in which it is invested. But the data presented in this paper by McGee and Macleod strongly suggests an interplay between financial and industrial capital. There is also a homogenizing of "Overseas Chinese" capital suggestive of a Western perspective. In the Singapore context it may have been more useful to identify in terms of Singapore Chinese (national) capital, and the international components of Hong Kong Chinese capital and if relevant Malaysian, Indonesian and Thai Chinese capital. We also hear nothing of the role Japanese capital plays, though we are told of the Japanese playing on the golf courses.

The neglect of the political economy also reduces our understanding of the forces that seek to sanitize Singapore and attract prostitutes to Batam and industries in search of

female labour to Johor. (Ibid). What is the response of women, feminists and NGO activists to these trends. If there is none, what is political economy that denies them a response, a voice. As we noted earlier McGee in coining the term desakota in Bahasa Indonesia intended to sensitize social sciences to vernacular perceptions and knowledge. This task also incorporates a need to understand the local political economy. The process of change in these urban regions undoubtedly poses many research challenges, particularly the importance of incorporating the local-global dialectic into a new regional geography.

Recent feminist writings (Eg: bell hooks 1984, 1990; and Spivak 1990), have argued that Western mainstream academic writings are prone to a Western and/or white male perceptions. Massey (1991) has also criticized Harvey's and Soja's recent publications as being a male view. All this is part of larger debate that involves gender bias, cultural politics, imperial knowledge systems, post-colonial critics, organic and traditional intellectuals. McGee has been sensitive to these issues (1985, 1991) and as discussed the use of an Asian vernacular language to coin the neologism desakota is part an effort to address these issues. What is being argued here is that a sensitivity to the political economy and cultural politics within it, is demanded in any effort to incorporate non-western, non-sexist understandings of the objects of study. Some of these issues will be taken up in the concluding chapter.

In examining the interface between the political economy and desakota in spatial formations it may be useful to draw on insights in the work of another geographer, Doreen Massey. The primacy of space, production and political economy and the underpinning of historical geographical and cultural factors is emphasized in Massey's approach to examine spatial formations, spatial structures and spatial change in Britain. (Massey 1984, 1989)

The use of Massey's work for this study may be criticized as the mechanical application of models developed in the study of a western society to an Asian context.

Desakota as indicated earlier is in part an effort to move away from such analysis. The character of capital and the labour processes; the relationship between the two; occupational structures, culture and regional class and the prior historical use of space or the geological layering of earlier production systems; are elements that Massey sees as coming together in particular spaces to influence spatial structures. (Ibid) As we shall see in this study the same elements, though with differential content, both in economic and cultural terms, are important features in the regional geography of Kerala that influence desakota in Kerala. The relevance of Massey's work for examining the spatial structure of Kerala is largely because of its sensitivity to culture and politics. For instance Massey shows the importance of the working class character and politics of the coalfield areas in Britain to understand the spatial structures and change occurring in these areas. (Massey 1984. p195-223)

In Kerala proletarianization and working class politics are important features of the region and need to be taken into account in examining spatial structures. This is not to claim universalizing logic of political economy. It is important to recognize the development of working class consciousness being influenced by local cultural traditions and the process of change in such traditions. This is indeed important in Kerala as well. We shall see for instance in this study the influence of the caste reform movement, and caste consciousness on class consciousness. At the same time the labour intensive character of some sectors of the Kerala economy, and the emergence of organized labour has created localities with more highly developed occupational and working class culture and consciousness. This will be seen in chapters eight and nine when we examine the coir industry in Alleppey District and beedi industry in Cannanore district. Massey's approach is thus more relevant than it would appear at first. [18]

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18. Peter Sahlins reviewing Dipesh Chakrabarty book on the jute-mill workers of Calcutta, Rethinking Working-Class History: Bengal 1890 - 1940, says it is "perhaps the most important monograph since E.P.Thompson's The Making of the English Working Class." (Sahlin 1991. p179) There is in this statement an implicit recognition that there are universalizing elements in working class history.

Massey has listed six underlying principles in the spatial division of labour approach in developing her model of the regional and industrial geography of U.K. First, the links between regional and local development with wider processes at the national and international levels. Second, she stresses not just the economic factors but a constellation of technical, social and cultural factors. Third, the inadequacy of the conventional 'location factors' of economic geography on the one hand and the enriching and elaboration of labour as a location factor. Fourth, the active role geography and geographical variations play within wider economic and social changes. Fifth, the uniqueness of the location, in reflecting successive layers of investment and as a part of a wider system of interdependence. And lastly the superimposition of different spatial divisions of labour, creating patterns of regional geography and unevenness as well as periodic changes. (Massey and Meegan 1989. p245-46)

Massey sees capital accumulation to be an important element in explaining spatial change. She argues that rounds of capital accumulation in a single country, can produce spatially uneven effects as a result of historically prior use of space. (Massey 1984. p194-5) Massey also stresses the three strategies of capital in its quest for increasing profits, namely, rationalization, technical innovation and centralization of capital. (Ibid p26) These strategies are examined by her in the context of the restructuring that is going on the advanced economies, and specifically Britain. But at the same time in Massey's view different functional levels of a firm or industry require different qualities of labour. (Massey 1984. p25-27) As Warde observes:

> The logic of Massey's account is that capital has come to use spatial differentiation as a resource in the competitive search for profit. There is a search for spatial advantage. Such advantage is most readily obtained by discriminating between available labour forces.(Warde 1985. p196)

In analyzing labour forces, Massey, following Aglietta (1979), identifies four phases in the development of the labour processes in capitalist societies.

> The first, manufacture, consists mainly of the gathering together of previously independent workers into a factory system. In the second, machinofacture, mechanization is introduced and the division of labour within production developed. With scientific management and Fordism job-fragmentation is further increased, particularly along the lines of separating of conception from execution, and the 'flow-line' principle, aiding these changes, is introduced. In the latest phase, with the introduction of neo-Fordism, fragmentation and deskilling of the direct work force (particularly through the removal of control) can be pushed further with the use of electronic information systems. Each phase represents a different way of combining capital and labour in the production process, a different way of organizing the labour force, and a different kind of stratification and differentiation within that labour force. (Massey 1984. p23)

The restructuring and spatial change that Massey is examining in the context of Britain is occurring in the third and fourth phases. The second phase as the geological layer prior to the last two is also of some relevance in Massey's mapping of the spatial change and the regional geography of industrial structures in Britain. The first phase is of little significance to Massey for spatial change and structures because in the regional economic geography of Britain this stage has been passed over in the 19th century or even earlier. This is a simplified interpretation of Massey's examination of the phases of labour processes. The transitions are not neat and as Massey points ut a mix of more than one labour process does occur at any one point of time.

Massey in examining spatial change and restructuring of the regional economic geography of Britain also finds the differentiation of capital, into industrial and financial, crucial. (Ibid p14-21) And so is the relationship between capital and labour processes. (Ibid p25) The metaphor that Massey uses to understand changes over time is geological: successive rounds of capital accumulation deposit layers of industrial sediment in geographical space. She also emphasizes the political effects of industrial change on occupational structure and regional class structure.

Massey has been criticized for isolating class structure and excluding other spatial effects; historical changes in location pattern; political combination of classes; reproduction of labour power; and local cultures that are not independent of class structures but nor reducible to class structure. (Warde 1985. p197-201) Warde recognizes in Massey's metaphor the tight embrace of the critique of orthodox geography's 'fetishization of space'. Warde concedes that space is no first cause but it should not be dismissed from analysis. He argues,

> Metaphorical local surfaces are blemished by past local political practices, household organization, social protest movements and local customs, as well as industrial histories. Cumulative local, cultural effects cannot be omitted. (Warde 1985. p201)

While mindful of the criticisms of Massey, which as we shall later observe are pertinent in the Kerala context, her work is discussed here primarily for its usefulness in relating the political economy to spatial change and spatial structures. One of the cues from Massey's work we can follow is to identify the character of the local or regional capitalism. This is to draw on her methodology and insights rather than replicating her model.

Character of capital in Kerala

Massey argues (Ibid p16) that it is important to examine the specific character of capitalism in a country or region under study. The predominant character of capital invested in the Kerala region is merchant. In colonial export economies which were primarily based on agriculture, resource extraction and their minimal processing the dominant economic powers were the mercantile interests. For mercantile capital any production in the form of agro-processing or mineral dressing if it occurred served merely as an accessory rather than an independent objective valued for its own sake.

The differentiation of merchant capital from industrial capital does not wholly correspond to that between circulating and fixed capital. Merchants' investment in warehouses, transportation facilities represents fixed capital, and the working capital of industries are a kind of circulating capital. The more fundamental and distinguishing character of merchant capital lay within the rentier nature of the merchant's investments, including other bases of his wealth, such as usury, licences etc. The merchant's search for profits was in the exchange relations or process and not in the production process. The stimulus given by merchant capital to commodity production is through a widening of markets and a territorial division of labour, rather than through a deepening of markets by a splitting up of the production process into a greater number of distinct and special products or operations. Merchant capital is external to the production process. It may increase the mass of products that enter trade in its search for profits but it does not seek lowering the costs of production by increase in productivity. Merchant capital had no compulsion to apply capital in depth so long as new lines of trade could be opened up and investment opportunities existed outside the sphere of production. In contrast to merchant capital, as Marx states:

> Industrial capital is the only mode of existence of capital, in which not only the appropriation of surplus-value or surplus-product, but simultaneously its creation is a function of capital. Therefore with it the capitalist character of production is a necessity. (Marx 1867. 1967 (Ed) p55)

Thus the fundamental characteristics of industrial capital that distinguishes it from merchant capital are threefold. First, while merchant capital seeks profit in the exchange relations industrial capital appropriates surplus value and/or profits in the production process or relations. Second, following this characteristic, industrial capitalists strive to increase productivity so that they can enhance the surplus value. Rationalization and technical innovation that Massey refers to as strategies that capital uses in its competitive search for profits are part of this process to enhance productivity. The stages of labour processes referred to by Massey also form part of this strive to increase productivity, to increase surplus

value and obtain greater profits. Merchant capital in contrast, since it finds its profit in exchange relations, does not seek to increase productivity. Increasing profits is by expansion of trade; faster turnover of capital and stocks; and paying less to the producer. Thirdly, this inherent striving of industrial capital to increase productivity and profits leads to accumulation of capital.

The accumulation of capital is the critical difference emphasized by Marx. A difference that is also critical to the transformation of merchant capitalism to industrial capitalism. This is of importance in theories of development or underdevelopment. The traditional view sought to explain the non-occurrence of the transformation of merchant capitalism to industrial capitalism was in terms of internal conditions such as 'factor scarcities' and cultural limitations. A radical critique of this view by the dependists was in terms of the impact of the external forces of colonialism and surplus extraction. This in turn was criticized as a mirror image of the traditional "modernization" view. There emerged the third view focusing on the impact of the external on the internal, the two seen in terms of different modes of production and their unequal interaction.

Bettelheim's 'conservation-dissolution' process or theme (1972. p297) expresses this relationship. Armstrong and McGee (1985. p52-55) examining the mechanisms of conservation-dissolution and the urbanization process in developing societies observe:

> it is clearly in the interests of the local ruling classes and international capital to allow these non-capitalists systems to continue, at least in the short term, so as to avoid some of the more extreme structural contradictions which are emerging from the unequal alliance between transnational and local capital. (Ibid p54)

The character of merchant capital invested in the agro-processing industries of Kerala was a combination of European, (largely British), Indian non-Kerala, and Kerala. The last category had a marginal and subordinate role. The detailed implications of such capital and

combination are discussed in chapters seven, eight and nine. Suffice to state here that the characteristic unequal alliance was present and made more complex by three levels of participation and combination, the foreign, the national (Indian) and local (Kerala).

It is important to bear in mind that some of these features were strongly present in late colonial Kerala. There have been important changes occurring in the nature of capital formation and deployment in the last few decades. Foreign capital has virtually disappeared in the agro-processing industries making way for an alliance between national and local capital.[19]

Another aspect of the complexity of the inhibited transformation of merchant capital to industrial capital in the Kerala context was the character of the commodity composition and the agro-industrial products. The inability of the export and domestic markets to absorb the products; the low demand elasticities of most of these products; secular decline in terms of trade of such commodity exporting countries and regions; have made the market for most of these products uncertain and fluctuating.

The Kerala economy is largely an agrarian cum commodity export economy. The latter being plantation produce and agro-based products. It was in these sectors that merchant capital played a dominant role. As will be demonstrated in chapter seven, twelve industries make up more than 75 percent of the manufacturing work force in Kerala. Of this twelve

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19. It is important in this context to note that in the last two decades considerable numbers of skilled and technical personnel from Kerala have gone as labour migrants to the Middle East. This has resulted in inward remittances and accumulation of savings within Kerala. A good part of this have been invested in housing and conspicuous consumption of household assets. Housing investment in turn caused a construction boom. But interestingly foreign remittances and savings has also triggered a lot of activity in the Cochin Stock Exchange, vaulting it to rank fourth among the stock exchanges in India.(Mohan and Raman 1990. p17; Paul 1990 p576) Through the Cochin Stock Exchange investment is being made or funded outside Kerala. The aversion to investment in Kerala, is the perception by investors that the presence of organized labour in Kerala is not conducive to industrial peace and profits. (Subramaniam and Pillai 1986 p588; Oommen 1981 p78-82; Anil Kumar 1990. p379; Paul 1990b p2808) We shall shortly discuss the genesis and character of organized labour in Kerala.

industries eight are agro-processing industries. The character of capital is predominantly merchant capital. Though there had been some policy initiatives from the late colonial period to transform merchant capital to industrial capital or attract industrial capital, there has been a minimal trend in this direction. Particularly in the agro-processing industries the transformation has been extremely limited. In the textile industry too as we will note in chapter seven, the fixed capital investment is minimal, unlike in many other parts of India. In a great number of cases capital investment is limited to the manually operated looms and the buildings that house them. In some instances the looms are owned by the workers who have come together to form a co-operative to enable them to market their products through State aided co-operative marketing federations. These features of the Kerala economy, together with its commodity composition, mark it as industrially backward even in the Indian context.

As will be discussed in chapter seven, the troughs and peaks of the market for different commodities sometimes cushioned or evened out the adverse effects. Labour sometimes moved from one commodity production to another, and/or took on secondary work.[20] Chapter seven, will illustrate the features of such movement and work. One aspect of this commodity character was that it encouraged merchant capital investment. Industrial capital invested in capital assets would have remained idle or underutilized in periods of commodity slump, locking up capital and giving poor returns on capital. On the other hand labour intensive production was ideally suited for such a commodity market. Lay offs were not easy in the context of organized labour. But as chapters seven, eight and nine will demonstrate, in the context of capital-labour conflict, capital downsized large production units in urban areas and moved them to the countryside. The labour intensive, low technology meant in some instances a near regression to the stage of independent household production. The household and small producers were linked to the exporters by a network of traders. The

20. This is while a person's primary occupation was in one industry or agriculture, there was subsidiary work, often by household manufacture, in another industry.

nature of trade relationships in such networks facilitated the exporters and traders to use the networks only when market conditions demanded it. Labour intensive production, the trade networks, and capital's use of space by moving the fragmented units to the countryside were thus linked to the character of the commodity market and capital.

In such contexts the merchant can also take on the role of supplying the raw materials to the producer to be turned into finished goods. If the finished product is purchased at a lower than market price because of the supply of raw material, the merchant may in turn sell at a lower price for the sake of a quicker turnover, or capturing a market. The merchant by interposing himself between the producer and the market, both for finished goods and for raw material, and through usury subjects the producer to a relation sometimes of almost personal bondage. In the South Asian agrarian context, the merchant interposing between the peasant producer and the market has been conceptualized by Bhaduri (1983 & 1986a) as forced commerce. This positioning of mercantile capital is of relevance in examining the agro-processing industries in Kerala and there impact on desakota.

Forced Commerce

Bhaduri developed the concept of forced commerce in the context of backward agriculture in South Asia. He argued that the extraction of surplus value from peasant agricultural producers occurs through the trading mechanism and/or system. Peasant consumer and agricultural production input needs are met by village level traders, visible as owners of grocery stores, rice processing mills etc. The peasant production and consumer needs are invariably met on a credit basis as the peasant producers hardly have liquid cash or convertible assets to pay in cash. The credit and interest are returned only when the agricultural produce becomes available.

The peasants ability to sell their produce in the open market are extremely limited. Social and economic pressures compel them to sell it to their creditor, the village trader. Sometimes the pressures extend to the physical, the village trader or agent is on the threshing floor to collect the dues in kind. What the peasant is left with for subsistence is not adequate to carry the peasant family through till the next harvest. So before long , the peasant is back to the trader for consumer loans and needs and by the time of sowing for seed paddy and other production inputs on credit. The cycle is repeated and perpetuated, and the peasant never ceases to be a debtor.

This is a simplified description. The real life situation is far more complex. But the central process whereby the peasant is forced to enter into commercial transactions with village trader, the end node at the village level of wider trading networks, is an important feature of the village agrarian economy. This Bhaduri conceptualizes as forced commerce.

> We shall employ the term forced commerce essentially to describe the nexus of involuntary market involvement by the small peasants in various forms and arrangements under the compulsion of debt. (Bhaduri 1983 p9)

The point that Bhaduri emphasizes is trade as a instrument of appropriating part of the peasant agricultural surplus value.[21] This is particularly significant in parts of south Asia where peasant small holdings predominate and large holdings and landlordism are minimal. In such regions forced commerce becomes the key instrument of appropriation of agricultural surplus value. Bhaduri conceptual framework expresses the merchant capitalist exploitation of the small peasant. The exploitation is however taking place in the market place and not in production relations. This is in keeping with the character of merchant capital.

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21. This may not be acceptable to Marxian economists who argue that surplus extraction occurs only in production relations. It is not proposed in this study to examine forced commerce in the context of this debate. For Bhaduri's arguments why surplus extraction can occur in exchange relations see Bhaduri 1983, Chapter one. Also see Bardhan (1985) and Ashok Mitra (1985) for a discussion of Rosa Luxemberg's views within the Marxist ideology and Bhaduri's concept of forced commerce.

Another issue raised by Bhaduri's schemata is that any accumulation of capital is invested not in production but in trade. Thus productive accumulation leading to increases in production and productivity does not occur. If in the rural economy the dominant social class were the traders, together with the presence of small holders of cultivated land then the temptation to exploit commercially the small holders and petty producers are great. The forces of technological change and productive accumulation are in a disadvantaged position in such a situation. As Bardhan observes:

> Bhaduri (1983) has emphasized how surplus extraction by rentier, merchant or moneylending interests may drive poor peasants to exchange relations, raising the index of commercialization of the economy without any necessary positive effects on accumulation. This is related to Marx's idea in *Capital, Vol III*, of two alternative historical paths that may be taken by merchant capital, in developing or retarding the growth of industrial capitalism. (Bardhan 1985. p551)

Though Bhaduri's conceptualization of forced commerce was developed in the context of backward agriculture in South Asia, it is present in petty manufacturing or commodity production in India, including Kerala. This will be demonstrated in chapters seven and eight. The importance of Bhaduri's forced commerce is that it helps to make intelligible the context that facilitated desakota in Kerala.

First, as indicated the presence of forced commerce provides in part an explanation for the absence of capital accumulation and the lack of growth of industrial capitalism in the context of the agro-processing industries in Kerala. It is pertinent here to draw on an observation Ashok Mitra made on this aspect of forced commerce in reviewing Bhaduri's work.

> Depending on certain historical circumstances, forced commerce could give way to productive accumulation, or it could be the other way round.....Whatever the initial conditions, if through a series of accidents, some technological innovations or other percolate into the system and

> therefore lead to a sharp increase in farm output, those in control of money may then be persuaded to go the whole hog and opt for massive productive accumulation. If, on the other hand, resistance to social and technological change is deep rooted, the bias in favour of forced commerce could continue indefinitely. (Ashok Mitra 1985. p285)

As we will note shortly, due to a mix of labourism and resistance to deskilling in the labour intensive agro-processing industries in Kerala, there developed a strong resistance to mechanization. This then may have added to continuation of forced commerce and further inhibited the entry of industrial capitalism to the agro-processing industries. There is also the neoclassical view, that in a context of high population densities and a reserve army of labour, technological advances are less likely.

Second, and of importance for this study, is the spatial order that accompanies forced commerce, particularly in its linkage to the petty and small producers. The apex and some of the higher nodes of the trading network are invariably urban, - port cities, port towns and bazaar towns. The rest of the trading network, linking the petty producers and small scale production units, is non-urban. This is an important part of the mix of factors in Kerala that produces a desakota situation. The sheer numbers involved in this vast trade network augments the non-agricultural sector in non-urban areas.

Third, it provided a cultural economic institutional system for capital to link up a dispersed army of petty and small scale producers. As we shall shortly note capital used space to contend with organized labour, by downsizing, decentralizing and dispersing the agro-processing units. In this capital had a ready cultural economic institution to link the dispersed producers. In capital-labour relationship the labour process was crucial factor. We turn to examine this in the next section.

Labour process and the capital-labour conflict in Kerala

The labour process in most agro-processing industries in Kerala was what has been characterized by Marx as simple co-operation, where workers are brought together as wage labourers at a single centre but continue by and large to work independently of each other. This is the first of the four phases of labour processes referred to by Massey. But in these centres or factories emerged a capital-labour conflict relationship and led to labour beginning to be organized by the late 1920s. By the late 1930s labour in most occupations in Kerala had become trade unionized. The emergence and growth of organized labour influenced capital-labour relationship and had considerable impact on the political economy of Kerala since the 1930s. It is argued in this study that this political economy and the strategies used by capital to contend with organized labour has influenced spatial formations and structures in Kerala.

Chapters eight and nine which present case studies of coir and beedi industries deal in depth with the factors that led to the emergence of organized labour and capital-labour conflict. They will also demonstrate how capital's use of space among its strategies to combat labour influenced spatial structures in Kerala, including desakota.

The task now is to briefly comment on the more important of the factors that contributed to labour becoming organized; the manner in which capital used space among its strategies to contend with organized labour, and how this influenced desakota. The factors that influenced labour to become organized in Kerala may be put down as follows:

[1] Low wages and poor working conditions

The poor working conditions and low wages in the agro-processing sector fomented labour dissatisfaction and unrest. This activated labour mobilization and organization of trade

unions. The low prices offered by the merchants for the finished products in context of the labour intensive character of the industries made it imperative to keep wages low.

[2] Labour concentration and capital's use of space.

As the case studies of coir and beedi in chapters eight and nine, as well as the sketches of a few other industries in chapter seven will demonstrate, many of the agro-processing industries expanded in response to changing market demands, both national and international, from the late 19th century onwards. This was largely consequent to the combined effects of the Western world's industrial and imperial expansion. In the initial phase of the expansion of the agro-processing industries the production organization was typically the "gathering together of previously independent workers into a factory", the first of the four phases of labour process we noted before. And these were located in the port towns of Kerala. (Eg, coir in Alleppey, beedi in Cannanore, cashew processing in Quilon).

This concentration of workers initially in the urban centres and their face to face contact generated labour mobilization and organization. Capital to prevent and preempt labour mobilization, downsized, decentralized and dispersed the factories to areas outside the urban centres. Here was capital's use of space in its strategies to contend with organized labour. This however in Kerala failed to stall labour from becoming organized. In fact it had the opposite effect of organized labour spreading to non-urban areas and to many other occupations, including even rural agricultural workers in rice cultivation as early as 1939.

Some of workers in the factories of the urban centres were rural migrants, and so they went with the downsized factories that were dispersed to new rural locations. But these workers took with them the seeds of labour organization capability. They had learnt that organized labour is a weapon to fight low wages and poor working conditions. So in a short while trade unions emerged in the new locations. And workers in unionized industries

influenced other members of their household in other occupations to trade unionize. Thus capital's use of space turned out to be a process that enabled, among other factors, labour to become organized country wide. This contributed to the growth of working class consciousness and politicalization. This as will be argued in this study is important in understanding the political economy of Kerala. In short geography matters in examining the political economy of Kerala, just as the political economy is important in understanding the spatial structures in Kerala.

[3] Literacy levels and labour

The high rate of literacy among the work force facilitated trade unionization. The relatively high literacy rate in the Kerala population is attributed among other reasons to indigenous systems of education being not dismantled during the colonial period. (Tharakan 1984; Jeffrey 1987b) Part I of this study will briefly discuss this. What is important to recognize now is that literacy in Kerala means more than the ability to scrawl one's signature. Literacy in Kerala as Jeffrey (1987) shows is functional literacy.

> Kerala, of course has been the most literate region of India throughout the 20th century. But a flourishing vernacular press requires more than simple literacy. Areas with literacy figures as high as Kerala's do not necessarily generate a daily newspaper culture. Thailand in 1967 had a literacy rate of 70 percent, a population nearly twice as great as Kerala's, yet a daily newspaper production of only 350,000. Kerala at that time printed more than 750,000 copies a day.(p607)

Kerala in 1981 had one vernacular (Malayalam) newspaper daily for every 19 persons. This ratio was second only to the English dailies in India, which were one for every four persons literate in English in India. (Ibid p607) Jeffrey has some vignettes of the extent of literacy. A aged female fish seller of the informal sector picking up a flyer to read,(Jeffrey 1987 p467); an aged poor women on a verandah, seen from a bus, reading a newspaper.(Jeffrey 1987 p447) The significance of a literate work force in aiding working class and political consciousness may be inferred from the observation of Brown an English missionary. He

records that in the 1940s the ferry boat he travelled in was filled with people on their way to work and reading copies of a Malayalam translation of the Communist Manifesto. (Brown 1981 p12)

[4] Impact of the caste reform movement

Kerala witnessed during the first few decades of this century a strong caste reform movement. This was not a moderate reformism initiated by the *savarna*[22] or privileged castes. This, as will be shown in Part I, distinguishes it from the kind of caste reformation from within privileged caste structures that occurred in colonial India. The caste reform movement in Kerala was an attack, ideologically and socially, by the *avarna* or subaltern castes and minority religious groups, led by the Ezhava caste. (Issac and Tharakan 1986a) This was occurring at a time of social change when the dominant caste of Kerala, the Nayars were on the decline. (Jeffrey 1976)

The most visible aspect of the caste reform movement, which included the demand for equal civic rights, was the struggle for Hindus of any caste to have the right to enter temple for worship. Hither to the *avarna* castes had been denied this right. A protracted *satyagraha* campaign outside some of the temples led to temples being opened to all Hindu castes. The ethos of solidarity and legitimacy of equitable civic rights did not disappear with the temples opening the doors to all Hindus. There was a kind of positive transference of the ethos from the protest barricades around the temples to other situations perceived as iniquitous. Among this was the poor wages and working conditions of workers in agro-

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22. The varna principle in the traditional caste system divides the castes into four broad groups or varnas (colours). They are the Brahmins, the priestly caste, the kshastriyas, the ruling castes, the vaishnavas, the trading castes and the sudras, the agricultural castes. These are the savarna castes, the high castes. There are a number of castes that fall outside the four varna castes, they are the middle and lower castes and known as the avarna castes.

processing industries. There was thus a transfer of the ethos of solidarity and protest against social inequities from the temple floor to the shop floor.

As stated, the caste reform movement was led by the Ezhavas, whose traditional occupation was regarded to be the making of toddy or coconut palm wine. They were also engaged in small holder coconut cultivation, and coconut based industries such as coir. The caste reform movement infused the occupational and caste culture of the Ezhavas with a political and social awareness. This was carried into the coir industry working class culture. The coir industry was also regionally concentrated in Alleppey district. Chapter eight, the case study on the coir industry will provide a descriptive analysis of these features and other radicalizing influences, such as the Russian revolution, the rise of the Labour party in Britain, anti-imperialist struggles in India etc. Suffice it to state here that the coir industry and Alleppey district played a pioneering, catalyst and central role in trade unionization in Kerala. And in this as will be made clear in chapter eight the regional, occupational, and caste culture and caste reform experience were important. Issac's emphasis on the transformation of caste consciousness to class consciousness in his work on the coir industry in Kerala, explicitly recognizes this. (Issac 1985) Here we see, though in a very different cultural and economic context the validation of Massey's view that regional or local labour market area's occupational and class sub-cultures influence the manner in which capital makes use of pools of labour. Her analysis of Cornwall and the coalfields areas in Britain though removed in space and time provide insights. (Massey 1984. p195-223)

Labour process, deskilling and organized labour

The labour process in the agro-processsing industries we noted remained in the first stage of the four stage typology described by Massey. But trade unionization occurred while the labour process was at this stage. Militant, politicalized trade unions at this stage is not

common. Deskilling has been seen as one of capital's strategy to alter the control labour has over the labour process. (Baverman 1979) It occurs when machinofacture is introduced into the labour process. The emergence of trade unions prior to machinofacture can impact on the capacity and capability of labour to resist deskilling. This is seen in the agro-processing industries in Kerala. Only in two agro-processing industries did mechanization occur. They were exceptions that prove the rule. One was in rice-processing where mechanized hulling and milling had been introduced before trade unions emerged in Kerala. The other was is coconut oil manufacture where mechanized processing replaced traditional technology using animal (bullock) power with little or no displacement of human labour.

Trade unionism at this "first stage" of the labour process in capitalist societies can also create a tendency to labourism, though this was in the Kerala context contained to some extent by the politicalization of the trade unions. An outcome of the labourism tendency, together with the workers resistance to deskilling and fear of job loss, was the hostility or antipathy to mechanization. This led even as late as in the 1970s, to luddite destruction of machines introduced for defibring of coconut husks into coir strands. Thus even close to the last quarter of the 20th century there were forces that contributed to the persistence of rural or non-urban; dispersed; low technology; labour intensive; merchant capital facilitated; agro-processing industries. The implications for desakota are clear, the augmenting of non-agricultural activities in non-urban areas.

Organized labour and State power

Organized labour was aided in its conflict with capital by its partial capture of state power at the local level of the Kerala State. The capture of State power is deemed partial for two reasons. First, the overall character of the Indian State and economy remained capitalist.

Within the federal system of such a nation state, the election of a Communist Party Government at the Kerala state level gives labour only a partial access to state power. Second, the process of labour access to state power was through parliamentary elections, not a revolutionary change. This meant periodic changes were possible and did in fact take place. The Communist Party was elected to power for the first time in 1957 and in three of the subsequent seven elections held to date, the last being in 1987. From the late 1950s there emerged in Kerala a two party political system. One was the Communist Party led coalition, the Left Democratic Front and the other a right-wing Congress Party led coalition, the United Democratic Front. The two coalitions have held office almost alternately from 1957 onwards, interspersed by Union Government rule that the Indian constitution provides.[23] This meant that labour's access to state power was not complete.

But nonetheless the Communist Party was an important actor in Kerala mainstream politics and political economy. This strengthened labour in its conflict with capital. When the beedi industry was co-operativized, the Communist Party was in power. The Kerala State at this juncture supported and guided the labour initiative to form beedi manufacturing co-operatives. Following the luddite smashing of coir defibring machines, statutory prohibition of mechanization, up to certain stages of coir processing, was legislated. Such State actions suggest labour access to state power, even though partial, was an important factor. This may have, along with other factors discussed earlier, inhibited capital investment.

It is pertinent and important to point out here that the rise of the Communist Party in Kerala was consequent to the strength and size of organized labour and its radicalization in

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23. The Indian federal system concentrates power in the centre compared to most federal systems. The centre can dismiss a State government on a number of grounds and run the State for an interim period until fresh elections are held. This has happened in the case of Kerala on a few occasions. It is alleged that this occurred due to the political maneuvering of the Congress Party, the principal opponent of the Communist Party in Kerala, which was in power at the Union Government level.

the process of its continued conflict with capital since the late 1920s. There was a symbiotic linkage between organized labour and the emergence and growth of the Communist Party in Kerala. And in this, desakota and the spatial spread of the industries were an important factor. We noted the spread of trade unionism to the countryside with decentralized industries. This leavened the countryside with radical politicalization.

It is sometimes claimed that the social development of Kerala, indicated by the health and education levels of the population, are consequent to the Communist Party led governments in Kerala. It is substantially correct that the Communist Party with its egalitarian ideology encouraged many positive and egalitarian features. But this was not a top down situation, with the benefits flowing from Communist Party led governments. In the social analysis of the Communist Party's power, the role of organized labour is central. And in this the coir industry played a catalyst role. Chapter eight, a case study of the coir industry, is in effect a history of the emergence of organized labour and the rise to power of the Communist Party. Having said this it is important to recognize that Kerala's achievement in social indicators is not purely the result of State policy initiatives. The role of the human agency in demanding and utilizing civic rights, collective consumption is equally important in Kerala.

Mobility in Kerala

Mobility was not contained in Kerala. Even in pre-colonial times mobility was made possible by waterways, both internal by the backwaters and connecting canals and by coastal sea transportation. With the advent of railways and road transportation in the colonial period mobility was greatly advanced by a coastal road and rail network. Today Kerala has the highest road density in India, (Muttiah 1987. p110) and affordable motorized transport has increased in the last two decades as will be shown in chapter four.

It may be useful to recognize that high population densities not only demanded dense transportation networks but also provided economies of scale for transport systems. The point being made here is that within the lowlands and midlands of Kerala, spatial mobility was comparatively easy and increasingly so in recent decades. The implications for time-space compression and time-space collapse are apparent. In effect it was another factor facilitating desakota in Kerala. Mobility also contributed to minimal differentiation.

Minimal differentiation

Harvey we noted emphasized the differentiation tendency of capitalism and how it seeks to make distinct places. And in this process urban centres are made distinct, with massive investment of fixed capital in infrastructural and manufacturing features. Though there are urban centres in Kerala, the urban-rural distinctions are relatively minimal. This is in part an expression of minimal differentiation in Kerala. There are many geographical and socio-political factors contributing to this effect.

First, industries in Kerala being largely labour intensive, very little fixed capital in plant and machinery were required. The looms of the coir and cotton weaving industries; the roasting barrels of the cashew processing industries; were simple fixtures that could be removed and set up at another place. Tile manufacturing and saw mills had some equipment , land and buildings that comprised the fixed capital, but were not very expensive and more importantly not concentrated in urban locations. They were often close to waterways and other transport routes or near raw material sources. Beedi did not need any fixed capital at all. In chapter seven when manufacturing in Kerala is examined these features will be clear. It was only in the port towns, with warehouse facilities that had a measure of infrastructural concentration of fixed capital in land and buildings. Here too the ease of water transport made such facilities less concentrated and less required.

Second, is the minimal physical geographical and ecological differentiation within each of the three natural zones of lowlands, midlands and highlands that run north-south, parallel to each other, for the entire length of 550 kilometres of the Kerala State. There was also no one major river system like Ganges, Krishna, Godavari, Kaveri or Naramada elsewhere in India, centralizing regional economic activities and population. There were forty two small rivers that rose in the Western Ghats or highlands and flowed east west to the Arabian Sea. Among the string of ports along the coast, none had a natural superiority over the others, except Cochin to a slight extent. The rise and decline of one port over the others in the history of the region was due to political factors.

As will be argued in chapter four the historical geography of Kerala also suggests that the port towns were only ports of trade, not just on the geographical periphery of Kerala, but also on the social and economic margins of the region. During the British raj, the transformation of some of these port towns as typical colonial port cities and administrative towns began to change this feature. The initial concentration we noted of some the agro-processing industries in the port towns, were part of this change. But the capital-labour conflict and as we noted capital's use of space as a strategy to contend with organized labour partially reversed this trend. There was in this changing role of urban centres a conflict between the earlier role of the cities and the new role. But it may be argued that the conflict was in part contained or resolved by desakota.

Another factor is the colonial development of India being centred around the pivots of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Kerala or Malabar coast port cities, once important in the Indian ocean maritime trade and history, declined and became marginalized as the periphery of Madras, and for some commodity transactions (eg: coconut oil), as the periphery of Bombay. This too inhibited the growth of the Kerala port towns and cities into the typical colonial port cities. These issues will be discussed more fully in chapter four.

Third, and of important significance to this study, is the minimal demographic differentiations caused by the high rural population densities ranging from about 650 to 1100 persons per square kilometre in the lowlands and midlands.[24] The urban densities are no doubt higher, though there had been instances, as we will note in chapter three, when rural densities were higher than some of the towns. Chapter three also discusses some of the factors contributing to the high population density of Kerala. What is important for this study is that when capital was in need of labour, it's search was not necessarily confined to the urban areas. Spatially, labour could be found anywhere in the lowlands or midlands, though in practice non-spatial factors such as gender, class and caste may have intervened. Rural densities then did not limit capital's use of space to urban areas in its efforts to contend with organized labour. And in the reproduction of labour too urban-rural distinctions were minimal. This takes us on to the next factor, influencing desakota, collective consumption. This is closely linked to and influences minimal differentiation.

Collective consumption.

We noted that Castells (1976) argued that one of the distinguishing features of urban settlements in capitalist societies is that they are structured in accordance with the logic of collective consumption. Cities are the centres for the provision of services for the reproduction of labour and so minimizing the costs to capital of transport, health care, education and housing as such services are partly or wholly financed by the state. The urban system is seen as a repository of labour power wherein the state subsidizes its reproduction. In Kerala the collective consumption services that are available, particularly those provided by

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24. Kerala has recorded the highest population density among the States in India in censuses of the 20th century, except for 1901, 1911 and 1941 when West Bengal had a slightly higher population density. (See Chapter three, Table 3.07) Kerala's rural population density is among the highest in the world.

the state in health care, education and transport are relatively less concentrated in the urban areas than is usually the case. This is seen in Michael Lipton's (1977) recognition of Kerala as one of the few post-colonial societies where urban bias is minimally present. Two factors contributed to this and will be elaborated in Part I. To note them briefly now.

First, an egalitarian ideology, particularly in spatial terms of urban-rural, characterized state intervention in providing the services that make up collective consumption. The beginnings of such ideology may be seen in the princely or native state government of Travancore providing some of these services.[25] This ideological thrust and practice was accelerated in the post-colonial period by political and ideological factors, particularly as we noted earlier, with the entry of the Communist Party of India as one of the mainstream political parties in Kerala. Second, the rural population densities not only necessitated and claimed collective consumption services, particularly transport, education and health care, but the very population size and density facilitated economies of scale. (Bhat and Rajan 1990). This then enabled capital to use space to combat labour, because collective consumption facilities was not spatially uneven and concentrated only in urban areas.

Summing up space, political economy and desakota.

Cumulative effect of this mix or constellation of factors was the increasing importance of capital-labour conflict in the political economy of Kerala. The mercantile character of capital invested in the agro-processing industries and the growth of trade unionism and labourism combined to keep these industries labour intensive. Capital at the same time sought to combat and outflank labour by the use of space. The agro-processing factories were downsized, decentralized and dispersed to the countryside. This led to the growth of labour

25. As will be explained in chapter two, Travancore was one of the three politico-adminstrative units under the British raj that coalesced to form Kerala State soon after Indian independence

intensive small-scale and petty production in agro-processing in the countryside. The labour process not only remained in many industries in the first stage - "gathering together of previously independent workers into a factory system", but regressed to some extent in some industries to the stage of independent workers. Trade unionism and political awareness led in some industries to production and/or marketing co-operatives. In some cases the petty producers with their prior trade union experience as wage earning workers formed associations to negotiate for better prices. The spatial effect was that the development of the typical colonial urban system of port and administrative cities and towns, was impeded.

The characteristics of desakota in the McGee hypothesis and in Kerala

This study will demonstrate that most of the characteristics delineated by the McGee hypothesis are present in Kerala subject to a few but significant variations. Briefly, following the summary of characteristics of desakota presented on pages 10-11, these observations may be made.

First, there is in Kerala a large population engaged in small holder agriculture with considerable interaction through accessible transportation routes. The significant variation from the McGee model in Kerala, is that not all of such agriculture is rice cultivation. While rice remains an important crop there is a considerable amount of cash crops, most of them non-grain crops. Livestock farming is also significant and increasing in recent times.

Second, desakota in Kerala is not linked to any large primate city, but occurs in association with secondary cities. Such desakota is far less dependent or linked to any central urban system than desakota in an extended metropolitan region. While McGee (1991a) has recognized that desakota does occur in association with secondary cities in some parts of

Asia, his more recent writings (1991b, 1992) with the emphasis on extended metropolitan regions tend to overlook this type of desakota.

Third, the importance of intra-desakota dynamics. In desakota that is not linked to a primate city or a central urban system, like in Kerala, intra-desakota dynamics are significant. Once again this is receiving increasingly less attention in McGee's conceptual and analytical treatment of extended metropolitan regions and desakota.

Fourth, fluidity and mobility of population and commodities as well as intensive use of land and agriculture and household production existing side by side as listed by the McGee hypothesis is observable in Kerala. Kerala also has a significant presence of small scale industries, or 'non-factory, non-household industries' as it is sometimes described in India. Chapter seven demonstrates and discusses this feature of Kerala industries.

Fifth, McGee's recent writings (1991b, 1992) on extended metropolitan regions and desakota is increasingly associated with the rapid economic growth that is taking place in some of the southeast Asian countries. Desakota in Kerala in a sense blurs this type of desakota. It is not associated with rapid economic growth, nor is it a recent phenomenon. Rural household industries that characterize pre-capitalist and pre-colonial manufacturing, did not totally cease to operate in Kerala. Some activities like manual rice processing declined, while a few others such as toddy manufacture, jewellery making, basket and mat weaving continued and were as before non-urban based. In coir, an important industry in Kerala, coir yarn spinning continued to be a household industry. But with increasing demand there emerged the "gathering together of previously independent workers into a factory system". The factories were no more than 'open air' group activity, near lakes and other inland waters where coconut husks where retted to make the coir yarn. They remained non-urban and using labour intensive low technology. It was this section of the coir industry that saw luddite

resistance to mechanization. But a new value added coir sector, using low labour intensive, but nonetheless new, technology was the making of coir carpets, mats and mattings with the spun yarn. It was this new economic activity and the market for its finished goods that pushed the demand for coir yarn. The coir mats and matting sector was initially urban, but due to the capital-labour conflict and capital's use of space to contend with the conflict, became non-urban in location.

A similar path is seen in beedi, cashew processing and in sections of the cotton textile industry. Some new industries such as brick and tile, wood based industries and seafood processing, were non-urban and largely labour intensive, due to the comparative advantage of raw material and the availability of labour, collective consumption and transport facilities for finished products. The presence of these non-urban manufacture, together with the large number of employees in the collective consumption and transport services, trade and commerce, particularly by the presence of forced commerce, created a large non-urban, non-agricultural work force. New market demands, national and international; high rural population densities; pressure for employment opportunities; organized labour; reproduction of past social relations of productions, form a complex context that underpins the presence of non-agricultural activity in non-urban areas of Kerala.

Sixth, women's participation in the work force had, overall declined in Kerala, in terms of census data. Some new industries such as cashew processing used female labour. But due to the decline of some traditional household industries, (Eg: manual rice processing), which had high women's participation rates, the net effect had been an overall decline of women's participation in the Kerala labour force. The measurement of this is of course affected by the nature of census operations, census definition of work, under-enumeration of women's work etc. Informed studies of Kerala economy and labour agree that women's participation in the work force had declined in the 20th century in certain kinds of economic activity. (U.N. 1975.

p74) The overall rate of decline may not been reliably established or agreed upon given the weakness of census data. This is in contrast to McGee's observation of increasing female participation in desakota regions elsewhere in Asia.

Seventh, it has been suggested in the McGee hypothesis (1991a p12) that labour shedding accompanying the green revolution may have contributed to the emergence of desakota by the search, by the displaced or underemployed labour, seeking alternate employment opportunities in the non-agricultural sector. The increasing participation of women in the non-agricultural work force is also seen as related to green revolution labour shedding. This linking to the green revolution once again suggests that desakota is a recent phenomenon, occurring during the last two to three decades. Desakota is seen as part of the new industrialism and agriculture in Asia. While this may be so elsewhere in Asia, it is not the case in Kerala. Kerala agriculture is not regarded as a green revolution "success" story. In fact it is agricultural stagnation in Kerala that has drawn attention. (Kannan and Pushpangadan 1989. p1067, 1990. p1991) Thus desakota in Kerala does not have any relationship to green revolutions and labour shedding. But in Kerala as suggested in the McGee hypothesis a mixture of agriculture and non-agriculture occurs within a single household. This is due to the presence of non-agricultural activity in non urban areas for reasons discussed before.

Eighth, and perhaps the most significant of this study's findings is the importance of the political economy in making desakota intelligible. A unique mix of factors in Kerala make the political economy central to an understanding of desakota in Kerala. Undoubtedly the specificity of the Kerala context makes the political economy important. Nonetheless this study raises an important critique of McGee's work on extended metropolitan regions and desakota. There is an increasing emphasis in his recent writings on the technological and economic base of extended metropolitan regions and desakota and the political economy is seen as less important.

Lastly, an important outcome of the McGee desakota hypothesis is that it challenges the conventional view of the urban transition, and the underlying assumption that urban-rural distinctions will persist as urbanization advances. McGee finds the conventional view of the urban transition inadequate for three reasons.

> First, it is too narrow in its view that the widely accepted spatial separation of rural and urban activities will persist as urbanization continues. Second, it is inadequate in its assumption that the urbanization transition will be inevitable because of the "agglomeration economies" and comparative advantage, which are said to facilitate the concentration of the population in linked urban areas.....Third, the Western paradigm of the urban transition, which draws its rationale from the historical experience of urbanization as it has occurred in Western Europe and North America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is clearly not neatly transferable to the developing countries' urbanization process.(McGee 1991a. p4-5)

Desakota in Kerala is a strong and explicit demonstration of McGee's argument of the inadequacy of the urban transition model. The recognition of this and the presence of desakota in Kerala, helps to make intelligible the pattern of urbanization in Kerala. Kerala urbanization as we will discuss in chapter five was seen by many scholars as a problematic variant in the urbanization trends in India. This was in part due to such studies being underpinned by an urban transition model of analysis.

Objectives of this study

The basic objective or central motif of this study is simple. This is to establish that desakota, as delineated in the McGee's hypothesis is present in Kerala, subject to some qualifications, and to make this presence of desakota intelligible. To re-phrase it, the urban-rural fusion that is observed in Kerala, is to be presented in a macro-descriptive analysis using a mix of quantitative and qualitative data. In the process a regional geographical analysis is put forward to make the urban-rural fusion intelligible. This analysis is centred in the use of the desakota hypothesis, with some refinements and re-emphasis. This central motif in the

objectives of this study has a cluster of subordinate objectives. They may be described as follows.

First, the presence of desakota at the macro level has to be established. This is nearly the entire Kerala State, 'sans' its highland region, commercial centres, bazaars and other definitive urban areas. This implies that some of the areas deemed for census purpose as urban or rural may include some areas more appropriately described as desakota. What is being argued in this study is that the entire lowlands and midlands of Kerala is desakota and it is in a symbiotic embrace with the commercial centres and bazaar nodes. The presence of desakota has to be primarily established on the economic dimension, for this, as we discussed earlier, is central to the definition of the urban-rural dichotomy. Other dimensions of the urban-rural dichotomy will also be addressed in the effort to establish the presence of desakota in Kerala. The need to establish desakota on the basis of economic activity, at the Kerala State level and disaggregated by districts, partly dictates the need for a macro quantitative methodology and data.

Secondly, as discussed earlier, desakota is not a recent phenomenon in Kerala. This necessitates an historical geographical objective. This is largely confined to examining 20th century Kerala for the features of desakota. But some of the historical geographical analysis presented in this study bring in glimpses of 19th and 18th century Kerala, to facilitate understanding 20th century events and trends. A recent theme in Indian historiography (Bayly 1988) is that an understanding of colonial and post-colonial India cannot be limited to the rise of the British raj and its aftermath. It has been argued that many of the social and political configurations of 19th and 20th century India are rooted in the character and emergence of the successor states during the decline of the Mughal empire. The Kerala region in the southwest corner of the sub-continent was never part of the Mughal empire. But nonetheless the rise of Travancore in the 18th century among the principalities of the Malabar coast and its

functioning as a princely state within the British raj is of immense importance in understanding colonial and contemporary Kerala. This will be made clear in chapter one. The mix of an economic and historical geographical approach brings in a strong economic historical perspective.

Third, there is the objective within the coherent framework of the desakota hypothesis and economic, historical, and geographical analysis to present a regional geography[26] of Kerala. The need is to be sensitive to the mix of environmental, ecological[27] and human factors that produce the specificity and uniqueness of a region. This objective, though informed by the Vidal de la Blache vision of a mix of *milieu, genre de vie* and *circulation,* does not seek a deterministic society and environment relationship. It is more a vision of sensitively composing the parts so that the totality of region as a specific and unique place emerges.

The fourth objective of this study is to explain the centrality of the political economy and its symbiotic relationship to the spatial economy for an understanding of Kerala and desakota in Kerala. This has been discussed earlier and its central importance in making desakota intelligible has been stressed. It is repeated here briefly to emphasize that an objective of this study is to demonstrate the relationship between the political economy and space economy, and that this relationship is of fundamental significance in understanding desakota, and Kerala as a unique region in the subcontinent.

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26. Regional geography means the study of the geography of regions, that seek to document and clarify the specific character of a particular locality. In this effort the interactions of the human and physical domains are analyzed and their fusion in the landscape is viewed as text.

27. Ecology is used here to mean the interaction between human culture and the physical environment.

A fifth objective that emerges in the effort to make desakota in Kerala intelligible is the synthesis and re-interpretation from a geographical perspective the literature on the economic history and political economy of Kerala. A number of scholarly economic historical studies (Issac 1982, 1983a, 1983b, 1984, & 1985; Kannan 1983, 1988; Raghavan 1986; Beevi 1978; Rajagopalan 1986; and Mathew 1986) of Kerala contain information of spatial significance. But none of the studies draw out in conceptual and analytical terms the geographical issues. The closest to a recognition of the importance of space is by Issac:

> Decentralization of production has to be seen as a strategy of capital to by-pass the social limits imposed by organized working class to capitalist exploitation in the large-scale manufactories. (Issac 1982. p PE13)

The present study will seek to draw out, synthesize and interpret the spatial significance in some of this literature on Kerala.

Lastly, an objective of this study is to demystify Kerala's urbanization as an aberrant variation in the context of national and other regional patterns of urbanization. In chapter five it will be shown that many studies of urbanization in India leave Kerala out, as it is problematic to fit it within the wider Indian pattern of urbanization. It is argued in this study that once Kerala spatial order is seen within the conceptual framework of the desakota hypothesis, it ceases to be unexplained deviancy.

Presentation of the Study.

This study is presented in three parts. Part I titled "Towards an understanding of Kerala" is a historical geographical introduction to Kerala as a region in India or south Asia. Part II is a macro descriptive analysis of economic activity in Kerala, as depicted by census and

other quantitative data on the occupational character of the Kerala work force in the 20th century. Part III presents case studies of two industries in Kerala. They will attempt to make explicit the political economy of labour-capital conflict and the relationship between the political economy and spatial structures. The case studies also seek to balance the quantitative thrust of Part II and act as a corrective to some of the inherent weakness of census data. There will be a concluding chapter drawing out the main findings of this study.

Part I consists of chapters two to five. Chapter two is a historical geographical introduction to Kerala, as a cultural-linguistic region in the mosaic of such regions in the subcontinent. A theme developed at the end of the chapter is that among such a mosaic of regions on the basis of cultural-linguistic distinctions, Kerala has claims to a distinct socioeconomic character, as distinguished from cultural-linguistic characteristics. Chapter three addresses this question. Among the distinct features of Kerala is its unique spatial order. Chapter four goes on to deal with this at length. It is, as would be apparent now, an important feature of Kerala for this study of desakota in Kerala. Chapter five reviews the literature that had addressed the spatial order of Kerala, in particular its urbanization pattern and trends. It also emphasizes the relevance of the desakota hypothesis for an understanding of Kerala's spatial order.

Part II consists of chapters six and seven. Together they seek to address the macro economic objectives of this study and to demonstrate the presence of desakota by establishing the substantial numbers of the work force engaged in non-agricultural occupations. It must be stressed again here that for these purposes, agriculture is taken in its broadest sense and includes apart from cultivation and agricultural labour, all those engaged in livestock, forestry, fishing, hunting, plantations, orchards and allied activity. Chapter six begins with a critical review of the twelve decennial census of India from 1871 to 1981 and then goes on to use the censuses from 1901, which are relatively more reliable. The effort is to first

construct the two broad sectors of agriculture and non-agriculture in Kerala disaggregated by the rural-urban entities. The intention is to demonstrate the substantial presence of non-agricultural activity in the non-urban areas. This it is argued is due to most of the rural or non-urban areas being desakota. Chapter seven disaggregates the non-agricultural work force on a sectoral basis and rural-urban basis with a view to identifying the sectors that contribute to the significant non-agricultural activity in non-urban areas. The manufacturing and service sectors are disaggregated further to identify specific industries and services that are present in the non-urban areas.

The data used for these two chapters is primarily census data. Some use of the Annual Survey of Industries data, and State domestic product data is made for the period such data are available, viz 1961 to 1981. Chapters six and seven also review and use secondary source material, (apart from the census and other primary quantitative data), of relevance for the economic history of in Kerala. Some studies of small and household manufacture in 20th century India but outside Kerala are also used. This enables the teasing out of some of the issues present in the small and household industries in Kerala.

Among the industries identified as important for the presence of rural non-agricultural activity, coir and beedi have been selected for in depth case studies as chapters eight and nine. The reasons for selecting these two industries will be detailed in the two case studies. Chapters eight and nine make up Part III of this study. The objective of the case studies is not merely to flesh the dry bones of the quantitative data of Part II with qualitative data. Part III is more than this. It was argued that the character of the political economy of 20th century Kerala is of fundamental importance for the study of desakota in Kerala. The emergence of organized labour and the conflict between labour and capital is seen as important to an understanding of the political economy of Kerala. The two case studies of coir and beedi will illustrate the factors and process by which the capital-labour conflict became an important

feature of the political economy of Kerala. Capital's use of space is explored in these case studies. This also makes the non-urban or desakota location of the two industries intelligible. The coir industry, is however, the more important. It was one of the major industries in Kerala and was also a catalyst in the emergence and spread of organized labour among many occupational groups in Kerala. A case study of the coir industry is thus an important reading of the history and character of the political economy of 20th century Kerala. The choice of case studies of industries as qualitative data over the more common academic choice of anthropological material needs to be briefly explained. While anthropological material may have elicited processes at work at the local level in our search for an understanding of desakota in Kerala, the time-space sweep so important to make Kerala desakota intelligible may be missed in an anthropological snapshot. And since desakota is linked to the non-urban location of Kerala industries, case studies of two industries in Kerala was methodologically more appropriate.

Finally the conclusion discusses the relevance of the concept of desakota towards an understanding of the spatial character of the Kerala region, and the significance of this study, as an empirically informed examination, of the desakota hypothesis.

CHAPTER TWO

REGION AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN KERALA

Ecology and Region

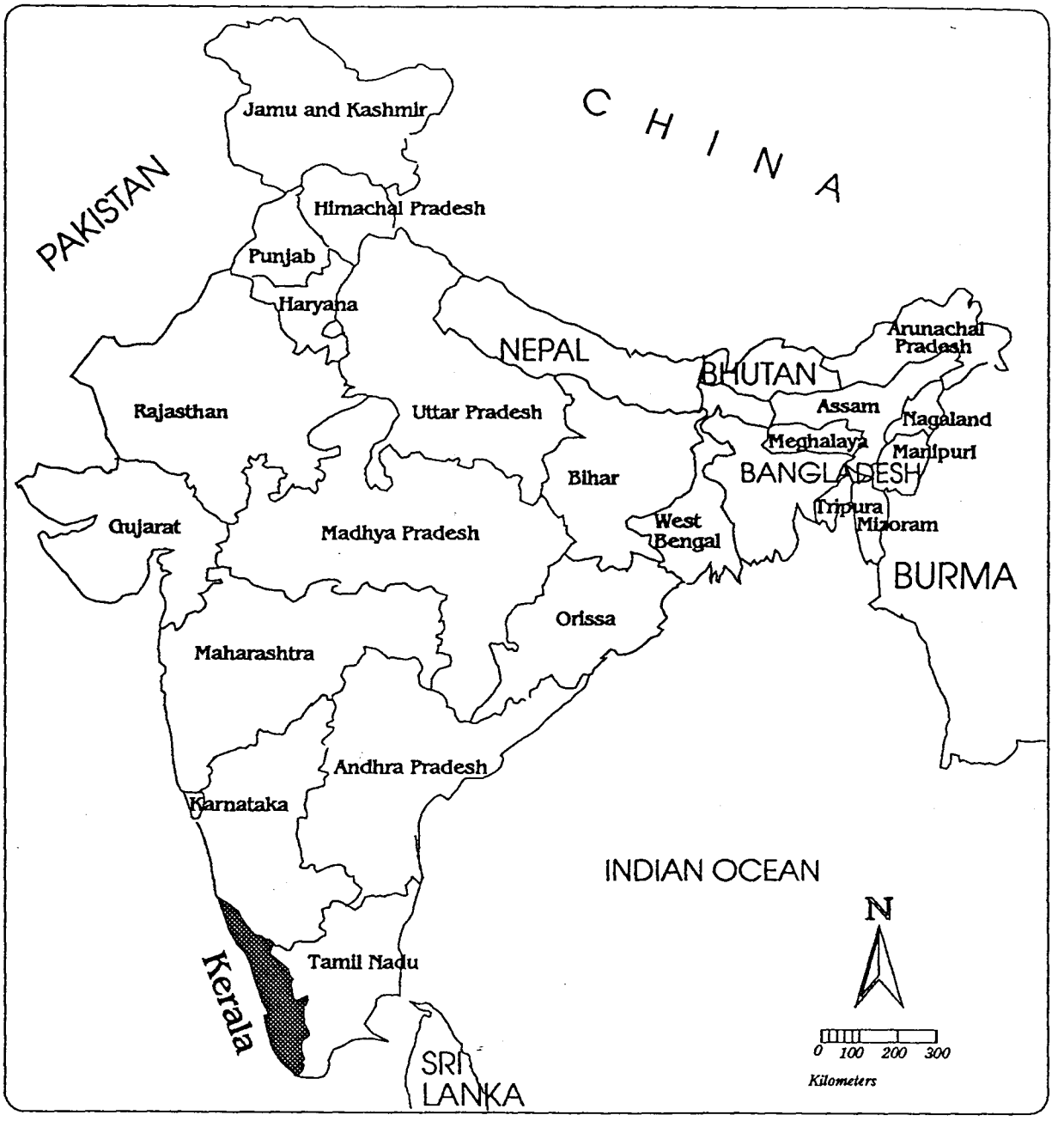
Kerala State occupies a narrow strip of land along the south western coast of India, ending 50 kilometres north of Kanya Kumari, (Cape Comorin), the southern tip of the sub-continent. The land area of Kerala covers 38,855 square kilometres. It has an elongated shape, with the width nowhere over 100 kilometres and averaging 60 kilometres. This shape gives it a long coastline of nearly 550 kilometres. Such a coastline, with its historical geography and ecosystem, as we shall soon observe, has had an impact on the space economy of Kerala. The coastline and elongated shape results in nine[1] of the twelve administrative districts of Kerala in 1981, being coastal districts. (See Maps 2.01 and 2.02)

Kerala's land mass includes the Western Ghats and the slopes west of it, falling to the lowlands by the sea. This area including the Western Ghats, has three ecological zones, the highlands, the midlands and the lowlands. (Map 2.03). On the western fringe are the lowlands which stretch along the coastal plain and are interspersed with extensive backwaters, lagoons and canals. The soil is sandy and the principal crop is coconut. Though the lowlands occupy only 10.2 percent of the land area of Kerala, they contain 25.8 percent of its population. The lowlands thus have the typical Kerala landscape of dense population amidst backwaters and canals flanked by coconut groves. The midlands are an undulating

1. Including Kottayam District, which adjoins Lake Vembanad and so has access to the sea via this lake. (See Map 2.01)

Map 2.01

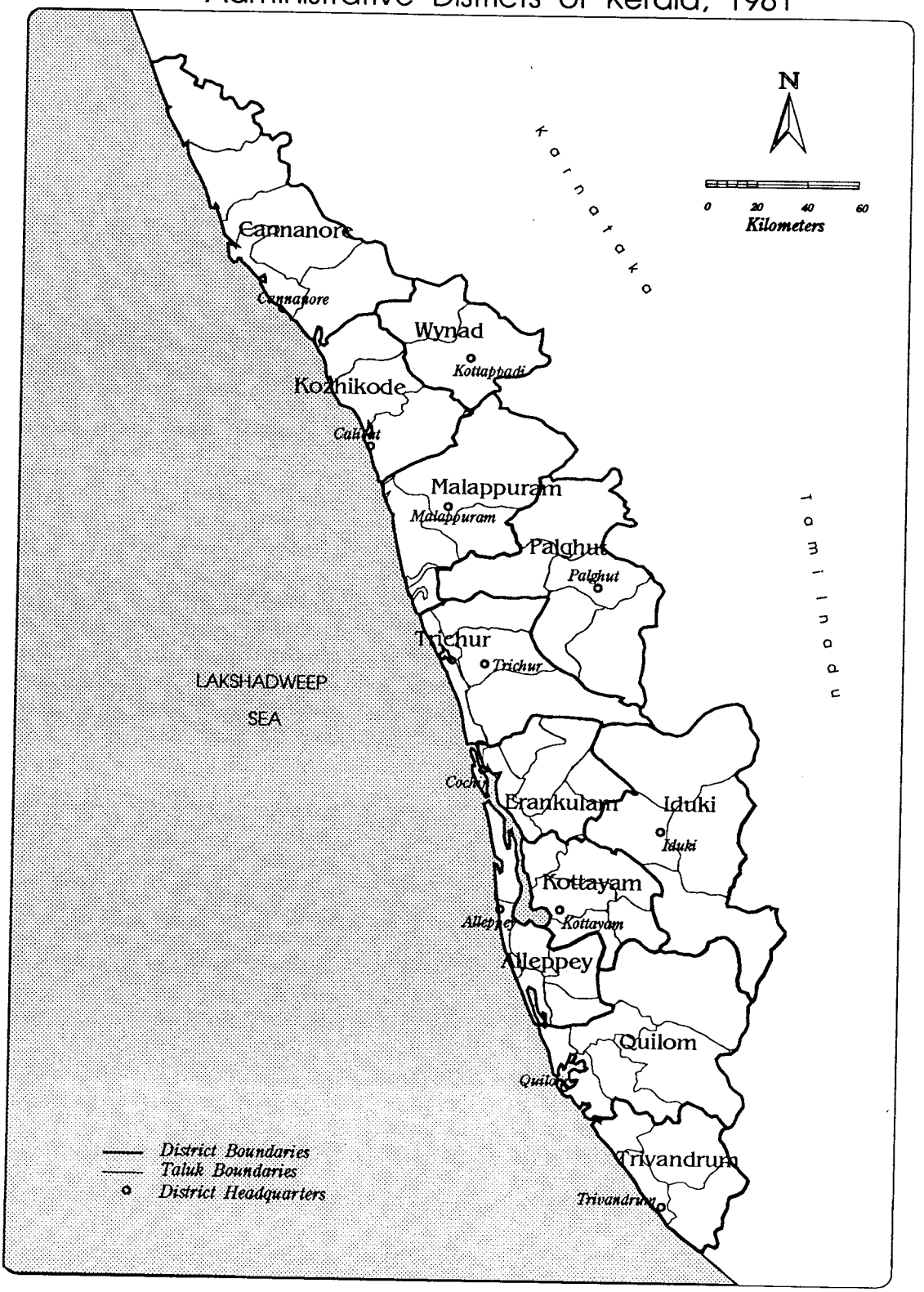
Position of Kerala in India, 1981



Source: Census of India 1981, Series 10: Kerala, Part II-A.

Map 2.02

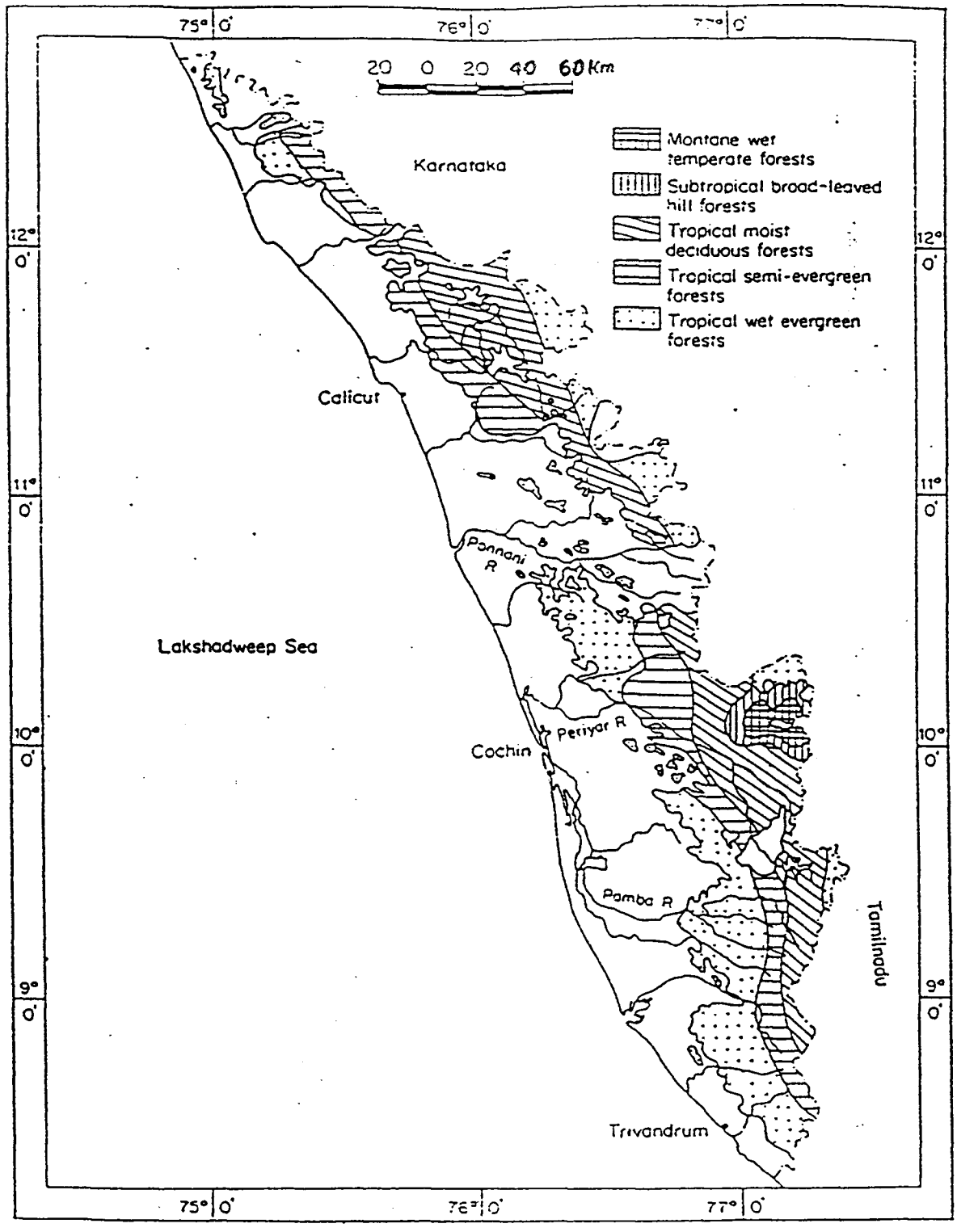
Administrative Districts of Kerala, 1981



Source: Census of India. Series 10: Kerala, 1981.

MAP 2.03

KERALA : ECOLOGICAL ZONES



Source; Chattopadhyay 1985. p221
Note: This map shows the Kerala highland region by vegetation types. The balance area of Kerala (white spaces), correspond with the lowland and midland regions of Kerala.

terrain, seldom reaching more than 1000 metres in height, with laterite soil and rich in agricultural produce. Rice, coconut, tapioca, spices and cashew are some of the main crops of this region. It occupies 41.8 percent of the land area and contains 59.1 percent of the population. The lowlands and midlands together occupy a little more than half the area of the State, but contain nearly 85 percent of its population. They also constitute the major portion of the land area of the nine coastal districts. It is within the socio-spatial labyrinth of the lowlands and midlands and its political economy that desakota occurs.

The Western Ghats range along the eastern border of Kerala and separate Kerala from Tamilnadu in the east and Karnataka in the northeast. It is the Western Ghats that form the highland region of Kerala. It is mostly a mountainous and rocky terrain ranging in elevation from about 1000 to 3000 metres. The highest peak Anamudi which is close to 3000 metres is the highest point in India, south of the Himalayas. The highland region is thickly forested in the upper ranges, while in the lower ranges the forests are interspersed with tea, coffee and rubber plantations. Spices, growing wild, conserved or planted are also found in this region. The highlands constitute 48.0 percent of Kerala's land area but only 15.0 percent of the population reside in the region.

The highlands or Western Ghats are important for two reasons. First, the high mountainous wall of the Ghats and its close proximity to the sea results in heavy and regular rainfall in all regions of Kerala.[2] The flora and fauna of Kerala are influenced by this rainfall and the topographical features of the natural regions. The rich forest and spice growth and plantation crops in the highlands are a good example. The dense coconut groves in the lowlands are another. These agro-climatic features and resultant land use patterns have important implications for the demography and space economy of Kerala. We shall examine

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2. Kerala, together with coastal Karnataka and coastal Maharashtra, has the highest rainfall in India averaging around 3000 millimetres a year. (Muttiah 1987.p60)

this later. Second, the Western Ghats form a ramparts on Kerala's eastern flank. The Palghat gap about twenty miles wide is the only significant break in the Western Ghats. This together with the much narrower Shenkottah and Aramboli passes further south, provide restricted access to and from the south eastern plains and the Deccan plateau in central peninsula India. This meant that Kerala was relatively isolated from the rest of peninsula India. With the coming of railways and roads in the late 19th century this isolation was removed. But in the pre-colonial period, the isolation imposed by the Western Ghats intensified the exposure of the long Kerala coast to Indian ocean trade and navigation. Even without the isolation imposed by the Western Ghats the western littoral from Surat to Kanya Kumari had social geographical significance.

> The recurrent appearance on the Indian littoral, the western one in particular, of conditions that are distinguished from those prevailing in the north or trunk of India, may be seen as the consequence of an offside location relative to the historical flow of culture. The littoral's cultural distinctiveness and its peripherality in relation to the larger pan-Indian world are underlined by a metaphorical turning away to face the sea, whether in a merely local exploitation of the strand's resources or in establishing mercantile connections across the waters. (Sopher 1980. p316-7)

It is this littoral context that gives greater significance to the isolation of Kerala, imposed by the Western Ghats. One consequence of this was the presence, in Kerala's narrow littoral strip, of the cultural and economic effects of exposure to seaborne trade and contacts. Another was the implication for the spatial order. The more visible cultural results of this exposure are the presence of foreign ethnic communities like the Jews; the Saurashtra trading Brahmins; and the emergence of ethno-religious groups like the Syrian Christians and Mopalah Muslims. This is not to argue that Kerala was a picturesque backwater domain tucked away behind the Western Ghats, untouched by the forces at work elsewhere in India, until the colonial period opened up internal communications. That would be to give a somewhat static, deterministic cast to the socio- spatial order and fail to recognize the dynamics of internal circulation over many centuries, in spite of the topographical constraints. For instance,

Malayalam, the language native to Kerala, was a 9th century A.D. offshoot of Tamil, (Davies 1959.p84; Sastri 1964.p1) the language of southeast India. So, though the topographical isolation of Kerala and its exposure to Indian ocean trade contributed to the specificity of Kerala's regional identity, interaction with a hinterland was present and had its impact. This incorporated Kerala into the broader south Asian or Indian cultural identity, and in particular with south India as a cultural region. Thus in Kerala, as elsewhere in India:

> An underlying order is first discernible in the pervasive "Indianness" of the phenomena observed, however diverse that may be. (Sopher 1980. p289)

The regional identity: A historical sketch.

The first available evidence of a regional identity of Kerala[3] in political terms is in the Sangam period of south India, approximating to the first five centuries of the Christian era. Chera was one of the three kingdoms in southwest India. (Sreedhara Menon.1984. p54) Little is known of the region after this, until the 9th century A.D. when Chera becomes the dominant power of the region. It continued to be so until the 12th century. This period is referred to as the second Chera dynasty. It is perhaps during this period that a cultural-linguistic identity as a region emerged, with Malayalam as the regional language and a symbol of the regional cultural-linguistic identity. (Ibid p32,49) During the period 13th to 17th A.D. the region politically disintegrated into warring minor principalities. But the cultural-linguistic identity as region continued and lent a firm popular consciousness of region. It was in Kozhikode (Calicut), one of the major port cities of this period on the Kerala or Malabar coast, as it was often known then, that Vasco de Gama anchored in 1498, after his historic voyage round the Cape of Good Hope. Kozhikode was the seat of the Zamorin of Kozhikode, the

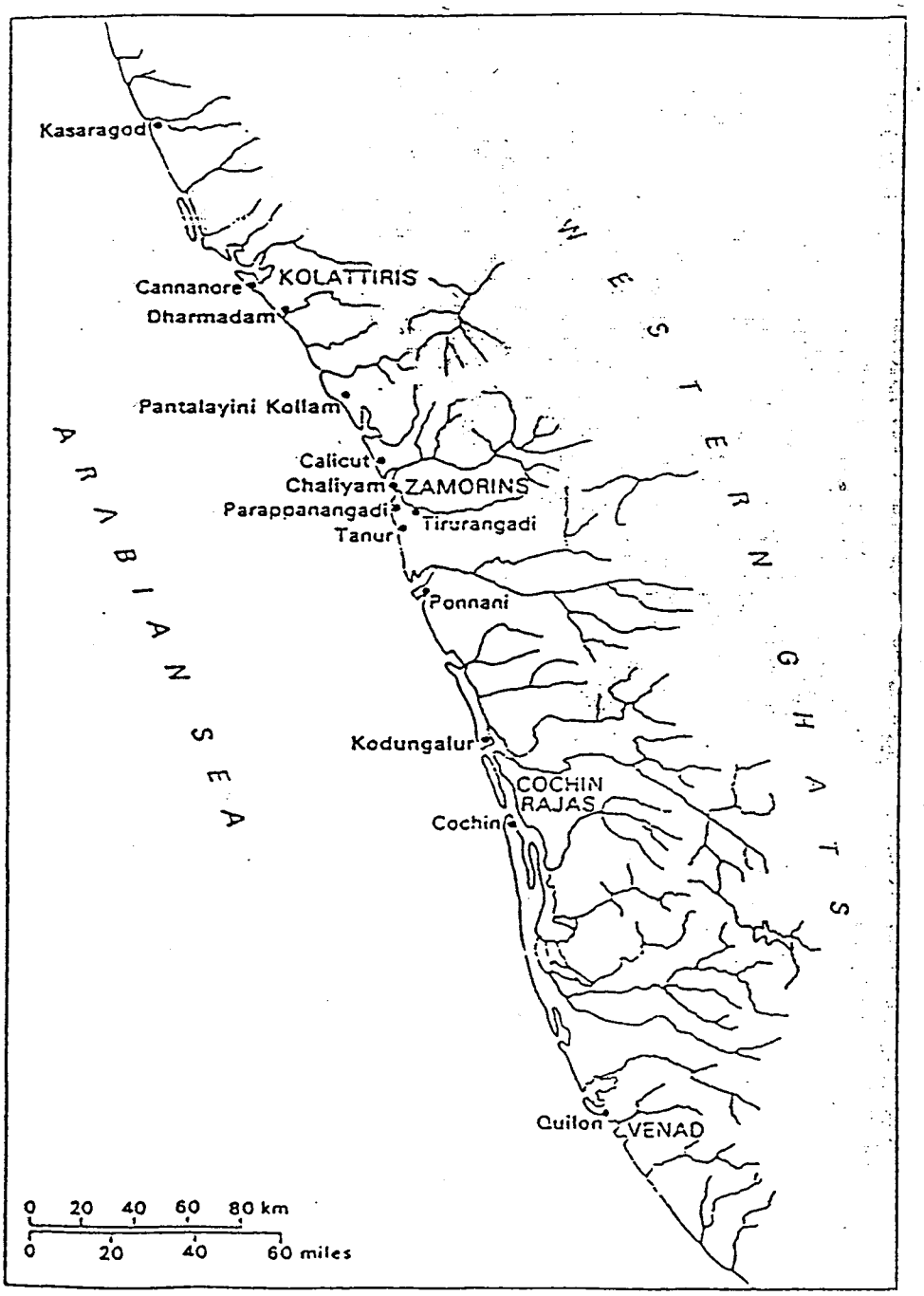
3. Many explanations have been offered for the name Kerala. One is that Kerala means the land of Kera, the Malayalam word for the coconut palm. Another is that Kerala was originally Cheralam, the land of the Cheras. Cher can also mean "added" in Malayalam. This would give the meaning - the land that was added. The origin myth of Kerala is that Parasurama, a god of the Hindu pantheon, flung his battle axe far into the sea and the waters receded and the land of Kerala emerged.

ruler of the principality of Kozhikode. With this began the entry of the European maritime powers and their trading companies to the geopolitics of the region. During this period, among the many principalities of the southwest coast, there were three or four more important than the others. These were Kolathunad, and Kozhikode in the north and Venad in the south. They were ruled by the dynasties of the Kolattiri Rajas, the Zamorins and the Tiruvadis respectively. Cochin came into prominence in the course of the 16th century. (Dale 1980. p12-14) (See Map 2.04) Beginning in 1729 Venad annexed a number of adjoining principalities to cover the southern half of the Kerala region and renamed itself as Travancore State. In the north, Kolathunad ruled by the Kolattiris and Kozhikode by the Zamorins remained supreme. Sandwiched between Kozhikode and Travancore was the small principality of Cochin. It was left alone due the presence of a Dutch factory on its shores.

In the second half of the 18th century a decisive turning point was brought about by the expansion and consolidation in peninsular India, in the north east of the Malabar coast, of the Deccan kingdom of Mysore by Haidar Ali and later Tipu Sultan. They desired to control the rich trade of the Malabar coast, as well as through such trade further their commercial links with Muslim west Asia. (C.A.Bayly 1988. p62) With this in view they annexed Kolathunad and Kozhikode. The second half of the 18th century also saw the British gaining control and consolidating their position in India. (Ibid.p8) In south India the major challenge to the British was put up by Mysore. Eventually, after the narrow defeat of Tipu Sultan in the third Mysore War (1791), the British gained control of the region. (Ibid.p62) What was formerly Kozhikode and Kolathunad, were ceded to the British in 1792, and brought under direct British rule as the Malabar District of the Madras Presidency. Travancore and Cochin continued to have their separate political existence, but as native or princely states within the British raj in India. They accepted British suzerainty, Cochin in 1791 and Travancore in 1795. (Map 2.05)

MAP 2.04

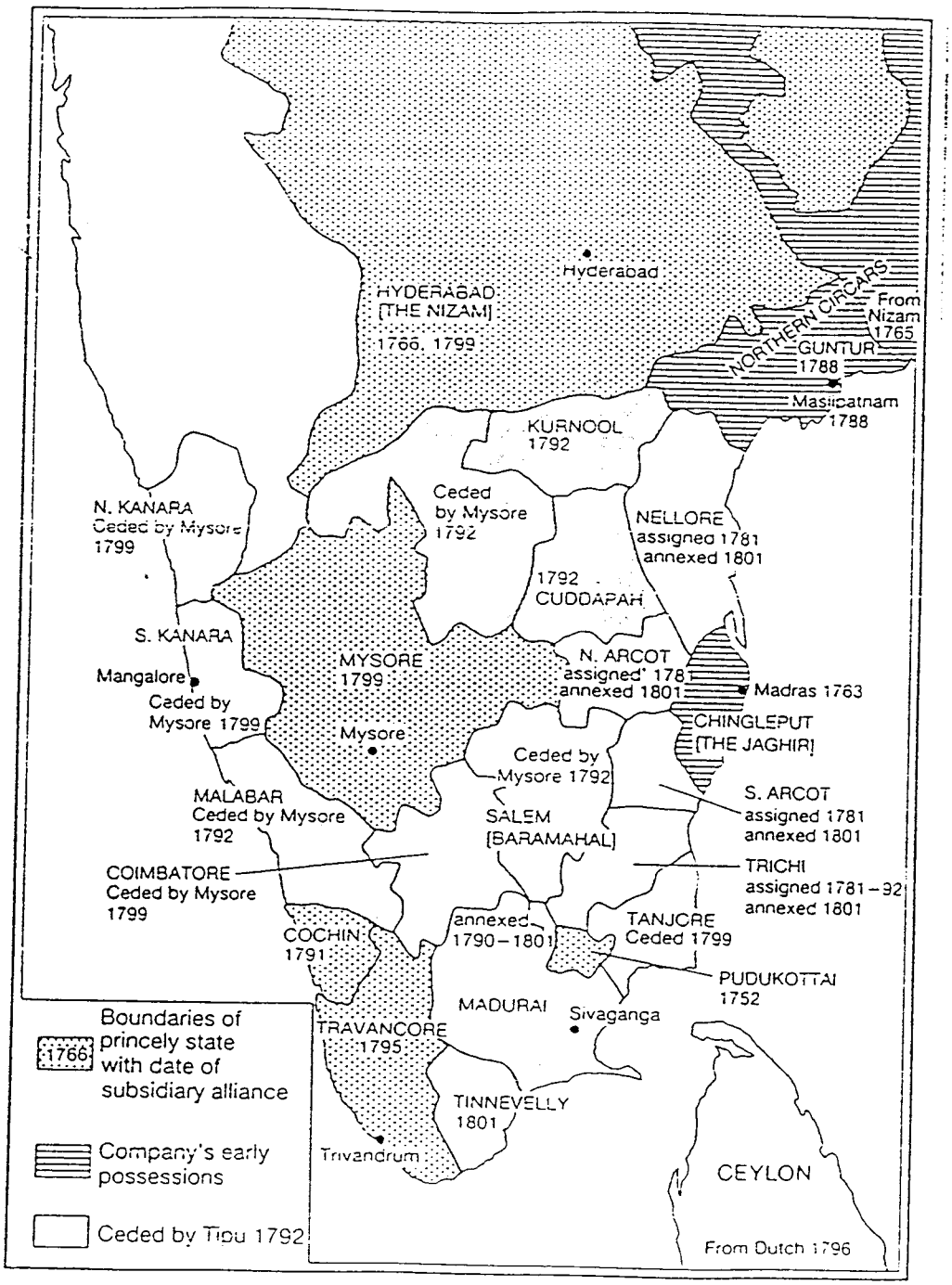
THE FOUR MAJOR PRINCIPALITIES OF KERALA
Circa 16th Century



Source: Dale (1980) p 25. Note the river basin character of the principalities. There were other minor principalities on the many river basins that were annexed by Venad in the 18th century.

MAP 2.05

BRITISH EXPANSION: SOUTH INDIA 1750 - 1820



Source: Bayly (1988) p88.

In 1947, with the departure of the British, Travancore and Cochin were joined together to form the Travancore-Cochin State of the Indian Union. In 1956 when the States of the Indian Union were reorganized on a linguistic basis Malabar district was taken away from Madras State, the erstwhile Madras Presidency, and joined to Travancore-Cochin to form Kerala State. Two taluks of South Kanara district, (north of Malabar district), of Madras State, the majority of whose inhabitants were Malayalam speaking, were added to Kerala State. Four taluks at the southern tip of Travancore, whose residents were Tamil speaking, were ceded by Travancore-Cochin to Tamilnadu, a state carved out of Madras State. Thus eventually after about seven centuries of political fragmentation, the Malayalam speaking linguistic-cultural region was once again unified under one political authority as Kerala State. (Map 2.06)[4]

Cultural institutions, change and consequences

Though Kerala has this historical and cultural-linguistic identity, this is not unique in the sub-continent. Most regions of India have such identities. India is a mosaic of such regions within an overall south Asian identity. The diversity of the cultural-linguistic regions of India, within a broader common identity, is comparable to that of Europe. The regions of India however even lack a common script, that Europe possesses in the Latin script. Given this diversity, within the pervasive "Indianesss" in all regions, Kerala is no more specific or unique than any other cultural-linguistic region of India.

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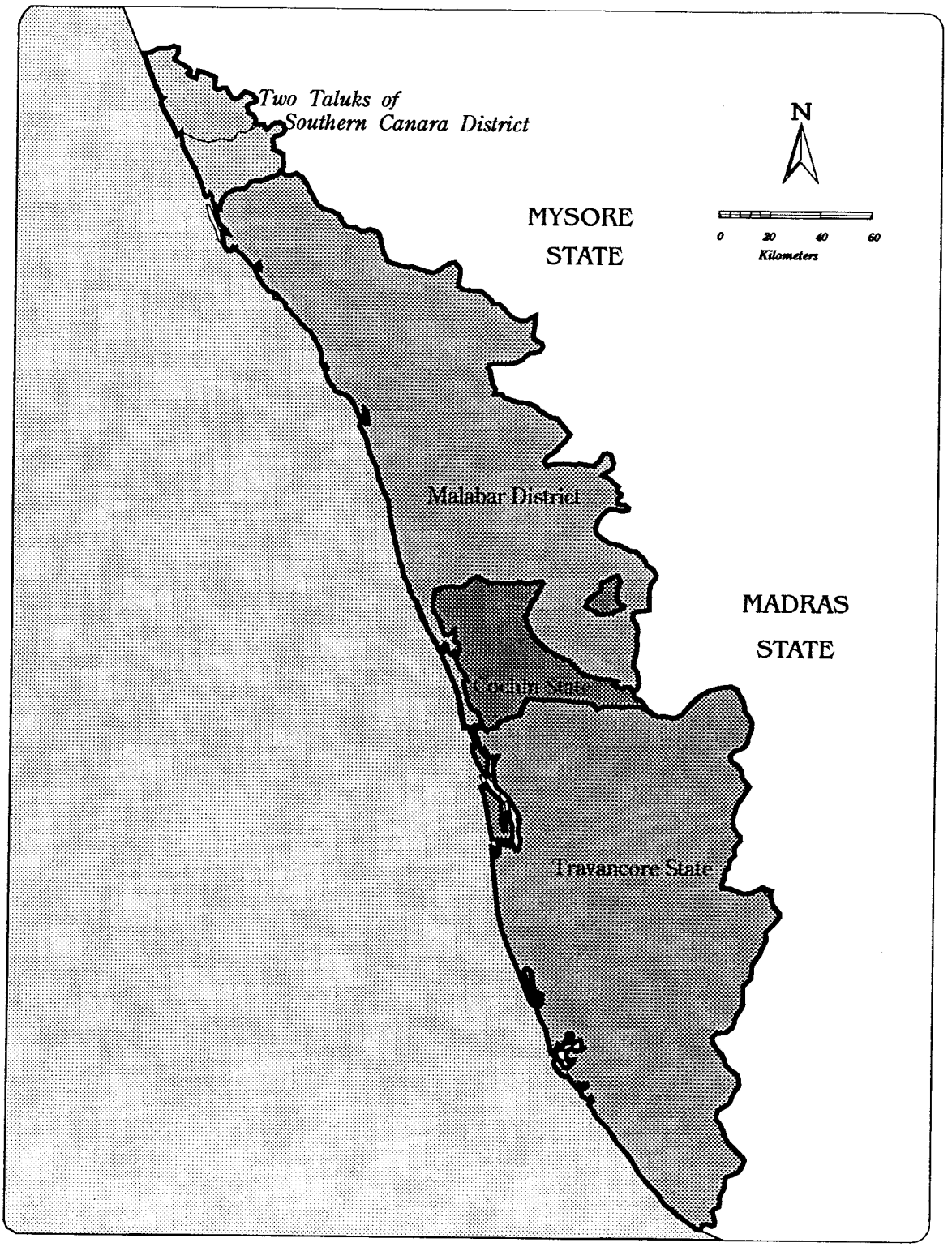
4. Kerala will be used throughout this study to refer to the Malayalam linguistic and cultural area and the modern Indian state of Kerala. Malabar coast will designate the Kerala coastline during the pre-colonial and the British raj period. Malabar district will signify that part of northern Kerala which was termed Malabar district and was part of Madras Presidency during the British raj. Travancore and Cochin princely or native states will be referred to as Travancore and Cochin respectively. Cochin city and part of the city that was directly under the British and called British Cochin, will be distinguished as such when required. The term "the three political-administrative units" will be used when there is a need to refer to Travancore, Cochin and Malabar district collectively.

Map 2.06

Travancore, Cochin, Malabar and South Canara



Source: Census of India. Series 10: Kerala, 1981.

Nonetheless Kerala has attracted attention for a number of characteristics that are unique to Kerala. Among western scholars and academics, those who were repeatedly drawn to study aspects of Kerala society were anthropologists. They sought to study the *marumakkatayam* system of matrilineal inheritance and joint-families. Many numerically and socially important castes of Kerala followed this system. (Thurston 1909, Vol 2 p69, p410; Vol 3 p139; Vol 7 p77 and Census of India 1901, Vol XXVI Pt I, Appendix piii-iv). Anthropological interests however centred on the Nayars, the dominant caste of Kerala.[5] A brief description of of some the features of marumakkatayam system is called for as a background to social change and reform in 20th century Kerala. These changes had implications for the political economy of 20th century Kerala.

The matrilineal joint-family of the Nayars were called *taravads*. A *taravad* was comprised of the matrilineal descendants of a common ancestress, and usually contained a set of sisters and brothers, their mother (if alive), and the sister's children and sister's daughters' children. They all resided together, invariabaly in a *nalukettu* house. (A spacious four sectioned house that enclosed an inner courtyard) Nayar women entered into *sambandhams*, (which in translation roughly means relationships, including and most importantly sex), with one or more men of Nayar or higher caste outside their *taravad*. *Sambandhams* did not result in co-residence, the woman and man continued to live in their natal *taravads*, and the man only visiting the woman in her *taravad*. The children belonged to the their mother's *taravad*. The *sambandhams* did not permit or mean sexual freedom. They were institutionalized polyandrous relationships. The most important male figure for a child were his or her mother's brother. Management of *taravad* lands were vested in the eldest male. Ancestral property was inherited through the female line. All *taravad* members had an

5. Dominant caste is an anthropological concept that denotes a caste that is economically, socially and numerically important in a region. It need not necessarily be the first caste in the caste hierarchy, though often it is one of the higher castes. (Sirinivas 1968 p10). In the Kerala caste hierarchy the Nambudhri Brahmins are on top, followed by the Nayars. The Nayars are regarded as the dominant caste of Kerala.

equal right to maintenance, but none had the right to claim his share of assets and separate from the *taravad*. Partition of assets could be affected only by the consent of all members of a taravad. (Gough 1959, 1961, 1965; Rao 1957; Fuller 1976; Jeffrey 1976; and Agarwal 1988. p549-552)

The *marumakkatayam* system and society was obviously matrilineal but not matriarchal. But nonetheless the matrilineal systems of inheritance and the membership pattern of the taravad gave women a better position in society than in Brahminic patriarchy, which was the norm in wider Indian society. (Agarwal 1988. p570-571) Indeed Jeffrey (1987.p471) argues that Kerala's culture gave women a remarkable independence and such women had contributed to Kerala's remarkable literacy.[6] Though the legal systems of native states and British India continued to recognize the *marumakkatayam* system and laws, social, cultural and economic changes in the wider 19th century colonial society of India constrained the continued existence of the *marumakkatayam* system and in particular the *taravads*. (Jeffrey 1976) By the begining of the 20th century the taravads were on the decline. In 1912 legislation was passed in Travancore recognizing legal monogamous marriage among the Nayars, which implied the freedom to set up conjugal nuclear families as household and/or residential units. (A similar act for Malabar district was not passed until 1933.) (Jeffrey 1978.p81) Wives and children were also given legal rights to the self-acquired assets of the husband and fathers. Later members of the *taravad* were permitted to claim per capita shares of the *taravad* wealth. By the 1920s and 1930s the socio-economic and legal changes has led to the virtual disappearance of the *taravads* and the nuclear conjugal family had become the norm.

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6. The position of women in Kerala may have had implications for the relatively high literacy rate in Kerala. Neighbouring Sri Lanka also has as a high literacy rate as Kerala for both males and females but with the absence of a matrilineal system. A more likely common ground for the high literacy rates of Kerala and Sri Lanka may lie in the incorporation of indigenous vernacular schools of pre-colonial times into the colonial educational system This occurred both in Kerala and Sri Lanka.

Anthropologists were attracted to study the *taravads* and the *sambandham* relationships with the view to identifying whether it fell within the definition of marriage. (Fuller 1976; Gough 1959, 1961; McLennan 1970; Mencher 1965; Moore 1985; Morgan 1964 and Rao 1972) The Nayars were warrior-agriculturalists by occupation. Martial suicides in times of war practiced by Nayars in pre-colonial times has also attracted historical anthropological inquiry. (Spores 1988. p11-20)[7]

The caste system in Kerala in the 19th century was seen as one of the most intricate and rigid expressions of the caste system in India. (Jeffrey 1978a. p82; Susan Bayly 1984. p177; Kannan 1988. p25).[8] Distance pollution, that is a high caste person, (Nambudhri Brahmin or Nayar), being ritually polluted by the sight or approach of a middle or lower caste person was strictly adhered to in Kerala. Such persons had keep a specified distance from a Nambudhri Brahmin or a Nayar. For instance a Nayadi,who occupied the lowest rung on the caste hierarchy, was not permitted within 72 feet of the higher castes. The late entry of Brahminism to Kerala, after it had crystalized in its ideological and ritual forms elsewhere in India is seen as contributing to the rigidity of the caste system in Kerala. (Issac and Tharakan 1986a p6). There is an underlying assumption that the late entry was because Kerala was isolated by the Western Ghats. In the case of the *marumakkatayam* system there is little evidence to suggest that the isolation was a contributing factor. It may have been tempting to view them as residual cultural features of the first peoples or earlier inhabitants of the south surviving the

7. Nayars who were ritually committed to performing martial suicides in times of war were called amoucos, amokos, amocchi etc. Spores draws some parallel between the martial suicides of the Nayars and running amok in the Malay world. The similarity between the Malay word amok and the Malayalam words amoucos, amokos etc are striking. The English phrase "running amok" is derived from the Malay word amok.

The matrilocal, matrilineal joint-family taravads may have had some relationship to the elite-warrior occupational character of the Nayar men, such as their having to be away from home, and the higher mortality rates as warriors.

8. Swami Vivekananda travelling through Kerala in the late 19th century described Kerala as "a veritable lunatic ayslum" because of the extreme caste rules. (Kooiman 1984. p1536)

changes brought by the migrating or invading Aryan speaking peoples. But there is little evidence to suggest that the marumakkatayam system was present in Kerala from early times. They are believed to have emerged sometime after the 11th century A.D.

The objective in referring to these cultural phenomena is not to enumerate the unique and the esoteric features of Kerala. As we shall examine later in this chapter and in the next chapter as well, changes in the social and cultural make up of the Kerala society in the early 20th century led to a new order and political economy. This in part flowed from the implications the changes had for social reform. In turn the reforms and changes triggered caste consciousness with implications for class consciousness. The character, then, of some the cultural features just described, their very structure, and even rigidity, are thus of relevance to this study.

Jeffrey has argued that the decay of the *marumakkatayam* system in the early 20th century produced a generation of *deracine* Nayars and this contributed to the emergence of radicalism in Kerala mainstream politics.

> The decay of the matrilineal joint-family produced litigation and intrigue in abundance, and the generation of Nayars born about 1905 found itself in a cruel dilemma. These men and women generally had neither property in their own right nor a father or maternal uncle ready to take responsibility for them. There was no place for them in the collapsing society of their forebears, yet new forms of social organization had scarcely begun to evolve. (Jeffrey 1978. p81)

Jeffrey cites many examples of Communist Party leaders being drawn from this generation of Nayars. The anomie created by the disintegration of some the cultural institutions may have been a contributing factor, among others, to emergence of radicalism in Kerala. It may have provided a cadre of Communist Party Leaders, prone to ascetic life styles[9]

9. Jeffrey found many Kerala Communists were either bachelors or married late, in their 40s. This was partly due to the lag between the decay of the sambandham institution and growth of monogamous marriage and nuclear families. (Jeffrey 1978, p81 n11)

and drawing them to a committed political cause that may have filled their otherwise emptied and unmotivated lives. But the radicalization of mainstream politics in Kerala is a complex phenomenon and cannot be subject to neat simple explanations. When we examine the relationship between the political and space economies of Kerala in later chapters we shall observe some of the complex issues involved in the emergence of radical politics and hegemony in Kerala.

The political radicalism of Kerala is another characteristic of the region that has attracted academic and popular attention, in recent decades. Many studies since the 1950s have attempted to examine why and how Kerala became a stronghold of the Communist Party of India.[10] This followed the holding of the first general elections to the Kerala State Assembly in 1957, when the Communist Party was returned to power. It drew global media attention as it was the first time that a Communist party had been voted into power in a multi-party electoral system.

Late pre-colonial period in the making of colonial and contemporary Kerala

The changes that occurred in Kerala from the early 20th century are of importance for this study. But this does not mean that pre-colonial Kerala was a static and stagnant society

10. See among others, R.Velayudhan, Kerala: The Red Rain Land. (New Delhi: Indian Institute of Social Affairs 1958); Jitendra Singh, Communist Rule In Kerala. (New Delhi: Diwan Chand Indian Information Centre. 1959); Taya Zinkin, Reporting India. (London. Chatto & Windus. 1962); D.R.Mankekar, The Red Riddle of Kerala. (Bombay. Manaktalas. 1965); R.Ramakrishna Nair, How the Communists came to power in Kerala. (Trivandrum. Kerala Academy of Political Science. 1965); Kathleen Gough, Communist Rural Councillors in Kerala, in Journal of Asian and African Studies, March 1968; Manfred Turlach, Kerala. (Wiesbaden. Otto Harrasswitz. 1970); Victor M.Fic, Kerala: The Yenan of India. (Bombay. Nachiketa Publications. 1970); Robert L.Hardgrave, Jr., The Kerala Communists: Contradictions of Power. in Radical Politics in South Asia (Ed) Paul Brass and Marcus Franda. (Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1973); Robin Jeffrey, Matriliny, Marxism and the Birth of the Communist party in Kerala, in Journal of Asian Studies, November 1978; T.J.Nossiter, Communism in Kerala: A Study in Political Adaptation. (Bombay. Oxford University Press 1982); E.M.S.Namboodiripad Kerala Society and Politics: An Historical Survey. (Delhi. National Book Centre. 1984. A revised version of Kerala: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow. 1967) T.V.Sathyamurthy, India since Independence: Studies in the Development of the Power of the State. Vol I: Centre-State Relations: The Case of Kerala. (Delhi. Ajanta. 1985).

and the first catalyst of change was the colonial experience. Jeffrey has been criticized for taking such a view. Susan Bayly (1984. p1) sees this perspective explicit in this statement of Jeffrey:

> In the last half of the 19th century a society which had survived fundamentally unchanged for 700 years came unhinged. A movement from inherited to achieved status began, a movement from the interdependence of castes to the competition of individuals, from traditional authority to modern bureaucracy. (Jeffrey 1976. p265)

Jeffrey's comment no doubt is centred on the *marumakkatayam* system, which had in fact emerged among some social groups, particularly the Nayars, about the 12th century A.D. and was now, 700 years later, disappearing. Little is known of what processes and changes the *marumakkatayam* system went through in the centuries prior to the nineteenth. The breakdown of the *marumakkatayam* system in late 19th and early 20th century is a major catalyst of other changes in Kerala society, changes that were important ingredients in the making of colonial society in Kerala, as well as modern Kerala. Jeffrey is correct in emphasizing it as an overwhelming and dominating change. And it is I believe erroneous to read in this emphasis any unintended nuances of the European, particularly British orientalist, perspective of the historiography of India. This was a historiographical perspective that emerged in the 19th century, a perspective that found little dialectical change in Indian history and saw Indian society as static in character. (Thapar 1982. p389-90; p394) In the last two decades historians, both within and outside India, using a variety of sources, including anthropological, archaeological, linguistic material and vernacular sources, have vigorously debated Indian history from a number of new perspectives. An excellent synthesis of some of the more important of these perspectives, themes and work pertaining to the late pre-colonial and 19th century India has been presented by C.A.Bayly. (1988).[11] And in this work he observes:

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11. Braudel too recognizes the importance of these new perspectives. "Specialists on China, India, Japan or Islam are showing more interest than in the past in these countries' societies or political and economic structures. There are even some sociologists who think like historians.....These historians are the toilers in the vineyard of the new history and its harvest is begining to appear in their books and a number of excellent journals....There is so much of material that time is not ripe for an overall view. I have nevertheless tried,

> Certainly, some of the more rigid orientalist interpretations which emphasized the unique and incomparable features of the Indian social scene appear less convincing now. Caste, for instance, was not an immutable 'given' of Indian society. Castes were constantly in the process of formation and change, notably in periods such as the eighteenth century when political authority was fluid. (C.A.Bayly 1988. p11-12)

Susan Bayly's work (1984), which belongs to the corpus of new perspectives on the history of India, brings out the fluid character of the the relationships among social groups, including the Nayars, as well as between the state and the social groups in 18th and 19th century Kerala. Jeffrey's work (1976) on the disintegration of Nayar institutions in the early part of this century still remains a seminal contribution to the understanding of Kerala society. But the implied immutability of Kerala caste institutions in the centuries that went before are less convincing.

New perspectives in the historiography of India also see the 18th century as a significant stage in the formation of the social order of modern India. (C.A.Bayly 1988. p11). Important features in the significance of the 18th century for modern India were the metamorphosis of some of the Mughal provinces as successor autonomous states (C.A.Bayly 1988 p18); military contact and conflict with European powers and increasing use of European military systems and weapons (Ibid p 21); increasing commercialization and monetization of the economy and contact with international trade and finance (Ibid p11); commercial communities increasing their power and at the same time many of the features of the landed class of the 19th century being consolidated in the 18th century. (Ibid p10,11)

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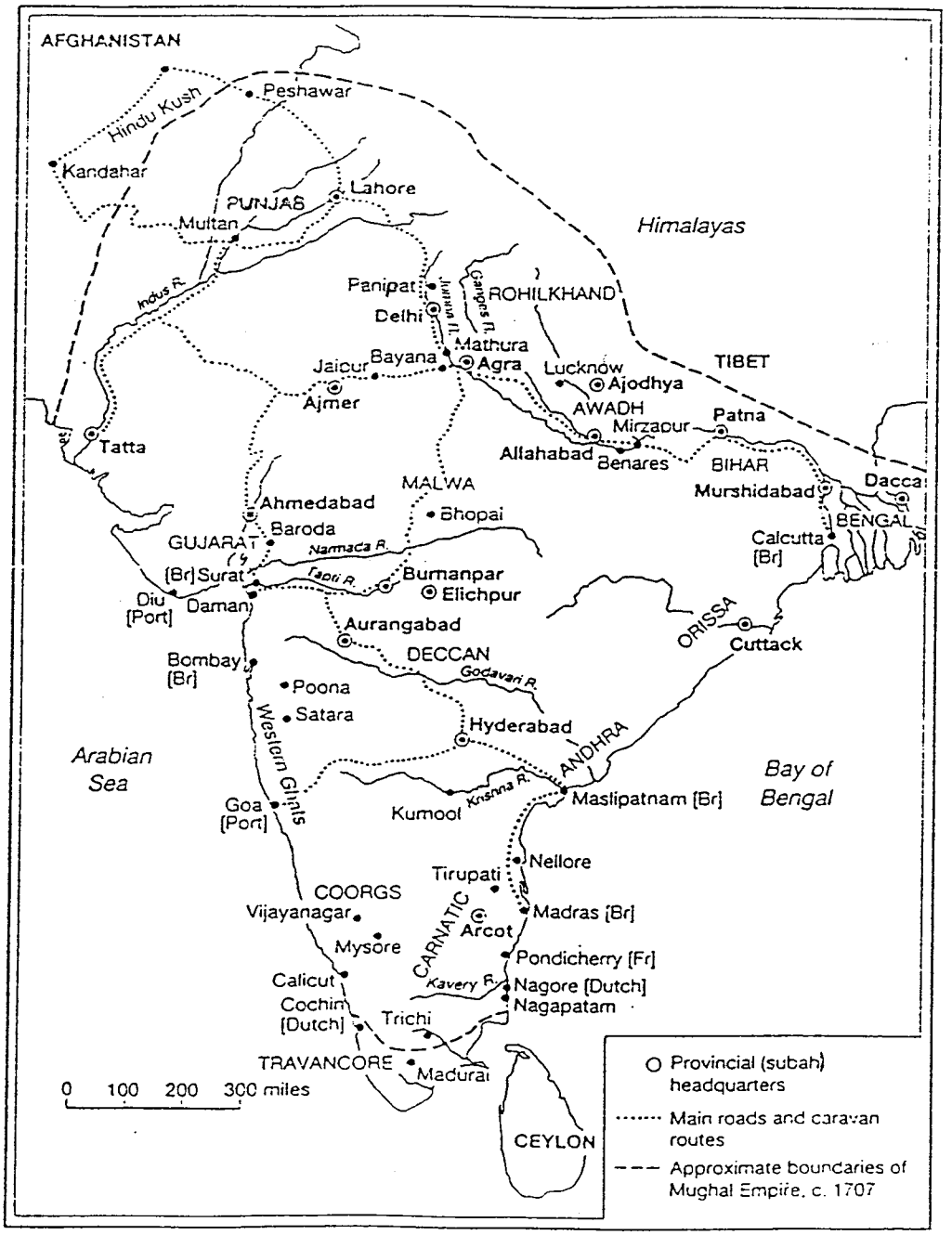
rashly perhaps, to convey through one example, some idea both of the scope and novelty of the problems which are now coming to light. The example I have chosen is India. There are now several fundamental studies in English, and the work of an outstanding team of Indian historians is now available, since they too have fortunately published in English." Braudel 1984. Vol III. p497.

MAP 2.07

INDIA UNDER THE LATER MUGHALS



Source: Bayly (1988) p17.

The emergence of Travancore as an important state in southwest India in the 18th century is accompanied by many of these features even though it was never part of the Mughal empire and thus strictly not a successor state within the Mughal realm.[12] (Map 2.07) The use of European mercenaries[13] to train and equip the army was an important factor in the Raja of Venad, Martanda Varma's annexation of adjoining principalities during the period 1729 to 1758 to form Travancore State. Trade, commerce and monetized transactions were present in the southwest coast for a long time consequent to the involvement in Indian ocean trade for a number of centuries. Travancore consolidated and advanced such transactions in the 18th century. There were state monopolies in some commodities, including pepper an important produce of the region. State monopolies, tax on trade and shipping and absence or minimal land taxes were a feature of the southwest coast principalities and states for long time.[14] Travancore state monopolies may have inhibited the growth of power of commercial

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12. The claim is made that "unlike the rest of Kerala, Travancore was not subjugated by any foreign power..... Travancore is one of the very few remaining specimens of pure Hindu Government, its institutions not affected by Mohammedan conquests." (Travancore Land Revenue Manual.1916. Vol IV p2)

13. Eustaius D'Lannoy, a Fleming formerly in the service of the Dutch came play an important role in the military strategies and success of Travancore. (Tharakan 1984 p1961; Menon 1984 p234)

14. The nature of the pre-colonial state in southwest India has begun to attract the attention of scholars. (Subrahmanyam 1986). If attention went south of the glittering Mughal Empire, (which was not too often), it was only to the southeast. The state in Mughal region, or north India has been characterized as patrimonial-bureaucratic while the south, "sans" the southwest, following the work of Stein, Ludden and others as segmentary, diffuse and decentralized. (Ibid p359). Both types related to large kingdoms, leaving out the small river basin principalities of the southwest. (Of the 44 rivers originating in the Western Ghats, 42 run westward). One interpretation was to characterize these States or principalities as feudal, the chieftains with their Nayar warriors rendered military service to their overlords, but were otherwise free to administer the regions under their control. (Sreedhara Menon 1967. p254-55) Subrahmanyam sees similarities between the southwest and the Indonesian kingdoms of the period, such as Aceh, Banten, Makassar and Johor. (1986. p361) Dale is more emphatic - "Certain aspects of the history and political organization of Kerala are more intelligible when the area is thought of as one of the Hinduized states of South-East Asia rather than as an integral part of the South Asian subcontinent".(1980. p11) He sees parallels in ecology, transport systems, cash-crops, commerce and that it shares most of the characteristics of what Fisher (1965. p5) identified as "The South-East Asian Personality" (Dale 1980.p11) Subrahmanyam is more cautious, stating that important parallels between state formation in parts of India and Indonesia in the late pre-colonial period exist and are worth exploring. He argues that state structures should not be seen as either purely mercantile or wholly agrarian. In South India upto the 17th century he sees an expansion of both agrarian and manufacturing economy and that it is worth investigating whether a middle ground existed populated by individuals who were not easily classified as merchants or agrarian/feudal elite. (1986. p372-77) Sindhu and Wheatley (1983. p1-7) see elements of Indianization of the southeast Asian states and cities in the pre-Islamic period of southeast Asia.

communities. Subrahmanyam (1986. p370) notes the absence of portfolio capitalists[15] in the southwest coast. State trade monopolies may have had an inhibiting effect. But at the same time export sales of state monopoly commodities were often routed through merchants, as sub-agents. Merchant communities were encouraged to settle down in port towns and cites of the Malabar coast. As we shall observe in chapter four, Travancore was keen in building up Alleppey as a port city and so encouraged and facilitated merchant communities to settle down in Alleppey. Mathu Tharakan, a Syrian Christian, (Susan Bayly 1984. p188 Tharakan 1984. p1961), and millionaire Jewish merchants of the Malabar coast like Ezechiel Rahabi, Issac Surgun and Banichery Ismael (Ashin Das Gupta 1967 p1-2;p104-8;130) had commercial careers, political importance, power and influence that carry many of the features of portfolio capitalists.

Overall then Travancore exhibits the internal dynamics that was distinctive to 18th century India.

> The crisis of eighteenth century India now appears to have three distinct aspects. First, there were cumulative indigenous changes reflecting commercialization, the formation of social groups and political transformation within the subcontinent itself. Secondly, there was the wider crisis of west and south Asia which was signalled by the decline of the great Islamic empires, the Mughals and their contemporaries the Ottoman and the Safavids. Thirdly, there was the massive expansion of European production and trade...(C.A.Bayly 1988.p3)

There is then a commonality between Kerala and southeast Asia, whether this is seen in terms of an "southeast Asian personality" or a "Indianization" of a common ecological terrain. A common high rainfall ecology and exposure to Indian ocean trade are some of the common features of both Kerala and southeast Asia, underpined by some common "Indianized" traits. The ecology also sustained a high population density in both regions. That desakota has emerged in both regions is significant and may be related to a mix of these factors.

15. Subrahmanyam and C.A.Bayly (1988. p418) argue that "from the late sixteenth century on, the portfolio capitalist - an entrepreneur who farmed revenue, engaged in local agricultural trade, commanded military resources (war animals, arms and human labour), as well as on more than odd occasion had a flutter in the great game of Indian Ocean commerce - was a characteristic feature of Indian political economy".

The focus of this thesis is on some of the processes at work in 20th century Kerala, with a view to making the presence of desakota in Kerala more intelligible. But it is necessary to acknowledge that many of contemporary Kerala's unique characteristics appear rooted in 18th century Travancore. Perhaps a historical geographical examination of Kerala from the 18th century would give us better understanding of contemporary Kerala. Such an examination is beyond the scope of this study. But at same time the weight of recent themes and perspectives suggests the need to look at the late pre-colonial history to understand the making of colonial and modern India. Colonialism is not to be endowed with the status of a *deus ex machina*, the source of a radical break with the static and reversible past, and the point at which irreversible change begins. (Perlin 1983. p32) This is so in the case of Kerala, and a few features of 18th century Kerala that thread their implications upto the 20th century need to be briefly examined.

Venad's annexation of all but one of the adjoining principalities to become the larger Travancore State occurred mostly between 1729 and 1758, under the rule of Maharaja Marthanda Varma. His successor Maharaja Rama Varma annexed Alangad in 1762. In the process of this expansion, lands belonging to the chieftains of the conquered principalities, their families and allies were taken over by the Travancore State and made state owned or *sirkar* lands. This was a measure of consolidating state power and also eliminating any residual powers of the chieftains' families that were left after the conquests. But in the process, of the 0.7 million acres of cultivated land in Travancore, nearly half became *sirkar* lands. (Varghese 1970.p30) In addition, Colonel Munro, British Resident-cum-Dewan of Travancore, in 1812 for political reasons[16] vested in the State, lands belonging to 378 important and wealthy temples. Thus at the begining of the 19th century nearly two thirds of the cultivated land in Travancore

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16. Immediately folowing an anti-British uprising led by Velu Tampi the former Diwan to the Maharajah. (Varghese 1970 p31)

were *sirkar* lands. The tenants in these sirkar lands had permanent tenancy as per custom of the southwest region.

In contrast, because of the direct administration of Malabar district, the British were anxious to secure the political support of chieftains and landlords, called jenmies. The jenmies not only continued to hold on to their land, but the British interpreted jenmies' rights as property rights under English Law. This gave the jenmies the leverage to evict tenants, violating customary law of the southwest coast principalities. Tenants and their heirs, under the customary law had permanent occupancy provided they paid the customary dues.

> A jenmie does not derive his title to lands from sirkar. (State). His title to jenmam is inherent. He is so far as his jenmam lands are concerned, a little territorial sovereign in a limited sense...(Travancore State Land Revenue Manual. 1916. Vol IV. p7)

It is this concept that gave the prerogative for the conquering Travancore state to take over the lands as its own sirkar lands. Permanent tenancy is also embedded in this concept, as jenmies did not have rights of absolute ownership over land. In Travancore, the Maharajahs, as native monarchs familiar with customary laws, adhered to the principle of permanent tenancy in the sirkar lands and enforced it in the jenmie lands as well. The Maharajahs were also politically motivated to consolidate their rule at the broad based level of peasant cultivators. The allegedly non-Kshastriya origin of the Travancore Maharajah family, and Venad the original principality of this family being on the fringe of Malayalam speaking region with a number of Tamil speaking people and their cultural institutions,[17] intensified the Maharajahs'

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17. A major portion of what was Venad territory is currently in Tamilnadu being part of the four Tamil speaking taluks in the southern tip of Travancore that were ceded to Tamilnadu in 1956. Even today, what was southern Travancore, including Trivandrum is viewed by Malayalees (Malayalam speaking persons) as infiltrated with Tamil speaking peoples and culture. It is Travancore north that seen as Malayalam heartland.

need to legitimize their rule,[18] of a Malayalam Kingdom, if not with the jenmies and earlier elites, at least with the peasants.

On the other hand, Travancore accepting British suzerainty and becoming a princely state within the British raj, influenced, among the Travancore jenmies and the judiciary when litigation was resorted to, a tendency to fall in line with the Malabar interpretation of jenmie rights. In 1829, following violations of the customary right of tenants in jenmie lands, the Maharajah issued instructions to the courts not to permit eviction of tenants.[19] This was reissued as a Royal Proclamation in 1867. (Velu Pillai 1933. Appendix A & B; Varghese 1970. p65-66; Tharakan 1984. p1960).

Travancore land policies of the 18th and 19th centuries and their implications

These events and underlying political motivations, together with a succession of English educated Maharajahs and Diwans (C.A.Bayly 1988. p197) created in the Travancore ruling family an ethos and political ideology oriented to support or being sensitive to the needs of the broader base of Travancore population. Such orientations however did not aim to transcend the caste structures and caste inequalities continued to be present. Nonetheless

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18. The Rajas of Travancore adopting the ceremonies of kingship representing the highest Brahminical aspirations, (C.A.Bayly 1988. p41), may be interpreted as part of this legitimization process.

19. The edict said "These tenants spend their labour and capital on such properties; reclaim such portions as are waste, marshy or otherwise defective; in gardens build houses, dig wells and plant productive trees such as coconut, jack, etc.....pay to the jenmis proper rent....The tenants also get their documents renewed by the jenmies at the end of the 12 years, and also when a change of parties by death etc occurs, and they pay on such renewal, certain fees. The jenmies are in the habit of receiving those due and of allowing the tenants to go undisturbed.....Such is the custom established and this custom is ancient....Latterly it appears that the jenmies are suing the tenants for the recovery of lands which have been improved by their labour and capital and on which the tenants have been punctually paying their dues to the jenmies; and that the courts decree the restoration of lands on repayment by the jenmies of the amount of tenants lien-lands.....His Highness.....directs that.....the Courts maintain the established usage in the country. (Cited by The Report of the Jenmie Kudiyan Committee. 1916. Appendix I)

some of the policies that flowed from such political motivations and ideologies, together with economic motives which we shall discuss shortly, did trigger at the latent level social changes with consequences for the caste structure. We shall examine some of these later in this chapter. The continuing underpinnings of this political ideology and motivations of the Travancore ruling house may be seen in these observations of Maharajah Rama Varma Ayilyam Tirunal (1860-1880) on the role of the judiciary.

> The glorious uncertainties of the law are proverbial and have never been more prominently illustrated than in the cases appertaining to jenmie and tenant rights. Confusion was added to confusion and contradiction to contradiction till the whole 'judge-made law' became a tangled mess of chaos. Ignorance, carelessness and a deficiency of the sense of responsibility on the part of the judges might in themselves have produced this result. But to these were added a far more powerful motive - self interest. I do not mean self interest which is the result of actual corruption, but the special self-interest arising from the fact of these judicial functionaries being either large jenmie landlords or large tenants. For instance, Parameswaran Namburi, who was Chief Justice for ten years, was himself a jenmie and had largely purchased jenmon rights from other jenmies. No single man has perhaps contributed a larger share than this gentleman to make confusion more confused, and it was chiefly on account of some of his decisions that the jenmies propensity to oust the tenant attained its climax. (Cited in The Report of the Jenmie Kudiyan Committee. 1916. p114-5)

While these disputes and litigations were occurring, the ruling house of Travancore brought about a series of changes in land regulations and policy that facilitated the growth of a small holder peasant proprietor ownership and cultivation of land. These changes also had the effect of extending land ownership outside the traditional landlord and warrior-agriculturalists, the Nambudhri Brahmins and Nayars respectively. In 1818 conversion of waste and abandoned lands into agricultural operational holdings was permitted and encouraged. Tax exemptions were allowed for the first ten years. These measures were partly motivated by the need to increase production and State income, consequent to the need to pay tribute to the British. (Issac and Tharakan 1986b. p3) An important consequence of these measures was that Syrian Christians and Ezhavas were able to acquire land. This was previously difficult, as caste factors had a considerable effect on the distribution of holdings. (Varghese 1970. p35-

36) These measures permitted the Syrian Christians and Ezhavas to acquire land. In 1865 by royal proclamation full ownership was vested in all tenants of the *sirkar* lands. This reform made in the context of litigation and interpretation of jenmies and tenants rights, and the effect it had in making land a freely marketable commodity, has prompted it being even compared to the land reforms of the Meiji Restoration. (K.N.Raj 1970. p-xi). These reforms were followed by the Travancore Jenmie and Kudiyan Regulation of 1896. The effect of all these was security of tenure, increasing land sales and purchase and growth of small holdings. (Varghese 1970. p65; Tharakan 1984. p1959-60).

Cochin occupied an intermediate position in land policy. Attempts to subdue the chiefs were present but not to the same extent as Travancore. As a result only one third of all cultivated land were *sirkar* lands, a considerable portion of which was the private property of the Raja of Cochin. Ownership rights tended to be more akin to those that developed in Malabar. (Varghese 1970. p32-33) Cochin was a small princely state, its land area being less than one fifth of Travancore State and one fourth of Malabar district. Thus the overall pattern

TABLE 2.01

Distribution (Percent) of number and land area of holdings in Travancore-Cochin area and Malabar District in 1959

Category in Acres	Travancore-Cochin No of Holdings	Travancore-Cochin Land Area	Malabar District No of Holdings	Malabar District Land Area
1.0 and less	66.7	16.5	28.9	2.4
1.0 to 2.5	19.8	20.5	22.6	6.8
2.5 to 5.0	8.4	20.1	18.0	9.5
5.0 to 10.0	3.5	16.3	14.2	14.6
10.0 to 20.0	1.2	10.2	10.1	20.3
20.0 and above	0.4	16.4	6.1	47.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: NCAER 1962. Table 7, p273.

of land holdings of Kerala was determined by the differing political economy of Travancore and Malabar in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Reliable data on land holdings by size of these two regions is available only by 1959. This data, too, while available separately for Malabar, is for the amalgamated Travancore-Cochin region only. Even as late as this date and with the Cochin data added onto Travancore the differing consequences of the land policies of Travancore and Malabar of the previous two centuries are apparent. (Table 2.01).

The percentage shares of the different categories of the agricultural population of the Travancore, Cochin and Malabar areas in 1911 and 1951 presented in Table 2.02 are also indicative of the impact of the differing land policies

TABLE 2.02

Agricultural Population by relationship to land

	Travancore		Cochin		Malabar D:	
Category	1911	1951	1911	1951	1911	1951
Cultivating Landowner	75.3	53.3	15.7	19.0	7.7	12.7
Tenants	6.8	10.2	44.6	28.1	44.9	39.3
Agricultural Labourer	12.6	34.6	36.0	48.9	41.6	44.0
Rent Receivers	5.3	1.9	3.7	4.0	5.5	4.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: U.N. 1975. Table 23, p57.

discussed above. Even as late as 1951, in spite of demographic pressures, tenants remained only 10.2 percent in Travancore. Agricultural labour had increased. In chapter five we shall discuss the occupational mobility of the landless labourers between agricultural and non-agricultural work, which is important to an understanding of desakota.

This land policy of Travancore had two consequences of significance for the space economy. First, it encouraged the growth of small holders in rice and cash crop cultivation. This had implication for the character of agro-processing industry and trade. We shall examine this in chapter seven with a case study of the coir industry in the space economy of Kerala. It may be useful to point out here, that subsequent to 1956 when the three colonial political-administrative units of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, were unified as Kerala State, many of the progressive policies and features of Travancore were extended to Cochin and Malabar. Introduction of universal franchise, a parliamentary form of government together with radical politicization facilitated such extension. We shall examine some of these processes at work and the relationship between the political economy and the space economy in Part III, cse studies of the coir and beedi industries. Suffice to state here the land reform measures of the 1960s not only extended the better features of Travancore to Cochin and Malabar but over all reduced the large holdings and increased small holdings. (Sankaranarayanan and Karunakaran 1985.p117) This is demonstrated in Table 2.03

TABLE 2.03

Kerala: Operational holdings and area cultivated classified by size-class. (Percent Only)

Operational Holdings Size-Class	Operational Holding Units			Area Cultivated			Average size of Holdings		
	1953 %	1959 %	1970 %	1953 %	1959 %	1970 %	1953 Acre	1959 Acre	1970 Acre
Marginal	55.6	59.4	67.0	8.1	11.3	17.3	0.43	0.43	0.31
Small	32.4	31.7	27.3	24.7	30.4	47.5	2.29	2.14	2.12
Medium	6.5	5.1	3.6	14.9	15.7	20.1	6.93	6.89	6.75
Large	5.5	3.8	1.2	52.3	42.5	15.1	39.50	25.60	15.00
All	100	100	100	100	100	100	2.99	2.24	1.22

Source: Sankaranarayanan and Karunakaran 1985. Table 5.20, p116.

Second, the Travancore land policies resulted in land sales. This was further enhanced in the early 20th century by the legislation that permitted the partition of taravad or joint-family properties. The overall effect was the transfer of some the properties from the traditional land owning families among the Nambudhuris and Nayars to Syrian Christians, Mopalah Muslims and Ezhavas.[20]

Caste, education and social change

Syrian Christians are the descendants of Christian West Asian merchants and their converts.[21] Mopalah Muslims are the descendants Arab merchants who settled in the Kerala coast and married women of the region. Ezhavas are a *avarna* caste group of Kerala. Though their traditional occupation is toddy tapping, they were in many of the coconut based industries; agriculture, particularly coconut cultivation; and even in occupations like textile weaving. They were a numerically important caste in Kerala.

It is important to identify the numerical size of these caste and religious groups in Kerala. As will be demonstrated in this study they played a role in the political economy of Kerala, and their numerical strength was a factor. Table 2.04 presents this data derived from the Census of India, 1901, the first census to have reliable data on caste and religious population.

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20. This is a generalization at the macro level. For instance the Nayars had 72 sub-castes, some of them in poor economic circumstances and often tenants. So in some localities the transfers were from the Nambudhuri to tenant Nayars or big landlord Nayars to tenant Nayars.

21. The Syrian Christians have been present on the southwest coast from as early as 6th century A.D. for the traveller Cosmas Indicopleustes makes reference to them. (Susan Bayly 1984. p178-179). The Syrian Christians' own foundation account asserts that they are descended from Nambudhri Brahmins converted to Christianity by St Thomas the Apostle.

TABLE 2.04

Kerala Population by Caste and Religious Groups in 1901

Groups	Travancore		Cochin		Malabar		Kerala	
	`000	%	`000	%	`000	%	`000	%
Hindu Castes								
Nambudhri	10	0.3	6	0.8	18	0.6	34	0.5
Nayars	521	17.6	112	13.8	391	14.0	1024	15.6
Ezhavas	492	16.7	185	22.7	661	23.7	1338	20.4
Shanan	156	5.3	-	-	-	-	156	2.4
Kammalan	67	2.3	20	2.4	101	3.6	188	2.9
Pulayas	207	7.0	60	7.4	-	-	266	4.1
Cherumans	-	-	-	-	118	4.2	118	1.8
Paraiyans	70	2.4	9	1.1	17	0.6	96	1.5
Others	514	17.4	163	20.1	598	21.4	1276	19.5
Sub-total	2036	69.0	554	68.3	1904	68.2	4494	68.6
Others								
Syrian Chr:	697	23.6	198	24.4	52	1.8	947	14.5
Mopalah Mus:	191	6.5	55	6.7	833	29.9	1078	16.4
Others	29	1.0	5	0.6	1	0.1	35	0.5
Total	2952	100.0	812	100.0	2790	100.0	6554	100.0

Source: Census of India 1901
Travancore - Vol XXVI-A, Part II, Table XIII, p147-187.
Cochin - Vol XX-A, Part II, Table XIII, p38-39.
Malabar - Vol XV-A, Part II, Table XIII, p155-205.

Apart from the Nayars, Ezhavas, Syrian Christians and Mopalahs, the other numerically significant caste groups were the Pulayas, Cherumans and Paraiyans, all agrestic slave castes. With the legal abolishment of slavery in the mid 19th century they became agricultural and/or casual labourers. Pulayas and Cherumans are Malayalam speaking. Paraiyans are Tamil speaking and mainly domiciled in south Travancore and in Malabar plantations as migrant labour from Madras Presidency. The Kammalans are artisan castes working in household metal industries.[22] Shanans were a Tamil speaking caste group in south

22. Textile weaving castes were numerically not important in Kerala. The three textile weaving castes were the Saliyans, (population in 1901-37742), Kaikolans (pop: 1901-12560) and Devanga (pop: 1901-4008). Unlike Coramandel coast the Malabar coast was not renowned for household textile manufacture in the pre-colonial period. (Ramaswamy 1985.p7) Indeed the Saliyans are the weaver caste of Telugu speaking regions, (contemporary Andhra Pradesh), Kaikolans the weaver caste of Tamil speaking region (contemporary

Travancore. Many of them were converts to Protestant Christianity in the 19th century. Their traditional occupation was toddy tapping but were occupationally and socially upwardly mobile in the 19th and 20th centuries. (Kooiman 1984) Being Tamil speaking, and domiciled in the southern Travancore taluks that were ceded to Tamilnadu in 1956, they are of marginal interest in the making of contemporary Kerala.

The centre stage of the social and economic transformations of 19th and early 20th century Kerala were held by the Ezhavas, Syrian Christians, Mopalah Muslims, Nayars and Nambudhri Brahmins. Some of these changes touched the Pulayas, Cherumans and Paraiyans, but they remained oppressed peoples until nearly the mid 20th century.[23] Though since then a good many have been upwardly mobile some still remain socially and economically disadvantaged. The Nambudhri Brahmins, on top of the caste hierarchy and big landlords were socially and economically important, though numerically insignificant.

We shall discuss only those aspects of the transformations or change that are relevant for this study and as a necessary backdrop for the coir case study in Chapter seven. In the coir case study we will observe some of the caste reformism and consciousness that developed in the early 20th century transforming into class consciousness Before we discuss some of the social changes of late 19th and early 20th century it is important to point out that once the Travancore ruling house developed a land policy that was weighted in favour of the cultivator, whatever the political origins, motivation and economic gains, it may have influenced other

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Tamilnadu) and Devanga the weaver caste of Kannada speaking regions, (contemporary Karnataka). These castes probably migrated to Kerala in pre-colonial times to meet local weaving needs. In the 19th and early 20th century however cotton textile weaving became an important household industry attracting many Ezhavas to this occupation. (See Chapter seven)

23. The Pulayas threw up a remarkable leader, Ayankali (1863-1941) who led their struggles for the right to walk on public roads and enter schools. (Saradamoni 1980)

policies to lean in the direction of a broader base than the elites. This is suggested in the health and education policies of the Travancore administration.

> The early lead of Travancore in population growth appears to have been due mainly to the considerable attention given to medical and public health services in the state in the latter half of the nineteenth century. As with reform of land tenures, the rulers of the state followed policies in medicine and public health which were much ahead of the times. Apart from starting a separate Department of Vaccination in 1865/66, the Government set up a large number of hospitals and dispensaries and introduced a system of grants to support private medical institutions. It is measure of the progress made by Travancore in the following four decades that, 1903/04, the number of beds in hospitals and dispensaries in the state was nearly 60 per 100.000 population, a level reached in India as a whole six decades later. (U.N. 1975. p73-74)

The U.N.study in a footnote adds:

> This appears to have been in part fortuitous, the result of the intense personal interest in western medicine and surgery of Maharajah Martenda Varma Uthram Thirunal who ruled Travancore from 1847 to 1860. (Footnote 2, p73)

In the sphere of education there is less evidence of the Travancore Maharajahs' personal interest or ideological bent influencing a policy aimed at a broader section of the society than the elites. But such a policy did emerge in the 19th century due to a combination of factors. A primary factor was that in Travancore the indigenous schools from pre-colonial times were not disrupted by the new school system of the colonial society. As Jeffrey observes:

> In this context, it is worth comparing Kerala with other areas of India, for they, too, had village schools before the imposition of a British system of education. The crucial differences seem to be that in Kerala these village schools were more deeply embedded in society than elsewhere, and that in Travancore the government co-opted them. (Jeffrey 1987b. p459)

Indeed when the Travancore government set up its own schools, there was resistance from the indigenous school teachers. But the government responded by appointing the old teachers to the government schools and permitting the old curriculum to co-exist with what the government wanted introduced. (Travancore Administrative Report 1872-73. p128-29) This was innovative, for the general pattern in 19th century British India, was to introduce a modern curriculum only in English medium schools. (Jeffrey 1987b. p452)

Jeffrey also credits Madhava Rao, the Dewan of Travancore, (1858-1872) with having guided this education policy. (Ibid p449) Madhava Rao, "that most remarkable of nineteenth century administrators" (ibid p449) is also seen as having influenced the Maharajahs on land policy. Travancore administration during the earlier reign of Maharajah Swati Tirunal (1829 - 1847) was inefficient. Allegations of corruption and maladministration prompted Lord Dalhousie to warn that unless there were "timely and judicious reforms", annexation of Travancore under direct British rule was a distinct possibility. (Nagam Aiya 1906. Vol IV, p513; Jeffrey 1978a p140: Tharakan 1984.p1960) Madhava Rao's tenure as Dewan, his policies etc were thus also designed to restore the British confidence in Travancore, (Jeffrey 1978a p140) though in the context of the events of 1857 in India, the threat of annexation may have faded.

Tharakan (1984) in examining education in 19th century Travancore emphasizes that the indigenous school system provided the base upon which the modern system was erected. He also attributes its development to the demand for education, to meet the infrastructural needs of the growing commercialization of agriculture and as an avenue to obtain posts in the state bureaucracy. (Tharakan 1984. p1963-4) The latter were positions of social prestige and power. Though such posts were small in number, the clamour to obtain them made many seek education. The young Nayars were particularly attracted to the state bureaucracy. Encumbered in the 19th century by the marumakkatayam system with its restrictions on the sale of property and inhibitions on individual initiative, Nayar youth failed to make headway in the opportunities offered by the increasing commercialization of agriculture. (Ibid p1962) Prestigious posts in the state bureaucracy were a strong compensating mechanism. The process by which this became open to all Nayars[24] was set in motion in the 18th century.

24. As indicated earlier there were 72 sub-castes among the Nayars and not all of them were economically and/or socially powerful and important. This is another criticism made of Jeffrey (1976), in that his analysis of the Nayar decline in the 19th and early 20th century he tended to treat the Nayars as one homogeneous group and was not adequately sensitive to the social and economic divisions within the Nayars and explicit in the sub-caste system. (Personal communication, Michael Tharakan.)

> ....traditionally, government service was the exclusive preserve of certain higher castes; and even among them (for sensitive jobs) of certain privileged families. The exclusiveness of the civil service was already diluted in the eighteenth century by Marthanda Varma. In his efforts to institute a centralized monarchical regime he suppressed the landed baronage consisting of various title holders like *madampimar, pillamar* and *karyakar,* whose families traditionally monopolized positions of power and prestige associated with governance of the state. (Tharakan 1984 p 1961)

This shift meant the recruitment of non-aristocratic Nayars as well as Brahmins from outside the State, mainly Tamil Brahmins, on the basis of personal competence and loyalty to the Maharajah. As the 19th century progressed individual merit and educational attainment became the criteria. This is the time that Nayar youth sought these posts. In time Syrian Christians and Ezhavas also sought entry to state service. The Ezhavas did not find entry easy, the Dewan felt, because of their caste status, they will not command the respect and authority that the jobs required. (Ibid p1961-62) By the turn of the century, these concerns were no longer entertained and as a kind of affirmative action the government required Heads of Departments to give special consideration to Ezhavas, Muslims etc. (Ibid p. 1962) This increased the demand for education and many caste and religious bodies and caste interest groups set up schools, increasing the already existing facilities for primary and secondary education.[25]

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25. In Kerala as a consequence of these factors and trends there was a greater provision of primary and secondary schooling and comparatively less emphasis on post-secondary education during the colonial period. This is in contrast to the educational system that developed in the wider Indian colonial society with a disproportionate weightage to post-secondary education, obviously to cater to elitist needs. This may be observed in the educational systems that developed in and around Calcutta, Bombay and Madras and later a pattern of the other urban centres of India. Partly as a result of this structure, Malayalees in need of post-secondary education in the 19th and early 20th century had to seek such facilities in Madras. (Lewandowski 1980)

Expansion of cash-crop export economy and its implications

Commercialization of agriculture, Tharakan (1984. p1963) argues, led to an increasing demand for basic education that could equip people to handle accounts, mortgages, contracts, agreements, etc. Changes that occurred in the Travancore economy, beginning in the middle of the 19th century, have been conceptualized by many scholars as the commercialization of agriculture, or the economy itself. (Issacs and Tharakan 1986. p3).[26] Cash crops for export had been an important item in India's participation in Indian ocean trade for "centuries on end" (Braudel 1984. p484 and 502) And among the regions of India participating in Indian ocean trade, that of the southwest coast has been especially reputed for agrarian produce, particularly pepper and other spices. What is conceptualized as the commercialization of agriculture and/or economy in Travancore, beginning in the mid 19th century, is the increase in volume of agricultural produce for cash sales and/or exports; and the increased participation of the population in the cultivation, production, processing, trading and export of such agricultural produce. Cash-crops became increasingly important in agriculture. This, as will be subsequently argued, had important implications for the space economy.

There are a number reasons for the increased economic activities in cash crops, both cultivation and exports, in Travancore begining in the mid 19th century. First, *sirkar* monopoly over 165 items of foreign trade were removed in 1860s. (Issacs and Tharakan 1986b.p6). Second, the vesting of *sirkar* lands in the tenants, and the land policy initiatives of the 19th century, led to increased productivity, freedom to change crops, free sale and purchase of land and agriculture as an area of investment. Third, was the entry of British merchant capital. This was mainly in plantation agriculture. But processing and export trade of agricultural

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26. See Raj (1985) for a discussion of the concept of commercialization of agriculture in the Indian context.

produce, such as coir and coir products, was another area of activity for British merchant capital. Fourth, the increased or new international demand for some agricultural produce or agro-based products. Coir once again is an example. Chapter eight, the case study of the coir industry and trade, will illustrate how these occurred, as well as the entry of British capital in coir processing and export trade. Fifth, the southwest coast with its backwaters, numerous rivers and coastal shipping had a good waterways transport system. This was augmented in the 19th century by the advent and growth of railway and road transport systems.

British capital dominated the increasing cash-crop agriculture of the new plantation crops.. By the end of the 1930s there was about 75,000 acres in tea and 100,000 acres in rubber. 85 percent of the tea acreage was owned by the British. In rubber there was greater indigenous capital participation, but British holdings were in the majority. (Issacs and Tharakan 1986b. p10) British capital presence was dominant outside the plantation sector too.

> European coastal trading firms such as Pierce, Leslie & Co, William Goodacre & Co, Aspinwall & Co, Bombay Co, Volkart Bros, Darragh, Smail & Co etc rose into prominence. They virtually monopolized the export of plantation products as well as imports for the plantation sector through interlocking of the directorships and managing agencies. They also controlled the shipping and forwarding business as well as insurance business. Similarly their control over import of textiles, metal products and mineral oils were total. (Issacs and Tharakan 1986b. p7)

While the more lucrative and higher echelons of capitalist agriculture, agro-processing and import-export trade were the preserve of the British, there was considerable participation in the middle and lower rungs by Indian entrepreneurs. Not all of them were from Travancore or the Kerala region. Some of the bigger investors were from outside Kerala. But a considerable number at the middle level and almost exclusively at the lower level were native entrepreneurs of Travancore and adjoining regions. We shall examine in chapters eight and nine the structure of capital investment and participation, from the level of the petty producer to big capitalists, as well as the network of dealers, agents etc in the two illustrative case

studies of the coir and beedi industries in Kerala. The focus of the case studies is to understand the dynamics of change; the nature of capital investment; the need for labour; labour mobilization and movements; conflict and confrontation between capitalists and labour; and the impact of all this on the changing political economy of late 19th and 20th century Kerala. As outlined in the last chapter the political and space economy have symbiotic nexus. The case studies of coir and beedi will make this explicit. They will also illustrate the implications for desakota, capitals' use of space in its confrontation with labour.

What is important to note in this chapter are some of the socio-cultural features, and consequences of the native capitalist participation in the changing economy of Travancore of the late 19th and 20th century. In the new openings in the cash-crop economy of this period, there was considerable participation by Syrian Christians, Mopalah Muslims and Ezhavas. On the other hand the participation of the Nayars was minimal. The Nambudhri Brahmins, numerically insignificant, but big landlords were content to live on the rent due from their tenants. As the traditional literati of the society, some of them had used education as an access to the professions and posts in the State bureaucracy. All Nambudhuri Brahmins were however culturally disinclined, if not tabooed, to participate in trade or other entrepreneurial activity.

The important consequence of this trend was that the newly acquired economic power and privilege of the Syrian Christians, Mopalah Muslims and the Ezhavas were in contradiction with their social position in traditional Kerala society. (Issacs 1985. pPE-5 Issacs and Tharakan 1986a p8 1986b p9 & 28). The Syrian Christians had in the 18th century had a social position on par with or close to the Nayars. (Susan Bayly 1984. p 180-6) In the 19th century their position on the social ladder had declined. Their displacement from the Indian ocean trade consequent to the dominating position of the British; the transference of the poor, if not negative, social image in south India of the Hindus who were proselytized as

Christians by 19th century British and other missionaries; and the legitimizing of the social and economic importance of the Nayars by the British, particularly in Malabar, in their desire not to alienate the dominant caste; may have been contributing factors. Susan Bayly argues that the Kerala Rajas built up and stabilized corporate leadership among the Syrian Christians and

> it was in the nineteenth century that the group underwent a process of what might be called 'dis-incorporation' or disintegration as the establishment of British military and political supremacy in the region brought about the collapse of the eighteenth century political order. (1984.p180)

While the social position of the Syrian Christians had declined in the 19th century, their economic position was on the rise by the latter part of the same century. The Syrian Christians having been a trading community were obviously quick to take up the new economic opportunities.

The Mopalah Muslims were of three broad groups. First the merchants in the coastal towns. Second the tenant cultivators in inland Malabar. (C.A.Bayly 1988. p176). Third the fisher folk of coastal areas. (Mathur 1978.p2) The peasant tenant cultivators were the protagonists of the Mopalah revolts of Malabar in the 19th and early 20th centuries. (Dale 1980. p180;227-232) They were social protests against the changing tenurial relations translated into militant action by a religious fervour and identity. (C.A.Bayly 1988.p175-6; Pannikar 1989. p199). These revolts, significant in the peasant uprisings in colonial India, are however of less significance in the political economy of 20th century Kerala. Since the focus in this study is on the latter, and its relationship to the space economy, the Mopalah peasant revolts are of minimal concern here. It was the merchant Mopalah Muslims who progressed economically with the growing importance of cash crops and allied processing and trading activity.

The contradiction was even more sharp in the case of the Ezhavas. They were an avarna[27] caste who upto the early 20th century, were deemed as causing distance pollution to the savarna castes; were not permitted to enter most Hindu temples in Kerala, even though they were Hindus, as their presence in temples were considered polluting ; were not given posts in State services for reasons explained earlier. But with their traditional occupational involvement in coconut cultivation and industries, they benefited from the growing cash-crop economy. Coconut next to tea and rubber was an important cash crop. The structure of coconut cultivation and how the Ezhavas benefited from coconut cultivation and industries will be examined in Chapter eight.

Syrian Christians, Muslims, and Ezhavas, thus encountered a contradiction between their traditional social position and the upward economic mobility. This was the context which generated social reform movements among the Christian, Muslim and Ezhava communities. The social reform movement was spearheaded by the Ezhavas. As reflected in Table 2.04 they were numerically the most significant group in the whole of Kerala and present in all three political-administrative units, namely Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. The only other group numerically significant and equally present in the three units were the Nayars. The Syrian Christians were concentrated in Travancore and Cochin, while the Mopalah Muslims were in Malabar.

Syrian Christians and Mopalah Muslims while taking independent initiatives to advance their social and political position to keep pace with their increasing economic position, also joined together with the Ezhavas in the agitation for social and political reform. This was in spite of the religious differences and the efforts to use these to divide them. (Issacs and Tharakan 1986a. p17-19) The nominated Travancore Legislative Assembly instituted in 1888,

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27. Please see footnote 17.

had no Ezhava representatives in spite of their numerical importance. The limited electoral representation that was introduced in 1919 was on a restricted franchise that kept out any Ezhava representation and underrepresented the Christians and Muslims. This is symbolic of the limited social and political power these communities wielded and their agitation to redress this in the context of their growing economic position. These communities were also aggrieved that State bureaucracy in Travancore was dominated by the Nayars. In social discrimination, such as access to temples, public roads etc the Ezhavas suffered more because in spite of being Hindus, they were denied these privileges on the basis of caste.

It was this context that made the Ezhavas play the central role in social reform. This social context, pregnant with contradictions and restructuring, produced the charismatic figure of Sri Narayana Guru, (1854-1928) a Hindu philosopher-ascetic, and Ezhava by birth. British scholar-administrators and missionaries to justify and legitimize colonialism had to perceive and present it as a valiant "civilizing mission". Among the obnoxious features of Hindu society that lent itself readily to such rationalization of colonialism were sati, the position of women and caste oppression. The Indian response was mixed. But a predominant response readily assumed the role of counter-players. To elaborate, they

> borrowed their fundamental values from the western world view and, in spite of their image as orthodox revivalists, were ruthlessly critical of the Hindus. They also took the position that the Hindus had been great in ancient times and had fallen on bad days because of their loss of contact with textual Brahmanism...(Ashish Nandy 1983. p24)

Sri Narayana Guru's philosophy and activism is part of this broad genre of reformism that emerged in India, in the late 19th and early 20th century. It was however like some others conditioned by the regional context to a local specificity. The Ezhava Social Reform Movement or Sri Narayana Movement,[28] as it is sometimes called, (Issacs and Tharakan 1986a

28. It was also sometimes referred to as the S.N.D.P. movement after the Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (The Society for the Protection of Sri Narayana Doctrine or Teachings)

p1), had two facets. First, it sought and persuaded, the Ezhavas to shed some of their caste customs and beliefs. This included some aspects of the marumakkatayam system, such as the tali kettu ceremony, inheritance patterns, etc as well as other caste rituals. These efforts had elements of sanskritization[29] and as well as moving towards the nuclear conjugal family that was becoming the norm in Kerala. Second, was to agitate for the removal of overt discrimination of Ezhavas on the basis of caste, such as the limited use of public roads, access to temples, entry to the State bureaucracy etc. This was both by referral to Brahmanical texts as a legitimizing authority for the inappropriateness of these restrictions, as well by a social movement including satyagraha at temple entrances, caste association as a lobby and pressure group etc. In the former the charisma and learning of Sri Narayana Guru was invoked. By his active participation in the reform movement, he gave a moral and textual authority to the challenging slogan of "one caste, one God and one religion". (Ibid p9; Rao 1972 p125-30)

A key figure in the social movement and its organizational aspects was Dr Palpu, a western medical professional, who was denied entry to Travancore Health Services because he was an Ezhava. The details of the Sri Narayana or Ezhava Social Movement activities and success are not required for this study. What is important to note is the implications for the political economy of Kerala. First as Issacs and Tharakan state;

> Unlike the earlier social reform movements of other avarna castes, as for example the well known breast cloth agitation in southern Travancore, the Ezhava Social Reform Movement was led by the bourgeois elements that emerged from amongst the avarnas themselves. The demands raised by them were in some sense the demands of the whole Ezhava caste, even if only a section of the Ezhava community stood to benefit most from the gains. Primarily because of the slogans raised, the Ezhava Social Reform Movement could bring into action almost the whole Ezhava masses and become the most sweeping mass movement that Travancore had known. (1986a p2)

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29. Sanskritization is an anthropological concept that refers to a process by which castes attempt to move up the caste hierarchy by emulating the behaviour practices of the Brahmins. (Srinivas 1968. p1-45)

30. Literally meaning "truth grasping" which could be manifest as "sit ins".

Second, it was an anti-Hindu establishment movement from within the Hindu community, and not led or orchestrated by missionaries. It may have imbibed or catheterated western values, including bourgeois radicalism, and/or organizational methods and forms. But the bourgeois radicalism was not that of a elitist caste as elsewhere in India, concerned with the image and/or moral legitimacy of Hinduism in the face of colonizers criticism. It was the assertion, of civil and social rights emerging from the lived experience of a disadvantaged group, in context of changing economic and social forces. Third, the egalitarian ideology explicit in Sri Narayana Guru's teachings, facilitated the percolation of radical political ideology and an ethos of the moral legitimacy and authority for any disadvantaged group to assert their rights and challenge the oppressors.

There were two strands in Sri Narayana Guru's reformist ideology. One was sanskritization, and the other an attack on the Hindu establishment, from the great tradition of vedanta philosophy. Egalitarian ideology embedded in his teachings was also later to fertilize political radicalism. The anti-Hindu establishment ethos is important. It prevented revivalist nationalism. This is brought out if he is compared with Anagarika Dharmapala, the Sri Lankan Buddhist reformist, a contemporary of Sri Narayana Guru and also a "counter player" in the south Asian colonial context. Anagarika Dharmapala led a Buddhist revivalist movement not directed at reforming indigenous institutions but colonial institutions. He was critical of the Sri Lankan westernized elitist minority, dominated by Christians, and their favoured position and life styles in colonial Sri Lanka.[31] But in the process his reformism fostered revivalism and eventually contributed to Sinhalese-Buddhist atavism and/or chauvinism. (Obeyasekera 1972 p68-73; 1975 p248-255; 1976). In contrast Sri Narayana Guru's reformism, with its anti-Hindu establishment stance, had a liberating influence and was not nativist. This had implications for the political economy, including the emergence of a radical hegemony. We shall observe the

31. For a very readable, witty and literary presentation, that provides a glimpse of a voluptuous strand in the westernized Sri Lankan elite life styles circa 1920s, see Michael Ondaatje, Running in the Family. (1982)

workings of these forces in the political economy and its implications for the space economy in later chapters.

Social changes and the region

Some of the features discussed in this chapter as an introduction to Kerala, are obviously specific to Travancore, particularly north Travancore. Some of these features, among others, contributed to this sub-region becoming a heartland of Kerala. What occurred in Travancore by a process of osmosis and/or as catalyst influenced the rest of what is contemporary Kerala. One reason why this occurred is because of the three political-administrative units of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar being one cultural-linguistic region. The common language, together with the increasing literacy and mass media took the messages across whole the Malayalam speaking region. Cultural similarities, such as the presence of the same caste groups were another. Once political unification occurred during the period 1947 to 1956, the policies and pressures of Travancore were extended, or its percolation accelerated, to the other two. We shall observe how some of these occurred in chapters eight and nine. Chapter eight is a case study of the beedi industry, concentrated in Cannanore district, part of Malabar District of the colonial period. One reason for the selection of beedi as a case study is to demonstrate how some of the features of the political economy that developed in Travancore spread to what was formerly Malabar district. But it was not totally a one-way process. Malabar being part of British India experienced the typical nationalist struggle within British India as led by the Indian National Congress. It was mediated in Cochin and Travancore by the character of these two princely States. But some of the fissures that developed in the Malabar nationalist movement had their influence on Travancore. We shall in chapter eight observe how the Congress Socialist Party of Malabar, a break-away group of the Indian National Congress was an important force in the labour

movement of the coir workers of Travancore, and eventually on the political economy of Travancore, and Kerala as well.

This chapter has described some features that are specific or unique to Kerala. But as stated earlier, in the cultural geography of India, every region has its own specific and unique characteristics. Kerala then is no more or less unique than any other region. The next chapter however will attempt to demonstrate how some of these unique socio-cultural features of Kerala, in combination with some unique socio-economic characteristics, have made Kerala emerge as a distinct society in India. A distinct society in the sense that it is different from the rest of India, in a manner that few other regions of India have developed to be.

CHAPTER THREE

KERALA A DISTINCT SOCIETY IN INDIA

In the mosaic of regions of India, what makes Kerala stand apart is not so much its ecological and cultural features, but some of its socio-economic and spatial characteristics. The more important among them are: land use patterns; demographic trends; physical quality of life and a reasonably equitable access to social infrastructure, unmatched even by the economically more advanced States in India; the substantial presence of non-agricultural economic activity in rural areas; and urbanization and settlement patterns. Some of these characteristics flow from the ecological and cultural features described in the last chapter. We shall examine in this chapter these characteristics that combine to make Kerala a distinct society in India. The presence of desakota is part of this mix, the constellation, and finds expression among others, in the degree of non-agricultural activity in rural areas.

Land use patterns

In chapter two we observed the influence of the political economy on land policy in both Travancore and Malabar. This together with the historical geography of the Kerala coast, both the ecology that influenced a cash crop economy, and the active role of the port cities of this region in Indian ocean navigation, trade and commerce, are important ingredients that have a bearing on 20th century Kerala's land use patterns.[1] This pattern is distinctive in the Indian context.

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1. The Kerala ports were important and necessary stops in pre-steamer navigation, when sailing vessels used the monsoon winds to travel across the Arabian Sea to India. (Curtin 1984. p99)

Land use: Kerala and other States

The land use patterns of twenty-one states, covering 96.8 percent of the land area and 99.6 percent of cultivated area of India, are tabulated in Table 3.01. Fourteen states had food grains, (cereals and pulses), cultivated in more than 75 percent of the total cultivated area. If oil seeds, (groundnuts, sesame, linseed and castor), are added to this (column 7), seventeen states have more than 75 percent of the cultivated area with food grains and oil seeds. Of the remaining four Gujarat and Karnataka have 69.6 percent and 69.3 percent respectively of the total cultivated land used for food grains and oil seeds. The other two states are Meghalaya and Kerala with 59.5 percent and 29.8 percent respectively of cultivated land being used for food grains and oil seeds cultivation. The low percent of land used for food grains and oil seeds cultivation in Kerala is in sharp contrast to the rest of India. This is true even if only the food grains are considered. (Column 5) Only Gujarat has 45.7 percent of its cultivated area used for food grains which is much higher than Kerala's 28.7 percent.

The significance of coconut

It may be argued that coconut is an oil seed, even though the Indian official publications and statistical data do not classify coconut as an oil seed.[2] The importance here is not how an "official" list categorizes but the functional importance of a crop in terms of land use, and more importantly for this study the character of the employment it generates. From the time of Strabo's writings[3] in the first century B.C. the coconut palm is known in written geography for its many products. In chapter eight, the case study on coir, we will have

2. The Indian Statistical Abstracts do not include coconut under oil seeds in the data on land use in India. (Govt of India 1987. Statistical Abstracts 1986 p49-50). The National Industrial Classification (NIC) used by the Census of India 1981 does not list coconut under oil seeds but under plantations. (Census of India 1981. Series 10 Kerala. Part III A & B [i], p49. See two digit code 01 and three digit code 017) The census definition of agricultural labour limits such work to those working in the cultivation of cereals, pulses and oil seeds. Coconut is not listed under oil seeds, but included with the excluded crops such as tea, rubber etc (Ibid page 21-23)

3. Cited in the 16th century Portuguese publication "The Narratives of Joseph the Indian". See English translation from Italian, Latin and Dutch versions by Antony Vallavanthara, 1984. p190-191.

TABLE 3.01

Land use by food grains and oil seeds as a percent of total cropped area in India, classified by States in 1982

States	1[a]	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Andhra Pradesh	29.0	00.1	29.9	10.7	*69.7*	14.4	*84.1*	15.9	100.0
Assam	68.2	03.1	00.8	03.5	*75.6*	00.7	*76.3*	23.7	100.0
Bihar	48.0	15.3	11.3	12.0	*86.6*	01.1	*87.7*	12.3	100.0
Gujarat	04.8	06.8	27.7	06.4	*45.7*	23.9	*69.6*	30.4	100.0
Harayana	09.2	28.3	21.1	20.0	*78.6*	00.2	*78.8*	21.2	100.0
Himachal Prd	09.8	37.9	37.9	05.8	*91.4*	01.6	*93.0*	07.0	100.0
Jamm:& Kashmir	26.7	20.0	32.6	04.8	*84.1*	01.0	*85.1*	14.9	100.0
Karnataka	10.2	03.1	34.0	13.0	*60.3*	09.0	*69.3*	30.7	100.0
Kerala	*27.3*	*00.0*	*00.2*	*01.2*	*28.7*	*01.1*	*29.8*	*70.2*	*100.0*
Madhya Pradesh	23.0	15.1	21.8	21.4	*81.3*	04.9	*86.2*	13.8	100.0
Maharashtra	07.6	05.6	44.4	13.9	*71.6*	06.3	*77.9*	22.1	100.0
Manipura	78.9	00.0	02.8	01.9	*83.6*	00.5	*84.1*	15.9	100.0
Meghalaya	47.5	01.3	09.0	01.3	*59.1*	00.4	*59.5*	40.5	100.0
Nagaland	70.7	00.0	12.0	04.0	*86.7*	00.7	*87.4*	12.6	100.0
Orissa	52.0	00.8	08.9	21.3	*83.0*	05.8	*88.8*	11.2	100.0
Punjab	19.2	44.0	07.4	04.8	*75.4*	01.7	*77.1*	22.9	100.0
Rajasthan	00.8	10.1	41.9	21.5	*74.3*	03.9	*78.2*	21.8	100.0
Tamilnadu	32.1	00.0	20.2	09.6	*61.9*	17.0	*78.9*	21.1	100.0
Tripura	77.7	01.0	00.0	01.3	*80.0*	00.8	*80.8*	19.2	100.0
Uttar Pradesh	21.8	32.3	16.7	12.8	*83.6*	06.8	*90.4*	09.6	100.0
West Bengal	66.1	02.7	01.4	06.4	*76.6*	02.1	*78.7*	21.3	100.0
Others [b]	34.0	06.3	12.7	02.4	*55.4*	00.7	*56.1*	43.9	100.0
INDIA	23.4	12.7	23.8	13.6	*73.5*	07.0	*80.5*	19.5	100.0

Source: Govt of India, Central Statistical Organization. Statistical Abstract 1982. New Series 26 p41-48.

Notes:

[a] Column titles are as follows:

1. Rice
2. Wheat
3. Other cereals [c]
4. Pulses
5. *Total food grains*
6. Oil seeds [d]
7. *Total of food grains and oil seeds (Columns 1 to 6)*
8. Other crops
9. Total cultivated area

[b] Others comprise Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Delhi, Goa, Daman & Diu, Lakshadeep, Mizoran, Pondicherry, Arnunachal Pradesh and Sikkim. In total they comprise 3.2 of India's land area and 0.4 of the cultivated area. (See Appendix 4) Most of them are administered by the Union (Federal) Government.

[c] Other cereals are bajra, barley, jowar, maize, millet and ragi.

[d] Oil seeds are groundnuts, sesamum, linseed and castor seed.

occasion to discuss some of the many products of the coconut palm in 20th century Kerala, and the amount of economic activity generated in manufacturing, processing and trading of such products.

Briefly, the kernel of the nut is used as an ingredient in currying vegetables, fish and meat, for the extraction of oil and/or making desiccated coconut. The shell of the nut is used for making utensils, (eg: wooden spoons and ladles), and for making charcoal. The husk of the coconut is used to make coir yarn, which in turn, as we will see in chapter eight, is a base for a number other products, such as rope, mats, carpets, mattress and cushion fillings etc. From the spathe of the coconut palm an extract is tapped to make sweet toddy (mildly fermented palm wine), toddy (fermented palm wine), arrack (palm wine converted into spirits by distillation), vinegar and palm sugar in syrup and/or crystal form. From the palm leaves are woven cadjan, a roofing material very much used in Kerala and South India. The spine of the fronds of the palm leaves is used to make brooms (ekel brooms) and wooden skewers as a cooking aid. The palm fronds are used to weave baskets and mats. And the trunk of a felled tree yields excellent timber for rafters.

So while the co*conut* per se may be classified as an oil seed, it is difficult to categorize the coconut *palm* cultivation in a singular sense of oil seed cultivation. The kernel of the nut may be given some primacy, as the core of the fruit of the palm, in a literal and metaphorical sense. But from employment generation perspective it does not warrant any primacy. For cooking purposes the kernel is grated by the user or consumer and so no employment is generated in processing it for the market. It is just sold as a nut. In manufacturing oil, traditional methods used animal power and a limited use of labour. It was not as labour intensive as the coir industry, weaving of cadjans, making of baskets and mats etc. As we noted in chapter one, coconut oil processing is one of the few industries in Kerala where traditional processing methods were replaced by mechanized methods. Quality

needs and the replacement of animal power by electric power, and the minimal use of labour, were factors for this transition to occur, which is otherwise not common in Kerala. So the kernel of the coconut does not generate employment as much as the processing and manufacturing of other products of the palm. The cultivation of the coconut palm is also not labour intensive. Indeed among plantations and small holder cash crops it is known for its low labour inputs or absorption capacity. (Nagam Aiya 1906, V 3, p189; Tilakaratne et al 1981. p 10; Casinader et al 1987. p310)[4]

It may be noted in passing that though coconut kernel is a food item, it is not a staple food item. It is an ingredient in the Kerala cuisine but a person in Kerala cannot live by coconut alone. It is not, as is tapioca, a substitute for rice. Indeed in Kerala both indigenous and western medicine advocate against excessive use of the kernel. The former are of the opinion that excessive use causes indigestion and the latter because of its high cholesterol content. It is also important to note in this context, that Kerala is the major supplier of coconut oil and copra (sun dried or kiln dried kernels) for the Indian domestic market outside Kerala.

Land use and desakota.

Land use in Kerala is being examined here not merely because its features are distinct in the Indian context, but also to understand the employment patterns it generates and shapes. This is important for understanding the presence of desakota. Does the land use pattern and related agro-processing influence the character and mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activity and occupations in non-urban areas. McGee has argued that the rice bowl ecology and the cyclical nature of labour inputs in rice cultivation have implications for

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4. Coconut cultivation requires 0.25 persons per hectare, (i.e. one person for four hectares), compared to 3.1 persons per hectare of tea and 1.0 persons per hectare of rubber. (Tilakaratne et al 1981. p10; Casinader et al 1987. p310)

desakota. Drawing on the work of Oshima, (1986), Geertz (1963) and Bray (1986), McGee concludes:

> Thus it is possible to argue that the labour force of these rice bowl areas was "culturally" prepared to commit its labour to various forms of "new" non-agricultural activity. (1991.p15)

McGee found particularly appropriate the following observation of Bray.

> The organization of resources typical of a "skill oriented" technology such as intensive rice farming dovetails very neatly with petty commodity production, which requires very little capital to set up a family enterprise and absorbs surplus labour without depriving the farm of workers at times of peak demand. It can be expanded, diversified or contracted according to market demands, but the combination with the rice farm guarantees the family subsistence. (Bray 1986.p135)

Rice is an important crop in Kerala as would be apparent from Table 3.01. But Kerala, as the ecology described in the last chapter would suggest, is not a rice bowl in the sense the river basins and delta of Kaveri and Krishna in southeast India or the Ganges in northeast India are rice bowl ecologies. It is then important in examining the land use pattern of Kerala to understand if and how the ecology contributes to a mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activities.

Coconut cultivation we noted is not labour intensive. But the processing and manufacturing of the many products of the coconut palm yields a demand for non-agricultural labour. It can then be argued that the combined effects of rice and coconut cultivation have implications for non-agricultural activity and thus for desakota as well. This was augmented by the non-agricultural activity in the processing of forest based products and agro-processing such as cashew nut processing, sea food processing etc. The details of such activity will be discussed in chapter seven in the context of what constitutes the manufacturing sector in Kerala.

What is important to emphasize now as distinctive in the Kerala land use pattern is the predominance of plantation and/or cash crops and the combination of rice and coconut cultivation. The latter distinction, unique to Kerala, is brought out in the fact that of the 1.1 million hectares of coconut cultivation in India, 0.67 million hectares (61.4 percent) are in Kerala. (Govt of India 1982. Statistical Abstracts. p48)

Climate, topography and the exposure to, and opportunities in, maritime trading had historically influenced this trend in land use pattern. Ward and Connor of the Madras Surveyor-General's Office, in their "Geographical and Statistical Survey of the Travancore and Cochin States" in 1815-16 record the land use pattern in Travancore at that time. This is presented in Table 3.02. Coconut was half as much as the area cultivated with rice at that date. Spices were part of the forest growth. This pattern was further advanced by the expansion in the

TABLE 3.02

Travancore Land Use Pattern in 1815-16

Category	Total Area			Culti:[a] Area
	Sq.M	Hect[b]	%	%
Rice	741	191919	11.0	61.9
Coconut	357	92463	5.3	29.4
Palmyra	115	29785	1.7	9.5
Fallow land	1000	259000	14.9	
Pasture land	1961	507899	29.1	
Forests	2379	616162	35.3	
Lakes, rivers & tanks	158	40922	2.4	
Built up areas	20	5180	0.3	
Total	6731	1743330	100.0	100.0

Source: Ward and Connor 1863. p 3

Notes :

[a] Cultivated Area

[b] Data is given in Square miles in source and is converted at one hectare equals 0.00386101 square mile

cultivation, processing and trade of cash crops beginning in the mid 19th century for reasons discussed in the last chapter. By 1906, Travancore State Manual of the same year states;

> Even in the case of paddy the produce of the State is insufficient to meet the whole demand and its import as well as that of rice comes to about 25 lakhs of rupees worth a year. It might seem strange that a country with ample rainfall and large irrigation facilities should not be able to produce its own requirement of paddy. But it must be remembered that the Travancore ryot (peasant) takes more kindly to rear coconut and other trees than to cultivate rice fields, for they yield better profit and are less liable to be affected by unfavourable seasons. And when to this is added the fact that gardens entail comparatively less trouble and cost and that there is an ever increasing demand for their produce, we can well understand the ryot's partiality for them, a circumstance which also accounts for the very large export of the produce of the coconut tree. (Nagam Aiya 1906. Vol 3. p189)

TABLE 3.03

Area under principal crops : Travancore 1816 to 1978

Crops	1816 Hect `000	1918 Hect `000	1948 Hect `000	1978 Hect `000	1978 Hect %
Rice	191.9	258.2	210.4	205.7	18.0
Tapioca	[a]	157.4	196.7	181.0	15.9
Coconut	92.5	186.1	210.8	284.5	24.9
Rubber	[a]	19.0	41.7	118.7	10.4
Tea	[a]	20.6	31.5	29.4	2.6
Coffee	[a]	[a]	3.2	6.0	0.5
Others	[a]	[a]	[a]	315.7[b]	27.7
Total				1141.0	100.0

Sources:
Table 3.02 of this chapter for 1816 data.
Panikar, Krishnan and Krishnaji 1978. Table 2A1 for 1918 and 1948 data
Govt of Kerala, (State Land Use Board) 1980a. p125-6, for 1978 data.
Notes:
[a] Data not available.
[b] Others in 1978 include 46831 hectares (4.1%) of pepper, 46333 hectares (4.1 %) of cardamom, 24774 hectares (2.2 %) of banana, 21036 hectares (1.8 %) of cashew, 15972 hectares (1.4 %) of arecanuts, 6314 hectares (0.6 %) of sugar cane and 5742 hectares (0.5 %) of ginger.
[c] For 1978, Travancore is equated with the districts of Trivandrum, Quilon, Alleppey, Kottayam and Idukki following the UN (1975) practice. Idukki was not a separate district in 1975, but was largely part of Kottayam district. (Census of India 1981. Part II A p19)

This trend continued as Table 3.03 suggests. Unfortunately such time depth data is only available for Travancore, and this too does not include important crops like pepper, cardamoms, arecanuts etc prior to 1978. Comprehensive data is available only for the recent period for newly formed or amalgamated region of Kerala. This makes it difficult to chart the trends over time. But the available data suggests the continued increase in the area planted with exportable cash crops.

The significance of tapioca

Other than rice, tapioca (cassava) is the only significant food crop for Kerala domestic consumption and/or market. Its significance in terms of hectareage is shown in Table 3.03 We need to recognize here on many fronts the significance of tapioca. First, it is an important food supplement. It is often a rice substitute for low income households. (U.N. 1975. p 48-49. Kannan and Pushpangadan 1990. p1996) It is also used as breakfast food among middle and higher income groups. It had been part of the Kerala diet and cuisine for considerable period of time as a 16th century narrative suggests its cultivation and consumption. (Vallavanthara 1984. p189,243 and 289 footnote 137) Kerala ecology may have facilitated the growth and consumption of this crop. Hill (1983. p536) observes the cultivation of tubers and roots in Southeast Asia and terms it as a pre-rice culture crop. We noted earlier the comparable ecology of Kerala and southeast Asia. One has however to be cautious not to overstate the use of tapioca as a main meal item and/or as substitute for rice. Kannan and Pushpangadan found its cultivation related or sensitive to the price of rice. (1990. p1996) During my stay in Kerala I found that among the cafes and restaurants in Trivandrum serving cheap meals only one served tapioca, and that too restricted at restricted times.[5] Restaurants serving thosai, a

5. This is served ironically with neymeen, (seer fish or Spanish mackerel) an expensive fish in South Asia.

cheap south Indian dish, were more common. Tapioca was often a side dish in many homes and a substitute for rice only in hard times.[6]

Second, the extent of land cultivated with tapioca as shown in Table 3.3 is considerable. But as Kannan and Pushpangadan observe it is often an inter-crop in home gardens. (Ibid. p1996) As we will observe in the next chapter the Kerala settlement pattern is to have the homestead surrounded by the cultivating land, other than sometimes paddy lands. And this cultivating land or "home garden" is a veritable jungle of crops. There is intense inter-cropping, particularly with coconut. The extent of tapioca cultivated has to be understood in this context of cultivation practices. Third, tapioca cultivation is not labour intensive. It needs labour only at the time of planting and uprooting to get the tubers. There is no processing involved, the uprooted tubers being sent direct to the market or the kitchen if it is for home consumption. So like coconut cultivation, tapioca does not generate a great deal of agricultural employment.

The point being emphasized is that the tapioca being an seasonal inter-crop, invariably with coconut, and with low labour needs, makes its cultivated extent have less than ostensible impact in terms of its hectarage. This is in terms of land use and more importantly employment generation. Together with arguments led in the case of coconut as requiring little agricultural labour it can be summed up that though in quantitative terms the total hectarage of paddy, coconut and tapioca may be substantial, agricultural employment generated is

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6. The locality we lived in had a mix of middle and low income households. As tapioca is cultivated and consumed in Sri Lanka we were interested in Kerala tapioca cookery. Many of our neighbours gave us tapioca cooking demonstrations and it was always as a side dish or breakfast food. It is particularly appropriate to have it with curried neymeen. It was never a substitute for rice at lunch or dinner. This may have not been disclosed because it is prestigious to have rice for lunch and dinner. But as we were known as Sri Lankans who consume tapioca, the barriers of pretence were considerably broken down. We did find on, the other hand, in homes, as well as in cheap eating out places of middle and lower income persons, many rice flour dishes substituted with wheat flour. (Eg pittu, stringhoppers). This was particularly for dinner. We were familiar with such substitution as this has occurred in Sri Lanka as well.

largely confined to paddy. It would be erroneous to then conclude that since these three crops total to about 60 percent, (which is overstated by the extent of inter-cropping), the land use pattern is close to the other Indian States in terms of agricultural employment generation.

What is being argued here is that Kerala is distinct from other Indian States in that its land use pattern has largely confined agricultural employment to paddy.[7] [8] So Kerala is not "culturally" prepared, as McGee states, by its rice cultivation to forms of non-agricultural activity, but it is "ecologically" prepared by its tree crops, particularly coconut, and to some extent cashew and forestry to generate non-agricultural employment in agro-processing. There is both a cultural and ecological fix by the land use pattern to influence the generation of non-agricultural activity in non-urban areas. In this sense Kerala land use pattern is distinct in the Indian context.

Size of operational holdings

India with its large peasant population has a low average size of operational land holdings. But within India, Kerala has the lowest average size of operational holdings. (Table 3.04) This is in spite of, on the one hand, having tea, rubber and coffee plantations, which are generally large holdings, and on the other a relatively low extent of grain crops, which are traditional peasant small holdings. Except for tea and to a less extent rubber and coffee, all crops, including coconut, are small holdings in Kerala. In chapter two we noted that the land policy of the Kerala region progressively brought about an increase in small holdings. The demographic pressures on land and fragmentation of holdings to circumvent ceiling on land

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7. See Table 3.01. The ratio of rice to total of food grains and oil seeds (27.3 to 28.7) is highest in Kerala. Only West Bengal and the small states northeast India (Assam, Manipura, Meghalaya and Nagaland) have high rice to total of food grains and oil seeds, though they are not as high as the Kerala ratio.

8. See Appendix 3.01 for 1981 census data on agricultural workforce in Kerala disaggregated by cereals, pulses, oil seeds, plantations, livestock, forestry, fishing etc. An overwhelming section of this workforce are in cereals, pulses and oil seeds. This as indicated by Table 3.01 is dominated by rice.

legislation may have also contributed to this trend. The predominance of small holdings is thus another feature of the land use pattern of Kerala that is distinct even in the Indian context.

TABLE 3.04

Average size of Operational Holdings by States : India 1971

States	Ave:Size of Op:Hd Hectares	States	Ave:Size of Op:Hd Hectares
Rajasthan	5.46	Himachal Pradesh	1.53
Maharastra	4.28	Bihar	1.52
Madhya Pradesh	4.00	Assam	1.47
Gujarat	4.11	Tamilnadu	1.45
Harayana	3.70	West Bengal	1.20
Karnataka	3.20	Uttara Pradesh	1.16
Punjab	2.89	Jammu & Kashmir	0.94
Andhra Pradesh	2.51	**Kerala**	**0.70**
Orissa	1.89	India	2.30

Source: Ministry of Agriculture & Irrigation, Govt of India. 1976. Table 4.4 p71.

Summing up

Overall such a land use pattern, both the nature of crops, the character of employment generated, the size of holdings, when combined with the related agro-processing industries, and the export and internal trade in the agro-processed commodities, has implications for the space economy. Primarily the crops involved agro-processing and so generated both agricultural and non-agricultural activity. Secondly the small holdings dovetailed with small scale and petty production and processing. Availability of labour, collective consumption infrastructure, and transport facilities, permitted the non-urban areas to participate in agro-processing activities. The comparative advantage of raw materials, cheap land and buildings were also factors. And as we will note in chapter seven and eight, the two

case studies, a congregation of workers in urban centres in labour intensive industries proved dysfunctional for capital. It facilitated labour mobilization and organization. Capital's response was to use space in an attempt to disperse labour by downsizing and locating the production units in non-urban areas. All this facilitated the presence and mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activity in non-urban areas and makes intelligible the presence of desakota.

Demographic features

Population growth

The demographic pressures on land were brought about by two processes. First, the land-person ratio, and second the rate of growth of the population. Though there had been some censuses in the 19th century, which we will examine shortly, reasonably reliable population figures are those of 1901 and subsequent decennial censuses.[9] Table 3.5 presents in brief some of the salient demographic features of 20th century Kerala other than population density which we will deal with separately. India is well known for an adverse female sex ratio. But this progressively improves on a north-south continuum of the continent. In Kerala it reaches its peak with a favourable ratio of females. This is due to the long life expectancy of females (Bhat and Rajan. 1990. p1959)[10]

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9. A detailed discussion of the Censuses of India, from 1871 to 1981, as source material, is presented in chapter six.

10. Bhat and Rajan have argued that, contrary to what is often believed, the Indian cultural preference for sons is present in Kerala too. (1990. p1977) But they concede that the position of women in Kerala, is relatively better than is generally the case in India. This is consequent to earlier matrilineal inheritance, joint family systems and current absence of patrilocal residence after marriage and subjection to the authority of the mother-in-law, (a feature in many other parts of India). The relatively better position of women in Kerala they argue may have contributed to the health and nutrition of females in Kerala and longer life expectancy than elsewhere in India. (Ibid. p1961, 1973)

The intercensal growth rate is broken down by net migration and natural increase. The net in-migration up to 1931 is caused largely by labour migrants for plantation work in the Malabar highlands from Tamilnadu. The net out-migration since 1941 is caused by Malayalees

TABLE 3.05

Some Demographic Features of Kerala: 1901 to 1981

Year	Pop: in `000	Sex Ratio [M/F%]	Pop: Growth Rate	Net Migr Rate	Rate of Natural Increase		
					Kerala	India	Diff:
1901	6396	99.6	-	-	-	-	-
1911	7148	99.2	1.11	0.03	1.08	0.60	0.48
1921	7802	98.9	0.88	0.04	0.84	0.00	0.83
1931	9507	97.9	1.98	0.12	1.86	1.07	0.78
1941	11032	97.4	1.49	-0.01	1.49	1.31	0.18
1951	13549	97.3	2.06	-0.11	2.16	1.24	0.93
1961	16904	97.9	2.21	-0.20	2.41	1.88	0.53
1971	21347	98.4	2.31	-0.16	2.47	2.19	0.28
1981	25403	96.7	1.75	-0.22	1.97	2.26	-0.29

Source: Bhat and Rajan 1990. Table 1, p1957.

seeking employment in Madras, Bombay and other urban centres. Population pressures and greater literacy and education that made them employable may have contributed to this trend. The peak in the 1971-81 period is caused by male labour migrants from Kerala to the Middle East. This partly accounts for the drop in the sex ratio to its lowest in 1981.

The natural increase of Kerala is consistently higher than that of India. This has been mainly attributed to the public health and medical services established by the Travancore and Cochin rulers in the late 19th century. (UN 1975. p73-74; Bhat and Rajan 1990. p1963) It needs to be emphasized here that public health care or preventive medicine was equally important as the curative medical services in the decline of mortality rates, and the

consequent rise in the rate of natural increase.[11] High population density has also facilitated, through the operation of economy of scale, the spread, provision and reduced per capita costs of health care. (Bhat and Rajan 1990. p1963) Literacy has also influenced the demand, access and utilization of medical services. Utilization of medical services has been pronouncedly greater in Kerala. (Nag 1989) Cultural attention to personal hygiene, drinking of boiled water are also believed to have contributed to the better health of the Kerala population. Bhat and Rajan (1990. p1963) discount this in view of high morbidity rates in Kerala. But they ignore the fact that greater utilization of medical services may have inflated morbidity rates. The dispersed settlement pattern checking disease transmission is also adduced as a possible contributory factor. (Ibid.p1963)

In brief, these features suggest the greater population growth rate in Kerala than the national average is caused both by a time lag in the mortality rates and historical-cultural factors. Bhat and Rajan recognize this:

> Even before the present decline began in the early part of this century , Kerala had substantially lower mortality rate than India as a whole. It probably reflected a relatively permanent difference in the historical equilibrium than simply a time lag in transition. (Ibid p1979)

The comparison of Kerala population growth rates with the national average though useful in bringing out some issues affecting the demographic features of Kerala, can however be misleading because it ignores other pockets of high population density and growth within India. To rectify this we shall shortly compare Thanjavur district of Tamilnadu, a classic rice bowl high population density region of south India with Kerala as whole, as well as its

11. A feature that one observes while travelling in south Asia is the tendency for people to use the "bush" as a toilet. (In some cities such as Madras it is even common in the disadvantaged areas for children to use the sidewalks and drains for defecating purposes). But this is conspicuously absent in Kerala and Sri Lanka. This is partly due to the public health policy and advocacy. House construction regulation included toilets to be constructed, spaced from wells if the toilet was not to have a water sealed septic tank system etc. This was partly motivated to control the spread of water borne and bowel related diseases and did prove very successful. See Meegama (1968) for some observations on the Sri Lankan experience.

disaggregated political-administrative units in the colonial and post-colonial periods. Before we set about this task it is necessary to discuss the population density features of Kerala. It is also necessary to establish that at the sub-regional level within Kerala, Travancore and Cochin had higher population growth due to the rulers of these princely

TABLE 3.06

Kerala and India: Population Growth 1901 - 1971

Period	Tr'core	Cochin	Malabar	Kerala	India
1901 - 1911	1.48	1.25	0.72	1.11	0.56
1911 - 1931	2.19	1.44	0.81	1.44	0.51
1931 - 1951	2.03	1.82	1.53	1.79	1.30
1951 - 1971	2.25	2.16	2.42	2.30	2.11
1901 - 1971	2.04	1.73	1.47	1.74	1.20

Source: U.N. 1975. Table 30. p74.
Notes : For the period 1951 to 1971 the districts of Kottayam, Alleppey, Quilon and Trivandrum have been taken to correspond broadly to Travancore; Ernakulam and Trichur districts for Cochin and Cannanore, Kozhikode, Malappuram and Palghat districts for Malabar of the colonial period. (U.N.1975. p73, f1)

states initiating better health and medical services. Table 3.06 shows the population growth of the three political-administrative units, Kerala and India for the period 1901 to 1981.

All three units have had a sustained higher growth than the national average. The highest growth among the three units is in Travancore. The early lead of Travancore in the rate of natural increase, is attributed to the medical services and public health policies and programme initiatives taken in the latter half of the 19th century. (U.N. 1975. p73) The broad context in which these occurred were noted in the last chapter. The first phase of the demographic transition, when mortality rates drop and crude birth rates remain constant, was obviously beginning to occur in Travancore in the early decades of the 20th century.

Population density

Apart from population growth, the land-person ratio of the region also contributed to the demographic pressure. Kerala occupies 1.18 percent of the total land area of India, but in 1981 its population was 3.71 percent of the national population. This results in Kerala having the highest population density among the states in India.[12] Census data from 1901 show that throughout the period 1901 to 1981 Kerala had a high population density. (Table 3.07) From 1921 to 1981, with the exception of 1941 Kerala had the highest population density in India.

The only other region in India which has had a similar high density throughout the period is West Bengal. The high population density of Kerala and West Bengal are present in both urban and rural areas. In West Bengal high rural population densities are largely in the districts around Calcutta and in the Calcutta-Murshidabad corridor. In Kerala rural densities are in the coastal districts. (Table 3.08) The Calcutta-Murshidabad corridor while being a fertile river basin and a rice bowl area, is also a transport corridor to Calcutta, a major Indian metropolis. More than half of this corridor is within 100 kilometres of Calcutta. This corridor more or less fits the description as the mega-urban region (McGee 1991a. p7; Ginsberg 1991. p36) of Calcutta. The Kerala high population density coastal region has none of these characteristics. It is not part of any mega-urban region. As noted in the last chapter Kerala may be viewed as a string of mini river basins, but as argued earlier the whole region cannot be characterized as a rice bowl ecology.

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12. It also has one of the highest non-urban population densities in the world.

TABLE 3.07

Population density of Indian States per sq kilometre

States	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981
Andhra Pradesh	69	78	78	88	99	113	131	158	195
Assam	42	49	59	71	85	102	138	186	254
Bihar	157	163	162	180	202	223	267	324	402
Gujarat	46	50	52	59	70	83	105	136	174
Haryana	105	94	96	103	119	128	172	227	292
Himachal Pr	35	34	35	37	41	43	51	62	77
Jammnu & Kashmir	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	59
Karnataka	68	71	70	76	85	101	123	153	194
Kerala	*165*	*184*	*201*	*245*	*284*	*349*	*435*	*549*	*655*
Madhya Pradesh	38	44	43	48	54	59	73	94	118
Maharashtra	63	70	68	78	87	104	129	164	204
Manipur	13	16	17	20	23	26	35	48	64
Meghalaya	15	18	19	21	25	27	34	45	60
Nagaland	6	9	10	11	11	13	22	31	47
Orissa	66	73	72	80	88	94	113	141	169
Punjab	150	134	142	159	191	182	221	269	333
Rajasthan	30	32	30	34	41	47	59	75	100
Sikkim	8	12	12	15	17	19	23	30	45
Tamilnadu	148	161	166	180	202	232	259	317	372
Tripura	17	22	29	36	49	61	109	148	196
Uttar Pradesh	165	164	159	169	192	215	251	300	377
West Bengal	191	203	197	213	292	296	394	499	615
INDIA	77	82	81	90	103	117	142	177	216

Source: Census of India, 1981; Series 1 India, Part II B [i], Statement 4.
Note: Census of India 1981 (Statement 4) provides the population densities, for Census years 1901 to 1981, of the areas corresponding to the contemporary twenty two States of India.

The cities on the Kerala coast are also small by Indian standards, none of them having a population of more than about half a million. The coast may be characterized as a transport corridor. There were coastal shipping and internal waterways from pre-colonial times. This was augmented with rail and road transport from late 19th century. But the transport corridor is not part of a transport artery in India. (Berry 1966. Schwartzberg 1978. Plate XI.E1, [South Asia Economy 1961] p130) It tapers off in the north, a little outside Kerala at Mangalore in Karnataka State and in the south at Nagarkoil in Tamilnadu, which was prior to 1956 part of Travancore. Kerala's land transport link to the rest of India is by road and rail, via the Palghat

gap in the Western Ghats, that connects Palghat town in Kerala to Coimbatore in Tamilnadu. The Kerala coastal transport corridor dynamics are thus self-generated and not as a segment of longer coastal arterial system.

TABLE 3.08

Kerala: Population density per Sq Kilometre by districts and urban-rural areas in 1981

Districts	Urban	Rural	Total
Coastal			
Cannanore	2236	460	565
Kozhikode	3821	748	957
Malappuram	1579	648	677
Trichur	2392	683	805
Ernakulam	2656	755	1053
Kottayam	2962	715	770
Alleppey	2856	1128	1248
Quilon	3156	543	609
Trivandrum	3961	957	1184
Non-coastal			
Wyanad	-	260	260
Palghat	2186	419	456
Idukki	662	186	192
Kerala	2669	558	655
West Bengal	5467	466	615
INDIA	2998	172	215

Source:
Census of India, Series 10 Kerala, Table A-1
Census of India, Series 1 India, Table A-1

It is argued in this study, that the coastal transport corridor and the port cities and towns, and bazaar towns that make the nodes of the transport system are encapsulated within a desakota region, the lowlands and midlands of Kerala. Both are in symbiosis, neither the transport and urban system or the desakota region being a dependent variable. We shall return once again to these issues when we discuss urbanization in Kerala and non-agricultural economic activities in non-urban areas. Suffice to state here that the non-urban population

densities of Kerala are not the spin offs of a rice-bowl river-basin scenario and/or as the hinterland of a mega-urban region in the sub continent.

There is then, also an apparent lack of a stimuli for a high rural population density. This may seem to mystify the demographic character of Kerala. How and why did high rural population densities occur in Kerala ? Are such densities of Kerala only a late 19th and 20th century phenomenon or was it historical present ? Is it a facet of colonial and modern Kerala that was structured by the political economy and social development set in motion by the events beginning in the 18th century ? There are no clear answers, but historical demography may provide some understanding.

Historical demography

We noted earlier the observation of Bhat and Rajan (1990. p1979) that Kerala historically had a lower mortality rate than the rest of India. It was also believed that this may have had some relationship to the dispersed settlement pattern, cultural norms of personal hygiene etc. More importantly beginning in the late 19th century improved health and medical facilities, growing literacy, particularly in Travancore and Cochin, were seen to have lowered further the mortality rates. But there is a methodological weakness is comparing Kerala to the rest of India, as this flattens out the variations within the national average which may be comparable to Kerala in some aspects. To overcome this weakness an effort is made in this section to compare Kerala with a high population density rice bowl region. Thanjavur district, which incorporates the Kaveri basin and delta, is a good choice. Since it is in Tamilnadu, it is in the same cultural realm of south India as Kerala, and more importantly, like Kerala not influenced by, or part of, any mega-urban region.

Interest in historical demography is recent in India. (Lardinois 1985. p 454) Historical demography of southwest India is constrained by the absence of data prior to the 19th century.[13] Even the 19th century data is not totally reliable. The imperial decennial census of India commenced in 1872. In Travancore and Cochin this was held only in 1875, the second one however being held in 1881 to fall in line with other regions of India. Prior to 1871/75 there were censuses carried out in the period 1816 to 1822; in 1836; and quinquennial returns of population commencing in 1851/52. These were carried out in various parts of south India, including Travancore and Cochin princely states and Malabar district. These censuses were not always reliable. The Travancore censuses in particular showed wide intercensal population variation, including decreases. The Commissioner of Census, Travancore, in 1875, reviews the earlier censuses, and examines the decrease in population between 1836 and 1854. He observes that there were no adverse weather, droughts or epidemics in Travancore during this intercensal period to explain such a decrease. (Census of Travancore 1875. p 103).He was critical of the accuracy of the earlier Travancore censuses and concludes:

> Viewed in any light whatsoever, it is difficult to defend the character of the old statistics. (Ibid p109)

The intercensal population variations of Cochin and Malabar are less erratic. The censuses for the period 1871/75 to 1891 are regarded as relatively more reliable, than the ones prior to them. But even among them the 1881 Census of Cochin is regarded as an under-enumeration. (Census of Cochin 1891.Pt I, p2). In spite of their inadequacies they do serve as a kind of crude estimate. And if the census years of known under enumeration and unexplained declines are ignored the data may be a little better than crude estimates. Such

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13. The only historical demographic study of southwest India (Gopinath 1987) examines the linkages between demographic and agrarian phenomenon in Malabar district between 1871 and 1921. The study found a sympathetic movement in population size, per acre productivity and total output, supporting Boserup's (1965) thesis that population pressure in a agrarian context leads to higher agricultural productivity. Gopinath however cautions that other variables, notably replacement of tied labour with free labour and increase in cultivating landlords as opposed to non-cultivating landlords, possibly also influenced productivity.(Ibid p PE-36)

data may be useful for limited comparative purposes, that may help towards understanding the demographic character of the Kerala region. The comparison during the colonial period is between the three political administrative units of the Kerala region and Thanjavur district. As Thanjavur is a large district the comparison is legitimate in terms of size. (See Table 3.08) In the post independence period the comparison is between the districts of Kerala and Thanjavur district. (Table 3.09) The purpose of this exercise is to examine whether the lowlands and midlands of Kerala have higher population densities than the typical rice bowl.

Thanjavur district lies in the fertile basin of the river Kaveri and is a classic example of a rice bowl in the south Indian context. It was the delta in which rose the Tamil Chola Kingdom, in the third century B.C.. (Gough 1981. p6). It had the associated feature of sustaining a high density population for a number of centuries, particularly during the heyday of the Chola Empire from the 9th to the 13th century A.D, as well as subsequently. The late 18th century saw a steep decline in Thanjavur's population following the Mysorean invasions and consequent unsettled conditions.(Ibid p 118) The early 19th century population may have thus been at a low ebb.

And as stated before Thanjavur is also in the south Indian cultural realm, and unlike the Murishabad - Calcutta corridor and river basin it not part of a mega-urban region of India. Thanjavur district lies about 250 kilometres south-southwest of Madras, and so is well outside even the immediate periphery of the Madras mega-urban region. Thanjavur thus shares three features with Kerala. First being in the south Indian cultural zone. Second not being part of the periphery of a mega-urban region. Third its high population density. These similarities

Table 3.09

Demographic data of the nineteenth century pertaining to Travancore, Cochin, Malabar and Thanjavur.

State or District	Year	Population	Density per Sq.km	Intercensal increase percentage
Travancore				
Area	1816	906587	46	
19749	1836	1280668	65	41.3
Sq.km.	1854	1262647	64	- 1.4
	1875	2311379	117	83.1
	1881	2401158	122	3.9
	1891	2557736	129	6.5
	1901	2952157	146	15.4
Cochin				
Area	1820	223003	58	
3833	1836	288176	75	29.2
Sq.Km.	1858	399056	104	38.5
	1875	601114	157	50.6
	1881	600278	157	- 0.1
	1891	722906	188	20.4
	1901	812025	212	12.3
Malabar				
Area	1821	907575	60	
15006	1836	1165791	78	28.5
Sq.km.	1856	1602014	107	37.4
	1871	2261250	151	41.2
	1881	2365035	158	4.6
	1891	2652565	177	12.2
	1901	2795738	186	5.4
Thanjavur				
Area	1821	901353	93	
9692	1836	1128730	116	25.2
Sq.km.	1856	1657285	171	46.8
	1871	1973731	204	19.1
	1881	2131019	220	8.0
	1891	2228114	230	4.6
	1901	2245029	232	0.8

Sources: For Cochin data 1820-1858, Census of Cochin 1875, p2-3; for Malabar and Thanjavur data 1821-1856, census of madras Presidency 1871, Vol I, p8-9; For Travancore data 1816-1854, Census of Travancore 1875, p103. For all other data the sources were the respective Censuses, except for Cochin 1881 data which was obtained from the Cochin Census of 1891.

Note : The 1901 population given above is for the respective states/districts as per the boundaries in 1901. This may slightly differ from the data for 1901 in Table 3.9 as the latter is the 1901 population of the areas corresponding to current area of jurisdiction of these states/districts.

provide some control to compare the demographic trends of Kerala, a non-rice bowl region, with Thanjavur, a rice bowl region.

The comparative data for Kerala and Thanjavur for the 19th century is presented in Table 3.09. In spite of the unevenness in the quality of the data, it is clear that Thanjavur throughout the 19th century had a higher density than Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. Cochin is a small state and its territory was within the lowlands and midlands of the Kerala region. The population concentration was, we noted in the last chapter, in the lowlands and midlands. But even Cochin, in spite of its territory being confined to the lowlands and midlands, its population density was always below that of Thanjavur. The differentials however tend to progressively narrow with time.

Thanjavur also records a substantial increase for the intercensal period 1836 to 1856. There is reason to believe that 1836 Census of the Madras Presidency, of which Thanjavur was a part, was an under enumeration. (Census of Madras Presidency, 1871. Vol I p2-8)[14] But until 1836 the British neglected Thanjavur's irrigation works, and the silted Kaveri threatened to overflow. Government works started in 1836, saved and expanded the area of delta irrigation. (Gough 1981. p120) This might have had some impact on Thanjavur demography, by way of internal migration and even enhanced natural increase. Towards the last quarter of the 19th century Thanjavur's increases are relatively muted. The censuses of the last quarter are more reliable and possibly the increases are closer to reality. But it is also likely that Thanjavur was reaching once again a sustainable agrarian population and dramatic increases were no longer

14. The Report of the 1871 Census of the Madras Presidency, the first of the decennial Imperial Censuses, reviewed the earlier censuses in the Madras Presidency. The sharp increase in population in the Presidency as a whole between 1836 and 1956 was interpreted as an under enumeration in 1836. Omission of zemindary estates were speculated as a possible cause of under enumeration. Malabar and Thanjavur districts do not figure as having such estates. (Census of Madras Presidency, 1871. Vol I p2-8) This suggests that under enumeration may not have occurred in Thanjavur and Malabar on the scale it occurred in districts with zemindary estates.

possible given 19th century fertility and mortality or rates. This may partly explain the narrowing of the density differentials between Thanjavur and Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. It is also possible that better health and medical policies and facilities in Travancore, and later Cochin, were beginning to affect demographic trends.

It must be remembered in this context that though the Kerala region may not be characterized as a rice bowl, as argued in the last chapter, its climate and ecology provided the opportunity for the creation of a fertile area. The 1921 Census of the Madras Presidency observes:

> Further south in the east coast south division the prosperity is still more evident in the thickly populated deltas of the Cauvery (Kaveri) and Tambrapanni as well as in the rich cotton fields of Madura and Tinnevelly. But the wealthiest division of the Presidency is beyond doubt the west coast where with an abundant rainfall, nature produces from the soil sufficient wealth to support a teeming population with hardly any exertion on their part. (Census of India 1921. Vol XIII, Pt I p8)

But these favourable conditions did not lead to a rice based agrarian economy. Even in Malabar, which had more paddy lands than Travancore or Cochin, and agricultural productivity increased in the period 1871 to 1921, it was still inadequate to meet the districts rice requirements. (Gopinath 1987. p PE-30)

Table 3.10 extends the comparative demographic data to the period 1901 to 1981. For this period census data is more reliable. Also the censuses since 1961 provide the population at the retrospective census years from 1901 onwards for the current area of jurisdiction of the contemporary States and districts. Table 3.10 uses such data, provided in

TABLE 3.10

Population density per square kilometre of Kerala districts, selected Tamilnadu districts and the states of Kerala, Tamilnadu and West Bengal for the period 1901 to 1981

Districts		Area Sq Km	Population density								
			1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981
Kerala coastal											
Cananore	T	4958	153	164	169	195	219	265	341	451	565
	R	4665	151	160	166	191	215	255	298	410	460
K'kode	T	2345	260	279	289	340	380	476	598	777	957
	R	2185	118	127	130	153	162	201	232	287	370
Malapura	T	3548	192	211	215	247	275	324	391	523	677
	R	3435	97	105	106	120	132	154	185	247	315
Trichur	T	3032	225	254	268	328	381	463	557	702	805
	R	2817	231	259	271	321	367	440	534	667	683
Er'kulam	T	2408	268	305	328	408	487	579	706	899	1053
	R	2030	282	319	341	410	484	558	642	753	755
Kottayam	T	2204	205	221	265	352	428	514	596	698	770
	R	2150	99	107	126	164	200	229	268	311	358
Alleppey	T	1883	354	406	482	699	674	806	959	1129	1248
	R	1752	363	414	467	575	644	739	853	1008	1128
Quilon	T	4620	114	131	155	198	248	320	421	522	609
	R	4503	113	130	150	190	237	296	400	494	543
Tri'drum	T	2192	221	260	304	391	463	606	796	1003	1184
	R	2026	211	250	278	357	413	504	640	803	958
Kerala non-coastal											
Wayanad	T	2132	35	39	40	43	50	79	129	194	260
	R	2132	35	39	40	43	50	79	129	194	260
Palghat	T	4480	171	183	191	210	229	271	306	376	456
	R	4385	161	172	179	198	211	243	278	335	419
Idukki	T	5061	9	20	22	37	48	66	115	151	192
	R	4993	10	20	22	37	48	64	116	148	186
KERALA	T	38863	165	184	201	245	284	349	435	549	655
	R	37075	160	179	192	232	265	316	387	482	558
Selected Tamilnadu districts											
Thanja vur	T	8290	253	267	262	269	289	335	364	429	491
	R	7955	219	231	225	230	247	277	298	349	393
Kanya Kumari	T	1684	213	251	293	346	402	490	592	726	845
	R	1641	203	239	254	294	338	372	516	620	718
Chengalpattu [c] Excl: Madras	T	7863	168	180	189	206	227	244	273	356	460
	R	7214	165	178	185	202	221	224	241	263	306
Incl: Madras	T	8033	235	250	261	296	335	420	489	663	858
	R	7214	165	178	185	202	221	224	241	263	306
TAMIL NADU	T	130058	148	161	166	180	202	232	259	317	372
	R	124197	133	143	147	155	170	183	199	231	261
WEST BENGAL	T	88752	191	203	197	213	262	296	394	499	615
	R	86106	173	182	174	186	215	232	306	387	466

Sources: Derived from Census of India 1981:
Series 1 India, Part II-A, p54-55, 182-183 & 581.
Series 10 Kerala, Part II-A, p34-47 & 70-71.
Series 20 Tamilnadu, Part II-A, p21-22, 27-50 & 101-104.

Notes:
[a] For the contemporary area of jurisdiction of these states and districts, the population at the retrospective census years are given in the above sources. The population densities are derived from these data.
[b] T = Total and R = Rural
[c] Madras City Corporation is located within Chengalpattu district. There are two sets (total and rural) of densities given. One for the whole district including Madras and the other excluding Madras.
[d] Population growth rates over the period examined in this table for various districts are as follows:

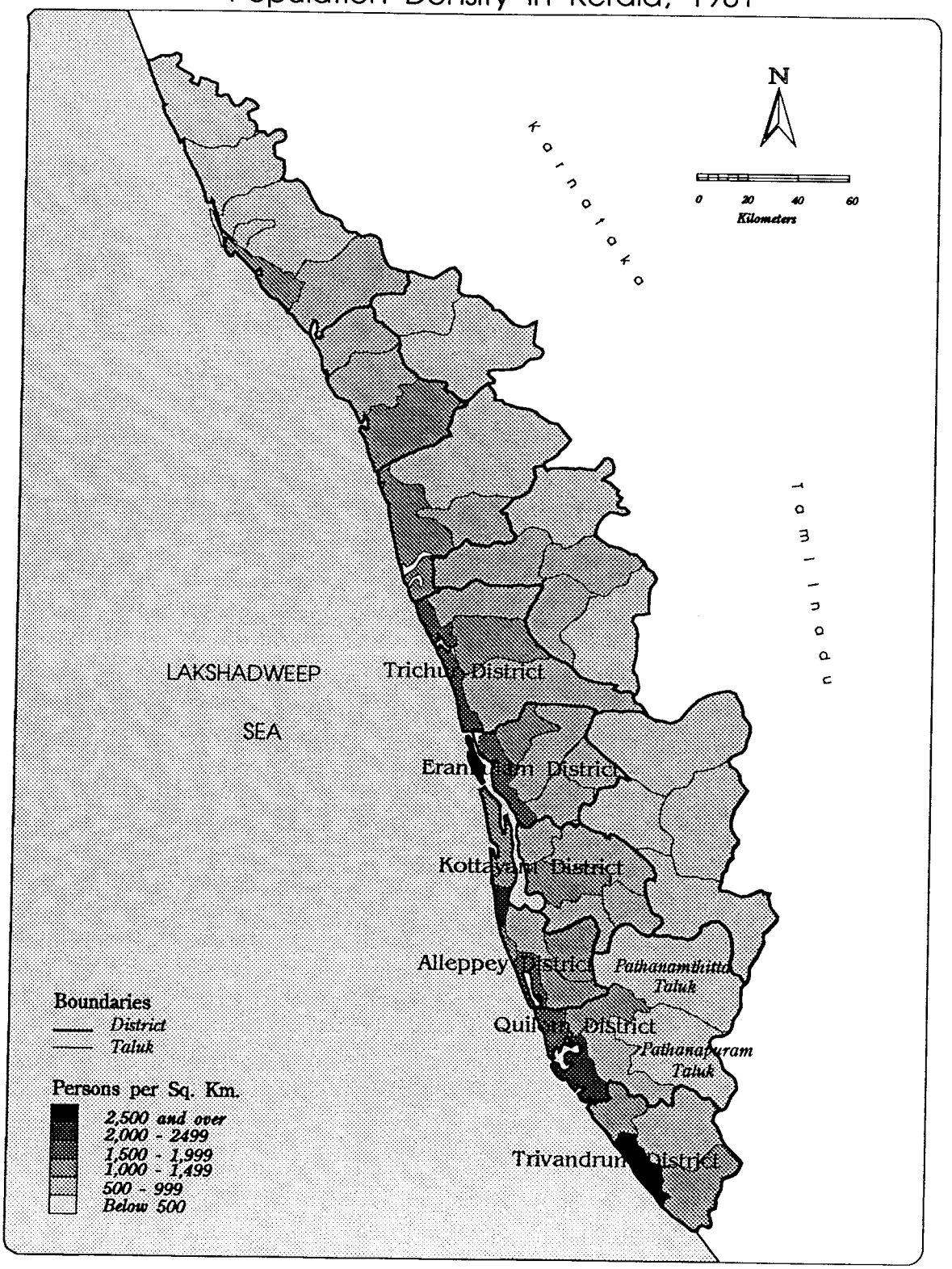
Kerala Districts				*Tamilnadu Districts*	
Cannanore	11.5	Alleppey	10.4	Thanjavur	6.8
Kozhikode	11.6	Quilon	13.1	Kanyakumari	11.3
Malapuram	11.0	Trivandrum	13.1	Chenglpattu	
Trichur	11.1	Wayanad	15.6	Incl Madras	11.3
Ernakulam	11.5	Palghat	9.1	Excl Madras	9.0
Kottayam	11.2	Idukki	16.7		
Kerala	11.7	Tamilnadu	8.7	West Bengal	10.9

the 1981 Census, to present the population and density of Kerala by districts, together with that for the districts of Tanjore, Kanyakumari and Chengalpattu of Tamilnadu. Kanyakumari district was the Tamil speaking southern tip of Travancore that was ceded to Tamilnadu in 1956 when the States were reorganized on a linguistic basis. Chengalpattu is the district that encapsulates Madras city, and may be regarded as the Mega-urban region of Madras.

Table 3.10 by presenting the population densities by districts helps us to identify the population concentration within Kerala. It is also meaningful to compare such areas of population concentration with Thanjavur. Reading Table 3.10 together with Map 3.01 a high population density belt in Kerala may be identified along the coast, stretching south from Trichur, through Ernakulam, Kottayam, to Alleppey. Trivandrum further south is also a high density district. It would appear as though a break in the high density belt occurs at Quilon. But this is false. Quilon is a large district, (up to 1984), stretching from the lowlands by the sea to the highlands in the Western Ghats. If the two

Map 3.01

Population Density in Kerala, 1981



Source: Census of India. Series 10. Kerala, 1981. Part II A. pp. 32-33.

Note: Only the names of Districts/Taluks referred to in text (p. 125) are shown in map.

highland taluks of Pathanamthitta and Pathanapuram are left out, the population density of Quilon rises. The lowlands and midlands of Quilon district are thus part of the high density belt.[15] Indeed this belt stretches to Kanya Kumari district, just south of Kerala in Tamilnadu, which was until 1956 part of Travancore. This belt, together with the sparsely populated Idukki district, and the taluks Pathanamtitta and Pathanapuram, correspond to the territories of Travancore and Cochin States. Idukki and the taluks of Pathanamtitta and Pathanapuram are highland regions. This means that the entire lowlands and midlands, which was largely the inhabited area of Travancore and Cochin, form the high density belt.

North of this belt the only district with a high population density is Kozhikode. Kozhikode is an port city and was the capital of Malabar district during the British raj, and the seat of the Zamorin of Kozhikode prior to it. It is the urban density of Kozhikode that contributes to its overall (total) density being somewhat high, for its rural density is low. On the other hand the high density belt from Trichur to Kanyakumari is caused by high rural densities. Indeed a scrutiny of Table 3.10 reveals that Trichur, Ernakulam and Alleppey had, during the first few decades of this century, higher rural densities than overall (total) densities. This meant that, in these districts, the urban densities were lower than the rural densities in the early decades of this century.[16] The urban ratio of the high population density belt districts, from Trichur to Trivandrum was also low. Alleppey which ranks number one in terms of population density, through out the period 1901 to 1981, had an urban ratio of only 4.6 percent in 1901. This had by 1981 reached only 15.8 percent. We shall discuss the additional significances of such urban ratios when we examine the urbanization pattern and urban system of Kerala in the next chapter. It is sufficient to recognize here that it was the rural densities

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15. These two taluks were in 1984 separated from Quilon district to form a new district called Pathanamtitta.

16. Higher rural densities than urban densities were found in Alleppey in 1901 and 1911; in Ernakulam in 1901. 1911, 1921 and 1931; and in Trichur in 1901, 1911, and 1921. Quilon's rural densities were almost the same as urban densities in 1901 and 1911. (See Table 3.09)

that make up the high density belt, an area that virtually covers Travancore and Cochin, except for their highland region.

Examination of the densities of the selected Tamilnadu districts reveal significant differences. Thanjavur, the rice bowl district, occupies sixth place in rank order of all the districts in Table 3.10, on the basis of rural population densities. There is a progressive decline in its rank order over the years. Even rural Chengalpattu, which encapsulates Madras city, occupies rank order seven in 1901 and drops further down subsequently. Indeed, among the contemporary districts of Tamilnadu, the district with highest rural density retrospectively from 1901 to 1981, is Kanya Kumari, formerly of the Travancore State. These figures demonstrate that the lowlands and midlands of Travancore and Cochin had higher population densities than the rice bowl district of Thanjavur and/or Chengalpattu district, which approximates with mega-urban Madras. This was because of high rural densities of these districts. This phenomenon continued through-out the 20th century. It is likely that the trend of high rural densities commenced earlier, in the late 19th century. Unfortunately, reliable data, disaggregated by the Kerala districts is not available for the 19th century, to examine such a possible trend.

The growth rates given in note [d] to the table are also revealing. Thanjavur has a low growth rate (6.8) compared to the Kerala districts. (Average 11.7) The high rates of Idukki and Wayanad in the highlands are due to the low baseline population and also reflects the recent migration and deforestation that is beginning to occur in the Kerala highlands.

The rates of population growth of Travancore are reflected in Table 3.06. The high density belt coincides with the territories of Travancore and Cochin. The increasing densities over the years seen in Table 3.09. All this supports the observation that the health policies of Travancore had influenced the growth of population densities. (U.N. 1975. p73) Cochin a

small princely state, adjacent to Travancore, and with the same Malayalam-speaking population and culture as Travancore, followed through with many of Travancore's policies. Malabar, being part of the British administered Madras Presidency with British administrators at the helm, had different policy initiatives and direction. The similarity of the demographic trends of Travancore and Cochin and the slightly different path of Malabar may flow from these differences in political administration and economy.

Alleppey and Ernakulam[17] have had high densities from 1901, and possibly even before. Alleppey was the main port of Travancore but its urban character by Indian standards were very small. On the other hand Alleppey district as a whole epitomizes the Kerala landscape in terms of physical landscape, rural population densities, and space economy. Chapter eight is a case study of the coir, an industry, concentrated in Alleppey. This case study will prise open the character of Alleppey, the epitome of Kerala landscape. What is argued in this study is that the Kerala region had, in spite of not being a classic rice bowl region, a capacity to sustain a high density population. As the Census of India 1921, quoted a little earlier, implies, the Kerala region was endowed with a climate and terrain for a luxuriant and dense vegetation. An ecology "to support a teeming population with hardly any exertion on their part" (Census of India 1921, Vol XIII, Pt I p8) It is partly this ecology and the contextual culture that emerges that appears like the grafting of "southeast Asian personality" (Dale 1980 p11-12) to the southwest of India, an issue discussed in chapter two. [18] [19]

The folklore of the region sees the ecology as a natural endowment, an environment that sustains, where nobody goes hungry for there is always, at least, an unplucked jak fruit at hand to provide a meal. The seeds of the fruit once eaten, are tossed away, but they take root

17. Cochin city is in Ernakulam district.

18. The only other region in south Asia that has this character is the southwest quarter of Sri Lanka.

19. See footnote 14 of chapter two.

and grow untended in the evergreen forest climate and ecology. And so the cycle of sustenance continues. The folklore may romanticize the survival strategies of the poor. A U.N. study (1975) makes more real world and useful observations examining the food basket in Kerala. It found cereals intake is smaller in Kerala than in the remainder of India. Among the cereals, however, rice dominates. Pulses intake was insignificant. On the other hand coconut and root crops, particularly tapioca, as discussed earlier, played a far more important part in the diet of Kerala, than elsewhere in India. The study finds the dietary pattern of Kerala reflecting the land use pattern, which in turn is seen as largely influenced by the climate and topographical peculiarities. (U.N. 1975. p25) The U.N. study observes:

> It may be presumed that , by and large, the increase in the production of tapioca has made a greater impact on the diet of the lower income households. There is a lingering prejudice against tapioca among members of the upper strata of society; tapioca is not generally acceptable to them for reasons of taste or, more often, of prestige. Therefore, the greater part of increased output has found its way into the kitchens of the lower strata of society. This has offset the adverse effects of other recent developments on the food front in Kerala, effects which would otherwise have aggravated the inequalities in the distribution of food and nutrition. (Ibid p29-30)[20]

Obviously there are linkages among the ecology, land use patterns, food intake habits and aspects of Kerala's demography. One may conclude that Kerala was historically a region of high population density, and the health and medical policies and facilities set in motion in Travancore in the mid 19th century accelerated population growth and density. Did this trend continue or did the second phase of the demographic transition, when crude birth rates fall to levels closer to the already lowered mortality rates, begin to occur ? In the context of Kerala's industrial backwardness, which we shall discuss shortly, it was feared that the second phase of the demographic transition might be delayed. But it did begin to occur in the 1970s, but not

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20. Tapioca cultivation since the early 1970s has declined. (Kannan and Pushpangadan 1990. p1996)

for reasons usually associated with such declines. This aspect of the demographic features of Kerala once again contributes to Kerala being a distinct society in India.

Fertility decline in Kerala

Kerala's early entry, in the Indian context, into the demographic transition by the fall of its mortality rates does not necessarily mean that the fall in birth rates, too, should occur at an early stage. Indeed, in the context of other socio-economic features of Kerala, the fertility decline that did occur has been seen by some demographers as an anomaly.

> The relatively low fertility level in Kerala presents a puzzle because it appears to be out of line with what was expected on the basis of observed patterns of the demographic transition in developed countries, as well as in a number of developing countries which have achieved fertility decline in recent decades. Generally the decline in fertility (as well as in mortality) in these countries have been preceded by improvement in income, industrialization and urbanization. Yet in India there are many states (including West Bengal) which are richer (in terms of per capita income), more industrialized and urbanized than Kerala, but have fertility levels higher than Kerala. (Nag 1984. p33)

The crude birth rate of Kerala which was 37.4 in 1965/66 had fallen to 26.9 in 1974. (Krishnan 1976. p1203) In 1978, the crude birth rate was 25.2 for Kerala. 28.4 for West Bengal and 33.3 for India. (Nag 1984. p33). Krishnan's study of the demographic transition in Kerala up to 1974, found that in that year the rural birth rate was 26.9 and the urban rate 26.4 The narrow urban-rural disparity was unusual and striking. The rural rate was the lowest in India and led to the overall rate for Kerala being the lowest as well, in spite of the urban rates of some the other Indian States being lower than Kerala's. (Krishnan 1976. Table 2, p1205) The urban-rural differentials in the fertility rate also show a progressive narrowing in Kerala and was the lowest in India. (See Table 3.11)

TABLE 3.11

Fertility Rates by States in India, 1972, 1978.

States	Urban		Rural		Combined	
	1972	1978	1972	1978	1972	1978
Andhra Pradesh	4.5	2.7	4.8	4.1	4.7	3.8
Assam	3.7	2.8	5.3	4.0	5.2	3.9
Bihar	3.9	3.4	5.1	4.2	5.0	4.1
Gujarat	4.5	3.6	6.0	4.6	5.6	4.3
Haryana	4.7	3.2	7.0	4.6	6.6	4.3
Jammnu & Kashmir	3.1	2.8	5.2	4.8	4.8	4.4
Karnataka	3.5	3.0	4.5	3.7	4.3	3.5
Kerala	*3.6*	*2.3*	*4.2*	*2.8*	*4.1*	*2.7*
Madhya Pradesh	4.4	3.8	6.2	5.3	5.9	5.0
Maharashtra	3.8	2.9	4.8	3.9	4.5	3.5
Orissa	4.0	3.5	4.7	4.3	4.6	4.2
Punjab	4.1	3.2	5.7	4.1	5.3	3.9
Rajasthan	5.4	3.9	6.4	5.5	6.2	5.2
Tamilnadu	3.0	2.9	4.4	3.5	4.0	3.3
Uttar Pradesh	4.8	4.1	6.9	5.9	6.6	5.6
West Bengal	3.6	2.5	4.5	3.5	4.3	3.2

Source: Zachariah and Patel. World Bank 1984. Table 4. p9.
Note : Only States with a population of five million or more in 1981 are included in this Table.

Krishnan's study also revealed that the birth rates were even lower in the districts of Kerala that corresponded with the former Travancore and Cochin States. (Krishnan 1976. p1209) The rates of this region were not achieved anywhere in the developing world except Taiwan. In one district, viz Kottayam, of this region the birth rate was as low as 20.8 in 1974, which Krishnan remarks was only 2.2 above the Japanese rate for the same year. (Ibid. p1209) The ability to achieve a fertility decline notwithstanding a low economic growth, an achievement shared only by Sri Lanka in the developing world with market economies, attracted the attention of U.N. agencies concerned with social development like UNFPA, WHO, UNICEF etc. Their interest was to understand the Kerala experience and replicate it, if feasible, in other developing countries, with low economic growth.[21] A World Bank study of

21. Another region in India where fertility decline has been observed is Karnataka State, though the decline is less remarkable than in Kerala. The World Bank has carried out complementary studies of fertility decline in

what some demographers see as the anomaly of the Kerala fertility decline without structural changes in the economy, and its determinants, was carried out in this context. Its findings are of interest for this study, for it brings out a mix and sequence of social development and political economy. A theme running through this study is the unique mix or constellation of factors in Kerala and desakota being an organic part of this symbiotic mix. The World Bank study observes:

> Educational developments and improvements in health successfully altered the cost-benefit ratio of children. Falling mortality rates increased the number of children surviving to school age. Rapid population growth, resulting mostly from the mortality decline, lowered further an already very low land-man ratio in the State, forcing more and more youngsters to seek a living away from the farms. The introduction of education as a criterion for admittance to non-agricultural occupations enhanced the value of education and raised parents' aspirations about their children's education. The increase in the number of surviving children, together with the perceived necessary level of education raised the cost of bringing up children. As most Kerala families did not have the necessary income to meet this increased cost, they realized that the solution to their dilemma was to opt for a smaller family. (Zachariah 1984. p-xxvi).

Fertility decline is also attributed in part to a rise in the average age of marriage.[22] More years of schooling and post-secondary education by females; women preferring to wait rather than marry someone who is unemployed; dowry demands and problems, (causing delays), such as the cost of educating a boy and finding a job increases, were some of the factors influencing the rise in the average age of marriage. (Zachariah 1984. pxxv) The study also found the official family planning programme more effective in Kerala than in other Indian States because of the spin-off effects between the programme and socio-economic developments, particularly health and education. But the sequence was found important, in Zachariah's view.

Kerala, Karnataka and Sri Lanka with the objective of understanding the determinants of fertility decline in low-income populations.(RPO 671-70) (Zachariah. 1984. p-xxiii)

22. Demographers are not agreed though in quantifying the impact of the rise in the age of marriage on the fertility decline. Zachariah has estimated it at 30 percent, (1984. p- xxv) while Bhat and Rajan put it at 15 percent.(1990. p1967, p1970 and p1979)

> One lesson from this is that the sequence in which policies affecting the determinants of fertility are implemented are important as the policies themselves. In Kerala, the steps came in the right order - a reduction in infant and child mortality, accompanied or followed by an increase in female education, followed by redistributive policies and finally by the official family planning program. (Ibid. p-xxvii)

Bhat and Rajan stress female literacy as central to the fertility decline in Kerala. They find fertility decline related to the knowledge of contraception becoming widespread and changes in the perception about children's cost and benefits. Both these they argue, based on a comparative study of fertility decline in the districts of Kerala with districts adjoining Kerala in Tamilnadu and Karnataka states, are the effects of female literacy. This in turn they contend is due to the promotion of mass education by the Maharajahs of Travancore and Cochin and the elected governments since independence; the high proportion of Christians in Kerala; and high population density that increases the accessibility to schools. (1990. p1979) They are critical of the structuralist interpretation of fertility transition.[23] They argue that

> except for a substantial rise in adult female literacy, in the last 30 years or so there have been very little structural change in the economy or society that could have tripped the historical balance in the flow of 'wealth' between generations. (Ibid. p1979)

They find the diffusion hypothesis appropriate to explaining the fertility decline in Kerala. In this hypothesis the spread of birth control technology is the key to the fertility decline. And in

> this diffusion, the role of such factors such as the perceived advantages of new technology, its compatibility with moral values and social norms, approval by opinion leaders, social networks, means of communication and information

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23. Bhat and Rajan see the structuralist interpretation as a traditional view, according to which fertility transition is the consequence of the shifts in the balance of economic costs and benefits that child bearing entails to parents. It is contended that during the course of economic or social development, having a large family becomes disadvantages to parents because the shift from the familial to capitalistic mode of production and the spread of mass education reduce the labour utility of children. (1990. p1971)

> dissemination are considered important. The diffusion can occur spontaneously or it can be encouraged through government policies and programmes. (Ibid. p1971)

Bhat and Rajan see female literacy as central to the diffusion of contraceptive technology in Kerala and the consequent fertility decline. Bhat and Rajan do not explain the rise in female literacy in Kerala in terms of cultural factors. It is not, as Jeffrey has put forward, due to the position and status of women in Kerala, following the matrilineal inheritance, joint family system and culture that was historically prevalent in Kerala. Bhat and Rajan put forward an alternate hypothesis that high female literacy is due to high male literacy levels in the past. This leads to sex differentials in literacy which are likely to grow until large number of literate males become fathers who might decide to send their daughters also to school. This may also be consequent on the demand among literate men for literate brides.[24] (Ibid. p1975)

Summing up the demographic features.

The distinctive demographic features of Kerala in the Indian context may be summed up as follows. First, the region had high rural population densities. This was not caused by being adjacent to any mega-urban region or having river basin rice cultivation with a need for heavy seasonal labour and an ability to sustain a dense population. Second, there is evidence to suggest that population densities had been historically well established because of the ecology of the region with its food, fruit and root crops and maritime trade in cash crops, sustaining such population densities. The available evidence suggests that such historical densities though high, were less than those found in rice bowl regions. Third, historically due

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24. Bhat and Rajan hypothesis is applicable to Sri Lanka where the same combination of high female literacy, rise in age of marriage, increasing use of contraceptives and decline in fertility rates are observed. This needs however to be statistically tested as Bhat and Rajan have done for Kerala. On the other hand as indicated in footnote 6 of chapter two (p 93) the Jeffrey hypothesis fails to explain the Sri Lankan high female literacy rate in the historical absence of a matrilineal inheritance and joint family system among the Sinhalese. Jeffrey's hypothesis is that the matrilineal system and position of women in Kerala, among other factors, contributed to higher female literacy. (Jeffrey 1987 p462-67)

to cultural and ecological factors Kerala had lower mortality rates than the rest of India. Fourth, the region showed an early lead in population growth, because of the better health and medical facilities introduced in some parts of the region. (UN 1975. p73-74) Such growth accelerated rural population densities, resulting in the rural areas becoming one of the most densely populated regions in India, if not the world. Within India the rural densities exceeded those of river-basin rice-bowls and/or rural areas adjacent to mega-urban regions. Fifth, a fertility decline or the second phase of the demographic transition began to occur in the 1970s. This was seen as an anomaly by some demographers, as the usually associated features of this phase of the demographic transition such as urbanization, industrial advancement, economic growth and development were absent or only minimally present. Bhat and Rajan however see the diffusion hypothesis as more appropriate to understanding the fertility decline in Kerala, and high female literacy as being critical for the diffusion of contraceptive technology.

Non-agricultural economic activity in rural areas.

Another facet of the distinct society of Kerala is the high level of non-agricultural activity and employment in rural areas. In chapter one, the mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activities was delineated as one of the main characteristics of desakota. The higher occurrence of non-agricultural activities along with agricultural activities in rural Kerala, than in other parts of rural India is then of central importance in this study. Parts two and three of this study deal with the mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activity in the context of Kerala. What is being attempted in this section is to establish that there is relatively a high level of rural non-agricultural activity in Kerala compared to the other states in India. This will support the thesis that desakota is occurring in Kerala at a level not observed elsewhere in India, apart from establishing a facet of Kerala as a distinct society in India.

This will be attempted in two stages. First, with the aid of Table 3.12, it will be established that Kerala had during the period 1901 to 1981, a higher percentage of non-agricultural workforce than the rest of India. Second, with Table 3.13 it will be demonstrated that in the Indian workforce for the period 1961 to 1981, disaggregated by the 14 major Indian States and rural-urban sectors, Kerala had the highest percent of non-agricultural workforce in the rural sector. Obviously the first set of data is methodologically weak. The data on India at the national level tend to flatten out regional variations that may have been comparable to Kerala and also does not distinguish between the urban and rural sectors. There are reasons why in Table 3.12 these inadequacies are difficult to correct.

First, the administrative regions of India during the British raj were too numerous and complex to attempt a regional analysis of the workforce data. For instance, in 1901 there were twelve large areas of presidencies, agencies and provinces directly administered by the British, together with another 201 princely or native states of varying sizes. (Indian Census Centenary Atlas. 1974. p8) The complexity continued until the 1951 census a little after independence in 1947. Regional states on a linguistic basis, incorporating within them both the areas under British administration and the former princely states, was yet to be worked out. This was done largely in the 1950s and by 1961 there were fourteen major states covering 83 percent of the land area and 95 percent of the population of India. Second, the definition of urban was not on a uniform basis in a regional sense in the various administrative regions of the British raj and princely states. In a temporal sense too it was not uniform over the period 1901 to 1951.

The question that may be now raised is why include such data ? The purpose is to examine, even with deficient data, whether Kerala prior to the World War II had a significant non-agricultural sector and its size relative to the national average. We noted in chapter one, that McGee's desakota hypothesis suggests that desakota is a recent phenomenon in Asia. This is not the case with desakota in Kerala. The later chapters will address this issue, but it is

TABLE 3.12

Workforce classified by agriculture, casual labour and non-agriculture sectors in India and Kerala : 1901 to 1981

	India			Kerala		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
1901						
Agriculture	45.8	20.2	65.9	35.0	18.3	53.3
Casual	4.0	2.8	6.9	6.3	4.2	10.5
Non-agric:	19.2	8.0	27.2	22.6	13.5	36.2
Total	69.0	31.0	100.0	64.0	36.0	100.
1931						
Agriculture	55.4	15.0	70.4	35.3	13.2	48.5
Casual	3.6	1.9	5.5	10.5	5.6	16.1
Non-agric:	18.9	5.2	24.1	25.6	9.8	35.4
Total	77.9	22.1	100.0	71.4	28.6	100.0
1961						
Agriculture	46.9	26.0	72.9	38.7	16.9	55.6
Casual	2.8	1.3	4.1	3.7	1.3	5.0
Non-agric:	18.7	4.3	23.0	27.8	11.6	39.4
Total	68.4	31.6	100.0	70.2	29.8	100.0
1971						
Agriculture	57.7	14.4	72.1	41.7	13.8	55.5
Casual	0.8	0.1	0.9	1.4	0.3	1.7
Non-agric:	24.1	2.9	27.0	33.5	9.3	42.8
Total	82.6	17.4	100.0	76.6	23.4	100.0
1981						
Agriculture	46.7	21.9	70.6	36.9	15.6	52.5
Casual	0.8	0.2	1.0	1.2	0.3	1.
Non-agric:	24.5	3.9	28.4	34.3	11.7	46.0
Total	74.0	26.0	100.0	72.4	27.6	100.0

Source: Derived from the Census of India 1901, 1931, 1961, 1971 and 1981.
Notes :
[a] 1981 data is main plus marginal workers.
[b] 1971 data does not include secondary workers.
[c] 0.5 million workers were transferred from casual labour to agricultural labour in the 1961 data following the correction suggested in the UN study. [1975. p80 footnote 16]

useful with the available data to establish the extent of non-agricultural activity in the workforce relative to the national average for the period prior to world war II.

Table 3.12 presents the workforce of India and Kerala classified by agricultural and non-agricultural sectors and casual workers.[25] Agriculture for this purpose consists of the census categories of cultivators, agricultural labourers, livestock, forestry, fishing, hunting, plantations, orchards and allied activity workers. The data is presented at thirty years interval for 1901, 1931 and 1961 and then for 1971 and 1981 as well. This table shows that throughout the period Kerala had a higher percent of non-agricultural activity and lower percent of agricultural activity, than India as whole. The same trend is seen in the male and female percentages as well. Casual labour is consistently higher in Kerala, though in 1971 and 1981 when casual labour is a negligible percentage in both India and Kerala, the difference too had narrowed down.

Table 3.12 also shows that non-agricultural activity in India had been dropping from 27.2 percent in 1901 to 24.1 in 1931 and then 23.0 in 1961. Since then it climbed up to 27.0 percent in 1971 and 28.4 percent in 1981. Kerala on the other hand shows a slowly increasing trend from 36.2 in 1901 to 46.0 in 1981. Agriculture in Kerala has been fluctuating around 52.0 percent with a dip of 48.5 in 1931 and a peak of 55.6 in 1961.

Table 3.13 presents the non-agricultural workforce as a percent of the total workforce classified by the fourteen major states. The seven smaller states and union (federal) territories as described in note [b] to the table are grouped under "others". The non-agriculture percentages are presented in terms of total persons, (total of males and females in rural and urban areas taken together), rural persons, (males and females), total males (rural and urban) and rural males only.

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25. Casual workers are those who have no regular work, and seek work on a daily basis. Such work can be either agricultural or non-agricultural. Since the nature of their work cannot be identified, they classed as an intermediary category between agriculture and non-agriculture. A detailed discussion of such workers from 1901 to 1981 is made in chapter six. Agricultural labourers also have only seasonal and no regular work. However the nature of their work has been identified in census enumeration as agricultural. Census definitions and concepts of such workers, workforce etc over the period 1901 to 1981 is discussed in chapter six.

TABLE 3.13

Non-agricultural[a] workforce as a percent of total workforce classified by major states, sex and rural areas: 1961 - 1981

States	Rural and Urban			Rural Only		
	1961	1971	1981	1961	1971	1981
Persons						
Andhra Pradesh	26.7	26.6	27.0	19.2	17.3	16.5
Bihar	20.4	16.8	19.1	15.6	10.4	12.0
Gujarat	28.0	32.4	33.4	14.3	14.1	15.3
Haryana	[b]	22.5	34.9	[b]	21.5	21.5
Karnataka	25.1	29.2	29.4	14.2	15.5	14.5
Kerala	*44.5*	*44.5*	*47.7*	*39.5*	*38.0*	*40.9*
Madhya Pradesh	18.1	18.9	20.6	10.9	09.4	10.4
Maharashtra	27.7	33.5	33.8	11.3	12.7	13.5
Orissa	23.8	20.4	21.3	20.1	14.9	14.9
Punjab	33.3	36.4	38.4	21.5	20.5	21.0
Rajasthan	18.1	23.2	24.2	10.5	12.5	12.9
Tamilnadu	36.5	35.6	35.2	24.5	19.1	18.5
Uttar Pradesh	23.1	22.0	24.2	15.3	12.3	12.9
West Bengal	42.2	38.6	40.7	23.2	18.2	21.8
Others [c]	27.9	34.0	41.8	16.8	18.0	19.9
INDIA	27.1	27.9	29.4	17.3	15.2	15.8
Males only						
Andhra Pradesh	30.6	30.7	33.4	21.0	19.7	19.9
Bihar	23.4	18.1	21.6	17.3	11.2	13.6
Gujarat	35.3	35.3	40.9	18.1	15.7	19.4
Haryana	[b]	33.2	38.6	[b]	21.5	24.1
Karnataka	29.3	30.7	34.2	15.8	15.9	16.4
Kerala	45.0	45.6	49.2	39.4	38.9	42.0
Madhya Prades	23.1	21.9	26.0	13.2	10.8	12.8
Maharashtra	38.0	40.4	44.8	15.9	16.1	19.4
Orissa	22.6	25.6	23.5	18.0	14.1	16.0
Punjab	36.9	35.5	39.4	23.6	20.0	21.9
Rajasthan	23.3	24.9	30.1	13.1	13.5	16.4
Tamilnadu	40.4	38.8	42.1	25.7	20.9	22.5
Uttar Pradesh	25.6	23.1	25.7	16.5	12.9	13.6
West Bengal	43.6	39.2	41.7	23.0	18.4	21.8
Others [c]	32.4	36.7	52.0	17.6	19.6	26.9
INDIA	31.4	30.2	34.1	19.1	16.3	18.2

Sources: Derived from the Census of India 1961, 1971 & 1981.

Notes:

[a] Non-agricultural workforce consists of all workers other than cultivators, agricultural labourers and those engaged in livestock, forestry, fishing, hunting, plantations, orchards and allied activities.

[b] Haryana was constituted after 1961 from existing major states, mainly Punjab.

[c] The fourteen major states included in this table constitute nearly 83 percent of the land area of India and 95 percent of the population. The smaller states not included in this table are Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jammnu and Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura. "Others" in this include these smaller states and Union (Federal) administered territories of Delhi, Chandigarh, Pondicherry, Goa, Daman & Diu, Arunachal Pradesh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Andaman, Nicobar, Laccadive, Minicoy and Amindivi Islands.
[d] 1971 data exclude secondary workers.
[e] 1981 data is based on main plus marginal workers.
[f] For Kerala 0.5 m workers were transferred from casual to agricultural labour in the 1961 data, following the correction suggested in the UN study (1975. p80 footnote 16)

Throughout the period 1961 to 1981 Kerala has the highest percentage of total persons in non-agricultural activity. Even Maharashtra, West Bengal and Tamilnadu, industrially more advanced states than Kerala, and with the urban agglomerations of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras respectively have lower non-agricultural activity than Kerala.[26] The overall state non-agricultural activity is brought down in these three states because of the low percentage of non-agricultural activity in rural areas. This is seen when we examine the columns of rural persons in non-agricultural activity for 1961, 1971 and 1981. Kerala has the highest percentage at 39.5 in 1961, 38.0 1961 and 40.9 in 1981. These are substantially higher than the percentages of the next highest state, which was Tamilnadu in 1961 at 24.5, Harayana in 1971 at 21.5 and West Bengal at 21.8 in 1981. In the case of West Bengal and Maharashtra the disparity in the percentages between the rural persons and total persons in non-agricultural activity is substantial. This is indicative of the concentration of non-agricultural activities in the urban areas of these States, probably Calcutta and Bombay mega-urban regions. This is also observed in the case of "Others", which includes among others Delhi.[27] For reasons that will be discussed in chapter six, under-enumeration of female workers is believed to occur in the Indian censuses. Hence male participation in the workforce is

26. Delhi, the other major urban agglomeration in India is a Union (Federal) territory and so not part of any State. (See footnote 27 of this chapter)

27. A major share in terms of population of "Others" are the Union (Federal) territories of Delhi, (the federal capital), Chandigarh, (held federally as it in dispute whether it is to be ceded to Haryana or Punjab), and the former Portuguese and French enclaves of Goa, Daman, Diu and Pondicherry. All these territories are predominantly urban in character and hence reflect a high percent of non-agricultural activity in the columns of total persons and total males.

regarded as more reliable data. For this reason Table 3.13 shows total male workers and rural male workers. These data too confirm that Kerala has a higher non-agricultural workforce.

The enigma of industrial backwardness, low economic growth and remarkable social development of Kerala

Economic backwardness

The components of non-agricultural activity in Kerala will be examined in detail in chapter seven. However it is necessary at this stage to point out that a major share of non-agricultural activity in Kerala is in the tertiary sector. (Table 3.14). An overdetermined and/or enlarged tertiary sector is not unusual in underdeveloped or developing economies where there is a labour surplus economy. This seems to be a factor in the case of Kerala. But it is also partly the reflection of the growth of broad-based health and educational services. The emergence of such services were discussed in this and the previous chapter. An equally important contributing service is trade and commerce. Small holding cash crops generated a host of middlemen and traders. This was perhaps increased by the presence of forced commerce.

This will be illustrated by the coir industry case study in chapter seven. The secondary sector is also significant and is largely comprised of labour intensive agro-processing industries. A very significant number of industries are neither household industries, nor factory type industries, but the intermediate ctegory of non-fctory, non-household or small scale industries. It is more appropriate to examine these structural features in Part II (chapters six and seven), when we examine the anatomy of the occupational structure of Kerala. But it is important to recognize now, the low productivity of the secondary sector in Kerala, consequent to its being largely comprised of small scale, low technology, labour intensive agro-processing industries.

TABLE 3.14

Sectoral state domestic product, workforce and relative sectoral product per worker in Kerala in 1961, 1971 and 1981

Sectors	Share (Percent) of S.D.P. in Total Output			Relative Share (Percent) of Workforce			Sectoral Product per Worker		
	1961	1971	1981	1961	1971	1981	1961	1971	1981
Primary	56.0	49.4	38.9	56.0	56.0	53.3	1.00	.88	.73
Secondary	15.2	16.3	21.2	18.0	15.8	16.5	.84	1.03	1.28
Tertiary	28.8	34.2	39.9	26.0	28.2	30.2	1.10	1.21	1.32
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	1.00	1.00	1.00

Source:
Govt of Kerala, 1980b. Table 6.6 p.71 for Col 1.
Govt of Kerala, 1985. Table 6, p.23 Cols 2 and 3.
Censuses of India, 1961, 1971 and 1981 for Cols 4-7.
Notes:
[a] S.D.P for 1961 is at 1961 prices and for 1971 and 1981 at 1970/71 constant prices.
[b] Relative sectoral product per worker is the sectoral share of the S.D.P. divided by the respective sectoral share of the workforce

Table 3.14 gives the sectoral percentage of the state domestic product, the sectoral percentage of the workforce and the relative sectoral product per worker. In developing economies the percentage share of the primary sector workforce is usually larger than its percentage share of total output of the economy. The reverse is the case in the secondary and tertiary sectors. The primary sector's relative sectoral product per worker is thus usually much lower than that of the other two sectors. The disparities narrow only when technological advances in agriculture lead to labour shedding, and the redundant labour drawn towards the growing secondary and tertiary sectors.

The relative sectoral product per worker of the three sectors in Kerala, however, exhibit a narrow range. Over the period 1961 to 1981 the secondary and tertiary sectors' relative product per worker increased marginally and that of the primary sector declined

slightly. This trend is in the direction of a situation typical of underdeveloped economies, where the growth of the tertiary sector is prior to, and greater than, the secondary sector. Notwithstanding this trend, overall the Kerala relative sectoral product per worker is within a narrow range. This is exceptional in the Indian context. But this has occurred, not because of an advancing character of the Kerala agrarian economy. On the contrary it is an expression of the backward character of the Kerala economy, particularly its secondary sector.[28] The labour intensive, low technology character of manufacturing, with a large workforce and low productivity, results in the unusually low relative sectoral product per worker for the secondary sector. There is a relative improvement in the secondary sector's performance over the period 1961 to 1981.[29] But overall the secondary sector remains backward. Some of the factors that have contributed to the industrially backward character of the Kerala economy will be discussed in chapters seven, eight and nine, when we deal with the manufacturing sector and case studies of two industries. Consequent to the low productivity of the manufacturing sector and the food grains agricultural sector (Govt of India, Planning Commission, 1983. p24) the per capita State N.D.P. of Kerala is among the bottom five of the fourteen major Indian States. It is also below the national mean during the period 1961 to 1981.

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28. It may be argued, that in Kerala plantation agriculture has contributed to the primary sector's high productivity relative to the other two sectors. It has possibly also off set, within the primary sector, the low productivity of the food grains sector. Kerala has the lowest productivity in the food grains sector among all the States in India. Such productivity is high in Punjab, and to a less extent in Haryana, (Govt of India. Planning Commission. 1983. p24), two States where the green revolution occurred. What is important to recognize is that the narrow range of the relative sectoral product per worker among the three sectors in Kerala, is largely due to the low productivity of the secondary sector, following its labour intensive, low technology characteristics.

29. This may partly due to the decline of the highly labour intensive coir industry in the 1970s. (See chapter four). The 1970s also saw the growth of a few factory type industries in the Cochin-Alwaye corridor. (George 1984 p2161)

TABLE 3.15

Per Capita State Domestic Product

Rank	States	Per Capita State N.D.P. 1961	1971	1981
1	Punjab	760	1067	1308
2	Haryana	627	932	1029
3	Maharashtra	769	811	1008
4	Gujarat	697	845	884
5	West Bengal	758	729	765
6	Karnataka	559	675	723
7	Tamilnadu	571	616	682
8	Andhra Pradesh	518	586	678
9	Rajasthan	500	629	591
10	*Kerala*	*471*	*636*	*569*
11	Uttar Pradesh	457	493	524
12	Orissa	392	541	514
13	Madhya Pradesh	472	489	463
14	Bihar	390	418	438
	Mean	558	676	727

Source: Govt of India, Planning Commission.1983. Table 2.9 p23

Social development

But in spite of the industrial backwardness and low economic growth that Kerala has exhibited relative to the other Indian States, and even developing economies outside India, it has achieved spectacular levels of social development. John Ratcliffe's (1978) observations on Kerala are a succinct statement on the enigma of Kerala's social development amidst low economic growth.

> It is a poor state even by Indian standards. Its per capita income of US $ 80/= lies well below the all-India average of US $ 120, and it suffers from the lowest per capita calorie intake in India. Nevertheless, Kerala has managed to achieve the demographic transition from high (pre-modern) to low (modern) birth rates - something no other Indian State has been able to attain. Indeed the magnitude of Kerala's fertility decline - the birth rate fell from 39 in 1961 to 26.5 in 1974, has never been observed in a nation of comparable levels of income and undernutrition. Other indices of Kerala's social development are equally surprising: levels of literacy, life expectancy, female education, and age

> at marriage are the highest in India, while mortality rates, including infant and child mortality, are the lowest among Indian States. (Ibid p 123)[30]

The use of some economic indicators by Ratcliffe carries with it the hazard of the inadequate sensitivity of these accounting artifacts to social development. In a sense Ratcliffe's statement makes this point. While it is useful to be aware of the deficiencies of economic yardsticks, it is not important to dissect this issue for this study. What is important to recognize is that the Kerala model, as it sometimes called, is a path to social development without capital intensive industrialization. It is an unique model within a market economy framework that Kerala shares with Sri Lanka in the developing world.[31] In Kerala some of the achievements of social development flow from the social changes and the health, education and land tenure policies that were set in motion in the 19th century or earlier. We discussed in the last chapter the political economy within which these policies emerged and the context of the social changes. What is important to recognize is that social development without capital intensive industrialization or a green revolution is unique to Kerala in the Indian context and contributes to its claim as a distinct society in India.

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30. Ratcliffe taking note of the U.N. study (1975) later recognizes: "There exists some evidence that the national study which claimed that 90 percent of Kerala's citizens were malnourished in 1961-62 may systematically have eliminated tapioca (cassava) in-take among the poorer classes. There also exists substantial evidence to indicate that nutritional levels have improved since that time." (Ratcliffe 1978. p134)

31. There is an tendency for some social scientists to glow over the model and to even romanticize it. But there is a need to be sensitive to whether the peoples of this region are satisfied with this model or seek to move on to improving employment opportunities and income, while retaining the benefits of the model. Bhat and Rajan raise an important question in this context. Kerala had achieved the transition in fertility without a structural change in economy. They turn this around and state that large declines in fertility have not had a desired effect on the Kerala economy. (This also has implications for a western world media perception, often legitimized by its academia, that the doom and gloom of the post colonial can be turned around by population control and/or fall in fertility). So is the 'Kerala model' of "little use in bringing about economic transformation or is it simply that falling fertility helped to maintain the status quo in a deteriorating economy ?" (1990. p1978) The merit of the Kerala - Sri Lanka model is the relatively equitable distribution of available social and economic wealth, as an end in itself rather than a path. This is enhanced by the failure of the trickle down effect to work as satisfactorily as it was claimed to be.

Higher wages in Kerala

One of the reasons for the continuity and acceleration in the mid 20th century of the social development that was commenced in the late 19th century was the radical hegemony that emerged and consolidated within the Kerala political economy during the 1930s and 1940s. In chapter eight the radicalization of the political economy will be made explicit, when labour mobilization and trade unionization of the coir workers are discussed. Suffice to note here that the emergence of a strong labour movement led to, among other consequences, better wages in Kerala. (U.N. 1975. p90-91)

> Wage rates are also extraordinarily high in Kerala, ranking second only to Punjab in all of India; and the rate of increase of the wage rate (238 percent in 1971-72 over 1956-57) was higher than any other state, including Punjab. The astonishing rise in wages results, evidently, from a combination of factors. Tenant farmers have become less dependent on wage labour to eke out their income; therefore landless labourers enjoy an improved bargaining power. Activity in the industrial and service sectors, relative to other Indian states, appears to be more labour intensive than capital intensive in nature. It is therefore likely that a greater proportion of the labour force is participating actively and productively in the economy - and therefore sharing in the overall distribution of income - than would otherwise be the case. Stated another way, unlike the situation in the rest of India, the per worker product in the service and industrial sectors in Kerala does not differ much from that of agriculture. The lack of inter-sectoral mobility evident in the rest of India has not contributed to income inequality in Kerala,where there has been a substantial inter-sectoral shift of workers.(Ratcliffe 1978. p128)

Kerala also has at 53 percent the highest percent of workers dependent on wages or salaries, compared to the national average of 38 percent. (Bhat and Rajan 1990. p1971)[32] The U.N. study findings (1975. p87-95) on the wage rates, on which Ratcliffe's observations are based, were in terms of real wages, and are thus valid in a context of interstate consumer price differentials. A study (Baby 1986) though limited to agricultural sector wages, indicate that Kerala continues to be among the Indian states where higher wages obtain. From a market economy perspective, Kerala's demographic features makes it a labour surplus

32. Bhat and Rajan are the view that 53 percent indicated by the National Sample Survey is an underestimate. They are of the view that 65 percent suggested by a Govt of Kerala, Dept of Statistics survey, is more accurate. (1990. p1979, footnote 9)

economy. That within such an economy higher wages obtain is part of the Kerala enigma and contradicts the customary thesis that low wages are unavoidable in a labour surplus economy. (Lewis ?) The political economy of Kerala, including the radical hegemony of the last four to five decades, and organized labour have no doubt made Kerala differ from the expected pattern. (Lipton 1976. p319, 333 & 363 n32)

Political economy and spatial order

Ratcliffe too argues that the indices of social development are not the result of direct state intervention designed to achieve these targets. They are rather, in his view, the broad social response to structural reforms in the political economy of Kerala. (1978. p123) The political economy of Kerala is crucial in seeking an understanding of the Kerala model of development. Implicit in most scholarly studies of Kerala and/or its development pattern is the importance of its political economy. This study too places the political economy as central to understanding Kerala. But it is argued in this study that it is equally important to examine the relationship between the space economy and the political economy. This emphasis on examining the relationship between the political and space economy is of central importance to this study. For one of the aims of this study is to bring out the importance of a historical geographical understanding of the political economy of Kerala.

The objective is also to eventually demystify and deconstruct the spatial order in Kerala. It is a spatial order with minimal urban-rural disparities; an urbanization pattern and urban system at variance with the rest of India; and the dominating presence of desakota. It is here that the conceptual relevance of desakota, to make Kerala and its spatial order a little more intelligible, emerges. Desakota is an organic part of the enigmatic, symbiotic and synergistic mix of factors that make Kerala not only unique, but distinct in Indian society. The fertility decline was an illustration of the synergistic impact of a constellation of factors. And

then the fertility decline in turn becomes part of the dynamic synergistic forces, the mix, the constellation.

The spatial order and space economy of Kerala have attracted little academic attention. Their distinctive character in the Indian context was a problematic feature in mapping trends on the scale of the national level. Rakesh Mohan reporting on the regional patterns of urban growth and economic development in the 1980s in India, excluded Kerala

> ...because it posed particular problems in the definition of urban areas.
> (Mohan 1983. p1579)

The definitional problematic is because the conceptual baggage of urban and rural as tight compartments is carried over from another time and place. The answer is not to sweep Kerala under the carpet, but to re-work the conceptualization. It here that the relevance and pertinence of desakota emerges. In working towards such an objective, it is important to first present a descriptive analysis of the spatial order of Kerala. This is the focus of the next chapter.

To sum up, this chapter sought to present features of Kerala society and economy that laid a claim to Kerala being a distinct society in the sub-continent. But an underpinning theme was that these features make a mix, a constellation that profoundly influences Kerala desakota.

First, this chapter in examining the land use pattern sought to establish a relationship between land use and the mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activities.

Second, the demographic features of Kerala, its historical demography; the high population density; population growth due to low and declining mortality rates; fertility decline in the past two decades and their determinants; were discussed. McGee's desakota hypothesis lays emphasis on large and dense populations as a key characteristic of desakota. The discussion of Kerala's demographic features shows that these key features are present. In

particular it was argued that Kerala's demographic features were not entirely generated by a rice bowl ecology or mega-urban features. But other ecological and historical factors had contributed to its high population density character.

Third, this chapter also established that though Kerala was not as industrially advanced as Maharashtra, West Bengal and Tamilnadu, and did not possess a mega-urban region like Bombay, Calcutta or Madras, a greater share of its workforce was in non-agriculture than in these three States. Such activity was also predominantly in non-urban areas. This its was argued was because of the desakota character of the non-urban space in Kerala.

Fourth, this chapter sought to present the Kerala model of social development in a context of low economic growth. Organized labour and its gains in wages and working conditions were part of this scenario. This brought up again the central theme of this study, the relationship of the political economy to space. In working towards an understanding of this relationship, we move to the next chapter to examine the spatial order of Kerala.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SPATIAL ORDER IN KERALA

This chapter will seek to provide a descriptive analysis of the spatial order in Kerala by first presenting the rural settlement pattern in Kerala, and then going on to discuss the urban order, and the transport and communication flows in Kerala. Both the urban and rural aspects of the spatial order, and the communication flows, as will be argued in this chapter, have implications for, or are underpined by the presence of desakota. The understanding of the spatial order is crucial to the analysis of desakota.

The rural settlement pattern

The isolated rural homesteads

A study of the spatial forms of Indian villages by the Anthropological Survey of India, identified four types of settlements. These were shapeless cluster, linear cluster, square or rectangular cluster and lastly isolated homesteads. In the last category, a number of homesteads are treated together as a village for convenience of collection of rent or taxes. (Nandi and Tyagi 1961.p1) The predominant settlement pattern in Kerala is isolated homesteads. It is also referred to as the dispersed settlement pattern. A neat description of this settlement pattern as a distinct feature of Kerala that strikes most visitors was made as early as the 14th century by the Arab traveller Ibn Battuta.

> Along this road ....no space is uncultivated. Every one has his own separate garden with his own house in the middle, surrounded by a wooden fence.....it is the same through out the entire journey of two months. (Ibn Battuta. Tr: Gibbs 1929. 1969 Ed p231/2)

This settlement pattern is not exclusive to Kerala. It is found, according to the Anthropological Survey of India, in the mountain ranges of Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh, as well as in the flooded districts of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. (Nandi and Tyagi 1961.p3) But in association with the population density of the Kerala region the settlement pattern imparts to the landscape a distinctiveness not commonly encountered elsewhere in India. What is of particular interest for this study, is its similarity to some features of the urban landscape that has evolved in colonial India. This has implications for desakota as we shall examine shortly. It has also implications for the unit of settlement in defining urban and rural in India. Before we examine these issues we need to discuss some details of the dispersed settlement pattern and how unique it is to Kerala.

Joan Mencher, an anthropologist, in a comparative study (1966) of the ecology and social structure of Kerala and Madras (now Tamil Nadu), identifies certain features of ecology and social structure in Kerala.

> ..... owing to ecological factors the settlement pattern was of a dispersed type. A typical dwelling unit was placed in its own garden set off from neighbouring houses. Middle and upper class houses had their own bathing pool and well, vegetable garden, and fruit trees, all within the compound itself, which also served as the arena for daily interaction. For poorer people the basic unit for daily interaction was the locality, and the focus of their activity was the powerful family of their locality.....(Mencher 1966.p163)

The absence of a village core, and lack of a social cognizance and identity of a village itself has been commented upon by a number of writers. Menon (1953) describes a Kerala settlement as having

> .... no distinct core, nor is there any residential area or shopping street..... Here and there is a small hut, usually a one-storied building with a front yard. There is an occasional large house with a garden gate-house and out-houses probably belonging to an important landlord. In some cases there is a shop which supplies sweetmeats, lengths of cloth, provisions, etc. It might also be a tea-shop where some of the men might meet. There may be a temple, village tank, or court of justice but none of these form the core of the village which is altogether rather loosely knit.(Menon 1953.p46)

Kuriyan (1938) states:

> The whole region along the coast is from one end to the other like a garden city where one can hardly walk a furlong without seeing some houses ..... The villages in Kerala have no marked nodality.(Kuriyan 1938.p141-142)

As Mencher states, it was then

> impossible for an ordinary Malayalee visitor to know when he has come to the end of one village or entered another.....There is little geographic logic in the decision to consider one area part of one village or another.....Administrators, lawyers,judges, legislators, and anthropologists have often debated what constitutes a village in Kerala.(Mencher 1966.p142-143)

Traditionally in Kerala there was no concept of a village or a local space perceived as a village. The concept of a village was introduced by the British for administrative and revenue purposes. In a sense it was an administrative fiction, for local inhabitants did not perceive it as a local space with a social identity. Traditionally, *kara* or *tara* was local space in Kerala. It cannot be equated with village. There is no clear description of a kara. It was territorially diffused and approximated to a network of households, sometimes limited to the household of ones own caste. Even the diffused territory was much smaller than a revenue village. A number of *karas* constituted a village. The 1971 Census lists 1268 villages in Kerala made up by 5972 *karas*. (Census 1971 Series 9, Pt II-A p64, p72) .

What emerges from all this is that the settlement pattern is non-nucleated and distinct from the nucleated or cluster form which was the dominant settlement pattern in India. This is clearly established by Nath. (1962. p142-43) For a definition of the term "village" for the limited purposes of identifying the basic unit to be deemed rural or urban we must go to the Indian census, which says:

> "It should be borne in mind that the concept of a village is not demographic but administrative. As a general rule, it represents a parcel of land, the boundaries of which are defined and settled by a Revenue Survey or by a

> Cadestral Survey. It may be, but need not always necessarily be a single house cluster with a local name, marking its distinctiveness as a residential locality". (Census of India 1951. Vol I, Pt II-A p 2)[1]

It will be clear from the above definition that the term "village" strictly speaking, does not stand for a social or a settlement unit. It is a term used to express what is primarily a revenue-administration unit. It is true that in most parts of India this is also a unit of settlement or habitation. The village in these parts conforms to the popular picture of a cluster of houses situated amid its cultivated fields which define its boundaries, and separate it from other similar units, and give it a distinct identity. According to Nath:

> The identity between the revenue village and the unit of settlement is closest in northwestern India and in the "dry" areas of the country generally, Eg., Punjab, Rajasthan, Western Uttara Pradesh, Bombay, Mysore and parts of Madhya Pradesh. In these areas, the village is a tightly nucleated unit of settlement, distinctly marked from other similar units....But, as we move away from these areas, there is a trend towards a more dispersed settlement pattern, with the village being composed of a "main village", which is usually inhabited by the landholding castes, and one, two or more "hamlets". In the Gangetic plain, this pattern is already well established in central Uttara Pradesh and becomes more marked as we move east. Thus over large parts of eastern India (Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal) the revenue village consists of the main village and a number of small clusters of households (thollas), each situated within its own grove of trees having its own source of water supply, and separated from the others by some distance.... A somewhat different situation is found in Madras and parts of Andhra Pradesh. Here the pattern of settlement is generally similar to what would be called the tightly nucleated village type, i.e., a distinct cluster of houses surrounded by cultivated fields. But these "clusters" are not called villages, but "hamlets". The revenue villages in these areas consists of a number of such hamlets and generally has a large population, up to 10,000 or 15,000.
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> The extreme departures from the pattern of the tightly nucleated village are found at the two extremities of the country, Kerala and Himachal Pradesh. In Kerala the unit of settlement is the individual homestead situated within its own compound and agricultural lands. These homesteads extend in

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1. This Census concept of village continues to be operative, though there is a more guarded acknowledgement of it being only an administrative concept and not a demograaphic concept. "In India the smallest area of rural habitation is the village. It generally follows the limits of a revenue village that is recognized by the district administration. The revenue village need not necessarily be a single agglomeration of habitations. It may have one or more hamlets. But the revenue village has a definite surveyed boundary and each village is a separate administrative unit with separate village accounts." (Census of India 1971 Series 1, Pt II-A (i) p3) "The basic unit for rural areas is the revenue village which has definite surveyed boundaries. The revenue village may comprise several hamlets but the entire village has been treated as one unit for presentation of data." (Census of India 1981, Series 1 Pt II-A (i), p13)

> almost unbroken lines along the roads and in other areas suitable for settlement. The "village" here is purely an artificial unit created by the revenue administration and has no existence on the ground...in Himachal Pradesh, where the population is very sparse, the typical unit of settlement is the "hamlet", consisting of a very few houses, sometimes not more than two or three....and true "villages" begin to appear only in the valleys and other areas of more concentrated population. (Nath 1962. p142-143)

It is clear from Nath's study that the nucleated or cluster form was the dominant settlement pattern in India. The supposedly self sufficient village republics of India, romanticized by 19th century indologists, but less credible to historians now, (Thapar 1982) certainly did not exist in Kerala. What is the relevance of the non-nucleated settlement pattern for this study ?

First, social ecology and administrative history have influenced the size of revenue villages. From Nath's study it appears British administration in northwestern and northeastern India,[2] with the exception of what is now Himachal Pradesh, was prone to make the nucleated socio-ecological village the revenue village. In southeastern India, (Tamilnadu and parts of Andhra Pradesh, i.e formerly Madras Presidency), the socio-ecological clusters had a small population and this led to few of them being grouped to form a revenue village. With the historical continuities, these villages by the 1950s had the mean population between 10,000 and 15,000 that Nath refers to.

It is important to note that Travancore Census administrators used the tara and/or kara as the basic unit of data collection and classification. (Census of Travancore 1891. Pt I p215, p288-290; Census of India 1901. Vol XXVI, Pt I, Appendix pii). They were very much aware of the cultural and socio-ecological distinctions from the "east coast" and convinced the Census authorities in Madras of the kara as the appropriate basic residential unit. Cochin having used

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2. These were the British India governing regions of Bombay Presidency, Bengal, United Provinces, Central Provinces, Punjab etc, together with the princely states of the region which had to fall in line with British administration policies for census taking etc.

kara as the basic residential unit for Census taking until 1901, fell in line from 1911 with other regions of India in using the revenue village as the basic residential unit. Malabar district, even though part of Madras Presidency, did not use the revenue village but the smaller unit called desam. (Census of India 1961, Vol VII Pt II-A, p31) In 1961 the revenue village became the basic unit and "village" for purposes Census data collection and definitions. (Ibid) This was the first Census after the three politico-administrative units were unified as Kerala State. There was a need for uniformity. At the same time there was pressure to fall in line with the rest of India in Census data collection and definitions.

The implication is that in South India, in the context of its social ecology and colonial administration, one of the contemporary criteria of urban, viz, the population size of the settlement being a minimum of 5000, (and settlement for census purposes being the revenue village), is easily met. We shall return to this issue when we discuss the Indian definition of urban shortly.

Second, Kerala does not possess a typical Indian, or for that matter a popular global conception of a landscape associated with a rural settlement. The customary landscape associated with rural settlement, albeit an idyllic perception, was a cluster of thatched houses surrounded by rice fields and in the centre of all this a village bazaar and/or temple, village bathing spot in a river, stream or tank. The Kerala rural landscape was not only devoid of all these expected features of a rural settlement but paralleled in many ways contemporary urban residential landscape or settlement in India.

Newly emerging urban residential landscape in India

The traditional urban residential landscape in India, including Kerala cities, were street houses. They abutted each other and the street in front. They had a backyard and/or inner courtyard. During the British Raj, the older cities and old quarters of colonial cities continued

to have this residential pattern. But in the colonial cities and new residential areas of old cities, a new type of urban dwellings emerged and became the norm. As Anthony King (1976) argues, the model was set by the British administrators and business elite. The British residents away from their home country wanted to recreate a little bit of the British Isles in their residential communities. But in doing so, the Britishers being mostly of middle class origins, to keep up with their new found imperial pomp and splendour, made the model the manor houses of the British landed gentry. (King 1976. p134) Limited urban space and finances led to the residences being smaller versions of the manorial houses of Britain. But the model of the house standing in the centre of the grounds was clear. This eventually evolved to be the 'bungalow and compound,' the typical urban residence of the British in India.

King also argues that 19th century medical science was supportive of this model. The British army in India had high mortality by disease. Nineteenth century medical science's 'aerial' theory of disease, came up with the view that some of the diseases could be prevented if a clear "air space" existed between the cantonment areas and the native quarters.

> 'Medical' theories required that compounds should provide optimum amounts of 'fresh air', the generous spatial distances acting as physical barriers between members of the community and particularly, against representatives of the indigenous society. (King 1976. p134)

The provision of esplanades, and the spacing pattern of cantonments emerged from such medical science prescriptions. There were also perhaps military reasons to keep open spaces such as esplanades around the cantonment. The twin city character, the old city and the cantonment area, characteristic of many Indian cities and towns of the British raj period, are consequent to such planning, compounded with political, social and cultural factors of a ruling elite in a colonial environment. (King 1976. p108-115).

Portuguese colonial housing patterns, such as verandahs, and elements of indigenous housing styles, also influenced the bungalow-compound complex. The derivation of the word bungalow from the Bengali word bungaloo, for a Bengali rural house type with a narrow verandah all round, and compound from the Malay word Kampong, reflect the colonial cultural origins of the bungalow-compound complex. Perpetuation of the residential norms of the gentry of the metropolitan society in the bungalow-compound complex prevented the adoption of some of the climatic controls in indigenous housing such as inner courtyards etc. Each bungalow had thus to provide protection from the sun and glare by broader verandahs round the house, maximizing the compound, and extensive tree planting. (King 1976. p135)

The newly emerging native urban middle and upper middle classes followed the imperial elite's urban residential styles. Soon in most Indian cities a new native residential quarter emerged housing the growing middle and upper middle classes.[3] Those of the more wealthy upper middle class resembled the British residential space, while those on the lower rung of upper and middle classes were similar, but far reduced in size and social symbols. What evolved eventually as the norm of the new urban residential spatial order in India was the bungalow surrounded by a compound. The size of both the bungalow and compound varied with the class and income character of the middle class neighbourhoods. But there was a definite shift in most Indian cities in the urban residential landscape from street houses to the bungalow and compound type.[4] (See Appendix 4.01) New working class neighbourhoods

3. See Duncan and Duncan (1976a and 1976b) for studies of the different housing and lifestyles of old and new native urban elites and symbolic social meanings attached to housing and in the use of domestic space. Kings study (1976) focuses on the political, social and cultural context in which the cantonment, hill station, and the 'bungalow and compound' evolved as the residential and domestic space of the British in India. Duncans' paper is a comparative study of the social meaning of housing for the old and new indigenous urban elite in Hyderabad City. The housing styles of the new elite described by the Duncans, supports the argument made in this study, that it is modelled on the residential landscape of the British in India.

4. In the post independence period, there has been some return to courtyard houses in cities. This was influenced by cultural revivalism; the post-modernist movement in architecture; and the increasing cost and less availability of urban land space. The courtyard houses need less space than the typical bungalow and compound type. But the new courtyard houses were the preference of the professional and intellectual elites, most middle class persons and the nouveau riche still preferring the colonial model.

had tenement housing, which was not very different from street houses, though less spacious and without inner courtyards. They were probably modelled on or replicas of low income residences in European cities.[5] Some of the old street houses were also divided up and the old residential areas gradually becoming the less prestigious, low income areas, in urban decay.

The implications of the settlement patterns for desakota

The significance of the new urban residential landscape in the Kerala context was that it is similar to the isolated homestead of rural settlements described earlier. The population growth in Kerala, and the disintegration of the joint family *taravads* into nuclear households discussed in chapter two, fragmented the rural homesteads into smaller units of homesteads and cultivated land around them. There was thus a multiplication of rural homesteads and a reduction of their sizes. Given the coastal density of Kerala and the absence of nodal villages, the resultant landscape of the lowlands and some of the midland regions was not very different from the new urban landscape. An Englishman, as private secretary, accompanying the Maharajah of Baroda (Gaekwar of Baroda) on a tour of South India in 1915 writes of the Kerala region:

> Yet in a sense the whole country is a village; the people of Malabar and the south country must have privacy and their taravads give it to them regardless of space.....the succession of taravads makes the approach to Trivandrum deceptive, makes it difficult to distinguish town from country. (Clarke 1915. p72)

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5. This observation is based on the housing provided in Colombo to house the labour required for packaging and warehousing of plantation produce prior to export. These were tenement houses, a row of housing units abutting each other with common back yards and front yards. In some cases they fronted the road. They had common toilet facilities. Similar housing were also provided in the British plantations in Sri Lanka.

From Cannanore in north Kerala to Trivandrum in the south the coastal area was one continuous non-nucleated settlement, pock-marked with the many city commercial centres and bazaars. The residential areas of the cities are indistinguishable from the surrounding countryside, if they could be termed countryside at all. It may be more appropriate to call them non-urban or desakota. Even as late as the early 1930s, Hesterlow, a public health official observes of Malabar district:

> There are to all intents and purposes no real towns or villages. Such few towns as there are being mere collections of bazaars or trading stations; and even these towns consist very largely of isolated houses in more or less extensive grounds of their own. There are no rows of houses or streets and therefore there is no congestion of population due to this cause. The population is thus more uniformly distributed than in other districts. (Hesterlow 1932. p179)

And as cited earlier, even a native Malayalee visitor did not know where one "village" ceased and another began. It was this situation that prompted Polly Hill, a visiting anthropologist to state:

> I was often quite literally unable to locate myself. This unfortunate topographical bewilderment was compounded by many people's inability to distinguish named village panchayat areas from named (revenue) villages. Because, as is well known, most of the rural population lives dispersedly, not in compact villages as in South India generally, 'village' has little meaning. (Hill 1986 p780)

Minimal urban-rural disparities occur on a number of dimensions in Kerala, and some of them will be discussed in the next section. Such minimal urban-rural disparities are an expression of desakota. The rural settlement pattern and the density of homesteads in Kerala in the context of the new norm of urban residential landscape, visually minimize urban-rural distinctions. This cannot be interpreted as an expression of desakota, or the surface phenomena of deeper issues in the spatial order. It is more a coincidence that rural settlement patterns of Kerala which had existed for a number of centuries resemble the newly emerging urban residential landscape of 19th and 20th century India. But minimal landscape distinctions between rural and urban regions may be influencing people's perception of space and the

spatial order. Urban space in Kerala as we shall observe shortly was also not monumental. Perception and cognizance of urban and rural space as not being distinctively different and a loose identity with a locality may have implications for desakota. We shall draw this out later in this study.

The Urban Order

Urban ratio

The urban population as a percent of the total population, or urban ratio as it is often called, is low in India. In examining the concept and definition of urban in chapter one we discussed the relationship between industrialization and urbanization. India is not as industrialized as the western world and its urban ratio is low. Kerala's ratio is even lower, though like the national trend it has increased over the period 1901 to 1981.

TABLE 4.01

Urban Ratios of India and Kerala 1901 to 1981

Years	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981
Kerala	7.1	7.3	8.7	9.6	10.8	13.5	15.1	16.2	18.7
India	11.0	10.4	11.3	12.2	14.1	17.6	18.3	20.3	23.7

Source:
Census of India, 1981. Series 10, Kerala. Part II-A. Statements 3 & 8, p 28 & 32.
Government of India. Planning Commission 1983. p10.

Table 4.02 provides the urban ratio of the fourteen major states in India for 1901 and 1981 and their rank order on the basis of the urban ratios in 1981. It may be observed that Kerala and five other states that make the bottom six are also the bottom six in terms S.D.P in Table 3.14.[6] This may suggest a relationship between urbanization and the economic character

6. See chapter three.

of these states as measured by economic criteria such as S.D.P. This may even be interpreted to reflect the relevance of the western model of urban transition in the Indian context. But the fact that Punjab, whose economic growth is more due to agricultural productivity than industrial, is among the states with relatively high and increasing urban ratio suggests that there is no neat explanation for the pattern of urban ratios among the Indian states. Obviously there are factors specific to each of these states that need to be examined to understand the pattern. This is beyond the scope of this study.

TABLE 4.02

Urban Ratios in India by States - 1901 and 1981

	1901		1981	
	Ratio	Rank	Ratio	Rank
Maharashtra	16.6	2	35.0	1
Tamilnadu	14.2	4	33.0	2
Gujarat	22.3	1	31.1	3
Karnataka	12.6	5	28.9	4
Punjab	12.4	6	27.7	5
West Bengal	12.2	8	26.5	6
Andhra Pradesh	9.6	10	23.3	7
Haryana	12.4	6	21.9	8
Rajasthan	15.1	3	21.0	9
Madhya Pradesh	8.6	11	20.3	10
Kerala	7.1	12	18.7	11
Uttar Pradesh	11.1	9	17.9	12
Bihar	4.0	13	12.5	13
Orissa	2.5	14	11.8	14
INDIA	10.8		23.7	

Source: Derived from Census of India 1981. Series 1, India. Part II-A [i] Statement 5, p. 34-37 and Table A-1 p. 72-81.

What is argued here is that in Kerala, the low urban ratio is consequent to the presence of desakota. It was pointed out in chapter one, that desakota in Kerala is an expression of the western model of urban transition not occurring in Kerala. This is the position taken by the McGee desakota hypothesis as well, as we noted in chapter one. It was also shown in the last chapter that Kerala had the highest percent of non-agricultural

workforce among the Indian states. Yet its urban ratio is low. This strongly supports the case not only for the presence of desakota in Kerala, but desakota as the explanatory variable for a low urban ratio in the context of relatively high non-agricultural workforce. It is only in a desakota situation that a low urban ratio can occur along with a significant percentage of non-agricultural activity. It also supports the argument that the western model of urban transition is not occurring and desakota is an alternate path. The whole issue here, exemplified in Kerala's relatively high non-agricultural workforce but low urban ratio, is linked to the official definition of urban in the Indian context. We turn to examine this in the next section.

Definition of urban in India and its significance in Kerala

Prior to 1951 though there were some differences in the definition of urban in different census years and among the political-administrative units of India, (Census of India 1981, Series 1 India, Part II-A [i] p22-25) basically urban areas included

> all municipalities of whatever population and every other continuous collection of houses, permanently inhabited by not less than 5000 persons, which the Census Superintendent, having regard to the character and relative density of its population, the importance of the place as a centre of trade and its historic associations, might decide to treat as a town. (Census of India 1981, Series 10 Kerala, Part II-A General Population Tables. p 21)

In 1961 a standard definition of urban for use throughout India was adopted and this was:

> [1] All places with a city corporation, municipality, cantonment board or notified town area committee.
> [2] All places which satisfied the following criteria:
>
> [a] a minimum population of 5000
> [b] a density of population of not less than 400 persons per sq km,
> [c] at least three-fourths of the male population engaged in non-agricultural activity.
>
> (Census of India 1981, Series 1 India, Part II-A [i] p20-21)

This definition continued to be used in 1971 except that it was now explicitly stated that it was three fourths of the male *working* population that should be engaged in non-agricultural activity. In 1981 another ambiguity was removed when agriculture was specifically defined to include not merely cultivators and agricultural labourers, but workers in livestock, forestry, logging, fishing, hunting, trapping, plantations, orchards and allied activities as well. The Indian Census definition was thus incorporating the demographic, economic and political-administrative components of the definition of urban as discussed in chapter one. There is no official explanation for restricting the economic criteria to male workers. Possibly the under enumeration of female workers that is believed to be occurring in the Indian censuses, (Nayar 1987, Krishnamurty 1985, Bhattacharya 1985, Gulati 1975, Krishnaraj 1990, Mitra et al 1979, 1980) may have prompted the use of the more reliable economic indicator of the male workforce.

It is important to recognize in the context of Kerala, and the definition of urban since 1961, that if rural non-agricultural activity had tended to be concentrated in peri-urban regions of Kerala, (or for that matter any other non-urban location), and thus cause the male non-agricultural working population of such areas to exceeded 75 percent, *ipso facto* such regions become urban. This is because given the population density and size of revenue villages, for reasons explained earlier, the other two criteria for an area to be defined as urban would have been easily met.[7] The critical variable for being defined urban in Kerala then was the extent of non-agricultural activity. Kerala had a low urban ratio, but definitionally it was close to having the entire coastal region being defined as urban. Indeed Rakesh Mohan,

7. In 1981 of the 1219 revenue villages in Kerala, 905 had a population of 10,000 and above and another 222 villages a population between 5000 and 9999. Thus 1127 villages comprising 92.5 percent had a population above 5000. The average population density of rural Kerala in 1981, as indicated in Table 3.7, was above 400 in all coastal districts and in one of the interior districts. Only in the remaining two interior districts was it less than 400. (Census of India 1981, Series 10 Kerala, Part II-A, p34 and 78-79) Thus the whole of the coastal region of Kerala meets with all the requirements to be deemed urban, except for the criteria of 75 percent of the male workforce being in non-agricultural activity.

reporting on the regional patterns of urban growth and economic development in India in the early 1980s, excluded Kerala,

> ...because it posed particular problems in the definition of urban areas. For one thing, its overall population density was about 550 per sq km in 1971, the rural density itself being about 480. Secondly, over 95 percent of the rural population in Kerala lives in villages of over 5000 people. Hence almost all the settlements in Kerala would qualify for classification as urban settlements, were it not for the additional requirement of 75 percent of the male labour force being in non-agriculture. (Mohan 1983. p19)

But in spite of a significant percent of rural non-agricultural activity being present, as reflected in Table 3.12,[8] the urban ratio remains low. What this signifies is that rural non-agricultural activity is not concentrated in rural pockets and/or peri-urban regions but scattered through out the rural coastal areas. This is a clear and unequivocal demonstration of the presence of desakota in Kerala. It also demonstrates the spread of non-agricultural activity and the mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activity that is occurring in Kerala, a core characteristic of desakota. For in the Kerala context any concentration of non-agricultural activity in any non-urban settlement that could tip the balance at 75 percent of the male workforce becomes instantly urban ! It is also argued here that this is indicative of desakota not being a dependent variable of the urban system in Kerala. This was a theme put forward in chapter one, of desakota and the urban system being in symbiosis. This symbiosis has influenced, among other factors, the character of the urban system, the urban ratio and the urban transition in Kerala. Let us now examine the urban system, meaning the network of urban centres in Kerala and the factors influencing it.

Historical geography of the urban system in Kerala

Though Kerala had a population of 25.4 million in 1981, in an area of 38,863 sq.km, its cities are not big by Indian standards. It has no city with a population of a million or more. In 1981 it had only six cities with a population over 100,000.

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8. See chapter three.

TABLE 4.03

Kerala cities with a population of 100,000 and above in 1981

City	Population
Cochin - Ernakulam [Note 1]	551,567
Trivandrum [Note 2]	499,531
Kozhikode [Note 3]	394,447
Alleppey	169,940
Quilon	167,598
Palghat	117,986

Source: Census of India 1981. Series 10 Kerala
Notes :
[1] Formerly capital of Cochin State
[2] Formerly capital of Travancore, and presently of Kerala.
[3] Formerly the administrative centre of Malabar district in the Madras Presidency, and earlier the seat of the Zamorin of Kozhikode.

Indian maritime history recognizes four core regions of the sub-continent in the Indian ocean trading system. They were Gujarat in the northwest, Bengal in the northeast, Coromandel in the southeast and Malabar in the southwest. (Arasaratnam 1989. p101-2) In three of these regions, colonial port cities that rose to prominence in the 18th and 19th centuries, displaced the supremacy of the primate port city of the regions in the late pre-colonial period. Thus in the Gujarat region Surat was displaced by Bombay, in Coromandel, Musulipatanam by Madras, and in Bengal, Murshidabad, Hugli and Chittagong by Calcutta. In the Malabar region, towards the end of the late pre-colonial period, Cochin was beginning to overshadow Kozhikode, the older and more important port city of the region in the late pre-colonial period.[9] (Ashin Das Gupta 1967 p11-12). But it did not by the late 19th century rise

9. Historically as argued in chapter one no one port city had remained supreme on the Malabar coast. There was a kind of shifting moon among stars in different epochs. Muziris, identified with contemporary Kodungallur (Cranganore), was the principal port during the period of trade with the Romans. (Thomas 1932. p230) The anonymous author of the Greek work The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea wrote that Muziris "abounds with cargo sent from Arabia and by the Greeks". (Ibid) In later centuries the focus of maritime trade shifted south to Quilon, (or Kollam in Malayalam), with Jews and Syrian Christians as principal merchants. (Ibn Battuta. Tr Gibbs 1929. 1969 Ed p238; Das Gupta 1967, p5) Quilon continued to be important until the 13th century, when Kozhikode and to less extent Cannanore in north Kerala emerged as important ports, dominated by Arab and/or Muslim traders. By the end of the 16th century there was a shift to Cochin in central Kerala. (Das Gupta 1967, p11-12) In the 18th century the Travancore Rajahs created the port of

to the stature of a Calcutta, Bombay or Madras. The roots of British power and the birth and growth of Indian colonial society and economy are embedded in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. (Bayly 1988. p68-75) The British were drawn into the geo-politics of southwest India only in the late 18th century consequent to their wars with Mysore. Their trade interests in the southwest prior to this date were handled by the Anjengo factory of the East India Company. In the late 18th century part of Cochin City and harbour which were held by the Dutch as a factory were ceded to the British.[10]

But for a number of reasons Cochin did not emerge during the British raj as a key port city in the sub-continent and was not even distantly comparable to Calcutta, Bombay or Madras. First, the multiplicity of principalities on the southwest coast in the late pre-colonial period and the presence of three political-administrative units during the British raj led to a number of port towns competing with one another and all playing minor, but nonetheless regionally important roles. Thus Alleppey and Quilon were important port towns of Travancore, and Cochin city of Cochin State. Further north Kozhikode, a port city, formerly the seat of the Zamorin and Cannanore the principal port of the Kolattiris' were all important regional port towns. In addition British Cochin, the Anjengo factory and port, (close to Trivandrum) and Tangasseri factory and port, (close to Quilon) were British enclaves on the coast, within the territories of Travancore and Cochin. So was Mahe a French enclave in the Malabar district. Thus no one port city or town rose even to the position of a primate city of the region. As argued earlier (chapter one) this was in part because no one port had a pronounced geographical superiority over the others, though Cochin had a slight edge,

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Alleppey, in close proximity to Cochin, to rival and compete with Cochin. (Das Gupta. 1967 p73; Schenk 1986. p31-34) Even though one port gained prominence in a period others continued to function. In addition to these important ports there were a number small ports and/or open roadsteads on the Kerala coast, including one at Trivandrum.

10. The Cochin harbour area was retained under the direct administration of the Madras Presidency, and known as British Cochin, until 1947.

beginning in the late 19th century, over the others by its harbour and railway linkages. Even in the last three decades since Indian independence, with the unification of all the political units as Kerala, there has been the dual growth of Trivandrum as the administrative centre and Cochin as the commercial centre.

Second, given the geographical shape of the Indian peninsula and the development of rail and road transportation in the 19th century,[11] the southwest coast came under the dominance or as the hinterland of Madras. In the north the broad expanse of the land mass allowed the hinterlands of Calcutta and Bombay to remain separate. In the south then geography constrained the historical continuity of the Malabar coast as a trading core region with its own metropolis comparable to the Calcutta, Bombay and Madras axes. The presence of two princely States, Travancore and Cochin, with some independent though limited powers, further contained the emergence of a major colonial port city on the Malabar or southwest coast. Studies on communication and commodity flows in India have demonstrated the poly-nuclearization of the Indian urban system, with primacy of one city in the regional economies of Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Delhi. (Berry 1966. p237,258; Reed 1970. p116; Prakash Rao 1980. p108-9; Alam and Reddy 1987. p33-36) The emergence of a fourth regional economy with the primacy of Delhi is a post-independence phenomenon.[12] The late emergence of Delhi is in part a reflection of the typical dominance of the port cities in the colonial period and economy.

11. It is argued by Ibrahim (1978) that roads and railway were initially laid to Malabar district, as part of the Madras Presidency, for troop movements consequent to the Mopalah uprisings and then for movement of goods and plantation produce.(p36-37)

12. The British moved the capital of India from Calcutta to Delhi in 1911, andbegan the construction of the planned city of New Delhi. This was at the height of British global and imperial power. It was a symbolic display of making Delhi the prestigious imperial capital for the eighth time in Indian history as the seat of British power in India. (Irving 1981. p2) (The correct count is believed to be more than fifteen, Ibid). It remained a ceremonial and administrative city until 1947. Since then it has emerged as an axis for a cluster of industrial towns, among which Faridabad and Meerut are prominent. This together with centralizing power of the Union government in the Indian federal system has led Delhi to emerge as the fourth regional economy with the primacy of Delhi.

Third, the British developed Colombo, south of the Malabar coast in Sri Lanka, as a major transshipment and service port of the Indian ocean, together with Singapore. This was in the late 19th century, following the increasing steamer traffic and the need for a port as a coaling station.[13] (Dharmasena 1989 p161-165) There was only a slight locational advantage that Colombo possessed over the Malabar coast ports. Colombo was a little more centrally placed than Cochin for Indian ocean sea traffic, and onward sea traffic to southeast Asia and China. Possibly there were geopolitical reasons as well. Sri Lanka, (then Ceylon) was a crown colony directly under Whitehall administration and was not part of the British raj complex in India. This may have prompted the British for strategic reasons to develop Colombo as a transshipment and service port.

Fourth, though the rails and roads of the late 19th century fractured the massif of the Western Ghats, this was possible only at two passes, the Palghat Pass and the Shencottah Pass. The Western Ghats thus continued to isolate the Kerala region. This constrained the opening up of the land east of the Western Ghats with multiple and easy access which would

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13. Dharmasena supports his argument with the following data of 1910.(1989 p167).

	Total tonnage of vessels using the port		Total tonnage of vessels using the port
1. New York	12,154.780	7. Colombo	8,091,123
2. London	11,605,698	8. Liverpool	7,749,994
3. Antwerp	11,005,761	9. Marseilles	7,187,638
4. Hamburg	10,944,909	10. Singapore	7.045,193
5. Hong Kong	10,085,595	11. Montevideo	6,936,983
6. Rotterdam	8,600,496	12. Cardiff	5,771,475

Among the Sri Lankan ports, throughout the period of sailing vessels Galle was the more important port. The higher costs of building a breakwater at Galle, due to the presence of sunken rocks etc, Colombo was developed by the British in the late 19th century to handle big steam ships. (Ibid p161-5)

Colombo declined in importance since the 1950s. This may be partly related to the departure of the British from south Asia; declining use of coal by steamers; and the increasing use of air transport for global passenger travel.

make them a hinterland of any Malabar coast port city. Dale argues that this was a factor that historically limited the expansion of the Kerala principalities eastwards.

> Commerce was especially important to the Malayali monarchs because their other resources were so limited. This was partially a dictate of geography,for the barrier of the Western Ghats sharply restricted the possible territorial base of any Malayali state. (Dale 1980.p15)

Fifth, historically the port cities of Kerala were beachheads of trading activity. They were not a core with a hinterland or a political and economic axis. The port cities were residentially, but not politically, enclaves of merchants. The merchants were largely Arabs, Jews, Mopalahs, Syrian Christians, Gujarati and Coromandel merchants. The Kerala region rajahs were very concerned with the port cities and the foreign trade that passed through these cities. They were an important source of revenue.[14] The merchants were encouraged to settle down and given all facilities. But the port cities and their residents remained cultural enclaves, unintegrated with the hinterland. The social and economic position and role of the cities is suggestive of Karl Polyani's argument that the ports of trade in early state formation were

> not just on the geographical periphery of the state, where trading complementarities were maximized, but also on the social and economic margins of the state. (Dodgshon 1987. p195)

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14. The evidence that there was little or no land tax is admittedly fragmentary. Dale while conceding this, cites a 16th century Arab historian who records that among the privileges of the Muslims was the non-payment of land tax. The Zamorin of Kozhikode papers cited by Dale indicate that the Nayars were exempt from land tax. The Nayars, being warrior-agriculturalists, a skirmishing infantry, completely dominated the military. The state or monarchs had far from absolute control and their sovereignty was limited by the necessity to act with and through the powerful warrior-agriculturalists, (Logan 1887. 1981 Edition. p114; p160-161) and the dominant caste of the region, the Nayars. In this context, the Kerala rajah's failure or inability to tax their land, Dale argues, itself explains why they were eager to encourage the growth of commerce. Early British officials have also observed the absence of accountants or revenue officials in the village hierarchy (Dale 1980.p16-19) Ecological factors are relevant, for Mencher observes: "The lack of necessity for constructing irrigation works and roads requiring public expenditure may be correlated with the fact that until the Mysorean invasions no land revenue was collected in Kerala". (1966. p144)

Such states allowed traders and taxed their activities. In the Kerala context produce such as pepper were made state monopolies and only the state could sell them to the merchants in the port cities. Polyani argued that the early state was concerned that trade, if unchecked, might threaten traditional values. One of the devices used by the early state rulers to externalize trade transactions

> was by confining them to a strictly demarcated, politically neutral site on the edge of the state system, usually at the break-point between land and sea, besides a major river or at point of contact between ecosystems. Polyani labelled these sites as ports of trade and saw them as a universal institution of overseas trade.(Dodgshon 1987. p194-197)[15]

The Kerala cities were also marked by the absence of any monumental architecture (Govt of India, Archaeological Survey of India, 1978. p54) in contrast to the splendour of the Moghul and other court cities of north India, or closer to Kerala, in Tamilnadu of the court and temple cities of the Pandyans at Madurai and the Cholas at Thanjavur. Kerala temple and palace architecture though unique and pleasing was not monumental. The palace-administration complexes were also not located in port towns or cities. The Tiruvadis, the ruling house of Travancore, had their palace-administration complex at Padmanabhapuram, 180 km from Alleppey and 110 km from Quilon the two main ports of Travancore. In the late 18th century the palace-administration complex was shifted to Trivandrum and became a palace-administration-temple complex. Trivandrum was also distanced from the two main ports of Travancore. (60 km from Quilon and 130 km from Alleppey). The traditional Kerala elite, the Nambudhri Brahmins and Nayars, were also not urban based. Logan observes;

> The Hindu Malayali is not a lover of towns and villages. His austere habits of caste purity and impurity made him in former days flee from places where pollution in the shape of men and women of low caste met him in every

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15. Polyani's discussion of both ports of trade and early regulated markets, form part of a wider analysis in which he maintained that market dominated societies were a much later phenomenon. (Dodgshon 1987. p194-197) Michael Tharakan sees the relevance of Polyani's wider analysis for an understanding of Kerala's economic history. (Personal communication) My argument for the relevance of Polyani's work is limited to the understanding of the urban phenomenon and/or spatial order in Kerala

> corner; and even now the feeling is strong upon him and he loves not to dwell in cities. (Logan. 1887. 1981 Ed. p107)

And after quoting extensively from the Report of the 1871 Census on the life style of the Nambudhri Brahmins Logan observes again:

> It may be gathered from the above descriptions that quiet and retirement are what the Malayali looks to in selecting a site for his dwelling, and that towns and town life are not congenial to his tastes. (Ibid. p111)

What may be argued then is that historically the character of the settlement and society in Kerala made urban and urbanism unimportant. Even today if one were to look for a centre of Malayali arts and letters, or a Kerala cultural centre, the choice would be Trichur, a town of 13.5 sq.km and a population of 80,000. (1981), and not any one of the port cities and/or capitals of the three political-administrative units of the colonial era. The presence of a simple but elegant temple and staging of an annual pageant at this temple has led in part to Trichur acquiring the reputation as a cultural and arts centre.[16]

During the British Raj with the formation of a colonial society and economy in India, the Kerala port cities developed many features typical of colonial port cities, including the emergence of native urban upper and middle classes. Yet there may have been some continuity from earlier times, for upper and middle class urbanism in Kerala is not a prestigious trend setter, nor culturally and politically important or dominant. In the prestigious residential areas of New Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras is an upper and upper middle class elite with an urbane life style that sets the tone for the affluent side of the urbanism of these cities. Such a cultural dominant is absent in the Kerala cities except perhaps for a semblance of it in Cochin. This may be partly due to the presence of a significant non-Malayalee upper middle class community made up of senior naval personnel and business

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16. It is also the centre for some of the literary and art associations in Kerala.

executives of shipping and export companies and their families. [17] These features of Kerala society have implications for desakota. We shall comment on them later in this study.

The absence or minimal presence of a culturally dominant urbanism in Kerala, should not be seen or interpreted as counter-urbanism. It is not a reactive condition such as the counter-urbanism that has emerged as a social phenomenon in some parts of the western world. In Kerala it is a continuity or persistence of a non-urban life style that was culturally preferred and prestigious. Urban life was marginal, socially and geographically, and strikingly similar to Polyani's characterization noted earlier.

Contemporary urban system

According to the Census of 1981 there are 106 cities and towns in Kerala. Their distribution in terms of population size is presented in Table 4.04. Since 1971 the Indian census introduced the concepts of Urban Agglomeration (UA) and Standard Urban Areas (SUA).

> Urban agglomeration represents a contiguous urban spread constituting a town and its adjoining urban outgrowths or two or more physically contiguous towns together with contiguous well recognized urban outgrowths, which may fall within the revenue limits of a village or villages. These 'urbanized' villages or outgrowths deserved to be reckoned along with the town in conformity with the continuous urban spread. The urban agglomeration represents a spatial urban spread at a given time.
>
> The Standard Urban Area was defined as the projected growth area of a city or town as it would be in 1991 taking into account not only the towns and villages which will get merged into it but also the intervening rural area which are potentially urban.....The standard urban area will thus be a larger areal unit which will extend beyond the main city or town and would contain all likely developments up to 1991.
>
> The characteristic features of a standard urban area are that:
>
> i) it should have core town of a minimum population of 50,000.

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17. Cochin is the seat of the Southern Naval Command of the Indian Navy.

ii) contiguous areas made up of other urban well as rural administrative units should have close mutual socio-economic linkages with the core town; and
iii) the probability is that the entire area will get urbanized within a period of two to three decades.

(Census of India 1981, Series 10 Kerala, Part II-A p169)

In Kerala there are 9 U.As and 76 towns. This means that 30 of the 106 cities and towns have merged to form the nine U.As. Eight of these U.As with a total of 27 cities or towns, including the core city or town, along with another 16 towns in close proximity, and together with adjoining and intervening non-urban space form 8 S.U.As. Another 6 towns, 2 of them in proximity to one another make another 5 S.U.As making a grand total of 13 S.U.As. Details of the core cities, the U.As and the S.U.As are provided in Appendix 4.02. The 13 SUAs cover 1421 sq km of which 879 sq km are urban areas and 542 sq km are rural areas. The population of the urban areas is 3.3 m and the rural areas .8 m. (Ibid p185)

Economic activity data is not given by S.U.As but by cities, towns and U.As. The urban sector in the census data on economic activity is also limited to the 106 cities and towns. The rural areas caught up in the SUAs are thus included in the rural sector data of the censuses. The S.U.As cannot thus be used for any meaningful quantitative analysis in terms of economic

TABLE 4.04

Number of Cities and Towns in Kerala by population size 1981

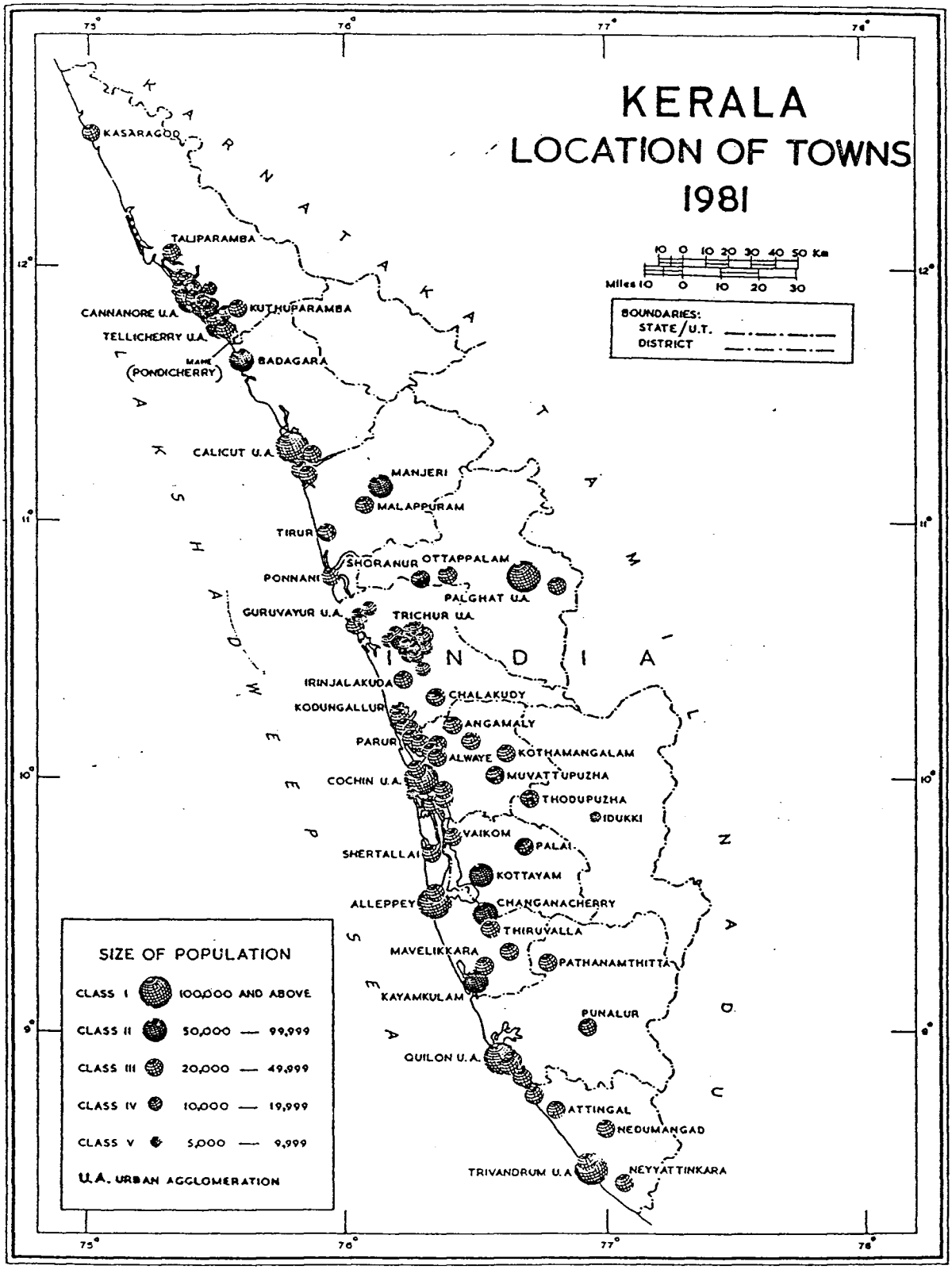
Size of Population	Number No	Number %	Population '000	Population %	Density Sq.Km
500,000 and above	1	.9	551	11.5	4508
100,000 - 499,999	5	4.7	1350	28.3	4077
50,000 - 99,999	8	7.5	512	10.7	2606
20,000 - 49,999	64	60.4	2022	42.4	1864
10,000 - 19,999	21	19.8	283	5.9	1720
5,000 - 9,999	6	5.7	49	1.0	772
4,999 and less	1	.9	4	.1	
Total	106	99.9	4771	99.9	3737

Source: Census of India 1981. Series 10. Part II-A p126-127, p184 and 188.

activity. The size-class characteristics of the Kerala cities and towns are summarized in Table 4.04. The 14 cities and towns with a population of 50,000 and above make the core cities and towns of the U.As and S.U.As. Another 38 towns have clustered with core cities, leaving 54 small towns outside the clusters.

Map 4.01 shows the 106 cities and towns. The core cities and towns that form the 9 U.As and the 13 S.U.As are demarcated on this map. Examination of the map reveals two urban networks. One on the north on the Cannanore - Kozhikode (Calicut) axis and the other a long stretch from Trichur in central Kerala to Trivandrum in deep south. The distance from Trichur to Trivandrum is approximately 270 kilometres. It can be seen from the map that there is a clustering of towns around Cannanore, Trichur and a little (approximately 25 kilometres) north of Cochin. The Cochin to Trivandrum segment in southern Kerala has a relatively sparse clustering of towns. This as the previous chapters have shown is virtually the coastal area of what was formerly Cochin and Travancore states. This region it was argued is typical Kerala country or landscape, in socio-economic and spatial terms.

The towns are relatively sparse in this region. This is partly because of the spread of small industries. Concentration of industries may have led to some settlements reaching the critical 75 percent of the male work force in non-agriculture to be deemed urban. The spread of industries and other non-agricultural activities make this region desakota. The cities and towns, may be seen as a string of commercial areas and bazaars encapsulated by a desakota region. The urban system or network is a linear model along the coast, and the transport-communication lines. The transport-communication lines also run along the coast, and fork out at Trichur and Shoranur to link up, via Palghat, with Coimbatore in Tamilnadu. The deviation from the linear pattern , when it occurs, is along rivers. Overall the linear pattern



Source: Census of India 1981, Series 10 Part II A, p136

dominates, with 76 of the 106 towns being within 20 kilometres of the coast. (Chattopadyay 1988. p15) The desakota region is not a product or a dependent variable of the urban system or the transport-communication lines. The urban centres and the desakota region are in a symbiotic mix. The Cannanore-Kozhikode network in northern Kerala many be seen as another such symbiotic corridor, though desakota may be relatively less present. The clustering of towns at Trichur and Cannanore can be interpreted as desakota crossing the critical line of having more than 75 percent of the male workforce in non-agricultural activity. If a concentration of some non-agricultural activity occurs in a few localities then such areas become urban. We saw earlier that in Kerala all lowland and midland settlements have met all the census criteria to be deemed urban, except the economic criteria of having 75 percent of the male working population in non-agricultural activity. Those that have such working population become urban.

But there are two issues here. First, it must be recognized that the spatial unit of calculation for census categories is the revenue village. As discussed earlier, there is no "village" in Kerala. The revenue village was a spatial unit of administrative convenience for revenue collection. Their boundaries are arbitrary, if at all one can talk of boundaries in Kerala, other then the boundaries of the homesteads and/or the bungalow and compound ! Second, the economic criterion for urban is gender specific. Female labour participation in non-agricultural activity is ignored. What distortions this causes is difficult to unravel.[18] What are census categories of urban and rural depicting, if some of the agro-processing industries have a gender specific work force ? We shall examine this issue in chapters six and seven when census data on economic activity are presented. But to briefly make the point now, the industry, a male work force dominated beedi industry concentrated in Cannanore district, has

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18. As we will note in the next chapter, other than for Chakraborty's (1991. p305) passing observation, this issue has not been recognized in the literature on Kerala urbanization, and for that matter on Indian urbanization.

obviously had some implications for the cluster of towns in this district. The concern here is to sensitively understand and use census categories, with a kind of anthro-geographical guided understanding, imagination or qualitative perception.[19] There is also the need to be aware of the semantics of urban, rural, village, etc, and the definitional issues of the urban-rural dichotomy. Some of these concerns were addressed in chapter one. This does not mean that we discard census data, like the proverbial baby with the bath water. At the macro level, census data remain an unmatched source to decipher the spatial order, if used with caution and insight. On the other one should avoid excessive analysis of statistical data, such as the change in the composition of the size-class towns over the census years. There is then the danger of census categories substituting for reality in the academic world of papers, seminars and dissertations.

The concerns expressed here raise many issues. One of these was obliquely raised by Rakesh Mohan,(1983. p19) but not pursued. This was the suggestion that the whole of Kerala [20] is urban. A census definition as such is prevented only because the economic criteria are not met. Chattopadhyay (1988. p22) is more explicit stating that the entire state may be referred to as an urban centre. He sees the economic criteria, in any case in Kerala, as problematic

> because the unit of calculation used is the village, which itself appears to be non-existent for all practical purposes.(Ibid p30)

We will return to these observations of Rakesh Mohan and Chattopadyay when we review the literature on Kerala urbanization in the next chapter. This then is the issue raised earlier of revenue villages as census blocks being arbitrary. As Mencher stated,

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19. This was one of the rewards of the one year's field work, or more simply put, the 'lived experience', of the author in Kerala. See chapter one.

20. In effect referring to the lowlands and midlands of Kerala, the more habitated areas of the State.

anthropologists, administrators, jurists etc cannot decipher the "village" in Kerala. It may be more meaningful to treat the entire coastal region as isolated homestead settlements with nodes of bazaars and/or commercial centres of cities.[21] Ibn Battutta, whose 14th century description was quoted earlier, is close to recognizing this and still seems relevant ! Mencher observes:

> The Namboodiri Brahmins, higher groups of Nayar, and even ordinary middle-class Nayar have hardly any need to move out of their residential compounds to meet their daily requirements....they have within their compound their own bathing pond, snake pit, small deity for daily worship, garden crops and even cremation grounds. Vendors make their usual rounds....Thus there was and is even today little opportunity for individuals to have the experience of non-familial primary group life which characterizes the nucleated villages...Among the Christians, Muslims, Tarakans and even the wealthier Brahmins from the east coast, many families live in their own substantial house in a spacious compound. (1966. p145-6)

Clustering of residences of a single caste, often seen in other parts of India, was absent in Kerala. With partitioning of taravad lands, some caste clustering did occur. But even in such instances, each house is still set on its own plot of land, and often one cannot see one's neighbours' houses owing to the dense vegetation. (Ibid. p146). Mencher also notes that traditionally a Nayar is more likely to refer to his taravad than to his village (Ibid. p156) to establish his/her social identity.

William Logan, who among the British administrators had the most perceptive and intimate knowledge of the Kerala region,[22] writes of the Malabar district:

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21. "I am going to the city" in the Kerala context is equivalent to "I am going to down town" in the western world. Sometimes the exact bazaar or commercial centre is referred to by name. for example in Trivandrum, Chalai bazaar, Palayam market, Statue junction, Bakery junction etc

22. William Logan, (1841-1914) of the Indian Civil Service was the Collector of the Malabar District for a good part of the latter half of the 19th century. His description of the Malabar District in two volumes published in 1887, is a standard reference on the Malabar District of the 19th century. He was the first British administrator to perceive the Mopalah peasant uprisings not as expressions of Islamic fervour and friction with the Hindus, but as tenants protesting against a changing tenurial system that was advantageous to the Nayar landlords. The Mopalah peasants being Muslims and the Nayar landlords Hindus, had introduced a religious element overshadowing the fundamental economic or agrarian character of the protests. (Kurup 1981; Gurukkal 1989)

> And the fact is that the coast tracts are so densely populated that it is difficult to say where one municipal town begins and where another ends. From end to end of the district on the low lying lands near the sea there is an unbroken belt of coconut palm orchards, and the description that Shaikh Ibn Battuta gave of the country in the 14th century is equally applicable now.....The fact which on the Malabar coast indicates the existence of a town is the occurrence of one or more streets of shops - bazaars - longer and busier than those to be met elsewhere in the district. (Logan. 1887. 1981 Ed p111-2)

The continuing theme of indistinct urban-rural residential landscape is present from Ibn Battuta (14th century), Logan (1887), Clarke (1915), Kuriyan (1938), Menon (1953), Mencher (1966), Chattopadhay (1988) Acharaya (1987). All this is suggests that it may be more appropriate to merely describe the spatial order of Kerala lowlands and midlands as one continuous dispersed settlement, with pockets of bazaars and/or commercial centres, and administrative service centres. The emphasis is repeatedly on the bazaars and commercial centres of towns and cities, and not on the entirety of a city, because there is hardly any difference between the residential areas falling within official city limits and those outside it. Only the bazaars and commercial centres have a distinct urban landscape. It may also be argued that parts of areas designated urban are desakota. The presence of paddy and coconut lands, and agricultural workforce, (Sankaranarayan. 1977. p7,11), within urban areas support this argument.

Michael Lipton sees Kerala as one of the two regions, the other being Sri Lanka's southwest, where the city-country line is blurred. In this context he describes Kerala as "areas of almost continuous rural settlement with many markets and administrative centres." (1977.p57) This description of Kerala is not very different from what I am arguing here, except that Lipton characterizes the settlements as rural, while I see them as desakota settlements or region. In another context in the same book Lipton describes the densely populated regions of Kerala as "big villages or quasi-urban settlements" (Ibid p363 n32) This description has an implicit recognition of the desakota character of the settlements or region.

All this may suggest that it may be even appropriate to discard the conceptual baggage of urban and rural. But as discussed in chapter one, the problem lies in the dichotomy of urban and rural, and the need to flex it. In this context, desakota becomes a meaningful and corrective injection to the urban-rural conceptual baggage. The desakota concept articulates the mix of urban and rural characteristics, and presents desakota as a region with its own dynamics and not as a peri-urban region or a rurbanization phenomenon. This makes sense in the Kerala context. While Kerala's spatial order can be described in specifics, of a dispersed settlement with pockets of bazaars etc, the use of desakota as a conceptual hook or frame has advantages. It makes possible cross cultural comparisons and whether the similarities in different cultural contexts are a manifestation of a common factor at deeper levels. McGee's (1987, 1989 and 1990a) work on desakota seeks to bring about such understanding. This study seeks to contribute to this understanding by examining the Kerala context. This is not to suggest that the building up of the desakota hypothesis is a statement of an Asian coherence. The desakota hypothesis is seeking to theorize about an Asian experience in spatial ordering taking into account the ecological, cultural, economic and historical context, which includes the manner of incorporation and functioning within a global economy. If the fragments in the Asian scene have a commonalty, it needs to be explored. It makes sense to examine the recurring pattern, and not just stack them with fetish hostility to avoid being branded 'totalizing' with the conventional ambitions of social sciences. This is not to suggest that the Asian society is a coherent system with its own superordinate logic.

The aim of this chapter was to present data that emphasized the settlement pattern and the internal, independent dynamics of a desakota region as an important characteristic of desakota. McGee's early writings (1987 p4-5; 1989 p94) on desakota emphasized the internal dynamics as important. His more recent writing (1991a) which incorporates mega-urban regions as part of the desakota phenomenon, dilutes the issue of internal dynamics. The

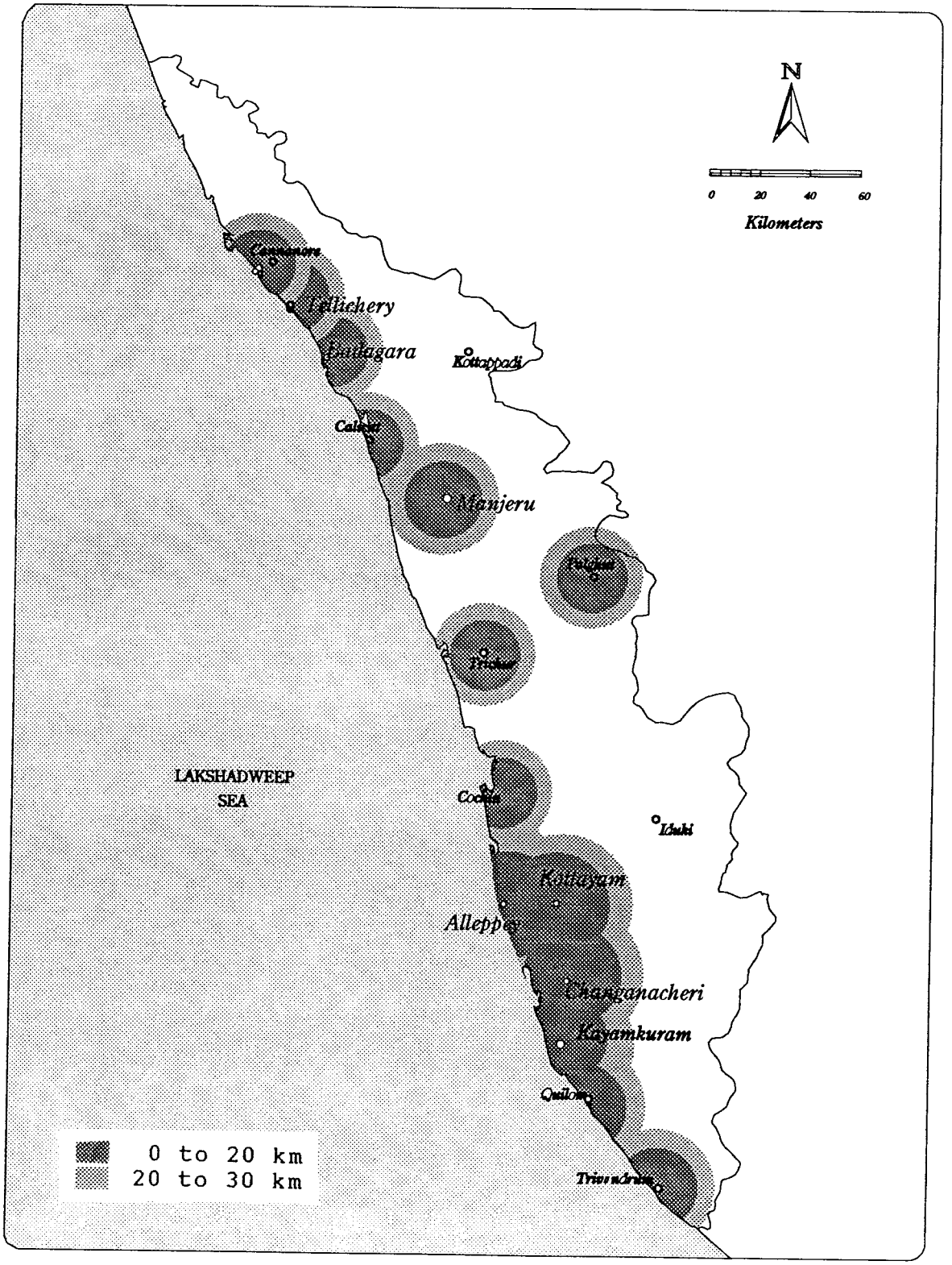
Kerala specifics or phenomenon becomes a sub-model. The importance of desakota being not a dependent variable of a central urban system is less emphatic in McGee's recent writings. (Ibid p15-17) This issue was raised in chapter one. It is reiterated here in the contextual thickening of data. Kerala desakota brings up front the need to keep in perspective the internal dynamics of desakota and the non-subordination and non-dependence of desakota to an urban system.

To briefly return to our discussion of the contemporary urban system in Kerala.The northern or Cannanore-Kozhikode urban network, with its extension to Manjeri, neatly falls into what was the Malabar district of the Madras Presidency. The other southern network from Trichur to Trivandrum falls into the lowlands - midlands of what was the two princely states of Cochin and Travancore. It was argued in the earlier chapters that many of the policies and social changes that emerged in Travancore by a process of osmosis was extended to Cochin. Travancore and Cochin thus formed a spatial functional unit. Some of the features we have discussed so far as conditioning the presence of desakota were relatively more present in the lowland - midland region of these two states. The urban network, with relatively sparse small towns, suggesting the greater presence of desakota in the region, thus makes sense.

Chattopadhyay (1988) has mapped out the zone of interaction, of what in the Indian censuses is termed Class I towns, (population of 100,000 and above), and Class II towns, (population between 50,000 and 99,999). This map is reproduced as Map 4.02. A radius of 20 and 30 kilometres is depicted by Chattopadhyay. Such distances are easily commutable for any transaction, and the commuter can return to base the same day. We referred just now to Kerala desakota having its own internal dynamics and is not a kind of peri-urban region, dependent on an urban core as a stimulus for its economic activities. The zones of interaction given in Map 4.02 support this observation.

Map 4.02

Interaction Zones Around Urban Centres in Kerala



Source: Chattopadhyay 1988, p13.

This makes even more sense when we later document the regional specialization and/or concentration of some industries. Chapters six to nine will deal with such concentration by quantitative analysis and case studies. Briefly, these chapters will demonstrate that beedi manufacture is concentrated in Cannanore district, coir in Alleppey district, cashew processing and shrimp processing in Quilon district, cotton textiles in Cannanore and Trivandrum districts, brick and tiles in Cochin and Kozhikode districts, jewellery in Trichur district etc. Comparative advantage in raw materials and economies of regional specialization may have influenced region specific industries. This again is in the desakota regions. Urban centres function only as transport outlets and centres for a network of traders and forced commerce, especially if the final product is for export or the larger Indian market.

Kerala urban system as a variant from the Indian norm, and the significance of minimal urban-rural disparities.

A repeated theme in studies of Kerala urbanization and/or systems, which we will review in detail in the next chapter, is its significant variation from the pattern of urbanization elsewhere in India. (Sankaranarayanan 1977, Mohan 1983, Chattopadyay 1988, Acharya 1988). The differences may be summed as follows:

1. Historical evolution of the urban pattern in Kerala is different from the rest of India.
2. Urban hierarchy is less pronounced in Kerala.
3. Towns are more spread out and evenly distributed within Kerala than in the rest of India, in spite of the two clusters around Cannanore and Trichur.
4. Economic base of the urban areas in Kerala have differences from those in most parts of India.
5. The absence of a sharp break in economic structure when one moves from urban to rural areas.
6. The ratio of urban to total density in Kerala is less than in other areas of India.
7. Relative to the other regions of India, minimal urban-rural disparities.
8. Intra-urban centres distinctions are minimal in Kerala.

The previous two sections in this chapter have presented a few of the factors that make intelligible some of these variant features. Overall it may be argued that the presence of desakota regions play an important role in the Kerala urban system being different from the

rest of India. Some of the features summed up above are also symptomatic of the presence of desakota. Minimal urban-rural disparities is an expression of the rural regions being in effect desakota regions. We saw in the case of fertility decline, the differences between urban and rural crude birth rates were narrow in Kerala. This was in contrast to the other states in India. Sunny's study of consumer behaviour in Kerala during the period 1966 to 1983, shows very narrow differences in consumer expenditure patterns between urban and rural residents. This once again is in contrast to the rest of India. [23]

Minimal urban-rural disparities that Kerala is noted for, is the access to social infrastructure, particularly health and educational services. The previous chapters explained, in part, the political economy that led to educational and health policies ensuring a reasonably equitable access to both urban and rural residents. More than 97 percent of residents in Kerala have a primary and middle school within two kilometres and a high school within five kilometres. In providing such access Kerala ranks number one among the states in India. (Table 4.05, columns 7 and 9) Physical proximity does not always ensure social access. But literacy and school enrollment rates suggest that there is reasonable social access as well. In health facilities, 90 percent of the residents have a dispensary within two kilometres, and 78 percent a hospital within five kilometres. Kerala once again ranks

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23. I am indebted to K.P.Sunny for this information. This was revealed in his research on 'Consumer Behaviour in Kerala, 1966-1983' for the M.Phil dissertation Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. See Appendix 4.03 for details.

TABLE 4.05

India : Basic Amenities in Villages classified by States

PERCENTAGE OF VILLAGES HAVING A PARTICULAR AMENITY LOCATED WITHIN A SPECIFIED DISTANCE BY STATES

Sr No	State	Number of Villages for Which Data Were Processed	Railway Station (within 5 km)	Metalled Road (within 2 km)	Bus Stop (within 2 km)	Post Office (within 2 km	Primary or Jr Basic School (within 2 km)	Middle School (within 2 km)	High/Higher Secondary School (within 5 km)	Dispensary (within 2 km)	Health Centre (within 2 km)	Hospital (within 5 km)	Fertiliser Depot (within 5 km)
(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
(1)	Andhra Pradesh	25756	14.85 (10)	61.39 (6)	48.85 (7)	68.75 (3)	90.02 (15)	39.36 (15)	54.38 (12)	24.11 (16)	7.17 (17)	31.56 (11)	23.75 (19)
(2)	Assam	23082	27.61 (2)	32.94 (16)	47.70 (9)	50.91 (13)	93.70 (9)	53.90 (6)	70.42 (5)	25.90 (11)	15.25 (8)	53.82 (2)	29.66 (18)
(3)	Bihar	62404	23.03 (7)	43.21 (12)	34.29 (16)	57.22 (10)	92.02 (11)	55.86 (5)	62.57 (7)	25.32 (12)	31.04 (2)	45.93 (6)	32.49 (15)
(4)	Gujarat	18158	27.46 (3)	58.10 (9)	71.18 (3)	63.41 (8)	95.72 (6)	25.71 (20)	20.21 (22)	26.96 (9)	7.54 (16)	20.12 (17)	40.86 (13)
(5)	Haryana	6681	25.62 (5)	92.68 (3)	67.26 (5)	66.35 (4)	98.88 (3)	56.92 (3)	79.43 (4)	34.22 (6)	17.02 (5)	31.26 (12)	59.68 (7)
(6)	Himachal Pradesh	16275	6.38 (16)	28.11 (19)	45.59 (11)	52.05 (11)	83.73 (19)	44.57 (12)	55.07 (10)	27.19 (8)	6.68 (19)	14.63 (20)	64.73 (5)
(7)	Jammu and Kashmir	6487	4.23 (17)	59.51 (7)	48.00 (8)	47.21 (15)	90.29 (13)	53.00 (7)	61.39 (8)	40.32 (4)	15.28 (7)	40.93 (7)	80.43 (2)
(8)	Karnataka	27006	13.85 (11)	72.23 (5)	59.17 (6)	64.05 (5)	94.86 (8)	52.99 (8)	51.59 (13)	26.22 (10)	10.54 (12)	51.78 (3)	53.26 (9)
(9)	Kerala	974	23.00 (8)	98.25 (1)	97.95 (1)	99.69 (1)	99.69 (1)	98.56 (1)	96.71 (1)	90.56 (1)	46.71 (1)	78.43 (1)	93.23 (1)
(10)	Madhya Pradesh	70525	9.69 (14)	27.20 (20)	26.69 (17)	30.14 (20)	85.76 (18)	30.42 (18)	27.31 (18)	15.04 (20)	5.64 (21)	20.56 (15)	31.51 (16)
(11)	Maharashtra	35746	12.82 (13)	44.38 (11)	46.40 (10)	46.20 (17)	93.23 (10)	38.62 (16)	31.76 (17)	22.31 (18)	7.08 (18)	24.08 (13)	36.31 (14)
(12)	Manipur	2068	0.05 (21)	34.72 (15)	31.86 (15)	34.29 (19)	87.77 (17)	46.86 (11)	39.89 (15)	19.58 (19)	11.20 (10)	11.74 (21)	19.20 (20)
(13)	Meghalaya	4599	0.28 (20)	22.16 (22)	19.94 (21)	18.57 (22)	83.63 (20)	24.68 (21)	23.85 (20)	8.66 (22)	5.81 (20)	9.11 (22)	7.59 (21)
(14)	Nagaland	963	2.49 (18)	26.27 (21)	17.34 (22)	20.25 (21)	98.24 (4)	39.36 (22)	21.40 (21)	36.45 (5)	8.30 (13)	16.72 (19)	6.85 (22)
(15)	Orissa	41656	8.65 (15)	29.14 (18)	26.45 (18)	50.73 (14)	88.29 (16)	49.40 (10)	54.63 (11)	13.92 (21)	7.80 (15)	23.57 (14)	47.85 (11)
(16)	Punjab	12162	33.22 (1)	94.66 (2)	70.52 (4)	64.50 (7)	98.96 (2)	65.67 (2)	84.07 (2)	41.31 (3)	18.58 (3)	50.30 (4)	66.61 (3)
(17)	Rajasthan	32430	13.59 (12)	31.40 (17)	41.32 (13)	46.25 (16)	81.33 (22)	33.01 (17)	34.99 (16)	23.83 (17)	5.60 (22)	31.79 (10)	30.18 (17)
(18)	Sikkim	215	—	42.79 (13)	26.06 (19)	44.65 (18)	90.24 (14)	30.00 (19)	25.70 (19)	29.44 (7)	16.82 (6)	17.76 (18)	60.93 (6)
(19)	Tamil Nadu	14875	22.43 (9)	78.69 (4)	72.29 (2)	75.94 (2)	95.09 (7)	56.61 (4)	66.87 (6)	24.16 (15)	7.90 (14)	39.23 (8)	65.22 (4)
(20)	Tripura	863	2.20 (19)	39.52 (14)	26.08 (20)	51.56 (12)	82.74 (21)	39.63 (14)	41.13 (14)	24.45 (4)	11.93 (9)	20.40 (16)	51.33 (10)
(21)	Uttar Pradesh	112547	25.39 (6)	46.87 (10)	31.26 (16)	57.80 (9)	90.79 (12)	41.40 (13)	58.32 (9)	24.52 (13)	10.70 (11)	46.51 (5)	58.51 (5)
(22)	West Bengal	38227	25.63 (4)	57.91 (8)	44.79 (12)	64.72 (6)	96.60 (5)	50.37 (9)	79.93 (3)	41.69 (2)	17.42 (4)	36.09 (9)	47.66 (12)
	All India	558519	18.34	45.76	40.26	53.24	90.12	43.76	20.92	24.59	11.98	35.48	43.89

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Sr No	State	Number of Villages for Which Data Were Processed	Seeds Store (within 5 km)	Agri Pump Repair (within 5 km)	Storage and Warehousing (within 5 km)	Veterinary Dispensary (within 5 km)	Credit Co-operative (within 5 km)	Bank (within 5 km)	Daily Market (within 2 km)	Hat (within 2 km)	P P Shop for Grocery (within 2 km)	Electricity	Drinking Water within Village
(0)	(1)	(2)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)	(21)	(22)	(23)	(24)
(1)	Andhra Pradesh	25756	18.70 (19)	15.72 (13)	23.68 (10)	49.89 (9)	62.88 (12)	36.70 (10)	10.02 (16)	19.11 (10)	22.82 (16)	51.13 (7)	91.67 (13)
(2)	Assam	23082	26.42 (17)	12.73 (16)	13.98 (15)	45.16 (13)	45.05 (16)	29.04 (16)	32.19 (2)	40.43 (3)	60.32 (3)	9.15 (21)	95.34 (6)
(3)	Bihar	62404	29.28 (15)	19.65 (11)	20.47 (11)	40.67 (15)	67.71 (11)	35.52 (12)	17.16 (9)	37.98 (6)	49.11 (5)	17.41 (17)	92.39 (11)
(4)	Gujarat	18158	35.63 (10)	21.34 (9)	25.70 (9)	31.71 (18)	74.71 (6)	50.87 (5)	20.76 (5)	13.45 (18)	51.67 (4)	37.42 (10)	93.09 (10)
(5)	Haryana	6681	45.83 (7)	31.02 (5)	19.00 (12)	71.58 (3)	84.26 (3)	89.41 (2)	9.08 (18)	—	41.25 (7)	99.78 (1)	9.08 (2)
(6)	Himachal Pradesh	16275	51.36 (6)	31.67 (4)	6.69 (19)	47.17 (11)	69.36 (10)	36.40 (11)	14.36 (10)	18.05 (12)	26.43 (14)	50.78 (8)	68.89 (21)
(7)	Jammu and Kashmir	6487	64.94 (1)	49.33 (2)	35.61 (2)	51.62 (6)	73.98 (7)	44.47 (8)	9.33 (17)	—	20.60 (17)	42.92 (9)	•
(8)	Karnataka	27006	35.39 (11)	16.53 (12)	33.88 (4)	53.47 (4)	69.90 (8)	47.54 (7)	8.34 (20)	15.22 (15)	29.66 (12)	66.45 (5)	92.37 (12)
(9)	Kerala	974	62.94 (2)	64.59 (1)	33.68 (5)	81.52 (1)	95.90 (1)	96.09 (1)	56.06 (1)	51.85 (1)	98.77 (1)	96.92 (3)	96.22 (5)
(10)	Madhya Pradesh	70525	23.18 (18)	8.72 (18)	10.24 (16)	37.41 (16)	34.31 (18)	33.56 (14)	8.94 (19)	17.17 (13)	19.24 (18)	20.14 (14)	94.98 (8)
(11)	Maharashtra	35746	37.75 (9)	14.77 (14)	29.96 (6)	45.54 (12)	79.78 (5)	34.97 (13)	7.44 (22)	19.08 (11)	66.67 (2)	53.56 (6)	96.45 (4)
(12)	Manipur	2068	15.00 (20)	5.95 (19)	8.23 (17)	36.82 (17)	22.21 (20)	16.03 (19)	17.78 (7)	22.80 (8)	11.83 (21)	9.38 (20)	83.08 (18)
(13)	Meghalaya	4599	8.02 (21)	2.88 (22)	4.58 (21)	17.92 (21)	19.55 (21)	7.59 (21)	11.91 (14)	24.11 (7)	37.68 (8)	4.67 (22)	87.62 (16)
(14)	Nagaland	963	6.54 (22)	5.19 (21)	66.45 (1)	23.88 (20)	7.17 (22)	6.85 (22)	7.68 (21)	6.44 (19)	10.17 (22)	27.83 (12)	79.03 (19)
(15)	Orissa	41656	30.94 (14)	5.86 (20)	8.09 (18)	50.43 (8)	58.08 (14)	24.24 (18)	10.72 (15)	19.84 (9)	16.88 (20)	18.48 (16)	86.26 (17)
(16)	Punjab	12162	35.11 (12)	46.10 (3)	34.56 (3)	77.80 (2)	88.94 (2)	63.32 (3)	13.00 (13)	—	37.01 (10)	98.18 (2)	99.39 (1)
(17)	Rajasthan	32430	28.66 (16)	11.27 (17)	16.24 (14)	17.20 (22)	54.93 (15)	27.51 (17)	13.98 (11)	15.99 (14)	24.00 (15)	18.78 (15)	96.76 (3)
(18)	Sikkim	215	59.35 (3)	23.01 (8)	3.28 (22)	29.11 (19)	32.63 (19)	14.63 (20)	17.68 (8)	13.49 (17)	18.76 (19)	20.93 (13)	75.34 (20)
(19)	Tamil Nadu	14875	42.30 (8)	29.47 (6)	26.46 (8)	50.58 (7)	81.86 (4)	44.09 (9)	13.43 (12)	15.15 (16)	26.69 (13)	94.53 (4)	95.12 (7)
(20)	Tripura	863	57.81 (4)	13.20 (15)	5.91 (20)	48.31 (10)	43.80 (17)	29.90 (15)	25.14 (3)	51.68 (2)	48.78 (6)	14.60 (19)	90.95 (14)
(21)	Uttar Pradesh	112547	55.64 (5)	26.14 (7)	27.67 (7)	53.35 (5)	61.19 (13)	48.96 (6)	18.94 (6)	38.14 (5)	35.11 (11)	30.91 (11)	94.55 (9)
(22)	West Bengal	38227	33.83 (13)	20.85 (10)	18.31 (13)	44.69 (14)	69.69 (9)	50.89 (4)	21.81 (4)	39.19 (4)	37.61 (9)	16.04 (18)	89.40 (5)
	All India	558519	40.33	18.76	20.72	45.19	60.75	39.88	14.81	26.34	35.05	33.36	92.61

Source:
Special Statistics, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol XX No 14, April 6th 1985, p615-616.

number one among the among the states in India. (Table 4.05. Columns 10 and 12). Utilization of health facilities have also been high in Kerala.[24] There are a number other institutional services in Kerala that are within easy reach of most residents, Kerala ranking number one among the Indian states in such access. (See Table 4.05)

In part a high density population generates such provision of services and also provides economies of scale. In Kerala this was augmented by a political economy that prioritized equitable or egalitarian distribution of services. This does not mean that urban bias is absent in Kerala. Relative to other states, and most parts of the developing world, urban bias may be less in Kerala, but it is not absent. Urban bias was defined by Lipton in terms of the norms of efficiency and equity. (1977. p56) It is not necessary to discuss in detail the concept of urban bias for purposes of this study. But in the context of ease of access to many services to the vast majority of Kerala residents, there is a need to examine whether this eliminates or reduces urban bias.

It may be argued that urban bias is not simply a matter of discrimination of where services and institutions are physically located. It is also built into the very organizational structure of education, health services, etc. Each of these are organized hierarchically with special institutions at the top being in urban locations. This is observable in Kerala. Institutions of higher education, hospitals with specialized expertize and equipment are in or near urban locations. In terms of physical location and built environment there is a congregation of these institutions. For example in Trivandrum such a congregation can be observed. But as presented earlier such congregation of service institutions, bazaars and/or commercial centres

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24. Krishnan's data of 1968 shows that the number treated in hospitals as percentage of total population was 115 percent in Kerala. The next highest percentage among the Indian states was Rajasthan at 53 percent. (1976.p1217) Nag's comparative studies of Kerala and West Bengal in terms of accessibility of health services; mortality rates; fertility differentials etc also emphasize the high utilization of health services in Kerala. (Nag 1983, 1984 and 1989)

are pockets in a whole region of continuous settlement. The congregation of services does not appear as the infrastructure of an residential enclave, that can be termed urban and is distinct geographically and socially from those outside it.

The congregation of services is at transport nodes, or more likely transport systems developed to bring people to these centres. Within the five kilometres of schools and hospitals, or more in the case of specialized institutions, those in close proximity are at an advantage. But those in close proximity are not the socially advantaged or an elitist neighbourhood. Indeed it is difficult to locate prestigious or elitist urban neighbourhoods in Kerala, such as the "Golf Links" of New Delhi,[25] Adayar of Madras, or Cinnamon Gardens of Colombo. In this context, urban bias though present, is less of a "conspiracy" of the urban elite.

Minimal urban-rural disparities and the relative ease of physical access to services in both urban and rural areas, led us to examine urban bias in Kerala. It is not of central importance in this study. What is important is to recognize that collective consumption, as defined and discussed in chapter one, is not an urban privilege in Kerala. This has consequences for the location of industrial activity. The spatial spread of service institutions also increases the tertiary sector in the non-urban areas. Non-agricultural activity in non-urban areasis partly a consequence of the spread and density of the service sector. Rural population densities also increase the service sector in the rural areas. Service caste continuities have also contributed in some measure to the tertiary sector in the non-urban areas. We shall examine these in chapter seven.

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25. In a sense the whole of New Delhi is the residential enclave of the socially privileged or advantaged. It is often said in India that you need a passport to get into New Delhi, because it so different from the rest of India and looks so "foreign". But within New Delhi, (ignoring areas of bureaucrats official residences or civil lines), among the privatized residential areas, "Golf Links" may be termed a prestigious enclave.

Transport, communications and the spatial order.

Kerala we noted in chapter two has an elongated shape. The topography further concentrates its population along the coast in the lowlands and midlands, with a sparsely populated highlands. Historically the space of the lowlands and midlands was shrunk by a mobility provided by the sea and inland waterways. A number of ports and open roadsteads made possible coastal travel and transport. In addition, it was possible at some places on the Kerala coast to find moorings in areas of calm waters due to the formation of mud banks. (Jean Deloche 1983. p443) [26]

Inland waterways were both by coastal lakes, lagoons and backwaters, parallel to the sea, as well as vertical to the sea by the 42 rivers that flowed from the Western Ghats through Kerala to the Arabian Sea. Ward and Conner in their survey of Travancore and Cochin in 1815 record the distances that the rivers were being navigated. (Ward and Conner 1863 p27) Given the topography and the size of the rivers, the distances were not great. But given the concentration of the population in lowlands and midlands the inland waterways and coastal shipping served to collapse the space of this region.

> In the West lies more disparate and compartmentalized strip of land. Here the backwaters of Kerala have served to bring to points near the river mouth the traffic and trade of the hinterland. (Jean Deloche 1983. p439)

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26. "I should also mention a curious phenomenon, well known to old sailors. At certain places on the Kerala coast it is possible to find moorings in areas of calm water which depend upon the formation of mud banks. It has been observed that marine deposits of fine sized particles of green and black mud have been found near certain ports between Pantalayini and Quilon, (which is about 300 kilometres distance from each other).....Many of the ancient settlements owe their prominence partly to this phenomenon which allows vessels to throw their anchors safely and of discharging cargo even at the height of the monsoon...In 1775-76, Stavorinus, talking of the mud banks at the mouth of the river at Koduganallur (Cranganore), north of Cochin, and at Porcad, stated that vessels could moor there in 20 feet of water, without anchor or cables, perfectly secure, during the southwest monsoon". (Deloche 1983. p443)

And even though the rivers were not big, the indigenous technological culture associated with waterways had produced crafts that could navigate the small shallow rivers. Pearson citing a 16th century Portuguese source makes these observations:

> The other route, by sea to Gujarat, ...was navigated in small, light, oared craft called *paroes*, which could escape up the numerous rivers of the west coast if they were seen by the Portuguese. The Portuguese ships were usually too large to follow them,.....These traders in fact in the 1520s felt themselves so secure that they would sail up north to Gujarat and on the way take mocking pot shots at the Portuguese coastal forts. They even sailed tantalizingly close to the cumbersome warships of the dreaded Vasco da Gama, when he was back in India as viceroy in 1524, keeping just out of range and showing complete contempt for his armada. Da Gama, who had a tendency to choler at any time, and was certainly more used to massacring Malabaris than being laughed at by them "was scandalized at such disrespect". (Pearson 1981. p30-31)[27]

The inland waterways and the coastal sea and the numerous types of crafts that plied them continued to be used in Kerala even up to contemporary times. A 20th century British administrator observes, after referring to the usefulness of the anchorage provided by the mud banks during the monsoons:

> Of equal importance and significance was the vast backwater system .....This wonderful area of navigable waters, with minor streams and canals stretching inland like tentacles from the main body, permitted and promoted the use of every kind of native craft, from the toy-like canoe with its tiny mast and its sail no larger than a tea cloth, to the ocean going 'pattimas' with masts raking forward, their crafty looking lines, and picturesque crews in their red turbans. Next in order below the 'pattimas' came the transport lighters, varying in size from about thirty to one hundred tons burden. (Bristow 1959. p51-52)

In chapter eight we will have occasion to see the role of the inland waterways and native crafts in the space economy of the coir industry. Historical geography of the region once again comes into play, providing a water transport system and a mobility that collapses

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27. There were a category of naval marines or naval guerrillas on the Malabar coast. Most of them were Muslims, though Nayar warriors were known to have joined them on board in times of naval warfare. The more notable of these naval guerrillas, or corsairs (pirates) as the Portuguese chose to call them,were Kunjalis who served the Zamorin of Kozhikode. (Pearson 1981, Nambiar 1963).

the space. This may have facilitated the dispersed settlement pattern that was described earlier. A dispersed settlement pattern needed more means of access.

The water transport system was augmented in the latter half of the 19th century by road and rail transport. These were first introduced in Malabar district. Indeed in the first half of the 19th century the British extended the canal system. This coincided with the Mopalah uprisings and is interpreted as done to facilitate troop movements. (Ibrahim 1978. p36) With these extensions, together with those made in Travancore, there was a continuous inland waterway system from Cannanore in the north to Trivandrum in the south. The first railway line, laid between Beypore and Tirur, was in 1861. (Ibid p37) Later it was extended south to Shoranur and then eastwards eventually to link up to Madras via Coimbatore, in Tamilnadu,(then Madras Presidency). In the north it was extended to Kozhikode, Cannanore and eventually to Mangalore in South Canara district. Though the initial railways may have had a partial objective of facilitating troop movements, as they developed they ultimately served the movement of plantation produce and to draw the west coast districts, (Malabar and South Canara), of the Madras Presidency within the orbit and domain of Madras. Cochin and Travancore developed railways along the coast to link up with Shoranur. There was link up of Quilon eastwards also through the Shencottah Pass to Tirunelveli in Tamilnadu,(then Madras Presidency). The two princely states were also drawn into the Madras domain. This supports the earlier argument why none of the Malabar coast cities emerged as a big metropolis.[28]

Roads suitable for wheeled traffic were virtually non-existent in Kerala until the latter half of the 19th century. Most the roads until this time were those built by Tippu Sultan for military purposes.(Ibid 35-36) The presence of waterways in the lowlands and the difficult terrain for bullock carts in the higher regions may have constrained the development of roads. Any land transportation of cargo that could not be handled manually may have been done

28. Lewandowski's (1980) work on Kerala migrants in Madras city, suggests the centre-periphery character of Madras and the southwest India during the British raj.

with the aid of pack-bulls. The latter half of the 19th century saw the growth of roads, mainly to link the areas of plantation agriculture to the ports and railway. Travancore led in the building of roads. From a mere 52 miles in 1862, it rose 900 by 1880 and 3000 in 1900. (Ibid p39) Similar trends obtained in Cochin and Malabar.

With the advent of motorized public and private transport by the end of the first quarter of the 20th century, there was pressure for more roads and road transport. During the last four to five decades road transport has been the most heavily used system, followed by railways and then waterways. Inland waterways systems however continue to be used, and are still important in some districts like Alleppey and Kottayam. (Tharmamangalam 1981. p17)

The thrust to have social infrastructure accessible to most residents of Kerala, and the transport needs of the densely population rural regions, has led Kerala to have a high road density in India. In 1961, except for a few pockets in the highlands, all residents of Kerala had road accessibility within 0 to 8 miles of their residence. (See Appendix 4.04) By 1977, 98 percent of Kerala residents had a bus stop and/or a metaled road within two kilometres of their residence. Kerala ranked number one in the provision of such services in India. (See column 4 and 5 in Table 4.05) By the 1980s Kerala had the highest road density among the States in India at 2.74 km of road length per square kilometre. The next were way below, with Tamilnadu at 1.0 km and Punjab at 0.92 km of road length per square kilometre. Access to railway was less, only 23 percent of the population were within five kilometres of a railway station. (See column 3 of Table 4.05 and Appendix 4.05) Overall roads and railways have brought about increased mobility and heightened the space collapse already present in Kerala with the inland waterways. This has been further intensified during the last few decades by the increase in the number of motor vehicles, particularly by the entry of two and three wheeler motorized transport. (See Table 4.06)

TABLE 4.06

Registered motor Vehicles in Kerala

Numbers	1960		1970		1982	
Percent	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%
Goods Vehicles						
Trucks & Lorries	5476	22.4	13162	15.3	25626	11.6
Three Wheelers	Not	Known	Not	Known	2038	0.9
Passenger Vehicles						
Buses	3511	14.3	6563	7.6	11030	5.0
Cars	11611	47.4	33294	38.6	60412	27.4
Taxi Cabs	1485	6.1	8848	10.3	21569	9.8
Two Wheelers	2064	8.4	15117	17.5	70498	31.9
Auto Rickshaws	100	0.4	1062	1.2	12727	5.8
Jeeps	Not Known		4828	5.6	9030	4.1
Others	223	0.9	3360	3.9	7803	3.5
TOTAL	24470	100.0	86234	100.0	220733	100.0

Inter-period increase	1960-1970 Percent	1970-1982 Percent	1960-1982 Percent
Goods Vehicles			
Trucks & Vehicles	140.4	94.7	368.0
Passenger Vehicles			
Buses	86.9	68.1	214.2
Cars	186.7	81.5	420.3
Taxi cabs	495.8	143.8	1352.5
Two Wheelers	632.4	366.3	3315.6
Auto Rickshaws	962.0	1098.4	12627.0
Others	1406.7	132.2	3399.1
TOTAL	252.4	156.0	802.1

Sources:
Government of India 1969. Table 63. p246, for 1960 data.
Government of Kerala 1984. p105, for 1970 data.
Government of Kerala 1984. p33 and p105 for 1982 data.

McGee observes in formulating the desakota hypothesis.

> The availability of relatively cheap transport such as two stroke motorbikes, buses and trucks has facilitated relatively quick movement over longer distances than could be covered previously. (McGee 1991a p17)

In India affordable transport other than public transport were the use of two wheelers as personal or owned vehicles and three wheeler taxis called auto-rickshaws. Table 4.06 demonstrates the growth in the use of such motorized transport in Kerala. These trends are in the direction of time-space collapse in Kerala. But one has to be cautious in stressing the time

element. The size of roads and the time taken for travel by public transport or two and three wheelers have to be kept in mind. Equally relevant is the pace of life, and cost element of time. The latter is not high, given the availability of labour. There is thus no rush to save time.

The presentation of the spatial order in Kerala in this chapter, together with the previous chapters two and three, completes a descriptive analysis of the back-drop or socio-spatial milieu of Kerala. In chapter one it was argued that the desakota hypothesis as put forward by McGee was relevant to understanding the spatial order of Kerala, particularly the urban-rural fusion. In this and in the previous chapter this was raised whenever it was appropriate to do so. We are now in a position to examine within this socio-spatial milieu or labyrinth, the hard core economic character of desakota, the mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activity. But before we do so it is necessary to review the existing literature on Kerala urbanization. It is particularly necessary to examine whether these studies too recognize an urban-rural fusion and if so what analytical and theoretical perspectives have been taken in any effort to make it intelligible. This is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

KERALA URBANIZATION: A LITERATURE REVIEW

There are reasons why it is necessary to review the literature on Kerala urbanization. First, as stated, to examine if and how the urban-rural fusion observable in Kerala is dealt with in the literature. Second, to demonstrate some of the inadequacies of the conceptual interpretation of Kerala urbanization. Third to show how the desakota concept helps to demystify what is frequently portrayed in Indian urban studies as the aberrant urbanization pattern of Kerala in the national context.

This review is presented in three parts. First a review of the literature on urbanization trends at the national level that have some observations on Kerala urbanization. Second, specific studies of urbanization in Kerala, as well as comparative studies of Kerala urbanization with another region or state in India. Third, an overview of studies in urban anthropology, urban history and regional geography in the Indian context and their usefulness for examining desakota in Kerala.

Kerala in the urbanization trends in India

There has been a growing literature on urbanization in India during the last three decades. Not all of them are relevant for this study. This review is limited to those where Kerala figures in the regional trends or is referred to for some specific feature. This task is made easy because few studies of national urbanization trends have specific, or even a passing, comparison, comments or analysis of Kerala urbanization. This is largely due to Kerala

urbanization being seen as a marked variant from the national and other regional trends. This makes it difficult to fit Kerala within national and/or regional trends, and so it is left out even in the influential work of Rakash Mohan on Indian urbanization. We shall examine this when we review Mohan's work.

There is no reference to Kerala, as depicting or part of any regional trend, or for that matter in any context, in the frequently cited studies of Indian urbanization of Sovani (1966), Fox (1970a), Bose (1973. 1975), or Noble and Dutt (1977). The papers on Indian urbanization by Deshpande and Bhat in the volume edited by Ronald Jones (1975); and by Singh and Singh in the volume edited by Michael Conzen (1986) also have no reference to Kerala. These two publications are a collection of country studies of urbanization. Crook and Dyson's (1982) brief analysis of urbanization in India, based on the 1981 Census has no reference to Kerala. It may be noted that all Kerala cities fall outside the twenty largest cities in India compiled by Crook and Dyson. (Ibid. p153) The recent two volumes of studies on urbanization in Asia edited by Costa, Dutt, Ma and Noble (1988 and 1989) have a number of articles on Indian urbanization, but none of them have any reference to Kerala.

The collection of urban studies edited by Turner (1962) includes a paper by Nath (p141-153) titled "The Village and the Community". This study examines the village in India as a settlement unit, social unit and as a community. Kerala, along with parts of Himachal Pradesh, is seen as an extreme departure from the tight nucleated village settlement type. Nath's work was referred to in detail in the last chapter. There is also a passing reference to Kerala in a paper on city-hinterland relationships by Ellefsen (p94-115) in the Turner volume. None of the cities in the Ellefsen study are from Kerala, but there is reference to Kerala as an exception to the decline in literacy rates in populations on a city hinterland continuum in India. (p108)

It is only in the work of Rakesh Mohan and Pant (1982), Rakesh Mohan (1983, 1985), Buch (1983) Manzoor Alam and Reddy (1987), Chakraborty (1987, 1990) and Amitabh Kundu (1987) that there is some reference to Kerala urban patterns and trends.

Kundu found Kerala, along with Punjab, had a high concentration of slow growing and stagnating towns together with fast growing towns in close proximity, suggesting some towns growing at the cost of others.(1987.p169) He also observes in Kerala a decline in the number of towns in the 1970s and an increase in the 1980s, some of them clustering near Trichur, Ernakulam and Cannanore. (Ibid.p170-171) He also refers to Kerala, Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh, together with Bihar and West Bengal as having large villages with more than 5000 population. (Ibid, p176) This confirms the observations of Nath (1962), referred to in the last chapter, on the regional variations in the size of settlements. This as shown in the last chapter has implications for urbanization, because one of the criteria for a settlement to be deemed urban is a population of 5000 or more.

Chakraborty (1987) found that the decline of household industries in urban areas in the 1960s in all Indian states, reversed in the 1980s, except in Kerala and Orissa. (1987.p137) As we will note in the next chapter, non-factory non-household or small scale rural industries are a dominant feature of Kerala and explain the trend observed by Chakraborty. Chakraborty was also the only person so far to draw attention, though only in passing, to the gender bias in the definition of urban in India, having worked against Kerala which has a relatively a high incidence of females in the workforce.(1990. p305) This issue was discussed in the last chapter.

Alam and Reddy (1987) classify the urban systems of the Indian states into three types, the primate city distribution, the log-normal city distribution and the decentralized or multi-nucleated distribution. Kerala falls into the last category along with Madhya Pradesh, Bihar,

Orissa and Punjab. (1987.p51) This is the absence of primacy in Kerala and was discussed at length in the last chapter.

Buch (1983) in an article titled "Emerging Regional Patterns" in the journal *Urban India*[1] has only this observation to make on Kerala:

> Kerala is a class by itself. Its topography concentrates its population along the coast. The main focal points of development are Cochin, Trivandrum, Calicut and Quilon. This is precisely what the configuration of the state dictates. There is no particular lesson to be drawn from this, except that the entire Konkan coast would present a similar picture. (1983. p9)[2]

An informed analysis of urbanization in India in terms of census demographic material has been in the work of Rakesh Mohan (1983, 1985) and Rakesh Mohan and Pant (1982). This included an attempt to map out the State-wise pattern of urban growth. (Mohan and Pant. 1982 p1579-1581) In their effort to deal with state trends, they found the Kerala urban features problematic. This led them to leave Kerala out of their analysis. We had occasion to refer to this earlier in this study. But since their reasons for excluding Kerala are illuminating and also of central importance in this literature review it needs to be quoted in full.

> Kerala poses particular problems in the definition of urban areas. Its overall population density was about 550 people per sq km in 1971, the rural density itself being about 480. Further about 80 percent of the rural population lived in villages of over 10,000 population and another 15 percent in villages in the range of 5,000 to 10,000 population. Hence almost all the settlements would qualify for classification as urban settlements were it not for the additional requirement of 75 percent of the male labour force being in non-agriculture. With such high overall densities , it is also not easy to decide on the boundaries of settlements. It is presumably because of these problems that there appear to have been major definitional changes in the 1981 census. Many towns in the class IV, V and VI range from the 1971 census do not appear in this census, and many new towns have been added. Kerala has, therefore, been omitted in this state-wise analysis because of all these definitional problems. (Mohan and Pant 1982. p1579)

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1. This is the journal of the National Institute of Urban Affairs, New Delhi.

2. The Konkan coast is the coastal region north of Goa and stretches up to Bombay. South of Goa, down to Kanya Kumari (Cape Comorin) is the malabar coast. (Schwartzberg 1978. p3;p140)

Some of the few references to Kerala in the literature reviewed so far, and in particular the detailed comment of Mohan and Pant, confirm the distinct variation of Kerala urbanization patterns and trends from other regions of India. Kerala urbanization no doubt requires examination in depth, which is why perhaps it is difficult to accommodate in studies that aim at the breadth of the national canvas. But Mohan and Pant may have recognized in their exemption clause for Kerala some of the underlying factors for the 'particular problems in the definition of urban areas'. Among these the more important are, first, the settlement pattern which defies natural boundaries. Second, the chopping up of the continuous dispersed settlements into population blocks of 10.000 to 15,000 as revenue villages. These two factors, together with population densities and size of settlement which Mohan and Pant recognize, make the economic criteria the only critical variable for any settlement to be deemed urban.

This was discussed in detail in the last chapter. It is brought up here to argue that, what Mohan and Pant are encountering as problematic in Kerala, is in fact the presence of desakota. The critical variable we noted is the economic criteria, viz, 75 percent of the male workforce to be in non-agricultural activities. In a desakota context of a mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activity, this can make some settlements that have non-agricultural male workforce oscillating around 75 percent to be classified and declassified as urban in different censuses. This has been conceptualized as the instability of the urban process by Nagaraj (1985). We shall shortly return to this issue when we review Nagaraj's work. The oscillation by some settlements is happening in spite of the gender bias. Indeed as indicated earlier, it is the concentration of the male workforce dominated industries like beedi in the Cannanore and Trichur districts that are tipping the scales and contributing to the cluster of towns in these districts. To sum up, the urban problematic of Kerala disappears, once the desakota hypothesis is used to conceptualize the spatial order of the non-urban regions of Kerala. This

shall become more clear once we critically review the studies dealing with Kerala urbanization, as a specific case study and/or a comparative study.

Kerala as a case and comparative study in urbanization.

There are few case studies of urbanization in Kerala, or in comparison with another state in India, and thus are limited to the work of Janaki (1954), Sankaranarayanan (1977), Nagaraj (1985), Chattopadhyay (1988) and SreeKumar (1990). Some aspects of Kerala urbanization are also dealt in the volume on India in the Habitat Asia Series dealing with settlement and shelter issues, policies etc (Bhooshan and Misra 1979). There are also some observations on Kerala urbanization in a study of Kerala urban land for housing (Acharya 1988).

Janaki's work titled "Functional classification of urban settlement" published in 1954 bears the stamp of the period. The stated aim of the study was to examine the impact of physical and economic factors on the functions of towns in Kerala and of the relationship between the functions and sizes of towns. The study is however largely a description and grouping of towns under the categories commercial and industrial towns, agricultural market towns, temple towns and plantation towns. It is informative of Kerala towns in the 1950s but its analytical value is negligible.

Sankaranarayanan (1977) made a comparative study of Kerala and Tamilnadu urbanization.[3] It was a pioneering study to prise open the distinctive features of Kerala urbanization in the Indian context. While there was some comparison of the Kerala urban trends with the national mean, the focus was on comparing Kerala with Tamilnadu. The purpose of the comparison was to bring out the distinctive features of Kerala urbanization, the

3. It was Sankaranarayanan's study that first stimulated my interest in Kerala urbanization, particularly because the pattern of urbanization had many similarities to Sri Lanka.

author asserting that the urbanization pattern in Tamilnadu was typical of India. (Ibid. p1) In the light of recent studies of urbanization in India some may have reservations on this assertion. But in spite of this possible methodological weakness, Sankaranarayan was successful in his objective of detecting and presenting the distinctive features of Kerala urbanization. Summing them up he stated:

> The distinguishing features of Kerala's urban pattern are that (a) the city dominance is conspicuously absent; (b) the urban influence is more widely diffused, and (c) rural-urban distinction is blurred. These differences are due not so much to deliberate policy of planned urban growth, as to demographic and ecological factors peculiar to Kerala. (ibid. p26)

These factors were population density, big villages, absence of primacy, settlement pattern, coconut and garden cash crops, agro-processing small scale industries, diversified economy of towns and villages, including agricultural activities in urban areas, etc. The last feature he noted led to the declassification of many towns from urban to rural with the 1961 census, consequent to the introduction of economic criteria of 75 percent of the male working population having to be in non-agriculture for urban status. Most of these features can be interpreted as occurring or associated with the presence of desakota. In effect, if the urban rural dichotomy is flexed to include the intermediary desakota, the distinctive or aberrant features of the Kerala "urban patterns" cease to be problematic and become meaningful or make sense.

Nagaraj's (1985)[4] study is in fact a comparative study of urbanization in the states of Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. If Kerala had been included the study would have covered the whole of south India. Nagaraj, conscious of the omission, explains:

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4. An abridged version of this study was published in 'Perspectives on urbanization and migration: India and USSR' Edited by Manzoor Alam and Fatima Alikhan. (1987. p303-370) The review here is of the larger version published as Working Paper No 54 (pp315) of the Madras Institute of Development Studies. (1985)

> The peculiarities of the pattern of urbanization in Kerala - and the definitional problems attendant on these - pose a number of problems in comparing Kerala with other states, southern or northern, in India; and Kerala is often left out in a disaggregated study of urbanization. And our study is no exception. (1985. p8)

Nagaraj also cites Mohan and Pant (1982), which we quoted earlier, and the reasons given by them for excluding Kerala. But Nagaraj in a footnote states:

> It may be noted here that the Dakshinna Kannada district (formerly known as South Kanara district) in Karnataka, which displays some striking similarities with Kerala, both with respect to its pattern of urbanization and the general nature of its economy, poses similar problems in the study of urbanization. We believe that the method we have adopted in this study has enabled us to capture the essential features of urbanization in Dakshinna Kannada district, and also to provide some broad hypotheses regarding the factors underlying the processes of urbanization in the district. So with hind sight we could say that after all, we could have included Kerala in this study. (Ibid. Footnote 7, p8)

Dakshinna Kannada district is along the Arabian Sea and immediately north of Kerala. Historically it was part of the Malabar coast. The transport corridor that runs along the Kerala coast, ends up in Mangalore, the administrative and main urban centre of Dakshinna Kannada. The coastal region of this district is a literal tapering northern end of the Kerala socio-spatial and ecological features.[5] Nagaraj's hypotheses about this district are thus of interest for this study of desakota in Kerala. His efforts to understand urbanization and the urban systems within the three states in the context of the regional economies was also a welcome departure from the pre-occupation of many studies of Indian urbanization with mere demographic features. Eg: size-class of towns etc.

In a sense Nagaraj takes his cue from the Mohan and Pant (1982) study in attempting to map out the morphology of urbanization trends. Like Mohan and Pant he looks at sub-regions within the states, but going down to the lower order of districts or combination of

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5. Along with Malabar district, South Canara district, now Dakshinna Kannada, were the two west coast districts of the Madras Presidency during the British raj.

districts. His examination of the regional economies is also at greater depth than Mohan and Pant. Mohan and Pant's study aimed at breadth, the whole of India, except Kerala. Nagaraj's study of three states permitted greater depth and sub-regionalization at lower orders. Nagaraj also develops and defines Mohan and Pant's concept of the stability of urban settlements in India with greater precision and makes it the central theme or problem of his study. Mohan and Pant saw in Indian urbanization

> a stable settlement structure, where there has been a progressive accretion to existing settlements of all sizes which are well spread out spatially. (1982. p1584)

Nagaraj defines,

> the stability of urban settlement patterns as the stability of the spatial configuration of urban settlements (i.e., towns) in a geographical area, (like say, a state, or a district). (1985. p11)

But he also develops the inverse,

> instability - i.e. a significant degree of emergence and/or disappearance of towns - in an area would imply a significant degree of mobility or footlooseness of population, spatially as well as occupationally. (Ibid p11)

It may noted here that the Indian censuses since 1961 not only classify a settlement as urban, if it meets the census criteria for urban, (discussed in the last chapter), but also declassifies an urban settlement to the rural category if at a subsequent census it falls short of any of the urban definition criteria. The census thus documents de-urbanization, if it occurs. It is this that leads to the emergence and disappearance of towns.

Nagaraj uses the concept of instability to interpret what he sees as the complexities that underlie the urbanization process in Dakshinna Kannada. This urbanization process or pattern of Dakshinna Kannada as described by Nagaraj may be summarized as follows. Low degree of urbanization; a continuous urban spread by the dispersal of towns along the narrow

coastal stretch, though a concentration of half of the district's urban population in Mangalore occurs; minimal urban-rural distinctions along the coast; instability of urban settlements; and the limited urban growth was by emergence of new towns and extensions to existing ones rather than by increase in population within existing towns. (Ibid. p237-38)

This he links to the regional economy of the district. This may be summarized as a backward rice economy, in social and technological terms, co-existing with highly commercialized cash crops; extensive presence of primary processing industries geographically dispersed particularly in the coastal region; a developed tertiary sector and an excellent transport system; and social development with a relatively high level of literacy.[6] Overall there was a backward interior region and a developed coastal region with a high population density, and dispersed settlement pattern and indistinguishable and elusive village boundaries. (Ibid p240-244)

Nagaraj sees the urban process influenced and shaped by the regional economy. The coastal towns being processing and marketing outlets; the minimal urban-rural distinctions, dispersed settlement pattern, high density, scatter of primary processing units, all contributing to a continuous urban spread. But what he sees as central is the mobility of the population, including a push for internal migration made by the backward rice economy.

> All the factors noted so far can lead to: a) a large scale migration both long distance, permanent and short distance, seasonal and b) a high proportion of 'floating population' within the district with a large number of people commuting to work place or travelling for business purposes, everyday (a highly developed tertiary sector, the transport system in particular, ensures this). Thus the district has the characteristic of what may be termed a 'mobile society', and this is particularly so of the coastal belt. It appears as if this mobility is almost a permanent feature of the economy, with the very nature of the economy providing the basis for such an almost continuous and constant movement of population. Needless to add, this high degree of mobility prevalent in the district should explain, to a considerable degree, the

6. This description appears in part to be in relative terms to the other sub-regions in the three states.

> very high degree of instability of the settlement pattern in the district. (Ibid. p246)

There are a number of points of interest in Nagaraj's analysis of Dakshinna Kannada for this study of desakota in Kerala. First, the parallels between the socio-spatial structure of Kerala and Dakshinna Kannada are apparent. The description of its urbanization, urban system and regional economy reads like a summary of Kerala. Dakshinna Kannada is the tapering northern end of the Kerala socio-spatial system, a miniature Kerala, though there are some points of difference. For instance it may be difficult to describe the rice economy of Kerala as backward, though its low productivity in the Indian context is recognized.

Second, the 'mobile society' of Dakshinna Kannada is reminiscent of conceptualizations of circular migration in Java (Hugo 1978 p106-115) and of the living perimeter in Taiwan (Tsai 1984). Once again there are many parallels, particularly the ecology and population density, and the sort of 'behind the scene' economies of scale for transport, communication and other social infrastructure that a densely populated and cash crop vegetated region facilitates. But all these conceptualizations suffer from the weakness of working within the parameter of the urban-rural dichotomy. It was McGee's desakota hypothesis that was able to break out of the dichotomy fixation and see a third force, in a settlement pattern with a mix of urban and rural features. Desakota is a third space, not as an intermediary in spatial and/or morphological terms of a peri-urban, but an intermediary in conceptual terms. Desakota is a mix of urban and rural with its own dynamics, using the urban nodes, in the Dakshinna Kannada scenario the market towns, and co-existing with them in symbiosis. It is this central conceptual grip that is being loosened, as discussed earlier, with the incorporation of desakota into the mega-urban conceptualization, in McGee's recent writings.

Third, Nagaraj's description of the 'mobile society' is a description of a central characteristic of desakota, succinctly put by McGee as the extreme fluidity and mobility of the population within a region, as well as to outside centres, facilitated by easy transport. (1991a. p16-17). Nagaraj is not explicit about this, but it is the advent and development of motorized public transport in the Indian context, including the three wheeler taxis, that have enhanced the mobility earlier provided by the waterways and railways. We have dealt with this, the time-space collapse that McGee refers to, in the section on transport and communication in the last chapter.

Fourth, the instability that Nagaraj sees in Dakshinna Kannada is the manifestation of desakota. The population density, settlement pattern and size of settlements make only the economic criteria a critical variable for a settlement to be deemed urban in Dakshinna Kannada. This is the same issue we examined in the context of Kerala in the last chapter. The geographic dispersal of primary processing industries in the coastal region that Nagaraj refers to obviously leads to desakotaization. Once again, as referred to in the Kerala context, the oscillation of the scale around the 75 percent male workforce in non-agriculture, in the desakota region brings about the appearance and disappearance of towns.

This is the instability of the urban configuration that Nagaraj sees in Dakshinna Kannada. Nagaraj has used the twin concepts of agglomerization and instability to analyze and understand the spatial configurations of sub-regions of the three south Indian states. (1985. p274) Instability according to his study occurs in three contexts. First, in the development of heavy industries in a backward region, second in a region of agrarian distress inducing short term migration and third in the 'mobile society' which he finds unique to Dakshinna Kannada among the sub-regions of the three states. (Ibid. p249-250)

It is outside the scope and relevance of this study to examine all the contexts in which instability occurs in thethree South Indian States examined by Nagara. Only the Dakshinna Kannada model is relevant, and as Nagaraj too recognizes, the region is similar to Kerala. The point that needs to be made is that the desakota hypothesis captures all the features, the fluidity of the population and commodities, the population densities, the mix of urban-rural features, the internal dynamics etc. The instability concept not only concentrates on the oscillation between rural and urban, but by its very nomenclature and approach, negativizes it. Desakota is neutral in its nomenclature. But it has underpinning positive policy implications. The recognition and enabling of desakota is beneficial. It reduces pressures on the urban centres in terms of rural-urban migrations for employment, infrastructural and collective consumption needs etc. Indeed relative to other Indian cities the minimal presence of squatter housing in Kerala cities may be related to the presence of desakota. So while Nagaraj's rigourous development of the Mohan and Pant stability concept is to be welcomed, the manner of its use to understand the spatial configuration in Dakshinna Kannada is inappropriate. There is also in the instability concept, an implied suggestion of the census categories of urban and rural being accorded an importance, where they begin to be substituted for the reality. This is not to suggest the discarding of census categories and data. This study uses, and has argued for relevance of census data. It is important to keep a hold on the real world and not treat census categories as sacred, and not to be tampered with.

Fifth, in spite of the insights, depth of analysis, a sweep that covered three of the four south Indian states, and the centrality of the concepts of agglomeration and instability, Nagaraj's study does not centralize the Dakkina Kannada issues. It appears more as an after thought, literally a footnote to the objectives of his study. And here too in his own words, "only to provide some broad hypotheses regarding the factors underlying the process of urbanization in the district". (Ibid. p8, footnote 7). A central hypothesis provides a coherence, and facilitates cross cultural and cross regional comparisons. This is one of the

advantages of the McGee desakota hypothesis in that it provides for comparative studies within Asia. In the process, refinements of the hypothesis may work towards the development of a theory. This weakness in Nagaraj's study also suggests the usefulness of a hypothesis for a discourse that transcends national boundaries. This is not to suggest, to the chagrin of post-modernist geographers, the search for an overarching or totalizing explanation, or to impose a coherence which is not there.

Sixth, Nagaraj's study of Dakshinna Kannada suggests that the desakota region in southwest India begins with Dakshinna Kannada and goes south encompassing the entire lowlands and midland areas of Kerala and overflows south of the Kerala border into Kanya Kumari district of Tamilnadu. We noted earlier that Kanya kumari district was formerly part of Travancore and was ceded to Tamilnadu in 1956. Like Dakshinna Kannada it shares all the features of Kerala, and its urbanization pattern is similar to Kerala's.[7] (Kurien and James. 1979. p180)[8] And it is interesting to note that the desakota region continues across the Palk Strait along the south western coast of Sri Lanka. Thus from Mangalore in Kannada State to Matara in the deep south of Sri Lanka is a coastal belt of nearly a 1000 kilometres or more of desakota country, pock marked with a string of towns and cities, across the linguistic regions of Kannada, Telu (Dakshinna Kannada), Malayalam (Kerala), Tamil (Kanya Kumari), and Sinhalese (southwest Sri Lanka). [9]

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7. Kanaya Kumari district does not figure in the sub-regions developed by Nagaraj. It was possibly left out for the same reasons that Kerala was left out of his study.

8. The work of Kurien and James (1979) is on 'Economic Change in Tamilnadu, 1960 - 1970' and does not include a discussion of urbanization in Kanya Kumari. There is only passing comment to urbanization in Kanaya Kumari being similar to Kerala and referenced to an earlier, uncited, work of the authors. In the absence of a bibliography in this publication it was not possible to trace this study.

9. This region has also been noted as one of three models of development in south Asia by Timberg.(1981) He calls it "the Kerala/Sri Lanka model where high investment (sic) leads to moderately high growth in incomes and consumption but priority to social expenditure leads to very high health and education levels".(p644) The other two models are:

"(1) Punjab (India and Pakistan) model of high productive investment , but low initial social investment, resulting first in higher income and consumption, then in better health and education levels and a heightened

Chattopadhyay (1988) is the first published case study devoted solely to urbanization in Kerala. Its strength is its geographical perspective and sensitivity, though Chattopadhyay pays inadequate attention to placing this within the relevant literature on India and/or the developing countries. It is also informative on the urban geography of Kerala. The influence of the authors' training and skills in geography and access to geographical data is seen in this study, and as indicated its strength. As may have been noticed, I have drawn on this work, among others and my own observations and investigations, to present the contemporary urban system of Kerala in the last chapter. A good part of Chattopadhyay's study is a descriptive analysis, in terms of urban history; demographic, locational and functional features of the urban centres; social infrastructural, commercial and industrial features and functions of the urban centres; migration patterns and what Chattopadyay terms as the rural-urban continuum. In the last two, the author makes some observations that are of significance, particularly for this study.

Migration in the light of Chattopadyay's observations appears not uni-directional but a mix of intra-state, rural to rural, urban to urban, urban to rural and rural to urban. The last being low to the bigger cities. (Ibid. p21) The net migration effect is not clear, but Chattopadyay's observation suggest a constant flux or movement of peoples. In the introductory note to the rural-urban continuum the author states:

> "the pattern of urbanization in Kerala clearly indicates the existence of symbiotic relationship between the rural and urban areas to a considerable extent" (Ibid. p22)

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level of consciousness. (2) the Bihar/Bangladesh model, where low investments leads to persisting low levels of income, consumption, education and health". (Timberg 1981. p644)

My reading of Timberg is that he presents three types of development models in south Asia, but not in the sense of these three models exhausting all development patterns in south Asia.

It is my view that the Kerala/Sri Lanka model was in part financially facilitated by the surplus extraction from the plantation workers and petty producers in cash crop cultivation and processing.

This is supportive of a theme in this study that the desakota and urban system are in symbiosis. There is also an effort by Chattopadhyay to articulate the relationship between the dispersed settlement pattern and urbanization in Kerala.

> This pattern of settlement development has spilled over from the coast land to the entire low and midlands. In fact, village to town boundary, village to village boundary and town to town boundary appear to be more imaginary than real. One of the main reasons for Kerala's apparently low urbanization is related with this pattern of settlement distribution. Regarding density and population size, almost all villages in Kerala satisfy the criteria adopted by the census....Regarding parameter that 75 percent of the working population (sic) should be non-agricultural for defining an urban area, the problem arises because the unit of calculation used is a village, which itself appears to be non-existent for all practical purposes. (Ibid p22)

This explicit critique of the census measurement of urban in Kerala reflects his sensitivity to social reality. Indeed this is further evidenced in his virtual rejection of census categorization.

> The entire state may possibly be referred to as an urban area having a number nodal points almost uniformly distributed. (Ibid p 22)

This observation is also supportive of the argument in this study, that there are hardly any urban-rural residential distinctions. What one observes is the nodes of bazaars and city commercial centres. The Chattopadhyay study thus provides some penetrating observations, that are supportive of some of the main arguments and observations in this study.

SreeKumar (1990) has a promising title - "Neither Rural nor Urban: Spatial formation and Development Process", but the text fails to deliver the promise. There is little that this study adds by way of observation, empirical data, analysis or conceptualization that the existing literature has not provided. The study begins with a discussion of the relevance of modernization and dependency theories for an understanding of spatial categories and social processes of the developing world. By implication the more recent paradigm shifts of mode of production, world-systems, and internationalization of capital are not relevant. The latter two,

in view of Sreekumar's later argument of Kerala's integration into the world system having implications for its urbanization, appear relevant. After the brief discussion on the modernization and dependency theories, the study goes on to give a brief account of the urban history of Kerala from the 15th century, and the role of colonialism in the process of urbanization in Kerala. This is followed by an examination of Kerala's urban system in terms of what the author calls "its hierarchical fabrication, functional structure, stability." (sic) (Ibid. p1983)[10]

"Hierarchical fabrication" appears to be a mix of primacy and size-class character of the urban centres. Examination of functional structure, included a review of Janaki's work (1954), the 1971 census classification of towns into mono-functional, bi-functional and multi-functional, and the resource base of the towns. This is followed by analysis of Kerala urbanization in terms of stability and instability as conceptually developed by Nagaraj. (1985) The author then intends to provide "a scaffold of explanations for the specificities related to the process of spatial formation in Kerala". (Ibid. p1986) This begins with a discussion of the incorporation of Kerala into the world system of capitalism, and the growth of plantation companies and crops. The author argues that the customary agglomeration of population and productive forces in places of location advantage did not occur because of the transport facilities in Kerala. This is reasonable to accept, and does not need much convincing in the Kerala context. The growth of most colonial plantation economies were accompanied by the development of railways and roads. The exceptional circumstances in Kerala were the waterways, though this is less used in recent times, and the population density which as commented earlier facilitated economies of scale in transport and communication. (Bhat and

10. The author has an inclination to use pedantic phrases. Primacy is called the "dominant mode" (SreeKumar 1990. p1985). Urbanization for instance is seen as having "two positive components and one negative component", these being further classified into "incremental component", "extensional component", and "decremental component". (Ibid. p1983). These are what have been customarily referred to, in simple terms, as the natural increase, migration and reclassification, in urban population growth, including by Mohan and Pant (1982. p1534-5) in the Indian context.

Rajan 1990. p 1963). The author recognizes the importance of waterways but fails to recognize the population density factor.

The author argues that in the absence of agglomeration, small towns developed. He however does not explain why in aggregation the small towns did not counter the low degree of urbanization in Kerala. Later he recognizes that there were limits to the growth of small towns due to comparative advantage , (called "natural resource endowment" by the author), of locating agro-processing industries in rural areas, and the "tendency among some of the major industries like beedi, coir, cashew, handloom etc to percolate (sic) down to small scale production and then to household production". (SreeKumar 1990. p1986). He cites the work of Issacs (1985), Pyarelal (1986), Rajagopalan (1986) and Kannan (1988). But the author does not pursue the political economy of labour that brought about this spread which is made abundantly clear in these studies he cites. The need to fuse the economic historical studies and perspectives with the spatial was not perceived by Sreekumar.

Sreekumar then relates the settlement pattern as a factor for the Kerala urban system. But he tells us remarkably little about ways in which the settlement pattern articulates with \the urban system. He recognizes the arbitrary boundaries of villages, the large population size of the villages, and even the presence of non-agricultural activities, but does not see the mix of agriculture and non-agriculture in the non-urban areas and the fluidity of peoples and commodities, the 'mobile society' of Nagaraj. If he had drawn on and synthesized on the Issac's gragaram concept and Nagaraj's analysis of Dakshinna Kannada, he might have recognized the importance of the mix of agriculture and non-agriculture. In the last paragraph Sreekumar tells us:

> The various historical process had ultimately created a situation where the emerging spatial form is neither rural nor urban. They can be either called 'rurban' or semi-urban. But it must be borne in mind that it is under

> development and deprivation rather than economic development which led to this unique spatial ordering. (Ibid. p1989)

But we are not told how the historical processes, whatever that may be, eventually articulate a spatial form that is neither urban nor rural. Nor is a clear relationship established or developed with all the arguments and analysis that made the body of his paper, with this concluding statement about Kerala spatial form being neither rural or urban. It stands as an assertion in isolation. He does realize that the other side of the coin, of being "neither rural nor urban" is being both rural and urban at the same time, and suggests the word rurban or semi-urban. It is mystifying why he chose not to refer to Issac's insightful gragaram concept. Probably he preferred a neologism in English, and was also unaware that the term rurban had been used in so many different contexts that its meaning has become imprecise. In effect, if we ignore the semantics, Sree Kumar is suggesting the presence of desakota in Kerala.

Sreekumar is of the view that under-development and deprivation rather than economic development has led to this unique spatial ordering in Kerala. On the face of this assertion one then wonders why desakota has not occurred in all the developing countries of the world. Probably what he is suggesting is that in Kerala, in spite of all the other attendant contributing factors, a critical cause of desakota is Kerala's industrial backwardness. A similar, but better formulated question has been recognized by McGee (1991 p19) in the context of Speare, Liu aand Tsay's (1988) work on the rural-urban transition in Taiwan. The question that McGee raises is whether desakota is of short-term persistence (upto fifty years), or is it simply a transitory phenomenon. In the light of the rural-urban transition taking place in the Taipei-Kaoshiung corridor in Taiwan, McGee concedes that the persistence of desakota is questionable. It is then to be conceded that if Kerala advances industrially, desakota may become less present.

But there are some caveats. First, there are similarities and distinctions between Kerala and Taiwan, all of which cannot be gone into here. For our purposes it is important to note that both have a geographical size, an extended coast line, and a population and population density that are remarkably close.[11] Taiwan is dominated by the primacy of Taipei and the transport corridor from Taipei in the northwest to Kao-hsiung in the southwest. Kao-hsiung the second largest city, is exactly half the population size of Taipei, thus conforming to the primacy concept that the second largest city will be half the population size of the first. Kerala has a north south transport corridor but no primacy. The urban system of Taiwan leads to a systematic urban accretion or crystallization around these two cities. The urban system of Kerala is less likely to lead to such accretion.

Second, if such accretion were to occur in the context of a marked industrial advancement, it likely around Cochin, or the Cochin-Alwaye corridor along the national highway (NH 47) and railway. This region is emerging as a preferred location for large factory based industrial activity. Indeed, as we will have occasion to note in the next two chapters, the corridor of industrial development is likely to extend from Cochin to Trichur, via, Alwaye along the NH 47/railway corridor. The two SUAs[12] of Cochin, (which includes Alwaye at its northern end), and Trichur (which includes Edakkunny on its southern end), are separated by little less than 40 km on this corridor. But Cochin is not a Taipei, nor is it likely to be. The Cochin SUA is the largest in terms of area and population within Kerala, but still does not measure up to primacy. (See Appendix 4.02) Both urban and rural areas within the Cochin SUA in terms of landscape features are predominantly desakota. Unfortunately economic activity data at the disaggregated level of revenue villages, (both those deemed urban by the

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11. Taiwan has a land area of 36000 sq km with a population of 18.1 m in 1981. (Density of 504 per sq Km). Kerala has a land area of 38000 sq km with a population of 25 m in 1981. (Density of 655 per sq km). (Republic of China (Taiwan) Statistical Yearbook 1984 and Government of Kerala 1987)

12. Standard Urban Areas. Please see chapter four for definition.

census and others left as rural), townships, municipalities, corporations that comprise the Cochin SUA, are not available to examine and establish this in terms of the mix of agriculture and non-agriculture. But a description of a village on the NH 47, in a study of livestock farming strongly suggests a desakota landscape.

> Muttam lies along the stretch of National Highway 47 that runs between the city of Cochin and the town of Alwaye. The village is 13 kilometres from the city and five kilometres from the town. A kilometre away from Muttam is Kalamassery, a small young town spawned by the establishment and activities of a number of heavy industries in the area, including Hindustan Machine Tools, Fertilizers and Chemicals Travancore, and Indian Aluminium, as well as a textile mill and smaller enterprises housed on two industrial estates. Muttam's mantle of rice fields and coconut groves is therefore spread against an incongruous background of industrial towers and chimneys. It is conceivable that in few decades Muttam will be no longer a village but a residential suburb of Kalamassery. Bring tomorrow what it will, today Muttam village covers quarter of a square kilometre before it merges into the neighbouring village of Ambattukava on the one side and the hamlet of Thaikkavu on the other. (Shanti George 1984. p2161)

The transformation of a "village" to an urban suburb is something that rarely occurs in the Kerala socio-spatial milieu. The comment that in a few decades Muttam may undergo such transformation, is more a reflection of the author, (with an academic interest in livestock and diary farming), stereotyping Muttam with the suburbanization of urban fringe villages elsewhere in India. The description of current Muttam, on the other hand, is very suggestive of desakota. When I visited Muttam in 1988, it was still the same as Shanti George described it in 1984.

What is being argued is that in the context of its historical geographical, eco-cultural, and social infra-structural features, such as among others, the dispersed availability of collective consumption, transport facilities, preference for non-urban single dwelling housing etc, Kerala may retain its desakota features even in the context of industrial advancement. The Cochin-Alwaye corridor is a good case study. What is referred to as "modern industries in Alwaye-Kalamassery-Cochin belt" (Chattopadyay 1988. p19), or as "an area of rapid industrial

development" (Shanti George 1984. p2161), is the reference to the physical flanking of the NH 47 by factories. One does not know where the workers in these factories reside. With high population densities and a spread of collective consumption infrastructural facilities throughout the lowlands and midlands of Kerala, this could be from anywhere within daily commuting distance. This in the context of Cochin-Alwaye NH47/Railway corridor can be even up to Trichur. For other roads and public transport networks in the region, it can be less, but certainly up to a radius of 30 km with ease. It may be also noted that in the west and north of the Cochin SUA are waterways of the Vembanad lake and Periyar river. They provide uncongested transport access routes, though admittedly the traditional craft are not fast. The point to be recognized is that concentration of factories on the Alwaye-Cochin corridor is more for movement of commodities, and access to the financial institutions and the port of Cochin core city. The workers can be drawn from a wider catchment area. It can be argued then that Kerala in the context of industrial development may still retain its desakota features, as the manner of Cochin-Alwaye corridor development suggests. We will return to this issue in the final chapter.

To return to a review of Sreekumar's work he is not explicit how the dependency theory helps to understand urbanization in Kerala. The many criticisms of dependency theory in the 1970s, particularly Laclau's (1971) critique of dependency theory, made it less influential and led to the emergence of the mode of production approach in development studies. (Ruccio and Simon 1986) The dependency theory also lost the force it carried by the appropriateness of the paradigm in the global political climate of the 1960s. Dependency theory nonetheless remains a useful paradigm when examining the developing world. But it appears singularly inappropriate to understand the urban phenomenon in Kerala. Dependency theorists argued, among other issues, that the unequal relationship between the metropolitan countries and the periphery is repeated in the city-hinterland relationships in developing

societies. Kerala, (along with Sri Lanka), being noted as exceptions to urban bias, (Michael Lipton 1977) suggests the absence of an exploitative city-hinterland relationship.

To sum up this review of Sreekumar's publication, its contribution to our understanding of Kerala's spatial formations is minimal. And though there is some beating about the bush, Sreekumar seems in the last paragraph to come to a gragram perception of Kerala spatial order. Sreekumar's study also provided a lever to tease out some issues of importance to this study, particularly the issue of whether Kerala can retain the desakota formation, in a context of industrial advancement.

Bhooshan and Misra (1979) deal with Kerala as one of three case studies in the quality of life in rural settlements in India. The choice of Kerala (Ibid. p125) was because; of its unique settlement patterns; better condition of shelter and services relative to other Indian states; and

> the rural areas of Kerala which are more than rural compared to other parts of India; maybe we can call them rurban. (Ibid. p125)

A description of the dispersed settlement pattern of Kerala is then provided. They point out that this is pervasive in both rural and urban areas, and among all income groups and castes. They relate the presence of dispersed settlement to social, cultural and ecological factors, including the availability of fresh water (Ibid. p126-7) They also comment on the low urban ratio in Kerala. (Ibid. p129) Following this they note:

> The dispersed matrix of settlements in Kerala therefore, takes the form of a continuum, punctuated by semi-urban, semi-nucleated nodal points at regular intervals, with scarcely any discernible difference to mark the boundary of urban or rural areas.....The formation of semi-urban, semi-nucleated nodes at regular intervals has been necessitated by the demand for service and amenities by the inhabitants of scattered settlements. The rural-urban knot is the unique phenomenon which characterizes these service centres, like 'neighbourhood centres'. The knots which take the form of nucleated non-residential activities are urban in character, and are usually located 8 to 10 kms

> apart. Many of these knots house services like banks, shopping, markets, service industries and even places of higher education. (Ibid p126/129)

The nodes or knots are similar to what I have referred to as bazaars and commercial centres. The importance is that there is hardly any distinction between urban and rural residential areas. To the bazaar nodes being necessitated by the scattered settlements is oversimplifying the issue in terms of settlements and space. Demography, political economy, petty production, forced commerce and small holding cash crop agriculture are also important actors in the emergence of these "Knots", but are not mentioned by the authors. But in their emphasis on the spatial they capture features, which are strongly desakota.

> The existence of these knots, which are urban in character, conveys the impression of advanced urban influence in the rural areas of Kerala. Simultaneously, the continued existence of dispersed dwellings in extensive plots together with the incidence of agricultural lands in urban areas, tends to portray an apparently rural character to the urban areas. (Ibid. p129-30)

The study also observes the minimal urban rural distinctions in housing and shelter.

> There is not much of a difference between an urban and rural house in the arrangement of rooms, use of material or the production techniques. Differences exist only between classes, in urban areas as well as rural areas. (Ibid. p130)

In my observation of housing styles in Kerala too I found a mix of vernacular, colonial middle class, and nouveau riche ostentatious architectural styles. There was also a mix of sizes obviously dictated by the income of the dwellers. This mix in terms of styles and sizes is seen in both urban and rural areas. There is no distinct urban or rural housing style or pattern. There is also little neighbourhood social identity by housing styles, as described by Duncan and Duncan (1976a; 1976b) of the old and new urban elite neighbourhoods in Hyderabad. During my stay in Kerala, the little evidence of housing as social identity that I came across are the street houses of the Jewish quarter in Mattanchery, Cochin and some of the aghraham dwellings of Tamil Brahmins close to a few temples in Trivandrum. Both were architecturally

street houses with inner courtyards, a traditional urban housing style in India. Both were symbols of non-Malayalee neighbourhood or social identity.

The problems of shelter that Bhooshan and Misra note in Kerala are: limitation to access roads due to the dispersed settlements; uneconomical land use compared to other cities in India, with a high percent for residential use, again due to the homestead with compound preference by all sections of the population; conversion of agricultural lands for housing; and ribbon development. In the context of the last they observe:

> It is difficult to find more than half a kilometre at a stretch of even national highway which is free from ribbon development. Even bypasses planned to avoid population concentrations face a similar fate. (Bhooshan and Misra p140)

Bhooshan and Misra's study is focused on shelter and services. But in the description is clearly seen the desakota features.

The uneconomical use of land within residential areas falling within what Census deems as urban in Kerala, is also observed by Acharya. (1988) Acharya's study is of plot reconstituting being tried in some areas of Kerala, as a statutory mechanism available to cope with excessive fragmentation and/or joint ownership of land. He deals with the Trichur experience as a case study, with some general observations on urban land planning and development issues. Not all of this is directly relevant for a study of desakota in Kerala. But some of Acharya's findings and observations are useful. Acharya's study too reiterates the unique features of Kerala urbanization, settlement pattern with minimal distinctions on a rural-urban continuum, spread of basic facilities, ribbon development etc. (Ibid. p80-81) It is his observations on the land use pattern that are of interest. He observes:

> The scattered and dispersed settlement pattern has resulted in low density residential development especially in the urban fringe areas. This has been encouraged largely due to a relatively higher ceiling on land holding. The Kerala Land Reforms Act, 1963, applicable to both urban as well as rural areas,

> fixes a ceiling on land holding to the tune of 2 ha for an individual adult, but for a family the ceiling varies from 4 ha to 8 ha depending on the size of the family. Thus large tracts of vacant land are almost non-existent, but individual residential plots are large enough for private sub-division, although they are uneconomical for infrastructural provision. (Ibid. p 87)

Acharaya's observation suggest greater residential density within urban areas, and at the same time the persistence of single house dwellings up to the urban fringe. But more importantly it suggests the absence of statutory distinctions between urban and rural areas. This suggests that Kerala desakota is not a "grey zone" where statutory urban regulations cannot be applied, one of characteristics of desakota delineated by McGee. (1990. p16) But this needs to be researched in other spheres of statutory control and it would be inappropriate to generalize on one subject of statutory control. At the same time Acharaya makes an observation that is important to recognize.

> The highly literate Keralites are more conscious to protect their interests, and the resistance to compulsory acquisition of land comes out in the open street in the form of a slogan march or protest in front of government premises. If this approach fails, the people often approach the government to obtain a stay order.....(Ibid. p87)

Social and political consciousness and the political economy may make Kerala desakota less of a grey zone.

Other literature of relevance for Kerala urbanization.

This section is a brief recounting of the efforts to trace any studies or reference relating to Kerala in the field of urban anthropology, urban history and regional geography. It was found that there are no published urban anthropological studies or monographs of urban history relating to Kerala. Sir Robert Bristow's "Cochin Saga" (1959) is the closest to a monograph, though it is more in the genre of reminiscence and memoirs of the British administrators during the Raj. There was a study of Trivandrum being carried out by Ahalya

Sukumar of the Centre for Earth Sciences, Trivandrum, when I was in Kerala, but so far it has not been published for unrestricted circulation. Lewandowki's (1980) study of Kerala migrants in Madras, is an important contribution to urban migration and ethnicity studies in India, but her focus is on Madras, and tells us little about urban Kerala. Her study however strongly supports the argument made in the last chapter that Kerala as a region during the Raj was within the orbit of Madras's hinterland. Spodek's (1980) pioneering and excellent bibliographic review titled "Studying the history of urbanization in India", does not list any publication on Kerala or its cities, confirming the absence of any urban history of Kerala cities published up to 1980.

Just as studies on the late pre-colonial India are dominated by the despotic presence of the glittering Mughal empire and say little of the region south of the Deccan, (Perlin 1983 p55) so are generic studies on south Indian urbanization dominated by Tamilnadu and have little or nothing to say of the land west of the Western Ghats. This is very evident in the publications of Champakalakshmi (1987) and Heitzman (1987), the former titled, "Urbanization in South India: Role of Ideology and Polity" and the latter "Temple Urbanism in Medieval South India".

Anthropological and sociological discourses on the urban-rural dichotomy and/or continuum in India, (Srinivas 1959, Pocock 1960, Chattergee 1968, Cottam 1980 and Gupta 1988)[13] have little to offer in understanding the spatial character of large sections of Kerala

13. All these publications are titled drawing attention to the urban-rural dichotomy in India: Social Anthropology and the Study of Rural and Urban Societies (Srnivas 1959); Sociologies: Urban and Rural (Pocock 1960); The town-village dichotomy in India. (Chattergee 1968); City, Town and Village: The continuum Reconsidered. (Cottam 1980) and Country-Town Nexus and Agrarian Mobilization. (Gupta 1988) Spodek's (1976) study of urban-rural integration was not reviewed here as it is specific to Saurashtra. And moreover its core theme is the inter-relationships between cities and the countryside. (Ibid p1) K.N.Chaudhuri's "Some Reflections on the Town and Country in Mughal India" (1978) was also not reviewed as Kerala was never part of the Mughal realm.

Karunanayake's (1990) study of the Colombo Metropolitan region is also not reviewed here as it pertains to Sri Lanka. But given his effort to relate some of McGee's conceptualizations and the fact that it is

where a fusion of urban and rural occurs. Srinivas (1959) looks at, in the context of the 1950s, the social anthropologists' expanding territory from "primitive" societies to village and urban societies. Cottam (1980) and Gupta (1988) examine the various forms and motivating factors of supra-local linkages of peasants, villages and small towns. Pocock's (1960) concern is with what he terms the atomization of social studies in India. He reviews the efforts at urban and rural sociologies of India being written in the 1950s. He takes the Weberian position that the city and the village are elements of the same civilization, culture and society and has to be studied as such and is critical of an academic dichotomy. (Ibid. p81). Chattergee (1968), too, argues that the dichotomy can be examined only within the context of Indian society and culture. Both Pocock and Chattergee are critical of drawing on the experience of the West to understand any urban-rural divide in India. None of these studies seem to relate to or envisage a spatial order, within the Indian context, and may be with some roots in pre-colonial India, that was both urban and rural at the same time.

It is pertinent here to refer to what Moore (1984) lists as one of the criticisms of Lipton's concept of urban bias.

> Lipton's work is 'Indian' in the sense that it arises from, and contributes to, an established Indian tradition of seeing the urban-rural divide as a central feature of social organization. (Ibid p18)

Moore cites Kothari (1970. p351-2) in support of this view. But it is a wrong reading of Kothari, to present the urban-rural divide as part of "an established Indian tradition" suggesting that it is rooted in its civilization and culture. Kothari was clear in presenting the

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in the same socio-ecological region of southwest south Asia it may have been useful to review his work. But Karunanayake's focus is on Colombo Metropolitan region (western province) and urban-regional linkages. And this in the context of the dominance of Colombo's primacy is different from spatial order of Kerala. Karunayake does not bring under the scope of his study the rest of the Sri Lankan southwest quarter. In particular, the deep south or southern province with Galle and Matara districts, away from the immediate dominance of Colombo have many parallels to Kerala. The non-inclusion of this region thus also made a review of Karunanayake's study less important. Admittedly a comparative study of Kerala and Sri Lankan desakota is a useful exercise, but outside the scope of this study.

urban-rural divide as part of the newly emerging political economy and ideology of 20th century India.

> The striking point about the Indian concern with issues of distribution is its concentration on a single focus of attention: the urban-rural dimension. Most other issues seem to be treated under this larger rubric of "sectoral" relationships....The ideology that dominated the nationalist movement, and has since been expressed in the directive principles of the Constitution, the resolutions of the Congress Party, and the plans themselves, is largely weighted in favour of rural development and the "awakening of villages" (Kothari 1970. p351-2)

Kothari was clearly describing a 20th century phenomenon and to read them as "an established Indian tradition" is inappropriate. A later comment of Moore (1984 p18) is more perceptive, when he relates what he calls the Indian obsession with the rural-urban divide to the influence of Marxist ideas, which perpetuate the British political economy tradition of assuming a clear rural-urban divide. And this in part, as Moore acknowledges' explains how the proponents of both urban bias (Lipton 1977) and rural bias (Mitra 1977) find the Indian experience illuminating for their models ! But Moore misses the significance of Indian political economy itself for the 20th century obsession with the rural-urban divide. With the history of a mass nationalist movement for independence, and a sustaining parliamentary democracy under an electoral system in a country where 80 percent reside in rural areas, the development of such an ideology is to be expected and perhaps legitimate. It was also part of the moral ideology of the Congress Party. The moral dimension is underpinned in part by the alienated westernized urban middle class intelligentsia of south Asia psychologically seeing a superior worth of the relatively culturally rooted "common man" and/or the peasant.[14] To some extent the importance of the rural was also influenced by cultural nationalism and

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14. This has in part been aided by a naive utopianism of some Western scholars and intellectuals working on south Asia. See for instance Andre Beteille's (1984) critical review of Ronald Herrings work and critique of land reform in south Asia. (1983) Herring's study is underpinned with a vision of a classical peasant society where there are no landlords or landless labourers. (Beteille 1984. p130-32) The re-birth or re-incarnation of the idyllic village republics of 19th century European indologists !

trends within it that harped on the grandeur of the past encouraging atavistic and revivalist outlook.

It is useful to recall in this context that there is also a body of work on south India, (Beck 1972, Mines 1984, Ramasamy 1985 and Arasaratnam 1986) that have drawn attention to the traditional division of the south Indian social cosmos into left-hand and right-hand castes, with inter and intra-village linkages, the former being non-agricultural castes and the latter agricultural castes. Embedded in this is an indigenous perception of space, not in terms of territory but networks.

There are also no recent studies on the regional geography of Kerala.[15] The Journal of the Madras Geographical Society had in 1932 a special issue on Malabar district. The collection of articles is informative about issues of that time, and now of historical geographical value. Some of this information has been used in this study in the context of the discussions on settlement patterns, absence of distinctions between urban and non-urban residential areas, public health policies and programmes etc.

The references to, and the literature on, the dispersed settlement pattern of Kerala have been extensively used in this study and a review is unnecessary. In combination with the population density its uniqueness in Kerala or southwest India [16] in the Indian context was a

15. The only regional geopgraphical studies of Kerala are Cotton (1927) and Kuriyan (1942). These studies are in the regional geographical tradition of the period they were published. They are descriptive, with uncertain ecological models and gazzetteer-like listing and mapping of economic activities etc. See Sopher (1973) and also chapter seven, footnote 5.

16. The only other region in south Asia that has this unique combination of population density and dispersed settlement is southwest Sri Lanka. Compare the following description of a homestead in southwest Sri Lanka by Moore (1985) with that provided by Mencher (1966. p163) of the homestead in Kerala and quoted in chapter four for striking parallels. Obviously it is a characteristic of the desakota country that stretched from Mangalore to Matara.

> **Apart from the house (or adjacent family houses) a homestead includes a good number of coconut, jak and other trees, to serve the kitchen a vegetable garden, a compound round**

recurrent theme from the time of Ibn Battuta narrative. (Ibn Battuta. 14th Century. Tr Gibbs 1929. 1969 Ed, p231-2; Joseph, 1507. 1984, p153; Logan 1887. 1981 Ed p 111; Clarke 1916. p72; Kelman 1923 p26; Dann 1932. p164; Hesterlow 1932. p179; Kuriyan 1938. p141-2; Menon 1953, p46; Nath 1962. p143-144; Mencher 1966; and Bhooshan and Misra 1979. p125-29; and Hill 1986 p780). Mencher's study remains a seminal contribution on this subject.

Summing up

To sum up this review of literature, there are a few issues of importance. First, this review should convince even the skeptics that Kerala is a distinct society in the Indian context, at least in the sphere of urbanization, and in terms of spatial order. This is true even to the extent where it is academically diplomatic to leave Kerala out of studies of regional patterns of urbanization. In this context there was also overwhelming evidence that the dispersed settlement pattern of Kerala is unique in the Indian context. Though there are other pockets where this occurs, particularly in Himachal Pradesh, the mix of this pattern with population density in Kerala makes it unique in the Indian context.

Second, the studies that examined in depth Kerala urbanization, or that of socially and territorially allied regions such as Dakshinna Kannada, uncovered many characteristics that are desakota as described in the McGee hypothesis. This was seen in the work of Nagaraj, Chattopadhyay and Sankaranarayan. It was less explicit in SreeKumar's study, but beneath the pedantry and circumlocution, there was a confirmation of the presence of desakota.

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the house which is kept swept and a toilet standing clear of the house. Half an acre at least is required to realize this preference on a decent manner. An acre is better and more does not come amiss. Rural settlement is thus dispersed. (Moore 1985. p123)

Third, many of the observations made in this study are confirmed in the literature reviewed. For example, the observation that the whole coastal region is a desakota region encapsulating a linear network of bazaars and city centres was confirmed in the work of Bhooshan and Misra, Chattopadhyay etc.

Fourth, this literature review surfaced the usefulness of the desakota hypothesis for a coherent understanding of the Kerala spatial order. This was at many levels.

(a) It provided a centralizing, logical and coherent statement which helps to make intelligible and relevant what was perceived as the aberrant and recalcitrant urbanization pattern of Kerala.

(b) The desakota hypothesis being framed within the theoretical framework of the urban-rural spatial order, and in the larger spatial context of Asia, gave the Kerala experience a meaning, both in theoretical terms and as part of a wider Asian experience. This experience formulated as the desakota hypothesis, questions the unidirectional logic of the urban transition on the western model.

(c) The significance of the links between space and economy is brought into focus by the desakota hypothesis. This is particularly important in the Kerala context. This also led us to the work of Harvey and Massey. Harvey's work was important for it brought together advances in transport and communication technology and changing economic conditions over space. Capital's use of space in its pursuit of profits was made explicit in the context of the advanced economies by Harvey's theorization. Even though not directly relevant to Kerala society and economy, it helped to make desakota in Kerala more intelligible. But all this made sense only when examined in the context of the political economy of Kerala. And for such examination Massey's work provided insights.

The studies of Kerala urbanization reviewed in this chapter see the time-space collapse in terms of mobile society etc. But they fail to understand the role of the political economy in the spatial order especially in contributing to the presence of non-agricultural activity in non-urban areas. The studies have sought to explain the spatial order in terms of spatial factors such as comparative advantage, agglomeration, mobility etc. On the other hand as we will see in the next two chapters economic historians were beginning to see the importance of the political economy in Kerala industrialism, but failed to link it to the spatial order. The bridging is facilitated by the desakota hypothesis. As indicated earlier one of the objectives of this study is to make explicit the relationship between the political economy and spatial order.

In doing this the desakota hypothesis was in effect expressing what Massey called the inadequacy of the conventional locational factors and the enriching and elaborating of labour as a location factor. (Massey and Meegan 1989, p245) The desakota hypothesis provided a framework within which we could bring together work of McGee, Massey and Harvey to examine a specific spatial order and formation.

This brings to a close Part I of this study which sought to introduce Kerala; demonstrate some of its distinctive features in the Indian context; present its spatial order, which is the focus of this study; and review the existing literature on urbanization Kerala. At the same time it was argued that the desakota hypothesis is relevant for an understanding of the Kerala spatial. The task now is to present some empirical data on the mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activity in the non-urban areas, and ways in which the political economy articulates the spatial order, in particular the presence of non-agricultural activity in non-urban areas. This as stated earlier is the hard core of Kerala desakota. This will be attempted in Parts II and III. Part II consisting of chapters six and seven will present some quantitative data, including an evaluation of the census as source material and a brief review of literature that facilitates an economic historical understanding of Kerala. Part III comprising chapters eight

and nine are case studies of coir and beedi industries, presenting qualitative data to flesh the quantitative data presented in Part II, and more importantly to demonstrate the relationship between the political economy and the spatial order.

CHAPTER SIX

SECTORAL PROFILE OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN KERALA: 1901 - 1981

The rationale for the use of census data to examine Kerala desakota.

In chapter three, as part of the distinctive character of Kerala within India, it was demonstrated that Kerala had the highest percent of non-agricultural activity among the states in India. Non-agricultural activity surpassed even the relatively industrially advanced states in the Indian context, of Maharastra, West Bengal and Tamilnadu. And this was in spite of the mega-urban regions of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras being within these respective states. It was also demonstrated in chapter three that non-agricultural activity in Kerala was in non-urban areas, in contrast to the more industrially advanced states in India, where they were concentrated in the urban areas and their environs. It was also argued in chapter four that the non-agricultural activity in Kerala was not in urban fringe areas, but dispersed through out the non-urban areas of the lowlands and midlands of Kerala, occurring in a mix with agricultural activity.

The task of Part II of this study is to examine this mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activity in the non-urban areas in greater detail. For as indicated in chapter one, the mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activity is central to the desakota hypothesis. This chapter will attempt to delineate in quantitative terms the sectoral profile of economic activity in Kerala, and how agriculture and non-agriculture are structured within it and mixed in spatial terms. The next chapter will look at the components of non-agricultural activity, and examine

in greater detail what may be described as Kerala industrialism, the labour intensive, low technology, agro-processing. There will be an effort here to also examine the relationship between the political economy and the space economy. The ways in which the political economy bear on the space economy and spatial order will be made more explicit in the illustrative case studies of two industries in chapters eight and nine. The case studies will also provide a qualitative balance to the quantitative data presented in this and the next chapter.

The objective of the present chapter is to sketch the Kerala economic sectoral profile, or structure in broad categories, using the decennial censuses from 1901 to 1981. The use of census data is no doubt fraught with dangers. Compared to anthropological data and investigations, census data can be less reliable, less rigorous, less close to reality and provide minimal insight into processes. But on the other hand anthropological investigations do not yield data of the kind that can be readily compared over space and time. The study of desakota by its very spatial character makes a spatial comparison and understanding imperative. And Kerala desakota, as indicated earlier, is not a post-colonial developmental configuration. This then makes the time dimension equally imperative.

This study makes a very conscious effort to construct a macro time-space understanding of Kerala desakota. As will be discussed in the final chapter, a comparative study of Kerala desakota with desakota in other Asian regions or a micro level study within Kerala, using anthropological methodology, of desakota process and operation is feasible. But Kerala desakota by its continuous and contiguous spatial stretch in the lowlands and midlands and depth in time dictates a macro time-space approach and understanding. Comparative and/or micro studies will become useful as supplementary tasks or studies to a prerequisite macro time-space study. This makes it necessary to span the examination of non-urban, non-agricultural activity over the whole of the 20th century, and in spatial terms the whole of Kerala state.

There may be good reasons to confine the examination to the relatively more detailed and convenient Indian census data of 1961 to 1981. But a theme in this study is that Kerala desakota has not emerged out of the matrices of post-colonial demographic, economic, transport and communication formations and configurations. It was present during the colonial period and as we will see in the coir case study, the implications of the political economy for the spatial order was beginning be seen in the 1930s. The settlement pattern and transport facilities which play a role in Kerala desakota were present historically. So there is a need to look beyond the convenient slab of 1961-81 census data.

It is also difficult in a study such as this to ignore the pre-1961 census data. Not many countries have census data that span twelve decades that may at a minimum provide a rough estimation of the economic sectoral character of a region. The censuses initiated by the British were largely motivated by the need to collect demographic, economic and ethnographic data for colonial rule and administration. They were also infused with western conceptual perceptions, and the division of the spatial order in the censuses into urban and rural is a classic example. Among other factors the universalization of a urban-rural perception of space was propagated by census operations and ideology.

A subtle theme that underpins this study and the desakota hypothesis itself is the inapplicability of the urban-rural dichotomy as universalistic. There is an implicit effort to question the census concepts and categorization of urban and rural. This was present in the overt use of the term non-urban in place of rural in this study, when referring to the Kerala context. This is because the census category of rural includes both desakota and rural. The census categorization of urban-rural was also questioned in the context of the implications of the gender bias of the Indian census definition of urban, and the settlement pattern and historical size of the revenue villages in the Kerala context. And now the effort is to take the

Census's own economic data and examine the appropriateness of the urban-rural dichotomy in Kerala.

It is also important to note that what is being sought in this chapter is broad categorization of economic and occupational activity into agriculture and non-agriculture. What was deemed to be agriculture in 1901 may not be minutely identical with what it was in 1981, but it was not very different either. When, for instance, as in the next chapter, we compare the cotton textile industry as a category in the 1901 census with a similarly named category in the 1981 census, care has to be taken to find out whether they relate as comparable categories.

In sum, to demonstrate that the non-urban areas of the lowlands and midlands of Kerala are desakota, it is important to establish over a period of time, among other factors, a significant mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activity in what the Census designates as rural areas. In other words it is important to map out the space-time character of the Kerala sectoral structure. The decennial censuses as a register of information, though sometimes misleading and difficult to handle, yet remain as an important primary source of data on the sectoral structure of the Kerala workforce on a space-time dimension. Detailed examination of minute segments of census data have been made, to sketch in this chapter, the broad sectoral structure or profile of the Kerala workforce in the 20th century. The analysis justifies the conclusion that the census labour force data has analytical value when placed within the sequence of a number of decennial censuses. Their validity is enhanced when placed in such temporal context. Two preliminary tasks are called for before we examine the census data for the presence of non-agricultural activity in rural areas. First, an examination of definitions and concepts used in the Indian censuses. Second, a recognition of a floating pool of labour that mix and seasonally shift between agriculture and non-agriculture. Not only need do we have to understand how the censuses cope and depict this grey zone of the workforce, but we

have to take cognizance of this section of the workforce as an expression of desakota, as the mix of agricultural and non-agricultural work in the lives of desakotavazhis.[1]

Census data, definitions and concepts.

Nineteenth century censuses

The censuses used as source material for this chapter and the next are those of Travancore and Cochin princely states and the data relating to the Malabar district as appearing in the censuses of the Madras Presidency. This is for the period 1901 to 1941. For 1951 the census of the amalgamated region of Travancore-Cochin and Malabar district of the Madras State are used. From 1961 onwards Kerala State census data are used. It is useful at the outset to explain the reasons for confining the period of examination to 1901 - 1981, leaving out the 19th century censuses. In chapter three it was established that the censuses of the early and mid nineteenth century are useful for limited purposes of making crude estimates of population. The decennial censuses commencing in 1871 were found relatively more reliable for general population data. Unfortunately for the occupational character of the working population they remain inadequate. In 1871 only the male working population is recorded. In the 1891 censuses of Travancore and Malabar the working population and their dependents are presented as one aggregated figure. This leaves only the 1881 census as a source for 19th century, though some marginal use of the 1871 and 1891 censuses may be made for limited purposes. The comments in the Report of the Commissioner of Census of Travancore for 1891, on the censuses of 1875, 1881 and 1891 are useful in this context.

> In the Census of Travancore (1875) the occupation entries were secured only for male adults. I then remarked in my report:- "Women and children have not been entered under it, though in many instances they do follow some one occupation or other as a means of livelihood. In the northern taluqs the

1. **Vazhi means a resident or dweller in Malayalam, Tamil and Sinhalese.**

> women are mostly engaged in the cleaning of 'shacari' (coconut husk), the first of the coir making operations. Several hundreds of them, especially of the Elava caste, are employed as coolies in the Public Works Department. The little boys under 12 years of age who are returned as children in the forms are generally engaged in the occupation of their parents or guardians; of course the higher and more enlightened classes do not come under this category.
>
> The 1881 Census was a step in advance. This column, (referring to the occupation column in the census return), applied to all, whether for men, women or children, the standard being that the persons included should actually do work contributing to the family income.
>
> The present census (1891) is fuller, but takes a slightly different view of occupations. We have adopted on this occasion the means of subsistence of every man, woman or child, in the Kingdom as the standard. Suppose a man is returned as a Kurnam (village accountant), his wife and four children and himself, six in all, will be shown as subsisting by Government employment, they themselves having no other work to subsist by. The rule was: "For young children and women who do no work, enter the occupation of those by whom they are supported, but do not leave this column blank for anyone. The Government of India directed the addition of the word "dependent" in such cases. If the women and children had independent means of subsistence, they were of course shown under their respective occupations. (Census of Travancore 1891. Vol I. Report. V.Nagam Aiya. Dewan Peishcar & Census Commissioner. p561-2)

The Census Commissioner was aware that the aggregation of workers and dependents had disadvantages.

> It is pity that the present system did not allow of our finding out from the table the actual working males and females as distinguished from those who do not work. I do not think that the result of the entry is an improvement upon the Census of 1881. (Ibid p567)

For these reasons, except to present a broad division of agriculture and non-agriculture sectors in Table 6.1, the censuses of 1871 and 1891 have not been used. The use of 1881 census was rendered difficult by the non-availability of 1881 Census of Cochin.[2]

Twentieth century census definitions and concepts.

From 1901 to 1951 the occupation or to be precise the means of livelihood of a person was recorded if the person reported his usual status as one of earning or assisting in

2. The entire Indian Censuses from 1871 to 1951 have been made available on micro-fiche by the Inter-Documentation Co, Zurich. These were used for this study. Unfortunately the Census of Cochin, 1881 is not available in this collection.

the earning of a livelihood. Those who did not report such a status were recorded as dependents. The tabulations distinguished workers or earners from dependents. The nomenclature making this distinction and the recognition of an intermediate category of partial dependent differed from census year to year. Persons with a means of livelihood were described as "workers" and the rest of the household as "dependents" in the censuses from 1901 to 1921. In 1931 the rubrics were changed to "earners", "working dependents" and "non-working dependents". "Working dependants" were persons who added to the household income by their work. The 1941 census was conducted only in some parts of India due to the World War II. Among the places it was conducted were Travancore and Cochin Princely States.In these censuses the categories were those with the principal means of livelihood, (with or without subsidiary means of livelihood), "partly dependents" and "total dependents". The similarities to the 1931 classification are apparent, though the 1941 Census Report of Travancore states that in the case of the working dependents of 1931

> "their earnings reinforced only the family means of living while in the case of partly dependents (of 1941) the earnings contribute to their personal income which is supplemented by what they derive from their services as dependants of some other person".(Census of India 1941, Vol XXV Travancore, Part I Report, p64.)

In 1951 the categories became "self-supporting persons", "earning dependents" and "non-earning dependents".

The approach of the censuses from 1901 to 1951, was to view occupations as "some gainful activity by which a person makes an individual contribution to the upkeep of a household."(Ibid p63, Sinha 1972 p202 and Sinha 1982 p195). Since 1961 the census approach to enumerating the economic activity of the population is based on the labour force concept. This approach classifies persons into workers and non-workers on the basis of their economic activity status during a specified reference period. The use of a reference period is a

significant departure from the censuses of 1901 to 1951 which was based on the reported usual status of earning or assisting in the earning of livelihood.(Sinha 1972 p202 and Sinha 1982 p195).

Given these changes in approach, the comparison of census data on economic activity over the last eighty years is not a neat exercise. Even within the two broad periods from 1901 to 1951 and 1961 to 1981 when there was a similarity of approach, data collection and classification have not been uniform. Some of the differences in the censuses between 1901 and 1951 have already been observed. There are also differences among the censuses of 1961, 1971 and 1981. These centre on the use and definition of the reference period. The 1961 census has a dual reference period. In the case of regular employment it is fifteen days preceding the day of enumeration, while for seasonal employment the whole working season.

> .... in the case of seasonal work like cultivation, livestock, dairying, household industry, etc the basis of work is taken to be satisfied if the person has some regular work at least for more than one hour a day throughout the greater part of the working season.(Census of India 1961, Vol VII Kerala, Part II-B (i) General Economic Tables, p vii)

The 1971 census also uses a dual reference period.

> The reference period is one week prior to the date of enumeration in the case of regular work in trade, profession or business. In respect of seasonal work a person's main activity was ascertained with reference to such work in the last one year even if he was not economically active in the week prior to the enumeration.(Census of India 1971, Series 9 Kerala, Part II-B (i) Economic Tables, p3)

In the 1971 census:

> The "main activity" of a person was ascertained according to the time he spent i.e. how he engaged himself mostly. A worker was defined as a person whose main activity was participation in any economically productive work by his physical or mental activity.....A man or woman who was engaged primarily in household duties or a boy or girl who was primarily a student, even if such a person helped in the family economic activity but not as a full time worker he or she was not treated as a worker for the main activity. On the other hand if a person was primarily engaged in some economic activity but at the same time did also attend to some household chores or attend a night school etc

> he or she was treated as a worker for the main activity and categorized accordingly. (Ibid p3)

The 1981 census sorts out workers from non-workers in the first instance and then seeks to ascertain whether the workers worked for more than 183 days in the year preceding day of enumeration. If they had, they are classed as main workers, while those who had worked less than 183 days are marginal workers.

The reference period thus varies from one census to another. But Sinha observes:

> However, analysis of National Sample Survey data on work participation rates obtained on various rounds with different reference periods shows that the fluctuations are minor and do not bear any consistent relationship with the length of reference period. (Sinha 1982 p196)

In Sinha's view the main source of difference in the three censuses since 1961 lies in the criteria used for classifying workers and non-workers. He finds the 1961 and 1981 censuses' definition of workers liberal and the 1971 census definition restrictive. The 1981 census definition of worker is liberal because a person is enumerated as a worker even if he works for a few days during the year preceding the day of enumeration.(Sinha 1982 p196) This definition includes both main workers, who worked for more than 183 days in the preceding year, and marginal workers who worked less than 183 days but more than a few days. The 1961 census is liberal because of its treatment of seasonal workers. Even if a seasonal worker had worked for one hour a day for a greater part of the working season he or she becomes a worker. The qualification that this should be for a greater part of the working season makes the 1961 definition less liberal than the 1981 census. The 1971 census is restrictive since a person would be a worker only if his or her productive work is recognized as his or her main activity. If a person's main activity was being a student or housewife the person was categorized as a non-worker. Where such a person made a marginal contribution to work, that work was recorded as secondary work. One method of making the 1971 census less restrictive

and closer to the more liberal definition of work of the 1961 and 1981 censuses is to add to the 1971 data on workers the secondary workers.

It may be useful at this stage to refer to the concept of secondary workers in the Indian censuses. This information is recorded from as early as the 1891 census. The enumeration of secondary work is part of the overall effort in the Indian censuses to be sensitive to the nature and character of the Indian economy. Even in the use of the labour force concept since 1961, a liberal approach, was in recognition of this need to be sensitive to the character of the Indian economy. As Sinha succinctly puts it:

> According to the standard labour force approach, a person is classified as a worker if he participates in gainful work during a short reference period, say a week. The adoption of this approach in the Indian economy which has a dualistic structure presents difficult problems. Barely ten percent of workers in India are in the organized sector. Agriculture and seasonal industries account for by far the major part of the workers in the unorganized sector and most of them are engaged in family enterprises. They move in and out of the labour force, change from one job to another and combine household work with economically productive work in varying proportions. Thus, many persons participate in productive work but they do not form the pure category of workers. It is to cover this group that each census since 1961 has experimented with changes in concepts and definitions. (Sinha 1982. p 195)

The combination or dovetailing of agriculture off- season work with seasonal household or domestic manufacture and service occupational castes whose services were sometimes paid with grants of agricultural tenancy meant that some persons had more than one occupation at the same time during a yearly cycle of agricultural seasons. The mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activity was particularly evident. The censuses since 1891 made efforts to capture at least some of this mixed and fluid occupational character, though they do not appear to be exhaustive or consistent. We will discuss these issues in the next section.

Suffice to state now that secondary work data may be useful to decipher the fluid and mixed character of the workforce. It can also be used to inflate the workforce, if there is reason to believe that the workforce is understated or restricted as in the case of the 1971 census. There are also other corrective measures that help to put censuses over a time period into a comparable framework. A corrective measure that may make the 1901 to 1951 census data on workforce more comparable to the 1961 to 1981 workforce data is to eliminate all unproductive work and/or persons with unearned income from the workforce in the period 1901 to 1951. The means of livelihood approach from 1901 to 1951 permits the inclusion of those with income from pension, rented property, investments etc. However this category of persons can be identified in the tables and their numbers eliminated from the total. These corrective measures have been attempted in the preparation of the tables in this study. But this is not uniformly possible as data on secondary workers is not always presented at the same level of disaggregation, (three digit codes), as the main workers.

This discussion of the census concepts and definitions are a necessary prelude to the use of census data in this chapter to analyze the occupational structure of the Kerala workforce. As Schwartzberg suggests

> one must read not only the tables, but also the fine print that goes with them in the prose census reports and at times the so called "fly leaves" that are appended to the tables. Though the explanations of census concepts are typically as exciting as those relating to average insurance policy, timely consultation of either can yield significant dividends. (Schwartzberg 1981, p 57)

But excessive concern with concepts and definitions may also not be imperative. As Ashok Mitra states:

> It is important to remember that even if in print the concepts and definitions and the detailed instructions on such questions differ from one census to another, in actual working, that is, in canvassing the questionnaire from door to door, the finer distinctions tend to get blurred - both owing [a] to the small amount of time that the canvasser can actually devote to each household ; [b] to the fact that information is mostly obtained for other members of the

> household from the head of the household alone: and [c] to the other fact that neither the enumerators nor the respondents, by virtue of their limited education and their inability to interpret uniformly the finer nuances of instructions in their own language, are capable of nice distinctions and all that they understand and feel impelled to answer is whether a particular person has worked for his keeping or contributed to keeping the home fires burning, and what is the kind of work from the earnings or proceeds of which the home fires were kept burning. So while concepts and definitions have changed from one census to another, there should be a basic uniformity in comprehension in the elemental situation of India. The census return show work participation within the limits of what work or livelihood broadly means in village parlance and how it is perceived in the context of each household economy." (Mitra et al 1980. p18)

The workforce that mix, and shift between, non-agricultural and agricultural work.

A preliminary broad categorization of the workforce

We shall first present the sectoral profile at the Kerala State level in the broad categories of agriculture & fishing on the one hand and non-agriculture on the other. This is presented in Table 6.01 for the census years 1871 to 1981. Until 1941 the three political-administrative units of Travancore Princely State, Cochin Princely State and the Malabar District of the Madras Presidency had separate censuses. As explained in chapter two, with independence in 1947, Travancore and Cochin were amalgamated, and so had a common census in 1951. But Malabar continued to be separate until formation of the Kerala State in 1956. For Table 6.01 Travancore-Cochin and Malabar data have been aggregated. No adjustments have been made in the data upto 1951 for the areas transferred to and from Tamilnadu to correspond with the Kerala State territory as decreed in 1956. Since 1961 Kerala State census is published separately at the State level and is presented as such in Table 6.01.

The census concepts, definitions, classification, tabulations and even table numbering had a uniformity through out India. This was decided upon by the Imperial Commissioner of

Census until 1941 and from 1951 to the present by the Census Commissioner of India at New Delhi. The aggregate of separate censuses in Table 6.1 thus should not pose a problem.

TABLE 6.01

Kerala agricultural, casual and non-agricultural workforce as percent of total workforce: 1871 to 1981

	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
		1871			1881			1891	
Agr	29.4	[a]	[a]	29.4	11.9	41.3	24.8	24.0	48.9
C.L	35.7	[a]	[a]	10.9	6.4	17.3	8.5	9.0	17.5
Non-A	34.9	[a]	[a]	26.5	14.9	41.4	16.6	17.0	33.6
	100.0	[a]	[a]	66.8	33.2	100.0	50.0	50.0	100.0
		1901			1911			1921	
Agr	35.0	18.3	53.3	38.0	16.9	54.9	37.6	15.9	53.5
C.L	6.3	4.2	10.5	4.5	4.0	8.6	4.0	4.1	8.1
Non-A	22.6	13.5	36.2	23.3	13.3	36.6	26.1	12.3	38.4
	64.0	36.0	100.0	65.8	34.2	100.0	67.7	32.3	100.0
		1931			1941			1951	
Agr	35.3	13.2	48.5	44.2	8.5	52.7	44.2	13.9	58.1
C.L	10.5	5.6	16.1	5.9	1.4	7.3	2.7	1.1	3.8
Non-A	25.6	9.8	35.4	31.1	8.9	40.0	30.8	7.2	38.1
	71.4	28.6	100.0	81.2	18.8	100.0	77.7	22.3	100.0
		1961			1971			1981	
Agr	38.7	16.9	55.6	41.7	13.8	55.5	36.8	15.6	52.5
C.L	3.7	1.3	5.0	1.4	0.3	1.7	1.2	0.3	1.5
Non-A	27.8	11.6	39.4	33.5	9.3	42.8	34.4	11.7	46.0
	70.2	29.8	100.0	76.6	23.4	100.0	72.4	27.6	100.0

Sources: Derived from the Census of India 1891 to 1981, Census of Cochin 1875 and 1891, Census of Travancore 1875, 1881 and 1891 and Census of Madras Presidency 1871 and 1881.
Notes:
[a] Data not available
[b] Agriculture consists of cultivators, agriculture labour fishing, forestry, livestock and plantation workers.
[c] The 1871 data does not include fishing as this was not provided in the Census data.
[d] 0.5 million workers were transferred from casual labour to agricultural labour in 1961 following the correction suggested by the U.N.Study (1975. p80. footnote 16.)
[e] 1971 data is without secondary workers.
[f] 1981 data is the total of main and marginal workers.
[g] Data up to 1951 has not been adjusted for changes in Kerala State boundary in 1956.
[h] 1981 data is based on Travancore and Malabar only. 1941 data is based on Travancore and Cochin only. All other data from 1871 to 1931 is the aggregate of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. 1951 data is the aggregate of Travancore-Cochin and Malabar data. 1961 to 1981 data is the Kerala State data

Criticism however has been made that though the British Raj continuously attempted to make the census findings useful, concerns varied with time and region. It is pointed out that concepts and definitions filtered through a census bureaucracy which was region specific.(Barrier 1981 p-viii) Kerala during the British Raj though constituted of three political-administrative regions nonetheless had, as argued in the chapter two, a homogeneity of being a Malayalam speaking region. This gave a commonalty to the region specific concerns of the three units. It was a commonalty that emerged from the use of one language and a historical memory of being one linguistic-cultural region.

Casual labour and its significance

The intention in formulating Table 6.01 was to make explicit the agricultural and non-agricultural components of the workforce. But the Table presents a third category of casual labour. It is presented as such because it is not possible to identify whether the casual labour was engaged in agriculture or non-agriculture. The censuses too had to cope with the same issue of whether the livelihood of these persons was to be enumerated as agriculture or some other occupation for they are likely to have engaged in casual manual work of differing nature at different times of the year. Some of this may have been in agriculture while others may have been in non-agriculture.

Casual labour in Census data as an indeterminate category between agriculture and non-agriculture to a considerable extent reflects a reality. It is a floating and fluid labour that is continuously moving between and mixing agriculture and non-agriculture work. It may be argued that in pre-colonial times, though some movement between agriculture and non-agriculture was present in South India, massive periodic occupational mobility was unlikely.

Caste structures constrained such mobility. But some of the social and economic changes of the 19th century loosened some of these inhibiting structures.

First, agrestic slave castes tied to the land were released from such bondage with the abolition of slavery in the mid 19th century.(Tharmamangalam 1981. p39). Table 2.04, (see chapter two), shows that in 1901 these castes, (Pulaya, Cheruman and Paraiyan), numbered close to half a million, and were about 7.4 percent of the Kerala population. When released occupationally, though the majority remained in agricultural work, large numbers may have sought work outside agriculture, swelling the category of casual workers. Second, the population growth with land for agricultural use limited, resulted in unemployment and underemployment. This inflated the floating pool of casual workers always in search of work.

Third the expansion of the agro-processing industries beginning in the mid-19th century, with its ancillary services, and its peaks and troughs in the market, generated in part the floating pool of labour. This was a reserve army of labour that industries could dip into when and if in need of labour. Fourth, some of the social changes, particularly the rise of the Ezhavas and the decline of the Nayars had their implications. Some of the Ezhavas, whose traditional occupation was toddy tapping and allied coconut cultivation and/or coconut based activities moved out to such occupations such as handloom cotton textiles. (Census ofIndia 1901, Vol XV Pt II p359-360; Vol XX Pt II p76-78; Vol XXVI Pt II p368-370) But some who could not make it in the newly expanding industries, fell into the floating casual labour category. Some of the traditionally less privileged Nayar sub-castes may have with the intra-Nayar caste dependencies breaking down, been forced into casual labour.

In the context of the censuses how the casual labour are eventually enumerated depends on the interpretation given by the census staff and perhaps more importantly the date of census and whether it falls within the agricultural cultivation season or outside it. This

might partly explain the varying percentages of casual labour over the period covered by Table 6.01 as well as among the three political-administrative units Kerala during the British Raj. Appendix 6.01, from which Table 6.01 is compiled[3] presents agriculture & fishing, casual labour and non-agriculture disaggregated by the three political-administrative units.

Overall at the state level Table 6.01 reflects a declining trend for casual labour from about 17 percent in the late 19th century to 1.5 percent in 1981. The deviation is understandably in the depression census year of 1931. The over all long term trend may be reflecting the improving census enumeration over the decades. Census enumerators may have been able to track down occupation of the workers better than before. On the other hand it may be the result of census enumerators more readily pigeon holing workers into occupational categories by a set of bureaucratic rules and insensitive to the mixed occupational character of some of the workers. At the disaggregated level of the three political-administrative units casual labour is particularly high for Travancore. It is in the range of 27 to 32 percent in the 19th century and gradually declines to about 7 to 8 percent by the 1931-1941 period. Cochin too records high percentages in 1871 (60.3 %) and 1891 (31.5 %) and then stabilizes approximately between 5 and 8 percent during the entire period of 1901 to 1941. Malabar having had a high percent of 47.9 in 1871 drops to a low range of 1 to 8 percent during the period 1891 to 1921 and then peaks again at 30.9 percent in 1931.

For the post-independence Kerala State it was 3.8 in 1951 and dropped to 1.7 and 1.5 in 1971 and 1981 respectively. It was a freak 13.8 in 1961. The U.N. study (1975. p80 f16) of Kerala after close examination of the 1961 Census Tables was of the view that nearly 0.5 million agricultural workers were erroneously classified as casual workers. (In census

3. Appendix 6.01 complies the basic data for the period 1871 to 1941. Table 6.01 is derived from this data and the census data from 1951 to 1981. There is no need to aggregate 1961 to 1981 data as there was one census for the whole of Kerala during this period. For 1951 the data of Travancore-Cochin and Malabar district are aggregated.

terminology as "unspecified and inadequately described"). The 1961 figure has been corrected, following this finding of the UN study, by transferring 0.5 million workers from casual to agricultural work. The percentages shown for 1961 in Table 6.01 are after this correction.

These differences are suggestive of differing interpretation by the census bureaucracy of different years and of the three different political-administrative units until 1941. But at the same time the differing percentages of the three units may to some extent reflect differing realities. Malabar relative to Travancore and Cochin had a greater concentration of rice growing areas as well as plantation agriculture. This may have led to a greater demand for agricultural labourers. Travancore, on the other hand, as we observed in chapter three in the context of land use pattern, had a greater presence of seasonal agro-processing industries together with rice cultivation, plantation agriculture and spice production. A greater floating casual labour population is then to be expected in Travancore. The high percentage of casual labour in 1871 in Malabar and Cochin may be due to the uncertainty in the first decennial census of dealing with a labour force that was attached to more than one occupation. The high percentage in 1931 for Malabar may be due to persons seeking any kind of work, including casual work consequent to the depression.

Census classification and the floating labour

It useful in the context of this discussion on casual workers to quote a brief summary of industrial and occupational classification in the censuses.

> The industrial classification adopted in the population censuses vary from census to census. Till the 1951 Census the classification was generally an amalgam of industrial and occupational features..... In the 1961 Census, for the first time in census history the economic data were collected and tabulated separately under "industrial" and "occupational" classification. For this purpose the term "industry" denoted the sector of economic activity in which the

> worker was engaged while the term "occupation" covered the exact function or work that an individual performed in that sector. The Standard Industrial Classification adopted in the 1961 Census was divided into 9 divisions, 45 major groups and 343 minor groups.(Census of India 1971, Series 9 Kerala, Part II-B (i) Economic Tables. p83-84)

In this study, the census tables of 1961 and subsequent years that are used are largely confined to those using the standard industrial classification, as distinguished from occupational classification.[4] The Indian Standard Industrial Classification followed the International Standard Industrial Classification recommended and used by the United Nations. (Census of India 1961. Vol VII Part II-B (i) Fly leaf to Table B-1V. p 81) This was revised and made into the National Industrial Classification. (N.I.C.1970) This consists of 10 divisions (at the first digit level), 66 major groups (at the second digit level) and 386 minor groups (at the third digit level).(Census of India 1971, Series 9 Kerala, Part II-B (i) Economic Tables. p84) This classification was used at the 1971 and 1981 Censuses. With regard to casual labour the 1961 Census observes:

> under minor group 900 - activities unspecified and not adequately described - are considerably large in both rural and urban areas of all districts. Most of these entries relate to those returning their nature of work as "general coolies" or "general labourers" and the nature of industry as "no fixed place of work." (Census of India 1961, Vol VII Pt II-B, Fly leaf to Table B-IV, p81)

It is clear that though a more systematic and rigorous classification has been introduced since 1961 the floating and fluid labour could not be wished away and continued, even as diminished percentages in 1971 and 1981, to pose a problem for the census enumerators. In 1961 as we observed earlier 0.5 million workers were incorrectly classified. The distinction between agricultural and casual workers is difficult to maintain consistently, for a worker can be both at the same time or a agricultural worker during the cultivation peak season and a casual worker during the off season. This problem is not peculiar to 1961 and is

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4."Occupational" classification in the census of 1961 and subsequent years gives the professional group categories such as engineers, technicians, nurses, teachers, masons, etc. But these categories group together workers of the same occupation in different industrial categories. For example engineers would include engineers in the agricultural, manufacturing, mining, transport , communication and service sectors.

present throughout the earlier censuses as well. One way out of this is to lump the agricultural workers and the casual workers together. But this does not help in our quest to sift the agricultural workers from non-agricultural workers.[5] But it does point to a segment of the workforce that is mixing agricultural and non-agricultural work, if not at the same time, during the yearly cycle of agricultural seasons.

Taken together the agricultural and casual workers of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar until 1951 and of Kerala during the period 1961 to 1981 make up a third of the total workforce. There is a remarkable consistency over a period of eight decades with the percentage lowest at 28.8 in 1921 and the highest at 34.1 in 1901. (See Appendix 6.02). Even in the last three decades, with the refinement of census concepts and operations, the percentage has remained within this range. It was 31.1, 32.4 and 31.1 percent in 1961, 1971 and 1981 respectively. 1941 is out of step with this trend because the percentage is distorted by the absence of Malabar data.[6]

What is equally significant is that female participation in agricultural labour and casual labour has been consistently high throughout the eight decades peaking at 50.4 percent in 1971 and a trough of 39.5 percent in 1961. For all the other years it had fluctuated between 43.3 and 45.8 percent. In a context of an overall declining female participation rate this is remarkable. As the U.N. study observed

> Significantly, the percentage of agricultural labourers in the total female population has shown no clear declining trend over this period, (1901 to 1971), hence agricultural labourers accounted for nearly one half of the total

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5. But nonetheless in Appendix 6.02 is presented for the period 1901 to 1981 the decennial census enumeration of agricultural labourers and casual labourers; the total of these two categories; total workforce; and agricultural and casual workers jointly as a percent of total workforce. This compilation demonstrates the size of the agricultural and casual labourers, jointly and severally.

6. There was only a population count, and no detailed census of economic activity etc in the Madras Presidency in 1941 on account of the World War II. Thus Malabar district data are not available for 1941.

female working force in 1971 compared to less than one third in 1901. (U.N.1975.p75)

This suggests the movement of women from household petty production to agricultural work. There may be an element of deskilling here. This is not to suggest that agricultural labour is unskilled. Women's work in agricultural production, particularly in rice transplanting, has been shown to be one of the more exacting tasks carried out by one of the more exploited workforces in South India. (Mencher and Saradamoni 1982) Nor is to suggest that household industries are necessarily "skilled'. But women in Kerala have been edged into exacting agricultural work from petty household production, whether skilled or unskilled. The increasing entry, in absolute numbers, into agriculture by women manifests in a way a reverse process of labour shedding encountered in recent decades in the context of the green revolution elsewhere in Asia.

The fall in female workforce has two aspects. First, there is a fall in the ratio of female to male workers. (See columns 10 and 11 of Appendix 6.02) Second, there is a fall in absolute numbers in 1921, 1931 and 1951.[7] The slight drop in 1921 is caused by the decline of household industries which had high female participation rates. 1931 was the peak of the depression and possibly men were taking over some of the jobs done by women. Female workers in absolute numbers continued to decline in 1951.

There are two factors influencing this decline. First, as Sinha observes, because the receipt of regular income was the criterion of economic activity, unpaid family workers are likely to have been omitted. (Sinha 1982. p197) Women constitute a major share of family labour, and hence the decline in women workers in absolute numbers in 1951 may be a consequence of the census definition of a worker. Second, with increasing population and

7. 1941 data is distorted as Malabar is not included. In the 1941 Census in Malabar there was no enumeration of economic or occupational activity.

greater numbers in search of employment, women may have been edged out males. The rise in female workers in 1961 and 1981 is likely due to the liberal definition of a worker in these two years, and the upswing in the market and production of some agro-processing industries. 1971 records a slight drop relative to 1961, which is possibly due to the restrictive definition of a worker in 1971.

Agricultural workers and casual workers together represent in the Kerala context a mass labour force, landless except for their residential houses and a small garden or compound surrounding it. They exclude the regular wage earners, in plantations, in agro-processing industries etc. They also exclude casual manual workers (N.I.C. 1970 Code 706) in the transport sector, less euphemistically referred to in English usage in Kerala as "Head Loaders", because they do, or once upon a time did, transport the goods in baskets placed on their heads ! [8]

This enormous floating proletariat, underemployed and in search of work is the bottom bulge of two bulges of people in search of work. The other is the educated unemployed youth, some of them the children of the floating proletariat, who having used the educational facilities provided by the state as a social mobility avenue are now caught in the bottle neck of finding employment matching their educational achievement.

Agricultural labourers

It is useful at this stage to briefly discuss the role of agricultural workers. The censuses since 1961 define agricultural labourers as follows.

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8. The informal urban manual transport workers numbered 51588 (1971) in Kerala. (Vijayasankar 1986 p17). Vijayasankar examines trade unionism among these workers and the efforts by the trade union to restrict entry to the occupation, to prevent wages from falling. (Ibid p21)

> A person who works in another person's land for wages in money, kind or share should be regarded as an agricultural labourer. He or she has no risk in the cultivation but he/she merely works in another person's land for wages. An agricultural labourer has no right of lease or contract on land on which he/she works.(Census of India 1981, Series 10 Kerala, Part III A&B [i], p21)

As indicated in chapter three only work involved in the cultivation of cereals and specified oil seeds is defined as agriculture. Others doing cultivation work for wages are treated as plantation workers. In India agricultural labourers have been and still are an important and integral part of the agrarian scene. This has strong linkages to the caste system and its occupational characteristics. Kerala was no exception. The agrarian castes of Kerala were the Nambudri Brahmins, the Nayars, the Pulayas, the Cherumans and the Paraiyans.[9] The Nambudri Brahmins were a landlord agriculturalist caste. Caste rules did not permit them to do manual work and so their rice fields were formerly worked by the agrestic slave caste of Pulayas, (or Cherumans as they were called in Malabar district), and the Paraiyans. Though legal sanctions or state legitimization of an agrestic slave relationship were not present in the 19th and 20th centuries the Pulayas continued to serve as agricultural labourers. [10] The Nayars were a warrior-agriculturalist caste and were also the dominant caste of Kerala.[11] Most of them were owner-cultivators or tenant-cultivators but using agricultural labourers during peak cultivating seasons. Some of them by a process of sanskritization[12] have ceased to be

9. There are few other agricultural castes which are sub-region (district) specific and numerically not significant.

10. Pulayas, Cherumans and Paraiyans are untouchable, harijan or scheduled castes of Kerala. "Untouchable" is a Brahminic perception but was used by British administrators and scholars to describe castes whose members would be ritually polluting for a Brahmin to come into physical contact or within a prescribed distance. Harijans, meaning "children of God" is a name given to such caste groups by Gandhi in an effort to remove the social discrimination and stigma that the caste group members suffered. Scheduled Castes is often used in recent decades by administrators and academics as these castes are listed in official schedules that make them eligible for affirmative action. In recent years members of these caste groups along with tribal peoples, (aboriginal peoples of the sub-continent, an another socially and economically disadvantaged group,) have called themselves "dalits", meaning the "oppressed". Other agricultural labour castes of Kerala are Kannakans and Paniyans who are not numerically significant.

11. See chapter two, footnote 7, for a definition of the concept dominant caste.

12. See chapter two, footnote 9, for a definition of the concept sanskritization.

manually involved in the cultivation of their rice fields and engage agricultural labourers to do so.

Apart from these castes associated with rice cultivation there are other semi-agriculturalist castes like the Ezhavas whose traditional occupation was toddy tapping and other allied coconut based activities.

The significance of the floating labour pool.

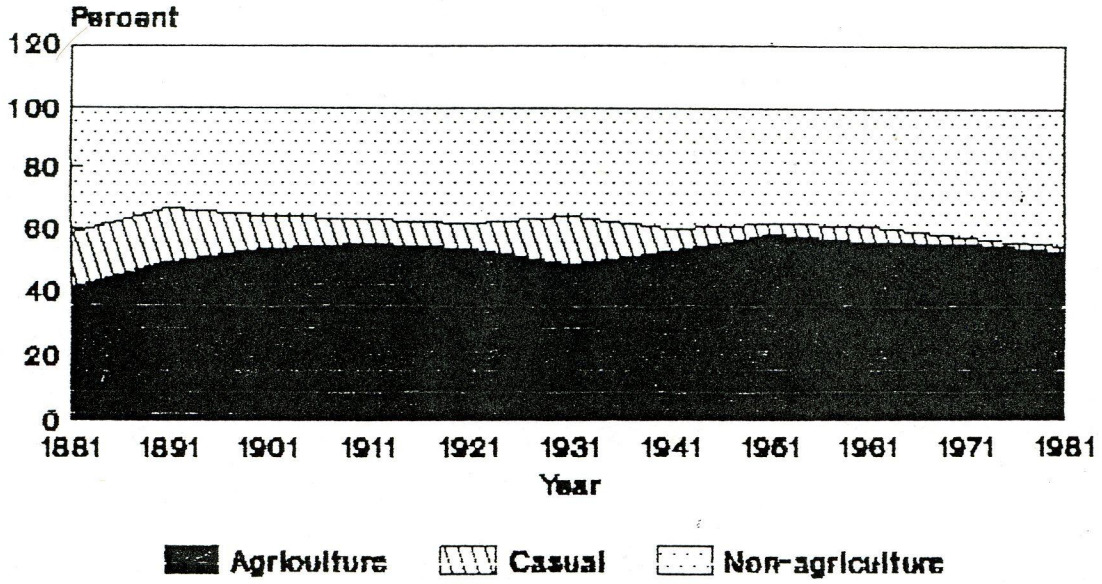
This discussion on casual labour and agricultural labour was necessary for a number of reasons. First it made explicit that casual labour occupied a grey area between agriculture and non-agriculture. And this is a manifestation of desakota. The opportunities for non-agricultural work create conditions for the emergence of casual workers. If the irregular work the underemployed found was in agriculture, they would have been described as agricultural workers. The indistinct character of the irregular work indicates the presence of both agricultural and non-agricultural work opportunities, a desakota economy of a mix of agriculture and non-agriculture. Secondly it was pointed out that casual labour together with agricultural labour formed a substantial part of the workforce. Thirdly the discussion helped to discern that a large section of the agricultural and casual labour are in fact underemployed. Fourthly it brings out some of the structural features of the Kerala workforce, features that are obviously influenced by population growth and increasing population density. All this help to describe the scenario within which occurs Kerala desakota.

The mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activity

Having dealt with census concepts and definitions, and the importance of casual work from the perspective of this study of Kerala desakota, we may now turn to a more fundamental purpose in this chapter. This is to measure the extent to which the non-urban workforce of Kerala is engaged in a mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activity. Table 3.13, (chapter three), demonstrated that a significant percentage of the rural workforce is in non-agricultural activity, and this is higher than in all other states of India. Table 6.01 presented the broad sectoral profile of Kerala workforce for the period 1871 to 1981, but the textual comments and discussion were confined to casual labour and agricultural labour. To bring out the mix of agriculture and non-agriculture the data in Table 6.01 is now diagrammatically presented in Fig 6.01. The 1871 data is left out as the census data on occupations of that year is confined only to males. As Table 6.01 was compiled by aggregating the census data of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, the data before aggregation (presented in Appendix 6.01) has been plotted on a graph in Fig 6.02. It reveals a remarkable consistency, subject to a few variations, in all three political-administrative units up to 1941. This consistent trend continues even more remarkably in and after 1951 in the Kerala State data. The only variations are a slight dip of Travancore in 1891 and relative to the consistent pattern from 1881 to 1981 all three political-administrative units show a low beginning in 1871.

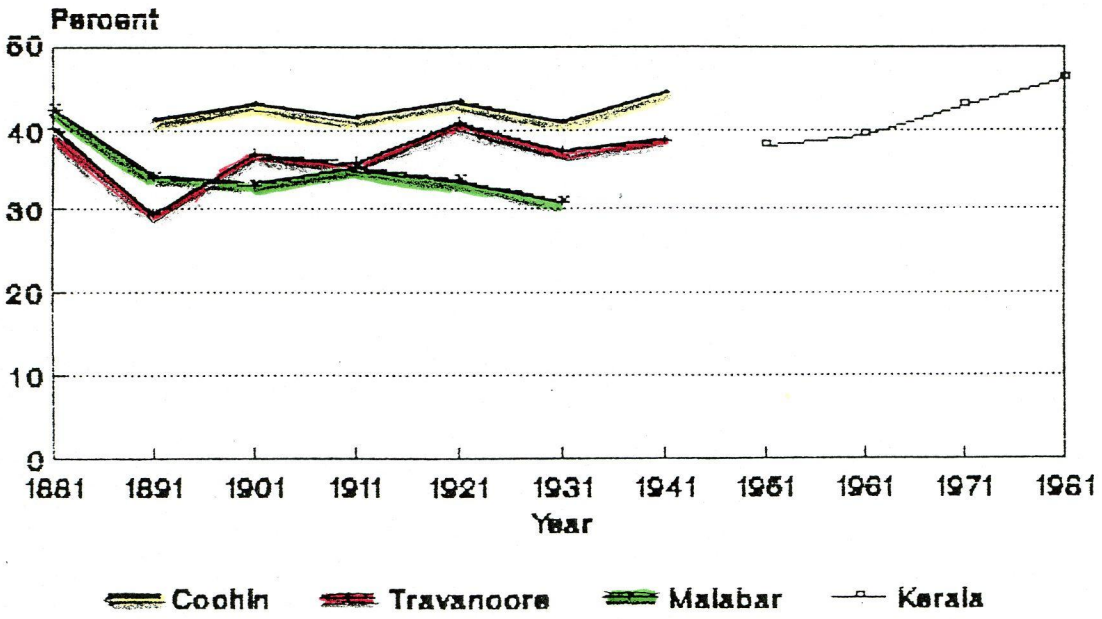
There was no enumeration of the female workforce in the first decennial census of 1871. The percentages of 1871 is thus based only on the male workforce. This may be causing a distortion. Table 6.01 shows that more females were engaged in non-agricultural activity than in agricultural activity in Travancore in 1881, 1901, 1911 and 1921 and in Cochin in 1891. The subsequent change to higher female participation in agriculture is related to the overall decline in the female participation rate in the workforce. This as was discussed earlier in this

Figure 6.01
Agriculture, Casual and Non-agriculture
Workforce: Kerala 1881 - 1981



Source Table 6.01
1871 is left out as only male workforce data is available.

Figure 6.02
Non-Agricultural Workforce 1881-1981
Travancore, Cochin, Malabar & Kerala.



Source: Appendix 6.01 and Table 6.01
Agriculture includes casual labour.

chapter was partly due to the decline of some traditional household or domestic industries which had high female participation. In 1871, before the decline in female participation rates took place, the percentages based only on males may then not be a reliable measure of non-agricultural work.

A weakness of this data is that it relates to the whole of Kerala State and does not distinguish between urban and rural. Given the low urban ratio of Kerala for the period covered in Table 6.01 it does mean that agriculture and non-agriculture workforce mix must be present in the non-urban areas as well. But we need to explore the specific mix in the non-urban areas. Unfortunately census occupational data classified by census urban-rural areas in a systematic manner is available only from 1951. Prior to this date for some years Travancore and Cochin censuses provide occupational data by urban-rural areas but in the case of Malabar such data is provided only for Kozhikode (Calicut) city and not for all urban areas in Malabar.

Whatever classification by urban-rural areas that can be derived from the censuses is presented in Appendix 6.03 It clearly demonstrates the presence of non-agricultural activity in rural areas. It shows that 91.0 percent to 97.8 percent of the total workforce were in rural areas of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar district, during the period 1901 to 1931, supporting the observation made earlier that the low urban ratio of Kerala would mean that a substantial section of its workforce would be non-urban. In the mix of agriculture and non-agriculture, the non-agricultural component ranged from of 29.8 percent (lowest) in Malabar district in 1931 to 38.5 percent (highest) in 1881 also in Malabar district, for the period 1881 to 1941. Between 1951 and 1981 non-agricultural component had increased from 38.1 percent to 46.1 percent. This is shown in Table 6.02, classified by urban and rural areas, which are more clearly defined and presented in these census years.

Table 6.02 brings out clearly the substantial mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activity in rural or non-urban Kerala from 1951 to 1981. The ratio of the mix of non-agriculture to agriculture in rural areas approximated 3:5 for the entire period 1951 to 1981. The mix is even slightly present in the urban areas, the ratio being 3:1 for 1951 and 1961, and 4:1 for 1971 and 1981. The dominance of agricultural activity is to be expected in rural areas. What is significant in the Kerala rural context is

TABLE 6.02

Agriculture and Non-agriculture workforce by urban and rural areas Kerala : 1951 - 1981

Year	Sector	Agriculture		C.L	Non: Agric		Total
		%	Ratio	%	%	Ratio	%
1951	Urban	3.7	[1]	0.1	10.1	[3]	14.0
	Rural	54.4	[5]	3.7	28.0	[3]	86.0
	Total	58.1	[6]	3.8	38.1	[4]	100.0
1961	Urban	2.3	[1]	0.6	10.4	[3]	13.3
	Rural	53.3	[5]	4.4	29.0	[3]	86.7
	Total	55.6	[5.5]	5.0	39.4	[4]	100.0
1971	Urban	2.8	[1]	0.9	11.3	[4]	15.0
	Rural	52.7	[5]	0.8	31.5	[3]	85.0
	Total	55.5	[5.5]	1.7	42.8	[4.3]	100.0
1981	Urban	3.1	[1]	0.4	13.3	[4]	16.8
	Rural	49.4	[5]	1.1	32.7	[3]	83.2
	Total	52.5	[5.3]	1.5	46.0	[4.6]	100.0

Source: Census of India 1951, 1961, 1971 & 1981

Notes :

a) C.L refers to casual labour or workers

b) Non-agriculture refers to workers other than cultivators, agricultural labourers, forestry, livestock, plantation, fishing, hunting and casual workers.

c) Ratios are approximate.

that the agricultural workforce is just only a little more than half of the total workforce. This is mainly made up of cultivators and agricultural labour.

Given this study's objectives, outlined in chapter one, what is important to demonstrate is the mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activity. There is little need to disaggregate and scrutinize the agricultural component by the nature of the activity, such as family and/or self employed labour (cultivators) or wage labour (agricultural workers). Nor is it important to analyze it by crops. The land use pattern examined in chapter three adequately described for purpose of this study the character of agriculture in Kerala. Suffice to recall that rice is the most important crop but with a substantial presence of coconut. But Kerala does not possess a rice bowl agrarian economy. Coconut cultivation was also noted for its low labour absorption capacity, and so is possibly contributing to the relatively reduced agricultural workforce or labour participation in agriculture.

But on the hand there is a need to prise open the character of non-agricultural workforce to understand its substantial presence in the non-urban or rural areas. This is of importance to this study of Kerala desakota. The next chapter deals with this in depth. But it is useful to have an overview at this stage by briefly examining the urban and rural components of the non-agricultural sector. This is presented in Table 6.03. This table classifies the non-agricultural workforce of the period 1951 to 1981 by sex and urban-rural areas. It shows that while the urban component of the total of Kerala State non-agricultural workforce had increased from 25.5 percent in 1951 to 28.9 percent in 1981, the rural sector continues to retain the substantial share. It was 74.5 percent in 1951, rising to 75.6 percent in 1961 and then declining slightly to 71.1 percent by 1981. Even the most reliable of Indian Census data, the male workforce of the census years 1961 and 1981 reflect the substantial presence of non-agriculture in the rural areas.

TABLE 6.03

Non-agricultural workforce by urban and rural areas
Kerala : 1951 - 1981

Sector	1951	1961	1971	1981
	%	%	%	%
Urban				
Males	21.6	19.0	21.9	22.7
Females	3.9	5.4	5.2	6.2
Total	25.5	24.4	27.1	28.9
Rural				
Males	59.3	51.5	56.5	51.8
Females	15.1	24.1	16.4	19.3
Total	74.5	75.6	72.9	71.1
Grand Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Derived from Census of India 1951, 1961, 1971 & 1981
Notes : Non-agriculture refers to workers other than cultivators, agricultural labourers, forestry, livestock, plantation, fishing, hunting and casual workers.

It should be noted in this context, that the urban ratio, or the urban share of the total population, is low in Kerala and follows the national trend. (See Table 4.01 in chapter four). In such a situation a large non-agricultural workforce has to be partly rural in character. It was also demonstrated in chapter four, that non-agricultural activity was not in peri-urban regions or concentrated in pockets. If this was so it was argued such areas would have qualified to be deemed urban, as did happen in the some settlements around Cannanore. In Kerala all settlements meet all the criteria to be deemed urban except the economic or workforce criteria. If concentrations of rural non-agricultural activities occur, this criterion too will be met. This issue raised in chapter four and now being re-emphasized is that rural non-agricultural activity is not concentrated in mega-urban or peri-urban regions in Kerala but scattered in the rural areas of lowland and midland Kerala.

What has been clearly demonstrated by the quantitative data presented is the presence of non-agricultural activity in the rural or non-urban areas. And this it was argued was not concentrated in peri-urban areas or pockets, but spread out in the rural areas of the lowlands and midlands forming a mix of agriculture and non-agriculture. This is the core characteristic of desakota, and so establishes beyond reasonable doubt the presence of desakota in Kerala. Before we turn to examine in depth in the next chapter the nature of the non-agricultural activity, and the factors that influence its presence in the non-urban areas, it is useful to present a sectoral overview of the Kerala workforce including agriculture and non-agriculture by its main sub-sectors.

Sectoral overview of the Kerala workforce

Table 6.04 presents a sectoral overview of the Kerala workforce for the period 1901 to 1981. 1871 to 1891 has been left out because the data is inadequate to categorize by detailed sectors.[13] Agriculture fluctuated between 52.5 percent and 58.1 percent over the eight decades from 1901, except in 1931 when it dropped to 48.5 percent. This is a fairly narrow range of variation for a span of eight decades, in spite of census definitional changes. Within agriculture, if we ignore the depression year of 1931, and 1941 which is distorted by the absence of Malabar district data, there is a remarkable consistency of the percentage of cultivators and agricultural labour until 1951. The decline in 1961 of the percentage of cultivators may be due to the more restrictive definition of cultivators introduced in that year and in use in the subsequent years as well. Since 1961 there is a decline in cultivators. There is a thin line separating the marginal owner and tenant cultivators from agricultural labour. Some of them indulge in both types of activity. Possibly with fragmentation and increasing pressure on land there is a downward mobility of some of the marginal owner cultivators and

13. Moreover for 1871 only the male workers were enumerated. For 1881, Cochin Census data is not available and 1891 tabulates only the aggregate of workers and dependents.

TABLE 6.04

Sectoral distribution of Kerala workforce: 1901 - 1981

	1901 %	1911 %	1921 %	1931 %	1941 %	1951 %	1961 %	1971 %	1981 %
Agr									
Cultv	24.4	26.3	26.3	22.0	25.6	27.1	20.9	17.8	13.7
Ag:Lb	24.1	22.4	20.8	16.8	15.7	24.7	26.3	30.7	29.6
Other	4.8	6.2	6.5	9.8	11.5	6.2	9.4	7.0	9.2
	53.3	54.9	53.5	48.5	52.7	58.1	55.6	55.5	52.5
Non-Ag									
Mines	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.8
Mfg	27.3	18.9	18.9	15.9	17.1	15.8	18.0	15.8	16.5
Const	[a]	[a]	[a]	[a]	[a]	1.6	1.3	1.7	2.9
T & C	[a]	8.6	9.8	8.9	10.4	8.6	7.5	9.1	10.2
Trsp	2.3	2.5	2.3	2.3	2.4	3.3	2.7	3.9	4.9
Serv	6.5	6.5	7.4	8.2	9.9	8.2	9.6	11.8	10.8
	36.2	36.6	38.4	35.4	40.0	38.1	39.4	42.8	46.0
Cas:Lb	10.5	8.6	8.1	16.1	7.3	3.8	5.0	1.7	1.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
`000	2925	3059	3072	3185	[b]	3788	5630	6216	7771

Sources: Derived from Censuses of India 1901 to 1981.

Notes

[a] Construction is included in manufacturing and services for the period 1901 to 1941. Trade and Commerce is included in manufacturing in 1901. Identifying and separating these categories involves disaggregation at the three digit level of over 300 categories and hence not attempted.

[b] Census was not conducted in 1941 in Malabar. The percentages pertain to the aggregate of Travancore and Cochin workforce only.

[c] Some categories at the three digit level were regrouped to conform to the 1971-81 classification of Industrial Groups I to IX. This included the transfer of hair dressing, laundry, utilities (water, electricity and gas) and domestic services from manufacturing, etc to services and hotel etc from services to trade and commerce for some years during 1901 to 1961.

[d] Others under agriculture include forestry, fishing, livestock, plantation and hunting.

[e] Notes d, e, f, g, and h to Table 6.01 apply to Table 6.04

tenants into agricultural labour. "Other" under agriculture consists of forestry, fishing, livestock and plantations. It has increased from 4.8 percent in 1901 to 9.2 percent in 1981.

Non-agriculture has risen from 36.2 percent in 1901 to 46.0 percent in 1981. This rise is a steady increase but for the dip to 35.4 in 1931 and a peaking to 40.0 in 1941. 1931 was

the year of the depression and 1941 data does not include Malabar. These factors may have influenced the slight deviations of these two census years. The steady increase appears to be taking place at the expense of casual services or labour except in the last two years where it seems statistically related to the decline of the cultivators.

Within non-agricultural activity manufacturing is the biggest component followed by trade and commerce and services. Manufacturing's share would appear to have declined slightly from 18.9 to 16.5 over the seven decades from 1911.[14] But this included construction workers up to 1941. If this is adjusted for there is perhaps little variation except in the depression year of 1931 and 1941 which excludes Malabar data. Trade and commerce as well as services had been increasing over the decades, services at a faster rate in the post-independence decades to become the second largest component of non-agricultural activity in the 1951-1981 period.

Since economic activity by urban-rural areas is provided in the censuses from 1951 onwards, Table 6.05 tabulates this information together with sex ratios in the sectoral distribution of the work force. Column 2 of Table 6.05 gives the urban component of each sectoral work force group or category for the particular year and similarly column 3 for the male component. As the censuses beginning in 1951 provide manufacturing disaggregated by household industries and non-household industries this information is also provided in Table 6.05.

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14. The 1901 figure for manufacturing is excluded as it is inflated by the inclusion within it of trade and commerce as well.

TABLE 6.05

Sectoral distribution of Kerala workforce with urban and males component (percent) of each sector : 1951 to 1981

Workforce Sectors	Total %	Within the Sector %		Total %	Within the Sector %	
		Urban	Males		Urban	Males
	1951			*1961*		
Agriculture						
Cultivators	27.1	5.6	80.3	20.9	3.1	76.8
Agr: Labourers	24.7	5.5	69.8	26.3	6.6	59.9
Others [d]	6.2	13.5	82.2	8.4	9.0	80.9
Sub-total	58.1	6.4	76.1	55.6	4.2	68.6
Non-agriculture						
Mining	0.5	6.1	96.2	0.4	3.7	96.8
Mfg: Household	7.0	14.8	70.6	8.6	9.9	38.2
Mfg: Non-household	8.8	20.6	76.1	9.4	25.6	74.2
Construction	1.6	20.7	94.7	1.3	19.6	95.7
Trade & Commerce	8.6	30.3	72.8	7.5	29.9	92.6
Trp, Storage & Comm:	3.3	32.3	95.0	2.7	37.7	95.0
Services	8.2	34.3	73.5	9.6	29.7	67.2
Sub-total	38.1	25.5	81.0	39.4	24.4	70.5
Casual Services	3.8	17.3	71.3	5.0	13.3	74.3
Total - Percent	100.0	14.1	77.7	100.0	13.4	70.1
- `000	3788	534	2945	5630	755	3947
	1971			*1981*		
Agriculture						
Cultivators	17.8	3.4	93.9	13.7	3.3	84.7
Agr: Labourers	30.7	4.9	62.7	29.6	5.4	59.7
Others [a]	7.0	10.6	82.0	9.2	11.2	82.5
Sub-total	55.5	5.1	75.1	52.5	5.9	70.2
Non-agriculture						
Mining	0.5	9.8	92.3	0.8	7.9	91.9
Mfg: Household	4.3	12.9	55.5	4.0	14.0	43.0
Mfg: Non-household	11.5	24.7	74.9	12.5	28.4	68.4
Construction	1.7	21.1	96.0	2.9	28.8	92.5
Trade and Commerce	9.1	30.7	94.9	10.2	31.2	92.2
Trp, Storage & Comm:	3.9	38.2	94.0	4.9	36.5	91.5
Services	11.8	29.9	69.0	10.8	31.1	63.1
Sub-Total	42.8	27.1	78.4	46.0	28.9	74.5
Casual Services	1.7	33.6	82.2	1.5	29.2	80.2
Total - Percent	100.0	15.0	76.6	100.0	16.8	72.4
- `000	6216	935	4765	7771	1308	5264

Continued next page

Sources: Census of India 1951, 1961, 1971 and 1981.
Notes:
[a] Others under agriculture consists of forestry, fishing, livestock, plantation and hunting.
[b] Independent workers in the Census classification of workforce into employers, employees and independent workers have been treated as the household sector in manufacturing in 1951. For 1961 to 1981 the Census definition of household workers given in the text applies.
[c] For purposes of consistency and comparability, hotel and restaurant workers who were classed under services in 1951 and 1961 were brought under trade and commerce following Census classification of 1971 and 1981. Similarly utilities which was under construction in 1951 was brought services following Census classification of 1961, 1971 and 1981.
[d] Notes d, e, f, g, and h to Table 6.01 apply to Table 6.05.

Table 6.05 shows that the urban component of the total work force is at the lowest at 13.4 percent in 1961 and at its highest at 16.8 percent in 1981. This is a low and narrow range and moreover, except for 1951 these ratios are lower than the urban population ratios for the respective years. (See Table 4.01, chapter four page 11). This indicates that there is no concentration of the total work force in urban areas. However as we examine the urban components by each category we find that it is relatively higher among the non-agricultural categories. This is to be expected and signifies a slight urban concentration of non-agricultural activities relative to the urban share of population and work force. But at the same time the urban component is not a dominant or significant share exhibiting a strong urban bias in services and manufacturing activities. Within non-agricultural activities the highest (34.3) urban component in 1951 was in services. But by 1981 both trade & commerce (31.2) and transport, trade and communications (36.5) had overtaken services (31.1) in the urban component of their respective workforce. Non-household manufacturing and construction had increased their urban component over the three decades while household manufacturing has retained the same level with a trough in 1961-1971.

A feature of the Kerala work force in the last three decades that Table 6.05 brings out is male dominance. This is pervasive in all categories of the work force, though relatively less present in agricultural labour, household industries and services. During the three decades female participation has increased significantly in these three categories as well as in non-

household manufacture, that is, taking 1951 as the base year.[15] To some extent the male dominance in the work force is a reflection of under enumeration of female participation. That female participation in many sectors is greater in 1961 and 1981, two 'liberal' Census years in terms of definition of work, supports this view.

Overall, Tables 6.04 and 6.05 demonstrate that a significant share of the work force is in non-agricultural activities. Table 6.05 clearly suggests that these non-agricultural activities are predominantly carried out by a rural male work force. It is also evident from Table 6.04 that there have been no dramatic or important structural changes in the work force over the eight decades of the 20th century. The structure and character of the workforce has shown a remarkable persistence over the period examined.

On the one hand this demonstrates the stagnant character of the Kerala economy; its industrial backwardness and the consequent absence of, or minimal, structural changes in the work force. On the other hand it shows that the presence of non-agricultural activity is not a recent development. It is not emerging out of the dynamics of post independence decades' developmental and population problems, policies and pushes. For instance it is not due to agricultural labour shedding consequent to a green revolution or the socio-spatial manifestation of a post colonial, export-led economic growth accompanied by rural and/or sweatshop industrialization. It also does not signify the emergence of an industrial putting out system and/or an informalization of manufacturing.

In the Indian context with the historical presence of household industries or domestic manufacture it is inappropriate to talk of informalization. Particularly in the late colonial period domestic manufacture flourished consequent on the European demand, among others,

15. This should not be confused with earlier comments of the decline in female labour participation rate taking 1901 as the base year.

especially for cotton textiles. (Arasaratnam 1986) In the 19th and 20th did domestic or household manufacture continue, survive or atrophy ? This question has been raised in the colonial context and the flood of cheap manufactured goods from Europe and within India the formalization of some sections of manufacture, particularly cotton textiles and yarn.

These issues are part of a debate in Indian economic historiography.[16] The debate has largely centred on the impact of colonialism on domestic manufacture. Some scholars argue that colonialism and the flood of cheap manufactured goods from Europe caused irreparable damage if not destruction of indigenous domestic manufacture. Others have attempted to demonstrate that domestic manufacture continued to exist, if not thrive, into the 20th century. It is not important given the objectives of this study to enter this debate. But it is useful to draw from it and argue that it is problematic to talk of informalization in the context of domestic or household manufacture. Though it is not certain whether such presence is a continuity, survival or atrophy. These issues are more complex when sectoral, (within domestic manufacture), and regional, (within India), variations are taken into account.

In the Kerala context, in the light of the data in Table 6.04, and the importance of household manufacture in late pre-colonial India, it is tempting to argue that historical persistence of such manufacture contributes to the significant presence of non-agricultural workforce in rural areas. A closer examination of the manufacturing sector however is required to identify the extent to which there may be historical persistence within the manufacturing sector. This shall be attempted in the next chapter, together with an examination of the service sector, and the sub-regional concentration of the more important industries in Kerala.

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16. For important statements in this debate see Daniel and Alice Thorner (1962), Morris et al (1969), Bagchi (1976), Twomey (1983), Simmons (1985) and more recently Harnetty (1991)

CHAPTER SEVEN

A CLOSER LOOK AT NON-AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Introduction

This chapter examines in more detail the three dominant components of non-agricultural economic activity in Kerala. They are manufacturing, trade and commerce, and service sectors. (See Table 6.04 in chapter six). The objective is to make more explicit the predominantly rural or non-urban character of these sectors; the sub-regional concentration within Kerala of some industries; and the predominantly low technology, labour intensive character of the manufacturing sector that may be described as Kerala industrialism. This will be prefaced by a discussion of the nature of the industrial response in Kerala to the regional, national and global economy of the late 19th and 20th century. This response is set within the Indian context. This will also set the scenario within which emerged a political economy that became increasingly pivoted around a capital-labour confrontation. And the ways in which the political economy articulated with the spatial order will be briefly indicated. The details of this articulation will become clear in the case studies of coir and beedi industry in chapters eight and nine.

The present chapter when examining the non-agricultural sectors, will pay attention to three issues of historical and cultural significance. First, the historical presence of household or domestic manufacture in India. Did this influence Kerala industrialism and capital's spatial strategies in its confrontation with labour in Kerala ?

Second, the presence of forced commerce. Did this dovetail with the mercantile character of capital, and facilitate capital's strategy to out-flank labour by providing a culturally

institutionalized system of linking the small and petty producers with the market nodes ? A linkage underpinned by debt linkages to enmesh the small and petty producers. In this process did it transform at certain stages the capital-labour conflict into a middlemen-petty producer conflict, as the experience of the coir industry, to be documented as a case study in the next chapter, seems to suggest ? There is also a need to understand the extent to which the presence of forced commerce and its network of middlemen inflate trade and commerce, and so non-agricultural activity.

Third, do caste occupation continuities, particularly in the service sector, influence the presence and size of non-agricultural activities in non-urban areas ? The impact of the spread of health and educational facilities, with minimal urban-rural disparities in Kerala, on non-agricultural activities in non-urban areas will also be examined.

Manufacturing Sector

The nature of the industrial response in colonial and modern Kerala.

Throughout the 20th century, up to 1971, twelve industries make up 80 percent or more of the manufacturing sector in Kerala. In 1981 this proportion dropped slightly to 75.4 percent. The list of industries and their individual share of the manufacturing sector from 1911 to 1981 are presented in Table 7.01.[1] It is important to emphasize that changes in categorization of industries in the various censuses do not permit a valid comparison of each industry over the years. The 1971 and 1981 censuses have the same national industrial code (NIC) and so pose no problem.

1. In the Census of 1901 manufacturing and trade were combined into one major group, viz, Class D - Preparation and supply of material substances. Separating out manufacturing involves disaggregation and reaggregation at the three digit classification level of over 300 categories. [Codes 076 to 391].For this reason 1901 was left out. 1941 Census is incomplete as there was no census of economic activity or means of livelihood in Malabar for that year. Of the other censuses prior to 1951, 1911 and 1931 were selected at 20 years interval for this table. All censuses after from 1951 to 1981 are included in this table.

Table 7.01

Manufacturing sector workforce of Kerala classified by major industries (percent) in 1911, 1931 and 1951 to 1981

Industry	1911	1931	1951	1961	1971	1981
Beedi[a]	0.2	0.2	4.8	6.4	9.2	11.0
Brick & Tiles	0.8	1.2	2.3	2.0	2.5	3.7
Cashewnut Processing	[b]	[b]	0.2	1.7	7.4	2.5
Coir	28.8	26.2	23.3	24.8	16.2	4.3
Cotton Textiles	6.7	7.7	10.8	9.8	7.8	16.9
Food Processing[c]	11.0	7.8	11.6	13.7	6.5	7.0
Jewellery	3.3	3.9	3.9	2.4	3.5	3.2
Seafood Processing	[d]	[d]	0.2	0.5	1.0	1.2
Tailoring	2.2	2.7	3.4	3.5	5.5	8.0
Toddy	13.4	7.2	4.8	1.4	3.1	[g]
Vegetable Oils	3.0	3.2	2.1	1.3	0.9	0.6
Wood Based	15.3	21.8	19.0	17.2	16.8	17.1
Sub-total	84.9	81.9	86.4	84.6	80.3	75.4
Others	15.1	18.1	13.6	15.4	19.7	24.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Manufacturing Workers						
Total `000	579	507	599	1012	978	1078
Urban `000	[i]	[i]	108	180	210	282
Urban %	[i]	[i]	18.0	17.8	21.5	26.1

Source: Derived from Census of India respective years.

Notes:

[a] There were no separate census category of beedi manufacture in 1911 & 1931. What is shown for 1911 & 1931 is tobacco.

[b] There were no separate census category for cashewnut processing in 1911 & 1931. In 1951 Code 2.01 (Canning and preservation of fruits and vegetables) and in 1961 Code 209 (Production of other food products) is taken as cashewnut processing. In 1962 cashewnut processing comprised 86 percent of Code 209. (Annual Survey of Industries 1962. p81 & 129)

[c] Food processing for the period 1951-1981 refers to all food processing other than cashewnut & seafood processing.

[d] There is no separate category of seafood processing in 1911 and 1931. In 1951 Code 2.02 (Canning and preservation of fish), and in 1961 Code 204 (Slaughtering, preservation & canning of fish and meat) are taken as seafood processing.

[e] Data up to 1951 has not been adjusted for changes in State boundary in 1956.

[f] 1971 data does not include secondary workers.

[h] 1981 data relates to main workers only as three digit classification has not been provided for marginal workers.

[g] The 1981 Census for an inexplicable reason does not record toddy industry workers. Kannan (1988. p150) citing the Annual Report of the Toddy Tapping Workers Welfare Board for 1982-83 estimates toddy industry workers at 43040 in 1982. This will make 3.8 percent of the manufacturing workforce in 1981.

The 1961 industrial code though not identical with the current national industrial code (NIC), is nonetheless similar and detailed enough to be matched with the current NIC used in the censuses of 1971 and 1981.[2] The 1911, 1931 and 1951 Census industrial classification presented greater problems, and some assumptions had to be made. These are set out as notes to Table 7.01. They do make comparison of each industrial category over the years difficult. This is especially so for beedi, cashew processing, food processing, and seafood processing for the period 1911 to 1951, as Table 7.1 and its notes will suggest. Even in the case of the other industries the comparison of pre-1951 data with the 1961-1981 data is not neat. Some of these issues will be addressed later in this chapter. Suffice to state now, that the purpose of Table 7.01 is primarily to show that in total, the same group of predominantly agro-based industrial workforce, comprised three quarters or more of the manufacturing workforce throughout the 20th century. The objective is to show the predominantly agro-based character of manufacturing in Kerala. For such purposes the definitions and data of the censuses appear adequate.

As we shall observe shortly, structurally, the twelve industries are predominantly small scale industries. This is evident in the last three decades for which there is more reliable and comparable data. Or more correctly in terms of census and statutory definitions, the twelve industries are predominantly, non-household, non-factory in organizational character. They are all also labour intensive, low technology industries. These latter two characteristics the small scale industries share with the household industrial sector. They reflect the roots and/or the adoption of aspects of household or domestic systems of production, particularly the

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2. But it did present a problem, though an isolated one, in the case of cashew processing. It was included under a residual generic code of "Other foods". The 1962 Annual Survey of Industries which used the same coding as the 1961 Census however gave a breakdown of "Other foods", indicating that in Kerala 86 percent of "Other food" workers were in Cashew processing. Cashew workers in 1961 in Table 7.01 have been calculated on the basis that 86 percent of "Other Food" workers are Cashew workers.

indigenous artisan technology and its associated labour intensive character. All these features characterize what has been termed in this study as Kerala industrialism.

But a sharing of some characteristics with the household sector does not necessarily mean a sluggish continuity of pre-colonial manufacturing and markets. In chapter eight we shall observe how a dynamic coir industry emerged in Kerala, in response to market demands in the larger world economy in the late 19th century. The availability of raw materials and labour, and the adoption and innovation of existing domestic manufacturing technologies were central to this response. The borrowing of the loom technology from cotton carpet weaving in Bengal, and the introduction of the ratt with spindles[3] for coir yarn spinning are examples of selective adoption of new technologies, albeit low and labour intensive. This was to cater to newly emerging market opportunities in the larger world economy. Merchant entrepreneurs, both foreign and local, were crucial catalysts in this response of the coir industry in Kerala to an international market. In chapter nine we shall observe a similar merchant entrepreneur response for a newly emerging national and regional market for beedis. A response that made use of the availability of labour and the access to transport routes.

In many of the twelve industries listed in Table 7.01 the same mix of factors is present. These factors are responses to newly emerging as well as traditional market opportunities, using indigenous labour-intensive technology. Not all of them remained traditional. But they were extremely selective in making any innovation to existing technology, choosing only technologies compatible with labour intensive production. Some of the large scale production units that emerged in certain phases of Kerala industrialism, also used the same labour intensive technology, as we shall observe in the case of coir and beedi in the next two

3. The ratt and spindle technology is also probably borrowed from cotton yarn spinning and adapted for coir yarn spinning

chapters. The use of indigenous systems of production and low technology suggests some continuity of domestic or household manufacturing systems with sensitive adoption to respond to new market and socio-economic conditions.

This is an issue that is part of the "de-industrialization" debate in Indian economic historiography referred to in the last chapter. The scholars in the two polarized positions taken in this debate in the 1960s and 1970s were labelled "nationalists" and "revisionists". (Haynes 1986. p127) It was the former who argued that domestic manufacture declined and decayed during the colonial period and the latter, that it survived.[4] The debate promoted scholarly research on the impact of colonialism on manufacturing in India. But by implication the debate was suggesting that whatever industrial dynamism that emerged in colonial India issued from large scale capital intensive factory type production. There was an underlying assumption that household manufacture during the colonial period was thus static and unresponsive to changes in the world and Indian economy and market. The Kerala experience described in this study does not suggest a static and unresponsive petty producer, both household and small scale.

As Haynes observes, one by-product of this perception of an unresponsive household industrial sector, had been the lack of scholarly attention on household manufacture in the late 19th and 20th centuries. (Ibid. p128) In recent years this lacuna has begun to be filled by some scholarly work. Among such work, the more important in the overall Indian context, are Commander (1985) on the khandsari (jaggery or unrefined coarse brown sugar) in north India, Haynes (1986) on jari (gold and silver thread and embroidery) industry in Surat, and Harnetty (1991) on handloom textile weaving in the Central Provinces. In the Kerala context the work has been carried out by Issacs (1982, 1983a, 1983b, 1984, and 1985) on coir; Kannan (1983)

4. The de-industrialization debate is now less polarized. Some of the recent work may have contributed to muting the earlier antagonistic and polar interpretations given by the "nationalists" and "revisionists".

on cashew processing, (1988) on beedi and toddy industries; Raghavan (1986) on beedi; Emam Beevi (1978) on cashew processing; Rajagopalan (1986) Tirankar Roy (1988) on cotton textiles;[5] and Mathew (1986) on prawn processing for exports. These studies present a corpus of informed analysis of small scale and household manufacture in the 19th and 20th century. Though they deal with the Kerala context, the findings are significant in the overall Indian economic history. But they all suffer from an inadequate attention to the spatial dimension.[6]

Some features are common to most, if not all of these small scale and/or household industries that have been examined in these studies. Among such features an important one is the presence of forced commerce in nearly all of the industries. None of the studies relate the role of merchants to forced commerce as conceptualized by Bhaduri. (1983, 1986) But the description of the structure and organization of production and marketing indicate the presence of forced commerce. For instance Harnetty observes:

> Mills (or importers of foreign yarn) did not sell directly to handloom weavers because they operated on the basis of forward contracts with agents and brokers and did not enter into small transactions with individuals. The agents in turn dealt with yarn merchants who sold to retail dealers through whom the

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5. Tirankar Roy's work is at the broader South India regional level.

6. This perhaps stems from the wider weakness of geography as an academic discipline in India failing to exert the same influence as economics, anthropology, sociology and history have on understanding Indian economy and society. See Romila Thapar (1982) on the influence of anthropology, archeology and linguistics and Srinivas (1959) on the assertive position of economics in India. See Sopher (1973) for a critique that brings out the inadquacies of Indian Geography. Reviewing Chattergee's (1963) "Fifty of Science in India: Progress in Geography," Sopher observes "The pervading impression of banality that a reading of these volumes conveys cannot be entirely blamed on the editor's attempt to summarize in a line or two every article and book he cites" (p121). Sopher reviewing other geographical work goes on to state: "Several large related themes that remain central to the geographic tradition deal with questions which students in other disciplines are continually seeking to answer. Geographers working in South Asia have hitherto either neglected these questions ar given them scant attention" (p129) The influence of Spate's (1954) descriptive regions and landscapes, uncertain ecological models and gazetteer-like location of industrial activities is seen in this tradition. Sopher is also critical of the influence of a Euro-centric geography tradition on South Asian Geography. Sopher thus argues that in such South Asian geography "the dweller is often made stranger by the conventions of the prevailing paradigm" (p126). Sopher's criticisms are no doubt influenced by his cultural geographic perspective, and since his critique nearly two decades ago some new directions in Indian geography have emerged and make Sopher's criticisms less applicable now. Nonetheless the weaknesses pointed out by Sopher still continue to a considerable extent still pervasive in Indian geography.

> yarn eventually reached the weavers. The latter bought their yarn on credit because they had no ready cash for this purpose and so were obliged to enter into some kind of relationship with a retailer or financier on either a contract or wage basis. They also needed advances for their personal maintenance while they produced the cloth. Thus the dealers came to occupy a central position in the handloom industry: supplying raw material on credit and marketing the finished cloth. The weavers found themselves enmeshed in a network of middlemen whose profits increased their costs of production and lowered their profits. They were also exposed to various malpractices, such as dealers passing off lower counts of yarn as higher counts or selling short weights. (Harnetty 1991 p479-80)

Simon Commander notes in the case of the Khandsari industry in north India:

> The widespread use of debt linkages was clearly an important factor in sustaining a high level of cane production...As a receiver of rents and a crucial figure in the nexus of local controls, the zamindar-cum-khandsari was in a particularly good position to maximize his profits....the zamindar aimed less to raise the level of rents than to engineer, through a form of debt peonage, a situation in which the supply of raab or rus was assured irrespective of price fluctuations and the pull of external demand. (Commander 1985. p508)[7]

The khandsari industry was an agro-processing industry and there was obviously a complex and unequal relationship between the landlord-entrepreneur and peasant-petty producer. In the case of jari manufacture, Haynes sees the merchant- petty producer relationship as a benign one, but nonetheless the description is very suggestive of forced commerce.

> Akhadedars (master-craftsmen) often established enduring personal relationship with the merchants...the craftsmen obtained raw materials from a jari merchant and processed these materials for the same merchant on a commission basis....most (craftsmen) had running accounts with a single merchant, and drew upon these accounts when they needed money for their work and subsistence...they generally fell into arrears and became almost permanently indebted to the merchant....In entering such dependent ties with the merchants, the akhadedars bartered independent positions in the market for greater security....At the same time, the prevailing production relations certainly served the interests of the merchant-manufacturer quite well....there was significantly less risks involved in having jari manufactured on commission than in investing in more capital-intensive forms of production....in a business environment subject to sudden expansions and contractions... Most traders chose to possess little fixed capital.....yet with sizeable number of artisan

7. The raab and rus are processed cane juice, which go through further processing to reach the stage of Khandsari. (Commander 1985. p507)

> clients, they could still quickly respond to sudden upswings in the jari market without heavy new investments.(Haynes 1986.p135-7)

Haynes's description and observations brings out another important feature of domestic manufacture or petty production, particularly in industries other than textile weaving. If the commodity had an unstable market it had a profound effect on the structure of the industry. It rendered petty producers vulnerable to merchants with a better knowledge of market conditions, and at the same time heightened the merchant's fear to invest in capital intensive forms of production. Availability of labour also permitted wage rates to remain low, and petty or small-scale production to be cost effective relative to capital intensive large scale production.[8] A classic example of this phenomenon is demonstrated by the inability of the formal, capital intensive, large scale sugar industry in north India to remain competitive with the informal, labour intensive, small scale khandsari industry.

> Deriving its initial stimulus from the growth of regional markets and the development of modern transportation networks post 1860, the khandsari industry drew upon the ample reservoir of cheap, unorganized labour and money-lending debt linkages to generate significantly high profit margins... Despite disapproval by both colonial and indigenous governments the informal sector's resilient competitiveness...effectively subverting the consolidation of a modern mill industry. In this regard, one implication of this particular history could be that even within a colonial structure it is quite possible for autonomous capitalist development to occur from below. For in this instance it might well appear that the rural informal sector will succeed in outliving its 'logical' successor. (Commander 1985. p514)

Consumer preferences, and low purchasing power of the mass consumer market in India, even though large in size, have also influenced the success of the khandsari industry. But it shows that there was a capitalism from below, responding to market opportunities.

This discussion helps us to understand the nature and character of the industrial response in colonial and modern Kerala. The needs and demands of the international, national

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8. In chapter one we noted that it had been argued that merchant capital, in contrast to industrial capital, is inherently reluctant to engage in capital intensification as a means of maximizing profits. It prefers to keep its profit margins constant by squeezing labour.

and regional economy fashioned an industrial response that was textured by the local context. The availability of raw materials, abundance of labour, existence of traditional and new transportation systems, indigenous labour intensive technology, merchandizing systems that linked petty and small scale production to domestic and international markets are all important ingredients. It was the unequal exchange in the relationship between the petty producer and merchants that made the merchandizing system, forced commerce. The instability of the commodity markets gave an edge to the merchants, over the large scale formal sector. These merchants of course controlled the petty and small scale producers, invariably with forced commerce. There was a reluctance to invest in capital intensive technologies, with capital locked in idle machinery and equipment during slump periods or even lost if demand for the commodity wears away or is substituted by another. These features characterize some of the twelve industries that dominate the industrial scene in Kerala in the 20th century. They are the ingredients of Kerala industrialism.

But present in the twelve industries are some features that are not commonly seen outside Kerala, in comparable small scale and/or petty production. First, is the presence, beginning somewhere around the 1930s, of organized labour in the industries of Kerala. Today organized labour is a common feature in all sectors of the economy in Kerala. The coir industry played a central role in the emergence of organized labour in Kerala. The case study of the coir industry in the next chapter is in effect a political history of the labour movement in Kerala. The case study will also illuminate the importance of the political economy in Kerala. This case study, together with that of beedi in chapter nine, lays out the relationship between the political and space economy in Kerala.

This takes us to the second feature of the Kerala industrial scene. This is its spatial character. The twelve industries were predominantly non-urban in character. Haynes study of jari manufacture in Surat, and Harnetty's of textile weaving in the Central Provinces suggest

that these two industries were urban based. Commander's study of khandsari shows that it is rural. This largely flows from its agro-processing character. Another reason is the availability of cheap and off-season agricultural labour in the fertile and densely populated corridor that flanks the river Ganges from north central India to its delta in Bengal.

The spatial character of these industries was not of central concern in these studies. But in Kerala the spatial character of the industries is important, as it is part of the dynamics of the industry, the political economy and desakota. In addition the presence of forced commerce, with its many levels and network linking the small scale units and petty producers of the rural areas with merchants and dealers at various levels, inflates the trade and commerce sector. This further enhanced the non-agricultural sector in non-urban Kerala and accentuated desakota. Studies of the industries in Kerala referred to just now though contextually thick and emphasizing the political and economistic interpretation have not adequately explored the spatial issues. This has been commented upon in chapter one and earlier in this chapter as well. This study in its synthesis and re-interpretative efforts seeks to bring about this emphasis. It is also obviously of importance in making desakota in Kerala intelligible.

Third, the organizational character of the twelve industries, as indicated earlier, is predominantly non-household, non-factory, or small scale. This type of production units was referred to earlier as well. It is important to understand what is meant by non-household, non-factory industries. For this it is necessary to first spell out the census definition of household industry.

> Household industry is defined as an industry conducted by the head of the household himself/herself and/or by the members of the household at home or within the village in rural areas and only within the precincts of the house where the household lives in urban areas. The larger proportion of workers in a household industry should consist of members of the household including the head. The industry should not be run on the scale of a registered factory

> which would qualify or has to be registered under the Indian Factories Act..... A household industry should relate to production, processing, repairing or making and selling (but not merely selling) of goods. It does not include professions such as a pleader or doctor or barber, musician, dancer, waterman, dhobi (washerman), astrologer etc or merely a trade or business,even if such trade or services are run at home by members of the household. (Census of India 1981, Series 10 Kerala, Part III-A&B [i], p23).

The workers outside this definition of household manufacturing workers are often called the non-household manufacturing workers. But it is incorrect to assume that they are factory workers. There is a clear definition of factories under the Indian Factory Act. Only those industrial establishments that employ more than 10 workers and use power for production or employ more than 20 workers without the use of power are deemed to be a factory and registered as such under the Indian Factory Act.[9] This definition of a factory is not going to encompass all industrial activity outside the census definition of household industry. There will be many production centres that shall be non-household by census definition but not qualify to be designated a factory in terms of Indian Factory Act. It is this category of industries that is called non-factory, non-household industry. Obviously this category refers to small scale industries. It is possible to identify the number of workers in this category by deducting from the census non-household manufacturing sector workers, the number of factory workers as given in the Annual Survey of Industries. We shall shortly demonstrate this quantitatively for the twelve important industries in Kerala.

Significantly, recent trends at the Indian national level suggest the growth of the small scale or non-household, non-factory sector. Some of this may be, the figures suggest, at the expense of the household sector. At the national level the non-household sector's share of manufacturing increased from 45 percent in 1961 to 68 percent in 1981. But the larger share of the increase and faster growth was in the non-household, non-factory component of this

9. The Census definition makes reference to the Indian Factories Act and later on goes to state that in the case of a joint family with 20 or more members, and where power is used, 10 or more members, engages in some industrial activity it should not be treated as a household industry even though only household members participate in production. (Census of India 1981, Series 10 Kerala, Part III-A&B [i] p23)

sector. The rate of growth of the non-household, non-factory sub-sector was 154 percent, while the factory sector was 97 percent. The household sector declined by 12.6 percent. Of the absolute increase of about 9 million workers in manufacturing between 1961 and 1981, about 3.4 million were absorbed in factories while almost 7 million found work in the non-household, non-factory sub-sector. Those employed in household industries declined by one million. (Eapen 1984. p1455)

The exorbitant cost of setting up capital intensive industries in recent years, limits such ventures to the established and affluent corporate sector and super-rich families in India. Commander observes that fixed capital investment of a large Khandsari[10] plant might not exceed Rs 100,000. And by contrast a modern sugar mill requires on average a fixed capital investment of between 25 and 30 million rupees. The technical sophistication of the modern mill improves the juice extraction from the sugar cane to 90 percent. It is about 60/65 percent in a khandsari plant. But the scale of investment can negate the enhanced results. (Commander 1985. p512) The price of refined sugar has to re-coup the interest on investment and the depreciation of the fixed assets of a modern mill. But the price limits the mass market of refined sugar to a section of the population in a country like India with poor buying power possessed by a majority of its population. The availability of labour for a three-shift labour intensive Khandsari plant, and the culturally attuned cuisine for the use of khandsari, even among the urban dwellers, are also important. They are contributory factors, along with the leaping costs of capital intensification, for the assimilation of khandsari industry with "non-capitalist features" in the wider Indian trend towards a more defined capitalistic framework of production, beginning in the 19th century.

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10. This does not belong to the non-household, non-factory type of industry, because the number of workers is certainly going to be more than twenty. It will belong to the factory category, but not a capital intensive modern factory.

This example may in part may be illustrative of the factors contributing to the surge forward of the non-household, non-factory type of industries that Eapen's (1984) analysis suggests. But factors may be industry specific, and less present, if not absent, in some industries such as steel, iron and metal work industries. Recent increases in energy costs for a country like India with limited indigenous energy resources, other than hydro-power, may be further complicating the growth of capital intensive, energy consuming industrialization. These factors may be contributing to desakota formation in parts of India, particularly in the belt of densely populated states that more or less encapsulate the river Ganges from north central India to the Bengal delta: Punjab, Haryana, Uttara Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal.[11] This suggests the need for desakota to be researched in these regions of India, particularly in the context of the trends spotlighted by Eapen's (1984) study.

In this section we examined the nature of the industrial response in Kerala, and some of the features that accompany this response. Together they shape Kerala industrialism. We noted that Kerala industrialism shared some of its features with small scale and household manufacturing elsewhere in India. At the same time there were other features, which if not unique to Kerala, were less present in comparable industrial structures elsewhere in India. It is the totality of all these features that makes appropriate the description "Kerala industrialism". The more important of the distinctive features are, as indicated earlier, the emergence of organized labour, the predominantly non-urban character of manufacturing and the marked character of most production units to be non-household, non-factory. These features are important aspects of the dynamics of desakota in Kerala. We shall now briefly examine these three features.

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11. Table 3.06 in chapter three shows that these five states, together with Kerala and Tamilnadu in the southern cone were the most densely populated states in India in 1901 and continue to be so to date.

Organized labour, a feature of Kerala industrialism.

The coir industry was central to the emergence and growth of organized labour in Kerala. The industry itself was par excellence a Kerala industry. The numbers employed in the industry; the labour intensive, low and ecologically[12] facilitated technology; the agro-based nature of the industry on coconut, a major crop in Kerala, and little cultivated elsewhere in India; the pervasive presence of the industry in the Kerala lowlands; the centre of the industry in Alleppey district, a district with the typical Kerala landscape of backwaters and coconut groves, and its proximity to Cochin, the Vembanad Lake, the Kuttanad rice cultivation systems; all contribute to the industry's strong Kerala character. The beginnings of organized labour may be seen in the 1920s in the coir industry. Its manifestation initially was as welfare organization for the coir industry labour in Alleppey. (Govindan 1986 p14-27)

The details of the emergence and development of organized labour in the coir industry, with catalytic consequences for labour, politics and the political economy of Kerala is dealt with in the next chapter, the case study of the coir industry. The growth of organized labour is so contextually interwoven and thick with the coir industry, that it would be inappropriate, if not difficult, to describe and examine it outside a case study of the industry. The selection of the coir industry for a case study, in a sense was justified, not only because it was the major industry in Kerala, but also for its role in Kerala's political economy. What would be appropriate now is to make a few general observations on the nature of organized labour in Kerala.

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12. This refers, apart from being agro-based on coconut, to the use of the backwaters for the retting of coconut husks, a process in the manufacture of coir yarn to be described more fully in the next chapter. In a broader sense the use of labour intensive technology in a densely populated region was also appropriate in terms of social ecology. Non-urban Alleppey is the most densely populated non-urban region in Kerala. (See Table 3.08 in chapter three)

First, organized labour became a pervasive feature in Kerala, not only among its industries, but in the other sectors as well. We had occasion to refer to agricultural labour being organized into trade unions beginning as early as 1939. We also referred to the organization of the informal sector manual transport workers, known in English translation as the "Head Loaders Union". If workers in the informal sector of the economy, such as agricultural labourers and manual transport workers in the bazaar areas, became organized and trade unionized, it is not difficult to understand the trade unionization of virtually every formal sector occupation in Kerala. The process took about two decades or so since the 1920s and was more or less complete by the early fifties.[13]

There is a complexity of factors, in synergistic and symbiotic combination that influenced this process. These may become clear in the two case studies of coir and beedi industries. As indicated earlier, the literacy; village library movements; labour intensive technologies that brought about concentration of workers in some localities; statutory provisions, perhaps influenced by the MacDonald Labour government of Britain; the impact of the Russian revolution; poor wages and working conditions in the early phases of Kerala industrialism; were some of the factors.

But a central factor was the ethos of the moral legitimacy of equitable rights, and collective action to assert and obtain them, and resist oppression of all forms, economic and social. This was a legacy of the caste reform movement in Kerala. Collective consciousness that facilitated the organization of labour had its initial impetus from caste consciousness and identity, a consciousness and identity that was in ferment in the caste reform movement. Govindan's memoirs as a trade unionist suggest that the caste solidarity and identity influenced the setting up and working of the welfarist Travancore Labour Association in the

13. Lipton also observes that was no 'labour aristocracy' in Kerala, organized labour being not limited to the public service and modern urban industry as in many developing countries. (1977. p35, p363 f32)

1920s, the forerunner of trade unionism. (Ibid p14-15) It worked to support the coir workers, predominantly of the Ezhava caste, in the new surroundings of urban Alleppey. We noted in earlier chapters how Sri Narayana Guru reformist ideology using the Hindu text, challenged caste discrimination and Brahmanic orthodoxy. The need and capacity to challenge Hindu orthodoxy liberated the Sri Narayana Guru's movement from infusing revivalist and atavistic trends, and as noted earlier distinguishing it from many other reformist and revivalist movements in colonial south Asia.

The 1920s and 1930s were also the period of a mass nationalist upswing in India, supporting the Indian National Congress demand for independence. In Kerala during the 1920s and early 1930s there emerged a triangular interaction among the caste, class and nationalist movements and consciousness. What eventually came to dominate was class consciousness. We will observe in the case studies of coir and beedi how labour in its conflict with capital initially tried to use caste identities, affiliations and consciousness but soon realized that it fragmented their strength. Learning from these mistakes, as Issacs (1985) argues, caste consciousness became transformed to class consciousness. Nationalist ideology in Kerala had a radical wing which became the Indian Socialist Congress and eventually the Communist Party of Kerala. This process was influenced by its close interaction with organized labour and participation in latters struggles with capital.

The point being argued is that there was an interaction among the three forces or consciousness of caste, class and nation, and the eventual dominance of class consciousness in Kerala. But it is important to realize that the working class movement drew strength from caste reformist collective action experiences and the mass character of the nationalist movement, to mobilize the workers in the various industries and occupations. What Kannan refers to as historical conjectures (1988 p322-7), I believe, partly refers to this. But it is more than a chronological conjecture. There was an interactive process among the three social

movements, and the emergence or assertion of the moral legitimacy of protest by the socially and economically disadvantaged, and the weapon of collective action, not a weapon of the weak, but a weapon of strength in its numbers, solidarity and in its moral and political correctness.

There appears in this interactive process more of a chemistry than historical timing between the experiences that flowed from caste reform, and a context of growing labour intensive industries and a concentration of workers in localities with poor working conditions and wages. The experiences that flowed from caste reform included articulation of the moral indignation over social inequalities, the right to publicly protest, organize and work towards dismantling these inequalities and the strength of solidarity and collective action. A kind of positive transference appears to have occurred from a collective action movement that fought and sought for équity on the temple floor[14] between all castes to the struggles for equity on the shop floor between capital and labour.

This contextual chemistry was underpinned by growing literacy, village library movements, and an intelligentsia that sought to translate and inform the literate Malayalee population of wider events and thinking such as the Russian revolution, Marxist literature, the success of the Labour Party in Britain, etc All this helps to understand the nature and extent of the mobilization and organization of labour into trade unionism and politicalization in Kerala, as part of a wider phenomenon of social and political consciousness at work. The two case studies will help to understand the symbiosis of the various elements in the chemistry of the context of the 1920s to 1940s, and the emergence, growth and consolidation of organized labour in Kerala.

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14. A most visible aspect of the caste reform movement was the struggle for right of entry to all temples for all castes. Satyagraha at the doors of the temple that had restricted entry to higher castes was a form of collective action brought by castes denied entry. At Vaikom this went on for many months and influenced the workers in the coir industry in the region. (See Jeffrey 1978b, p148-164 for details of the temple entry movement).

The non-urban character of manufacturing in Kerala.

Tables 7.02 and 7.03 present data on the sex ratios, urban-rural location and the scale of operation, (viz, household and non-household), of the manufacturing sector in Kerala. This is confined to the period 1951-1981 as the Censuses prior to it do not disaggregate manufacturing by urban-rural and household and non-household sectors. Table 7.02 presents this data for the manufacturing as a whole and Table 7.03 for the twelve major industries.

TABLE 7.02

Kerala manufacturing workforce classified by urban-rural, sex and household and non-household categories 1951 to 1981

	Household			Non-household			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1951									
Urban	5.2	1.4	6.6	9.7	1.8	11.5	14.9	3.1	18.0
Rural	26.2	11.7	37.9	32.6	11.5	44.1	58.8	23.2	82.0
Total	31.4	13.1	44.5	42.3	13.3	55.5	73.7	26.3	100.0
1961									
Urban	1.9	2.7	4.6	11.1	2.3	13.4	12.9	5.0	17.9
Rural	16.3	26.8	43.1	27.7	11.2	38.9	44.1	38.9	82.1
Total	18.2	29.5	47.7	38.8	13.5	52.3	57.0	43.0	100.0
1971									
Urban	2.2	1.3	3.5	15.0	3.0	18.0	17.2	4.3	21.5
Rural	12.9	10.8	23.7	39.5	15.3	54.8	52.4	26.1	78.5
Total	15.1	12.1	27.2	54.5	18.3	72.8	69.6	30.4	100.0
1981									
Urban	1.9	1.5	3.4	17.3	4.2	21.5	19.1	5.8	24.9
Rural	8.6	12.4	21.0	34.4	19.7	54.1	43.1	32.0	75.1
Total	10.5	13.9	24.4	51.7	23.9	75.6	62.2	37.8	100.0

Source: Derived from Census of India 1951, 1961, 1971 & 1981
Notes:
[a] 1951 data is the aggregate of Travancore-Cochin and Malabar and not adjusted for State boundary changes in 1956.
[b] 1971 data does not include secondary workers.
[c] 1981 data is main plus marginal workers.

What both tables bring out clearly is the dominant position of the rural manufacturing workforce. Though over the last two decades there has been a decline in the rural share of the manufacturing workforce from 82.1 percent in 1961 to 75.1 percent in 1981, it still means that three quarters of the manufacturing workforce remain non-urban or rural. The dominance of the rural manufacturing workforce is seen in all sub-categories of household,

TABLE 7.03

Kerala manufacturing workforce classified by major industries and component percentage of urban, males and household workers in each industry: 1961 - 1981.

Industry	Urban in Industry			Percent Males in Industry			Household Ind: % in Industry		
	1961	1971	1981	1961	1971	1981	1961	1971	1981
Beedi	24.9	20.5	25.4	97.9	87.4	65.3	18.1	20.6	9.1
Br & Tiles	27.8	20.5	19.3	79.3	74.9	72.6	4.8	3.6	6.0
Cashew Pr	25.0	11.2	14.3	48.0	9.4	19.3	87.2	19.3	0.4
Coir	9.1	13.8	19.0	21.6	31.2	47.5	79.0	40.3	17.7
Cotton Tex	26.1	19.0	22.2	62.1	74.3	40.2	61.4	39.0	43.6
Food Pr	13.7	23.1	24.6	35.1	80.5	81.0	26.8	27.5	28.9
Jewellery	24.7	25.2	29.1	98.4	99.2	97.4	43.3	36.9	29.5
Seafood Pr	27.5	44.8	26.7	64.0	49.3	39.4	38.9	6.4	4.1
Tailoring	26.2	25.1	23.7	92.7	83.9	73.9	14.7	20.1	13.7
Toddy	1.3	3.1	[d]	99.3	99.6	[d]	4.6	3.1	[d]
Veg: Oils	26.7	25.7	35.0	78.7	93.4	94.7	55.2	24.2	18.5
Wood Based	12.8	15.7	18.4	67.3	77.0	80.7	44.6	41.9	34.7
Sub-Average	15.9	17.6	22.1	52.9	64.0	64.5	49.9	28.9	25.9
Others	29.1	37.1	38.6	79.8	89.3	83.7	35.6	20.4	15.1
Total Ave:	17.9	21.5	26.1	57.0	69.6	69.2	47.7	27.2	23.2

Sources: Derived from Census of India 1961, 1971 and 1981.

Notes:

[a] In 1961 Code 209 (Production of other food products) is taken as cashewnut processing. In 1982 cashewnut processing comprised 86 percent of Code 209.

[b] See Table 7.01, Note [c].

[c] Code 204 (Slaughtering of animals, preservation and canning of fish and meat) is taken as seafood processing for 1961. Workers in the meat industry are negligible.

[d] See note [e] to Table 7.01

[e] 1951 is not included because three digit classification of urban and household industry is not available.

[f] 1971 data does not include secondary workers.

[g] 1981 data is only main workers as three digit classification is not available for marginal workers. For this reason percentages in respect of 1981 total will not agree with those in Table 7.02

non-household, male and female. We shall discuss some of the issues pertaining to the household and non-household in the next section. The predominantly male character of the workforce needs some comments. First, one of the characteristics of desakota as delineated by McGee (1990. p16-17) is the increasing participation by women in non-agricultural activity linked to changing agricultural production. This does not occur in Kerala. Indeed as noted in chapter one there has been a decline in women's participation in the labour force over the decades of this century. In terms of data presented in Table 7.02 for the period 1951-1981, female participation in the labour force has been fluctuating. This takes us to the second concern regarding the gender rates in the manufacturing labour force. Increasing attention has been drawn to the under-enumeration of women in the Indian Censuses. (Gulati 1975; Nayar 1987; Mitra et al 1979, 1980; Bhattacharya 1985; Krishnaraj 1990).

Female participation in the manufacturing work force is consistently lower than male participation, and particularly so in 1951 and 1971. Census data collection in India had systemic bias that under-enumerate women's work force participation. In spite work being defined for Census purposes the enumerator's perception affects data collection for such perceptions sometimes view some activities of women as not "work". The fact that the informant of a household for Census purpose is likely to be a male, who may sometimes find women's work invisible adds to the under-enumeration of women. But more importantly the systemic under-enumeration of seasonal, informal and household industries activity, particularly affects female participation rates, for women tend to be concentrated in these categories of work.

In the previous chapter we discussed the efforts of the Indian census administrators to overcome such under-enumeration and in the process we drew attention to the differential approaches of the censuses. The 1961 and 1981 censuses were more liberal while those of 1951 and 1971 were relatively restrictive. These distinctions have implications for the figures in

Tables 7.02 and 7.03. For instance female participation is higher in 1961 and 1981 than in the other two census years. In Table 7.02 for 1981 marginal workers are included but they had to be left out of Table 7.03 as the three-digit classification necessary to identify specific industries is not provided for marginal workers. In Table 7.02 male participation at the total level is 62.2 percent but in Table 7.03 without marginal workers this increases to 69.2 percent.

Obviously "marginal workers", those who worked less than 183 days in the year prior to the census date, brings more female workers into the census count. Female workers in household and informal sector are no doubt the most vulnerable to census undercount. The markedly different male:female ratios in household manufacturing workers between the Censuses of 1951 and 1971 on the one hand and the 1961 and 1981 Censuses on the other, shows how different the ratios can be between "restrictive" (1951 and 1971 Censuses) and "liberal" (1961 and 1981 Censuses) definitions of work.

While it is important to be sensitive to the deficiencies of the census data, the primary purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the continuing presence of non-agricultural activity in the non-urban or rural areas of Kerala. For this purpose in spite of its deficiencies the census data is adequate, for it amply demonstrates the presence of non-agricultural activity in rural areas. Minor variations do not alter the evidence of the data showing non-agricultural manufacturing activity in rural areas. The point that has to be noted in regard to female participation in the labour force is that unlike in desakota regions elsewhere in Asia, there has not been an increase in recent years in Kerala. But female participation has been present and in some industries like coir and cashew processing it represents the dominant share, while in cotton textiles and seafood processing it has been increasing in recent years. Even in beedi

industry, with a strongly male dominated work force, female participation has made substantial inroads. (See Table 7.03)[15]

From the overall purpose of demonstrating the non-urban character of manufacturing, the data on male workers of 1961 and 1981, (main and marginal workers), are fairly reliable. There is less under count among males and in addition the censuses of 1961 and 1981 are "liberal". Table 7.02 indicates that in 1961 44.1 percent of the 57.0 percent male workers (i.e 77.3 percent) were in rural areas and in 1981 43.1 percent of 62.2 male workers workers (i.e 69.7 percent) were rural. These figures suggest a declining trend. While in part this may represent a growth of urban industries, the decline is more a reflection of the troughs and peaks of agro-processing industries catering to a vulnerable commodity market.

Coir is a good example. As Table 7.01 indicates, coir workforce numbers are on a steady decline from 1961. This is caused by a falling market and declining employment opportunities in the coir industry. As Table 7.03 shows, coir in 1961 was a heavily rural based industry with only 9.1 percent of the workers being urban. As will be set out in length in chapter eight, it was a labour intensive industry with about a quarter million workers in 1961 with nearly 80.0 percent of them being females. The decline of such an industry has an impact on the overall female participation in, and the rural component of, manufacture.

But the troughs of one industry are sometimes compensated by the peaks of another. Thus cashew processing, which had about 17,000 workers in 1961, expanded in the 1960s to have a workforce of 72,000 in 1971 but suffered a decline to 26,000 in 1981. Cotton textiles, with the fluctuations of a workforce of 65,000 in 1951, 99,000 in 1961, 76,000 in 1971 and 182,000 in 1981 mitigated against the adverse impact of the decline of the coir and cashew

15. Table 7.03, Columns 4,5 and 6 give the male share of the work force for 1961, 1971 and 1981 respectively. Where it is low or declining, it represents greater or increasing female participation in the workforce.

industries in 1981. This was not merely in terms of statistics but in terms of the human component at real life level. Cotton textiles with a protected domestic market and a state sponsored and subsidized co-operative sector that guaranteed a floor price and supply of yarn had a sponge effect.[16] It absorbed some of the displaced workers and cushioned to some extent the distress of the laid off workers and their families.

Given the regional specialization or concentration of some of the industries within Kerala which we shall examine later in this chapter, the shifts of displaced workers from one industry to another are limited. But even with such constraints, when the need arises shifts can occur as in the case of displaced coir workers in Alleppey district moving to handloom cotton textiles weaving. We shall examine this shift later in this chapter.

Household and non-household sectors in manufacturing

The household industries' share of the manufacturing sector has declined from 44.5 percent in 1951 to 24.4 in 1981. (Table 7.02) The sharp decline even between two comparable "liberal" censuses, from 47.7 in 1961 to 24.4 in 1981, suggests that this decline is not a distortion caused by differential definition of work between two censuses.

The explanation for the decline lies largely in the decline of the coir industry. As Table 7.03 shows, 79.0 percent of the coir workforce in 1961 were household based and a decline of the coir industry was bound to affect the overall position of the household industry in the

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16. Mattison Mines finds similar evidence in his study of the weaver caste and the cotton textile industry in Tamilnadu. (1984 p137) In the post-independence period there were efforts by State and Union (Federal) governments to revive and/or sustain the cotton textile industry. (Harnetty 1991 p505; Mines 1984 p122). This in some States was through a State sponsored and subsidized co-operative sector. Mattison found that textile workers used the co-operative sector orsystem with a floor price as a cushion particularly in times of falling prices and to ensure yarn supplies. (Ibid p137). Kerala data suggests that workers in industries affected by adverse market conditions shift to textile manufacturing as a survival strategy becauseofthe protective features ofthe co-operative system that has emerged in the industry.

manufacturing sector. In addition, as we shall note later in this chapter, cashew processing in the 1960s transformed itself from a household industry to a non-household industry. Overall, non-household manufacturing through the period 1951-1981 has increased its share of the manufacturing workforce, from 55.5 percent in 1951 to 75.6 in 1981.

In the 1951 Census there was no definition of household industry. The definition of household industries quoted earlier was in use only from the 1961 Census. The 1951 Census however provided a classification of industrial workers by employers, employees and independent workers. (Census of India 1951, Vol XIII Part II Tables, p126 and Census of India 1951, Census Handbook-Malabar District, p33) Independent workers are treated as household workers in Table 7.2. But the 1951 Census did not provide this classification at the three digit level and it is partly for this reason that 1951 is left out of Table 7.03 and only provided for Table 7.02 [17]

The important issue here is to examine the character of the non-household segment, for a key character of Kerala industrialism lies within this sector. As discussed earlier it is not correct to assume that all non-household workers are factory workers. As stated earlier the Annual Survey of Industries provides the number of factory workers by the NIC code. By deducting this from the Census non-household industry workers, the "non-household, non-factory" category of workers can be identified. Table 7.04 presents the non-household non-factory sector for ten of the twelve major industries and for the manufacturing sector as whole in Kerala.[18] It is presented for the period 1961 to 1981.[19]

17. The other reason why 1951 is left out of Table 7.03 is that Travancore-Cochin data, (at three digit level), does not distinguish between urban and rural sectors.

18. Vegetable oils and food processing, (other than vegetable oils, cashewnut and sea food processing) have been left out as there were some problems in matching the two industries in the Census data with that of the Annual Survey of Industries.

19. The Annual Survey of Industries is not available for 1951. Three digit classified census data are also not available for 1951.

TABLE 7.04

Distribution of workers in the major industries by household, non-household non-factory, and factory sectors 1961 to 1981.

Industry/Category	No of Workers 1961 `000	1971 `000	1981 `000	Percentages 1961 %	1971 %	1981 %
Beedi						
Household	12	19	11	18.1	20.6	9.1
Non-household, non-factory	50	[a]	97	78.5	[a]	81.5
Factory	2	[a]	11	3.5	[a]	9.4
Total	64	90	119	100.0	100.0	100.0
Brick & Tiles						
Household	1	1	2	4.8	3.6	6.0
Non-household, non-factory	5	13	26	25.0	52.0	65.7
Factory	14	11	11	70.2	44.4	28.2
Total	20	25	39	100.0	100.0	100.0
Cashew Processing						
Household	[b]	0	0	[b]	0.5	0.4
Non-household, non-factory	[b]	0	0	[b]	0.0	0.0
Factory	[b]	72	27	[b]	99.5	99.6
Total	[b]	72	27	[b]	100.0	100.0
Coir						
Household	198	64	8	79.0	40.3	17.7
Non-household, non-factory	48	91	37	19.0	57.1	77.2
Factory	5	4	2	2.0	2.6	5.1
Total	251	159	46	100.0	100.0	100.0
Cotton Textiles						
Household	61	30	80	61.4	39.0	49.6
Non-household, non-factory	29	31	88	29.2	40.9	48.4
Factory	9	15	15	9.4	20.1	8.0
Total	99	76	182	100.0	100.0	100.0
Jewellery						
Household	11	13	10	43.3	36.9	29.5
Non-household, non-factory	14	21	24	56.7	63.1	70.5
Factory	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	25	34	34	100.0	100.0	100.0
Seafood Processing						
Household	2	1	1	38.9	6.4	4.1
Non-household, non-factory	3	7	11	48.4	71.7	86.2
Factory	1	2	1	12.7	21.9	9.7
Total	5	10	13	100.0	100.0	100.0
Tailoring						
Household	5	11	12	14.7	20.1	13.7
Non-household, non-factory	30	43	74	85.3	79.9	86.3
Factory	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	35	54	86	100.0	100.0	100.0

Continued next page.

Table 7.4 continued from previous page.

Industry/Category	No of Workers 1961 `000	1971 `000	1981 `000	Percentages 1961 %	1971 %	1981 %
Toddy						
Household	1	1	[b]	4.6	3.1	[b]
Non-household, non-factory	13	29	[b]	95.4	96.9	[b]
Factory	0	0	[b]	0.0	0.0	[b]
Total	14	30	[b]	100.0	100.0	[b]
Wood Based						
Household	78	69	64	44.6	41.9	34.7
Non-household, non-factory	91	84	109	51.9	51.5	59.2
Factory	6	11	11	3.5	6.7	6.1
Total	175	164	185	100.0	100.0	100.0
All Industries						
Household	483	266	251	47.7	27.2	23.2
Non-household, non-factory	357	520	602	35.2	53.2	55.8
Factory	173	192	226	17.1	19.6	20.9
Total	1012	978	1079	100.0	100.0	100.0

Sources: Derived from

[i] Census of India 1961, Vol VII Kerala, Part II-B (i) General Economic Tables, Table B IV Part C, p129-131.

[ii] Census of India 1971, Series 9 Kerala, Part II-B (i) General Economic Tables, Table B IV Part A Appendix, p140-145

[iii] Census of India 1981, Series 10 Kerala, Pt III A&B [i] General Economic Tables, Tables B-12 & B-17, p606-611 & 951-952.

[iv] Report on the Annual Survey of Industries, Kerala. 1962. p80-85 & p129-282

[v] Report on the Annual Survey of Industries, Kerala. 1971. p4-9.

[vi] Annual Survey of Industries 1979-80. Kerala. p30-32

Notes:

[a] The number of workers in the total manufacturing sector and the household manufacturing sector are obtained from the Censuses. The number of factory workers are from the Annual Survey of Industries. Factory workers are deducted from the Census non-household manufacturing sector workers to arrive at the non-household, non-factory workers. For 1981 compilation the number of factory workers are of 1979-80.

[b] Data not available.

[c] Notes c, f and g to Table 7.3 apply to this table too.

This is an important Table because it brings out a major feature of industrial activity in Kerala. The striking feature of the Kerala manufacturing sector is the substantial non-household non-factory sector. With the exception of cashewnut processing the dominance of the non-household non-factory sector is present in all the industries. This dominance however is not uniformly present in all industries for 1961. The data thus suggests an increasing dominance over the 1960s and 1970s. We noted earlier Eapen's findings that at the national level in India there is a growth of the non-household, non-factory sector between 1961 and 1981. In Kerala the non-household non-factory sector is more dominant than at the national level. And this was probably so in the period prior to 1961, though we have no data prior to 1961, to help us break down manufacturing workforce by the three component production systems, namely, household, non-household non-factory, and factory workers.

Let us however for the period 1961 to 1981 briefly note in the twelve major industries of Kerala the shifts among the three component production systems. In the case of coir the fall in the market has adversely affected the household sector more than the other two. But there is household production in coir as secondary occupation that is missed out in the census data.[20] In brick and tile, though there is a mild decline of the factory sector, it is the growth in the non-household non-factory sector that has caused the shift. In cotton textiles all three sub-sectors had grown over the two decades, with the household sector registering a dip in 1971 and the factory sector stagnant in the 1971-1981 period. But growth has been greatest in non-household, non-factory. This in part is a reflection of the growth of the co-operative sector within cotton textiles. In jewellery the non-household sector had grown. The household sector in absolute numbers has remained more or less constant, though its percentage share of manufacturing has been dropping. There is a total absence of the factory

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20. Secondary production explains the lack of fit of a declining coir workforce with the quantity of exports of coir, which though substantially reduced were yet at levels that could not be produced by the Census enumerated or documented coir workforce. (Issac and Mukergee. 1986)

sector in jewellery throughout the period under study. This indicates the artisan-craftsman character of jewellery manufacture. In seafood processing there has been a decline of the household sector, a growth of the non-household non-factory sector and a fluctuating factory sector. In the other industries there had been no major shifts.

All this suggests that the macro scenario of manufacturing is predominantly rural, employing a majority of males, and in recent years becoming more non-household, non-factory than before. The pervasiveness of rural manufacturing, and good share of it in non-household, non-factory production are reflected in the quantitative data presented. It is an expression of the presence of desakota in Kerala. As argued in chapter four, the whole of the lowlands and midlands of Kerala form a desakota region, encapsulating the bazaars and commercial centres of the towns and cities that function as transportation and specialized service nodes.

The pervasiveness of rural or non-urban manufacturing takes on sub-regional concentrations in some of the twelve industries. In the next chapter we will examine the concentration of coir in Alleppey district, as well as in the belt from Ernakulam to Trivandrum. In chapter nine we will examine the concentration of beedi in Cannanore. We will now briefly sketch the sub-regional concentration of a few other important industries among the twelve key industries. The purpose is not merely to present the geological morphology of Kerala industrialism in terms of sub-regions and concentrations of specific industries. The more important purpose is to demonstrate the pervasiveness of desakota character of all the major industries in Kerala. These presentations will also expand our economic historical understanding of Kerala industrialism and make its desakota character a little more intelligible.

Bricks and tiles manufacturing.

The availability of suitable clay in Kerala was important in the emergence of the brick and tile industry. Of these two industries, due to nature of the market demands; product innovations and technological improvements; it was the tile industry that streaked ahead in the early 20th century. But most manufacturing units produced both, bricks and tiles. For instance, of the 338 brick and tile manufacturing units in 1961, 250 (73.9 percent) produced both brick and tile, 79 (23.4 percent) brick only and 9 (2.7 percent) tiles only. (Census of India 1961. Vol VII Kerala. Part IV-B p29) The stimulus for the tile industry was the national, regional and later the Indian Ocean rim countries market. These markets were made accessible by the inland waterways and ocean going transportation that Kerala was heir to. Later, rail and road transportation were also used for the regional market. We shall also illustrate the dynamics and implications of transportation for local, regional and the Indian Ocean regional market in the case study on beedi.

The product innovation in tiles was made possible by the activities of the Basel Missionary Society, a Swiss-German missionary society with strong Calvinist and Pietist ideology. It started missionary work in Madras Presidency in 1834 and was particularly active in South Canara and Malabar districts. Its missionary ideology went beyond ora et labora. It believed that "praying was working, and working was praying", and that training and participation in industrial activity was part of its "civilizing mission". (Raghaviah 1986. p14-22) George Plebst, of the Industrial Commission of the Basel Mission,[21] and a mechanical

21. The Industrial Commission was of central importance, the missionaries themselves describing it as the "centre and crown" of their work. (Raghaviah 1986. p22) For an examination of Basel Mission industrial activities and proselytization and their social and economic impact, see Jaiprakash Raghaviah's unpublished M.Phil Thesis (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi) "Basel Mission Industries in Malabar and South Canara, 1834-1914: A Study of its Social and Economic Impact" 1986.

The Basel Missionary Society operated in Ghana, Borneo and China but their industrial activities and success were strongest in Malabar and South Canara.(Raghaviah 1986. p107) The Basel Missionary Society being of Swiss-German origin and most missionaries being German speaking, its activities came under the surveillance of the British Government during the First World War. In spite of the Swiss Government's intervention, by 1920 the industrial and trading activities were taken over and run by the Commonwealth Trust

engineer by professional training, found that the traditional tiles of Kerala made by the potter artisan were designed to be used with a lot of rafters or roofing woodwork. He designed a tile that needed less woodwork. The manufacturing process was also simplified and made more efficient by the use of a mould, that could be operated by animal power or manually. Later steam power was introduced.

The first tile factory using these production techniques was set up in 1865 in Mangalore, and the second in 1873 in Kozhikode. Subsequently between 1882 and 1905 the Basel Mission set up four more factories. One of them was in South Canara district and the other three in Malabar district at Codacal, Palghat and Feroke. (Ibid. p52-53) Feroke was only about 5 kilometres along the Beyapore river to Beyapore harbour and by land about 12 kilometres from Kozhikode. The tile factories at Kozhikode and Feroke had a transportation access that helped the industry to develop an Indian Ocean market. Being a bulky and heavy item, sea transport was particularly suitable and the proximity of the factories to the ports was an important factor. Exports were mainly to the British possessions of the period in the Indian Ocean such as East Africa, Aden, Basra, Sri Lanka, Federated Straits of Malaya, and even Australia. Tiles were also exported to Sumatra and the German colonies in East Africa. (Ibid. p54) In Sri Lanka these tiles came to be known as Calicut tiles as they were shipped from Kozhikode (Calicut).

The industrial activities of the Basel Mission, particularly tile manufacturing, and textile weaving as we shall observe shortly, had spread effects. A number of tile manufacturing units, using the same techniques and product mix, came up in Malabar district and spread to Cochin and Travancore as well. The main raw material, clay, as well as the finished products were

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Ltd, formed in London specifically for this purpose. The Madras Chamber of Commerce strongly lobbied for the take over. The fast growth of the industrial and trading activities of the Basel Mission were obviously seen as a challenge by some of the British trading interests in Madras Presidency. (Ibid. p59-61)

easily transported by waterways and many tile manufacturing units are on the banks of waterways. When one travels by waterways in Kerala the chimney stack of the tile factory kiln is a ubiquitous part of the landscape. In 1986 only four of the seven tile factories set by the Basel Mission were still run by the Commonwealth Trust Ltd.[22] (Ibid. p61) But the number of tile factories in 1961 was 259. This demonstrates the spread effects. Appendix 7.01 presents some data on brick and tile manufacturing units in 1961.

Basel Mission had introduced steam as early as the 1880s for mixing of clay. But in 1961 194 (57.4 percent) of the 338 brick and tile manufacturing units had not adopted the use of power. (See Appendix 7.01) They were possibly using bullock and/or manual power. Except for a few, these were the smaller units employing less than 20 persons and falling into the category of non-household, non-factory manufacturing units. Obviously in the spread effects, there was a selective screening and only features compatible with their size and character were adopted. Machine mixing of clay; presses or moulds replacing the potter's wheel; use of a continuously firing kiln were some technological improvements introduced by the Basel Mission.(Raghaviah 1986. p96-97) Most of these technological changes were adopted but not the use of power for the clay mixing machines, presses and the kiln. Bullock and manual power and use of wood fuel were preferred by the smaller units. Majority of the units, (73.1 percent), were rural based, and this being high even among the units using power. This is an example of taking advantage of the spread of the services sector and collective consumption facilities.[23]

The brick and tile industry workforce is concentrated in rural areas (79.1 percent). It is also predominantly (72.5 percent) male. (See Appendix 7.02) The early concentration in north

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22. See previous footnote.

23. See Table 4.05 in chapter four for the availability of electricity in 96.9 percent of Kerala villages in 1977.

Malabar, corresponding with the 1981 districts of Cannanore and Kozhikode, was diffused southwards with the spread effects. Access to raw materials and markets via water, rail and road transportation routes appear to have influenced the location.

Cotton textiles

Cotton textile manufacturing in Kerala is predominantly handloom weaving and allied activities without the use of power or powerlooms. According to the Census of 1961 of the 99,000 workers in cotton textile manufacturing, 88.8 percent were in non-power operated manufacturing. Majority (65.9 percent) were in handloom weaving. In 1981 of the 182,000 workers in cotton textile manufacturing 89.8 percent were in non-power operating manufacturing. (See Appendix 7.03) The censuses prior to 1961 do not disaggregate cotton textile manufacturing by sub-categories to identify workers in power operated spinning mills and powerloom weaving factories. The description in the Travancore State Manuals of 1906 (Nagam Aiya 1906. p204) and 1940 (Velu Pillai 1940.p643) of industrial and artisan activity are useful in this context. They suggest that cotton textile manufacture in the region was overwhelmingly, if not completely, of handloom manufacture in the late 19th and first four decades of the 20th century. Whether during this period cotton textile manufacture was on the decline or growing, it is difficult to establish, though there is some evidence cited by Rajagopalan that by the 1940s there was a greater number of handlooms than in the late 19th century.[24] (Rajagopalan 1986. p18-19)

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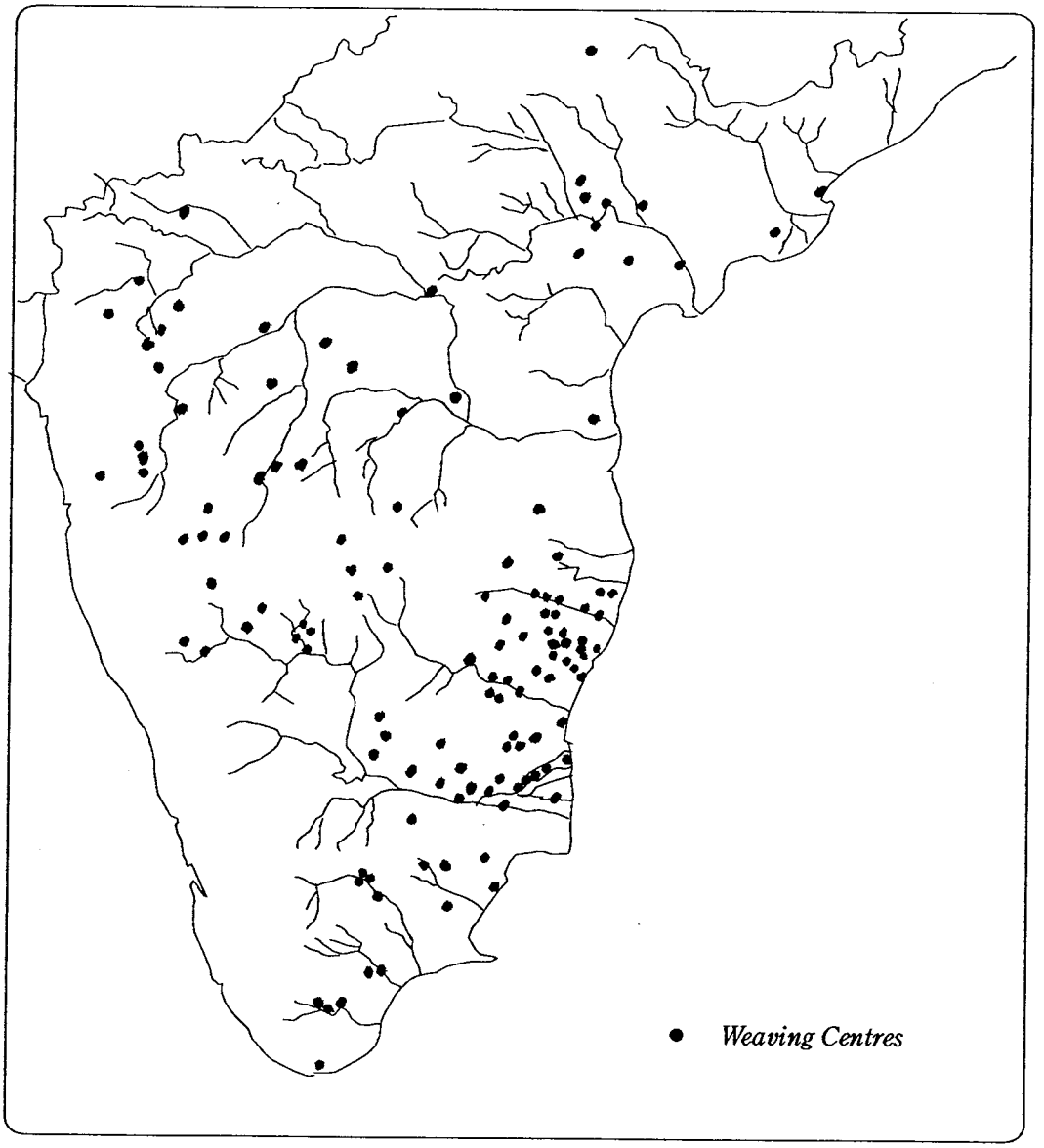
24. The source cited by Rajagopalan is the Report of the Fact-Finding Committee (Handlooms and Mills), Commerce Dept, Government of India, 1942, p32 and 35.

Map 7.01

Weaving Centres in Medieval South India, Circa A.D. 1000-1500



Source: Ramaswamy 1985. p7.

Historically during the medieval period,[25] Kerala was not a region of textile manufacture in South India. (Ramaswamy 1985. 6-14) Map 7.01 makes this explicit.[26] Though this map, reproduced from Ramaswamy (Ibid. p7), is based on inscriptional evidence, Ramaswamy finds that a survey of textile centres in Tamilnadu in 1957 show a continuity of the medieval centres shown in the map. Despite the mechanization that has occurred in the industry, Ramaswamy argues that the primary criteria for locational advantages of the industry, except for rail links, remain the same throughout the centuries. They are the availability of raw material, skilled labour, transport and marketing facilities. (Ibid. p7) The tendency to be proximate to rivers and port towns in the medieval period, are now replaced by the inclination to be close to rail transport.

Kerala's climate and soil conditions[27] were not suited for cotton cultivation. The lack of raw material was obviously a major factor for the absence of cotton textile manufacture in Kerala in the pre-colonial period. The absence of an indigenous or Malayalee weaver caste supports the view that cotton textile manufacture was not an important industry in pre-colonial Kerala. Chaliyans or Saliyans, the major weaver caste in Kerala, being of Telugu speaking Saliya caste descent, are of migrant origin from the region corresponding to contemporary Andhra Pradesh. (Thurstone 1909, V 2, p11-12) Chaliyans are also numerically insignificant. In 1901 there were only about 38,000 Chaliyan men, women and children, which was 0.6 percent of the Kerala population at that date. The two other weaver castes in Kerala are even more recent migrants, the Kaikolavans from Tamilnadu and the Devanga from Karnataka. They are of even less numerical significance than the Chaliyans. The Kaikolvans

25. The medieval period in Indian History comes up to the 17th century, the end of the pre-colonial period. (Braudel 1984. p497)

26. Braudel also observes the textile industry being poorly represented along the Malabar coast in the pre-colonial period. (1984. p507-8).

27. Black soil or feruginous loam soil is best suited for cotton cultivation in India. (Ramaswamy 1985.p6) The excessive rainfall in Kerala was also a disadvantage for cotton cultivation.

numbering about 12,000 and the Devanga about 4000 in 1901. (Census of India 1901, Vol XV Pt II p155-205; Vol XX Pt II p38-39; Vol XXVI Pt II p147-187)

The regional concentrations of cotton textile manufacture within Kerala in the late 19th and 20th century are in Trivandrum and Cannanore districts. Sixty percent of the looms in Kerala are in these two districts (Rajagopalan 1986.p11). The features of cotton textile industry in these two districts are distinctively different.

> In Trivandrum the household or unorganized sector predominates, and production is oriented primarily towards the domestic Kerala market. In contrast, in Cannanore nearly half the loomage is in the non-household or organized sector and production is oriented towards exports. (Ibid. p11)

Though Rajagopalan does not recognize it, the distinctly different character of cotton textiles between Trivandrum and Cannanore makes sense with the historical geography of cotton textile manufacture in South India. The presence of household textile weaving in Trivandrum, the southern most district of Kerala, is a historical overflow from similar textile weaving centres of the southern tip of what is now Tamilnadu. The district of Tinnevely (Ludden 1985 p56 p151; Ponniah 1940 p146) that was part of this southern tip of Tamilnadu was a cotton growing region. The narrow coast land between the end of the Western Ghats and the sea, provided access for the raw material and diffusion of weaving skills to enter the Trivandrum district. Indeed textile industry was more present in the four Tamil speaking taluks of southern Travancore that were ceded to Tamilnadu in the 1956 territorial reorganization of the Indian States. Even in contemporary or post-1956 Trivandrum district, the more reputed and important textile weaving centres of Neyyattinkara and Balaramapuram are on the very southern fringe of the district, and the Kerala State as well.

The continuity of the historical overflow of the cotton textile industry from Tamilnadu to Trivandrum, does not however mean that the industry continued unchanged. It was

subject to the competition and pressures of the import of varieties of cloth as well cotton yarn from Europe. This was later made more acute by the entry of the Indian mill production of these commodities. Consequently in Trivandrum district cotton yarn hand spinning declined by the end of the 19th century, (Rajagopalan 1986. p18); weaving of coarser varieties of cotton textiles such as mundus, thundus, thorthu[28] continued (Ibid p19); the silk weavers increasingly took to the weaving of cotton of fine counts with English spun yarn introduced to the Indian market in the mid 19th century. (ibid p17). This product mix response, was dictated by domestic market, consumer preferences and the ability of the product to compete with imported and mill produced items.[29] Some technological changes occurred. The most important was the adoption of the fly shuttle with the Travancore government's planned encouragement and support. At the end of the 19th century the throw shuttle was in substantial use. By 1940, 80 percent of the looms in Travancore had the fly shuttle. (Ibid. p20).

The structure of the textile industry in Cannanore was conditioned by the work, influence and the demonstration and spread effects of the Basel Mission. We examined their missionary ideology in the context of the brick and tile industry. Their interests in cotton handloom textile weaving pre-dates their ventures in brick and tiles. In 1844 the Basel Mission set up a weaving unit in Mangalore, in South Canara district. Its success led to the establishment similar units at Cannanore in 1852 and Kozhikode in 1859. By 1913 these units had become large establishments employing more than 600 workers each. The technological changes introduced by the Basel mission went beyond the fly shuttle. As early as 1847 the "frame loom" was introduced, and in 1872 the jacquard loom. Though steam power was

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28. Mundu and thundu are single piece lower body garments worn by Malayalees. Thorthu is a cotton hand or bath towel and sometimes used as a shawl. These are hard wearing garments of everyday use at home and for manual work situations.

29. This response is similar to Harnetty's findings in the Central Provinces where the handloom indutry "retained the advantage in the production of the most artistic and elaborate grments as well as in the most durable fabrics of very coarse cloth." (Harnetty 1991. p464)

introduced in 1895 for the winding of threads on bobbins, weaving remained a handloom operation. (Ibid p21-22) Given the Basel Mission's ideology of industrial work as prayer, and a proselytization and "civilizing" mechanism, it was perhaps logical and prudent to keep to labour intensive technologies.[30]

The Basel Mission also introduced a product mix that was carefully oriented to carve out a specialty niche in the Indian national market. The Mission establishment turned out table cloths, napkins, handkerchiefs, cotton check shirtings, suitings, damask linen (using the jacquard loom), under wear etc. Later the product mix extended to gingham, Turkish and honey comb towels etc. (Ibid p24) They were carefully catering to the needs of the colonial middle and upper classes, both native and British. By a system of visiting agents they covered such markets even in distant areas such as the plantation towns of Assam, Bengal etc. The Basel Mission's endeavours were emulated by a number of local entrepreneurs. By 1940 there were 122 handloom factories in Cannanore. (Ibid p23) There also developed small scale factories and household weaving that were linked to the bigger units. In times of heavy orders sub-contracting was resorted to.

The Basel Mission were thus a catalyst for the emergence of a whole complex network of handloom cotton textile units in Cannanore district and their functioning over the last hundred years or more. In 1960s Cannanore Handloom industries entered the export market. In the 1970s they were highly successful in meeting the demand from Western Europe for cotton crepe or cheese cloth. This was a high point of profitability but also exposed them to the vulnerability of export commodity marketing. By the end of 1970s when fashions changed in Europe, the export market fell. Efforts by the Cannanore handloom cotton textile industries to regain their traditional domestic market proved futile. Consumers had shifted to producers

30. Though the Basel Mission had these ideology aand perspectives, the number of people proselytized was small. A number of workers in their industrial establishments remained Hindus. (Raghaviah 1986. p111).

elsewhere in India. The small scale units and household producers of Cannanore were adversely affected. The 1980s have been a difficult time. Co-operativization has been resorted to as survival strategy. As we noted earlier co-operatives in the handloom weaving sector have State support and subsidies, and cushion the small producer member in times of crisis.

In Trivandrum district too the 1980s have witnessed an increase in handloom co-operatives. Petty producers marketed their products in the open fairs and/or through network of middlemen. This was invariably forced commerce with an unequal relationship with the merchant middlemen. (Ibid.p7) Co-operatives provided a centralized marketing system through their apex society or union. Since co-operatives had the Government's financial backing, they were able to hold stocks through slump periods. During crisis and slump periods petty producers joined co-operatives as it helped them to market their produce. Increasing co-operativization began to influence the product mix in Trivandrum. There is trend to produce more household linen etc. These changes, including co-operativization, have the beginnings of a convergence in the character of the cotton handloom industries at Cannanore and Trivandrum from their earlier distinct positions. (Ibid. p12 p118) Though some of their earlier distinctions remain, both are moving towards a middle ground.

An important feature of the 1970s was the growth of cotton handloom co-operative units in the coir belt, particularly in Alleppey district. It was apparent during
the time spent by the author in the coir belt in the Alleppey and Quilon district that a number of cotton handloom weaving centres had come up in recent years. Interviews with some of the weavers revealed that they had earlier been coir workers. Some of them continue household production of coir as a secondary occupation. The shift to cotton handloom weaving co-operatives was a survival strategy of coir workers displaced by the decline of the coir industry in the late 1970s. This is a good example of the characteristic of the Kerala desakota economy commented upon earlier. The peaks and troughs of the various agro-

processing industry sometimes interlock, workers shifting from one industry to another. They provide at the same time a cushion for the workers from extreme hardships.

A comparison of the census data of 1961 and 1981 on cotton textile workforce classified by districts, (See Appendix 7.04) shows the remarkable growth of the cotton textile industry in Alleppey in the 1970s. Indeed by 1981 it had climbed to the rank number one among all districts with 22.9 percent of cotton textile workforce of Kerala. The occupational shift from coir to cotton, in the coir belt districts of Alleppey, Quilon and Trivandrum have made the combined share of these three districts jump from 24.2 percent to 51.1 percent between 1961 and 1981. (See Appendix 7.04) The beginning of the decline of the Cannanore cotton textile industry in the very late 1970s led to a drop in absolute numbers of cotton textile workers. This contributed to the growing concentration of the cotton textile industry in the south.

The female participation rate in the cotton textile industry had increased between 1961 and 1981, obviously influenced by the influx of workers from the coir industry which had high female participation. (See Appendix 7.04) The household sector has declined, (see Appendix 7.03) possibly due to the folding up of this sector in Cannanore, following the collapse of the crepe market. Unfortunately district level data on the household sector is not available for 1981 to confirm this. The 1961 data suggests a concentration of the household sector in the south. This is in keeping with Rajagopalan's characterization of the industry in Trivandrum at that time as largely informal household manufacturing for the regional market. Overall in Kerala, the minimal presence of powerloom weaving, as well the limited use of power operated ginning and spinning of yarn, dyeing, bleaching, printing processes is reflected in the low percentage of workers in power operated units. Power operated factories may need less workers as they are capital intensive in character. But the power operated

cotton textile manufacturing units were small in number, but large in size by the number of workers employed. (See Appendix 7.05)

Ernakulam and Trichur districts have, relative to other districts, a lower percentage of workers in the household sector and a higher percentage of workers in power operated units. (See Appendix 7.04). We observed earlier in this chapter that any presence of capital intensive industries in Kerala is mostly in the Cochin-Alwaye transport corridor. This is a segment of the longer Cochin-Trichur road and rail corridor. The greater number of household cotton textile workers in power operated mills in Ernakulam and Trichur, than in the other districts is thus in keeping with industrial developmental character of these two districts. What is important to note is that such units are not concentrated in urban areas. Though the rural sectoral component declined between 1961 and 1981 in these two districts, it still remains high. (76.2 percent and 60.9 percent in 1981 in Trichur and Ernakulam respectively. See Appendix 7.04). This supports the argument made in chapter five that Kerala may retain its desakota characteristics, even in the context of industrial advancement.

Overall this sketch of the cotton textile industry demonstrates its predominantly rural character. Even in the case of the large power using units with 100 workers or more, seven out of the fifteen units are located in rural areas. This once again supports the view that desakota may persist even in the context of some industrial advancement in Kerala. Given the nature of Kerala's spatial order and political economy, urban concentration of non-agricultural activity need not necessarily accompany any industrial advancement. Transport facilities, and spread of social infrastructure and collective consumption, among other factors, may facilitate continuation of desakota.

It is important to note that labour-capital conflict had a minimal role in the spatial character of the cotton textile industry, in contrast to coir and beedi industries. Trade

unionism emerged in the cotton textile industry, but a series of collective agreements led to industrial peace and a fair wage to the textile workers. (Rajagopalan 1986. p70)

To conclude, some of the issues Harnetty raises in his study of the cotton handloom industry in the Central Provinces, are useful for an understanding of the cotton textile industry in Kerala. Cotton handloom weavers are not to be treated as an undifferentiated group. (Harnetty 1991 p456) The distinctions in terms of organizational character, product mix and marketing systems were important in Kerala. These distinctions influenced sub-regional differentiations between Cannanore and Trivandrum. By 1981 Alleppey provided a third type - handloom weaving dominated by co-operatives. This was a survival strategy of displaced workers from the coir industry in decline. The cotton textile industry in Kerala also exhibits the occurrence of de-industrialization and re-industrialization, a theme of Harnetty's study of the cotton handloom industry in the Central Provinces. (Ibid. p507)

Cashew processing industry

The cashew tree was introduced to India by the Portuguese about four hundred years ago. (James 1981.p4) Processing of the cashew nut on a commercial basis is of recent origin, beginning in the mid 1930s. (Kannan 1988. p61) Its growth to be an important industry in Kerala was during the post-war years. We noted in chapter five that the post war economic growth and affluence of the developed countries led to their discarding coir as a cheap insulating material. The same affluence saw at the same time the growth of exotic culinary habits and tastes. Kerala cashed in to provide some of the ingredients for this cuisine of new affluence. This was in the supply of shrimps and cashew nuts. The processing of these commodities for export becomes part of the industrial economic response and dynamics of Kerala and its desakota regions in particular. We observe once again the drawing in of household industries' technology and production systems in this response.

Cashew processing of the nuts by decorticating the outer skin (shelling) and inner skin (peeling) manually after pan roasting the raw nuts was a household industry. There was selective improvement of the technology when processing began to occur on a commercial scale. The most important of this was the discarding of the pan roasting method. In its place was introduced the drum roasting method and later the oil bath method. These methods were more efficient, using less fuel, faster and, most importantly, having less impurities in the finished product, than in the pan roasting method. With the emergence of an export market and quality controls to gain access to it, the elimination of impurities was important.

The equipment for drum roasting or oil bath method was turned out by local blacksmiths and machinists. The costs of such equipment and the stock of nuts needed to obtain maximum machine utilization however made it difficult to be operated as a household industry. The decortication of the roasted nuts however continued to be manual. And this was a major labour input in the processing of cashew nuts. Analysis of the categories of workers in cashew factories revealed that 85.0 percent of the workers were shellers and peelers, 10.2 percent graders of the processed nuts, 2.0 percent roasters and the balance 2.8 percent supervisory and managerial personnel. (Beevi 1978. Table 2.7 p20) Both the oil bath and drum roasting methods, roasted a barrel of nuts.The continued roasting process meant the need for a large number of workers to decorticate the nuts manually. This resulted in most of the cashew nut processing units having more than twenty workers and ceasing to be even small scale or non-factory, non-household, in terms of Indian statutory and census definitions. Here then we observe an exception to the general pattern of manufacturing organization. Given the quality demands of the market it was imperative that a roasting technology was adopted to make the final product free of impurities. The industry adopting such roasting technologies however made it difficult for the manufacturing units to remain small scale in terms of number of workers employed.

As indicated earlier the growth of cashew nuts as an export commodity on a substantial scale was in the 1950s, though there were some exports since the 1930s. What is significant is that by 1960 India had commanded 95.8 % of the growing world market for cashew nuts.(Nayar 1976 p113) Nayar observes:

> The main reason for this dominance had been the labour skills available to the Indian cashew industry.... the extraction of the kernels from the raw nuts requires very special manual skills. It is interesting to note that more than two thirds of India's cashew industry is concentrated in one district of Kerala, viz, Quilon. (Nayar 1976. p112)

The post war growth of the cashew market in the developed world was enormous. Though Quilon district had the labour skills to process the nuts for growing world demand, Indian crop production could not be increased to meet this demand. Raw nuts were then imported from Tanzania and Mozambique, processed mainly in Quilon district and re-exported.

In the 1970s a mechanized method of decorticating the nuts was developed internationally. Tanzania and Mozambique started processing their nuts using the mechanized methods and India's hold on the market declined. It was partly stabilized by the USSR's entry as a purchaser on a bi-lateral basis with India.(James 1981.p92, Nayar 1976. p115) Manual processing remained competitive as there was a higher recovery of whole kernels in manual processing. There was also more down-grading of nuts and higher capital and depreciation costs in mechanical processing. The growing demand and prices in the world market however made possible for the increased costs and wastage of mechanical processing to be recovered. The main problem for the Indian cashew processing industry was the short supply of raw nuts when the East African countries began to process their own nuts. (Ramunni Menon 1975. p4-5)

Census data from 1961 to 1981 reveal a high female participation rate; a majority of the manufacturing units and workers being rural based and a concentration of the industry in Quilon district. (See Appendices 7.06 and 7.07] The concentration in Quilon district, in normal circumstances, may have led to a number of settlements in the district being deemed urban. But this does not happen because the labour is predominantly female. The definition of urban, as we noted in chapter four, has a gender bias, and requires 75 percent of the male workforce of a settlement to be in non-agriculture

How and why the concentration of cashew processing occurred in Quilon is not clear. The concentration of the cashewnut processing industry in Kerala in the Indian context is largely explained by Kerala having the largest area of cultivation and the highest yield per hectare of cashew being in Kerala. (See Appendix 7.08) The availability of labour skilled in manual processing may be also a factor. But the concentration of cashew processing units within Kerala in Quilon district is not explained by any proximity or the presence of cashew cultivation in Quilon district. (See Appendix 7.09) Processing of cashew nuts on a commercial scale was started in Quilon by Joseph Periera, an entrepreneur. (Emam Beevi 1978.p2). It is likely that some of the improvements in the processing technology first occurred in Quilon district and this led to a concentration of the industry in the district. Agglomeration of cashew manufacturing units may have led to the growth of service infrastructure for processing machinery and tools; marketing networks etc. This over the years may have led to a comparative advantage for cashew processing in Quilon.

In the context of the socio-political milieu and organized labour in Kerala; the concentration of cashew processing units in one district; and in manufacturing units having a large number of workers; the unionization of the workers was quick to follow. Demand for better wages and working conditions soon followed. This resulted in labour-capital conflict. (Emam Beevi 1978.p53-62) This became a pervasive issue in Kerala industrialism, and will be

examined in depth in the case studies of coir and beedi in the next two chapters. There were implications for the spatial organization of the cashew processing industry, as capital sought to deflate the power of the unionized workers concentrated in factories in Quilon district. But efforts to decentralize and down scale the size of the factories in terms of workers was muted by the roasting technology that dictated economies of scale.

But in the 1960s when minimum wage legislation was introduced by the Kerala Government consequent to trade union agitation, capital struggled to keep unionization at a minimum. This brought about a resurgence of the household sector. Much of the household sector activity however was carried out within the premises of the factory either by leasing out of "closed" factories or by declaring them "closed" on certain days. This operated on a putting out system. The raw nuts were roasted by the factory owners. They were then handed out on a putting out system for manual decorticating. These were strategies to circumvent minimum wage legislation and trade unionization, but yet retain the use of factory equipment. (Emam Beevi 1978. p14) It suggests that the improved roasting technology could not be transferred to the household level probably due to size of the equipment, and the capital and skilled labour needs of such equipment. This posed problems for the industry in the context of labour-capital confrontation. This eventually led for many of the factories to be nationalized. Trade unionization resulted in better wages and working conditions for the workers. (See Appendix 7.10)

The other industries

Many of the other industries listed in Table 7.01 are in terms of organization and technology not very different from the industries sketched above or being presented as case studies in the next two chapters. Their petty and/or small scale non-factory, non-household

character of production organization was shown in Table 7.04, and the absence of any concentration in urban areas in Table 7.03.

Seafood processing is largely the cleaning and deep-freeze packaging of shrimps for the international market, mainly Japanese and North American. Its growth is since the 1950s. Jewellery, vegetable oil and wood industries and production cater to the national and regional market. Vegetable oil manufacture, is almost wholly coconut oil production. About 63 percent of the wood industry work force are in the sawing, planing and treatment of timber, and the making of wooden furniture, fixtures and roofing materials and fixtures. The balance were in the household industries of making mats, baskets etc using reed, rattan, bamboos etc. Some of these industries have sub-regional (district) concentration. (See Appendix 7.11)

Tailoring is present in all districts. Tailoring is not garment manufacturing. It is custom tailoring of men's, women's and children's clothes using a sewing machine. A tailor shop is a ubiquitous feature in Kerala, both in urban and non-urban areas. It is more like a service and is in the grey zone between a service and an industry. Census data however classifies it as an industry. It is not a traditional occupation and no caste is traditionally associated with tailoring as its occupation. Traditionally men wore no upper garment other than a shawl to wrap round the shoulders. Women wore a *settu mundu*[31] or *sari*. These were all woven clothes and the need for tailoring services was hardly present. It was only with the onset of the 20th century that clothing styles began to change with men wearing a shirt or kurtar as an upper garment with the dhoti or lungi continuing as the lower garment. There were also some beginning to wear slacks and school children wearing sewn garments such as shirts, shorts, dresses, etc The

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31. A dhothi, mundu or thundu along with a neryiyathu used as an upper shawl, constitutes a settu mundu. Until the late 19th century only middle middle and upper caste men and women were permitted to wear upper garments.

population density obviously influences the need for the tailoring services to be numerous and ubiquitously present in urban and non-urban areas.

The majority of the tailor shops are a one person operation, the person often seated on the front aisle or verandah of a textile shop.The larger ones are owned and operated by a master tailor with a few assistants and apprentices.[32] None of them use power operated sewing machines. These features make a majority of the establishments fall into the category of non-household, non-factory organization. (See Table 7.04) Even the one person operation if it was carried out outside the home fell outside the census definition of household industry in urban areas. A small number, ranging between 14 to 20 percent, were in the household sector. A substantial number of the household sector are women who sew children's dresses and women's blouses. Tailoring was a male dominated industry and continues to be so, though there has been a significant increase in female participation in the last two decades.[33]

The toddy industry is the production of a country liquor or wine from an extract of the spathe of the coconut tree. The major part of the labour input is in the preparation of the spathe over a period of a few weeks and subsequently for four to six months to daily collect the extract from the spathe. A pot is skillfully tied under the spathe, into which the extract drips. The fermenting of this extract into toddy or liquor is a natural process that takes place over a few hours. Some of the toddy is processed into arrack by a system of distilling. The balance is sold as toddy in taverns found in urban and non-urban areas. The Indian censuses include all workers in this industry, other than the sales workers, under manufacturing. But as the description of the work suggests, it lies in the grey zone between agro-processing and

32. Of the 7210 tailoring units in 1961, 63.5 percent were one person operation, 35.3 percent with two to five persons and the balance 1.2 percent with six to none persons. (Census of India 1961, Vol VII Kerala, Part IV-B, Table E-III, p32-41)

33. Female participation has risen from 7.3 percent in 1961 to 26.1 percent in 1981. (Censuses of 1961 and 1981).

plantation or agricultural work. Toddy tapping was one of the traditional caste occupations of the Ezhavas.

Other food processing, (other than vegetable oils, cashew and seafood processing), included sugar and jaggery manufacture, rice processing and bakeries. Manual rice processing, with high female participation has declined during the last few decades. From about 40,000 workers in 1951, it declined to 1,000 in 1981. Household manufacture of jaggery, another industry with high female participation, also declined from 17,000 workers in 1951 to 1,200 workers in 1981. Workers in bakeries increased from 500 workers in 1951 to 10,700 in 1981. The increase was largely in the rural non-household sector.

Some summing up observations

There are a number of features that are common, though with slight variations, to all the industries that have been discussed, as well as to the two industries that are to be presented as case studies in chapters eight and nine. These features were highlighted at appropriate places. We may sum them up as follows. First, they were all labour intensive in character; second, they had roots in indigenous petty production low technology, and selectively adopting and/or improving such technology, as long as it did not change the labour intensive and petty and/or small scale production character of the industries; third, they were and/or became predominantly rural based; fourth, the presence of forced commerce; fifth, the emergence of organized labour, and in most instances leading to industrial unrest and labour-capital conflict; sixth, the labour-capital conflict and the political economy of labour having implications for organizational and spatial character of the industries; seventh, sub-regional concentrations of specific industries within Kerala occur in the case of most of the industries.

All these characteristics of Kerala industrialism are part of the late 19th and 20th century industrial response in the Kerala region, to the changing international, national and regional economies and markets of the period. The character of the Kerala region, described in chapters two to four, particularly the mix of demographic, ecological, historical geographical and economic historical factors, influenced this industrial response. This response was part of the social changes of the period discussed in the earlier chapters. An integral part of this mix is a spatial order characterized by the dominating presence of desakota. The dynamics of the desakota region influenced the industrial response and was in turn reinforced by the nature of the industrial response, and the emerging characteristics of Kerala industrialism.

As was argued earlier one needs to drop the conceptual and intellectual baggage of the rural-urban dichotomy in understanding Kerala. In this thesis the classification of quantitative data as urban and rural is partly because census and other sources provide data classified as such. In other instances the term non-urban has been used, to denote that what is not urban is not necessarily rural. In the Kerala context, it is both desakota and rural.

As will be elaborated in the coir case study, indigenous perception of space does not compartmentalize space in terms of territory. Space is seen in terms of networks or circuits rather than as territory. Networks and circuits can mix and overlap. This then is a perception that makes desakota intelligible and plausible as a region or territory of mixed urban-rural character. McGee's desakota hypothesis becomes a key to understanding space in Kerala. It developed a third category of space for a theoretical understanding of Asian spatial phenomena. It is an effort in the context of certain features of Asian urbanization to conceptually and theoretically flex the urban-rural dichotomy with the desakota concept.

Trade and Commerce

The decennial censuses from 1951 to 1981[34] reveal that only 30 percent of the personnel in trade and commercial activity are in urban areas. (See Table 6.05 in chapter six). A high percentage of such activity then being in non-urban areas is due to a number of reasons. First, the urban ratio is low in Kerala. It was 13.5 percent in 1951 and had risen to 18.7 in 1981. (See Table 4.01 in chapter four). That 30 percent of trade and commerce is in urban areas, in the context of the low urban ratio, shows the customary concentration, relative to the population, of such activity in urban areas. It is however significant that though the urban ratio over the period examined had risen from 13.5 to 18.7, trade and commerce had risen only from 30.3 to 31.1.

Second, the rural population densities may have influenced the emergence of a multitude of retail outlets to service such a population. Third, the presence of small-holder cultivators, and petty producers in manufacturing may have created the need for a network of middlemen traders. This may have been both for the sale of agricultural inputs and manufacturing raw materials to the petty producers and collect their produce and finished products. Fourth, the trading sector by incorporating within it forced commerce, becomes an enormous network of traders at various levels. The manner in which forced commerce operates and inflates the trade and commerce sector will be illustrated in the coir case study. It would thus be more appropriate to discuss the trade and commerce sector and its position in the non-agricultural sector and Kerala desakota in the coir case study.

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34. The censuses prior to this period do not disaggregate occupational data by urban and rural areas in a systematic manner.

Service sector

In the observations made in chapter six on Table 6.04 it was noted that the service sector's share of the workforce increased from 6.5 percent in 1901 to 10.8 percent in 1981. It was a steady increase but for a peak in 1941 and a slight decline in 1981. The peak in 1941 is probably a distortion caused by the absence of Malabar data for this census year.[35] The 1981 decline is not in absolute terms as the total employed in the service sector increased from 736,000 in 1971 to 836,000 in 1981. (See Table 7.05). The service share of the total workforce declined due to the faster growth in other non-agricultural sectors. (See Table 6.04)

Table 7.05 presents the service sector disaggregated by sub-sectors for the period 1901 to 1981. The sub-sector classification follow the 1971 and 1981 Censuses two digit classification with a few changes. Electricity, (code 40), gas and steam, (code 41) water works and supply, (code 42), and sanitary services (code 91) have been aggregated and described as utilities. Personal services have been disaggregated by three digit classification to present hairdressers (code 962) and laundrymen (code 961) as separate categories. The need to distinguish them is due to their size and the implications of service caste occupational continuities. Community services follows the 1971 and 1981 census classification (code 94) and consists of personnel in religious services, welfare services on a non-profit basis, labour organizations and professional bodies. International service organizations (code 98) which is numerically insignificant in Kerala has been added on to community services. Cultural services also follows 1971 and 1981 census classification (code 95) and refers to persons engaged in the arts and letters, (which includes music, dance and theatre), film, T.V. and radio, (includes

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35. As discussed in chapters two and three, the thrust towards a social infrastructure and welfare package in Kerala first emerged in Travancore. This was soon followed in Cochin. This influenced the growth of public administration, health and education sections of the service sector in Travancore and Cochin. The 1941 peak is due to the inclusion of only Travancore and Cochin data with slightly higher percentages than Malabar. There was no census of economic and occupational activity in 1941 in Malabar.

artists, technicians, distributors, etc), other recreational services and personnel in libraries, museums, botanical and zoological gardens, wild life sanctuaries etc.

TABLE 7.05

Kerala service sector workforce classified (percent) by sub-sectors: 1901 - 1981

Sector	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981
Pb:Adm	14.6	12.4	14.5	14.6	17.9	17.4	18.1	27.3	21.8
Educ	7.4	10.0	12.8	15.7	15.9	17.5	24.3	29.9	32.5
Health	4.6	4.9	6.0	6.3	7.1	7.7	6.8	7.6	9.4
C'ty:S	19.7	17.5	19.5	16.5	10.6	15.0	10.1	6.2	7.3
Cul:S	4.7	6.3	7.1	4.2	4.2	0.4	1.3	1.5	2.1
Dom:S	16.9	16.2	11.1	20.5	26.1	22.5	23.9	16.1	15.9
L'dry	20.4	20.6	17.5	13.9	11.5	9.3	7.9	4.3	3.0
Hr:Dr	11.7	12.1	11.5	8.3	6.6	6.9	4.7	4.1	3.6
U'tls	[a]	[a]	[a]	[a]	[a]	3.4	3.0	3.2	4.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
`000									
Total	188	198	228	261	[b]	312	541	736	836
Urban	[f]	[f]	[f]	[f]	[f]	107	161	220	260
Urb %	[f]	[f]	[f]	[f]	[f]	34.3	29.7	29.9	31.1

Sources: Derived from Census of India 1901 to 1981.

Notes:

[a] Utilities, (electricity, gas and water), were not a separate census category until 1951. As these services were provided by the state and municipal governments the workforce is probably included under public administration. They are likely to have been less than 3.0 percent in the period 1901 to 1941.

[b] Census were not conducted in Malabar in 1941. The percentages for 1941 pertain to the aggregate of Travancore and Cochin only.

[c] Data up to 1951 has not been adjusted for changes in state boundary in 1956.

[d] 1971 data does not include secondary workers.

[e] 1981 data is the total of main and marginal workers. As three digit classification is not available for marginal workers, personal services (two digit code 96) has been allocated among domestic, hair dressing, laundry services etc on the ratio of these categories among main workers.

[f] Economic activity or occupational data for urban areas have not been provided in the censuses in a comprehensive manner until 1951.

[g] Abbreviations used in sector column. Pb:Adm-Public Administration; Educ-Education Services; C'ty:S-Community Services; Cul:S-Cultural Services; Dom:S-Domestic Services; L'dry-Laundry Services; Hr:Dr-Hair Dressing; U'tls-Utilities

The sub-sectors for purposes of discussion may be grouped under two broad categories. First, public and social infrastructure services consisting of public administration, education and health services which though present in Kerala from pre-colonial times expanded significantly in the 20th century. This may be termed the non-traditional sector. Second, cultural and personal services consisting of cultural services, domestic services, hairdressers and laundry services. These are traditional services and were historically present and continue to be important but have not expanded in absolute numbers in any significant manner except for domestic services. In fact laundry services had shrunk in absolute numbers from 38293 workers in 1901 to 24693 workers in 1981. This is difficult to understand in the context of population growth and greater need for such services. While differences in census definition is possibly a factor, occupational mobility out of caste occupations that became increasing possible as the 20th century advanced may be a factor as well. Community services lies between the two broad categories because it has within it components that are new as well as traditional. Religious services, a traditional service, that has been constant, while welfare, labour organizations and professional bodies, the non-traditional components have grown in recent decades.

Both traditional and non-traditional services have significance in this chapter's efforts to understand the importance, both numerically and otherwise, of non-agricultural activity in non-urban Kerala. It is then useful to present the service sub-sectors by Census urban-rural classification and then go on to discuss the significance of the two broad categories of services for the purposes of this chapter. This is presented in Table 7.06. Unfortunately economic and occupational activity by urban-rural sectors, as indicated earlier, is available in a systematic manner only from 1951.

TABLE 7.06

Kerala service sector classified by sub-sectors and urban and males component (percent) in each sub-sector : 1951-1981

Sub Sectors	1951		1961		1971		1981	
	Urban %	Males %	Urban %	Males %	Urban %	Males %	Urban %	Males %
Pub:Adm	45.6	96.1	43.4	94.0	36.1	91.5	38.5	85.7
Education	25.9	73.3	20.8	62.6	21.1	58.9	25.3	50.4
Health	32.1	84.3	29.0	76.0	31.1	65.1	33.3	54.8
Comm:Ser:	33.8	91.2	25.6	88.8	27.1	90.8	19.7	83.9
Cul:Ser:	54.2	97.5	34.4	91.2	42.9	91.7	40.9	92.8
Dom:Ser:	41.8	42.7	35.2	40.0	39.8	34.9	40.2	36.8
Laundry	17.4	53.4	16.7	38.1	21.5	47.9	22.0	44.6
Hair Drs	20.3	93.3	18.0	95.4	16.0	98.2	16.6	98.8
Utilities	52.1	71.4	40.9	87.6	34.4	92.1	32.1	91.0
Total	34.3	73.5	29.7	67.2	29.9	69.0	31.1	63.1

Sources: Derived from the Census of India 1951 to 1981.
Notes:
[a] Data for 1951 has not been adjusted for changes in state boundary in 1956.
[b] 1971 data does not include secondary workers.
[c] Same as note [e] to Table 7.05

In chapter four we discussed the issue of urban bias in Kerala. It was argued that though urban bias may be less present in Kerala, than elsewhere in India, (and for that matter in the developing world), it was not absent. If there was a total absence of urban bias the urban percentages of each service sub-sector should be close to the urban ratios of Kerala given in Table 4.01, (page 110). This was 13.5 in 1951 and increased to 18.7 in 1981. This is not the case as revealed by Table 7.06 Except for hairdressers all others were above the urban ratios.

It is unrealistic to expect a total absence of urban bias causing the urban percentages of the service sub-sectors to converge close to the urban ratio. But Table 7.06 shows that the major share of services is in non-urban areas. And significantly this has been increasing over the 1951-1981 period in all services except laundry, and to a slight extent in health services. It must also be recognized that in Kerala, as discussed in chapters four and five, it is very often

the bazaar nodes on the transport system that become classified as urban, with a concentration of trade and service facilities. There is no distinct urban residential enclave. The cluster of trade and service facilities are nodes in road and transport system that vivisect the dispersed settlements. Some of the personnel in the trade and services facility units reside in the rear or in the upper storey of such units. This being so there is a obviously a tendency for trade and service sector workforce to be slightly concentrated in the urban sector. This is perhaps reflected in Table 7.06 But a substantial share, as Table 7.06 shows, is non-urban. For instance given the British colonial system of administrative towns that only 45.6 percent of public administration was urban in 1951 reflects a significant dispersal of public administration personnel in rural or non-urban areas. Obviously the native states of Travancore and Cochin had not totally succumbed to the British colonial administrative system. And in spite of the growth of Trivandrum as the State capital since 1947, and other towns as district administrative head quarters, the urban component of public administration had dropped to 38.5 by 1981. Some of the personnel in public administration in urban locations commuting from non-urban areas, partly explains this, but there is also a spread of public administration in the non-urban areas.

Cultural and personal services, (i.e.cultural, domestic, laundry services and hairdressers), are significant in this chapter's quest to identify the factors contributing to the presence of non-agricultural activity. First, the numbers are substantial. In 1901 they numbered about 100,000 and constituted 53.7 percent of the service sector, about 11.5 percent of non-agricultural activity and 4.4 percent of the total workforce. By 1981 their share of the service sector had dropped to 24.6 percent and that of the non-agricultural sector to 5.6 and of the total workforce to 2.6. This reflects the growth of Kerala industrialism and supporting trade and commerce sectors. Yet the cultural and personal service sectors in absolute numbers were more than 200,000. So a noticeable share of non-agricultural activity is in cultural and personal

services and a significant portion of it in rural areas. This is particularly so for laundry and hair dressing services.

Examining why this occurs takes us to another characteristic of this group of services. Many of these services are traditional occupations of specific castes.[36] This is so in the case of laundry services, hairdressers and some temple services such as the playing of music, drumming at temple rituals etc. At the end of the 19th century there were no legal sanctions against occupational mobility and using education as an avenue, some in service caste occupations moved out to other occupations. But to the majority of persons in these castes there were many constraints to move out of their caste occupations. At the same time persons outside these castes did not wish to take up the occupations of hairdressing, laundering, playing the nagasurum or drums at temples etc as they were caste associated occupations. Even if they did, entry and training was difficult. They were ascribed, hereditary occupations into which outsiders had great difficulty of entry.

The caste system thus provided an open entry, to the members of a caste who were in the economically active age group, to their respective caste occupations. On the other hand the caste system constrained access to those who did not belong to the particular caste. Both status association and restriction of entry contributed to this constraint. In a context of competition for livelihood or economic opportunities this could influence continuities of caste occupation to some extent. This partly explains the numbers that were engaged in service occupations such as hairdressing and laundry service. It was at the same time economically remunerative, as these occupational services were in demand and outsiders had little or no ease of entry. The population density of Kerala has implications for the demand for such services. Hindu life styles enlarged this demand. It was mandatory at the turn of this century

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36. See Appendix 7.12 for list of castes in Kerala and their traditional occupations.

and for a few decades subsequently for middle and higher caste Hindus to have their personal barber visit them daily and shave them. It was ritually polluting to shave oneself or worse still visit a hair dressing saloon.

Similarly, it was ritually polluting to wash one's dirty clothes or carry them to the laundry. The washermen attached to the family visited the home, collected the clothes and after washing them brought them back. Laundries and hairdressing saloons visited by persons in need of their services began to appear only towards the middle of the 20th century. These too were initially located, and are still mainly in urban centres. There were also restrictions as to whom services could be performed by some service castes. Thus the Veluttedan caste washed clothes only of Nambudri Brahmins and Nayars. Kavutiyans were barbers only to Tiyans.

Yet another feature of this group of cultural and personal service sector is that they were historically present as a rural and non-urban occupational and service sector group. This character of the cultural and personal services and their continuities for reasons discussed, contributes to its being predominantly a rural and/or non-urban based service sector. It thus contributes to the presence of non-agricultural activity in rural areas. It may be also noted that non-agricultural castes were a substantial number in the Kerala Hindu population,[37] and that the Syrian Christians and Muslims in Kerala had occupationally both agricultural and non-agricultural components.

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37. About 40 percent of the Hindu population in 1901 were in non-agricultural caste groups. (See Appendix 7.12). This excludes the Ezhavas, whose traditional occupation of toddy tapping was not only in the grey zone between agriculture and non-agriculture, but whose members were by 1901 both in agricultural and non-agricultural occupations such as coir and cotton textile industries. Some of them using education as an avenue of upward social mobility were also beginning to enter the newly emerging professions such as Western medicine, etc.

This chapter in its efforts to examine the non-agricultural sector of the Kerala workforce has, together with what was set out in the earlier chapters, illuminated features that are of significance in making desakota in Kerala intelligible. It showed that the manufacturing sector is largely comprised of non-urban, non-household non-factory production units, using labour intensive low technology. Some of its technology borrowed from indigenous household petty production technology, and selectively improved upon without damaging the labour intensive character.

The dovetailing of this type of small and petty production with the mercantile character of capital and the presence of forced commerce was briefly noted. It was argued that all this was part of Kerala industrialism, a mercantile cum industrial response to existing and emerging international, national and regional commodity markets. The labour intensive character, the sub-regional concentrations, poor working conditions and wages, in symbiosis with socio-political milieu of late colonial Kerala was noted as having led to the emergence, growth and consolidation of organized labour and its conflict with capital.

There was also a convergence of the collective consumption needs of a non-urban, waged, non-agricultural workforce and a reasonably equitable spread of social infrastructure, particularly in health, education and access to public transport. This was was facilitated by a growing political ideology of equity that worked against urban bias; a dispersed settlement pattern; transport facilities; and the inherent economies of scale in providing collective consumption for a densely populated region. The personnel in the non-urban spread of collective consumption services, and the presence of forced commerce and a trading system that made available the raw materials to, and collected the finished products from, the small and petty producers, augmented the non-agricultural workforce in the non-urban areas.

How all these features make Kerala desakota intelligible will be drawn out in the concluding chapter. What is to be attempted now is to capture these features in their qualitative and concrete context by case studies of two industries, coir and beedi. Some of these features, as indicated before, are appropriate for qualitative examination. The basis or reason for selecting coir and beedi industries as case studies will be explained in the next two chapters, the case studies of the two industries.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE COIR INDUSTRY, SPACE AND POLITICAL SPACE ECONOMY

Introduction

The coir industry, an agro-processing industry using the coconut husk as raw material, was historically present in pre-colonial Kerala as a household industry. Beginning in the mid 19th century it expanded to cater to a newly emerging and increasing international market. While sections of the industry remained as a household industry, there developed at the same time large and small scale factory type production, but using labour intensive technology. The industry has passed through many phases over the last twelve to thirteen decades, but has through out this period continued to hold an important place in the economy of Kerala. It is one of the largest sources of employment and livelihood in the non-agricultural sector, until its recent decline in the late 1970s. At its peak in 1961 it employed nearly a quarter million workers. (See Table 7.01)

This chapter, as a case study, will qualitatively trace the growth and phases of the coir industry over the last hundred years or more. But more importantly it will highlight the restructuring that the industry has gone through in its various phases, and the implications of the restructuring for the space economy of Kerala. Some of this restructuring is centred around the labour-capital conflict that began to emerge in the industry beginning in the 1920s. Here we will observe, a illustration of capital's use of space in its efforts to keep labour docile and unorganized. This aspect of the labour-capital conflict, as argued in chapter one, is

of central importance for the presence of non-agricultural activity in non-urban areas, and for Kerala desakota itself.

With the spread of organized labour, labour-capital conflict began to occur in most industries and occupations in Kerala. But the conflict in the coir industry had a historical role. The conflict first occurred in the coir industry. The labour-capital conflict in the coir industry because of the position of the industry in the economy, the large numbers it employed, its spatial spread over the entire lowlands of southern Kerala, had a catalytic and profound impact on labour and the political economy of Kerala. These features make the coir industry an imperative choice for a case study. The coir industry is also an good example to illustrate the operation of forced commerce, and its implications for desakota.

The coir industry has two broad sectors. First the manufacture of yarn from the outer fibrous husk of the coconut and second the weaving of mats and matting with the coir yarn. The manufacture of yarn was the industry that was historically known in Kerala and was a rural household industry. There are two techniques of extracting the coir yarn from the husks. One method is to directly de-fibre the husk either manually or by machine when the husk is fresh. This is called brown fibre. The other method is to rett the husks for a period of six to eighteen months in water to rot the pith in which the coir fibre is embedded. The husk is then beaten with wooden mallets to remove the pith and the fibre extracted. Such fibre is called white fibre. It is superior to brown fibre because of its texture, resilience and strength.

Kerala with its backwaters and lagoons stretching all along the coast had ideal conditions for retting of husks to make white fibre. As we noted in chapter three, Kerala state has also the largest hectarage of coconut cultivation in India. Of the 1.1 million hectares of

coconut cultivation in India 61.4 percent, (668,000 hectares) are in Kerala.[1] (Government of India 1982. p48). Among the coconut growing regions of the world only Kerala and Sri Lanka have made use of the husk for industrial purposes on a commercial scale.(Government of Kerala. 1981. p9) Kerala production is almost entirely white fibre.(Ibid p 11) Sri Lanka produces some white fibre but the greater part of its production is brown fibre.

Coir market in the 19th century.

Prior to the mid 19th century the demand for coir yarn in Kerala was for the making of ropes. Ropes were in need for general household purposes, for construction purposes, fishing industry and navigational purposes.[2] But this demand did not exhaust the potential supply of coir yarn and ropes from the coconut husks yielded in the Kerala coast. Surplus husks were used for fuel. (Jeffrey 1984. p1159) Issac documents the exports, the *sirkar* monopolies and the East India Company involvement in the coir trade in the early 19th century.

> In 1801, the total exportable surplus was around 4090 candies. Travancore-Cochin area accounted for more than half of it, the islands of Laccadives and Maldives another one fourth and the rest from Malabar area. The island

1. Only four other States in India have a significant coconut cultivation They have a substantially lower hectarage of area cultivated with coconut compared to Kerala. They are Karnataka (16.0 %), Tamilnadu (10.7%), Andhra Pradesh (4.0 %) and Orissa (2.0 %) (Government of India 1982. p48)

2. Until chain cables were introduced all navigation in the Indian seas were furnished with coir cables. (Census of India 1961, Vol VII, Part VII-A, p79). Menon, citing Royle, states:

> **The character of coir has long been established in the east and is now well known in Europe as one of the best materials for cables on account of its strength, lightness and elasticity. These cables are further valuable being durable particularly when wetted with salt water. Numerous instances have been related of ships furnished with this light, buoyant and elastic material riding out a storm in security while stronger made less elastic, ropes of other vessels have snapped into two, and even when chain cables have given away. (Menon 1924. p431)**

The Arab and Indian navigational needs for coir cables continued until the late 19th century. Kerala with its linkage to the Indian ocean trade and traffic met this need with its white fibre and coir yarn and rope production.

> produce was a monopoly of the Ali Rajah of Cannanore, which was bartered from the islanders at ridiculously low terms of trade. In Travancore, coir trade was one of the sirkar monopolies. With the increase in the demand for coir by the Admiralty and the decline of the sirkar monopolies in Travancore, the East India Company began to directly purchase their coir requirements through middlemen to whom they advanced money. (Issac n.d. p3) [3]

The foreign demand was not great, in spite of the British Admiralty purchases for navigational purposes. But by the middle of the 19th century a new use for coir yarn emerged. This was the weaving of mats, mattings and carpets with coir yarn. This increased the demand for coir yarn.

> Coir yarn began to be exported from Travancore on a large scale in the 1860s. Coir matting had been used to cover the floor of St George's Hall, Windsor, at the baptism of Edward VII in 1842, and was displayed at the Great Exhibition of 1851. By the early 1860s, 600 people in London were said to be employed in a coir weaving industry which imported its fibre from all over the world. The products were mats and matting, which were increasingly used as floor covering in lower middle class homes in Europe, North America and Australia. (Jeffrey 1984. p1139)

Here we see not only the impetus for an increasing demand for coir yarn, but the birth of the new industry of mat and matting weaving using coir yarn. At the same time that the coir mats and matting industry was emerging in London, an Irish-American businessman of Calcutta (Jeffrey 1984. p1139) was setting up a coir mat and matting factory in Alleppey, Travancore.

> The manufacturing of mats and mattings out of coir yarn was first introduced by an European, Mr James Darragh, the founder of Messrs Darragh, Smail & Co, Alleppey, in 1859-60. Mr Darragh, while coming from Bengal, is said to have brought with him a few Bengalis who were adept in cotton carpet weaving and started his own factory in Alleppey, where he tried the weaving of mats and matting with coir yarn on the pattern of cotton carpets. (Census of India 1961, Vol VII, Part VII, p75 citing Travancore British Empire Exhibition 1924, p22)

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3. This is an unpublished paper. I am indebted to Prof Thomas Issac, Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum, for the courtesy of allowing me to read and refer to the manuscript copy of this paper.

From these beginnings the coir mat and matting industry, together with its feeder coir yarn industry, for the next twelve decades, was a significant part of the economic life of Kerala. For purposes of mapping the spatial order of the industry and its restructuring over time it useful to periodize the twelve decades.

1. The early phase (circa 1860-1918) of growth and the emergence of a coir belt.
2. The inter-war years: Expansion and industrial unrest.
3. The 1940s: Coir in the political economy on the eve of de-colonization.
4. Post-independence era: Forced commerce challenged.

Before we go on to discuss these phases it is useful to describe the production processes involved in white coir yarn making and white coir mats and matting weaving.

The production process

Though strictly not within the ambit of the production process, husk collection is the first step in the coir industry. Green husks are collected from coconut gardens, copra producers etc. The husks may be sold by the husk dealer or collector to retted husk dealers or retted by the husk collector himself. During the retting period, which varies from six to eighteen months, the husks are kept submerged in water. At the end of the retting period the husk are taken out and de-fibred, first by ginning and then winnowing out the loosened pith. This is done manually. Mechanized methods have been developed but were used only in some parts of Kerala as we shall observe later. Once the retted husks have been de-fibred, the longest and finest fibres are selected for spinning. Some are tied up in bundles to be exported in compressed bales or transported to regions where there is a demand for spinning yarn. The residual fibre, after selection of long strands, is used for making brushes, brooms and as mattress fillings. There are a number of varieties of yarn, depending on the retting period, the method of retting, the quality of the green husk and the quality of the water in which it was retted.

There are two types of spinning, hand spinning and ratt spinning. Hand spinning is done manually using the palm of the hands to spin yarn out of the fibre. Ratt spinning is also manual, but a ratt rotated manually and with one or more spindles is used to spin the yarn. The ratt was a technological improvement in the 19th century. This was possibly influenced by the spinning wheel of the cotton yarn industry. A ratt with one spindle requires three persons to operate, while a ratt with two spindles needs five persons. The spun yarn is rolled in the form of hanks and sold as such. If exported they are packed in bales. With the spun coir yarn, often dyed in desired colours, mats and mattings are woven, mainly on handlooms, though it is possible to use powerlooms. Mattings are woven to the size specified by the buyers. Carpets are similar to mattings, except that they are shorter in length, wider and have more intricate and colourful designs. For mats tufts of fibre are inserted while weaving and then sheared to get an even surface. All operations are manual, except shearing and combing of mats and pressing of mattings between two rollers. The manual operations include dyeing, beaming, warping and weaving. A flying shuttle was used and the loom treadled with the feet.

The early phase of growth and the emergence of a coir belt, circa 1860-1918.

Coir yarn spinning

The coir yarn spinning, as stated, was a rural household industry in pre-colonial times. With the growth in demand for coir yarn for weaving of mats and matting beginning in the mid 19th century there was an increase in the number of rural households involved in coir yarn spinning. But there also emerged the non-household non-factory sector. As Issac observes:

> A significant proportion of yarn production is still in the hand spinning sector where not even rudimentary tools are used. It presents a wide spectrum of pre-manufactory production organizations such as independent domestic

> producers, varied forms of putting-out systems, and occasionally the direct use of hired labour under a common shed. Even in the spindle spinning sector of the industry, where a crude spinning wheel is used for spinning yarn, the production process on the whole tends to be fragmented and small in scale. However, this sector reveals very significant variations in the development of capitalism. There are villages where nearly all the workers are hired workers as well as villages where most workers are self-employed. (Issac 1983a. p37)

The ecosystem of south Kerala coast was suited for coir manufacture. There was an ecology of coconut groves of small holder cultivation along the backwaters. It was also a region of high population density with marked unemployment and under employment.

Coir yarn production was carried out predominantly by women. We noted in the last chapter the high female participation rate. How this segregation of work by gender occurred is not clear.[4] Women's participation in coir yarn petty production was a typical expression of double oppression, for such participation was in addition to the domestic chores.

> Though the coir production is the main occupation of the female members, they do this side by side with their domestic duties such as cooking, washing, etc. In the early hours of the day, an elder female member goes to the retting field and procures daily requirement of retted husks, usually on credit terms.She brings husks home and two or three members beat them into fibre....In most places beating and cleaning is done in the forenoon, and spinning in the afternoon, after attending to domestic duties for two or three hours. Spinning may go on during the late hours of the night, in the light of the kerosine lamp till 10 or 11 p.m. Thus each set of workers have to spend 9 to 10 hours of the day for this work. (Cited from Kunju 1966. p48 by Issac n.d. p9)

In the context of male unemployment women's participation in petty production was often a survival strategy. (Casinader et al 1987.p321). Peripheral capitalism has also been observed to create gender division of labour in the extraction of surplus value, for petty production by women allow the wage, (to the men), to be less than the cost of production

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4. Possibly the decline in female participation in traditional household industries, like manual rice processing, led to some of the women taking up to coir yarn production as hired labour or petty producers. Alleppey, the coir producing area and Kuttanad a rice cultivation area were in close proximity and accessible by water transport.

and reproduction of labour power. (Deere 1976. p 9). Issac's observation in this context, on coir spinning in Kerala, is very relevant.

> The supplementary character of the income earned by the hand spinners tended to lower the wages to a level which by itself was inadequate for even the reproduction of labour power. Though nominal earnings of the workers increased through the present century, it is doubtful if there was any improvement in the real earnings. Coir spinners always remained the most sweated and underpaid stratum of workers in Kerala. (Issac n.d. p10)

What emerges is that throughout this period there was an increasing demand for coir yarn and a growth of household production of coir spinning. But it remained a low paid, exploitative industry. Coconut cultivation, as we noted in chapter three, had low labour absorption capacity and coconut based industries partially compensated for this. But in a context of a growing population in the coastal region, even this supplementary avenue for labour absorption was inadequate. The result was the availability of a typical reserve army of labour for exploitative work at low wages or as petty producers. Even the growth of the coir industry, consequent to the demand for coir mats and matting, did not alleviate the conditions of the petty producers and labour in the coir yarn industry.

Trading networks and coir yarn petty production

There was in artisan or household manufacture in India a dovetailing of such petty production with an intricate trading system. The trading system was a tiered hierarchy of middlemen who linked the rural domestic producer with the apex of a cartel of wholesalers who dominated the commodity market. This was particularly so if the commodity was for export or a larger Indian domestic market channeled through the urban centres of India. Cotton textiles in the late pre-colonial period in south India with an export demand had such a system. (Arasaratnam 1986 p265-271) The middlemen traders were not only a collecting system for the finished product but also a distributing system for the raw materials. Sometimes

this was on credit, as this forces the petty producer to sell the finished product, to set off the credit, to the same trader or middlemen. This coercion into dual transaction with the same trader invariably meant low prices for the finished product, irrespective of the prevailing market price. It was this coercion, and the leverage it provided traders to pay unremunerative prices for the finished product, that led Bhaduri (1983, 1986) to conceptualize it as forced commerce. We noted in chapter one how Bhaduri saw it as a mechanism to extract the surplus value in peasant petty production in agriculture through the exchange system.

Arasaratnam (1986 p268-271) has shown in the case of cotton textiles in the Coromandel region in the late pre-colonial period that the weavers had sufficient economic independence to resist the offers for cash or raw material advances. But when they did not possess such economic independence they succumbed to the stranglehold of credit and raw material advances of this trading system. We saw in the work of Haynes (1986), Harnetty (1991) and Commander (1985) on household or domestic manufacture the presence of forced commerce.

Coir yarn spinning is a classic example of petty production being tied to such a exploitative trading system. The fact that the raw husks had to be retted over period of six to eighteen months year gave the traders an added leverage. For in spite of raw husks being a raw material indigenous to Kerala, and a product of small holdings, a financial capacity was required to rett them over a long period of six to eighteen months. The petty producers and the small entrepreneurs did not have this financial capacity. The coconut small holding owners too preferred, or were forced by economic circumstances to convert to immediate cash the raw husks rather than do so after retting. Raw husks had to be put in water for retting as soon as possible, for once they begin to dry they cannot be retted and their use value is only as fuel. This meant that raw husk collectors too had to dispose of the husks as quickly as possible. They thus had little leverage and were dependent on and vertically integrated with

retted husk dealers.They were often mere agents of the retted husk dealers. (Issac n.d. p35) This observation is made based on more recent data. There is little data to construct in detail the trading system that prevailed in the period 1860 to 1918. But going by the data for more recent decades, which shall be presented later in this chapter, forced commerce may have been a feature of the coir yarn industry in 19th and early 20th centuries.[5]

Let us now briefly trace the growth of the coir industry, circa 1860 to 1918. The value of total coir exports which was Rs 0.6 m in 1864-65 had by 1905-06 risen to Rs 4.4 m. In the five years preceding the First World War exports of coir yarn reached Rs 6.0 m per annum and coir mats and matting 1.0 m per annum. (Jeffrey 1984. p1159) The exports were largely made by British and other European owned firms. Though a few Indian entrepreneurs had obtained a foothold in the coir export trade by the end of the 19th century, (Jeffrey 1984, p 1159), it was dominated by the European firms until second decade of the 20th century.(Issacs 1983. p38).

We noted earlier that the ratt with spindles was introduced as a technological improvement about the mid 19th century.[6] An important development by the end of the 19th century was the increasing use of the ratt for spinning coir yarn, particularly in Travancore. It increased output over hand spinning per work-day by four to six times.(Issacs 1988. p5) Ratt

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5. The conflict and the confrontation between the petty producers and traders in recent years, which we shall discuss later in this chapter, has surfaced some of the details of the trading system. The post-independence governments of Kerala, some of them Communist Party led coalitions, were for ideological and electoral political reasons concerned with the working and living conditions of the coir industry workers and petty producers. They set up inquiries and commissions on the industry, its minimum wage requirements etc. The reports of these commissions document some of the trading practices. The details of the trading system and the presence within it of forced commerce as conceptualized by Bhaduri (1983 and 1986) are thus best examined when we deal with the post-independence period.

6. Some have credited James Darragh for the introduction of the ratt for coir yarn spinning. Issacs however is of the view that it is more likely an indigenous development. (Issacs 1988. p59) Issacs dates the introduction of the ratt as the late 19th century, (Ibid p5) while Devassy in the Census of India 1961 (Vol VII Pt VII-A, p89) puts it as the mid 19th century.

spun yarn had a hard twist relative to hand spun yarn, and increasing demand for such yarn, partly contributed to its spread.

Coir mats and matting industry

The other important technological improvement was the introduction of looms to weave coir mats and mattings. Both the ratt and the loom were simple low technology, needing only manual operation. The looms were largely handlooms. These features made it possible for the ratt and the loom to be absorbed into household industry and occupational culture. But this happened only in the case of the ratt. Weaving coir mats and matting on looms began and continued for a considerable period of time as large scale urban establishments. In 1901 the coir mat and matting weaving factory of Darragh and Smail in Alleppey used handlooms and employed 1,100 persons. (Jeffrey 1984. p1159)

This was not because the loom was too sophisticated for household industrial operation. The entrepreneurs of coir mats and matting weaving were exporters of large quantities of coir yarn and mats etc. Executing such large orders and having adequate capital they were inclined to set up their own large weaving establishments. We noted earlier that in the mid 19th century a coir mat and matting factory had been established in London, England, using the raw material from Kerala and Sri Lanka. With the increasing use of coir mats and mattings as floorings in the lower middle class homes of Europe, North America and Australia, (Jeffrey 1984 p1159) probably more such factories were being set up in these user countries.

Darragh and Smail & Co, Volkart Brothers and others were the main exporters of the raw material, coir yarn, for this factory production. They were obviously driven towards exporting coir in a more processed or finished product form, using the cheap labour and so increase their profit margins. Capital investment was minimal and availability of cheap labour triggered the transfer then of some of the processing to Kerala. As we shall observe later

handloom production of coir mats and matting was cost effective in relation to power looms, if labour was cheap. It was in this context that the large scale coir mat and mattings factories came to be established in and around Alleppey Town. In addition to the export of coir mats and matting, coir yarn in bales and coir cables continued to be exported by these trading firms. (Census of India 1961, Vol VII Pt VII-A. p77)

The urban location of the coir mats and matting factories is significant. It suggests that for the new industries that emerged in Kerala in the late 19th and early 20th century the initial locational pull was for the urban port centres. It began as packaging or minimal processing of coir yarn to facilitate packaging. It had characteristics of a "warehouse industry". When coir began to be exported in the more finished product form of mats and matting, it continued to be in the urban locations. The "warehouse industries" became large scale factories. But this tendency to set up large scale processing industry was subsequently reversed when the entrepreneurs found the concentration of workers dysfunctional, given their objective of running labour intensive industries with cheap and docile labour.

The coming together of workers in one location and/or locality with poor working conditions and wages created a situation for mobilization and organization of workers. Many of the coir workers were of the Ezhava caste. Their caste identity and participation experience in caste reform or SNDP activities facilitated collective thinking and organization. (Govindan 1986 p11-19) Such identity and thinking had limitations too, for it hindered worker solidarity across caste divisions. But the coming together or concentration of workers in a locality provided face to face contact, a sense of solidarity in the context of poor working conditions, wages etc and precipitated labour organization.

The beedi industry to be examined in the next chapter provides another example of this trend. But the more complex and important example is the coir industry, as the coir

traders with their forced commerce were also drawn into the conflict. It was also more intense and consequential, as the coir industry was central to Kerala economy and society. We shall discuss the factors and events leading to the restructuring of the coir industry, with capital's use of space to fragment the concentrations of workers, when we examine the next phase of the coir industry. What we need to examine now is the growing concentration of the coir mat and matting industry in and around Alleppey Town, and coir yarn industry in what may be described as a coir belt stretching from Parur Taluk north of Cochin, (in contemporary Ernakulam district) to the south along the sea coast and along Vembanad Lake to Trivandrum Taluk, (in contemporary Trivandrum district). (See Map 8.01).

Towards an understanding of the concentration of the coir mat and matting industry in Alleppey

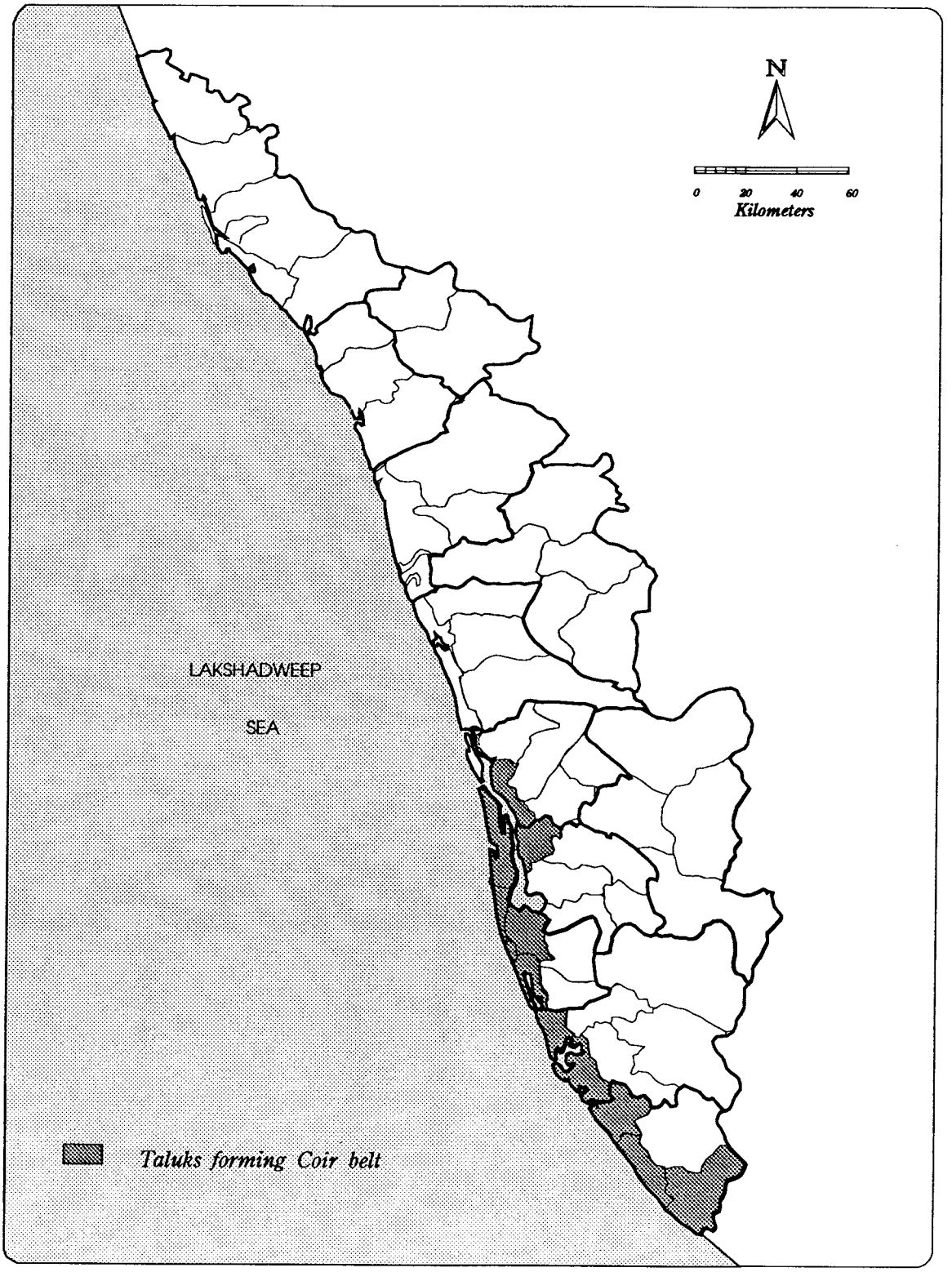
Schenk sees no geographically "clear answer" to why the coir matting industry was located in Alleppey.

> Why has the factory production of coir products become urban ? There is no clear answer in terms of the physical and economic geographical conditions of Alleppey. Since the first stage of coir (from husk to yarn) is rural and widely dispersed over large tracts in lowland Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, factories could just as conveniently be located some where close to any first stage site of production, while subsequently the final products could be sent to any of the several ports along the coast. Given the 'neutrality' of sites in these terms, it is more likely that urban sites were considered more convenient to (foreign) entrepreneurs. Alleppey and other urban places had not much to offer in terms of facilities during the late 1800s and early 1900s, nevertheless they were in company of a few fellow foreigners (the Commercial Agent, e.g. in Alleppey) there. And, as far as Alleppey is concerned the decision by James Darragh to settle there and start a factory may have been made by pure chance and may have influenced others, eventually leading to a concentration of this new form of coir processing in the town.(Schenk 1986. p53)

The social sciences have in recent years become more circumspect about their ability to provide "explanations" or the "why" for what is observable. The efforts are more towards making them a little more intelligible. There are some factors in the Kerala context that may make the concentration of coir matting industry in Alleppey a little more intelligible.

Map 8.01

Coir Belt by Taluks (Sub-districts) in Kerala



Source: Census of India.

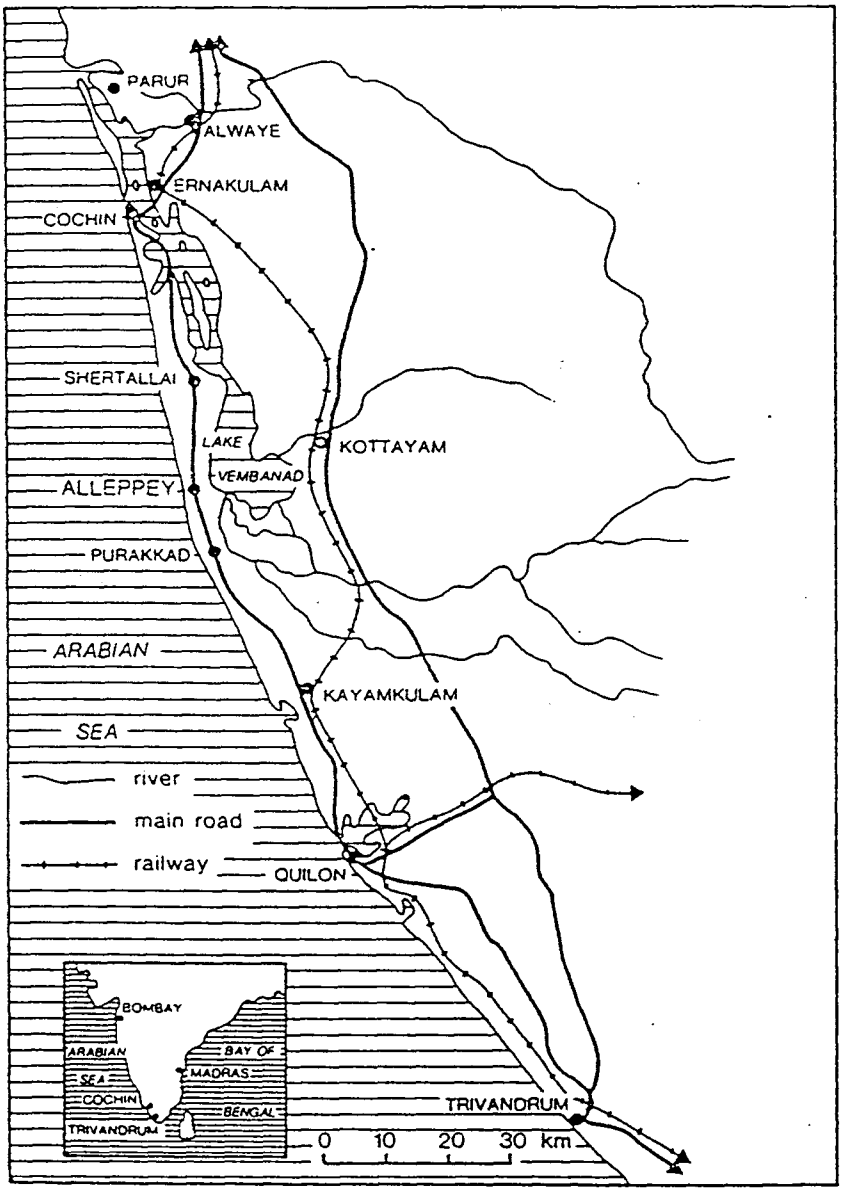
First, Alleppey was the most important port and commercial centre for foreign trade in Travancore. We noted in chapter two the growth of Travancore in the 18th century and its status as an important state in southwest India. In this growth and consolidation *sirkar* or state monopoly of many commodities was an important issue. To facilitate the export of some of these commodities Travancore in 1762 constructed a port at Alleppey. Travancore's participation in commodity trade was a challenge to the Dutch East India Co and the British East India Co. But the latter were too preoccupied with the Mysore ruler's political and military expansions in the Malabar region to respond to Travancore's challenge and so left Travancore alone. In dealing with the Dutch East India Co, the development of Alleppey was important.

> Finally, Travancore challenged and broke the Dutch blockade of the coast at sea. This was done not by another naval battle but by the establishment of a new port at Alleppey, a little to the south of Cochin, which the Dutch were forced leave alone. All this took some fifty years to accomplish. In this half a century the greatest single act in the business world of Malabar was the monopoly of Travancore. (Das Gupta 1967. p33)

This monopoly and power of Travancore did not last too long. By the end of the 18th century, the British had been able to overpower Mysore and have Malabar came under direct British rule, and Cochin and Travancore under indirect British rule as native or princely states. The British Resident in Travancore, who ensured that the overall British raj policy and interests were maintained in the native state was placed in Trivandrum, the palace-administration centre of Travancore. But the British Commercial Agent for Travancore resided at Alleppey. Thus even though Travancore's independence and power were now drastically curtailed to that of a native state within the British raj, Alleppey continued to be an important commercial and port town. It continued to be so until the beginning of the 20th century. Only with the development of the Cochin port and the extension of the railway from Quilon to Cochin along the east of Vembanad Lake, (see Map 8.02) and not through Alleppey, was Alleppey marginalized and declined in importance. (Schenk 1986. p48) Given the importance of

MAP 8.02

Railway on the East of Lake Vembanad



Source: Schenk (1986) p19.

Alleppey in 19th century Travancore, Darragh's choice to locate his coir mat and matting manufacturing and trading activities in Alleppey was not inappropriate or chance behaviour.

TABLE 8.01

Coir Workers and Dealers classified by Travancore Taluks, Cochin State and Malabar District in 1901.

Area	Coir Workers M %	F %	T %	Coir Dealers M %	F %	T %	Wkrs & Dlrs M %	F %	T %
Travancore Coastal Taluks									
Shertalai	4.9	11.2	16.0	7.3	22.7	30.1	5.2	12.6	17.7
Vaikom	4.5	12.4	17.0	0.5	1.5	2.0	4.1	11.1	15.2
Karunagapalli	0.7	6.3	7.0	4.3	3.2	7.5	1.1	5.9	7.0
Kartikapalli	0.5	4.6	5.2	3.1	2.3	5.5	0.8	4.4	5.2
Quilon	1.5	2.2	3.7	4.6	5.6	10.2	1.9	2.6	4.5
Chirayinkil	1.5	0.9	2.4	5.5	4.4	9.9	2.0	1.3	3.3
Parur	0.6	2.0	2.6	2.5	1.4	3.9	0.8	1.9	2.7
Ettumanur	0.2	1.0	1.2	0.5	2.0	2.5	0.3	1.1	1.4
Ambalapuzha	0.3	0.6	0.9	0.3	0.1	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.8
Trivandrum	0.2	0.1	0.4	2.6	1.7	4.3	0.5	0.3	0.9
Neyattinkara	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.6	0.0	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.2
Agastisvaram	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1
Eraniel	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.1	1.2	0.1	0.0	0.2
Sub-total	15.1	41.5	56.6	33.3	45.1	78.1	17.3	41.9	59.2
Cochin State	4.6	13.8	18.3	5.1	1.1	6.2	4.6	12.2	16.9
Sub-total	19.7	55.3	75.0	38.1	46.2	84.3	22.0	54.2	76.1
Travancore Other Taluks	0.4	0.6	1.1	3.1	4.0	7.0	0.7	1.1	1.8
Malabar Dist	2.5	21.5	24.0	2.9	5.8	8.7	2.6	19.5	22.1
Total - %	22.6	77.4	100	4.1	55.9	100	25.2	74.8	100
-`000			140			20			160

Sources: Census of India 1901, Vol
Vol XXVI-B Travancore, Pt III, Table XV p451-453.
Vol XX-A Cochin, Pt II, table XV p58-59.
Vol XV-A Madras, Pt II, Table XV p292-294.

Second, Alleppey was strategically located in the coir belt stretching from Parur, (north of Cochin), to the south along the sea coast and the Vembanad Lake, to Trivandrum. The earliest date when some data on coir workers disaggregated by taluks is available is the 1901 Census. Such disaggregated data is also available only for Travancore. This data together with

coir workforce data for Cochin and Malabar is presented in Table 8.01 The Travancore coastal taluks are listed in terms of rank order on the basis of the size of the coir workforce. The coastal taluks are identified in Map 8.01.

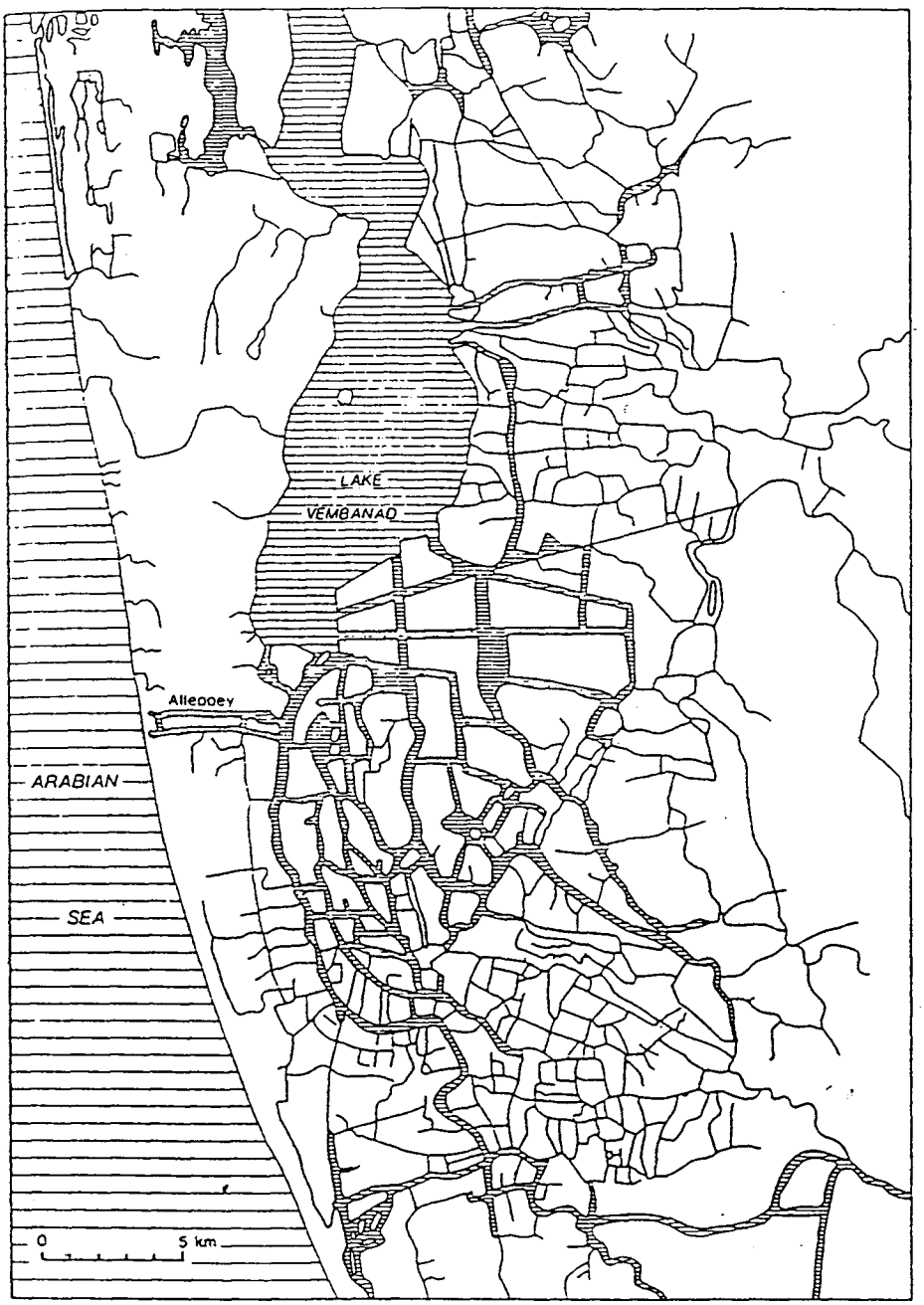
It will be observed from Table 8.01. and Map 8.01 that the coir belt taluks of Travancore extend along the coast up from south Travancore to Cochin State. (Cochin and Kanayannur taluks of Cochin State). (See Maps 2.03-2.05 for the boundaries of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore). Table 8.01 also shows a heavy concentration of coir workers in the four taluks of Vaikom, Shertallai, Karunagapalli and Kartikapalli.The coir workers in these four taluks total nearly 45 percent of all coir workers in Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. It will be seen from Map 8.01 that Karunagapalli and Kartikapalli taluks are just south of Ambalapuzha taluk and Vaikom and Shertalai taluks are in the immediate north of Ambalapuzha taluk. Alleppey is located in Ambalapuzha taluk. This makes it a strategic location for the coir industry.

The data in Table 8.01 does not however demonstrate a concentration of coir workers in Ambalapuzha taluk. Increasing concentration of the coir mat and matting factories in and around Alleppey town occurred in the 1920s as we shall observe later. The data in Table 8.01 is that of 1901 and also the total of coir workers in all sectors of the industry. Coir yarn makers constitute more than 90 percent of the total coir workers (Issac n.d. p1) and the concentration of coir workers in Vaikom, Shertallai, Karunagapalli and Kartikapalli taluks are mainly coir yarn makers.

Third, Alleppey town and port were not only strategically located but were easily accessible by waterways. In the 19th century as discussed earlier, waterways were the main means of transport. Map 8.03 and 8.04 demonstrate the ease of access by waterways to

MAP 8.03

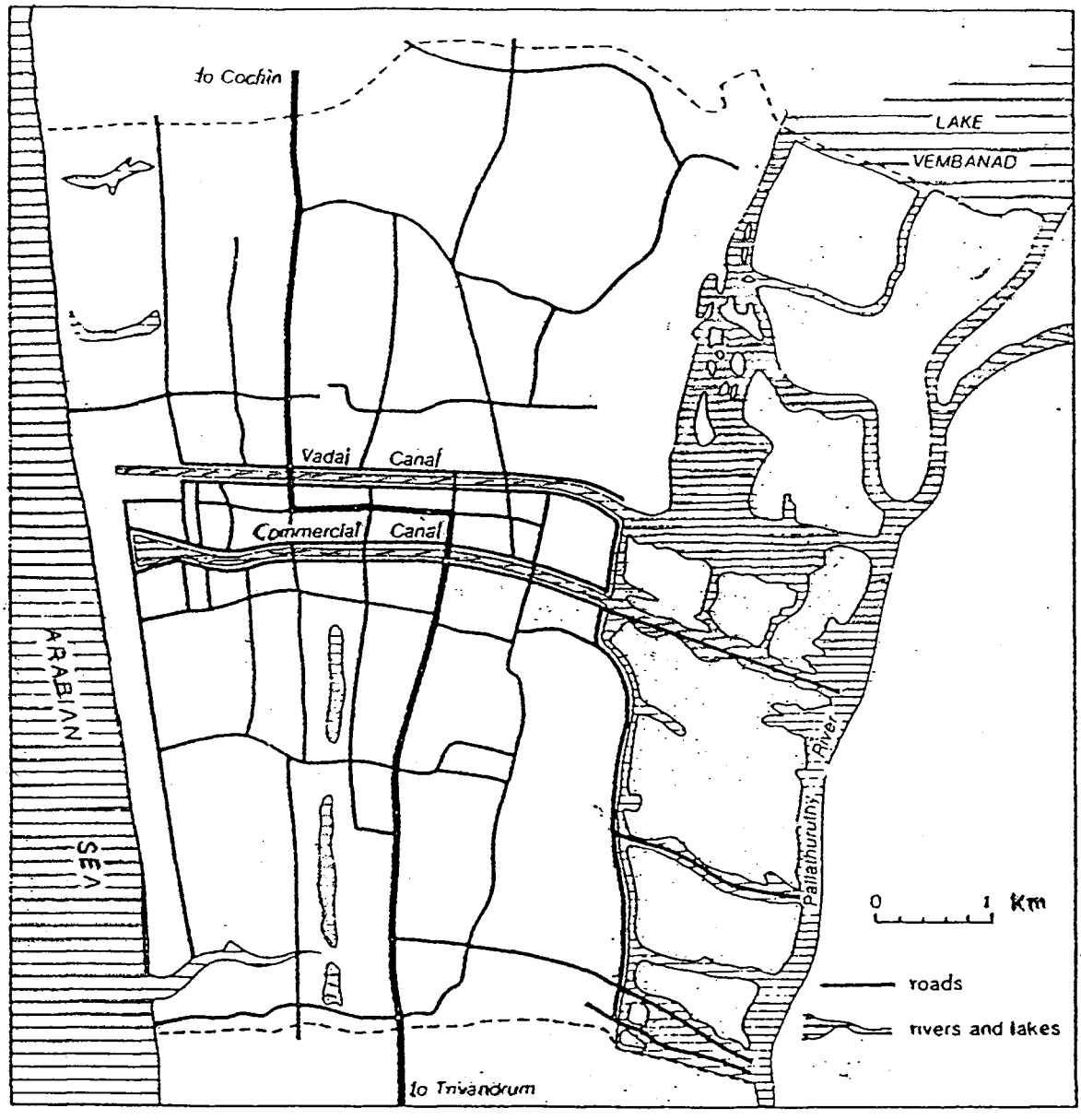
ALLEPPEY AND HINTERLAND



Source: Schenk (1986) p41.

MAP 8.04

ALLEPPEY AND WATERWAYS



Source: Schenk 1986. p20

Alleppey. Bristow's description of craft suited for transport of goods in the backwaters explains the advantages of water transport, and of Alleppey, in the 19th century.

> The backwater craft were called vallams..... It was a most efficient and adaptable form of construction. Heavy loads of five tons or more could be carried , and the smaller craft, it seemed, could almost navigate the ditches of the countryside. It was sailed, or poled, or rowed; or in very shallow water, pushed, the crew jumping overboard for the purpose. It provided the cheapest form of transport in the world, or at any rate one of the cheapest, which during the 19th century, was stated to have cost about the equivalent of one farthing per ton per mile. (Bristow 1959. p52-53)

Fourth, the retting of raw husks was mostly in the backwaters and Vembanad lake. The manual defibring by ginning and winnowing was often on the banks and the spinning of the fibre strands into yarn in the adjoining areas. The backwaters and Vembanad lake were also part of the waterway transport system. It was then the obvious mode to transport the finished yarn. The accessibility of Alleppey by waterways was thus a contributing factor. Cochin too had this waterway accessibility, (see Map 8.02), but the combination of the factors listed above led to a growing concentration of coir mats and matting factories in and around Alleppey town.

The inter-war years : Rapid expansion and industrial unrest

Growth, the depression years, and the emergence of rural small scale coir mats and matting factories.

The First World War, with the dislocation of European markets and shortage of shipping, resulted in the decline of coir yarn exports. But there was an increase in the mats and matting exports. (Jeffrey 1984. p1159) The saving of shipping space by transporting the finished mats and matting, and the disruption of work in coir weaving factories in Europe may have contributed to the increased mats and matting exports. The end of the war and the reopening of Europe brought about a renewed growth, both in coir yarn and woven coir goods. In the ten years following the end of the war there was a 400 percent increase in the

value of mats and matting exports. (Ibid p1159) A review of the industry speculated that internationally:

> the lower buying capacity of the consumer which had led him to take to a cheap floor covering where a more expensive one ....was purchased in the past.(Government of Travancore-Cochin 1953. p73)

This buoyant market brought about in the 1920s what Jeffrey (1984. p1159) describes as a unique dilemma in 20th century Kerala; a shortage of labour. The 1930s and the depression saw a swift change in this need for labour. There were lay offs in many industries and many of them sought work in the coir industry. The coir industry, unlike many other industries, continued to expand even during the depression but at lowering wages. The depression increased the international demand for a cheap flooring like coir, provided the price remained low. The Kerala coir industry was able to meet this low priced demand by a lowering of the wages. Issacs shows that for various grades of matting the drop in piece rate money wages between 1925 and 1937 was as sharp as 42.8 percent to 60.6 percent. (1985. pPE-7) A fall in the cost of living however made the decline in real wages marginal. In effect the coir industry was making use of the reserve army of cheap labour to cater to the new international demand for coir at low prices. A demand that emerged out of the global context of the depression.

In the growth of the industry in the 1920s, the coir yarn sector continued to be in the rural areas while the mats and matting sector was increasingly concentrated in and around Alleppey town. This was the heyday of the coir industry, trade and exports in Alleppey. But a significant development in the continued growth of the industry in the 1930s was the emergence of small scale mats and matting workshops in the rural areas of Alleppey district. The need to cater to a low price market meant the need to lower the cost of production of mats and matting.

> The principal attraction for the drift to the districts must have been the comparative cheapness of labour, the low cost land and premises, and the many small economies that could be effected in the villages.... labour is recruited almost wholly from the locality and the men are known to the proprietor and are therefore more accommodating and easy of control than workmen in the town factories. (Government of Travancore-Cochin 1953. p79-80)

This response to produce mats and matting cheaply was partly facilitated by small capitalists, many from within the coir industry and trade, who were eager to set up the small scale mat and matting rural workshops. At first they supplied the finished products to the Alleppey mats and matting factories who found their own production capacity inadequate to meet the increasing export orders. With time some of the small producers developed a familiarity with the coir export market to export on their own. There were also merchant shippers who owned no factories but bought from a number of small country workshops, bulked them and exported.(Issacs 1985. pPE-8) Intense competition and excess loom capacity among the small rural producers emerged leading to price bidding among them. In this price war some small producers went to the extent to "execute orders below cost of production" (Government of Travancore-Cochin 1953. p130) With little or no overhead expenditure they were also becoming a threat to the large urban producers. Most of the small rural producers were located in the rural area between Alleppey and Shertalai Towns. (Issacs 1985. pPE8)

In the coir industry a vertical integration was present from husk collection, through retting in the inland waters, spinning coir yarn in the backwater coastal villages to the urban coir mats matting factories and shippers. Such a continuum permits or facilitates the emergence of intermediaries in the continuum, like the small rural mats and matting workshops. Jeffrey recognizes the vertical integration:

> The coir industry was thus distinct: large factories shading off into rudimentary country workshops and finally into the huts of thousands of people who produced coir yarn. (1984 p1160)

But Jeffrey does not adequately recognize the spatial component in the continuum, except to qualify the rudimentary workshops as "country". It is important in the understanding of the coir space economy of Kerala to recognize that the vertical integration was translated spatially on a rural- urban continuum. This was spread over the coir belt. But the concentration was in the northern half of the belt stretching from Parur taluk in the north to Karunagapally taluk in the south. Shertalai and Ambalapuzha taluks were centrally located in this northern half. They also bordered Vembanad lake and so were easily accessible by water. These two taluks were thus an inner belt within the coir belt. Alleppey Town was located in Ambalapuzha taluk. The small scale mat and matting workshops that came up in the 1930s were in the rural areas of this inner belt. The northern half of the larger coir belt is part of Kerala heart land with a typical Kerala ecosystem of high densities of population and vegetation, (predominantly coconut) and a network of waterways and in the 20th century increasing roadways as well.

Many of the Indian mat and mattings factories at Alleppey were owned by persons from outside Kerala. Empire Coir Works, a leading Indian factory was owned and operated by a Gujarati merchant. But all the owners of the small mat and mattings were from Kerala. A good many of them were of the Ezhava caste. They recruited their workers from the poorer ranks of their own caste. (Issacs 1985.pPE11) This was vertical linkage of a socio-cultural character. The quotation earlier from the "Report of the Board of Conciliation of Trade Disputes in Mats and Matting Industry" (Government of Travancore-Cochin 1953.) referred to labour being recruited wholly from the locality, the workers being known to the proprietor and therefore more accommodating and easy of control. This was a reference to vertical caste linkages.

Such linkages apart from patron-client characteristics were structured by a sense of caste identity and solidarity. This helped to contain any labour discontent in spite of poor wages and exploitative conditions. But, as Issac (1983b, 1985) demonstrates, with the rise of

organized labour, trade unionization and politicalization of the coir workers there was a transition from caste consciousness to class consciousness. (Issac 1985.pPE-6) When we examine the T.L.A. and the subsequent emergence of organized labour we shall observe this transition occurring in the mid 1930s.

The initial emergence of rural small scale coir mats and matting workshops in the 1930s was not precipitated by trade union activity . But in later phases of the industry the need to destabilize trade unionism was an important factor in the continued spatial decentralization and down scaling of the size of factories. In these phases trade unionism became a powerful and important aspect of the coir industry. Here we begin to see the ways in which the political economy articulated a spatial order with a growing non-urban manufacturing activity.

The Travancore Labour Association.

The beginnings of active trade unionism in the coir industry are in the 1930s. But this was preceded in the 1920s by a labour welfare organization called the Travancore Labour Association. (T.L.A). It was formed in March 1922, under the leadership of P.K.Bava, a *moopan*[7] in Empire Coir Works. (Govindan.1986.p14)

> To P.K.Bava, the formation of the Labour Association was the fulfillment of a long cherished dream. Being a steadfast devotee of Sree Narayana Guru and an activist in the Ezhava Social Reforms Movement, he was very much disturbed by the social plight and low status accorded to workers. (Govindan 1986. p14)

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7. The Malayalam term for supervisor or foreman. Sometimes the moopan is also a labour contractor. He hires the workers under him and pays them too, with the money he is paid by the factory for all the work done by his group of workers. The moopan is a respected person in the occupational culture of the coir and other industries where he figured. He is also sometimes seen as a tough person. In later years with the emergence of labour-capital conflict a moopan was often seen as an agent of the management.

The influence of welfarist and reformist orientations of the caste associations of the period, were obviously, in part, a motivating force behind the formation of the T.L.A. Significantly the formation of the T.L.A. was supported by some of the coir mats and matting factory owners in Alleppey. The T.L.A. had ambivalent functions. It pre-empted trade union formation for sometime but the roots of coir industry trade unionism may also be traced to it.

Given the exploitative features of the coir industry, with long hours of work, poor working conditions and low wages etc, the coir occupational culture was characterized by harshness. In the urban context of Alleppey, in the big factories with a concentration of large number of male workers and an impersonal atmosphere the harshness generated a masculine toughness among the workers, and the need for controls and discipline. In the European owned large factories with relatively better wages and more supervisory staff such controls and discipline were systematized. For example Govindan[8] recollects that in the 1920s:

> In European Companies there was a fixed time for workers to enter and leave the factories. In the native factories the workers had greater freedom. (Govindan 1986. p12)

In the Indian owned factories, in lieu of the formal organizational approach of the European factories, an effort was made to place social objectives as an incentive for disciplined work. This was implicit in the promotion of a the T.L.A. by the Indian factory owners and their *moopans*.

> The motive of the Indian employers in promoting the T.L.A. becomes evident if one examines the growth of Empire Coir Works.....through these measures in active support of the Association the management of the Empire Coir Works was able to win the deep loyalty of its workers. As a consequence the workers began to consider the jobs in that factory as their own and execute

8. K.C.Govindan (1899-1986) was a coir industry worker and trade union activist in the 1920s and 1930s in Kerala. His autobiography was documented and published by the Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum, under the A.D.Neelakantan Endowment. (Govindan 1986). A Endowment facilitating senior activists in trade union, peasant and teacher's movements in Kerala to record their reminiscences and perceptions of the movements and their involvement. (See Introduction by T.N.Krishnan to Govindan 1986)

> them very sincerely. All the merchants were in agreement that no product would compete in quality to those of that factory.(Issac 1985. pPE-7)

The T.L.A's ideology and objectives were not that of a trade union.

> The T.L.A., it was advised, should concern itself with the social status of the workers than their economic conditions. Social welfare activities such as the formation of a reading room and library, an evening education centre, a death benefit fund scheme, an ayurvedic hospital and a co-operative society for the workers constituted the main burden of the T.L.A's functioning in the early years. (Ibid pPE-7)

The promotion and support of the T.L.A., as welfare society for coir workers, by the Indian coir factory owners was underpined by several factors. These may be summarized as follows:

- The rivalry between the European and Indian coir firms or factories. The European firms were not sympathetic or supportive of the T.L.A. (Issacs 1985 pPE-7).On the other hand some of the Indian factories employed only T.L.A. members and/or actively encouraged workers to join the T.L.A. The T.L.A. supported the Indian sector. The first secretary of the T.L.A. was a *moopan* in an Indian factory, and the first President, a manager of an Indian coir mat and matting factory.

- The formation and functioning of the T.L.A. was in the 1920s. This was the period of growing nationalism and political activities of the Indian National Congress which was eventually to lead to Indian independence. In the functioning of the T.L.A. nationalists sentiments were at play, and used cleverly by the Indian coir factory owners. It benefited them in many way as we shall observe later. The workers too derived some benefits. But a latent function of the T.L.A. seems to have been to pre-empt or diffuse conflict between the owners and labour. Whatever hostility that did emerge was directed at the European owners of coir factories.

- The Indian coir factory owners were not skilled in large scale factory formal organization and systems. They were used to more traditional, personalized, but nonetheless exploitative, patron-client relationships. Such relationships were problematic as the number of workers in a factory became large.In this context the ideology and commitment of the T.L.A. facilitated a more committed workforce in the Indian factories.

- Weaving of intricate designs required skilled weavers in the coir mat and matting industry. There was need to retain the more skilled weavers. Often they left one factory for another. There was thus the constant fear that they would be lured by another factory. This was particularly so in the Indian factories as they could not match the wages paid by the larger European factories with their bigger exports and profits. The T.L.A. with nationalist and loyalist ideology embedded in its welfarism, helped to reduce such labour turnover.

- We noted in Chapter two that caste reformism led by Ezhavas, and disintegration or decay of some Nayar caste institutions characterized early 20th century Kerala. Caste associations, part of the paraphernalia of caste reformism, both challenged the supremacy of the savarna castes and espoused sanskritization. The Ezhava traditional occupation was toddy tapping, but many Ezhavas from pre-colonial times were engaged in coconut cultivation and coconut based industries. The S.N.D.P., the Ezhava caste reformist organization, we noted in chapter two was a powerful social movement in early 20th century Kerala. Many coir workers were members of the S.N.D.P. We noted earlier that *moopan* Bawa, the founder and secretary of the T.L.A. was a staunch follower of Sree Narayana Guru. Caste reformist ideology and solidarity penetrated the workings of the T.L.A. Temperance was part of Narayana Guru's and S.N.D.P. ideology. The T.L.A. had a successful program to train toddy

tappers in coir weaving, pay them a trainee allowance and find them jobs in coir factories. (Govindan 1986.p17) Temperance as part of the ideological baggage of the S.N.D.P. is an example of sanskritization.[9] It sought to disassociate the Ezhavas from toddy tapping.

A mix of these factors was to inject reformist, nationalistic and altruistic motivations among the workers. The support and participation of the Indian coir factory owners in the T.L.A. also led to the perception of the employers as "benevolent capitalists" (Issac 1985. pPE8) The T.L.A. activities was a phase, almost a honeymoon, when class economic interests were submerged. It was in a period that was characterized by the fervour of nationalism and caste reformism. Basic class economic interests and contradictions could not however be subordinated for too long and they came out into the open in the 1930s.

Emergence of organized labour and a radical hegemony.

There had been sporadic and unorganized labour protests prior to the 1930s, including a strike in 1928 at William Goodacres & Co, decided upon by the workers in this factory in protest of a wage reduction. The T.L.A. was not supportive of this strike but was forced to take up the workers' cause when the entire workforce was dismissed. (Issacs 1985.pPE-9) This led to a change of T.L.A. leadership. The next strike in 1931 at the Bombay Company was better organized and supported by the T.L.A. It also brought forth further new leadership in the T.L.A.. (Ibid pPE-9) The T.L.A. by this time began to interact with political organizations like the State Congress of Travancore and the Congress Socialist Party (C.S.P.) of Malabar. The latter was a breakaway radical wing of the Indian National Congress in Malabar.

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9. Caste rules do not permit Brahmins to consume liquor. Sanskritization, as explained earlier, is a process by which non-brahminical castes tend to emulate brahminical practices and improve the social status of the caste. Missionary activities may have also had influenced the temperance movement.

This was also the period that the Russian revolution and the post revolutionary efforts of the Soviet Union were becoming more known in Kerala by translations into Malayalam.[10] The first Labour Government in Britain also had an impact on some who were social reformers and later to emerge as trade union leaders. (Govindan 1986. p15) [11] The number of coir workers literate was as high as 65 percent in 1938. (Government of Travanvore-Cochin 1953. p 201) [12] Many of them were also influenced by the literary renaissance that was occurring in Malayalam at this time. (Issac 1985 pPE11,Jeffrey 1984 p1162) The T.L.A. had its own weekly paper "Thozhilali".[13] It became a vehicle for workers to give expression, through the medium of poems, short stories, etc, to their work experiences, occupational culture, labour organization and class consciousness. All this began to direct the workers and the T.L.A. towards a radical orientation. The new leadership of the T.L.A. were also workers or worker oriented and not from the ranks of moopans. Caste reformist and nationalist orientations were still important in the wider societal context and continued to influence the workers. But radical ideology was beginning to make sense in the context of the working class experience of poor wages, working conditions etc. This is neatly exemplified in the Hindu reformist saying of Sri Narayana Guru, of "one caste, one religion, one God," being recast as a radical worker slogan of "no caste, no religion and no God". (Issac 1985. pPE-10)

While all this was happening the workers' condition had made no gains. This was particularly so for the rural small mat and matting factory workers whose wages were half of their urban counterparts. (Issacs 1985. pPE11) This led to the T.L.A. to organize the workers of

10. Leslie Brown, an English Missionary was surprised to see in the early 1940s, in a Travancore ferry boat, "all over the deck .....working class folk.....studying the Communist Manifesto". (Brown 1981. p42)

11. Some of the trade union legislation of the British Raj in 1920s and 1930s were caused by the first Labour Government and the Labour-National Government of MacDonald in Britain.

12. Jeffrey cites one source that estimated coir workers literacy at 75 percent in 1931. (Jeffrey 1984. p1162 and footnote 56,p1165)

13. In translation, from Malayalam, it reads "Worker".

the small factories. This meant a confrontation between the Ezhava small capitalists, who ran the small rural mat and matting workshops, and the T.L.A.. Class consciousness began to surmount caste loyalties and vertical socio-cultural integration. Ezhavas who had become small capitalists shed even their reformist fervour and become moderates to safeguard their economic interests. To an extent caste reformist objectives had been achieved by this time, and reformist motivation was on the decline among the small Ezhava capitalists and workers.

This was a period of price war among the small producers of mats and mattings. Price reductions were made at the expense of the workers by wage reductions. There was thus growing worker discontent. The Congress Socialist Party (C.S.P) of Malabar, the breakaway group of the Indian National Congress, with its increasing Marxist ideology, led the worker discontent into radical channels. This happened in the process of a growing closer interaction between the T.L.A. and C.S.P. (Ibid pPE12) The wage reductions and deteriorating conditions of the workers led the T.L.A. to organize a general strike of all coir workers in Travancore in March 1938. This was also the period that Travancore State Congress was agitating for "responsible government".Some of its leaders were in prison having courted arrests by *satyagraha*. There was coalescing of trade union and national political agitation. There was at the same as the coir general strike, a boatmen strike crippling waterways transport in Travancore.

In this heavily charged political atmosphere demonstrations by striking coir workers led to confrontations with the police and the deaths of six workers. When the strike came to an end in November 1938, the benefit to the coir workers was only six and half percent increase in wages. But it was a watershed in working class politics in Travancore. It contributed to what Issacs (Ibid pPE14) characterizes as the emergence of radical hegemony in Travancore, and for that matter in Kerala. The strike totally radicalized the T.L.A., and the moderates drifted away. Indeed during the strike, political demands became more important than worker

economic demands. (Ibid pPE13) The push for this came from the worker ranks. The politicized struggle of the coir workers influenced the workings of the Travancore State Congress and the young and more radical elements within it broke away to form a radical group. This group together with the C.S.P. of Malabar and T.L.A. leadership thrown up by the 1938 strike were to become the core of the Communist Party of India in Kerala. When the Travancore Trade Union Act came into effect in 1938, the T.L.A. came to be registered as the first trade union under the act, with a significant change in name as the Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union. (T.C.F.W.U.) (Tharamangalam 1981. p68)

Political polarization on a class basis was beginning to take place. We noted how the small Ezhava capitalists had achieved their caste reformist objectives in some measure. The 1938 strike and the political agitation that accompanied it, made them apprehensive of the growing radicalization of the working class. In this political context the small Ezhava capitalists, even in the caste reformist front, moved from confrontation to compromise with the establishment and the State power that represented it. It was in their economic interests to do so. Caste position, status and solidarity were less important than class interests and positions. On the other side, workers shed caste consciousness and loyalties. Marxist ideology became a powerful weapon to fight both class and caste oppression.

This discussion was to demonstrate the intricate relationship between the political economy of Kerala and the coir industry. How this affected the space economy of Kerala will become clear as we proceed to examine the growth of the small rural workshops. The small capitalists and workers of this sector became important actors in the political economy. They were replicated by the larger factories in their efforts to decentralize and downscale their establishments. They were also used as producers from whom were collected the finshed products by the big firms to meet their export commitments. Some of this occurred in the post-independence period as the War with its implications for market demands, shipping and

production conditions altered temporarily the trends that were beginning to emerge. But nonetheless an examination of the 1940s is necessary to understand the post-independence development.

The 1940s: Coir in the political economy on the eve of de-colonization.

The early phase

This phase may be summarized as follows. First, there was co-operation between the European and Indian large-scale coir mats and matting manufacturers and exporters. The European concerns had been members of the Travancore Chamber of Commerce, a European dominated body, while the Indians were members of the Alleppey Chamber of Commerce which sought to safeguard and promote Indian commercial interests. Some Indians were members of both bodies. (Mahadevan 1988. p12) The need for co-operation between the European and Indian large scale coir mats and matting manufacturers and exporters led to the formation of the Travancore Coir Mats and Matting Manufacturers Association. (T.C.M.M.M.A). The motive to co-operate was to contain the competition from the rural small scale coir mats and matting manufacturers and have a common front to growing trade union militancy. (Issca 1983a. p39)

Second, there was increasing sub-contracting from the large scale manufacturers to the small scale manufacturers. This was due to large and/or bulk orders from the British War Supplies Dept, which could be handled only by the large scale mats and matting factories. Indeed they did this by distributing the total order by sub-contacts to a number of small scale coir mats and matting factories. There was the added advantage that the cost of production in the small factories was becoming even lower than before. There was no such trend in the large factories. Shortages of food and rising prices during the war, with consequent dire need for jobs, led to the availability of cheap labour. Rural coir mats and matting labour was also

less organized than its urban counterpart. (Ibid p40) We see in the growth of sub-contracting the beginnings of a trend towards decentralization consequent to strong urban trade unionization and lower costs.

Third, in the 1930s the growth of small scale factories did not lead to any reduction in the size or number of large scale urban factories. They continued to exist together. But 1940s saw the decrease in the size of the large urban factories.(Ibid p40) This was consequent to increasing sub-contracting. Some of the large scale factories did not manufacture at all. They did some of the finishing processes like shearing etc and bulked the collections from the small factories and exported them. They were virtually exporters and shippers.

Fourth, the growth of the small rural factories led to the movement of labour between the urban and rural sectors. Sometimes the same workers moved in and out of the urban and rural factories and into the coir spinning sector as well. (Jeffrey 1984. p1163) Issacs calls this periodic migration (Issac 1984. p165). It has strong similarities to Hugo's description of circular migration in Java, Indonesia. (Hugo 1978 p106-115) and what Nagaraj described as the mobile society. This has implications for the space economy and political economy nexus as we shall observe later.

Labour relations

Labour relations in the 1940s had two phases. The first one lasting throughout the period of the war was one of industrial peace. Following the strike of 1938 and growing trade unionization among the coir workers:

> Instead of a policy of confrontation, the capitalists followed a policy of incorporation of the trade union movement into collective bargaining institutions. The trade union movement was also willing to co-operate, given its 'production policy' to help the war effort. (Issac 1983a. p39)

The T.C.F.W.U as we noted earlier had close interaction and involvement with the Communist Party. In November 1940 it came under the wing of the party. (Jeffrey 1981. p105) To the Indian National Congress the Second World War was a war among the imperialists and it saw no reason to be supportive of the British raj war effort in India. The Communist Party on the other hand, with the entry of the Soviet Union to the World War and the party's links to Moscow, found reason to support the war effort. The T.C.F.W.U.'s production policy and willingness to co-operate with the management was in this context.

The second phase of labour relations in the 1940s lasted from the end of the war to the time of Indian independence in August 1947. In contrast to the first phase it was a period of unprecedented agitation and struggle by the coir workers. Periodic or circular migration of the coir workers was in part a catalyst. It caused a political leavening of the countryside. Literacy, village libraries and reading rooms contributed to the political leavening of the Kerala countryside. But the geographically and occupationally mobile coir workers were the more important leaven. One result of this growing politicization was the trade unionization of many occupations.

> By the early 1940s it was difficult to find a coir factory or any other industrial enterprise in the two taluks of Ambalapuzha and Shertallai where a trade union had not been established. Unions had been organized among port workers, tile workers, textile workers, cashew workers, paper mill workers, head-load workers, beedi workers, fishermen, toddy tappers, coconut tree climbers, and boatman. (Tharamangalam 1981. p68)

Other than the port workers and "head-loaders" (urban informal sector manual transport workers), all other occupations were rural based. The trade unionization of agricultural labourers in 1939/1940 in Kuttanad, the region adjoining Vembanad Lake and on the immediate periphery of the coir belt, was the first time agricultural labourers were trade unionized in India. (Tharamangalam 1981. p70) It is also perhaps one of the first occurrences, in a global context, of trade unionization of landless agricultural labourers in peasant

agriculture, or agriculture other than capitalist and/or plantation agriculture. Coir workers played an important role.

> Many coir factory union activists from Alleppey travelled throughout Kuttanad mobilizing agricultural labourers. Those who lost their regular wages on such occasions were supported by their co-workers in their factories who contributed a share of their daily wages for this purpose. (Tharamangalam 1981. p70)

Equally significant was that the coir workers were concerned with political demands as much as they were with economic demands. This was a rude shock and rebuff to the coir capitalists who sought to channel the T.C.F.W.U., using the earlier phase of collective bargaining and co-operation as leverage, into mere economic trade unionism. They failed to realize that earlier co-operation was politically motivated. The support of the war effort by the coir workers was in part, in the perception of these workers, to safeguard the achievements of the working class of the Soviet Union. The cessation of the war did not bring the scarcity of food and economic difficulties that the workers encountered during the war to an end. In August 1946 the T.C.F.W.U. launched a strike for relief of what was described as "famine conditions" and won most of the demands. (Jeffrey 1981. p111)

The armed struggle

This was the eve of the partition of India and the departure of the British, a period of intense political flux, tension and discontent in India. Amidst the mutiny of the Royal Indian Navy in Bombay, ethno-religious violence in Calcutta, strikes, inflation and food shortages in various parts of India, three protest movements are distinct in being the articulation of the political discontent of the subaltern classes of India. They are, first, the resistance of the peasants of Telangana region of the Hyderabad princely state to the landlords and the state government for nearly five years commencing in July 1946. Second, in September 1946 began the Tebhaga movement among the sharecroppers in Bengal. Third, in October 1946 the bloody uprising of the workers of Alleppey district, often called the Punnapra-Vayalar rising,

after the two villages where armed encounters took place between the workers and the military.

> Indian working classes, to be sure, have conducted long, bitter strikes, and peasants have staged sustained revolts in the countryside. But only once, it appears, have workers in an industry fashioned weapons, set up armed enclaves and fought the military in pitched, if one sided, battles. That event, the so called Punnapra-Vayalar revolt, named for two of the places involved, was led by the Communist Party of India in October 1946 in the princely state of Travancore.....Why should the town of Alleppey and its neighbourhood have taken up arms when no other proletariat in India had done so ? A small provincial town in a remote corner of the country was not Moscow or Petrograd; nor was it Bombay or Calcutta....(Jeffrey 1981. p97)

Jeffrey goes on to discuss many issues that help to understand the wider context in which this occurred. All of them are not relevant for this case study on the coir industry.[14] Suffice to state that with increasing demand of the Muslim League for the creation of Pakistan, many princely states were manoeuvering to become independent states. The Communist Party of India was concerned that this might lead to a balkanization of India. It was not clear to the Communist Party whether the Indian National Congress would prevent the balkanization of India. The national bourgeoisie or elite were strongly behind the Indian National Congress and it may not have been in their interests to allow the balkanization of India. But the Communist Party perceived a British plot to bring about an "alliance between the Princes, the (Indian National) Congress and (Muslim) League leaders" [15] Perceiving also the conditions for a "mass revolutionary upsurge" it saw the need to launch "partial struggles" in the princely states to thwart the perceived conspiracy between the princes and bourgeois leaders. Jeffrey argues that the Communist Party had the right ingredients in Travancore princely state to test launch its "partial struggle".

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14. For a detailed discussion of the Punnapra-Vayalar uprising, see Jeffrey (1981) and Issacs (1984) Chapter IV p165-176.

15. From the August 1946 resolution of the Communist Party of India, cited by Jeffrey (1981. p110)

> An organized, angry working class already existed under the leadership of dedicated, well-read Communists seeking to capitalize on post-war instability and the impending departure of the British. Here was a potential "partial struggle" against a princely state set on a deal with bourgeois nationalists. Enough such partial struggles would lead to the seizure of power by the people. (Jeffrey 1981. p120)

Issac (1983a. p40) sees the Punnapra-Vayalar struggle as reflecting the high level of politicization of the coir workers and their refusal to limit their struggles to economic demands. For purposes of this case study it is not necessary to review the various interpretations that have been made of the Punnapra-Vayalar struggle. [16] What is important to recognize is that the coir workers were the central actors in the struggle, along with workers of other unionized occupations such as fishermen, boatmen, etc This explains the occurrence, in a small provincial town, Alleppey and its rural hinterland, of the singular armed workers' struggle in India.

> Alleppey's coir workers - literate, united and with twenty years agitational experience - were one of the truly mass bases of Communist strength in India. Given what appeared to be encouragement from the central leadership, Travancore Communists were ready to challenge their government in a way that seemed in accord with the Bolshevik tradition that many of them had diligently imbibed. Workers willingly threw themselves into that challenge, both because of local conditions and their own acceptance of Marxist ideas. (Jeffrey 1981. p100)

The Punnapra-Vayalar uprising did not achieve its objective of overthrowing the Travancore government. It did not become "Battleship Potomkin" or make Kerala the Yunan of India. But it was a watershed in Kerala politics, and aided in the consolidation of the mass base support for the Communist Party in Kerala and the party's position in mainstream politics in Kerala in the decades to come. The 400 workers who died in the struggle became martyrs and the struggle a legend.[17]

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16. For a discussion of some of the interpretations see Jeffrey (1981) p98-100.

17. The Communist Party of India's documentation of the struggle published in 1975 is titled "Immortal Punnapra-Vayalar" See George (1975).

The Punnapra-Vayalar struggle is significant for two reasons for this study. First, the locale of the struggle was the non-urban or rural hinterland of Alleppey town.It is in fact named after two villages, emphasizing the rural locale of an armed workers uprising. In 20th century India for the singular armed industrial workers uprising to take place in a rural locale is important and significant. It is a reflection of the space economy of Kerala. The rural locale is consequent to the spread of the coir mat and matting industry to the rural areas; circular or periodic migration of coir workers; trade unionization of rural wage workers in coir and other rural occupations. It is also then a statement of the close relationship between the space economy and the political economy in Kerala.

Second, labour intensive industries and their workforce are important elements in the political economy of Kerala. The presence of labour intensive industries in towns led to a congregation of workers and eventual trade unionization. In the labour-capital conflict that followed, capitals' strategy was the use of space. Downsized production units were set up, spatially spread out in the non-urban areas. Population densities made available cheap non-urban labour. The spread of collective consumption, transport facilities and cultural economic institution of a trading system and forced commerce that link small and petty production to national and international markets facilitated capitals' strategy. This emphasizes the consequences of labour intensive industries and a historical geographical context for the political economy. But of fundamental importance to this study is that it helps make the core characteristic of Kerala desakota, the presence of non-urban non-agricultural activities intelligible.

One of the central issues in this study examining Kerala desakota and its historical geography is the symbiotic relationship among land use, physical geography, transport, labour intensive agro-processing industries, politics, space and culture. Desakota is an organic part of this mix. Examination of the Punnapra-Vayalar struggle helps to bare this mix.

Post-independence era: Forced commerce challenged

Coir mats and mattings sector

In the initial post-independence period, there was a reversal of the decline of urban large scale factories that we observed during the war years. This was consequent to a sharp rise in rural wages during the post-war revolutionary upsurge; disruption of rural factories on account of the armed uprising and the aftermath of repression; and the return of some traditional buyers after the war for coir products that were specific to large scale factories.But the war years boom conditions and sub-contracting had created a rural loom capacity that was in excess when the war came to an end. The return to large scale urban manufacturing aggravated this situation. There was now idle loom capacity in the rural areas. In human terms this meant more rural unemployment and under employment.

This amidst food scarcities made the situation even more difficult. Following the Punnapra-Vayalar uprising, the T.C.F.W.U. and the Communist party had been banned and had to work underground during the period 1946 to 1951.(Tharamangalam 1981. p72) The total impact of all these circumstances was the erosion of the rural coir trade unions. (Issac 1983a. p40). Another consequence of this context, particularly with the decline of rural trade unions, was the stagnation of rural wages. This meant that there were increasing disparities in the rural and urban cost of weaving mats and mattings.

By the early 1950s there was stagnation and fluctuations in the international coir market. The existence of a cheap source of coir mats and matting production in the rural areas prompted new entrants to the coir export trade. Poor market conditions enabled them to enter the export trade with low priced coir products manufactured in the rural small scale factories. A trade war followed and the urban large scale manufacturers were once again compelled to sub-contract to keep up with the competition. (Issac 1983a. p41) Eventually they

ceased to manufacture and became export merchant firms purchasing from or sub-contracting their export requirements to the small rural mats and matting factories. Issacs reports that by 1965 there was a "virtual elimination of the big manufactories" (1982. pPE19).

This meant that over the late 1950s and early 1960s there were lay offs of workers in the urban large scale factories. With the lifting of the ban on the Communist Party and the T.C.F.W.U., trade unionism became active again. But Issacs observes that the trade union failed to reduce urban-rural wage differentials, prevent sub-contracting and the consequent lay offs of workers in urban large scale factories.(1983a. p41) They were probably organizationally weak after being driven underground and the context politically premature to take strong and concerted trade union action to prevent these occurring. Some statutory provisions in the Industrial Disputes Act of 1953 were also used by the employers to their advantage to lay off workers. (Issacs 1982. pPE18).

The laid off workers found work in the increasing number of small factories that were again coming up in the rural areas. This urban-rural shift of workers brought about a revival of trade unions in the rural areas. We noted in chapter two that in the 1957 Kerala State Assembly elections the Communist party was voted into power. Though it did not remain in power for long,[18] the political climate was now appropriate for the coir trade unions to agitate for better wages and conditions. Through a series of strikes in the late 1950s and

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18. Between 1957 and 1987 there were nine general elections for the Kerala State Assembly. The Communist Party was voted into power in four of these elections, the first being in 1957 and the last in 1987. The Kerala State government was held almost alternately by a Communist Party-led left wing coalition called the Left Democratic Front (L.D.F) and Indian Congress Party-led right wing coalition known as the United Democratic Front (U.D.F). The Communist Party of India split in 1964 on some ideological issues. One faction continued to have links with Moscow and is known as Communist Party of India (C.P.I) and the other which took an independent stand is known as Communist Party (Marxist) (C.P.M). It is the C.P.M. that has led the L.D.F. in Kerala since 1964. The C.P.M. has been voted into power in two other states in post independent India, namely West Bengal and Tripura. The Communist Party's victory in the Kerala 1957 elections however was its first electoral victory. It drew global media attention as the first time a Communist Party had been voted into power by the ballot in a multi-party electoral system.

1960s the workers were able obtain a minimum wage for mats and matting weaving, and other fringe benefits. But it was problematic for the small scale factories to pay the minimum wages and fringe benefits and sell at the low price the export merchants were willing to pay.

What began to emerge out of this crisis was the break up of the small mats and matting factories into even smaller units. This was, first, to avoid being deemed a factory and be subject to statutory requirements of minimum wages etc. Second, to prevent trade unionization. The sole proprietors of these smaller units were the supervisors, sometimes even working on the looms. The close personalized relationships they developed in a small group situation was used to influence the workers against joining a trade union. A good many of these increasingly smaller units were eventually household or domestic manufacturing units. Issac found that a unit which had five or less number of looms could operate with family labour.(1982. p-PE19) In times of peak demand hired labour supplemented family labour. Indeed in times of slack demand the family labour would work in agriculture or with another household with coir looms. This is if the latter household had been fortunate to get an "order" to weave some mats within a specified time and was in need of hired labour to complete it.

Some of the working operations are reminiscent of small holder peasant cultivators, having inadequate land for full employment also working as agricultural labourers. The author spent a week in 1988 at Muhamma, a village in the inner coir belt. This was to get a qualitative sense of the coir industry and a lived experience in the inner coir belt. Interviews and observations at this time suggest that household production of coir mats and mattings was one of many income generating activities. If there was a demand for coir products it became a full time occupation. If not it was a part time occupation along with agricultural work or as a hired hand in coir weaving or any other economic activity.

The break up of smaller units into even smaller ones began to occur in the late 1960s. This process by the mid 1970s had led to the rapid increase of household or domestic manufacturing units of coir mats and matting. Issac's analysis of the coir weaving units in 1980 by their year of establishment is presented as Table 8.02

TABLE 8.02.

Coir weaving units and looms in 1980 in Alleppey District classified by year of establishment

Years	Units		Looms	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
< 1947	44	1.2	581	3.5
1948-58	139	4.0	861	5.2
1959-65	346	9.9	2254	13.7
1966-70	363	10.3	1804	10.9
1971-76	1883	53.7	8127	49.7
1977-80	732	20.9	2813	17.1
Total	3507	100.0	16440	100.0

Source: Issac 1982. Table 14. pPE21.

It clearly indicates that 53.7 percent of the units were set up during the period 1971-76. Unfortunately a break up of these units by the size-class of the number of looms operated is not given to determine how many of these were small units. But Issac does provide the number of coir weaving units established prior to 1970 and surviving in 1976 by size-class of the number of looms operated. This data is presented in Table 8.03.

It is clear from this table that 70.5 percent of the units had six looms or less. Such units could be worked with family labour. Another 26.8 percent had seven to nineteen looms. This comprised the non-factory non-household sector. Only those with more than 20 looms will need more than 20 hands to operate and so fall under the factory sector. As we

observed earlier, only those establishments with 20 workers, without using power, and 10 workers, if using power, are statutorily recognized as factories.

TABLE 8.03

Coir weaving units in 1976 in Alleppey District established prior to 1970 and classified by size-class of number of looms

Looms Size-Class	Units Number	Units Percent
01-02	119	8.6
03-04	440	31.8
05-06	417	30.1
Sub-total	976	70.5
07-09	264	19.1
10-19	106	7.7
Sub-total	1346	97.3
20-49	25	1.8
50 +	13	.9
Total	1384	100.0

Source: Issac 1982. Table 12. p PE20

The growth of household production meant the need for a network of coir traders to link the broad base of petty household producers with the apex of merchant exporters. It was mostly the village level merchants of retted husks and coir yarn who moved in to form this network by extending their trading activities to woven coir mats and matting. These rural coir merchants became the end agents of a chain of middlemen who kept the merchant exporters supplied with their export requirements. (Issac 1982. pPE23).

The growth of smaller and smaller coir weaving units and a household sector did not bring about the collapse of the coir trade union movement. The trade union movement had become such a pervasive force in Kerala that as we noted before even agricultural labourers and informal sector service occupations had been trade unionized. In such a political

economy, particularly in Alleppey district, the centre of the coir industry, there was no holding back of trade unionization and worker militancy. The trade union movement followed through to unionize the hired workers in the small units and even the household sector.

> Not only were the hired workers in the small scale establishments unionized, but even the self-employed workers other than the legal proprietors in the domestic weaving units were canvassed for union membership. (Issac 1982. pPE20)

The small scale units and the petty household producers were uncomfortably juxtaposed between the unionized labour demanding more wages and benefits and a trading network refusing to pay an adequate price. Their fragmented character weakened them. A good many of the petty producers had been coir workers in the urban large scale factories. With their trade union experience they were aware of collective strength. To mobilize this they formed the All Kerala Small Scale Coir Factories Joint Association. (AKSSCFJA) Initially it was formed to confront the trade unions. But the AKSSCFJA found it formidable to contain the trade union movement. And this in turn led to further decentralization to avoid trade unionization. This meant less medium and small scale coir weaving establishments. One consequence of this was the declining importance of small and medium factories in the AKSSCFJA. There was on the other hand the increasing dominance of the petty household producers in the AKSSCFJA.

Influenced by this changing character, the AKSSCFJA turned to confront the merchant exporters to get better prices to meet the rising cost of wages and materials.(Issac 1982.pPE22) The coir trade unions were supportive of the AKSSCFJA demand for better prices. Road blocks were used to prevent the movement of coir. The agitation by the AKSSCFJA led to Kerala Government intervention to regulate the market for coir products and fix remunerative prices for the manufacturers.(Issac 1983a.p41) The merchant-exporters tried to circumvent the regulated price system by a black market operation. But the volume of

exports and the uncertainty of a black market supply to ensure punctual execution of export orders made black market operations problematic for the merchant exporters. (Issac 1982.pPE23). The success of the AKSSCFJA in getting better prices led to a slight increase in the number of small scale factories in the latter half of 1970s. (Ibid) The better prices for their products made it possible for them to pay statutory wages and benefits to unionized labour.

The merchant exporters, the big coir capitalists and traders were unhappy with regulated price system and statutory wages and benefits. It reduced their profit margins. They could no longer through the creation of a decentralized production structure manipulate the prices and wages, prevent trade unionism and maximize their profits. The alliance of workers, petty producers and small producers was too formidable for the merchant capitalists to overcome. In the early 1980s, eventually, the merchant capitalists turned to mechanization. They introduced powerlooms to weave coir mats and mattings. The workers, petty producers and small producers vehemently opposed these efforts. The Kerala Government feared the increase of unemployment, and so was also opposed to mechanization. When the Left Democratic Front was in power, it was, also for ideological reasons, supportive of the workers stand.

A few merchant exporters attempted to get over this opposition by setting up powerloom coir factories in the adjoining state of Tamilnadu. Restrictions imposed by the Kerala Government on the movement of raw material foiled the growth of such factories. The 1980s saw a declining global commodity market for coir. The coir industry in Kerala suffered as result and many small scale producers and petty producers ceased to function. Some petty production occurred only as a supplementary source of income and the main income earning activity was shifted to other economic activity. As shown in the last chapter cotton textile weaving was a frequent choice.

Coir yarn sector

Little had been said on the coir yarn spinning sector in our discussion of the inter-war period and the 1940s. This is partly because there are hardly any sources that tell us what was going on in the coir yarn spinning sector during these periods. But there is also reason to believe that hardly any changes occurred in the coir yarn spinning sector. Ratt spinning may have continued to expand at the expense of hand spinning. But in the early 1950s hand spinning was still in existence. Both hand and ratt spinning continued to be predominantly household industries. But spinning by hired labour in sheds continued to be present. In 1960 67.2 percent of workers in ratt spinning were hired workers. (Government ofKerala 1960. p61). This may suggest that "non-household non-factory" spinning in sheds was present in a substantial manner at least by the late 1950s. But a ratt with a single spindle needs three persons to operate, and if it had two spindles five persons. So the use of ratts in household production may have involved hired labour. And this is likely the case if there was more than one ratt used in household production.

Issac in a sample survey of coir yarn workers of one village in 1978 found that even in households with one ratt, only 53 percent of the labour used was family labour, the balance being hired labour. (n.d. p14) As the number of ratts increased he found that the percentage of family labour dropped. When it reached four to five ratts, family labour was almost negligible, and when it was more than six ratts, there was no family labour. Four to five ratts then meant that the production units ceased to be household production and became "non-household non-factory" category. With six ratts it was reaching a "factory" scale of operations. If some of the six ratts had two spindles then the labour requirements would have been more than twenty persons. This certainly puts such a production unit into a factory category in terms of statutory definition. What this pattern of production organizations reflects is the shading off of household production into "non-household non-factory type" and then into a factory category.

We noted when we discussed the 19th and early 20th century coir yarn production organization, that it was a rural hand spinning household industry and of the introduction of the ratt technology into such production. With the increase in demand for coir yarn there had emerged the "non-household and non-factory" types and eventually the factory level too. Unlike in coir mats and matting the beginnings were not as large scale urban production units.

With the emergence of "non-household non-factory" and household coir yarn production units, what was the distribution of production units by size-class of ratts ? In Issac's sample survey of 35 ratt spinning units in one village in 1978, 8 (22.9 percent) had one ratt; 9 (25.7 percent) two to three ratts; 7 (20.0 percent) had four to five ratts; and 11 (31.4 percent) had more than six ratts.

It is not known how universal Issac's sample survey findings are in the coir belt, and how far back in time such organizational forms had been present. But it does seem that household coir yarn production units had been increasing the number of ratts, and increasingly employing hired labour. Given the political economy, described earlier, of the coir industry and the coir belt, from the 1930s, the presence of hired labour would have led to trade unionization and agitation for better wages, etc. But this seems to have occurred only in the early 1950s. One can argue then, that the increasing number of ratts used in one production unit, and the increasing number of hired labour, occurred in the late 1940s at the earliest.

The coir yarn spinning industry, both hand spinning and ratt spinning, was one of the most exploitative industries, of the worker and/or petty producer. The Report of the Coir Minimum Wages Committee of 1953 observes:

> For a long time the workers had not been able to obtain a good meal on any day except on festival days..... Even that was made possible only by starvation on subsequent days. Usually they take a little "black tea" early in the morning and go to the work spots. In the noon intervals they are able to take a little dry tapioca and ground nut cakes which they supplement by drinking water. After returning late in the night, they prepare "kanji" (rice gruel) and drink the watery portion giving the residue, (the thicker portions), to the men and children in the family. Most of the workers were found to be wearing only rags in the working spots..... Girls between 16 to 20 years of age were dwarfed on account of insufficient nourishment. Women between 25 and 30 years were so worn out by work and starvation that they looked 40 to 50 years of age. The workers who are spinning coir cannot as a rule work more than four to five days a week. Generally they start work at 3.00 or 4.00 o'clock in the morning and continue their work up to 5.30 or 6.00 or even 7.00 p.m., with a short interval in the afternoon. This craze of early work is the outcome of their desire to earn as much as they could by turning out more work on a piece rate system.....At this rate the worker is able to get Rs 1/- to Rs 1/40 per day. (Cited by Issac n.d. p 23-25).

The piece rate wages does not necessarily mean the workers were hired hands. A division of labour in coir yarn spinning had been introduced by the retting dealers. The retted husks were de-fibred and then given out by the dealers to households to spin into yarn on a piece rate basis. (Ibid p6) This quotation brings out the abject social conditions consequent to the poor wages of the hired workers and low prices paid to the household petty producers. The Report of the Coir Minimum Wages Committee however noted:

> Wherever labour was organized under trade unions the conditions of labour are comparatively better....(Cited by Issac n.d. p23)

It was only in the early 1950s that the coir yarn spinning sector seems to have been adequately trade unionized for the mass body of the workers in this sector to agitate for better wages etc. This led to confrontation and capital's strategy of more contract or putting out system to the household sector to spin coir yarns from de-fibred retted husks.

> In fact, the most intense and fierce struggle in the hand spinning sector took place in 1956 and was centred around the issue of the large scale retters efforts to close their yards and contract out their work. (Issac n.d. p11)

Like the coir mats and matting workers, it took almost a decade of struggles for the coir yarn workers to achieve the introduction of a statutory minimum wage in 1963, specific to

yarn workers. A consequence of this was the closing down of the large coir spinning yards and sheds run by the retted husks merchants, adjoining their retting grounds. De-fibred husks were given out on a putting out system for the spinning of yarn to the household and small scale sectors. Defibring of the retted husks however needed labour. Retted husks, before defibring but after having been in water for six to eighteen months are wet and heavy and not very convenient to transport for a putting out system. Dealers thus had to de-fibre the retted husks and then give the fibre strands to spin coir yarn on a putting out system.

The fibre industry examined in this case study is the one concentrated in the coir belt stretching from Cochin to Trivandrum. North of Cochin, in the Malabar region, too, coconut was an extensive crop. Raw husks was thus available outside the coir belt. Malabar was also a copra producing region and raw husks were a by-product, when unhusked coconut was purchased by copra merchants and large scale copra producers. Some of these merchants extended their activities to retting. The retted husks were de-fibred and the fibre strands in shanks transported to the coir belt in Travancore-Cochin for further processing as yarn or baled and exported as shanks. Initially the Malabar merchants employed labour to de-fibre the retted husks by manual methods. Later they opted for mechanized defibring of husks.[19]

The retted husks merchants of the coir belt in south Kerala when faced with labour unionization and militancy in the mid 1950s began to set up mechanized defibring mills as done in Malabar. Over the years this increased. In 1955 there were only 8 defibring mills, but by 1973 this increased to 400. (Issac n.d. p28) This together with the putting out system of

19. The de-fibring machine was a motor operated fast revolving nail-barbed drum to which husks were fed through two closely pressed rollers. The nails on the drum shredded the pressed and thus loosened husk into fibres. Malabar region did not have extensive backwaters and lakes as the coir belt in south Kerala to rett husks. It is likely that the defibring machines were used initially to produce brown fibre by feeding raw husks without retting. This was the system in the mills of the northwestern province of Sri Lanka. Since the demand for, and the expertize in south Kerala, was for white fibre, Malabar merchants may have used the de-fibring machine for retted husks as well. Artificial retting pits may have been constructed close to the many rivers in north Kerala.

coir yarn spinning would have relieved the large retted husks dealers of having to employ a large labour force. But the unionized labour were vehemently opposed to mechanized defibring that threatened them with unemployment. It was estimated that complete mechanized defibring would displace about 80,000. (Government of Kerala 1973. p49-50) The savings in the cost of production were not substantial in the shift from manual to mechanical defibring of husks. (Issac n.d. p68) The quality of mechanically de-fibred coir strands was also inferior to manually de-fibred product. Issacs argues that the advantage to the retted husks merchants was the reduction in labour requirements.(Issac n.d. p29)

The unions and workers however resisted the trend towards mechanization with Luddite fervour.

> The large scale displacement of workers created widespread rural unrest in the coir belt. Violent mobs in some cases broke up the machinery and threw them into the backwaters. This struggle against defibring mills reached its zenith in 1972. Cases of starvation deaths among the unemployed husk beaters were reported. Thousands of workers were arrested, hundreds of volunteers tortured and one worker was killed in the police firing. In September 1973, the Government was forced to ban the husk beating machines from operating in the southern districts. (Issac n.d. p31)

Coir trading networks.

The examination of the events leading to the effort to mechanize defibring by the retted husk dealers brings into focus the pivotal role of the merchants and trading capital in the coir industry. The dealers in retted husks are on the one hand linked to the village raw husk dealers and collectors. The latter are virtually the agents of the former. On the other hand the dealers in retted husks provide the petty producers with the de-fibred husks to spin yarn. Once again they collect the yarn and provide it to the petty and small scale mats and matting producers as raw material. And they enter as actors once more as collecting agents of finished mats and matting to keep the export merchants supplied through a middlemen

chain. We discussed how the small scale coir mats and matting production organization and trade came into operation when we examined the coir mats and matting sector in the post independence period.

The coir merchants thus play multiple trading roles within the industry. They are not however one monolithic trading group. There are gradations from the village level dealer, through regional, bazaar to export level merchants. We noted how intricately they are involved in the various divisions of the coir trade, from raw husks through retted husks, de-fibred husks, spun coir yarn, to woven mats and mattings. And at each stage they are involved with petty producers and small scale manufacturers either on a putting out system and/or as buyers and sellers under conditions of forced commerce. Nor are they confined to coir trading activity alone. The coir trading network is linked to other sectors of coconut trade such as copra. Raw husks are by- products of copra making. Copra itself is a stage in the coconut oil processing industry. All this is linked to the coconuts trade and coconut cultivation.

The trading and entrepreneurial linkages are a very complex phenomenon and network. For example large coconut land owner can at the same time be large rural husk dealer, small retted husk producer and a large rural copra merchant and producer as well. The combination of many trading and some small scale manufacturing functions in one person or family occurs very frequently. What we have discussed is also confined to only some sections of the coconut based industry and trade. It does not deal with toddy tapping and trade; processing of arrack; jaggery (coconut palm sugar) making and trade; weaving of coconut leaves into thatched roofing material and its sales; coconut shell charcoal making and trade etc. The village level merchants are also not confined to coconut and coconut based products but deal in many consumer and agricultural goods and services.

The coir trading networks as forced commerce

The trading network brings out an important feature of the coir industry with implications for desakota. This is the presence merchant capital and forced commerce. We noted in chapter three that south Kerala had predominantly small holdings in agriculture. It is outside the scope and objectives of this thesis to examine the presence or absence of forced commerce in agriculture in Kerala. But a trading system existed in the rural areas to service agriculture and this coalesced with those serving petty production of agro-based industries like coir. Issac's findings in the context of coir is supportive of this argument

> As a rule the coir yarn exporters did not deal directly with the producers or small dealers in the countryside. The efforts made in the end of the 1920s to bypass the established network of middlemen was found unremunerative and given up. The petty middlemen and their traditional methods of exploitation were found to be cheaper means of procurement even after their mark ups and manipulations. The lowest in the chain of intermediaries was the village petty dealers. They carried on their coir business along with other occupations such as provision stores, agriculture etc. (Issac n.d. p39)

Forced commerce in the context of petty production of agriculture and agro-based industrial products, as in Kerala, has implications for desakota. A trading network inflates the trade and commerce sector which is part of the non-agricultural workforce. This is particularly so when the trading network distributes and provides the raw material and service requirements of a host of petty producers; and also collects the finished products from such petty producers for transmission through the tiered network to wholesalers and/or exporters.

Though Issac does not take cognizance of forced commerce, as conceptualized by Bhaduri, (1983 and 1986) in the coir industry, his empirical data on the coir spinning sector is clearly indicative of the presence of forced commerce.

> The "independence" of the self employed domestic workers was more illusory than real. A cursory survey of the various reports are enough to reveal their complete subservience to the merchants. They are dependent on the raw husk dealers' credit for their raw material and coir yarn dealers for the sale of their products, who in most cases were the same. The payment in kind was the

> dominant mode of purchase of the shopkeepers. The petty producer had little bargaining power with the merchants assessment of the grades, moisture content and the price, given the fact most of them were indebted to the merchants through consumption loans. The petty producer was left with not even a bare subsistence earnings. Thus, the price paid by the self-employed domestic workers for their alleged "independence" was quite startling - their earnings were half those of the hired domestic workers in the early sixties. (Issac n.d. p 8)

Institutionalized in cultural economic terms, is seen a trading system that dovetailed to link petty and small producers with wider markets at regional, national and international levels. And as we noted earlier, citing Arasaratnam's work on the Coromandel region, when petty producers are economically strong and independent, the trading system does not convolute to forced commerce. But irrespective of whether the trading system convolutes into forced commerce or not, it has a major role to play in petty and small scale production. And it suggests that historically present social relations of production and commerce reproduced themselves in a changing economic and technological context.

It was also noted in the last chapter that it was incorrect to assume that there was no economic dynamism in colonial India outside the formal, capital intensive manufacturing sector. The growth and performance of the coir industry over the last twelve decades or more suggests that small scale and domestic or household manufacture industries have not been stagnant or unresponsive to changes in the larger economic world. Haynes (1986. p126) has argued that in the domestic manufacture of jari in Surat, circa 1900-1947, such a response was present. His study as we noted in the last chapter was also a critique of the lack of scholarly attention to domestic production in colonial India and economic historians' assumption that industrial dynamism issued entirely from large scale production.(Ibid. p126) The case of the coir industry in Kerala is supportive of Haynes' argument, but there is a caveat. As the coir industry and trade in Kerala, as well as well as Haynes' description of jari manufacture and trade in Surat, demonstrate it was the merchant capitalists who responded to

the changing demands of the larger economic world. And in doing this they used pre-existing systems of domestic production and forced commerce.

> .....the prevailing production relations certainly served the interests of merchant-manufacturers quite well. Since craftsmen with substantial debts had little bargaining power and generally accepted low commissions, merchants were usually able to retain highly skilled labour at costs far below those of employing wage labour in a factory of their own. Secondly, there was significantly less risk involved in having jari manufactured on commission than in investing in more capital intensive forms of production. The merchant who committed himself to controlling all the processes of production directly could easily overextend himself in a business environment subject to sudden expansions and contractions. Most traders chose to possess little fixed capital, except perhaps small amounts invested in a single workshop of of their own. Yet, with sizeable number of artisan clients, they could still respond quickly to sudden upswings in the jari market without heavy new investments. Given the advantages of the existing system, there was little incentive for merchants to promote large scale factories....(Haynes 1986. p136-137).

The observations that Haynes makes are very much applicable to the coir industry and trade in Kerala. Petty household producers earning less than wage workers is identical to Issacs' observations on the coir industry. Some of the other similarities may be summed up as follows. First, minimal capital investment by the merchant capitalists. Second, a fluctuating market, an army of petty producers who meet the upswings and absorb the shocks of a fall. When the latter occurs, the merchants are relieved of the costs and problems of idle equipment and other capital investment; the problems of lay offs and/or keeping a redundant labour force etc. Third, the dependence of the petty producers on the merchants for raw materials, sale of finished products and consumer loans. Indeed Issac echoes Haynes's observations when he says of the coir yarn sector:

> In short, given the marketing and production conditions trade activity has a premium. Capital can remain in the trading sphere, leave the production to the petty producers from whom the whole surplus, sometimes even the necessary labour, can be squeezed out through manipulations in the market. Petty production not only survives but tends to get accentuated. (Issac n.d. p21-22)

And of the mats and matting sector:

> The earnings of the family workers must have been higher than hired workers, because they were able to ensure for themselves greater regularity and volume of work. However it is unlikely that there could have been any surplus accruing to them. They were wholly dependent on the traders. The key production decisions, such as what to produce, when to produce, and at what price to sell, etc were all taken by the trader. The shippers, especially the larger ones, did not directly deal with the small producers but placed their orders for goods with detailed product and price specifications; with the owners of rural coir depots. These intermediaries, who knew the local conditions intimately, distributed the orders among the small producers at the best advantage to themselves.The small producer, with meagre working capital and little access to institutional credit faced with severe unemployment and often failing to pay the workers in time, had little bargaining power vis-a-vis the trader. (Issac 1982. pPE22)

The dominating presence of forced commerce is obvious. Both Haynes and Issac's description of the industry and trade of jari and coir respectively, clearly indicate the presence of forced commerce as conceptualized by Badhuri. Bhaduri's conceptualization is a model of exploitation process in the agrarian sector. The exploitation of the peasant by the merchant capitalist. But it is clearly applicable to small and petty production in manufacture. In both contexts however the appropriation of surplus value is taking place in the market place and not in the production process.

The conflict between capital and labour led to capital's use of space to disperse labour, in its efforts to weaken labour. Though contrary to capital's expectation, labour continued to mobilize and organize itself in its dispersed form in the countryside, and even leaven the countryside with political radicalism. Existing institutionalized forms of trade networks and forced commerce helped capital to instal and service such a de-centralized and downsized manufacturing system. Both the dispersal of manufacture, and the need and presence of forced commerce, contributed in a large measure to the presence of non-agricultural activities in the countryside, and thus to its desakota character.

What this chapter has emphasized is the spatial aspects of the strategy used by capital in its conflict with labour. Apart from forced commerce, the other facilitating features for capital's strategy noted in chapter one also emphasize the role of space. And this is clear from the coir industry experience. They were the minimal differentiation and physical mobility. Minimal differentiation, particularly in the availability of labour and collective consumption, made it possible for capital to fragment and move the coir mats and matting factories. The character of the technology and fixed capital in fixtures, the looms that could be dismantled and taken away to be worked by a few, further aided this process. In coir yarn this was even easier as the ratts are never fixed and can be moved about. The role of space in the Kerala political economy, is related to the themes of time-space collapse (McGee) and time-space compression (Harvey) as indicated in chapter one. What needs to be raised now in the context of the ways in which trading networks and forced commerce operate, and the role of space, is whether there lies within this an indigenous perception of space.

Artisan - merchant networks and the perception of space.

Arasaratnam's (1986) work on commerce in the Coromandel region shows, in the case of the textile industry, that decentralized production existed from the late pre-colonial period, if not earlier. The textile industry and trade were important economic activities As they grew in importance the artisan-merchant organizations and occupational castes moved away from the authority of the agriculturalists and sought parity of status with agrarian castes. (Mines 1984.p37) This separation was affected through the division of all castes below the Brahmins into two vertical divisions of vadakai (left hand) artisan castes and idakai (right hand) agriculturalist castes. The organization of left and right hand castes was supra-local. This caste classification, unique to South India, does not associate right-hand and left-hand caste groups with territory. It is a network linking the rural locality through a hierarchy of levels to a regional level.

The observation that can be made is that the agricultural and non-agricultural occupational castes were perceived as two networks, co-existing in a region. The indigenous perception of space one may argue was in terms of networks and not in terms of territory. The western concepts of urban and rural are in terms of territory. They are rooted in the works of the classical economists as discussed in chapter one. Factory based non-agricultural production was an important characteristic of urban areas. It would appear then that the spatial order of the Indian experience of forced commerce and non-agricultural petty production, does not have a neat fit with the western conceptualization of urban and rural space.

One may argue that McGee's conceptualization of desakota is a reflection of this problem. He begins with the premise of a territorial urban and rural spaces and then moves on to a descriptive analysis of a space or region that is both urban and rural at the same time. It may be argued that this is the presence of two networks, once culturally conceptualized in south India as left-hand and right-hand castes. McGee, (1991 p14-15) citing Bray, observes a dovetailing of off season excess labour into petty production in the rice basins of Asia. He places some importance, for the emergence of desakota, on the historic association between the rice bowl areas and population densities. Kerala, as this study has argued, does not fit this model, though desakota is present. It is not a rice bowl area. McGee (1991 p25 f 23) does recognize 'mixed crops' systems developing population densities similar to rice growing regions. Kerala may fall into this category.

It is uncertain, even in rice bowl regions of India like the Kaveri basin in the Coromandel region, the extent to which dovetailing of rice cultivation off season labour with non-agricultural work occurs. The work of Mines (1984), Arasaratnam (1986) and Ramasamy (1985) on the textile industry in the Coromandel coast from pre-colonial times suggests the contrary. Agriculturalists were mainly, though not exclusively, the Brahmin (as landlords),

Vellala (as owner and tenant cultivators), Paraiyan and Pallan (as agrestic slaves and/or agricultural labourers) castes. The textile weavers were the kaikolavan and salayan castes. One does recognize that the caste system permitted some degree of occupational mobility and was not as occupationally rigid as it is often believed to have been in pre-colonial times. Many artisan castes, including the weaver castes, had agricultural pursuits. (Arasaratnam 1986 p267) But this does not mean that a mass of agricultural labourers and tenant cultivators in the off season took up textile weaving or some other household industry. Caste rules, entry to and acquiring of artisan skills did not permit such occupational mobility. Gough's (1981) work on the Kaveri basin Thanjavur, also does not document any periodic occupational mobility, on a large scale, in the pre-colonial period. Arasaratnam (Ibid p207) sees weaving, textile trading or farming as sole occupations. He also argues that the movement into and out of weaving reflected the demand for labour in weaving from the demand for woven goods, both domestic and exports. There is no indication that the movements were linked to the agricultural cycles of work.

The purpose of this chapter was to contextually illustrate the emergence of organized labour in Kerala industries and the growing centrality of labour-capital conflict in the political economy of Kerala. The role of space in this was stressed, and so was its significance for desakota. Organized labour however was not confined to the coir industry. It was present in nearly all industries and occupations in Kerala. In this context, in industries that tended to concentrate in a locality, whether urban or not, capital sought to bring about a spatial dispersal as part of its efforts to counter organized labour. The use of space by capital was thus not confined to the coir industry. As we noted in the last chapter, even in industries like cashew processing, where some stages of processing did not permit downsizing and so made spatial dispersal problematic, a modified strategy of a putting out system was tried out.

We shall in the next chapter examine the labour-capital conflict, and capital's use of space in the context of the beedi industry. The purpose is not merely to demonstrate the replication of what happened in the coir industry. There are number of reasons why a case study of the beedi industry is a complementary to the coir case study. They will be set out in the next chapter.

CHAPTER NINE

THE BEEDI INDUSTRY: A COMPLEMENTARY STUDY

Introduction

This chapter presents a case study of the beedi industry in Kerala. There are a number of reasons why in addition to the coir case study a qualitative examination of the beedi industry takes us further towards an understanding of Kerala desakota. First, the centrality of labour-capital conflict and capital's use of space to contain organized labour is reiterated when we examine the historical geography of beedi industry in Kerala.

Second, the beedi industry is concentrated in Cannanore district, which is north of even Kozhikode and almost on the northern periphery of Kerala. Cannanore district was part of Malabar district of the Madras Presidency (1792-1947), and Madras State (1947-1956). So in examining the beedi industry we note the dynamics of the labour-capital conflict taking place in a district which is fairly distanced from the Travancore-Cochin belt, which has been described as the heart land of Kerala. There is thus for this study a locational importance in the beedi industry's concentration the northern periphery. It demonstrates that the political economy of labour-capital conflict, though it had few centres in the Kerala heart land acting as stimuli, was not confined to a few specific industries and places, but occurred in, and leavened, the entire Malayalam speaking region, which was to become Kerala State in 1956.

Third, an examination of the beedi industry prises open the issue of wages in the political and space economy of Kerala. The availability of some data on wages, in part, makes this possible. It shows how the beedi industry, with raw materials not indigenous to Kerala, took root and expanded in Cannanore district. It was in part attracted by cheap labour. Fourth, the beedi industry caters substantially to a domestic market and at certain phases to an Indian ocean regional market. So the case study of beedi industry complements the case study of the coir industry which had a predominantly international market. Fifth, the beedi industry shows within the dynamics of the manufacture of an indigenous product, for a predominantly domestic market, the dominant presence and character of Indian capital. These features contrast with the coir products manufacture, which was not only for an export market, but was dominated for a considerable period of time by foreign capital.

Sixth, the beedi industry emphasizes the spatial factor in Kerala. Without any comparative advantage in raw material, the attraction was not merely the cheap labour but ease of the movement and mobility of commodities and people in Kerala. The importance of the access to transport and trade routes both within the region and in the Indian ocean can be seen in the beedi industry. The significance of the economic geography of Kerala in terms of labour and transport is made explicit in the beedi industry. Seventh, beedi manufacturing, unlike coir occurs in a number of states in India. With the help of Census data it is possible to demonstrate two characteristics distinct to beedi manufacturing in Kerala. These are, first, its being predominantly non-household unlike beedi manufacturing in most other Indian states. The non-household sector is, as shown in chapter seven, small scale, that is, non-household, non-factory. Second, in Kerala, in contrast to nearly all the other Indian States, beedi manufacturing was non-urban. These characteristics are linked to Kerala desakota.

Both coir and beedi, like many other industries in Kerala, were labour intensive, low technology and agro-processing in character. These were the core features of Kerala

industrialism. The beedi industry workers, too, like their counterparts in the Malayalam speaking region, that covered the three colonial political-administrative units of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, organized themselves to contest the working conditions and poor wages.

The beedi industry's beginnings in Kerala are obscure. In the 1930s and 1940s it appears to have been present both as an unorganized household industry as well as urban manufacturing units. (Census of India 1941, Vol XXV Pt I p102) The latter units employed piece rate wage labour in numbers ranging from three to about forty workers per unit. But what is significant is that the urban units after a period of expansion in size and numbers broke up into smaller units and were located in non-urban areas. A section of this rural small scale industry even became, through a putting-out system, household industry for a period of time. All this happened over a period of five decades stretching from the 1930s to the 1970s. It is important to map this happening as it once again illustrates capital's use of space to downsize and disperse the manufacturing units in its efforts to contain labour mobilization and organization. To understand this organizational downsizing of the production units it is necessary to describe the product and the production process.

The product and production process

Beedi is an indigenous Indian cigarette and has been referred to as a "country cigarette" and a cheap substitute for the real one. (Kannan 1988. p193) The tobacco is not rolled in paper but in tendu leaves. It is slightly conical in shape and shorter in length than the customary paper rolled cigarette. Traditional smoking in India used the hookah and cheroot. The latter is a cigar with both ends open. The origins of the beedi are obscure but appears a variant of the cheroot. It is a slender, shorter version about 5 to 6 centimetres long with one end closed and the other tapering to near closure. It is also rolled in tendu leaves while the

cheroot is rolled in tobacco leaves. The tobacco used for beedi is also different from the kind used for cheroot.

In earlier times beedi appears to have been rolled by the smoker or by the tobacconist. But beginning in the late 19th century it gradually became a manufactured product.The oldest beedi making firm in the Madras Presidency was established in 1887.(Government of Madras 1947.p9) The manufacturing process is labour intensive and mechanization is totally absent. In the simple labour intensive technology the only equipment required is a pair of scissors and a bamboo tray. The only division of labour is the preparation of the tobacco, to be followed by the cutting of the tendu leaves and rolling the prepared tobacco. The preparation of tobacco involves powdering the lumps, removing impurities and sun drying to eliminate moisture. With the evolution of manufactured beedis, brand names developed and some blending of tobacco began to occur to characterize brands and retain brand loyalties among consumers. Any such blending was part of the preparation of the tobacco.Such preparation was in bulk though sun drying went on in batches during the rolling process.

The greater part of the labour content in beedi manufacturing was in the rolling process. The worker sits on a mat on the floor or on a bench with the bamboo tray on his or her lap. The tendu leaves are moistened to prevent damage and then cut with the pair of scissors into wrappers. Skill is required to get the maximum number of wrappers per leaf. While cutting the wrappers the thick veins are removed to give a smooth finish to the beedi. Once a sufficient quantity of wrappers is ready the rolling begins. The wrapper is held on the palm and the tobacco spread on it. Then with a neat quick movement of the fingers it is rolled into a slender conical shape. The broader end of the beedi is closed and the other end tied with a thread. Sometimes helpers, often children, are employed to do the closing up of one

end and tying up the other. The rolled beedis are tied into bundles and dried in the sun or smoke chambers. They are then labelled and ready for the market.

Kannan (Ibid p193) observes that beedi making is perhaps one of the extreme cases of the single-person-job and thus offers no room for any economies of scale. There is thus no distinction in the manufacturing process obtaining in the household and non-household sectors of the industry. Raghavan (1986.p5) sees the beedi manufacturing process in the non-household sector as an example of capitalist organization that has been characterized by Marx as simple co-operation, where workers are brought together as wage labourers at a single centre but continue by and large to work independently of each other. The nature of capitalist control and management has been described as mercantile. (Kannan 1988. p194).

The beedi making workforce in India and Kerala

Given the price competitiveness of the beedi with the cigarette and the limited purchasing power of a greater section of the mass consumer market in India the size of the domestic market for beedi is very large.[1] Such a market in a large country like India together with the labour intensive character of manufacture supports a large workforce. The census data for 1981 puts the number of beedi workers at 1.6 million. Of this .9 million were in the household industries sector. But the actual number is suspected to be higher, as many workers in the unorganized sector, for whom beedi making is a secondary or supplementary source of income, are likely to have been left out.

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1. Raghavan cites a newspaper report estimate of 200 to 250 million beedi smokers in India. Of the 700 grms of tobacco consumed per capita adult per year, 300 grms is beedi tobacco and cigarette tobacco is only 200 grms. (1986 p1, p16 f1) The balance is in the form tobacco chewed with betel leaves, cigar smoking etc.

TABLE 9.01

Beedi manufacturing workforce in India by major beedi manufacturing States, sex and household and urban sectors as a percent of each State by sex: 1961 - 1981

States	Each State workforce as % of Total-India			Household as % of each (line) category			Urban as % of each (line) category		
	1961	1971	1981	1961	1971	1981	1961	1971	1981
Andhra Prd:									
Males	2.6	3.2	2.5	56.5	41.9	49.5	50.2	42.0	40.8
Females	5.9	8.7	11.4	65.4	57.6	74.9	39.7	24.2	25.9
Total	8.5	11.9	13.9	62.7	53.4	70.3	42.9	29.0	28.6
Bihar									
Males	7.8	6.4	4.8	63.8	54.8	28.6	27.1	32.6	28.0
Females	1.6	0.9	1.4	85.7	77.8	32.5	17.1	15.8	12.0
Total	9.4	7.3	6.1	67.5	57.7	37.3	25.4	30.5	24.5
Karnataka									
Males	4.0	4.3	3.5	40.0	59.5	38.1	53.6	47.1	44.2
Females	3.2	7.4	12.3	60.7	77.8	61.9	41.5	33.2	33.8
Total	7.1	11.7	15.8	49.2	71.1	56.6	48.2	38.3	36.1
Kerala									
Males	7.1	8.1	4.8	17.5	16.5	10.6	24.5	18.8	32.1
Females	0.1	1.1	2.6	43.7	54.5	6.1	45.0	32.2	12.9
Total	7.2	9.2	7.4	18.1	21.1	9.1	24.9	20.5	25.4
Madhya Prd:									
Males	10.4	9.0	9.0	84.8	72.7	77.1	33.6	42.6	34.1
Females	8.7	5.8	8.0	94.8	87.5	86.3	35.6	39.4	32.6
Total	19.1	14.8	17.0	89.3	78.5	81.4	34.5	41.4	33.4
Maharashtra									
Males	6.8	5.9	2.6	60.0	61.4	54.3	37.6	29.3	32.2
Females	9.4	9.1	6.0	95.2	64.0	56.0	46.6	37.4	47.9
Total	16.2	15.0	8.6	67.1	63.0	55.5	42.8	34.3	43.2
Tamil Nadu									
Males	5.5	5.5	4.5	30.6	25.9	52.4	66.8	66.9	53.3
Females	4.7	4.0	6.7	90.5	87.2	89.2	42.3	39.5	32.6
Total	10.3	9.6	11.2	58.2	51.6	74.5	55.6	55.5	40.8
West Bengal									
Males	9.4	8.7	7.6	39.8	56.5	32.4	38.6	32.8	25.5
Females	2.3	1.7	4.3	85.0	82.4	34.4	18.5	21.5	18.3
Total	11.6	10.5	11.9	48.5	60.8	33.1	34.8	30.9	22.9
Other States									
Males	8.5	7.7	5.1	52.0	42.7	37.5	48.7	47.2	50.0
Females	2.1	2.3	3.0	71.4	54.5	53.8	44.8	40.5	48.9
Total	10.6	10.0	8.1	57.4	45.4	43.5	47.9	45.7	49.6
Total-India									
Males %	62.0	58.9	44.4	51.5	48.5	45.1	39.9	38.7	36.6
Females %	38.0	41.1	55.6	79.5	71.0	64.8	39.1	33.3	31.5
Total %	100	100	100	62.1	57.8	56.1	39.6	36.5	33.7

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	Total -- India			Household--India			Urban -- India		
	1961	1971	1981	1961	1971	1981	1961	1971	1981
Total-India									
Males `000	549	573	713	283	278	322	219	222	261
Females`000	336	400	894	267	284	579	131	133	282
Total `000	885	973	1607	550	562	902	350	355	542

Sources: Derived from:
Census of India 1961, Vol I India, Part II-B (i) General Economic Table B-IV Part C, p432-433.[Code 220]
Census of India 1971, Series 1 India, Part II-B (iii) General Economic Table B-IV Part A, p225-401.[Code 226]
Census of India 1981, Series 1 India, Part III-B (i) General Economic Table B 12, p499-862. [Code 226]
Census of India 1981, Series 1 India, Part III-B (ii) General Economic Table B 13, p1-213. [Code 226]

Table 9.01 presents the 1961 to 1981 census data.[2] Kerala is one of the eight states that together account for about 90 percent of the beedi manufacturing workforce in India. Kerala's share increased from 7.2 percent in 1961 to 9.2 percent in 1971 and then dropped to 7.4 percent in 1981. There is a significant difference in the rate of female participation among the states with its being lowest in Kerala and Bihar. In the case of Kerala this may be related to the small size of the domestic or household industry sector in Kerala. It was 18.1 percent in 1961, 20.6 percent in 1971 and dropped to a low of 9.1 percent in 1981. In all other states the household sector is nearly 50 percent or more, except in 1981 for Bihar and West Bengal when it drops to 37.3 and 33.1 respectively. In all the states female participation is higher in the household sector than in the non-household sector. This was the case in Kerala too until 1981 when female participation in the non-household sector rose.

2. Decennial census data is confined to the period 1961 to 1981. There was little information on the beedi manufacturing workforce up to 1931. There was some data on beedi-making in the 1941 and 1951 Censuses, but, due to definitional and other issues discussed in chapter six, the data is not comparable with the 1961 to 1981 census data.

Though beedi manufacturing in Kerala, relative to the other states, is a predominantly male dominated non-household industry it is nonetheless more rural or non-urban based than in any other State. The exceptions are Bihar and West Bengal where urban based beedi manufacturing was low, but not as low as Kerala in 1961 and 1971. In 1981 however they drop to levels close to Kerala's. But in Bihar beedi making was more domestic or household based than in Kerala. Even though the household sector in Bihar dropped in 1981, it is still much higher than in Kerala. (See Table 9.01).

What emerges then as a significant characteristic of the beedi making workforce in Kerala is that the majority of the workers were non-urban males in non-household production. Their share of the Kerala beedi making workforce has however been declining from 80.8 percent in 1961 to 73.4 percent in 1971 and to 58.4 percent in 1981. The increasing female participation has also been in rural non-household production, particularly in 1981. Table 9.02 presents this data.These facts bring out a recurrent characteristic of Kerala space economy; the presence of a wage earning proletariat in non-agricultural activity in rural or non-urban areas. And this in an industry where the raw materials, both tobacco and the tendu leaf wrappers, are not indigenous to Kerala and have to be got down from central India.

It is the male dominance in the beedi industry that has led to Cannanore district having more urban centres than any other district in Kerala. In chapter four it was demonstrated that in Kerala the critical factor for a revenue village to be deemed urban, was the economic criterion of 75 percent of the male working population being in non-agricultural activity. This criterion being gender specific results in Cannanore district with a male participation dominated beedi industry having many of its revenue villages deemed urban. In contrast, we noted in Quilon district with a female participation dominated cashew processing industry it is the other way about.

TABLE 9.02

Kerala beedi manufacturing workforce by percent of sex, urban-rural and household & non-household sectors: 1961-1981

Category	1961			1971			1981		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Urban									
Household	1.0	0.2	1.2	3.0	1.8	4.7	0.9	0.3	1.1
Non-H'hold	23.0	0.7	23.7	13.4	2.3	15.7	20.0	4.2	24.2
Total	24.0	0.9	24.9	16.4	4.1	20.5	20.9	4.5	25.4
Rural									
Household	16.2	0.7	16.8	11.0	4.9	15.9	6.1	1.8	7.9
Non-H'hold	57.7	0.5	58.2	60.0	3.7	63.7	38.4	28.3	66.7
Total	73.9	1.2	75.1	71.0	8.6	79.5	44.5	30.2	74.6
Total									
Household	17.1	0.9	18.1	14.0	6.7	20.6	7.0	2.1	9.1
Non-H'hold	80.8	1.2	81.9	73.4	6.0	79.4	58.4	32.5	90.9
Total - %	97.9	2.1	100	87.4	12.6	100	65.3	34.7	10
-`000	63	1	64	79	11	90	78	41	119

Sources: Derived from, Census of India
1961, Vol VII Pt II-B, Table B-IV Pt-C p129-175
1971, Series 9 Pt II-B, Table B-IV Pt-A Appendix 140-183
1981, Series 10 Pt III, Tables B 12 & 13 p597-716 & 717-727

Examination of Table 9.02 reveals some changes in 1981. The rural component does not change, though it drops from 79.5 percent in 1971 to 74.6 percent in 1981 which is closer to the 1961 level of 75.1 percent. But within the rural component household manufacture increases slightly in 1971 and drops in 1981. This is caused partly by the character of the increase in female participation. There may be a nexus between these two increases but these changes are much more complex than the quantitative data suggest.Increase in female participation and household production in 1971 are both linked to capital-labour conflict and changes in organization of production.

Beginnings of the beedi industry in Kerala.

These changes as well as the differences between Kerala and the rest of India may become more intelligible with a qualitative and historical understanding of the growth of the beedi industry in Kerala. Unlike coir processing which was traditionally known in Kerala,

beedi was a new industry to Kerala when it was introduced in the first quarter of this century. But none of the censuses up to 1931 record any significant number of beedi workers in Kerala. According to the Census of 1931 there were no beedi workers in Malabar district and only 330 in Travancore and 529 in Cochin. Malabar district was part of the Madras Presidency. It is thus useful to quote a note on beedi making in the Report attached to Census of 1931 of the Madras Presidency.

> "Elsewhere a great increase in the number of persons engaged in the manufacture and sale of tobacco has been noticed. This spells mainly the popularity of the beedi. A general growth in the smoking habit has been noticeable to ordinary observation during the decade. The application of a tariff and the setting up of tobacco manufacture in or adjoining the Presidency, (Bangalore is a notable centre),led to considerable encouragement of cigarette smoking. At the end of the decade came the boycott of imported cigarettes and the beedi came into its own. This is in essence a small quantity of powdered tobacco rolled in a special kind of leaf. (Usually imported from Bombay Presidency.) Much beedi making is done as a household industry, notably by Muslim women. It is among Muslims that beedi smoking seems to be most common, a fact borne out by the prominence of tobacco dealers in Malabar and North Arcot. Beedis are actually exported from Madras to Burma and the Malay States. There is great variety in size in the manufacturing units; it depends chiefly on the premises available. Where a godown or shed is used the employees may run up to 150 or 200; where a house is used 50 would be a maximum and 30 an average. There is good deal of employment of children and long hours. Parents take a small advance from the employer of their children and so are little disposed to protest unduly or to withdraw them. The lighting and sanitary arrangements of the establishments are far from good or almost nil. Payment is by out turn, generally about 12 annas a thousand. The ordinary workman's performance would be about 100 an hour. Children are usually paid by the week, payment varying with capacity and age. The Factory Act does not apply to these places because no power is used. If Section 2 was extended to them, it would be defeated by keeping the numbers below ten. A tendency towards smaller units seems already apparent. North Arcot is one of the strongholds of beedi making with 74 factories and 1200 workers, half of whom are children. These factories are essentially fluctuating in nature. They may be set up, closed or transfed with equal ease. It is certain that a good deal of this form of employment has not entered the census returns. So long as beedi making is kept a house industry there is little to be said against it and it forms a useful subsidiary occupation especially for Muhammadan women who do not ordinarily go abroad. Its tendency will probably be towards some such scope; it is unlikely that large-scale quasi-factory operations can be of long standing." (Census of India 1931, Vol XIV Pt I, p 203-204) [3]

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3. The author of this report is M.W.M.Yeatts, I.C.S., Supdt of Census Operations, Madras.

This report suggests that beedi making had entered domestic household manufacture in the 1920s but this very character of the industry led it to be unenumerated or under enumerated in the census. North Arcot District is mentioned as a centre for beedi making.

Malabar District is noted for the number of tobacco dealers. The number of dealers or traders in tobacco in Malabar District of the Madras Presidency in 1931 was 4989 males and 34 females. The males make up 5.8 percent of all male dealers or traders in Malabar District. (Census of India 1931 Vol XIV Pt-II p207) In Travancore dealers in tobacco were 3905 males and 1213 females (Census of India 1931 Vol XXVIII Pt-II p 55) and in Cochin 558 males and 11 females.(Census of India 1931 Vol XXI Pt-II. p38) In Travancore the male dealers made up 3.5 percent of all dealers and in Cochin this was 1.7 percent.

The dealers in tobacco would have included trade in tobacco products such as cigarettes, cigars and raw and processed leaf apart from beedi. But the numbers are significant and suggest a dealers' (traders and middlemen) network that links up household manufacture of beedi with domestic and export markets. This brings out the structural features of petty production and trading and/or forced commerce network that we discussed in the last chapter. But more importantly it suggests that there were more beedi and tobacco industry workers than the census had enumerated.

These data also suggest the beginnings of tobacco trade and industry in Malabar, along with other centres such as North Arcot.[4] The tobacco trade and industry in Malabar District increased in the course of the next decade or so. At the same time within Malabar District it became heavily concentrated in Cannanore and Tellicherry Towns and their environs. The tobacco industry and trade in Cannanore was largely confined to beedi making

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4. North Arcot was a district of the Madras Presidency and is now in Tamilnadu.

and marketing. Tobacco trade and industries were also present in Travancore and Cochin but what was significant about beedi making in Cannanore was that its beginnings were as an organized urban, industry, though labour intensive. It shed some of these characteristics in later years as we shall observe shortly. But the initial foothold as an organized urban industry in Cannanore and Tellicherry towns and the factors that facilitated this led by the late 1950s to a heavy concentration of the Kerala beedi industry in Cannanore district.

Examining the concentration in Cannanore District

It is important to examine the concentration of beedi manufacture in Cannanore . Contemporary North Kerala is made up of former Malabar District plus a small part of South Kanara District, both part of the then Madras Presidency. This region or North Kerala in 1981 is divided into the administrative districts of Cannanore, Wynad, Kozhikode, Malappuram, and Palghat. The districts other than Wynad and Palghat are coastal districts with high population densities. Beedi manufacture is concentrated largely in Cannanore district and to less extent in Kozhikode, Malappuram and Palghat districts.

Cannanore district is named after the administrative centre of the district, Cannanore Town. Cannanore Town grew around a port that functioned as the main port of the Kolattiri Rajas of the pre-colonial period. Outlining the historical significance of Cannanore Town, the Census of 1981 states:

> It was emporium of trade for goods from Arabia, the Persian Gulf and southern India. When Vasco da Gama passed through Cannanore, it was "a large town of thatched houses inside a bay". In 1501, Pedro Alvarez Cabral founded a factory and four years later Don Francisco de Almeida constructed the Cannanore Fort, known as Fort St Angelo. This fort was later captured by the Dutch and finally the East India Company took it over in 1790. (Census of India 1981, Series 10 Kerala, Part II-A, p176)

Of the 106 cities and towns of Kerala, 26 are in Cannanore district. Of this number, eight towns that cluster around Cannanore Town, form together with Cannanore Town the Urban Agglomeration and Standard Urban Area of Cannanore. Three towns that cluster around Tellicherry Town, form together with Tellicherry Town the Urban Agglomeration and Standard Urban Area of Tellicherry. (See Appendix 9.01) The clusters of towns in Cannanore district have been commented upon in chapter four. As indicated earlier it is largely the reflection of a male dominated beedi industry concentrated in Cannanore district.

TABLE 9.03

Kerala beedi manufacturing workforce by districts and males as percent in each district beedi workforce: 1961 - 1981

Districts	Beedi Workforce			Males as a percent		
	1961	1971	1981	1961	1971	1981
Cannanore	28.8	45.2	59.2	96.1	81.7	55.4
Wynad	[b]	[b]	0.0	[b]	[b]	0.0
Kozhikode	13.2	3.1	2.3	98.5	99.6	94.6
Malappuram	[b]	9.5	4.9	[b]	95.7	89.8
Palghat	12.7	8.3	7.2	97.1	96.1	95.5
Trichur	7.4	9.4	9.3	95.5	63.6	29.5
Ernakulam	9.9	5.1	2.7	99.7	97.0	89.0
Idukki	[b]	[b]	0.6	[b]	[b]	97.9
Kottayam	5.9	4.3	1.9	99.9	100.0	99.8
Alleppey	8.0	5.6	3.6	99.9	99.6	98.3
Quilon	8.7	6.4	5.5	99.9	99.3	99.0
Trivandrum	5.5	3.6	3.0	99.7	99.7	98.6
KERALA - %	100.0	100.0	100.0	97.9	87.4	65.3
- `000	64	90	119	63	87	78

Sources: Derived from, Census of India
1961, Vol VII Pt II-B (i), Table B-IV Pt-C p129-175.
1971, Series 9 Pt II-B (i), Table B-IV Pt-A Appendix 140-83.
1981, Series 10 Pt III, Tables B 12 p597-716.
Notes
[a] Districts are listed in the north to location, following Census of India practice.
[b] These districts were created from existing districts after this Census year

Table 9.03 demonstrates this concentration from the 1960s. How and why did this concentration occur ? Kannan observes

> "The beginnings of beedi making and its concentration in Malabar seem to be closely related to the decline of the Malabar economy under the British which culminated in the economic crisis of the 1930s. This meant large scale unemployment of the poor in many occupations such as those in agriculture and traditional industries like weaving and toddy tapping which were the most predominant. By tracing the occupation of the parents and grandparents of present-day workers, all of them were found to belong to the class of rural landless labourers in agriculture, weaving and toddy tapping. The decline of agriculture, handloom weaving and toddy tapping created a large pool of unemployed labour. The unusual predominance of men in beedi making in Cannanore, compared with the rest of the country, could then be a result of them moving into this occupation rather than remaining unemployed." (Kannan 1988.p195, 196)

Kannan relates the decline in toddy tapping to the Gandhian Prohibition Movement which was more vigorous in British India, which included Malabar as part of the Madras Presidency, than in the Princely States of Travancore and Cochin. It is also possibly related to the Ezhavas, whose traditional caste occupation was toddy tapping moving out of toddy tapping due to sanskritization elements in the caste reform movement. (Govindan 1986 p17-18) On the other hand the Gandhian Swadeshi Movement (Movement for Self-Reliance) which advocated boycott of foreign goods, including cigarettes increased the demand for beedi. This was noted by Yeatts in the citation made earlier, though he does not directly acknowledge the political underpinnings.

In sum Kannan argues that decline of Malabar District economy and the depression of the 1930s caused widespread unemployment and pauperization. This he finds attracted mercantile capital, engaged in beedi manufacture in Bombay and Mangalore, to Malabar district, to make use of the abundant and cheap labour. (Kannan 1988. p65).

The Census Report of the Madras Presidency for 1931 note on the beedi industry that was quoted earlier observed that there was a dominance of Muslims in the Beedi industry and trade. The Census of 1921 data on the owners of industrial establishments classified by ethnicity supports this observation. There were 74 Tobacco industrial establishments in Madras

Presidency, 7 of them were registered companies and the balance 67 were referred to as "private establishments", and were probably sole proprietorships. Of the owners of the 67 establishments 28 were Muslims. (Census of India 1921 Vol XIII Pt-II p310). Raghavan (1986. p19) drawing on these sources and the concentration of Muslims in the population of Cannanore and Tellichery Towns in Cannanore district argues that the entry and growth of the beedi industry in Cannanore is linked to the marked involvement of Muslims in the beedi industry and the concentration of Muslims in Cannanore and Tellicherry towns.

With the increase in demand and the expansion of the beedi industry the petty establishments grew in size. The owner-entrepreneurs withdrew from direct participation in the work process and confined themselves to supervisory and managerial functions. Some became large establishments with hundred or more workers and employing supervisors.(Raghavan 1986. p23)

A factor that appears to have contributed to the concentration of the beedi industry in Canannore was the lower wage rates in Cannanore. The Census Report of Madras Presidency of 1931 quoted earlier gave the going piece-rate wage for rolling a thousand beedis at 12 annas. In Cannanore the rate during the 1920s had been 5 to 6.1/2 annas and there was a tendency for the wage rate to decline in the 1930s. (Raghavan 1986. p27)[5] These rates were lower than in the adjoining South Kanara District of the Madras Presidency.

> "Thus for instance in 1934, while the wage rates in the beedi establishments of Cannanore varied between 5 to 5 1/2 annas, in nearby Mangalore of South Kanara District the wage rate varied from 9 to 10 annas. A large number of workers from Cannanore used to migrate to Mangalore attracted by the higher wage rates." (Tobacco Workers Union, Cannanore,[1984] Cited by Raghavan 1986. p27)

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5. Raghavan cites two T.U.Sources in support of these wage rates.

The low wage rates obviously attracted capital from outside as well as within Cannanore to enter the beedi industry. Since the Muslims had a foothold in the Industry in South India there may have been an ease of entry for the Muslims concentrated in Cannanore District. Muslim entrepreneurs from outside Kerala may also have found it easy to locate the beedi making units in Cannanore because of the ethnic identities and linkages with indigenous population.

The decline of the Malabar economy, the growing unemployment accompanying the depression and demographic features of the district may have contributed to depressing the wage in Cannanore. But these are not unique to Cannanore. These features are present in most of the coastal districts of Kerala. A differing combination of factors seems to have attracted different industries to different districts in Kerala. Coir was attracted to Alleppey, Cashew processing to Quilon, Bricks and Tiles to Kozhikode and Quilon, Cotton Textiles to Cannanore and Trivandrum, Beedi to Cannanore, Jewellery to Trichur etc. Availability of raw material influenced the locations in the case of coir and tile industries. In some others like cashew processing, raw material availability was marginally present. It was absent in beedi for the raw materials of tobacco and tendu leaves for wrapping were both obtained from outside Kerala.

To sum up, the Census Reports comments and the work of Kannan (1988) and Raghavan (1986) suggest that the decline of traditional non-agricultural economic activities, the effects of the depression, high population density, consequential low wage rates and the ethno-demographic features of Cannanore district all contributed to the concentration of the beedi industry in Cannanore.

But the economic geographical importance of Cannanore is left out in these explanations for the concentration of beedi industry. Cannanore was a port town and in close

proximity to Kozhikode. We noted earlier that Kozhikode was one the important ports in the pre-modern maritime history of India and the Indian ocean. In the typical "torches flaring and fading" port cities of the Malabar coast, Kozhikode suffered stagnation and decline consequent to the growth of Goa, under the Portuguese in the 16th and 17th century, and Cochin since the 18th century. (Das Gupta 1967. p11-12). Though Kozhikode has lost its old glory it still remains as an important regional port city of southwest India.

Recent studies in Indian maritime history (Arasaratnam 1986, 1989; Satish Chandra 1987; Pearson 1987; and Das Gupta and Pearson 1987)[6] have raised the issue of the impact of European enterprise in the Indian Ocean on Asian trade. What emerges from these studies and debate is that native vessels were not superseded as carriers of commerce with the appearance of European shipping.

Nineteenth century British supremacy in the Indian Ocean and the advent of steamers had their impact but native carriers and trade were not eliminated. There was some continuity particularly in some commodities such as rice, processed sea food, and textiles which had Indian ocean regional consumer specificities. When the countries that rimmed the Indian ocean ended up by the 19th century as colonies of western European powers there were even new consumer demands on the Indian ocean trade. Kozhikode, Cochin and some of the other smaller ports of Kerala, catered to some of the newly emerging demands. Kozhikode is particularly important in the seaborne trade and traffic of the coast and Indian ocean. Commodity trade and traffic of a coastal character extended to the entire eastern and western coast of India. Indian ocean commodity trade and shipping included transactions with Sri Lanka, Burma, Malaysia, East Africa and West Asia.

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6. With the exception of Arasaratnam, others have emphasized the external trade transactions and neglected the importance of the economic geography of the hinterland, the nature of the economic activities of the hinterland or region and any relationship between such activities and the port.

As we noted in chapter seven the classic example in this context is the tile industry of Kerala, and Kozhikode as the Indian ocean regional centre of this industry and trade. What is important to understand in the context of the beedi industry is that the location of the industry in Canannore in close proximity to Kozhikode facilitated the beedi industry trade and expansion.

Existing trade and shipping traffic between Kozhikode and other port cities of coastal domestic and Indian ocean trade enabled the entry of beedi as another commodity. Raghavan's work has evidence to support this argument, though Raghavan misses its significance for the concentration of beedi making in Cannanore.

> "The beedi industry came to be firmly established in Cannanore after the First World War when the Muslim tobacco entrepreneurs utilizing their trade connections, started exporting beedis to Ceylon and later to Burma. The export trade encouraged the growth of a large number of small petty establishments and the existing establishments grew into concerns employing 20 to 30 workers by the middle of the decade. Beedi entrepreneurs like Polachal Moidu, Khadiar Assan, T. Amu, K. Achuthan and Ayubh Khan produced beedis for the Ceylon market while Laxmi Beedis and Whitehall Beedis were exported to Burma" (Raghavan 1986. p20)

Cultural similarities and the presence of a migrant Indian population in some of the Indian ocean rim countries like Sri Lanka, Burma and Malaysia may have made a commodity like beedi, an Indian cultural product at an affordable price, find an easy entry with little or no competition with other tobacco products from elsewhere. Many of the Indian ocean rim countries were part of the British Empire and so there were the additional linkages of British trading interests and Indians who had migrated to the Indian ocean rim countries as traders. So there is an economic geographical factor as well in the beedi industry being concentrated in Cannanore district.

Labour-Capital conflict and the restructuring of the beedi industry.

Political economy and restructuring.

Economic geographical factors continued to be of importance in the beedi industry's expansion, organization and locational shifts. But in the restructuring of the industry we once again see the relationship between the political economy of labour-capital conflict and the space economy. This relationship was in many ways a replication of what was occurring elsewhere. In the last chapter we examined this in detail in the coir industry in central Kerala. The happenings in the coir industry were to some extent the catalysis and the forerunner of the relationship between the political economy and the space economy, that was emerging in the whole of Kerala. The same elements that precipitated the initial catalysis in the coir industry were present in many other industries and sub-regions. They were the labour intensive character with poor wages and conditions concentrated in urban locations or a locality; a literate working class; context of easy transport and communication lines; and the rise of organized labour.

To decipher the position and role of the beedi industry in the space and political economy of Kerala it is necessary to map some of the changes in the organization of production and locational implications of such changes. Following Raghavan (1986 p113 & 114) these changes may be periodized as follows. Firstly the establishment and expansion into large scale manufacturing units in Cannanore Town during the period 1930 to 1937. Secondly the decentralization and downsizing of the large establishments and scattering them in the rural areas around Cannanore. This occurred during the period 1937 to 1951 The supply of raw materials and the collection and marketing of the finished product remained in the hands of the owners of old large manufacturing concerns. Thirdly beginning in the early 1950s there emerged middlemen who managed and operated the small scale units but supplied the entire

finished product to the owners of the former large scale units who marketed them under their brand names. Needless to say assistance was provided to the middlemen by the owners of earlier large units by way of credit and or supply of raw materials. This manner of production, tantamount to a putting out system, lasted until about 1968.

All these changes were taking place in the context of a conflict and confrontation between labour and capital. The changes were efforts towards a resolution of the labour-capital conflict. Some of them were manipulations to avoid statutory provisions enacted consequent to labour agitations and since the late 1950s by a Kerala Government that was sympathetic to labour. The labour capital conflict came to a head in 1968 and the last phase of the changes in the organization of production was ushered in. This phase has three components.

i) The closure of a number of beedi manufacturing units and capital moving to the adjoining Karnataka State in India.

ii) The displaced workers forming a co-operative with the Kerala Government's support and successfully competing in the beedi domestic market.

iii) Some of the small scale units dissolved to the level of household manufacture. The finished products were marketed through a tiered system of middlemen the apex being some of the owners of the old large scale units. In effect a putting out system came into operation reproducing earlier systems of domestic manufacture.

We need to discuss the different phases outlined above in a little more detail to spell out features and configurations that have implications for the Kerala space economy and more importantly its significance for Kerala desakota.

Establishment and expansion of large scale units

We noted earlier that with the expansion of beedi manufacture and trade in Cannanore district mercantile capital developed large scale manufacturing units similar to the ones described in the quotation from the Census Report of Madras [1931].A congregation of workers at such work places and a number of large work places in close proximity to one another is conducive to the development of working class consciousness and mobilization. The beedi industry in Cannanore and Tellicherry towns in their expansionist phase during the early and middle 1930s acquired this characteristic for labour mobilization.

A majority of beedi workers were either of the Ezhava caste or Muslims.(Raghavan 1986 p29) We discussed in Chapter two the social reform movement of the Ezhavas led by the philosopher-ascetic Sree Narayna Guru. It led to social and political awareness and conscientization particularly among the Ezhavas. We also discussed the impact of the Russian revolution on Kerala and in the early 1930s the formation of the Congress Socialist Party in Malabar in dissatisfaction with the policies of the Indian National Congress.

Into this context was woven the growing concentration of beedi workers in Cannanore and Tellicherry towns with poor working conditions and wages. The Indian Trade Union Act passed in 1928 permitted the legal existence of Trade Unions.[7] The first trade union of the beedi workers was at Mangalore in South Kanara District. In 1934 the Ezhava beedi workers in Tellicherry formed the Sri Narayana Beedi Thozhilali Sangham. (Sri Narayana Beedi Workers Union). It was soon drawn into a confrontation with the management of a large beedi making firm. Being a young and caste-based union it lost out in the struggle, with the members losing their jobs as well. Efforts to form a beedi co-operative by the dismissed workers also proved a failure. The workers learnt from this experience that caste based unions would not succeed and greater worker solidarity was required. (Raghavan 1986) As was

7. As Malabar district was part of the Madras Presidency, the Indian Trade Union Act of 1928 was operative in the district. In the case of Travancore the Trade Union Act was passed only in 1938.

explained in the last chapter, the Congress Socialist Party was also engaged in the task of transforming militant and reformist caste consciousness into class consciousness.(Issacs 1985 and Raghavan 1986. p 30). The beedi workers self critical of the early attempts at caste-based unionization responded positively. Kannan observes:

> "The response of the beedi workers perhaps surprised the Congress Socialist Party activists themselves, for the former took an active part in organizing peasant unions in their villages as well as forming volunteer corps for political and trade union work. The beedi workers formed their own organization and called it "North Kerala Beedi Workers Union" to encompass all the areas in Malabar. This union initiated struggles to end petty exactions such as deductions for lighting, lower wages for new workers and the rejection of beedis in the name of bad quality. By 1937 beedi workers had become politicalized and their struggle took the form of combining their economic demands with political demands" (Kannan 1988.p199)

When labour thus began to mobilize and become militant as well, the beedi entrepreneurs believed that concentration of labour in large units was causing this mobilization and militancy. The beedi entrepreneurs sought to downsize and decentralize the manufacturing units. It was at the same time in 1937 that the Madras Government extended the Factories Act to cover not only establishments using power and employing more than ten workers but those without using power but having more than 20 workers. The beedi industry was to be brought under the Factories Act and a Factories Inspector visited Cannanore to identify the factories employing more than 20. Efforts to mislead the Inspector was foiled by the trade unionists.

Decentralization and downsizing by a branch system.

The beedi entrepreneurs were alarmed. They broke up the larger units into a number of branch units and located them in non-urban areas.

> "By the end of 1937, the large beedi establishments which dominated the beedi industry in Cannanore began to disappear from the urban areas where they were concentrated. At the same time there appeared a large number of smaller establishments widely scattered over adjoining rural areas."(Raghavan 1986. p33)

By this strategy of downsizing and decentralizing the beedi production units, the entrepreneurs avoided the statutory requirements and diffused the growing mobilization and militancy of labour.There were two beedi trade unions at this time, the 'North Kerala Beedi Workers Trade Union' referred to in the quotation from Kannan (1988) earlier and the 'Beedi Thozhilali Union Cannanore'. The latter was formed by some activists of the Indian National Congress, but dissatisfied that the Indian National Congress leadership and policies were not working class oriented, the union had politically gravitated towards the Congress Socialist Party. Both these unions struggled hard, including in late 1937 having a strike that went on for 38 days, to prevent the branch system operating. Though in the course of this struggle they obtained some benefits for the beedi workers they could not prevent the branch system from becoming an established form of beedi production..

> "Under the branch system, each beedi firm had a number of small scale establishments where beedi rolling was carried out and a head office which co-ordinated the activities of the branches and undertook the marketing activities.The processing of tobacco and drying, labelling and packaging of beedis was done solely in the head office.....The branch establishments almost always employed less than 20 workers so that they could not be covered by the Factories Act." (Ragahvan.1986.p35)

The Madras Government was obviously not very concerned with beedi entrepreneurs circumventing the Factories Act for not only did they not pursue the issue but in 1941 even removed the beedi industry from the purview of the Act. Political lobbying and pressure by beedi entrepreneurs may have influenced this decision, though there is no documentary evidence to support this view. Consequent to this decision the beedi making branches did not strictly adhere to the ceiling of 20 workers but neither did they revert back to the urban centred large scale beedi making units. In fact some of the beedi firms in Mangalore, in the adjoining district of South Kanara[8] of the Madras Presidency, opened up branches in the rural

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8. South Kanara district formerly part of Madras Presidency is now part of Karanataka State. It is now called Dakshinna Kannada district and referred to in chapter four in reviewing Nagaraj's (1985) work on urbanization in Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. A small part of South Kanara district which was Malayalam

areas of Cannanore district. This was because the wage rates of Cannanore rural areas were less by 20 to 50 percent than at Mangalore, during the period 1939 to 1946. (Raghavan. 1986 p36)

Labour received a further set back in 1938 when the Indian National Congress as well the Muslim League set up their own Beedi Trade unions. This weakened the labour solidarity and bargaining power. The formation of these new unions was orchestrated by beedi entrepreneurs who were linked to the Indian National Congress or the Muslim League. The political ideologies of these parties were inspired respectively by nationalism and ethno-religious identity with little or no radicalism or support for the working poor.

In December 1939 the Congress Socialist Party unanimously decided to convert itself into a branch of the Communist Party of India. The two beedi workers unions affiliated to the Congress Socialist Party were important groups that supported this decision. The beedi workers were now drawn into the polarization that was becoming sharper than before in the political arena of Malabar district and the larger area that was to become Kerala. The entry of the Soviet Union into the Second World War complicated this situation. As indicated in the last chapter, the Communist Party with its links to Moscow and ideological concerns regarding the international working class became supportive of the British in the war effort. The strongly nationalist Indian National Congress saw no reason to support the imperial British and this stand together with the satyagraha (non-violent) campaign for independence saw the Indian National Congress leaders like Gandhi, Nehru and others put in jail by the British. This made them martyrs in the national cause and fueled the growing mass popularity of the Indian National Congress.

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speaking was taken into Kerala State in 1956. Mangalore Town which was in the Kannada speaking part of South Kanara district is now in Dakshinna Kannada district of Karnataka State.

Marxists see the Indian National Congress as representing the Indian bourgeoisie and landlord class. The efforts and tactics of the Indian National Congress were interpreted as strategies to divert a growing peasants and workers militancy and mobilization in the late 1930s and 1940s to a mass national populism that would ensure the replacement of the British by the Indian bourgeoisie in state power. In the last chapter we discussed the intense political flux, discontent and tension in India in the 1940s, a time at which the Punnapra-Vayalar armed struggle occurred in Travancore. The whole of the Malayalam speaking region was activated by these events to a political ferment. The beedi workers were caught up in this context and had an ambivalent understanding and response to what was developing around them. This is neatly exemplified in this perception of Gandhi by a beedi worker.

> "Gandhiji was man of the masses. He knew them through and through. But he also knew that power cannot be handed over to them. He was the best tactician who helped to hand over power to the Indian bourgeoisie from the British. In that sense he compromised with British imperialism. But I have high regards for his style and there is lot to be learned. His simplicity, Indian ways of thinking and viewing socio-political issues got him massive following. I regard his social work for harijans as very valuable. Indeed we have a lot to learn from him." (Quoted by Kannan 1988. p225)

The beedi workers became actively involved in the politics of the period but their confrontation with beedi capital was muted. For about a decade after the strike of late 1937 there was no open conflict between the beedi unions and the entrepreneurs. But neither were the entrepreneurs able to eliminate the unions by introducing the branch system. The multiplicity of unions was however disadvantageous to labour.

But in turbulent 1946, the year of the Punnapra-Vayalar uprising, all the unions jointly demanded a 4 anna wage rise and 3 months' wages as bonus and when they failed to get it, launched a strike. The two unions affiliated to the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League withdrew from the strike after a while but the other two unions linked to the Communist Party continued with the strike. It lasted for 56 days and when it was accompanied

by violence the Madras Government intervened and ordered the dispute for adjudication. This took six months at the end of which the workers got a wage increase of two annas and one month's wages as bonus.The entrepreneurs challenged the adjudication in courts and the award was implemented only in 1952 when the court held the adjudication legitimate.

As we saw in the last chapter there were restrictions imposed on the activities of the Communist Party in 1948. This was by the newly formed government of the Indian National Congress of independent India in 1947. These restrictions affected the functioning of the two unions affiliated to the Communist Party. Only after the restrictions on the Communist party were lifted in 1951 were the unions able to operate openly and freely.

The third phase: Small scale factories.

The 1950s witnessed the emergence of the third phase in the structural changes in beedi production in Kerala. The small scale branches of the beedi firms scattered in the rural areas became independent small units. They were earlier managed directly by the big beedi firms or their salaried branch managers.Now they were operated by middlemen who supplied the entire finished product to the beedi firms. Many of the middlemen were earlier the managers of what was known as branches. This change was activated by the beedi firms as they were apprehensive of many statutory provisions that were introduced to regulate the wages and working conditions of the beedi industry.

> "Following the exclusion of the beedi industry from the provisions of the Factories Act in 1941, the Madras Government set up a Commission of Enquiry to study the labour conditions in the beedi, cigar, snuff, tobacco curing and tanning industries. The Commission of Enquiry was to submit proposals for new legislation in the beedi industry. Under pressure of trade union agitation the report was published in 1947. The report recommended the speedy enactment of the Madras Non Power-Factories Bill which was under consideration of the Madras Legislature and to bring the beedi industry under its purview. It also strongly argued for the strict regulation of the employment of children. The report also recommended the enforcement of the Payment of Wages Act, the

> Madras Maternity Benefits Act and the Workmans' Compensation Act. Following these recommendations the beedi industry was brought the purview of the Factories Act in 1948. The beedi industry was also brought the purview of the Minimum Wages Act in 1948.(Raghavan 1986. p53/54)

For the beedi entrepreneurs the emerging statutory requirements had to be avoided. This was their objective in making the branch units independent units. When the branches became independent units what was emerging was a putting out system. There were two types of putting out that were developing. One was where the raw materials were supplied to the small units and when the finished product was delivered a commission was paid for the quantity delivered. Checks on the finished product ratio to raw materials supplied were done to prevent leakage of raw materials. The other was the purchase of raw materials by the small units from the big firms and the sale of the finished product back to the big firm .

This system would appear to permit a leverage to the small units as they could take advantage of the market price of raw materials and or finished product to increase the profit margin. But few of the small units had the finances to stock either raw materials or finished product to take advantage of the market. Moreover the purchase of raw materials and sale of finished products were mere book entries and liquid cash transactions were limited to the difference between the two. So the small firms were tied up and dependent on the big firms. The blending of tobacco in the raw material supplies that had brand name specificities further tied up and reinforced the dependent relationship between the big and small firms.

During the early 1950s the unions changed names and affiliations to political parties and a multiplicity of unions emerged. This further weakened the labour solidarity and strength but they continued to agitate for statutory regulation of the beedi industry. In 1957, as noted in chapter two, the Communist Party was elected to power in Kerala. The new government was responsive to the labour demands given its ideological stand and the working class character of its mass base and support. The shifts of power between the Communist Party (or

Left Democratic Front) and the Indian Congress Party (or United Democratic Front) during the period 1957 to 1987 have summarized earlier.

In this political climate for a Communist Party with radical and revolutionary ideology to operate within a parliamentary democratic system was both problematic and constraining.Criticism has been leveled at the Communist Party that its earlier dynamism and fervour has been eroded and diluted by participation in parliamentary politics. This was made more complex by centre-state relationship in the Indian federal system (Sathyamurthy. 1985). The constitutional powers of the centre and the political dominance of the Indian National Congress at the centre for four decades since 1947, except for two short periods when coalitions were in power (from 1977-1979 and 1989-91), made the New Delhi-Kerala relationship a difficult one.

These issues are outside the scope of this thesis. Suffice to state that we have to understand some of the developments in the beedi industry in this new context of the political economy of post independent India. The Communist Party led Government of Kerala in the late 1950s extended the Minimum Wages Act to cover the beedi industry in Malabar. It was already in force in the Travancore-Cochin areas and the extension became necessary with the amalgamation of these areas with Malabar to form the Kerala State in 1956. But Malabar and particularly Cannanore District had a concentration of beedi industry because of its low wages as we discussed earlier.

The introduction of a statutory minimum wage had obvious implications. Canannore was ceasing to be attractive as a low wage district for beedi manufacturing and there was a tendency for some of the beedi entrepreneurs to move to Mangalore in close proximity but in the adjoining Karanataka State. At the same time to circumvent statutory wage rates there were efforts by the entrepreneurs to introduce a putting out system involving household manufacture. Both these measures, namely to move out of Kerala and or have household

manufacture on a putting out system, met with resistance from the unions. As Kannan observes:

> "A situation where the beedi industry was spread throughout India, capital was more mobile than workers and there were States without any minimum wage regulations, worked to constrain the efforts of the Kerala unions to bargain effectively.....The prominent communist leader from Malabar, A.K.Gopalan, attempted to introduce a private bill in the Indian Parliament which would provide for certain regulations and enforcement of some uniform non-wage benefits. While several attempts to introduce this bill failed, the Government of India itself came out of with its own bill so as not to be branded as manifestly anti-labour. Thus the 'Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966' was passed by Parliament. It was however fairly evident that the Government of India was not serious in supporting this law as the responsibility for implementation was left to the State Governments. There was no time limit for such implementation and the State Governments were free to implement such schedules in the act as they found fit and in such areas in their States as they specified and at such time as they felt propitious" (Kannan 1988. p205)

In Kerala the unions agitated for the implementation of the 'Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act 1966. When in 1967 the United front Coalition led by the Communist Party (Marxist) came into power in Kerala once again the political climate was favourable to the unions and they pressed for the implementation of the 1966 Act. There were some provisions of the act that sought to eliminate middlemen in the industry by recognizing the relations between the beedi firms and the workers engaged indirectly through middlemen. Such provisions were useful for the unions in their battle against increasing household manufacture by a putting out system. Middlemen linked household manufacture with the small firms and sometimes through a network of middlemen to the big firms.

The crisis of 1968 and subsequent trends

The new government was aware that the implementation of the 1966 Act in Kerala might make the beedi entrepreneurs move to Karnataka or Tamilnadu as these two states had not implemented the act nor were there any pressures to do so. The government eventually took a stand and in August 1968 moved to implement the 1966 Act. The big firms responded

by stoppage of work in their firms and this had a domino effect on a number of small firms linked to the big. About 12,000 beedi workers were immediately thrown out of employment. (Raghavan 1986. p60). There was major confrontation and crisis involving the unions, the big firms and the Kerala Government. The details of this are not all relevant for our purposes. The final outcome was that the displaced workers formed a beedi making co-operative and commenced production.

The determination and commitment of the workers and unions, their political maturity, the support of the Kerala Government and good management enabled the beedi co-operative to successfully compete in the domestic market for beedis. The mass sympathy for the displaced workers contributed to their getting an initial foothold and carve a niche in the Kerala domestic market. By producing quality beedis and good management practices in purchasing, sales etc they built on this goodwill and became the most important beedi manufacturer in Kerala by the late 1970s. They dominate the Kerala market and are also in demand in the adjoining states and have to now even cope with the problem of petty producers pirating their brand label.

In 1981 they had about 30,000 member workers[9] with an elaborate system of work centres, primary societies and a central society with member worker participation in management at various levels. The increase in the beedi workforce in Kerala by 1981 is partly due to the success of the beedi co-operative. The beedi co-operative has its share of problems as it has to survive in a competitive market in a context of abundant labour and yet be a model employer as a co-operative. But it has in spite of these problems emerged as the most successful and a model beedi making co-operative in India.

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9. The 30,000 member workers belonged to the Kerala Dinesh Beedi Workers Central Co-operative Society, the co-operative formed by the displaced workers in 1968. It is the major beedi co-operative in Kerala. Its success led to other beedi co-operatives to be formed in Kerala. The total workforce in all beedi co-operatives is estimated at 48,000. (Government of India. 1981. p 8)

The success of the beedi co-operative and the shift of some of the big beedi firms to Mangalore in Karanataka did not mean the disappearance of the beedi worker outside the co-operative sector. In the late 1950s, even before the crisis of the late 1960s, the small unit entrepreneurs and/or middlemen had attempted to dismantle the small beedi making units and instal a putting-out system with household manufacture. This was in response to the changing political climate with the growing importance of the Communist Party and increasing demands and militancy of labour. In spite of the resistance of the unions a putting-out system with household manufacture came into practice in the late 1950s and early 1960s though it did not become the dominant pattern of beedi making in Kerala.

After the events of the late 1960s household manufacture linked to the big and small firms outside Kerala as well as within Kerala continued to exist and even grow. It peaked in 1971. Household manufacture linked to a putting out system continued to be a strategy to avoid statutory provisions in spite of the provisions of the 1966 Act that sought to eliminate these practices. This was accompanied by the increasing participation of women in household manufacture. But examination of census data does not reveal a direct correlation between the increase in domestic manufacture and the increase in female participation. The success and growth of the co-operative sector in the 1970s led to the re-emergence of the non-household sector to its earlier dominant position. The rural sector however continued to be important and the entry of the co-operative sector did not result in a return to urban based non-household production. Female participation which was mere 2.1 percent in 1961 rose to 12.7 percent in 1971 and to an unparalleled 34.7 in 1981.

Some of these changes were caused by the growth of the beedi working force in Kerala. It grew from 64,311 in 1961 to 89,834 in 1971 and to 119,000 in 1981, registering a 39.7 percent increase between 1961 and 1971 and a 32.5 percent increase between 1971 and 1981. This meant a 85.0 percent increase between 1961 and 1981. The growth was partly due to the increasing demand both within Kerala and South India for the

quality beedi manufactured by the Kerala Dinesh Beedi Workers Central Co-operative Society (KDBWCCS).This was the co-operative formed by the locked out workers in Cannanore in 1968. This co-operative which had only 3000 workers in 1968 had in 1981 22,330 workers and this rose to 30590 by 1984/85. Sales which were 1.1 million rupees in 1968 grew to 141.5 million rupees in 1981 and had reached 234.2 million rupees in 1984/85 (KDBWCCS Annual Reports 1968,1980/81 and 1984/85)

Census data on restructuring.

We noted earlier that since 1961 the Indian Censuses provide data on the manufacturing work force, classified by household and non-household industries. Census urban-rural data on the workforce were also more reliable after 1961. This makes it possible to use the census data from 1961 to 1981 for supportive analysis of the restructuring described in this chapter for the same period.

Tables 9.04 to 9.06 capture some of the changes and relationships described earlier as occurring between 1961 and 1981. We noted earlier in Table 9.03 that beedi making workforce is concentrated in Cannanore district. In 1961 of
the total beedi making workforce in Kerala 45.2 percent were in Cannanore. This rose to 59.2 percent in 1971 and dropped to 55.4 percent in 1981. If we examine Cannanore data as presented in Table 9.04 we find that the rural component was 55.5 percent in 1961. This is the lowest among the districts, all other districts having a rural component ranging from 75 to 90 percent. This reflects the continuing importance of urban manufacture in Cannanore in spite of the decentralizing trends since the 1940s.

TABLE 9.04

Kerala beedi rural manufacturing workforce as a percent of total workforce and by districts and sex : 1961 - 1981

Districts	Rural workforce as a percent of total workforce [rural and urban] of each district.								
	1961			1971			1981		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Cannanore	53.9	01.5	55.5	63.5	12.7	76.1	27.7	39.7	67.4
Wynad	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]	Nil	Nil	Nil
Kozhikode	82.2	01.5	83.7	69.5	00.4	69.8	73.9	03.2	77.2
Malappuram	[a]	[a]	[a]	86.0	03.2	89.2	81.6	09.9	91.5
Palghat	81.3	02.8	84.1	68.5	03.3	85.6	87.6	08.4	96.0
Trichur	79.9	01.6	81.4	52.8	23.0	75.8	23.3	55.0	78.3
Ernakulam	77.5	00.3	77.8	72.5	00.7	73.1	58.4	08.3	66.8
Idukki	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]	85.8	02.1	87.9
Kottayam	87.5	00.1	87.6	88.7	00.0	88.7	90.2	00.2	90.4
Alleppey	80.8	00.0	80.9	78.9	00.4	79.3	83.0	01.3	84.3
Quilon	91.3	00.1	91.3	91.9	00.7	92.6	85.9	01.0	86.9
Trivandrum	74.8	00.1	75.0	76.1	00.3	76.4	83.8	01.4	85.2
KERALA	73.9	01.2	75.1	71.0	08.6	79.5	44.5	30.2	74.6

Sources: Derived from
Census of India 1961, Vol VII Pt II-B (i), p129-175
Census of India 1971, Series 9 Pt II-B (i), p140-183
Census of India 1981, Series 10 Pt III, p597-716

Notes :
[a] Districts are listed according to their north to south location following Census of India practice.
[b] These districts were created from existing districts after this census year.

The rural workforce in Cannanore rose to 76.1 percent in 1971. This demonstrates the decentralization and dispersal to the non-urban areas that occurred during the 1960s. All other districts had either maintained their non-urban or rural ratios or slightly increased them except Kozhikode and Ernakulam. At Kozhikode the decrease occurred because a large and predominantly rural and Muslim populated region was carved out to form the new district of Malappuram. This made the rural ratio in the new and reduced Kozhikode drop. Ernakulam contains Cochin city, the major port and trade centre of Kerala. The limited capital intensive industries in Kerala we noted earlier have grown in and around Cochin city and on the

TABLE 9.05

Female participation rate in Kerala beedi manufacturing classified by selected districts, household & non-household and urban & rural: 1961 - 1981

Districts and Year	Females							Males Total	Grand Total
	Household			Non-household			Both		
	Rur	Urb	Tot	Rur	Urb	Tot	Tot		
Cannanore									
1961	0.9	0.5	1.4	0.6	1.8	2.5	3.9	96.1	100.0
1971	8.3	3.5	11.9	4.3	2.1	6.5	18.3	81.7	100.0
1981	1.2	0.2	1.4	38.5	4.7	43.2	44.6	55.4	100.0
Kozhikode									
1961	1.0	0.0	1.1	0.4	0.0	0.4	1.5	98.5	100.0
1971	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.4	0.4	99.6	100.0
1981	0.9	0.0	0.9	2.3	2.2	4.5	5.4	94.6	100.0
Malapuram									
1961	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]
1971	1.2	0.1	1.3	2.0	1.0	3.0	4.3	95.7	100.0
1981	6.1	0.0	6.1	3.8	0.3	4.1	10.2	89.8	100.0
Palghat									
1961	1.8	0.0	1.8	1.0	0.1	1.2	2.9	97.1	100.0
1971	1.1	0.6	1.7	2.2	0.1	2.2	3.9	96.1	100.0
1981	2.2	0.0	2.2	6.2	0.1	6.3	8.5	91.5	100.0
Trichur									
1961	0.4	0.9	1.3	1.2	2.0	3.2	4.5	95.5	100.0
1971	9.1	1.6	10.8	13.9	11.8	25.6	36.4	63.6	100.0
1981	5.4	1.3	6.7	49.6	14.2	63.8	70.5	29.5	100.0
Ernakulam									
1961	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.3	99.7	100.0
1971	0.4	0.1	0.6	0.2	2.2	2.4	3.0	97.0	100.0
1981	4.8	0.4	5.2	3.5	2.3	5.8	11.0	89.0	100.0
KERALA									
1961	0.7	0.2	0.9	0.5	0.7	1.2	2.1	97.9	100.0
1971	4.9	1.8	6.7	3.7	2.3	6.0	12.7	87.4	100.0
1981	1.8	0.3	2.1	28.3	4.2	32.5	34.7	65.3	100.0

Sources: Derived from Census of India, Kerala:
1961 Vol VII, Pt II-B, Table B-IV Pt C, p129-175.
1971 Series 9, Pt II-B, Table B-IV Pt A Appendix, p140-183
1981 Series 10, Pt III, Tables B 12-13 p597-716, p729-768.

Notes
[a] Same as note [a] to Table 9.04
[b] Same as note [b] to Table 9.04
[c] 1981 Census does not provide by districts household and non-household workers by minor (three digit) categories. This has been compiled by applying the ratio of household to non-household workers in the major group of tobacco and beverages, (code 22), to the beedi workers (Code 226).

Cochin-Alwaye transport corridor. The changing configuration appear to have had an impact on the urban-rural ratio of the beedi making workforce of the district. Cannanore. As workers' co-operatives, the manufacturing units were not dictated by strategies of down-scaling,

In 1981 Cannanore's rural beedi making workforce dropped to 67.4 percent. By 1981 the co-operative sector which began in the late 1960s had stabilized and grown in decentralization and dispersal to non-urban areas. The increase of the urban beedi sector in Cannanore is due to the growth of the co-operative sector in the urban areas.But the rural component did not drop to the earlier level of 55.5 percent in 1961 as co-operative sector was active in the rural areas too. Twenty two Primary Workers Co-operative Societies federate to form the KDBWCCS. Each primary co-operative had about fifteen work centres. Thus there was a scatter of more than three hundred co-operative work centres in Cannanore district linked to KDBWCCS. Many of these work centres were in rural areas.

A significant change reflected in Table 9.04 is the increasing female participation rate. There is no uniform increase in all districts. The increase is dramatic in Cannanore and Trichur districts. It was marginally present in the districts of Kozhikode, Malappuram, Palghat and Ernakulam. (See Table 9.03) Cannanore and Trichur together had in 1961, 1971 and 1981, 36.2 percent, 54.6 percent and 68.5 percent respectively of the total beedi workforce of Kerala. Thus the dramatic increase in these two districts is of significance.

Table 9.05 presents the female participation rate in these six districts where a striking or noticeable increase occurred between 1961 and 1981. The rates are classified by household and non-household sectors and within them by rural and urban. The most dramatic increase is in Trichur district where the female participation rate rose from 4.5 percent in 1961 to 70.5 percent in 1981. The greatest contribution to this increase was from the rural non-household

sector which increased from 1.2 percent 1961 to 49.6 percent in 1981. The overall increase in Kerala from 2.1 percent in 1961 to 34.7 percent in 1981 was also influenced by the increase in the rural non-household sector. This is largely due by the pattern of increase in Cannanore for nearly 60 percent of the beedi workforce of Kerala are concentrated in Cannanore. In Cannanore too the greatest increase has been in the rural non-household sector.

TABLE 9.06

Household sector in Kerala beedi manufacturing workforce in selected districts by sex and urban-rural: 1961 - 1981.

Districts and Year	Household Manufacturing							Non: House -hold	Grand Total
	Urban			Rural			Both		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	T	T	
Cannanore									
1961	1.0	0.5	1.5	5.0	0.9	5.9	7.4	92.6	100.0
1971	3.8	3.5	7.3	5.9	8.3	14.3	21.5	78.5	100.0
1981	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.3	1.2	1.5	2.0	98.0	100.0
Kozhikode									
1961	0.8	0.0	0.8	21.5	1.0	22.6	23.4	76.6	100.0
1971	4.0	0.0	4.0	14.2	0.0	14.2	18.2	81.8	100.0
1981	2.7	0.0	2.7	9.5	0.9	10.4	13.1	86.9	100.0
Malapuram									
1961	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]
1971	1.6	0.1	1.7	16.1	1.2	17.3	19.0	81.0	100.0
1981	2.3	0.0	2.3	22.4	6.1	28.5	30.8	69.2	100.0
Palghat									
1961	0.3	0.0	0.3	20.2	1.8	22.0	22.4	77.6	100.0
1971	2.8	0.6	3.4	13.8	1.1	14.9	18.3	81.7	100.0
1981	0.3	0.0	0.3	12.2	2.2	14.4	14.7	85.3	100.0
Trichur									
1961	1.6	0.9	2.5	27.7	0.4	28.1	30.6	69.4	100.0
1971	2.4	1.6	4.0	15.0	9.1	24.2	28.2	71.8	100.0
1981	1.3	1.3	2.6	4.7	5.4	10.1	12.7	87.3	100.0
Ernakulam									
1961	0.7	0.0	0.7	19.1	0.2	19.3	20.0	80.0	100.0
1971	2.9	0.1	3.0	13.0	0.4	13.4	16.4	83.6	100.0
1981	6.8	0.4	7.2	13.0	4.8	17.8	25.0	75.0	100.0
KERALA									
1961	1.0	0.2	1.2	16.2	0.7	16.9	18.1	81.9	100.0
1971	3.0	1.8	4.7	11.0	4.9	15.9	20.6	79.4	100.0
1981	0.9	0.3	1.2	6.1	1.8	7.9	9.1	90.9	100.0

Sources and notes are same as for Table 9.05.

Table 9.06 presents data on household manufacture in Cannanore and five other districts where beedi manufacture is of some significance. Cannanore is of central importance and household manufacture from 7.4 percent 1961 peaks at 21.5 percent in 1971 and drops to a low 2.0 percent in 1981. This is in keeping with the trends following the labour-capital conflict discussed earlier. Household manufacture increased in the late 1950s and 1960s with capital's strategies to avoid statutory requirements and labour militancy. The increasing importance of workers' co-operatives in the 1970s changed this trend and household manufacture dropped to 2.0 percent. While there was some drop in the absolute number of workers in household manufacture, the expansion of the beedi industry and workforce in the 1970s was in the non-household sector. Trichur somewhat follows the Cannanore pattern though domestic manufacture peaks in 1961. The other four districts had not witnessed an expansion of the beedi workforce. Indeed in Ernakulam, Kozhikode and Malappuram there were even slight drops in absolute numbers.(See Table 9.03) These trends affected the household and non-household ratios in these districts.

Towards an understanding of the space economy and political economy nexus

In chapter two to four we discussed the cultural and socio-political context, and the dynamics of change within it, that acted as a social base for political consciousness-raising in Kerala. This context was also very receptive to radical political thought as a legitimate weapon to fight unjust social and political power. Radical politicization flowed from such a crucible of context. We shall discuss here how the beedi workers were not only drawn into this crucible but were a basic substance in the forging of radical politicization in Kerala.

It is necessary to recognize this symbiotic relationship. The beedi workers not merely drew sustenance from the emerging radical political consciousness and leadership in the struggle for better and secure working conditions. They were at the same time, along with workers of some of other occupations, at the grass root level supporting and generating

radical politicization. Their poor working and living conditions mobilized them to fuel the growing radical politicization that was occurring in Kerala. The labour intensive character of agro-processing industries in Kerala thus played an important role in the political consciousness-raising and radicalization in Kerala. It was not merely that radical political ideology was introduced to the labouring poor of Kerala and their receptivity to it but their working conditions and class consciousness generated and supported such ideological perspectives.

Households with one or more workers from an agro-processing industry became cells for politicization. The decentralization and spread of the industry to non-urban areas took this process to the countryside. It had as commented earlier, a leavening effect and contributed to the grass roots politicization of Kerala that is not commonly seen in other regions of India. We thus see in many ways a link between the space economy and political economy of labour-capital conflict in Kerala. The attraction of mercantile capital to Kerala for its availability of labour, transport systems that provide access to markets and the labour-capital conflict that ensued due to a particular mix of factors had then its consequences. Kerala industrialism became an element that fermented the politicization process to leaven the whole of Kerala.

We shall return to these themes later in the concluding chapter. Suffice to state here that the beedi industry experience in Kerala suggests that in the Indian context of the first half of the 20th century mercantile capital was mobile. It moved to places of cheap labour for investment and trade in labour intensive manufacture provided there was access to markets. The population density of Kerala was itself an ingredient for a market for a cheap commodity like beedi. But more important was the transport system of Kerala. This, as discussed in chapter four, was not merely the internal transport system of roads, railway and waterways but the many ports along Kerala's long coastline providing an ready access to coastal, Indian ocean and international trade. This is clearly evident in the case of beedi.

What was occurring is similar to what Frobel et al [1980] described as occurring at the global level in the 1960s and 1970s. At the global level what Frobel et al observed was a shift from labour import to capital export in western capitalism. In the Indian context of the first half of the 20th century labour import to the urban centres, particularly the major centres of Bombay, Calcutta etc was occurring while at the same time mercantile capital was seeking cheap labour in rural regions for its investment and trade in household manufacture. The latter had some continuity from pre-colonial times. We discussed in the last two chapters the structure and process of the involvement of mercantile capital in household manufacture, and the dynamics of continuity. The discussion also showed the operation of forced commerce in Kerala, and the strong features of mercantile capitalism that it embodies.

In the Kerala context, mercantile capital did not find labour as docile as it would have wished it to be and perhaps was in pre-colonial times. The pattern of decentralization and downsizing, to mute labour mobilization, had occurred in a number of industries as this study has demonstrated. This is capital's use of space in its efforts at resolution of the labour-capital conflict. But these strategies of capital failed to prevent labour mobilization. They have obvious but important implications for desakota. Kannan [1988] argues that this Kerala experience is not unique within the total experience of the Indian economy and society though he recognizes three important distinctions in the Kerala context. These are the historical timing, the nature of capital penetration of rural areas and the character of social change among the peasants and working class. But Kannan does not recognize the implications for the space economy and spatial order of the non-urban locations of the agro-processing industries. Only Isaac has given some recognition in seeing decentralization as a strategy of capital to circumvent the social limits on exploitation imposed by organized labour (1982. pPE13) and in suggesting that rural areas or villages in Kerala, known as gramam in Malayalam, be now called gragaram, as they have a mix of both urban and rural characteristics. (1986. p121)

This is in part a reflection of the inadequate attention paid to the space economy and spatial order in understanding Kerala. The implications of the capital-labour confrontation for the space economy have not been recognized. The symbiosis that developed between the space economy and the political economy in the context of these implications has not been taken cognizance of in the growing literature on Kerala. Local capital of the region and mercantile capital of the bigger Indian cities were attracted to Kerala to invest in labour intensive agro-processing industries because of economic geographical features of the region. These were the high population density and availability of labour in the coastal districts; the internal transport system of roads, railways and waterways; the number of ports of varying size and facilities that provided an access to coastal, Indian ocean and international trade and shipping traffic; high population densities generating a market for goods and services, economies of scale for collective consumption facilities for labour deployment and reproduction, and fairly evenly present in both urban and rural areas; and State policies on social welfare, especially education, health etc which facilitated equitable collective consumption facilities in both urban and non-urban areas.

But the very nature of the mercantile capital penetration of the Kerala countryside, and its manner of operation as forced commerce in agro-processing, constrained industrial advancement. But labour for reasons we noted in chapter one was not docile and capital-labour polarization and confrontation occurred. And this confrontation which began in the second quarter of the 20th century, in a milieu of social reformism, nationalism and arrival of radical ideology soon after the success of the Russian revolution, made the confrontation highly politicized and militant. The visibility of the confrontation has now made Kerala unattractive to capital of India.[10] This has aggravated the industrial backwardness of Kerala.

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10. See earlier discussion on this issue and references. (Mohan and Raman 1990 p17; Paul 1990a p576; Subramaniyam and Pillai 1986 p587-588; and Oommen 1981p78-82)

This study has by a descriptive analysis presented the mix of factors that have led to the presence of desakota in Kerala. The underpinning argument is that desakota is an organic and symbiotic part of this mix or constellation. The centrality of the political economy of capital-labour conflict in this mix and its relationship to space was also demonstrated. This chapter, together with the previous chapter, examined these factors in the context of two industries, concentrated in two districts or sub-regions of Kerala. Some quantitative data was presented in the case of the beedi industry in support of the arguments. We shall in the next chapter recapitulate these issues and present their significance in the study of Kerala space and society. In the process the characteristics of Kerala desakota and the significance of some of its variations from the McGee desakota hypothesis will be summed up and enunciated.

CHAPTER TEN

AFFIRMATION OF DESAKOTA IN KERALA

The significance of this study

As stated in chapter one, the basic objective of this study was to examine the extent to which the urban-rural fusion that was observable in Kerala was in fact desakota as delineated in the McGee hypothesis. This study reveals that nearly all the features of desakota characterized in the McGee hypothesis are present in Kerala. There are some variations, and some of them have significances that have been commented upon. These will be summed up later in this chapter. The term Kerala desakota has emerged in this study to denote desakota as present in Kerala with its few variations from the McGee model, and also to focus at the same time on some of the characteristics of the McGee desakota model that acquire importance and added significance in their Kerala manifestation.

This study has also attempted to make the presence of desakota in Kerala intelligible. In doing so it has avoided putting forward a totalizing explanation, or simplistic "why" for the many observable features of desakota in Kerala. But at the same time it was not merely an attempt at coding observations and data into the conceptual category of desakota. There was an effort to understand or make intelligible the specific conditions which gave rise to what is observed as desakota. A mix or constellation of factors, some with geological depth and synergic impact, were seen as relevant to make desakota in Kerala intelligible. The more

important among them was the political economy of labour-capital conflict and capital's use of space in this context.

This raised an important critique of the McGee desakota hypothesis. McGee in presenting and expanding the desakota hypothesis has so far seen little influence of the political economy. Economic, demographic and technological factors are the paramount factors. While the critical influence of these factors are recognized, the present study has shown the political economy intervening in the impact of these factors on spatial structures. It may be contended that in the specificity of Kerala, with its political, cultural and class structural context, the political economy becomes critical. Kerala's political economy has gained an international visibility because of radical mainstream politics, and achievements in social development in a context of low economic growth. But this does not make the intervention of the political economy in spatial structures unique to Kerala. Massey's work showed the importance of the political economy for spatial structures in theoretical terms and in practice in Britain. In the southeast Asian context one-party and/or authoritarian regimes are believed to have aided the efficiency of the market forces and the pace of economic growth. (Castells et al 1990. p168-70) Whether they have any implications for spatial structures including EMRs and desakota are yet to be addressed in McGee's work.

The present study then in establishing, examining and attempting to make intelligible, desakota in Kerala was at the same time an empirically informed analysis and evaluation of the McGee desakota hypothesis. In doing so it was in effect testing and sharpening the explanatory power and viability of the McGee desakota hypothesis. Subject to the criticisms just made the desakota hypothesis was found relevant in understanding the spatial structures of Kerala. As indicated in chapter one, the McGee hypothesis provided a conceptual hook to fathom and articulate the urban-rural fusion that was observable in Kerala. Applying the desakota hypothesis to Kerala provided a centralizing, logical and coherent framework of

analysis that demystified what was seen as the aberrant urbanization pattern of Kerala in the Indian context. This was particularly made clear in chapter five, where a survey of literature on Kerala urbanization revealed the problems scholars encountered in dealing with Kerala urbanization and how the desakota hypothesis helps to resolve some of the problems.

This also brings out the synthesis and re-interpretation efforts of this study. The examination of desakota in Kerala, as indicated earlier, was possible either at a macro or micro level of analysis, or as a third alternative as a comparative study. It was argued that a macro examination and analysis was a preliminary need in the case of Kerala desakota. This also facilitated the synthesis and re-interpretation of existing work on Kerala. It was shown that though perceptive, economic historical studies of Kerala failed to recognize the spatial factors. On the other hand, studies of urbanization did not adequately perceive the ways in which the space and production articulated with each other. The desakota hypothesis provided a medium to synthesize and re-interpret some of the findings of some economic history and urban studies of Kerala. In the process it also sought to establish some essential links between historical and analytical methods.

As shown in chapter five, the desakota hypothesis placed as it is within the urban-rural theoretical framework and formulated in the context of Asia, gives the Kerala experience meaning. This was both in theoretical terms and as part of a wider Asian experience. At the same time, the usefulness of the desakota hypothesis to understand the spatial structures of Kerala validated the conceptual and social relevance of the desakota hypothesis in the Asian context. The Kerala desakota experience with its historical depth also strongly supports the challenge inherent in the desakota hypothesis to the conventional Western model of urban transition.

The historical depth means largely the 20th century for which data supporting the presence of non-agricultural activity in non-urban areas was available and presented in this study. There is a need to make clear that the historical presence of non-agricultural activity in non-urban areas was intensified by the ways in which capital used space in its conflict with labour. We saw in chapters eight and nine that there was some incipient congregation and concentration of the coir and beedi industries in the urban localities of Alleppey and Cannanore respectively. But this very concentration of labour intensive industries together with other factors led to the emergence of organized labour and its eventual conflict with capital. Perhaps if labour organization and the ensuing labour-capital conflict had not occurred, the superimposition of the typical colonial spatial order of port cities/towns and administrative towns on the pre-colonial spatial order of Kerala might have occurred.[1]

1. It was outside the scope of this study to examine the character of the pre-colonial spatial order and cities in Kerala. The Sjoberg (1960) model of the pre-industrial city has been used to examine the urban history of some cities in north India. (Tiwari 1989) But as the discussion in chapter four would suggest the Sjoberg model is of little relevance for the Kerala pre-colonial port cities. To mention a few features of the Sjoberg model that are conspicuous by their absence in Kerala: The Kerala pre-colonial elite were non-urban; the artisans were, as was generally the case in pre-colonial India (Chaudhuri 1978. p79) not concentrated in cities; city architecture was not monumental; none of the cities had walls, (Joseph 1507. Vallanvanthara, Trans 1984. p153); forts built in or close to port and other cities and towns were an innovation following the entry of the European maritime powers into the geopolitics of the region in the 16th century. Even the temple-palace complex at Trivandrum was a late 18th century development, part of the efforts of the Travancore ruling house to legitimize their "kingship". And the Palace at Padbhanabapuram continued to be important and the Trivandrum temple-palace complex was far from the monumental character of Madurai, the temple-palace capital city of the Pandyans, a neighbouring Kingdom on other side of the Western Ghats. Simple elegance is a key element in the vernacular architecture of Kerala, as this comment on the Padmanabhapuram palace makes clear.

> Incidentally, the Thekke-kottaram, situated just outside the main building-complex of the Padmanabhapuram palace is made entirely of wood. Like any other secular or religious architecture in Kerala, they have simple, unpretentious exterior, though the interior with mural paintings and fine wood carvings, bears stamp of simplicity but elegance. (Sarkar 1978. p54)

An interesting essay by Ramanujan, using Tamil epic poems as source material highlights some of the features of the early south Indian port city of Nagapattinam and its distinction even from the temple-palace cities of the same region. (Ramanujan 1970) A key theme among the distinctions is that the outsider feels fells comfortable and welcome in the port city of Nagapattinam but in the temple-palace city of Madurai he is all the time made conscious of his outsiderness. There is the obvious need in a port city to welcome and encourage the presence of merchants, seamen etc from other lands both as visitors and to reside. This can be turned around and argued that the port city is the city of outsiders, and this is the reason an outsider is comfortable. This is supportive of the Polyani argument that early port cities were on the geographical and social periphery a country and not at its centre. It is important to note that Trivandrum was developed only as

As stated in chapter four one could argue that a conflict was perhaps emerging between a pre-colonial spatial order in Kerala, similar to that described by Polyani, and a spatial order of port cities and administrative towns typical of the British raj era. Desakota was seen in part as a resolution of this conflict in the Kerala context. Capital's use of space facilitated this resolution by intensifying the location of manufacturing in non-urban areas.

The characteristics of desakota in the McGee hypothesis and in Kerala

This study has demonstrated that most of the characteristics of desakota as delineated in the McGee hypothesis are present in Kerala with a few significant variations. Briefly, following the summary of desakota characteristics in chapter one, and what was presented in Parts one, two and three of this study the following observations can be made.

Demographic and agro-economic conditions

Almost the whole of Kerala lowlands and midlands are densely populated and its agro-economy characterized by small holder cultivation. The densities of the coastal districts as shown in Table 3.08 are close to one thousand persons per square kilometre. This is the primary condition listed by McGee for desakota to occur. (McGee 1990. p14) The significant variation from the McGee desakota model in terms of agro-economy is that not all of such agriculture is rice cultivation in Kerala. While rice remains an important crop there is a considerable amount of cash crops, most of them non-grain crops. In chapter three in the presentation of land use patterns in Kerala this was made clear. It was also emphasized that a number of the cash crops needed agro-processing and so created a non-agricultural sector. This sector remained labour intensive and linked to merchant capital. The factors contributing

a temple-palace city. Even though Trivandrum was close to the sea its roadstead port was never developed. It was Alleppey that was developed by the Travancore rulers as a port city.

to the absence of industrial capital or containing the transformation of merchant capital to industrial capital were discussed in chapter one. The extent to which non-agricultural activities were non-urban and became increasingly so due to the nature of the political economy of Kerala was of central concern in this study and will be summed up in some of the sub-sections that are to follow.

It was shown in chapter three that Kerala is distinct from other Indian States in that its land use pattern has largely confined agricultural employment to rice. It was then argued that Kerala is not merely "culturally" prepared, as McGee terms it, by rice cultivation to forms of non-agricultural activity, but it is "ecologically" prepared as well by its tree crops, particularly coconut, and to some extent cashew and forestry to generate non-agricultural employment in agro-processing. There is both a cultural and ecological fix by the land use pattern to influence the generation of non-agricultural activity in non-urban areas.

Transport infrastructure and mobility of commodities and people.

McGee in describing the conditions underlying the emergence of desakota observes:

> ..these regions are frequently characterized by a well developed infrastructure of roads and canals that allowed an intense movement of commodities and people. (1991a. p15)

He then goes on to emphasize:

> The desakota zones are generally characterized by extreme fluidity and mobility of population. The availability of relatively cheap transport such as two-stroke motor bikes, buses and trucks had facilitated relatively quick movement over longer distances than could be covered previously. Thus these zones are characterized not only by commuting to the larger urban centres but also by intense movement of peoples and goods and movement within the zones. (Ibid. p17)

These conditions were demonstrated in this study to be very much present in Kerala. The waterways, coastal and inland, were the traditional system of transport in Kerala. Beginning in the 19th century roads and railways augmented, and in a sense superseded the waterways. We noted that Kerala has the highest road density per square kilometre in India. In the context of mobility it is important to note that 98.2 percent of the population had a metalled road within two kilometres of their residence, and 97.9 percent had a bus stop also within two kilometres. (See Table 4.05) Kerala with these percentages of access to roads and public transport ranked number one among the Indian states on this score. The increase in two and three wheeler motor vehicles in recent decades was noted. The mobility of people and commodities on the south west coastal region of India was characterized by Nagaraj (1985) as the "mobile society", as reviewed in chapter five. The population density creates a need and facilitates such transport infrastructure. As noted in the context of services and collective consumption, population densities also provide economies of scale in the provision of services, including public transport.

Women's participation in the work force

In terms of the McGee desakota hypothesis there was increasing women's participation in non-agricultural activities. This has not occurred in Kerala, and certainly not in the manner envisaged in the McGee hypothesis, where increased women's participation in non-agricultural activities is linked to changing patterns of agricultural production. This refers to labour shedding that has accompanied the green revolution in some parts of Asia. Kerala agriculture is not regarded as a green revolution "success" story. In fact it has been characterized as agricultural stagnation by Kannan and Pushpangadan (1989 p1067; 1990 p1991)

Kerala desakota appears to be little associated with any increase in women's participation in non-agricultural activities. But this has some caveats. First, a number of industries that dominated Kerala industrialism, such as coir, cashew processing and in recent years beedi have increasingly used female labour. But due to the decline of some traditional household industries, (Eg: manual rice processing), which had high women's participation rates, the net effect had been overall a slight decline or stagnation in women's rate of participation in non-agricultural activity. Second, women's participation rates in the work force as discussed in chapter six are affected by the nature of census operations, census definition of work, under-enumeration of women's work etc. But most studies of Kerala economy and labour agree that women's participation rate in the work force declined in the 20th century. (Eg U.N. 1975) Table 6.1 showed a fluctuating women's participation rate in non-agricultural activity with overall a slight decline, if the recent decades are compared with the rate at the turn of this century. But the rate of decline may not be reliably established or agreed upon. In terms of absolute numbers however their has been a substantial increase in the number of women in the work force.

Data of two recent and comparable censuses of 1961 and 1981 reflect a slight decline (2.3 percent, see Table 6.05 in chapter six), over the period. There has however been some gains in women's labour participation rates in the service sector, notably in public adminstration, health and education. (See Table 6.05 in chapter six and Table 7.06 in chapter seven). These are however professional and white collar jobs and not the blue collar type of work that seems to characterize the increases that McGee observes in Southeast Asia.

Kerala desakota not a recent phenomenon

The increase in non-agricultural activities seen in the McGee desakota model as a recent occurrence does not appear to be so in Kerala desakota. Non-agricultural activities in

non-urban areas appear to have been present in Kerala prior to the second world war. There is a suggestion in the McGee hypothesis (1991a p12) that labour shedding accompanying the green revolution may be contributing to the emergence of desakota by the need for the displaced or underemployed agricultural labour to find alternate employment in the non-agricultural sector. As discussed the increasing participation of women in the non-agricultural work force too was seen as related to this issue.

It is interesting to note in this context that women's participation in the work force as agricultural labour has been constant and little or no decline had occurred over the whole of the 20th century. (U.N. 1975. p75; Also see Table 6.01) This suggests that in spite of the influence of radical ideologies and a matrilineal past, women appear to be employed in substantial numbers in poorly paid occupations.[2] For this study, this reiterates that the movement from agricultural to non-agricultural activity was not triggered in the Kerala case by changing production systems and technology.

Together with the linking of some features of the green revolution to desakota there is an implied suggestion that desakota is part of the new industrialism of the newly industrializing countries, including Malaysia and Thailand. The growth of factory employment disseminating is linked to the new international division of labour. Kerala has not experienced a green revolution but nonetheless there are some caveats. Just as much as the agrarian transition and the new agro-economy that is generated by the green revolution have implications for the space economy, it would appear that the colonial agro-economy had implications for desakota in Kerala. This was intensified by capital's use of space, following its

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2. It has been observed that the most pernicious task in cashewnut processing of removing the outer skin of the nut, with health hazards for the fingers was very often assigned to the Pulaya women, (Beevi 1978 p21) suggesting a triple oppression of women, in terms class, caste and gender. Though the position of women in Kerala, relative to other regions of India may be better, gender inequities are apparently present, in spite of the influence of Marxist ideologies and a matrilineal past.

confrontation with labour. This was unique to the Kerala context. This blurs the profile of the desakota as part of the spatial phenomenon accompanying the new international division of labour in the newly industrializing countries in Southeast and East Asia.

To elaborate the Kerala experience, the colonial industrial response in Kerala described in chapter seven may be interpreted as a mix of proto-industrialism and a colonial agro-economy textured by a local context of ecology, historical geography of land ownership, land use patterns, exposure to maritime trading, and transport facilities. While plantations and typical colonial British mercantile interests were operative, there was at the same time extensive small and petty producer participation both in cash crop cultivation and agro-processing. There was then a colonial agro-economy and an agrarian transition that included a mix of the typical colonial plantation economy with British capital and migrant labour in the highlands and at the same time participation by the local populace in the cultivation of cash crops along with rice, and agro-processing industries in the lowlands and midlands. The capital for these activities as we noted in Part II was a mix of British, Indian and local (Kerala) but all predominantly mercantile in character.

These characteristics of what was termed as Kerala industrialism are part of the 19th and 20th century industrial response in Kerala to the changing international, national and regional economies and markets of the period. The character of Kerala as a region described in Part I, particularly the mix of demographic, ecological, historical geographical and economic historical factors, influenced this industrial response. This response was part of the social changes of the period discussed in Part I. An integral part of this mix is the spatial order characterized by the dominating presense of desakota. The dynamics of the desakota region influenced the industrial response and was in turn reinforced by the nature of the industrial response, and the emerging characteristics of Kerala industrialism.

McGee identifies a mix of economic activity within the same household. The nature of the colonial economy brought about this mix in colonial Kerala, and increasingly so from the 1930s when capital's use of space and its conflict with labour, intensified non-agricultural activity in non-urban areas. Indeed in the two case studies we observed the household with members in a mix of occupations acting as a cell for the transmission of information and ideologies that facilitated the spread of organized labour, class consciousness, labour militancy etc from one occupational group and culture to another. The leavening referred to of the countryside or desakota regions with political and social consciousness was in part the result of the action these "bacterial cells".

Mix of agriculture and non-agriculture

The intensive use of land with agriculture and household industries existing side by side as characterized in the McGee desakota hypothesis was observable in Kerala desakota. Kerala also had various small scale industries, in fluctuating importance as described in Parts II and III. This was part of the character of Kerala industrialism. The non-household non-factory type of production units being the mainstream of the production system in Kerala was noted in chapter seven. This does not alter the fundamental character of the mix of agriculture and non-agriculture in Kerala, a feature central to the desakota hypothesis.

As discussed in chapter four, in spite of a significant percent of rural non-agricultural activity being present the urban ratio was low. What this signifies is that rural non-agricultural is not concentrated in rural pockets and/or peri-urban regions but scattered through out the rural coastal or lowland and midland areas. This is a clear and unequivocal demonstration of the presence of desakota in Kerala. It also demonstrates the even spatial mix and spread of agricultural and non-agricultural activity in lowland and midland Kerala. For as argued in chapter four any concentration of non-agricultural activity in any rural settlement that makes

75 percent the male workforce to be in non-agriculture instantly makes that settlement urban. The other criteria of urban in India, density and size being met in all rural settlements of lowland and midland Kerala. It was also argued that this spatial spread and even mix was indicative of desakota in Kerala not being a dependent variable of the urban system in Kerala. Desakota and the urban system in Kerala were seen as being in symbiosis.

It is possible to speculate that these features of the Kerala desakota, particularly the predominance of non-household, non-factory production units in non-agricultural activity, may have a capacity to absorb or be absorbed into technologically advanced industrialism, if this were to occur in Kerala. The point that is being suggested is that Kerala desakota may have a capacity to persist even in the event of industrial advancement. Desakota can be viewed by some as a phase, and the Taiwan trends have been used to support this view. (McGee 1991a p19) Desakota in Kerala, Java and Sri Lanka has been seen as accompanying low economic growth and productivity, particularly in the industrial sector. This type of desakota in the emerging literature on desakota may earn the characterization of backyard desakota, to distinguish it from the high profile desakota associated with the mega-urban regions and the success of economic growth in many parts of Southeast and East Asia. And if we are to believe the emerging research on desakota in Southeast Asia, by the trends presented visually in slide shows, soon desakota may extend from a mix of agriculture and non-agriculture to agriculture, non-agriculture and golf courses ! There is in such documentation an unconscious use or recognition of visible elitism as an indicator of economic growth or development.[3]

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3. This is in contrast to Kerala where I failed to see a single golf course, though I am informed one exists in Trivandrum, and possibly in Cochin too. Being sparse they apparently do not have the visibility that seems to obtain in Southeast Asia. In Sri Lanka a golf course was done away to make room for social housing. It is perhaps a reflection of the relative effectiveness of the democratic political systems in South Asia, particularly in the southwest, that the political leaders were relatively more humanitarian managers of the system.

The corollary to backyard or backward desakota is that it may disappear if and when industrial advancement takes place. In the Kerala context however this may not occur. The point being suggested or speculated here is that the non-household, non-factory type of production units, which as we noted in chapter seven is the mainstream manufacturing system in Kerala, might facilitate the continuity of desakota even in the context of industrial advancement. If flexible production or capitalism is the wave of the future, Kerala industrialism may have adaptability by virtue of the small scale or non-household, non-factory character of its production system.

The view that desakota in Kerala, Sri Lanka and Java is in part a spatial expression of the survival strategies of people in densely populated regions with inadequate economic opportunities, is difficult to dispute. But an alternate interpretation, particularly appropriate to Kerala and Sri Lanka is that desakota may also be in part a spatial expression or effects of growth with equity. This interpretation has a sense of fit with the ideological world view that is germane to Kerala and Sri Lanka, with Marxist radicalism as part of mainstream politics for the last five to six decades. [4] The earlier view is not only underpined by economistic measurement tones, but has nuances of a western world view that places the urban as the good life, the repository of the material advances of culture and society. Those who are caught half way are only in transit, in a phase that has to pass. The traditional Indian view of nagara as a repository of the great tradition has shades of the same view, but city life is seen more as an opulent life than a good life. In Mughal India the Muslim tradition encouraged urban elitism and portrayed it in positive terms. The court at Delhi became a model for

4. Marxian radical politics was textured into parliamentary democracy and multi-party electoral politics in both Kerala and Sri Lanka for a number of decades. (The orthodox Marxists however have been critical of this trend and see it as the abandonment of revolutionary goals by the Marxist Political parties and capitulation to bourgeois politics). The mix of democracy and socialism may be seen as low income developing countries' parallel of the Scandinavian experience. Newspaper literacy and the presence of a strong and robust press in the vernacular languages are an important feature in the functioning of the democracies in this region of south Asia. There has however been an erosion of this in Sri Lanka during the 1980s in the context of the ethno-political violence and the stringent and miltaristic State measures to contain it.

princely states and their capitals and courts. (Spodek 1975. p421 and p424). But equally importantly Brahmins, the traditional caste elite as predominantly rural residents and a Sanskrit literati, were counter players. And there is in the Indian context no associated notion of the urban transition where most of the rural population would eventually transit to become urban. In addition in the Kerala context as we noted in chapter four urban was on the social and geographical periphery.

Cultural and ecological factors

Within the ambit of cultural and ecological factors there are two features that this study revealed as important. First, the dispersed settlement pattern as argued in chapter four had some impact on social perceptions. It made urban and non-urban residential landscape indistinct. We also noted that the emerging urban residential landscape of 20th century India, modeled on the British raj bungalow and compound was not very different from the dispersed homestead settlement pattern that exists in Kerala. This again had some impact on social perceptions. We also noted that due to the settlement pattern and population density there was no "village" in Kerala in terms of a social unit, perceived morphology or popular conception. The village for data collection etc was the revenue village, a mere administrative entity.

Somewhat allied to these issues is that Kerala desakota appears to be less of a grey zone, where urban statutory regulations cannot be applied, than suggested in the McGee hypothesis. Declining powers of the Municipal authorities on the one hand and increasing power of the State in framing and implementing regulations may be influencing this trend. A literate and politically articulate population, as we noted in reviewing Acharaya's (1987) study of land use patterns and regulations in Trichur, may be also a factor.

Secondly we noted the significance of the cultural economic institution of forced commerce. This contributed by its many layers of traders to non-agricultural activity in non-urban areas. But more importantly it facilitated the linking of merchant capital, petty and small scale producers. This was both in economic and spatial terms. It also provided a cultural economic institution that facilitated capital to use space in its efforts to combat labour.

Integrated and transactive environment

The economic linkages within the desakota region, another characteristic delineated by the McGee model is of course, as emphasized in this study strongly present in Kerala. We noted in chapter four the absence of primacy and/or a strong central urban system in Kerala. This reinforced and increased intra-desakota dynamics in Kerala. A criticism that this study raised of the McGee desakota' hypothesis, is that in the development of the desakota hypothesis over the period 1984 to 1991 there was a declining emphasis on the importance of the intra-dynamics of desakota regions. Together with McGee's later expansion of the desakota hypothesis to include mega-urban and/or extended metropolitan regions, there is the danger of grey areas building up between the concepts of peri-urban, satellite towns etc on the one hand and desakota on the other.

A fundamental distinction between the desakota hypothesis and concepts of peri-urban etc which was emphasized in chapter one is that while the latter concepts are largely morphological in character and construct, desakota articulates the relationship between space and production, space and economy. Attention was drawn in chapter one, to this as a common theme that runs through McGee's desakota hypothesis, Harvey's work on capital and space and Doreen Massey's geological model of spatial structures and labour. This takes us finally to a core theme of this study, the significance of the relationship between space and production.

Space and production

We see the importance of the relationship between space and production in Kerala desakota. We noted in this study that capital intensification of production as a resolution of labour-capital conflict was constrained by a number of factors in Kerala, and also pre-empted by organized labour, sometimes with luddite ferocity. But the presence of mobility and spread of collective consumption facilities enabled a localized spatial fix within Kerala. The spatial fix led to the intensification of non-agricultural activity in the non-urban areas, already made less distinct from the urban by the many dimensions of minimal differentiation in the Kerala lowlands and midlands. This is the Kerala manifestation of the time-space collapse that McGee articulates as an important factor of desakota.

Thus capital's use of space among its strategies to de-organize labour enhanced desakota in Kerala. This enabled us not only to make Kerala desakota a little more intelligible, but showed us the other side of the coin, the significance of space in the political economy of Kerala. As argued in this study the desakota hypothesis by articulating the relationship between space and production laid bare an important and hitherto under emphasized facet of Kerala economy and society, the relationship between space and political economy.

With the movement of production to the non-urban areas, organized labour too moved to the non-urban, though this was unanticipated by capital. This eventually leavened the non-urban areas, and so spread a social and political consciousness in such areas. We also saw in this context that the barricades of the caste reform movement were not dismantled, and its ethos dissolved, with the victory and entry of the *avarana* castes, the once allegedly ritually unwashed, to the insides of the temples. We saw that there was a positive transference

of this ethos to the economic theatre. And in a true Brechtian sense the multitude had advanced to the footlights.[5]

In the theatre of the political economy of Kerala, labour, production and space have been important actors, but the importance of space went unnoticed. This study in examining desakota in Kerala, has shown the importance of space. The desakota hypothesis prised open the relationship between space and production. Capital's use of space, and the spatial factor in the spread of trade unionism and political consciousness-raising in the countryside, illuminates the political economy of Kerala and iterates that geography matters in understanding Kerala. This is a contribution that this study makes towards an understanding of Kerala economy and society, apart from the application of the desakota hypothesis to demystify Kerala spatial order, and the examination of Kerala desakota that helps to measure and enhance the relevance and validity of the desakota hypothesis for an understanding of Asian space and society.

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5. One is tempted to portray this metaphorically as the transformation of the rituals of Kerala's traditional Kathakali dance drama to Brechtian theatre, the tearing asunder of the sacred and the profane perceptions and world views and replacing it with holistic secularization. The advancement of the socially and economically underprivileged and disadvantaged to the foot lights, and audience participation in the Brechtian sense. In a sense this was echoed when Sri Narayana Guru's slogan of "one caste, one religion, one God" was transformed by the working class activists to "no caste, no religion, no God." The audience changing the chant of the chorus leader ! The "one caste, one religion, one God" slogan of Sri Narayana Guru has to be contextually understood. It does not include an attempt to make Hinduism monotheist. When Sri Narayana Guru erected a statue of Siva, the Brahmins denounced it as sacrilegious, for they claimed that only Brahmins can erect and sanctify the statue of Siva. Sri Narayana Guru' answer was, "This is a Ezhava Siva"! To this the Brahmins had no reply. From this incident flowed a controversy and in a sense the slogan "one God, one religion, one caste" may seem related. But it had a deeper Hindu philosophical meaning. If the ultimate reality is Brahma, the one beyond all distinctions, the distinctions and ethics of the phenomenal world are relative and can be changed. "One caste, one religion, one God" could then become central to a vedantic world view. And logically, if social barriers constrained one from his true avocation, it was the person's karma to overcome them. And for karma yoga (path of action) one of Sri Narayana Guru's sutra was "Strengthen through organization, liberate through education" (Nataraja Guru 1968; Issac and Tharakan 1986b p8) In the context of the importance of organized labour and literacy in Kerala political economy and society, and the charisma of Sri Narayana Guru, this sutra takes on contextual significance. It also shows that the concept of karma does not necessarily involve a fatalistic world view, the opposite of the Protestant ethos. Such a perception is a Eurocentric understanding seen for example in Myrdal's work. (Myrdal 1968. See Goonetileke [1978] for a critique of Myrdal's Eurocentrism). See Nataraja Guru (1968) for a discussion of the Vedanta philosophical base of Sri Narayana Guru's teachings

Geographical perspectives

This study while emphasizing that geography matters in understanding Kerala had an associated motif of the geographical perspective being sensitive to the indigenous perception of space. The very use of an Asian vernacular in the neologism of desakota was for McGee dictated by the need to be sensitive to Asian vernacular perceptions and terminology.

> The use of Indonesian terms to describe these processes is deliberately adopted. The language and concepts of Western Social Science have dominated the analysis of Third World societies leading to a form of 'knowledge imperialism'. There is a need to develop terms and concepts in the language of the Third World which more accurately reflect the conditions of their societies. It is natural that these terms should be borrowed and utilized by Western Social Science. (McGee 1987. p46 f1)

It was argued in Chapter one, that Issac (1986) writing in Malayalam and coining the word gragaram in a manner almost identical to McGee's coining of desakota, vindicated McGee's position. Issac did this independently, unaware of McGee's desakota hypothesis which was then yet to appear in print. McGee's call for Western Social Sciences to be sensitive to non-western perceptions and conceptualizations and to use vernacular terminologies was thus justified. It is was suggested that there was an organic intellectual character in the conceptualization and use of the term gragaram in a Malayalam publication. It was also indicated in chapter one of this study, that though with little claim to an insider's view of desakota this study shall nonetheless be sensitive to the perception of social space that is indigenous to the region. This was in some ways an unintended response to Sopher's call nearly two decades ago.

> What is missing in the Indian geographic tradition is the dweller's perception, one that is present as an integral element in human geography in much of the West. This need not be the geography of places as the natives themselves conceive it, such as some current research is trying to recover. It should be a geography in which the popular landscape symbols, mental maps and "sense of place" of the dwellers, that is the folk ecosystemic models, are made to interact with and become incorporated in the intellectual constructs of

> strangers and outsiders. This is what we sometimes find in the best regional geographies of an earlier European generation. (Sopher 1973. p112)

The prescription Sopher offered was that South Asian geography should become more "South Asian", and cease to see South Asia with Western eyes. (Ibid p133) In a sense McGee echoes this in a recent paper, but also seems to imply that geography as a discipline has not shed Eurocentrism (McGee 1991b) If this is so the quest to incorporate local knowledge and local perceptions into geography as a discipline then becomes a problematic exercise. This is in a sense exemplified in this study. In spite of the recognition and effort to be sensitive to local or indigenous perceptions and knowledge and using a neologism in an Asian vernacular there is little that qualifies to make it a geography that is "South Asian" in the manner that Sopher and McGee suggest. This is because the basic paradigm within which the vernacular neologism is placed, urban-rural distinctions, has adapted Western categories of social space.

This is not to deny that there is no local perception or construct of city and countryside in the South Asian, South Indian or Kerala context. But the manner in which the paradigm has been developed and universalized is based on Western categories of analysis. Sopher argued that in "South Asian geography, the dweller is often made stranger by the conventions of the prevailing paradigm." (1973 p126). Is the Kerala dweller a stranger in the basic paradigm of urban-rural distinctions ? Or has the desakota hypothesis within this basic paradigm created a space that is organic to the Kerala dweller ?

The desakota hypothesis has created a middle space and a mutation of the urban-rural dichotomy that is Asian in character. A space that is largely characterized by the fusion of urban and rural characteristics. It also questions the conventional urban transition model based on the western experience which is part of the basic urban-rural paradigm and analysis. But the urban and rural characteristics that are in fusion are from the basic paradigm of urban-rural distinctions. Nonetheless the desakota hypothesis challenges the urban-rural dichotomy in a

more fundamental sense than suggesting a morphological elasticity that an urban-rural continuum recognizes with concepts such as peri-urban. The Asian vernacular term reinforces the strong Asian evidence for desakota. And this evidence is presented, for instance in this study, in spite of the basic units of data collection in Censuses etc for socio-spatial categorization being in terms of the basic urban-rural paradigm.

But in spite of these features it is yet difficult to claim that this study has incorporated a dweller's or indigenous perception of space and places. Sopher points out that "an Indian geographer on home ground may prefer to play the stranger in his writing, while the stranger from abroad seeks to simulate the dweller's perceptions" (Ibid p115). But an Indian geographer has sometimes to traverse linguistic, cultural and class boundaries. The author for instance lived from childhood among the Sinhalese; spoke Sinhalese fluently and is reasonably literate as well; had many and close friends and relatives (by marriage) among the Sinhalese. All this gave the author an intimate awareness, appreciation of, and affection for, the Sinhalese-Buddhist cultural space. But yet among this milieu my otherness remains. And this very life among the Sinhalese meant the wearing away of the roots in the ethno-cultural space of the Tamils and their geographical domains in Sri Lanka and South India. There was a process of alienation and marginalization. A process that in fact began many generations ago.

This marginal position was intensified by a Sri Lankan urban middle class life style which was shared only by a small section of the population. And within this space, which included urban middle class of Sinhalese and other ethnic groups, one is designated "Colombo Tamil". This epithet signifies from the generic Tamil perception, the alienated Tamils and in the current political context with undertones as the collaborators with the Sinhalese. And for the Sinhalese, the Colombo Tamils are part of the others who have carved a niche in their primate city. And this group of Colombo Tamils itself is dissected into Jaffna Tamils, Batticaloa Tamils, Colombo Chetty etc. There was eventually hardly a space where my

otherness was not with me. This is not something unique. The need to constantly bear the cross of otherness is something that is experienced by members of many minority groups all over the world. The author's otherness is always with him. There is not even a ghetto to retreat into and lose the otherness in South Asia or for that matter in this planet. A visit while once in India to the Coromandel port town of Cuddalore from where my ancestors are believed to have left three centuries ago for Colombo, failed to produce the desideratum in cultural space. The Tamil I spoke had a mix of refinement and archaism that established me as a stranger.

A dweller's perception, or an organic intellectual position, thus not come by easily to all Indian or South Asian geographers, and particularly to diasporic South Asians like the author. The need to be rooted in one's cultural space and be bilingual is important. The latter in one's native language and a Western language that provides access to the literature in geography. There are many who are placed in this position. Thomas Issac is a case in point. As a Malayalee intellectual and political activist living in Kerala, on the faculty of the Centre for Development Studies and active in the Peoples Science Movement in Kerala and India, moving among trade unionists, workers and students, and articulate in both Malayalam and English, he was correctly located to articulate a dweller's and organic intellectual's perception of social space. Such a perception is not facultative to the author. The author's perception may on the other hand be influenced by his marginal and alienated position. This may have meant the advantage of being close enough but yet having an outsider's overview. Such a perception is not without merits in academic work of an anthropological or geographical nature. But it is difficult to claim it as a dweller's view, or an organic intellectual's perception, from the ethno-cultural space of the Malayalees or Sinhalese.

The quest for a South Asian dweller's perception in a discipline that allegedly has Eurocentric categories of analysis in some ways seems to suggest that an Indocentric

perception can be a corrective influence. Dweller's perception needs to be incorporated into the intellectual constructs in geography. But there is a weakness in balancing Eurocentrism with Indocentrism, for they are but two sides of the same coin, just as academic imperialism and academic chauvinism are two sides of the same coin. (Gunatileke 1975) And this is related to the question of representation. As Spivak states:

> ...the idea of the disenfranchised speaking for themselves, or the radical critics speaking for them; this question of representation, self-representation, representing others, is a problem. On the other hand we cannot put it under the carpet with demands for authentic voices; we have to remind ourselves that, as we do this, we might be compounding the problem even as we are trying to solve it. (Spivak 1990. p63)

What this study has attempted is to examine the specific conditions that gave rise to desakota in Kerala. And this meant weaving together features of Kerala's political economy, culture and history to bring out the regional geography of Kerala that makes desakota intelligible. There may be a conflict between the richness of the specificities or contextual thickness and the universality that the desakota hypothesis seeks in the Asian context. But it is this balancing or tug of war that is important and not one between Eurocentric and Indocentric perspective. Any emphasis on universality or theorizing should not inhibit understanding of the specifics. For instance the labour-capital conflict is a reality in the political economy of Kerala. Any attempt to link this to a mode of production theorization should not inhibit our understanding of the specifics of the labour-capital conflict. This study in examining desakota in Kerala was also sensitive to the peculiarities of time in the sense that in seeking to make desakota intelligible, it attempted to relate it to historical specificities, as it attempted to relate to local specificites.

At the same time local specificities, perspectives and perception was seen to be integrative and not separatist. As Edward Said observes in his forward to Selected Subaltern Studies edited by Guha and Spivak (1988):

> For if subaltern history is construed to be only a separatist enterprise - much as early feminist writing was based on the notion that women had a voice or room of their own, entirely separate from the masculine domain - then it runs the risk of just being a mirror opposite the writing whose tyranny it disputes. It is also likely to be exclusivist, as limited, provincial and discriminatory in its suppressions and repressions as the master discoures of colonialism and elitism. In fact, as Guha shows, the subaltern alternative is an integrative knowledge, for all the gaps, the lapses and ignorances of which it is so conscious. (p-viii)

This study may not qualify for dweller's perception, or a perception that is organic to the region. But it has sought to use knowledge that is both local and external to sketch a regional geography of Kerala that seeks to make desakota intelligible. It seeks to be also integrative in another sense, a modest effort to fill in the gap between the studies of urbanization of Kerala and its economic history; between studies of Kerala's space and political economy and to inform that geography matters in understanding Kerala.

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Appendix 1.01

Work force by sectors and regions aand population and population density by regions: Italy 1987

Regions	Work Force-Percent			Population	
	Agr:	Ind:	Ser:	'000	Km2
Piemonte	8.8	41.4	49.9	4377	172
Valle D'Aosta	10.4	27.1	62.5	114	35
Lombardia	3.8	44.2	52.0	8886	372
Trentino Alto Adige	11.7	25.4	62.9	882	65
Bolzano - Bozen	15.1	21.5	63.4	437	59
Trento	8.1	29.1	62.2	445	72
Veneto	9.8	39.0	51.1	4375	238
Friuli Venezia Giulia	6.7	32.3	61.0	1210	154
Liguria	5.7	24.4	70.0	1750	323
Emilia Romagna	11.9	36.2	51.9	3924	177
Toscana	6.5	37.3	56.2	3568	155
Umbria	10.1	31.7	57.8	818	97
Marche	11.9	38.6	49.6	1429	147
Lazio	6.0	19.4	74.4	5137	299
Abruzzi	15.3	27.9	56.9	1258	117
Molise	27.1	24.6	48.4	335	75
Campania	14.5	23.1	62.4	5732	422
Puglia	20.0	24.9	55.2	4043	209
Basilicata	22.9	27.9	49.3	622	62
Calabria	19.8	19.8	60.3	2147	142
Sicilia	16.8	20.7	62.5	5141	200
Sardegna	13.8	22.9	63.3	1651	69
ITALY	10.4	32.3	57.4	57399	191

Source: ISTAT (Instituto Centrale i Statistica/Central Statistical Insitute. Rome 1988.

Appendix 3.01

Agricultural workforce in Kerala by sub-categories: 1981

Agricultural Production by Type and/or Crop	Males Percent	Females Percent	Total Percent
Cereals, pulses, oil seeds, sugar cane & fibre crops [a]			
Cultivators	22.1	4.0	26.1
Agricultural Labourers	33.6	22.7	56.4
Sub-total	55.8	26.7	82.4
Plantation agriculture			
Tea	1.0	1.2	2.2
Coffee	0.3	0.1	0.4
Rubber	0.4	0.2	0.5
Pepper	0.2	0.0	0.2
Cardamoms	0.4	0.3	0.7
Coconut	1.7	0.1	1.9
Others	3.3	0.3	3.6
Sub-total	8.0	2.5	10.5
Other Agriculture	0.2	0.0	0.2
Livestock	0.5	0.2	0.7
Agricultural Services	1.1	0.2	1.2
Forestry	0.5	0.0	0.5
Fishing	4.2	0.2	4.4
Sub-total	6.5	0.5	6.9
Total	70.3	29.7	100.0
Total `000	2863	1213	4076

Source: Census of India 1981, Series 10 Kerala; Tables B-3, B-7, B-12 & B-17; p160-161, p516-517, p599-600 & p951.

Notes

[a] Oil seeds does not include coconuts. Fibre crops are raw cotton, jute, mesta, sunhemp, and kindred crops (Ibid p21-22)

Appendix 3.02

Kerala and selected Tamilnadu districts in rank order in terms of rural population density: 1901-1981

Districts	Rank Order								
	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981
01 Alleppey (K)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
02 Ernakulam (K)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3
03 Trivandrum (K)	5	4	3	3	3	3	3	2	2
04 Trichur (K)	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	5
05 Kanya Kumari[b]	6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4
06 Thanjavur (T)	4	6	6	6	6	7	7	8	9
07 Quilon (K)	11	10	10	10	7	6	6	6	6
08 Chengalpat (T)	7	7	7	7	8	11	11	12	13
09 Cannanore (K)	9	9	9	9	9	8	8	7	7
10 Palghat (K)	8	8	8	8	10	9	9	9	8
11 Kottayam (K)	12	12	12	11	11	10	10	10	11
12 Kozhikode (K)	10	11	11	12	12	12	12	11	10
13 Malapuram (K)	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	12
14 Wayanad (K)	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
15 Idukki (K)	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15

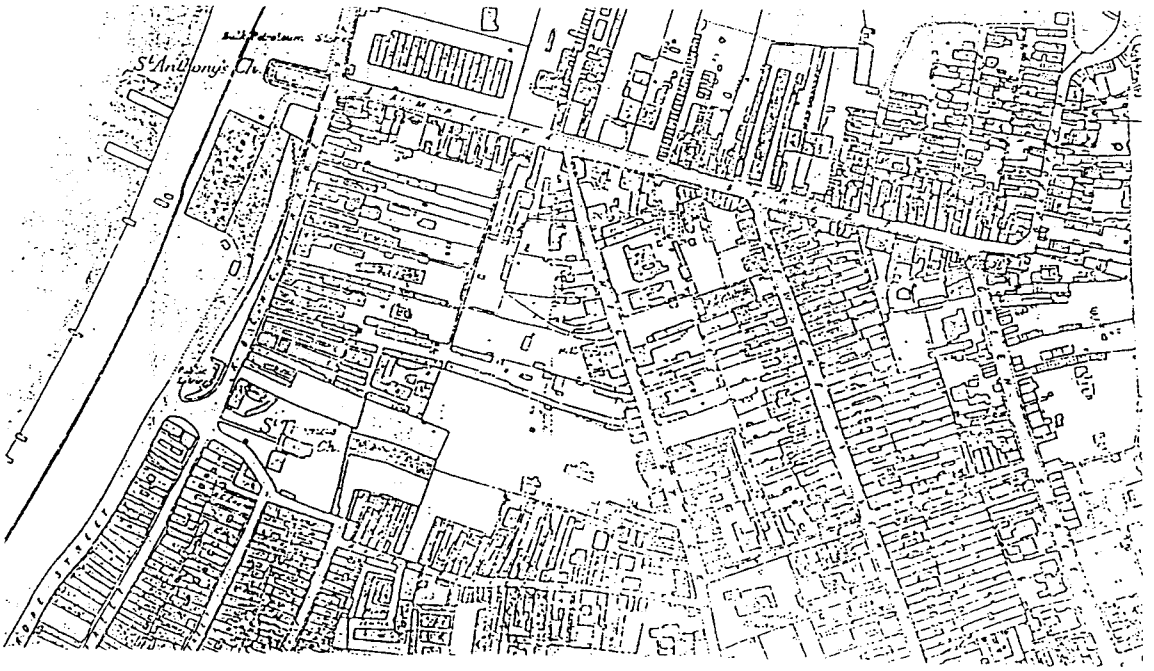
Source: Table 3.10 of Chapter Three.

Notes

[a] K - Kerala District. T - Tamilandu District.

[b] Kanya Kumari was part of Travancore (Kerala) until 1956. Since 1956 it a district in Tamilnadu.

SOUTH ASIAN INNER COURTYARD/STREET HOUSES (A) AND BUNGALOW (B) TYPE HOUES GROUND PLANS



A - Inner Courtyaard Street Houses in the old residential areas of Colombo North. (Jampettah Street, Hill Street, New Chetty Street, Green Street etc)

B - Bungalow Type Houses in new residential areas in Colombo South. (Ward Place, Horton Place etc)

Source: Colombo Town Survey 1905-06. Sri Lanka National Archives Microfilm 84/18.

APPENDIX 4.02

Kerala 1981: Standard Urban Areas and Urban Agglomerations

Core City/Town		Standard Urban Areas				Urb Agglomerations		
		Outer Towns		Rural	Total	Outer Towns		Total
Name	'000	Nos	'000	'000	'000	Nos	'000	'000
Cannanore	61	8	189	Nil	250	5	96	158
Tellicherry	76	3	77	Nil	153	1	23	99
Badagara	64	Nil	Nil	58	122	[b]	[b]	[b]
Kozhikode	394	4	152	144	690	4	152	547
Palghat	111	1	7	72	190	1	7	118
Guruvayur	18	[a]	[a]	[a]	[a]	2	42	59
Trichur	80	10	160	10	250	5	90	170
Cochin	552	7	216	179	947	3	134	685
Kottayam	64	Nil	Nil	76	140	[b]	[b]	[b]
Alleppey	170	1	21	10	201	[b]	[b]	[b]
Chan'cherry	52	Nil	Nil	21	73	[b]	[b]	[b]
Kayamkulam	61	Nil	Nil	19	80	[b]	[b]	[b]
Quilon	138	4	121	104	363	1	30	168
Trivandrum	499	1	21	134	653	1	21	520

Source: Census of India 1981. Series 10 Kerala. Part II-A
Tables A-4 (p137-142) and A-5 (p184-197)

Notes
[a] Not deemed to be a Standard Urban Area by Census.
[b] Not deemed to be an Urban Agglomeration.
[c] Cities/Towns are listed on their North-South location.

APPENDIX 4.03

Kerala: Consumer Expenditure (Monthly) classified by categories as percentage of Total Expenditure (Monthly) by Urban and Rural in different years between 1967 and 1983

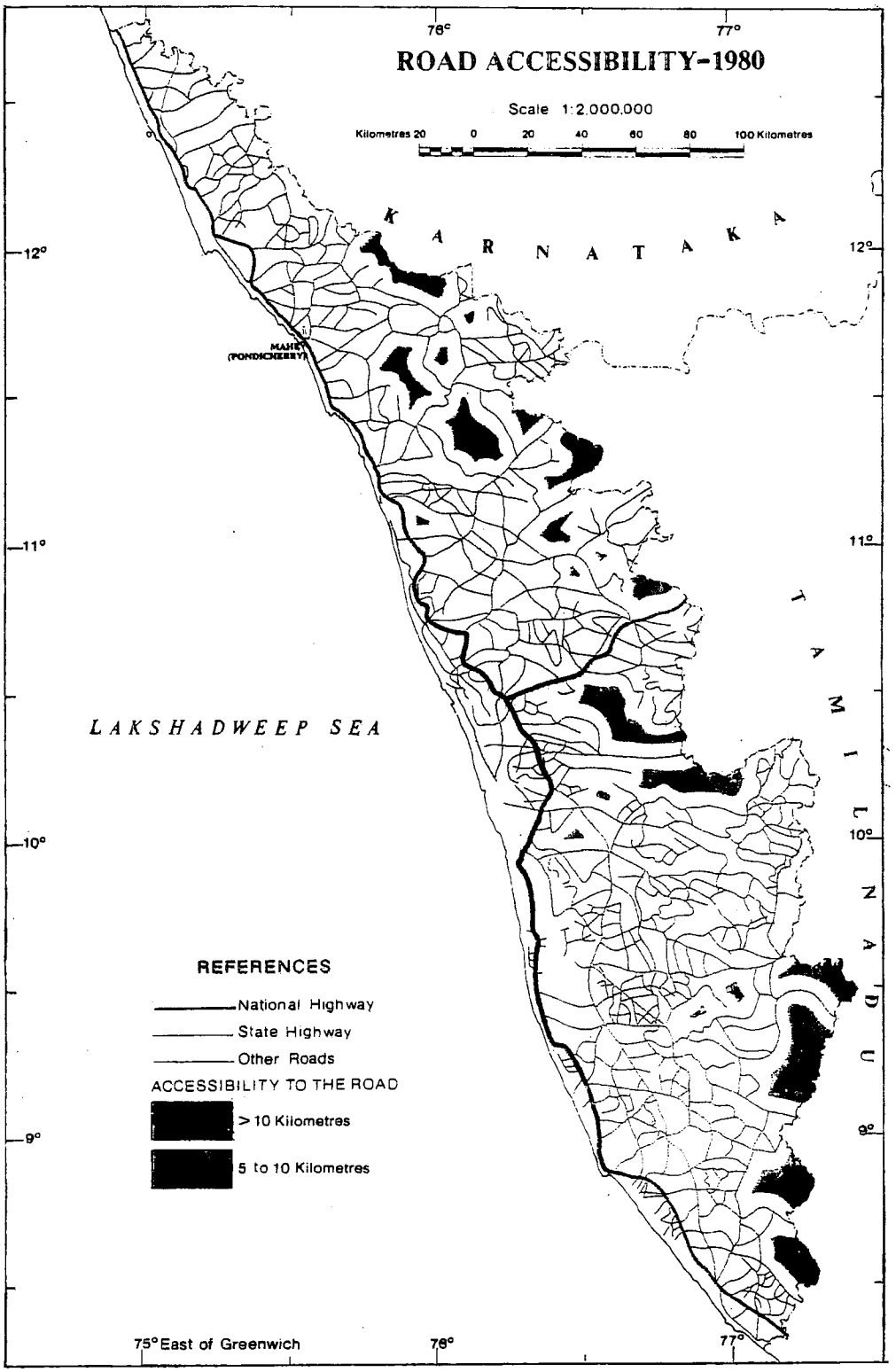
Expenditure Categories	Rural				Urban			
	1967 1968	1972 1973	1977 1978	1983	1967 1968	1972 1973	1977 1978	1983
Food Items								
Cereals	24.2	23.7	32.0	34.3	19.5	20.2	24.8	26.0
Gram	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.1
Cereal Subs	1.6	2.8	5.5	5.8	0.4	1.3	2.2	2.5
Pulses	1.6	1.5	1.3	0.9	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.6
Milk & Prds	4.1	4.1	3.6	3.4	5.1	5.3	5.4	5.4
Edible Oil	2.7	2.1	1.9	2.1	2.9	2.5	2.2	2.4
Meat etc [a]	6.2	5.4	4.6	4.5	6.6	5.8	5.2	4.8
Vegetables	2.8	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.8	2.4	2.2	2.2
Fr & Nts [b]	5.6	5.2	4.3	4.4	5.5	5.6	4.3	4.6
Sugar	2.0	2.0	2.5	2.8	1.9	2.2	2.9	3.3
Salt, Spices	4.6	3.5	3.1	3.1	2.2	3.2	2.5	2.9
Bev: Etc	8.1	8.2	9.5	10.4	10.5	11.3	12.7	15.0
Sub-Total	61.7	61.2	70.5	74.1	59.4	61.6	66.3	71.0
Non-food Items								
Tobacco Etc	3.1	3.4	3.7	4.0	0.2	2.9	3.4	3.1
Fl, Ltg [c]	5.8	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.8	6.3	5.5	6.1
Clothing	6.7	7.5	4.2	4.1	8.1	7.0	5.0	3.8
Footwear	0.7	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.9	0.5	0.3	0.2
Misc: Goods	16.4	15.2	13.3	11.8	19.7	14.8	16.8	15.9
Durable Gds	5.9	6.8	2.2	0.0	3.7	7.1	2.8	0.0
Sub-Total	38.3	39.0	29.5	25.9	40.6	38.4	33.7	29.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: K.P.Sunny's draft M.Phil Dissertation (Jawaharlal Nehru University) "Consumer Behaviour in Kerala: 1966-1983" p26. I am indebted to K.P.Sunny for the courtesy of allowing me to use these tabulations. His sources were the National Sample Survey, Rounds 22nd (1967/68); 27th (1972/73); 32nd (1977/78) and 38th (1983).

Notes

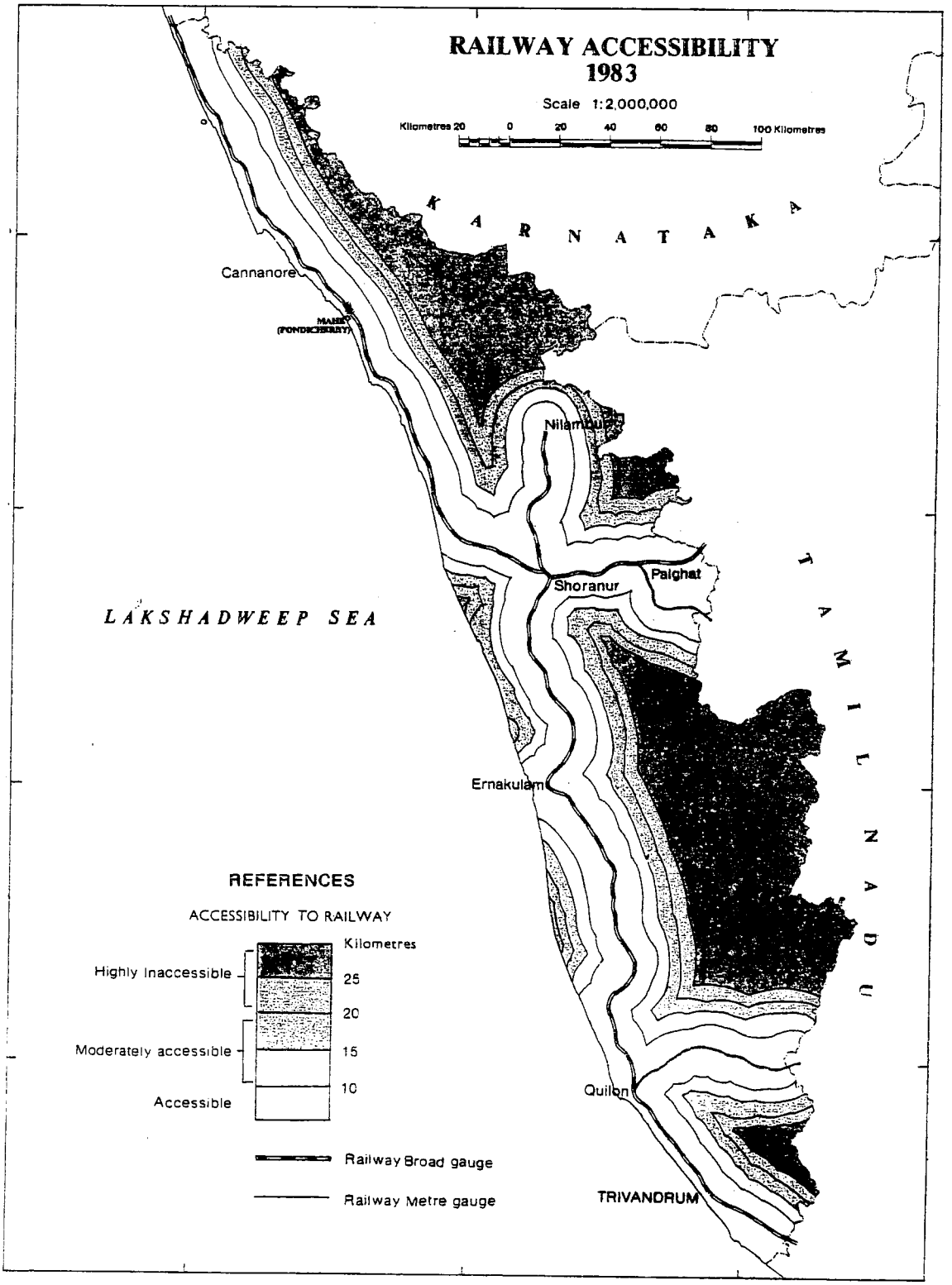
[a] Meat, Eggs and Fish
[b] Fruits and Nuts
[c] Fuel and Lighting

Appendix 4.04



Source: Govt of India 1984. p25

Appendix 4.05



Source: Govt of India 1984. p26

APPENDIX 6.01

Travancore, Cochin and Malabar
Agricultural, Casual and Non-agricultural Workforce as percent of Total Workforce: 1871 - 1941.

	1871			1881			1891			1901		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Travancore												
Agr & Fish	35.2	N.A.	N.A.	26.0	1.3	27.3	22.4	20.3	42.7	32.8	8.1	40.9
Casual Lab	32.0	N.A.	N.A.	20.4	12.0	32.4	13.7	14.1	27.8	12.9	9.2	22.1
Non-Agr	32.8	N.A.	N.A.	25.1	15.2	40.3	14.3	15.2	29.5	22.6	14.4	37.0
Total	100.0	N.A.	N.A.	71.5	28.5	100.0	50.4	49.6	100.0	68.3	31.7	100.0
Cochin												
Agr & Fish	19.5	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	24.0	3.9	27.1	31.7	19.9	51.6
Casual Lab	60.2	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	17.5	14.0	31.5	4.3	1.0	5.3
Non-Agr	20.3	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	29.4	11.2	41.4	25.0	18.1	43.1
Total	100.0	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	70.9	29.1	100.0	61.0	39.0	100.0
Malabar												
Agr & Fish	27.6	N.A.	N.A.	32.4	20.9	53.3	28.8	29.1	57.9	38.2	27.8	66.0
Casual Lab	47.9	N.A.	N.A.	2.6	1.6	4.2	3.3	4.5	7.8	0.5	0.2	0.7
Non-Agr	24.5	N.A.	N.A.	27.8	14.7	42.5	17.4	16.9	34.3	22.0	11.3	33.3
Total	100.0	N.A.	N.A.	62.8	37.2	100.0	49.5	50.5	100.0	60.7	39.3	100.0

	1911			1921			1931			1941		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Travancore												
Ag & Fish	38.3	10.0	48.3	36.6	8.7	45.3	42.2	13.5	55.7	46.8	6.5	53.3
Casual Lab	7.5	8.1	15.6	6.4	7.5	13.9	5.9	1.0	6.9	6.5	1.4	7.9
Non-Agr	22.1	14.0	36.1	27.0	13.8	40.8	27.5	9.9	37.4	29.7	9.1	38.8
Total	67.9	32.1	100.0	70.0	30.0	100.0	75.6	24.4	100.0	83.0	17.0	100.0
Cochin												
Ag & Fish	33.4	17.0	50.4	33.2	17.8	51.0	34.4	19.4	53.8	34.9	15.8	50.7
Casual Lab	6.0	1.9	7.9	4.0	1.6	5.6	4.3	1.0	5.3	3.4	1.5	4.9
Non-Agr	26.7	15.0	41.7	30.3	13.1	43.4	28.1	12.8	40.9	34.8	9.6	44.4
Total	66.1	33.9	100.0	67.5	32.5	100.0	66.8	33.2	100.0	73.1	26.9	100.0
Malabar												
Ag & Fish	39.0	24.5	63.5	40.4	24.2	64.6	27.4	10.7	38.1	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Casual Lab	0.8	0.1	0.9	0.9	0.7	1.6	18.3	12.6	30.9	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Non-Agr	23.5	12.1	33.6	23.5	10.3	33.8	22.4	8.6	31.0	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Total	63.3	36.7	100.0	64.8	35.2	100.0	68.1	31.9	100.0	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.

Source: Derived from the Censuses of India 1891 to 1941; Censuses of Cochin 1875 and 1891; Censuses of Travancore 1875, 1881 and 1891; and Censuses of Madras Presidency 1871 and 1881.

Notes

[a] Abbreviations used: Agr - Agriculture; Fish - Fishing; Lab - Labour ; and Non-Agr - Non-agriculture

[b] N.A. means data not available.

[c] The 1871 data does not include fishing as this was not provided in the Census data.

[d] The 1881 percentages is based on workers plus dependents.

Appendix 6.02

Kerala: Agricultural Labour and Casual Labour, 1901 - 1981

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	Agric: Labour			Casual Labour			Agr Lab + Cas Lab			Total Workforce			C7 as	C8 as	C9 as
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	% of	% of	% of
	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	C10	C11	C12
1901															
Travancore	52	45	97	164	116	280	216	161	377	965	401	1267	24.2	37.9	28.5
Cochin	51	56	107	16	4	20	67	60	127	227	145	372	29.6	41.0	34.1
Malabar	233	267	500	6	3	8	239	270	508	781	506	1287	30.5	53.0	39.5
Total	336	368	704	186	122	308	522	490	1012	1873	1052	2926	27.5	45.8	34.1
1911															
Travancore	74	59	133	107	115	222	181	174	355	960	453	1413	18.9	38.4	25.1
Cochin	48	48	96	22	7	29	70	55	125	247	126	373	28.3	43.4	33.4
Malabar	212	245	457	10	2	12	222	247	469	805	467	1272	27.6	52.9	36.9
Total	334	352	686	139	124	263	473	476	949	2012	1046	3058	23.5	45.5	31.0
1921															
Travancore	80	29	109	95	111	206	174	140	315	1033	442	1475	16.9	31.6	21.3
Cochin	51	51	102	17	7	23	67	58	125	283	136	419	23.8	42.5	29.9
Malabar	203	224	427	11	8	19	214	232	446	763	415	1178	28.0	56.1	37.9
Total	334	304	638	123	126	248	455	430	886	2079	993	3072	21.9	43.3	28.8
1931															
Travancore	161	63	224	88	15	103	249	78	327	1113	359	1472	22.4	21.6	22.2
Cochin	60	66	126	20	5	25	80	71	151	310	154	464	26.0	45.9	32.6
Malabar	92	93	185	228	157	385	320	250	570	851	398	1249	37.6	62.9	45.7
Total	313	222	535	336	177	513	649	399	1048	2274	911	3185	28.5	43.8	32.9
1941															
Travancore	187	37	224	103	22	125	290	59	349	1307	265	1572	22.2	22.4	22.2
Cochin	50	41	91	15	7	22	65	47	112	324	113	437	20.0	41.7	25.6
Malabar	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Total	237	78	315	118	29	147	355	106	461	1631	378	2009	21.7	28.2	23.0
1951															
Trv-Cochin	443	182	625	11	1	12	454	183	637	1996	575	2571	29.8	40.5	31.5
Malabar	212	101	313	93	41	134	305	142	447	950	268	1218	32.1	52.9	36.7
Total	655	283	938	104	42	146	759	325	1084	2946	843	3789	29.9	44.4	33.1
1961															
Kerala	517	461	978	580	204	784	1097	665	1762	3947	1683	5630	27.6	39.5	31.1
1971															
Kerala	1196	712	1908	89	19	108	1285	731	2016	4765	1452	6217	27.0	50.4	32.4
1981															
Kerala	1372	925	2297	96	24	120	1468	949	2417	5624	2147	7771	26.1	44.2	31.1

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Source: Derived from the Census of India, 1901 to 1981.
Notes
[a] 1981 data is the total of main and marginal workers.
[b] 1971 data does not include secondary workers.
[c] 1941 data is the total of those with principal means of livelihood, with and without subsidiary means of livelihood.
[d] 1941 Census in Malabar did not include an enumeration of economic or occupational activity.
[e] As the 1871 to 1891 Censuses of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar did not deal with agricultural labour in a consistent manner Table 6.2 presents data from only 1901 onwards. The 1871 Census does not distinguish between agricultural labour and casual labour. There was one category called "Labourers" and the Travancore Census Report states]

The largest number of them are engaged in tilling, sowing or repairing the rice lands of the country while a few are employed in the Public Works Department as well as in numerous private houses as ordinary journeymen living from hand to mouth.(Census of Travancore [1876] p265).

The 1881 Census of Malabar records 59351 males and 167680 females as agricultural labour and 29066 males and 18108 females as casual labour. Together they make a 24.7 percent of the workforce of Malabar in 1881. In Travancore in the 1881 Census they had been included under the generic category agriculturists.(Census of Travancore 1881 p246) In 1891 the census tables as discussed earlier did not distinguish between workers and dependents, hence the agricultural and casual workers cannot be identified. However this distinction was made by 1891 Census of Cochin and 25655 males and 5983 females were listed as agricultural workers and another 48198 males and 38517 females as casual labour. Together they make up 43.0 percent of the workforce in Cochin 1n 1891.

Appendix 6.03

Kerala: Agriculture and Non-agriculture workforce by urban and rural areas, 1881 to 1981

	See Note	Urban				Rural				Total			
		Agr	Cas Lab	Non Agr	Tot	Agr	Cas Lab	Non Agr	Tot	Agr	Cas Lab	Non Agr	Tot
Travancore													
1901		0.9	0.8	4.0	5.7	40.0	21.3	33.0	94.3	40.9	22.1	37.0	100.0
1911		1.3	1.0	4.0	6.2	47.0	14.7	32.1	93.8	48.3	15.7	36.1	100.0
1941	[a]	0.3	0.3	1.8	2.3	53.0	7.7	37.0	97.7	53.3	8.0	38.8	100.0
Cochin													
1891		0.7	0.6	4.7	5.9	37.0	22.5	34.5	94.1	37.7	23.1	39.2	100.0
1901		1.3	1.1	6.6	9.0	50.3	4.2	36.5	91.0	51.6	5.3	43.1	100.0
Malabar													
1881		0.9	0.4	4.0	5.3	52.4	3.7	38.5	94.7	53.3	4.1	42.6	100.0
1901	[b]	0.3	0.0	2.0	2.3	65.7	0.7	31.3	97.7	66.0	0.7	33.3	100.0
1911	[b]	0.3	0.2	1.9	2.4	63.2	0.7	33.7	97.6	63.5	0.9	35.6	100.0
1921	[b]	0.3	0.3	1.9	2.5	64.3	1.3	31.9	97.5	64.6	1.6	33.8	100.0
1931	[b]	0.8	1.0	1.7	3.5	37.4	29.8	29.3	96.5	38.1	30.9	31.0	100.0
Kerala													
1951		3.7	0.7	9.7	14.1	54.4	3.2	28.3	85.9	58.1	3.8	38.1	100.0
1961		3.1	0.6	9.7	13.4	52.5	4.4	29.7	86.6	55.6	5.0	39.4	100.0
1971		2.8	0.6	11.6	15.0	52.7	1.1	31.2	85.0	55.5	1.7	42.8	100.0
1981		3.1	0.4	13.3	16.8	49.4	1.1	32.7	83.2	52.5	1.5	46.0	100.0

Source: Derived from Census Reports and Tables.

Notes

[a] The urban data pertains only to Trivandrum City. Data for other urban areas are not provided in the Census.

[b] The urban data pertains only to Kozhikode (Calicut) City. Data for other urban areas are not provided in Census data for Malabar for 1901 to 1931.

[c] Economic activity or occupational data by urban-rural areas are not provided for some census years for Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. These years have been left out of this Appendix

[d] The percentages for 1891 is based on the total of workers plus dependents. They were not separately provided in the Census. (See text)

[e] Abbreviations used. Agr - Agriculture; Cas Lab - Casual Labour; Non:Agr - Non-agriculture; Tot - Total.

[f] 1971 data does not include secondary workers.

[g] 1981 data is the total of main and marginal workers.

Appendix 7.01

Brick and tile manufacturing units in 1961 classified by no of workers, use of power and urban-rural location

Size by no of Workers	Units Using power				Units Not using power				Total Units			
	Rur	Urb	Tot	%	Rur	Urb	Tot	%	Rur	Urb	Tot	%
02-05	1	1	2	0.6	32	13	45	13.3	33	14	47	13.9
06-09	3	2	5	1.5	43	10	53	15.7	46	12	58	17.2
10-19	8	0	8	2.4	33	24	57	16.9	41	24	65	19.2
20-49	46	8	54	16.0	19	5	24	7.1	65	13	78	23.1
50-99	38	8	46	13.4	7	3	10	3.0	45	11	56	16.6
100 +	17	12	29	8.6	0	5	5	1.5	17	17	34	10.1
Total	113	31	144	42.6	134	60	194	57.4	247	91	338	100.0
Units by products manufactured												
Bricks' only manufacturing Units									36	43	79	23.4
Tiles' only manufacturing Units									4	5	9	2.7
Brick & tiles manufacturing Units									207	43	250	73.9
Total									247	91	338	100.0

Source: Derived from Census of India 1961, Vol VII Kerala, Part IV-B Housing and Establishment Tables, Table E-III p29 -178.

Appendix 7.02

Brick and tile workforce by districts, sex and urban-rural location in 1981

Districts	Sex			Location		
	Male	Female	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
Ernakulam	16.9	8.7	25.6	1.9	23.7	25.6
Trichur	13.7	11.3	25.0	6.7	18.3	25.0
Quilon	11.2	0.9	12.1	1.5	10.6	12.1
Kozhikode	9.7	0.4	10.1	7.5	2.6	10.1
Trivandrum	6.1	2.4	8.5	1.8	6.7	8.5
Palghat	4.3	2.2	6.6	0.5	6.1	6.6
Alleppey	4.2	0.1	4.2	0.1	4.1	4.2
Cannanore	2.6	0.9	3.5	1.1	2.4	3.5
Malappuram	2.2	0.3	2.6	0.0	2.6	2.6
Kottayam	0.9	0.3	1.2	0.0	1.2	1.2
Wynad	0.5	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.5	0.5
Idukki	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.3
KERALA: Percent	72.5	27.5	100.0	21.1	79.1	100.0
`000	29	11	40	8	32	40

Source: Census of India 1981, Series 10 Kerala, Part III-A&B [i] General Economic Tables, Table B-12

Appendix 7.03

Cotton textile manufacturing workers by sub-categories and urban-rural locations and sectors - Kerala 1961 and 1981

Sub-categories	1961 Urb %	1961 Rur %	1961 Tot %	1981 Urb %	1981 Rur %	1981 Tot %
Powerloom factories & mills						
Spinning Weaving Mills	4.5	6.7	11.2	4.4	5.3	9.7
Powerloom weaving	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.4
Sub-Total	4.5	6.7	11.2	4.6	5.5	10.1
Handlooms and allied work						
Spinning Non-mills	1.1	6.8	7.9	0.3	2.0	2.3
Handloom weaving	19.0	46.9	65.9	8.7	17.1	25.8
Khadi manufacture	0.6	5.2	5.8	0.1	1.1	1.2
Unclassified	1.6	7.6	9.2	8.5	52.0	60.5
Sub-total	22.3	66.5	88.8	17.6	72.2	89.8
Total	26.8	73.2	100.0	22.2	77.7	99.9
Numbers `000	26	73	99	41	141	182
Handloom & allied workers						
Household sector	11.5	49.9	61.4	5.1	38.5	43.6
Non-household sector	15.2	23.4	38.6	17.1	39.3	56.4
Total	26.7	73.3	100.0	22.2	77.8	100.0

Source: Census of India 1961, Vol VII Kerala, Part II-B (i), Table B IV Part C. p129-130.
Census of India 1981, Series 10 Kerala, Part III-A&B [1], Table B 13, p717-721.

Notes : [a] All powerloom factories and spinning mills are in the non-household sector.
[b] The dramatic rise in "unclassified' handloom weaving is difficult to explain as there is no break down of this code (239). The explanation that may be offered is that workers in handloom co-operatives have been included under "unclassified"

Appendix 7.04

Cotton textile industry workforce in Kerala classified by districts, and percentage in each district that is rural, male, using power and in the household sector - 1961 & 1981

Districts [From north to south]	Share of C.Textile Workforce		Percentage of each district workforce							
			Rural		Males		Powered		Household	
	1961	1981	1961	1981	1961	1981	1961	1981	1961	1981
Cannanore	35.8	14.4	65.8	41.7	73.0	81.8	7.5	14.5	42.3	[a]
Kozhikode	13.5	9.9	69.4	68.6	59.0	44.3	8.4	9.5	72.7	[a]
Malapuram	[b]	2.5	[b]	84.2	[b]	55.0	[b]	18.1	[b]	[a]
Palghat	10.4	4.2	80.8	83.0	44.3	71.2	0.0	21.5	88.1	[a]
Trichur	9.2	7.5	93.6	76.2	48.0	57.7	41.7	26.8	45.1	[a]
Ernakulam	5.9	7.3	80.8	60.9	60.0	50.9	30.4	21.1	54.2	[a]
Kottayam	1.0	3.1	80.3	96.5	60.2	26.2	0.0	6.6	75.9	[a]
Alleppey	3.1	22.9	94.7	90.4	37.8	11.1	0.0	1.5	84.0	[a]
Quilon	6.3	10.3	90.5	86.6	69.2	29.5	15.4	6.8	72.9	[a]
Trivandrum	14.8	17.9	65.7	92.8	61.6	29.0	4.3	3.5	80.7	[a]
KERALA										
Percent	100.0	99.9	73.8	77.8	62.1	40.2	11.2	10.1	61.4	43.6
Nos `000	99	182	73	142	61	73	11	18	61	80

Source: Derived from:
Census of India 1961, Vol VII Kerala, Part II-B (i), Table B-IV Part C, p129-175.
Census of India 1981, Series 10 Kerala, Part III-A&B [i], Table B-12 & B-13, p597-727

Notes : [a] Census of India 1981, does not provide this data at the district level.
[b] Malapuram district was created after 1961,from existing districts, mainly Kozhikode and Palghat.

Appendix 7.05

Cotton textile manufacturing units in Kerala classified by rural-urban locations, use of power in manufacturing, number of workers and nature of manufacturing operations in 1961

Description	Number of units					
	Without power			With power		
	Rur	Urb	Tot	Rur	Urb	Tot
By manufacturing operation						
Ginning, cleaning etc	3	1	4	1	1	2
Spinning [Other than in Mills]	77	15	92	0	0	0
Spinning in Mills	0	0	0	5	8	13
Dyeing & bleaching	11	25	36	0	4	4
Weaving on powerlooms	0	0	0	1	5	6
Weaving on handlooms	3310	1541	4851	0	0	0
Khadi weaving on handlooms	36	2	38	0	0	0
Printing of textiles	4	1	5	0	0	0
Making of thread,twine etc	0	2	2	1	2	3
Total	3441	1587	5028	8	20	28
By size of units						
Workers 01	402	225	627	0	0	0
Workers 02 - 05	1998	853	2851	0	2	2
Workers 06 - 09	564	253	817	0	2	2
Workers 10 - 19	370	137	507	0	3	3
Workers 20 - 49	98	95	193	0	5	5
Workers 50 - 99	6	14	20	1	0	1
Workers 100 +	3	10	13	7	8	15
Total	3441	1587	5028	8	20	28

Source: Derived from Census of India 1961, Vol VII Kerala, Part IV-B Housing and Establishment Tables, Table E III p29-41.

Appendix 7.06

Cashew processing units by number of workers, district and urban-rural locations in 1961

No of Workers	Kerala				Quilon Dist				Other Dist			
	Rur	Urb	Tot	%	Rur	Urb	Tot	%	Rur	Urb	Tot	%
01-05	6	3	9	4.5	4	3	7	3.5	2	0	2	1.0
06-09	1	2	3	1.5	1	1	2	1.0	0	1	1	0.5
10-19	20	4	24	12.0	14	4	18	9.0	6	0	6	3.0
20-49	9	6	15	7.5	9	5	14	7.0	0	1	1	0.5
50-99	15	0	15	7.5	10	0	10	5.0	5	0	5	2.5
100 +	111	23	134	67.0	96	20	116	58.0	15	3	18	9.0
Total	162	38	200	100.0	134	33	167	83.5	28	5	33	16.5

Source: Census of India 1961, Vol VII Kerala, Part IV-B, Housing and Establishments Table E-III, p29-178.

Notes: Only the 1961 Census data on industrial establishment provides data on cashew processing manufacturing units. Data is separately presented for the cashew processing units as a sub-category of "Other foods", unlike for the workforce data. The 1971 Census provides data on industrial establishments only at the two digit classification code level and the 1981 Census does not provide any data on industrial establishments.

Appendix 7.07

Percentage of Cashew Processing Workforce by districts, sex and urban-rural location in 1981

Districts	Urban			Rural			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1971									
Quilon	1.7	6.9	8.6	6.7	70.4	77.1	8.4	77.3	85.7
Trivandrum	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.2	8.3	8.5	0.2	8.5	8.7
Alleppey	0.1	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.7
Trichur	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.7	0.8	0.1	0.8	0.9
Cannanore	0.1	0.4	0.5	0.0	0.9	0.9	0.1	1.3	1.4
Kozhikode	0.2	1.2	1.4	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.2	1.4	1.6
Others	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.8	1.0	0.2	0.8	1.0
Total	2.2	9.1	11.3	7.2	81.5	88.7	9.4	90.6	100.0
Numbers `000	2	7	9	5	58	61	7	65	72
Household - Percent							0.1	0.4	0.5
Non-household - Percent							9.3	90.2	99.5
1981									
Quilon	4.4	6.2	10.6	11.5	53.0	64.5	15.9	59.2	75.0
Trivandrum	0.1	0.1	0.2	1.0	10.6	11.6	1.1	10.7	11.8
Alleppey	0.2	0.6	0.8	1.0	5.7	6.7	1.2	6.3	7.5
Trichur	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.2	1.7	1.9	0.3	2.0	2.3
Cannanore	0.2	1.2	1.4	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.3	1.5	1.8
Kozhikode	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.9
Others	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.6
Total	5.3	9.0	14.3	14.0	71.7	85.7	19.3	80.7	100.0
Numbers `000	2	2	4	3	20	23	5	22	27
Household							0.1	0.3	0.4
Non-household							19.2	80.4	99.6

Source: Derived from:
Census of India 1971, Series 9 Kerala, Part II-B [i] Table B-IV Part A Appendix, p ?
Census of India 1981, Series 10 Kerala, Part III-B, Table B-12 & B-13, p597-727.

Appendix 7.08

Cashew cultivation and yield in India by States

States	1970-71		1975-76		1979-80	
	Area Hect `000	Tons per Hect	Area Hect `000	Tons per Hect	Area Hect `000	Tons per Hect
Kerala	108	1.07	109	1.09	148	.57
Tamilnadu	82	.26	97	.11	95	.11
Goa	35	.16	40	.14	42	.15
Andhra Pradesh	26	.50	31	.41	44	.28
Karnataka	18	.93	36	.43	53	.29
Maharashtra	18	.20	33	.13	23	.34
Orissa	5	.23	22	.18	39	.08
Others	-	-	1	.16	8	.39

Source: Krishnaswamy 1981. Table IV p10.

Notes:

[a] Increase in area planted with cashew in the 1970s is in response to the need to increase crop production to meet rising world demand. Fall in imports from Africa consequent to emergence of mechanical processing is also a factor.

[b] Recent extension of cashew cultivation being in the pre-bearing stage and may have contributed to the fall in yield per hectare. (ICAR 1976.p3)

[c] Estimates of production in Kerala are based on the crop-cutting survey of 1961-62, and applied since then to the area estimates. Area estimates are revised annually on the basis of annual land utilization surveys. Yield data are thus not as reliable as the area data. States other than Kerala have adopted even less reliable production estimates such as "eye estimates" (Ibid. p2)

[d] Recent extension of cashew cultivation are likely to be in marginal or less productive lands. In Kerala rubber has been the main crop competing for areas where cashew could be grown. Rubber is an economically attractive crop and capable of competing away areas under or suitable for cashew. (Ibid p8) The use of less productive lands may be contributing the fall in productivity.

Appendix 7.09

Cashew cultivation in Kerala by districts 1978-79

District	Hectares	Percent
Cannanore	63603	46.5
Malappuram	22221	16.3
Palghat	12790	9.4
Quilon	9357	6.8
Trichur	7363	5.4
Trivandrum	6130	4.5
Kozhikode	5222	3.8
Ernakulam	4317	3.2
Alleppey	3343	2.4
Kottayam	1183	.9
Idukki	1023	.7
Total	136552	100.0

Source: Govt of Kerala, State Land Use Board. 1980. p125.

Appendix 7.10

Average earnings for an eight hour shift by categories of cashew workers in the household sector and factory sector in Kerala and Tamilnadu in 1976-77.

Category of Cashew Worker	Household Sector Kerala Rs Cts	Factory Sector Kerala Rs Cts	Factory Tamilnadu Rs Cts
Roaster	7.50	7.70	5.50
Sheller (Outer skin)	3.45	7.06	2.31
Peeler (Inner skin)	4.00	7.57	2.83
Grader	3.90	7.50	2.64
Borma (oven) worker	7.50	8.30	5.50
Others	7.50	8.16	7.83

Source: Emam Beevi 1978. Table 4.3 p45. (Based on a sample survey of wages in the three sectors carried out by the Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum, in 1976-77.)

Appendix 7.11

Distribution of seafood processing, tailoring, wood based industries, jewellery and vegetable oil workforce by districts in Kerala in 1981.

Districts [North to south]	Seafood	Tailoring	Wood	Jewellery	Veg:Oil
	%	%	%	%	%
Cannanore	1.9	12.0	8.5	12.2	7.6
Kozhikode	3.3	8.1	7.9	9.0	10.7
Malappuram	1.2	6.8	6.8	11.1	4.4
Wynad	0.0	2.0	0.9	1.0	0.0
Palghat	0.0	8.8	10.8	10.8	3.2
Trichur	2.4	12.1	16.4	20.7	22.1
Ernakulam	35.8	11.3	15.5	7.3	13.4
Kottayam	2.1	6.4	6.8	6.8	4.0
Idukki	0.0	3.2	1.7	1.3	3.6
Alleppey	45.1	9.2	6.9	6.1	13.1
Quilon	7.7	9.1	9.8	5.4	9.4
Trivandrum	0.0	11.0	8.1	8.2	10.1
Kerala - %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
- `000	13	86	185	34	6

Source: Census of India 1981. Series 10 Kerala, Part III A&B [i] General Economic Tables.

Appendix 7.12

Population of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar classified by Caste[a] and Religion : 1901

Religion/Caste	Travancor		Cochin		Malabar		Kerala	
	`000	%	`000	%	`000	%	`000	%
Hindus by Castes								
Agr: Castes								
Cultivators								
Nayar	521	17.6	112	13.8	391	14.0	1024	15.6
Brahmin [b]	45	1.6	24	3.0	54	1.9	124	1.8
Vellala	49	1.7	8	1.0	10	0.4	67	1.0
Pandaram [c]	12	0.4	3	0.3	3	0.1	18	0.3
Labourers								
Pulaya	207	7.0	60	7.4			266	4.1
Cheruman					246	8.8	246	3.8
Paraiyan	70	2.4	9	1.1	17	0.6	96	1.5
Paniyan					27	1.0	27	0.4
Vettuvan	1	0.1	6	0.8			7	0.1
Kannankan			6	0.7			6	0.1
Kolayan [d]					5	0.2	5	0.1
	905	30.6	228	28.0	753	27.0	1886	28.8
Fishing Castes								
Valan	15	0.5	8	0.9			22	0.3
Mukkuvan					16	0.6	16	0.2
Marakkan	12	0.4					12	0.2
Arayan			4	0.5	3	0.1	7	0.1
	26	0.9	12	1.4	19	0.7	57	0.9
Occupational Mix [e]								
Ezhavas	492	16.7	185	22.7	661	23.7	1338	20.4
Shannan	156	5.3						2.4
Tandan	19	0.6					19	0.3
	667	22.6	185	22.7	661	23.7	1513	23.1

Continued next page

Artisan Castes [f]								
Kammalan	67	2.3	20	2.4	101	3.6	188	2.9
Chakkan	15	0.5	2	0.2	38	1.4	55	0.8
Chaliyan	9	0.3	2	0.2	27	1.0	38	0.6
Kollan	22	0.8	6	0.8			29	0.4
Tattan	19	0.6	8	0.9			26	0.4
Vaniyan	14	0.5	1	0.2			15	0.2
Kaikolavan	1	0.1	4	0.4	8	0.3	13	0.2
Anduran					9	0.3	9	0.1
Kusavan	3	0.1	3	0.4			6	0.1
Devanga			4	0.4			4	0.1
Tolkollan					2	0.1	2	0.0
	149	5.0	49	6.0	186	6.7	383	5.8
Trading Castes								
Chetti	16	0.6	5	0.6	22	0.8	43	0.7
Muttan					9	0.3	9	0.1
Konkani Brahmins			7	0.9			7	0.1
Tarakan					6	0.2	6	0.1
	16	0.6	12	1.5	37	1.3	66	1.0
Service Castes [g]								
Mannan					31	1.1	31	0.5
Maran	25	0.8					25	0.4
Ambalavasi			7	0.9	16	0.6	24	0.4
Veluttetan	10	0.3	3	0.4	11	0.4	24	0.4
Ampattan	18	0.6	1	0.2	3	0.1	22	0.3
Velan	12	0.4	8	0.1			20	0.3
Kanisan					14	0.5	14	0.2
Parian					13	0.5	13	0.2
Kurichan					10	0.3	10	0.1
Velakattalavan					9	0.3	9	0.1
Marayan					7	0.3	7	0.1
Kavutiyan					5	0.2	5	0.1
Eruman					3	0.1	3	0.0
Vanan	2	0.1					2	0.0
	66	2.2	20	2.5	122	4.4	208	3.2
Other Castes [h]	154	5.2	49	6.1	4	0.1	207	3.2
Aborigines						120	4.3	120
1.8								
Gypsies	54	1.8			1	0.1	55	0.8
Total of Hindus	2036	69.0	554	68.3	1904	68.2	4494	68.6
Syrian Christians	697	23.6	198	24.4	51	1.8	947	14.5
Mopalah Muslims	191	6.5	54	6.7	833	29.9	1078	16.4
Others [i]	29	1.0	5	0.6	1	0.1	35	0.5
Total Population	2952	100.	812	100.	2790	100.	6554	100.

Source:
For Travancore - Census of India 1901, Vol XXVI-A, Part II, Table XIII, p147-187.
For Cochin - Census of India, Vol XX-A, Part II, Table XIII, p38-39.
For Malabar - Census of India, Vol XV-A, Part II, Table XIII, p155-205

Notes

[a] Castes are listed within each industrial category in order of their numerical strength and in terms of any traditional social and economic status. The industrial categories are listed in the usual format of agriculture followed by manufacturing, trade and services.

[b] Brahmins include all Brahmins (Nambudhuri or Malayali, Tamil etc), other Konkani Brahmins who were traders.

[c] Pandarams are non-Brahmin priests, but were also agriculturalists and so included under agriculture.

[d] Kolayans are cowherds and are strictly not agricultural labourers.

[e] The traditional occupation associated with the Ezhavas (Malayali), Shannan (Tamil) and Tandan (Tamil) was toddy tapping. This occupation is in a grey zone between agriculture and manufacturing. (Census data classifies toddy tapping as manufacturing). But more importantly a good many of these caste group members cultivated coconut. Both Ezhavas and Shannans by the end of the 19th century, using education as an avenue of social class mobility were also entering many white collar and professional occupations.

[f] The occupations traditionally associated with these castes are as follows in alphabetical order: Anduran - Clay Pot Makers (Malayali); Chakkan - Vegetable Oil Manufacturers (Malayali); Chaliyan - Textile Weavers (Malayali); Devanga - Textile Weavers (Kannada); Kaikolavan - Textile Weavers (Tamil); Kammalan - Metal and wood craftsmen; Kollan - Blacksmiths; Kusavan - Clay Pot Makers (Tamil); Tattan - Goldsmiths; and Vaniyan - Vegetable Oil Manufacturers (Tamil).

[g] The occupations traditionally associated with these castes are as follows in alphabetical order: Ambalavasi - Temple Services; Eruman - Mason or Bricklayer; Kanisan - Astrologer; Kavutiyan - Hairdressers; Ampattan - Hairdressers; Kurichan - Shikaris. (Game Guides or Trackers); Mannan - Laundrymen; Maran - Temple Services; Marayan - Hairdressers; Parian - Medicinemen ; Vanan - Laundrymen; Velan - Laundrymen; Veluttetan - Laundrymen; and Velakattalavan - Hairdressers.

[h] Other castes largely consist of ?

[i] Mainly made up of Jews, Protestant Christians and a few Zoroastrians, Jains and Buddhists.

[j] Source for traditional caste occupations are the relevant Censuses and Thurstone (1909)

Appendix 8.01

Coir workers as a percentage of total manufacturing workers in Kerala: 1911-1981

Category	1911	1931	1951	1961	1971	1981
Coir workers	28.8	26.2	23.3	24.8	16.2	4.3
Others	71.2	73.8	76.7	75.2	83.8	95.7
Total-Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
-`000	579	5.7	599	1012	978	1078

Source: Table 6.01

Appendix 9.01

The Towns that cluster to form the Urban Agglomeration (UA) and Standard Urban Areas (SUA) in Cannanore District: 1981

Cannanore Town, UA SUA			*Tellicherry Town, UA*		
Towns	*Sq. km*	*Pop*	*Towns*	*Sq. km*	*Pop*
Cannanore Town	11.03	60904	Tellicherry T	15.35	75561
Chirakkal	13.56	36124	Dharmadom	10.66	23143
Puzhathi	9.17	26099			
Pallikunnu	6.90	22101			
Valapattanam	2.04	8080			
Cannanore Cant	1.79	4489			
U.A	44.49	157797	*U.A*	26.01	98704
Azhikode	16.05	37273	Kodiyeri	11.44	32590
Edakkad	18.26	29474	Eranholi	10.08	21521
Elayavoor	11.57	25481			
S.U.A	90.37	250025	*S.U.A*	47.53	152815

Source: Census of India 1981, Series 10 Kerala. Part II-A Pages 140-141 and 184-185.