

**COFFEE, TEA OR PEPPER? FACTORS AFFECTING CHOICE  
OF CROPS BY AGRO-ENTREPRENEURS IN NINETEENTH  
CENTURY SOUTH-WEST INDIA**

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November 1998

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Paper prepared for presentation at the International Conference on ‘Coffee Production and Economic Development C.1700 - C.1900’. at St. Antony’s College, Oxford, 10th to 12th September 1998. I am grateful to William G Clarence -Smith of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London for inviting me to the conference and thereby giving “incentive” to write the paper and to all those who participated in an internal seminar in the CDS and offered valuable comments; particularly to John Kurien, D. Narayana and Ravi Raman.

## ABSTRACT

Ever since plantation agriculture initiated by European capital and enterprise became an important form of exploitation of resources in the colonies, small holdings and small holders in the plantation sector were considered a separate category. There were a number of European proprietary planters among the pioneers. They got phased out with the vertical integration of production, distribution and marketing. Another group of small-holders were the indigenous farmers who took up cultivation of plantation crops. Almost all over Southern India and Ceylon such farmers were active in coffee; the earliest plantation crop. But one plantation area in South-west India, completely, and another, partially, was conspicuous by their absence. Significantly there were farmers involved in cash crop cultivation, particularly in pepper, in these areas. Meanwhile, upwardly mobile sections of the lower echelons of the caste hierarchy were very active in coffee, in another area of the same broad region. This paper investigates why small holders were absent in the former areas. Only in a few specific areas within the early plantation regions of Southern India and Ceylon did coffee survive a widespread blight in late nineteenth century. Though small holders and their coffee cultivation also had set backs in this crisis, they seem to have played important role in the survival of the crop in some areas. This paper also investigates what were the advantages held by small-holders in these areas and which were found lacking in other areas.

**JEL Classification :** N50, N55

**Key Words :** plantations, proprietary planters, small-holders, plant-diseases, monopoly system, trade.

## **Introduction**

In literature on plantations small holdings and small holders are considered a separate category. It was considered as such, ever since plantation agriculture became an important form of exploitation of resources in the colonies, initiated by European capital and enterprise. In different areas where plantations developed, there were significant presence of smaller planters, among the pioneers, in the sense of Europeans themselves holding relatively smaller areas. They opened up difficult regions all by themselves, without the backing of companies or other collectives. Widely known in plantation literature as “proprietary planters”, they got phased out systematically with vertical integration of production, distribution and marketing of plantation crops; which favoured companies. Those proprietary planters who survived such a shift, had to play secondary role in the plantation sector thereafter. Yet another group of small-holders, in both absolute and relative terms, were the indigenous farmers who took up cultivation of plantation crops. Almost all over Southern India and Ceylon, such farmers were very active in coffee cultivation; the earliest plantation crop. One of the early

plantation areas, completely, and another, partially, (in the Southwest Indian region of present day Kerala) is conspicuous by their absence. This paper sets out to enquire into its causes. The main question to be answered is whether it was due to the absence of “enterprising” indigenous farmers or due to economic or other reasons. It is significant that at least in Central Travancore region in Southwest India, there were farmers belonging to the Syrian Christian Community who were deeply involved in “cash crop” cultivation particularly in pepper. Subsequently they are found to be active in another plantation crop, ie. natural rubber.

In early plantation regions of Southern India and Ceylon, Coffee survived a widespread blight in late nineteenth century, only in a few specific areas. Apparently the presence of either proprietary planters or of small-holding indigenous farmers do not seem to have mattered much in the survival of coffee. In Ceylon and in the Southern Travancore area, though there was a vigorous presence of small holders, they could not withstand the onslaught of the blight; along with big-sized holders of coffee. In neighbouring Central Travancore region, the proprietary planters who were active in early planting of coffee also disappeared with the onset of blight. All these three regions viz Ceylon, Southern and Central Travancore regions subsequently shifted to tea. The Malabar - Wayanad region in Northern Kerala, had a mixed experience in this regard. Nevertheless, it is apparent that neither small-holders nor proprietary planters in that region did have any major role in the survival of coffee. That region also had significant shift of area into tea. But what is significant is that neighbouring Nilgiris, Shevaroy, Coorg and Mysore further north in the South Indian plateau managed to maintain their coffee area fairly intact, inspite of the blight and to increase it in due course. Some of the regions which initially abandoned coffee, later on reintroduced the crop. In the case of Nilgiris, Shevaroy, Coorg and Mysore there was no discontinuity in their history of coffee planting. In

this continued coffee planting experiences of these regions, indigenous small-holders and European proprietary planters seemed to have played a major role; the small holders more than the proprietary planters. It is worthwhile to investigate what were the advantages that the small-holders had in these regions which were found lacking in the other three regions which were Malabar - Wayanad, Central Travancore and Southern Travancore; all in the South Western Indian region of Kerala.

### **Coffee in South-West India**

The habit of drinking coffee and that of cultivating coffee beans were known in South India well before the arrival of European planters. It is believed that a pilgrim to Mecca, Baba Budan, brought coffee seeds and introduced them to a range of hills [which eventually bore his name], in the former princely State of Mysore in the sixteenth century<sup>1</sup>. The Dutch East India Company ordered a consignment of coffee from South India, as early as 1659<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, it was one of the crops around which the plantation system of agriculture (defined as mono-cropping for the market) evolved in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In Angengo, in the south of the present State of Kerala, coffee cultivation was attempted in the eighteenth century<sup>3</sup>. It was planted along with other crops in an agro-enterprise in Anjarakandy near Tellicherry in the North of Kerala, also in the same century<sup>4</sup>. These pioneering efforts did not result in any considerable coffee planting in and around these regions. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, a few merchants applied for grants of land for coffee in the erstwhile princely State of Cochin, but the land allotted to them were abandoned later.<sup>5</sup>

In the hills east of Quilon, in the princely State of Travancore, a group of Scottish planters from Ceylon acquired land grants for coffee around 1860 and that region soon developed as a distinct plantation district.<sup>6</sup> In Wayanad in the then directly British - ruled district of Malabar

in the Madras Presidency, there were 80 planters by 1859, and 10,000 acres were under coffee in 1862.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, Henry Baker Jr. a missionary from Church Mission Society (CMS) visited Mundakayam in the Central region of Travancore and realised the agricultural potential of the Peermade - Vandiperiyar hills which lay beyond. In 1860 he acquired a free land grant from the Travancore Government and two coffee estates were raised there<sup>8</sup>. Soon, others followed him,<sup>9</sup> and this region also developed into an active coffee planting area. In other words, three distinct coffee growing areas developed in the present south-western State of Kerala; one in Wayanad in Malabar and the other two in the princely State of Travancore<sup>10</sup>. Introduction of coffee into other regions of the southern Indian peninsula can be recapitulated chronologically as follows: in Ceylon in 1824; in Nilgiris in 1838; the Hassan and Kadur districts of Mysore in the 1840s; and Coorg in 1854.<sup>11</sup>

Though coffee was introduced in Wayanad in 1840, systematic cultivation developed in Travancore only by 1860s. Coffee prospered in the 1860's primarily due to favourable prices. This prosperity was short lived for a variety of reasons. Stem borers threatened the trees in the 1860's. A graver threat, from a leaf disease called Hemalia Vextratrix, appeared in the 1870's; which already had taken its toll in neighbouring regions. By late 1880s these diseases had almost wiped out coffee in all the three Kerala regions; particularly from Travancore. In Wayanad it was recorded in early twentieth century<sup>12</sup> that "at one time there was a good deal of coffee, but this has now been all replaced with tea". In addition, there was a depression in the price of coffee between 1879 and 1888 due to the competition from a comparatively cheaper Brazilian variety.<sup>13</sup> While Travancore's coffee export increased from 910 cwts in 1843 to an impressive 49,503 cwts in 1876-77; it declined sharply to 3,978 cwts at the end of the century.<sup>14</sup> Desperate planters tried cinchona in the 1870s<sup>15</sup> but finally settled on tea; practically abandoning coffee.<sup>16</sup>

What distinguished coffee cultivation in Wayanad and Peermade-Vandiperiyar regions, was that neither of these areas had much indigenous small-scale or large-scale cultivators. Both had a number of European proprietary planters.<sup>17</sup> Most of them also abandoned coffee. In Ceylon, Sinhalese and small-holding participation was high and “at the height of the coffee era, approximately one fourth of all coffee exports were produced on small holdings”.<sup>18</sup> However in Ceylon too, coffee disappeared at the same time as in Travancore. Small holdings seems to have survived in Mysore, Coorg and Madras Presidency. It has been pointed out that<sup>19</sup> “many of the coffee estates [in these areas] are in the hands of private owners” (meaning proprietary planters), while the majority of tea and rubber [in early years of its introduction] was controlled by companies. In addition to this, the small- holders also seem to have survived. An estimate was made in 1940’s in which it was found that while Mysore had 37, Madras 30 and Coorg 20, Travancore had only 6 and Cochin a mere 1 percent<sup>20</sup> of coffee acreage under small holdings. This clearly indicates the continuing small-holder interest in the former regions compared to the latter. This raises the question whether having strong indigenous and/or small holding tradition would have helped coffee to survive such crises. We have already seen that in Ceylon where small-holding traditions were strong, coffee did not survive. It is interesting to note in this context that in Southern Travancore, by 1877 there were at least 22 plantations owned by Indian Christians forming 22.4 percent of the 98 estates in that area. These estates covered an area of 811 acres forming 3.9 percent of the 20,884 total coffee area.<sup>21</sup> But they also disappeared with the onset of plant-disease and depression.

The explanation for the disappearance of coffee from some regions cannot be attributed to the lack of indigenous small-holding tradition. In fact the arguments in plantation literature is the other way. It is claimed

that small-holdings will not be able to make use of economies of scale. But in coffee, economies of scale do not seem to have mattered much. Some factors prevented indigenous participation in one region of a princely State ie. Travancore while in another part of the same State, such participation did not seem to have encountered any problems. This requires explanation. Was the decimation of proprietary planting interests and along with it the coffee crop from Wayanad as extensive as in Travancore? If yes, were it due to the same reasons? Moreover, how was it that while coffee practically disappeared from Travancore, there was continuing interest and further planting in the neighbouring areas like Mysore, Coorg, and parts of Madras Presidency? In an attempt to answer these questions, this paper investigates the various forces operating in the area of emerging plantations in South-West India that could have influenced decisions on crop selection.

### **State Policy**

In Ceylon, immediately after the conquest of Kandy, much of the land suitable for coffee ended up as Crown lands. In its allotment, the British planters were clearly preferred to the Sinhalese. In spite of this disadvantage, indigenous participation in coffee developed. This was apparently due to the fact that investment requirements were small, “agricultural technicalities” did not pose much problem, and the economies of scale were found inconsequential<sup>22</sup>. The Dutch, another power who had a major presence in these regions also showed a disinclination towards indigenous participation by preventing Paravas and others from planting coffee in South India.<sup>23</sup> The interest of the British imperial government in plantation crops and among them coffee, was very clear from the fact that almost all South Indian areas in which coffee was introduced early, were ruled directly by the British. Even Mysore a princely State and an early coffee region, was during 1831-



1881 [when it developed its plantations] under British custodianship.<sup>24</sup> The exception to this rule was Travancore. There around 1834, William Huxam under the “concurrence”<sup>25</sup> of the British Resident, Colonel Newall commenced planting of coffee and spices.

As British planters found Travancore to be “peculiarly well adapted for spice and coffee cultivation”<sup>26</sup> successive Residents took interest to promote cash<sup>27</sup> or plantation crops. The State administration seems to have followed the interests of <sup>28</sup> the Imperial bureaucracy, for obvious reasons. In 1824 by the proclamation dated 27th Mithunam 999 ME, the Travancore Government expressed interest in promoting the cultivation of coffee and Karuva. For this purpose people were exhorted to develop gardens on the banks of big rivers. Such lands were to be granted free from tax for four years and even then onwards, to be taxed only at the lowest possible tax rate. The interested persons were asked to submit applications to the Huzoor Cutcherry. Even before that in 1820 by the Royal Proclamation dated 22nd Vrischigom 995 ME<sup>29</sup>, the government’s concern about cultivators leaving properties in the hills uncultivated because of attack of wild animals, was expressed. To make them return to cultivation, they were offered tax exemption for six years. There are students of the plantation history of the region who surmise that the local bureaucracy, completely toeing the line of Imperial interests, were not supportive of indigenous cultivation.<sup>30</sup> In almost all the policy measures issued to promote plantations, there obviously was a bias in favour of European interests.<sup>31</sup> In the early years of planting few indigenous persons had shown interest in developing plantations. It was only in the early decades of the twentieth century and with the cultivation of natural rubber, indigenous planting interest developed considerably. Till then, whatever benefits offered in this sector were made use of largely by the European planters.

This does not mean that the State administration was totally uninterested in promoting indigenous planting. By the Huzur Order No. 784 dated 10th Edavom 1013 ME [1838] it was stated that

Lieutenant Isti Winson Sahib has prepared a manual of steps to be followed in the cultivation of coffee. Printed copies of this along with coffee seeds bought by the Treasury [Pandaravaka] have been freely distributed among tenants and others in all regions [Mandapathumvathukal] and they have been cultivating the crop. Lieutenant Isti Winson will be overseeing all these regions and to help him in this work and to collect accounts with reference to coffee to be submitted to the Huzoor, a person called Lowe is to be paid 25 Rupees. Whenever he is not present to do his duties and for translation [Dubashi] a Kanakapillai [accountant] is to be given 8 Rupees...

In 1837 by Rules dated 21st Edavom 1012 ME<sup>32</sup> tenants or cultivators [Kudiyavans] were instructed to cultivate coffee in areas suited for that purpose, in lands granted exclusively [Kuthaka] for coffee and in their dry lands [Parambu] (but not under coconut, arecanut, Jack and mango). The government considered a coffee monopoly and Ayilyam Thirunal, the Maharaja was told by the Madras Government in 1870s that the Sirkar cannot open coffee estates to enhance its own revenue.<sup>33</sup> In the meantime, there were several policy measures either initiated or imitated by the State administration for the promotion of the plantation sector in general and within that for coffee cultivation<sup>34</sup>. A proclamation allowing unrestricted transfer of landed property<sup>35</sup>, abolition of enforced labour tied to temples and governmental purposes, introduction of breach of contract by workmen by an act which declared it to be a criminal

offence, abolition of agrestic slavery,<sup>36</sup> and making available cheap rice through large scale import of paddy,<sup>37</sup> directly or indirectly helped the plantation sector.

There was considerable investment made by the State government towards improvement of transport and communication system, which also helped the plantation sector. Travancore Government's expenditure on public works department was Rupees 3,75,735 or 8.7 per cent of total expenditure in 1865-66. It increased to Rupees 12,23,075 or 20.3 percent of the total in 1879-80.<sup>38</sup> Occasional amendments to rules regarding land grants, assessments, adjudication of claims<sup>39</sup>, and export duty, clearly confirms that the Travancore State followed a consistently planter-friendly policy. In January 1858 Sir.T.Madhava Rao was appointed Dewan<sup>40</sup>. His interests very clearly lay with the promotion of commercial cultivation. He had written in the Administration Report of 1038 ME [1860 AD] that<sup>41</sup> "The Sircar feels satisfied that the country would largely benefit by the introduction of the capital, skill and enterprise of European gentlemen in utilizing tracts of valuable land, which, for the most part, would otherwise be untouched for generations ...." Only Europeans seem to have benefitted from coffee plantations, particularly in the Central Travancore region. This incidentally was adjacent to a region well known for centuries for pepper cultivation.<sup>42</sup> In the absence of any direct prohibition of indigenous cultivation, it is surprising that local farmers did not make any use at all of the emerging possibilities of coffee cultivation. Before going into this question further, let us look at the other Travancore region where indigenous participation existed.

### **Missionary Interests**

Dick Kooiman<sup>43</sup> has written extensively on the coffee mission of the London Missionary Society [LMS] in Southern Travancore. In 1862 an experimental garden maintained by the British Resident, General

Cullen was left to be taken over by Dewan Madhava Rao and the then Crown Prince Vishakom Thirunal. It was managed by John Cox a former missionary. In 1870s, the LMS missionaries themselves started coffee planting in an area of 50 acres to finance their operations. In 1877 in southern Travancore there were 8 plantations owned by (ex-)missionaries, with an acreage of 863 covering 4.1 percent of total coffee area and an average acreage of 107 per holding.<sup>44</sup> Soon Travancoreans themselves were introduced to coffee cultivation on the basis of the experience gained by working as migrant labourers in Ceylon. The Missionaries worked as the medium through whom converts to Christianity found their way to Ceylon.

Persons starting as worker or Kangani<sup>45</sup> in Ceylon came back and invested in coffee plantations. Prominent among them were Daniel Motchaken, P.D. Devasagayam and P Paul, two of them originating from the Nadar community and one from the Marava community. All three of them reaped considerable prosperity and Devasagayam [1822-1884] was felicitated by the Maharaja himself. They were looked upto by not only members of their own community, but others too. They could acquire signs of prestige like a two-storeyed house, ten acres of paddy land etc. Restrictions imposed upon them because of their backward or depressed caste origins could be eliminated in the process of upward social mobility made possible by participation in coffee cultivation. This was similar to the experience of Basel Mission converts in the north of Kerala who were able to submerge their pre-Christian caste identifications by becoming part of a missionary-run industrial labour force.<sup>46</sup> For people from the lower echelons of a rigid caste-system, religious conversion makes sense only if it is accompanied by access to independent living and employment. The LMS missionaries not only worked towards providing such facilities for converts from castes considered the lowest in the then existing hierarchy, but also supported

their movements for emancipation of slaves,<sup>47</sup> the right to wear upper clothes<sup>48</sup> and for basic education.<sup>49</sup>

Kooiman rightly points out that the missionaries, wanted the converts to engage completely in mission work.<sup>50</sup> But they could not ignore the benefits derived by the converts from participation in coffee cultivation. Many of them were able to contribute substantially to the building up of self-sufficient congregations. So this led the missionaries to actively promote participation by converts in coffee planting. With the added incentive of missionary encouragement, number of local converts are likely to have moved into coffee cultivation.<sup>51</sup> Most of the converts were from Southern Travancore plains where they were engaged (prior to entering coffee) as labourers in palmyra and paddy cultivation. Both these types of occupation had inevitable signs of social depression. One sure way out of such a situation was to go either to Ceylon or to the hills, to acquire work as a plantation labourer or Kanganani, to make enough savings to invest in a small holding of coffee, from which further funds can be acquired, which can be used to buy a piece of paddy land in the plains as Devasagayam (one of the pioneer Indian planters) did. This by itself must have created enough incentive for local participation in coffee rather than what has been implied by Kooiman<sup>52</sup> that “new cash needs like taxes encouraged...cash cropping...” It might have been true for Kandyan peasants but highly unlikely in Travancore where land taxes were found to be comparatively low<sup>53</sup>.

What is pertinent to note in this context is that both in Ceylon and in South Travancore, the small and big coffee holdings practically got wiped out with the vagaries of the plant-disease, depression and competition from Brazil. Much of the coffee land was placed under tea and in 1884 coffee lands were allowed to be used for other crops.<sup>54</sup> Nearly ninety percent of Indian coffee was for export. Hardly any home market

had developed. With the intense international competition, closely following plant diseases, in Travancore as well as in Ceylon, coffee lands were converted to tea or were abandoned. In spite of a sharp price increase in 1889-1896 due to political troubles in Brazil, coffee could not revive in Ceylon and in Southern Travancore regions. In other parts of the country where coffee area survived, the crop revived in this period.<sup>55</sup> It will be worthwhile to investigate how coffee in the other regions survived.

### **Plight of Coffee**

Though from 1896, area under coffee cultivation in South India declined, it has not shown up in export figures. The exact reasons cannot be analysed with any level of accuracy as the Review of the Trade in India 1901-02 has said the planters of coffee estates of Southern India are averse” for some unknown and un conjecturable reason, to communicate statistical information relating to the industry”.<sup>56</sup> The fact that exports did not decline in spite of shrinking area under cultivation, should be indicative of increased productivity. South Indian coffee was considered to be of superior quality. It was mostly of the arabica variety. Quoting from the Handbook of Commercial Information of India, it was pointed out that “the Coffee from certain Mysore estates commands higher prices than even so-called Mocha, much of which, if the truth were known, is Native cherry exported by dhow from Mangalore and Tellicherry”<sup>57</sup>. The districts found to be suitable for coffee cultivation in South India in early twentieth century were the hill tracts of Mysore, Coorg, the Shevaroyes, Palanis, Anamalais, South Travancore and Nilgiris<sup>58</sup>. We have already seen what happened to the nineteenth century coffee plantations in South Travancore. The early coffee estates had set backs in the Palanis also. The largest coffee tracts to survive were in Mysore, Coorg and the Shevaroyes. With the onset of widespread plant diseases, even Mysore, Coorg and Shevaroyes were in search of disease-

resistant varieties. An attempt was made with a hybrid, a cross between coffee liberica and coffee arabica. This produced a plant which was largely disease-resistant and yielded considerably more than the individual liberica and arabica varieties. In 1890 a “shade” consisting of rows of silver oak-trees, interspersed with dadap (lithospermo crythrine) was introduced to contain borer attack. Robusta coffee also was tried but it did not succeed in established coffee areas where the cultivation was in high altitudes.<sup>59</sup>

By twentieth century robusta area started picking up, especially in the lower altitudes. It was found to be cheaper in upkeep, its labour requirements for harvesting did not clash with the labour requirements of paddy, and it was almost wholly pest and disease resistant. It was grown in almost all plantation districts below 3500 feet. In later years it developed as a small-holder crop even in the foot hills of Travancore; accounting for a considerable portion of the coffee in the six percent small holdings estimated in the 1940s. Meanwhile arabica was confined to districts north of Nilgiris at elevations above 3000 feet.<sup>60</sup> Some area under coffee survived in Wayanad. Wayanad was described as the “main centre of (coffee) production” earlier. But the competition from Brazil drove down the price of Wayanad coffee. The Malabar Gazetteer of 1908 said that “there has been some improvement since, and coffee is still the staple product of the Wayanad plantations; but it pays only on the most favourably situated estates and only with the most careful cultivation”. It further recorded that between 1893 to 1903 the area under coffee in Wayanad decreased from 20,096 acres to 5,477 acres and “it is gradually being supplanted by tea”<sup>61</sup>

It is important to remember that Wayanad is divided into two, to Nilgiri-Wayanad and Malabar-Wayanad,<sup>62</sup> the former being on the eastern side of the Western Ghats bordering Kerala State. There, both

coffee and tea were grown at elevations between 3000 to 4000 feet and these estates were interspersed with paddy lands and a fair amount of dry cultivation. In the Malabar side of Wayanad, which is of lower elevation, it is tea that is mainly cultivated, after the devastation brought about by the crisis years of late nineteenth century. It should also be remembered that Wayanad was known upto the end of the nineteenth century as a great pepper growing centre<sup>63</sup> and pepper used to be grown as a supplementary crop along with coffee even by European planters. With the decline of coffee and the emergence of tea as an alternative, coffee and pepper were abandoned, quite extensively. But in the Nilgiri area both arabica and new robusta coffee survived well. There were obvious advantages arising from an absence of conflict between paddy and coffee harvesting and the existence of clearly marked dry season. It was reported from Kotagiri, a hill-station in the Nilgiris in early twentieth century, that in addition to a number of coffee estates there were a “very large number of small patches of coffee owned by natives”<sup>64</sup>. In the later wave of robusta coffee, in Malabar-Wayanad also indigenous cultivators participated; but not in any significant numbers earlier.

Mysore managed to maintain its coffee because in the hilly region of the State the soil was very productive and provided excellent yields of rice, pepper, coffee, areca-nuts, cardamoms, lemons and oranges simultaneously. Practically all areas cultivated by plantation crops were formerly evergreen or mixed forests; which were largely uninhabited. But among them the lower areas of the west coast and districts north of Nilgiris had local population growing rice and arecanut.<sup>65</sup> Following the coffee disease the experiments with a hybrid variety and eventually with robusta coffee, could have solved the problem of harvesting of arabica coffee clashing with that of paddy, in these areas. Robusta’s harvesting as already seen, fits in well with the harvesting of paddy and the same labourers can be used both for paddy and coffee.<sup>66</sup> This was a



particular boon to small holders who obviously in Mysore were engaged in coffee and paddy and other crops at the same time. In the upper regions where such simultaneous cropping of coffee and paddy cannot be done, arabica persisted. It was reported that “the holdings of a large majority of the farmers in Southern India are very small - say from 2 to 10 or 12 acres - and the number of those who possess sufficient capital (to raise plantation crops) is almost infinitesimal...”<sup>67</sup> In addition, a clearly marked dry season helps coffee, and it was available in Mysore as well as Nilgiris. These are the conditions under which coffee in general and small-holding coffee in particular survived in Mysore and Nilgiris.

In the meantime in Central Travancore in the height of the coffee crisis, the predominantly European proprietary planters were forced to leave an extensive area unworked. E.J. Chisholm, Honorary Secretary of Travancore Planters Association in a letter dated 16 June 1888 wrote to the Dewan of Travancore<sup>68</sup> that he does not think that any of the land owners on the Hills have ‘abandoned’ their holding in the literal sense of the word, but there are many portions on nearly every Estate which for one reason or another have been left uncultivated. He pointed out that “tea is making rapid strides on the Hills”, and if it is offered the type of governmental support that coffee received earlier, the same estates can be “opened out as Tea Gardens, giving good returns to the country and their owners”. This seems to be what actually materialised. In the process of the shift from coffee to tea, the proprietary planters also disappeared from the scene. This was due to various reasons. They found it difficult to meet the requirement of larger initial investment and working capital. The annual labour requirement for tea was much higher in contrast to the seasonal requirement for coffee and individual planters would have found it difficult to withstand recurrent fluctuations in international prices<sup>69</sup>.

Six major companies established before 1900 are found to operate in the twentieth century in the Kerala region.<sup>70</sup> Managing Agencies and/or coastal firms<sup>71</sup> which, in the coffee era confined to providing services to the plantation owners; started taking a direct interest in the planting side of the business. Increased labour requirements of tea was a major factor as already mentioned. In Southern Travancore where the labour recruitment was largely from among the community of converts,<sup>72</sup> it need not have been much of a problem unless the general working population declined. This seems not to have happened<sup>73</sup>. Wayanad got migrant labour from Mysore, particularly driven by famine and food scarcity<sup>74</sup>. In central Travancore, plantation labour was recruited from the neighbouring Tamil districts<sup>75</sup>. The earlier dependence on Travancorean labour, which would have been sufficient for the purposes of coffee cultivation was not enough for the large scale tea planting. Recruitment of labour from elsewhere must have been an important problem for individual owners. All these factors together worked towards the elimination of proprietary planters in Central Travancore. Since this region did not have much indigenous cultivation, the chapter of early coffee was practically closed.

Some coffee area survived in Wayanad even after the crisis years of late nineteenth century. But here too the tendency was to shift to tea. With this shift many of the proprietary planters are likely to have disappeared. As far as indigenous cultivators of coffee in Wayanad are concerned, there is little evidence either way. Their presence is likely to have been marginal in the earliest phase itself. But later on when robusta coffee appeared on the scene they might have participated in greater numbers. In Central as well as in North Travancore - which did not have any early coffee history worth talking about - small holders and indigenous cultivators had emerged in the twentieth century. In Southern Travancore, where both the indigenous and European proprietary planters

practically disappeared in late nineteenth century, at least indigenous small holders had appeared in the twentieth century. This will account for the six percent of the coffee area estimated to be under small-holdings in Travancore in the 1940s. In Mysore, Shevaroy and Nilgiris both large and small holdings in coffee survived due to the positive responses adopted by the sector in facing the crisis in the nineteenth century. Apart from the experiments with regard to planting material and shade, the cultivators derived benefits from the environment too. Clearly defined dry season was available along with the possibility of raising different crops simultaneously. Malabar-Wayanad and Travancore were comparatively disadvantaged in these respects and they were more easily persuaded to shift to tea.

### **Alternative Crops**

In retrospect we know that the European planting interests in Central Travancore area shifted to tea along with the proprietary planters being forced to sell or mortgage their coffee interests to tea companies. We also know that at a later stage, mainly Syrian Christian farmers from Travancore entered the plantation sector, particularly into natural rubber cultivation, to become the leaders in that enterprise.<sup>76</sup> They did not enter tea for obvious reasons. This was not due to lack of State support. As early as 1888, by `Notification No.8178 dated 8th Mithunam, 1063 ME<sup>77</sup> government made it clear that the benefits of the expanding tea cultivation in Peermade and other places are not forthcoming to the indigenous cultivators, because it is difficult for them to go to these regions to stay and cultivate. Therefore, the government was willing to allot suitable lands found in lower elevations under the same provisions as for waste lands, granted for plantations. For this, indigenous cultivators were asked to make their applications to Cutcheries at Taluks [Mandapathumvathukal] and Divisions. In spite of such support, they

certainly would have found it difficult to compete with large tea companies as European proprietary planters have themselves found. But what prevented them from entering coffee, in which proprietary planters were dominant? After all, they were already involved in production and trade of other cash crops and they came largely from central Kerala region which was adjacent to the Central Travancore plantation district.

Among those who have analysed the subject, Robin Jeffrey<sup>78</sup> has said that “throughout the 1870s and 1880s... through European planters, (the Syrian Christians) got a cursory introduction to cash crops and the plantation system... as planting increased on the hills east of Kottayam, young Syrians found employment as clerks, supervisors and artisans on the estates, or as clerks in export merchants’ offices in Alleppy or Cochin...” He further said that “having been introduced to the skills and opportunities of planting, a few Syrians took up coffee land around Peermade on their own account”<sup>79</sup>. He pointed out that at least two of the land grants that the Syrians got were of 500 and 800 acres; much too big to be considered small holdings. Though, those who got these grants left, when coffee failed after 1879, he believes that some of them “persevered on the hills and were in a position to take advantage of tea when it began to prosper in the 1890s...” But Kooiman has quoted Mateer writing in 1883<sup>80</sup> that “few, if any...Syrian Christians availed themselves of the opening which the Coffee enterprises offered”. Further, basing on The Planting Directory of 1878 he has pointed out that the names of owners, agents or managers of the 30 coffee estates in Peermade listed there, seem to be of non-Indian origin. Of the two contrasting opinions Kooiman’s seems to be more plausible. First of all, there is hardly any memory of early Syrian Christian coffee planting among the community members associated with planting. This is not to deny that there were exceptional cases. Cheriyaath [1836-1873] of Palakkunnel family in

Changanacherry collaborated with James Daragh, the pioneering foreign entrepreneur in Travancore, to grow sugarcane and coffee in Kuthrapally and Karukachal in the midlands. Karukachal Vellikavu Purayidam was known as Kappiparambu or coffee garden<sup>81</sup>. A few Syrians could have got jobs as clerks, supervisors etc in plantations as well as in trading companies dealing in plantation products. When Jeffrey says that “by 1879... the prosperity of Kottayam traders was obvious and owed `so much to the coffee Interest...which gives...markets for their produce (and)... employment for their bandies and bullocks”<sup>82</sup> he is correct only in a general sense. The plantation sector definitely brought prosperity to Kottayam, a Syrian Christian stronghold and eventually led Syrians into plantations. But it is far from clear that they were attracted in a significant manner to coffee cultivation. They are unlikely to be involved in early tea cultivation as well. As already seen, even European proprietary planters (missionaries included) found it difficult to withstand the pressure from joint stock companies.<sup>83</sup>

The central Kerala region, from where Syrians came, was also an important pepper growing area. The luxuriant growth of pepper in the State of Travancore is recorded to be in the taluks of Minachil, Kottayam, Changanacherry, Muvattupuzha, Thodupuzha, Pathanapuram, Kottarakara, Chiranyinkeezhu and Nedumangad.<sup>84</sup> Of these, except for the last two, other areas were for years, Syrian Christian strongholds. Perennial crops in Kerala were of two types, one set consisting of coconut, jack fruit, mango and pepper which could be grown on garden land without any special form of organisation or investment for the purpose, and the other of tea, coffee and rubber which required more careful preparation of land and management. Broad-based commercialisation of agriculture was possible also through the cultivation of the former in small-sized holdings<sup>85</sup>. The Syrian Christians were engaged in the expansion of the area under the former set of crops, particularly of pepper.

Among them, at least the non-Catholic faction<sup>86</sup> had their relationship with the Protestant missionaries engaged in plantations. What then explains their lack of interest in coffee? At the same time, converts to Christianity in South Travancore had moved into coffee with much less a tradition of cash crop cultivation. For the converts, social mobility was a problem which need not have been such an acute problem for Syrian Christians. But was it the only reason?

The narratives of Joseph the Indian in 1500 A.D itself talk of “pepper trees are nowhere in India as numerous as” in the hinterland of Kodungallur in Central Kerala<sup>87</sup>. P.J. Thomas interprets that when the European traveller, John de Maringoly who visited Quilon in 1320 A.D. records that the whole world’s pepper came from there and that the Christians of St. Thomas were the proprietors of that pepper, it is not meant that these Christians were the sole proprietors, but must have been the chief wholesalers from whom foreign traders bought it.<sup>88</sup> There were many such indications of Syrian Christian presence not only in production but also in the trade of pepper, in early times. Between 16th and 18th centuries the production of pepper, even in hinterland villages got streamlined under the expanded demand emerging from European trade in which local rulers were also interested<sup>89</sup>. Pepper gardens along with gardens of other cash crops developed around this period. In the 18th century the traders developed their own system of procurement of the commodity. Such expansion in pepper cultivation at least in the central Kerala region, occurred on the higher slopes which required comparatively greater outlays of investment. The lower slopes are likely to have been already cultivated<sup>90</sup>. The money for investments to open up and maintain gardens at higher slopes could have flowed in from different quarters, particularly from merchants and their agents who; to ensure pepper supplies were willing to grant advance payments, on future crops. The system of advance payments really played a secondary credit

role.<sup>91</sup> The farmers were not only able to sell their crops on the spot but also at the mushrooming of local markets all around. This led to a situation in eighteenth century when a monopoly system of purchasing pepper was introduced in Travancore, there were 70 points where the crops could be delivered.<sup>92</sup>

In spite of these advantageous factors, pepper production had to face serious reversals in the eighteenth century. This was due to various reasons but primarily because of the monopoly procurement that was imposed by the Travancore government. The strength of royal or state control over trade is indicated by a communication from the Raja of Travancore to the Dutch Commander at Cochin prohibiting the sale of pepper to the Dutch<sup>93</sup> by the Christians of Karapuram, a place midway between Purakkad (which was replaced eventually by Alleppey as the premier port town of Travancore) and Cochin. By the nineteenth century, there was strong British pressure against the monopoly system. A British Commercial Agent was appointed at Alleppey to control foreign trade.<sup>94</sup> The British became the 'sole' buyers, thereby eliminating the advantage derived by Travancore from its ability to sell pepper to the highest bidder. In 1860 the pepper monopoly was abolished.<sup>95</sup> Even before that, authorized and unauthorized traders appeared on the scene outbidding the government Commercial Department which found it difficult to make advance payments due to practical depletion of the treasury. Much of the pepper bought and sold in this trade was "smuggled" out of the State.<sup>96</sup> The Syrian Christians among whom there were traders and farmers and traders-cum-farmers of pepper and who were absorbed into the monopoly procurement system earlier; enjoyed a relative freedom provided by "free trade". In other words conditions were conducive for them to be involved deeply in the production and trade of pepper in this period. Newly introduced coffee, whatever the promises of its profits were<sup>97</sup>, could not induce them to abandon pepper. Their involvement in pepper is likely

to have inhibited the largely Syrian Christian producers from entering coffee.

This is broadly indicated by the two tables given below; one giving the total value and percentage distribution of the chief exports of Travancore and the other, the relative shares of some commodities in the composition of the export basket of the State. By the turn of the century Cochin reports to have no pepper gardens.<sup>98</sup> Travancore also underwent drastic changes in export shares of different commodities in this period as the Table I shows. Coconut and coconut products become foremost among Travancore's exports. In 1870-71 it is pepper, cardamom and turmeric together which has the second highest percentage share with 15 percent, while coffee, tea and rubber together has only 8.3 percentage. In 1899-1900, while coconuts and coconut products still maintain the lead, and pepper, cardamom and turmeric maintains its relative share fairly intact, the share of coffee, tea and rubber declines drastically to only 0.4 percent. This decline is obviously due to the coffee crisis because by then rubber has only appeared on the scene and tea exports could also been marginal. It is important to note that pepper with other cash crops is holding its share well intact. But since then the share of the "plantation" crops steadily increases as the Table I indicates. Table II on the other hand shows that even in the 1870-80 decade when coffee's share in the export basket was higher than that of pepper, the difference is not that great. But ever since that, in every one of the three succeeding decades pepper clearly out paces coffee in terms of export share.



**Table 1: Total Value and Percentage Distribution of the Chief Exports of Travancore, 1870-71 to 1938-39.**

ITEMS	EXPORTS			
	1870-71	1899-1900	1919-1920	1938-1939
1	2	3	4	5
Coconuts and Coconut Products	57.1	52.6	36.9	37.2
Coffee, Tea and Rubber	8.3	0.4	33.5	30.4
Pepper, Cardamom and Turmeric	15.0	14.0	10.1	7.7
Total value in Rupees Lakhs	65.37	169.5	576.3	958.0

Source: Report of the Administration of Travancore 1870-71, 1884-85, Statistics of Travancore 1910, and Trade Statistics of Travancore, 1938-9.

**Table II: Commodity Composition of the Export Basket of Travancore, 1870-80 to 1900-1910: Shares of Coffee And Pepper**

Commodity	1870-80	1880-90	1890-1900	1900-1910
Coffee	6.645	2.862	0.494	0.561
Pepper	3.547	5.723	8.648	9.142
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Statistics of Travancore and Trade Statistics of Travancore  
Several Issues.

While such a plausible hypothesis can be raised to explain the non-involvement of indigenous cultivators in coffee in central Kerala, a similar explanation cannot be put forward for Wayanad. This question is raised in a different form by Thomas W. Shea Jr.<sup>99</sup> He asks why even with centuries of trade contacts with the rest of the world, there was no systematic attempt to rationalize agriculture production. In his attempts to answer this question, he points out that the Muslims and the Gujaratis have a virtual monopoly of the lucrative spice trade from which they are able to siphon off virtually all of the profits. He identifies a “sprinkling of large pepper growers in the ‘North’ of Malabar”. Except for them and a few others, even in the middle of twentieth century, all other cash crop growers are involved in a personalized system of trade. As a result neither market nor credit integration between the export-traders and producers are possible. The large or independent pepper growers of the north have been identified by Buchannan, an English visitor to these parts at the end of eighteenth century. Among them Mapillas or Muslims were prominent.<sup>100</sup> In other parts, an investor is likely to have faced tremendous difficulties to obtain a clear title, in the heavily infudeated and subdivided land. Therefore inter-sectoral shift between trade and production, was practically impossible. This might have, besides the profits made in trade, forced traders not to shift to production. This seems a possibility. Nothing more precise can be said at this stage of research.

## **Conclusion**

It is obvious that absence of indigenous small growing tradition will not be able to explain the decimation of coffee under crisis, by itself. Even the European proprietary planters in coffee, were forced to succumb to pressures emanating from the emergence of a vertical system of production, distribution and marketing of tea. What was important was

that tea was found to be suitable for the early coffee lands. The Syrian Christians who were, by other indications, well positioned to have joined coffee production, did not; because they were already engaged in another and more attractive venture; that of pepper production and trade which were lately freed from a monopoly system. Obviously they would not have faced any opposition from the State administration which was (theoretically at least), not against local participation. Even if the Syrian Christians had joined coffee production, whether they would have been able to withstand the pressures from plant diseases, depression and competition from Brazil, is doubtful. There were converts to Christianity who found a nearly perfect route of escape from social exclusion in coffee cultivation. The missionaries encouraged them in this venture. It contributed to social change, in southern Travancore at least. But their long-term dreams also had a major set-back when the whole coffee enterprise in south-west India declined. Obviously they nor their missionary friends could revive it. In Wayanad also, coffee in general and proprietary planters in particular, suffered during the crisis period. In and around the region there were Muslim spice traders and independent pepper cultivators who could have joined the ranks of coffee growers. But they had to surmount many structural difficulties. Besides, they, as a social group were not very close to the Europeans as the Syrian Christians were. In such a situation, there was little possibility for them to enter plantation coffee, which was a "European crop". While in Wayanad, most of the proprietary planters moved to tea; in the neighbouring Nilgiri - Wayanad area, small holders in coffee survived due to their ability to grow other crops simultaneously. This enhanced their ability to experiment with new varieties of planting material and shades, which either prevented or reduced plant diseases. A similar case existed in Mysore and Coorg too. In neighbouring island of Ceylon, (along with regions like Travancore) much of coffee production was for

exports. Therefore, the depression in international prices and competition from Brazil particularly affected coffee. As a result extensive coffee areas were either abandoned or shifted to more “profitable” tea. The abandonment and shift to tea was so extensive that when on a later date coffee prices turned in favour of Ceylonese and Travancorean coffee producers, neither of these regions could profit from it; as other coffee regions of South India could.

## END NOTES

1. Somerset Playne (Compiler), Southern India, Its History, People, Commerce, and Industrial Resources, The Foreign and Colonial Compiling and Publishing Co., London, 1914-1915, p. 309 , Labour Investigation Committee, Govt. of India: Report on the Enquiry into Conditions of Labour in Plantations in India, [DV Rege ICS Chairman], Manager GOI Publication Branch, Delhi, 1949, p.3.
2. Heather Lovatt, A Short History of Peermade Vandiperiyar District, Vandiperiyar, 1972, [mimeo], p.3
3. Paul Erik Baak, Plantation Production and Political Power, Plantation Development in Southwest India in a Long-Term Historical Perspective, C.1743-1963, Academisch Proefschrift, University of Amsterdam, 1995, pp. 40-41.
4. In 1797 the East India Company opened out at this place, a plantation of about 1000 acres for the cultivation of special products, such as coffee, pepper, cinnamon, nutmeg, cassia, cotton, sugarcane and sandalwood plants, and appointed Mr. Murdoch Brown who had originated the scheme, to be the “overseer and manager” of the estate. The estate was held by the family of Brown on a lease of 99 years granted by the company on the 30th April 1817. See V. Chappu Menon, “Anjarakandi Amsam”, in William Logan, Malabar (2 vols), vol.II, Madras, 1887, [Rep]. Govt. Press, 1951, App.XXI, p.cclxix.
5. The first systematic attempt to cultivate coffee in Cochin was made in 1838, when a few plantations were started by European planters on the banks of the Alwaye and Chalakkudi rivers. Between 1862 and 1870, over 8000 acres of land on the Nelliampati plateau were assigned for coffee of which 3,300 acres were planted and 18 plantations were opened by Europeans and one indigenous planter. Toward the end of the century the estates began to decline. With the exception of three or four, they were in a neglected condition and was reported to be likely to be abandoned soon. In the 1880s tea began to be grown in four of the coffee estates, and over sixty acres were planted with it. It also did not make any progress owing probably to the heavy outlay required on machinery and buildings. Tea gardens were also practically abandoned. See C. Achyutha Menon, The Cochin State Manual Government Press, Ernakulam, 1911, p.243. also see T.W. Venn: Cochin-Malabar, Palms and Pageants, Pierce Leslie, Calicut, 1954, p.177.
6. Heather Lovatt: op.cit. pp.6-7.

7. Dick Kooiman, Conversion and Social Equality in India, The London Missionary Society in South Travancore in the 19th Century, Manohar, New Delhi, 1989, p.118.
8. See Eira Dalton, The Baker Family in India, CMS Press, Kottayam, 1963 for further details.
9. Planters obtained rights to 15,118 acres and 6 European planters were working in the State of Travancore by the August of 1862. See, Robin Jeffrey, The Decline of Nayar Dominance, Society and Politics in Travancore, 1847-1908, Vikas Publication House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, etc. 1976, p.98.
10. In Travancore itself at least three major plantation districts emerged; including the Kannan Devan Hills in North Travancore; but for the coffee period only two of them are important. They were Central Travancore District including the Peermade Hills, Minachil and Changanacherry; and the South Travancore District including the sub-districts of Shencotta, Ponnudi and Ashambo. See V. Nagam Aiyah, The Travancore State Manual Govt. Press, Trivandrum, 1906, (in 3 Vols), Vol.III, p.74. Part of the last mentioned district is in present Tamil Nadu. See the Map in Appendix.1. Labour Investigation Committee, Report...op.cit. pp.100-102 gives the following list of South Indian plantation districts: 1) South Travancore 2) Mundakayam 3) Central Travancore 4) Kannan Devan (Munnar) 5) Annamallais 6) Nelliampathis 7) Cochin 8) Nilgiris 9) Malabar 10) Nilgiri - Wynad 11) Malabar-Wynad 12) Coorg 13) Mysore 14) Shevaroyis 15) Palanis.
11. Dick Kooiman, op.cit.pp.117-8.
12. Somerset Playne: op.cit. p.221. For details of the beginning of coffee plantations in Wayanad, the attack of stem borer in 1865, leaf disease in 1875, and the fall of prices due to increased production in other countries, See C.A. Innes, Malabar, Madras District Gazatteers, [ed. by F B Ivans], Govt. Press, Madras, 1951, (First ed. 1908), p.225.
13. D.R Gadgil, The Industrial Evolution of India in Recent Times, OUP, Bombay etc. 1946 [first ed.1924] p.81. Ever since then Brazil was able to control coffee prices largely "with its cheap production and enormous turn-out". Somerset Playne: op.cit. p.222. also see C. Achyutha Menon: op.cit. p.243 who mentions the adverse effect of Brazilian coffee on the coffee cultivation in Cochin.
14. Paul Erik Baak, op.cit. p.53.
15. See V. Nagam Aiyah: [op.cit pp.73-74] says that around 1860s Mr. McIver, Superintendent of Government Cinchona Plantation in the Nilgiris was at the disposal of Travancore Government and on inspecting

Peermade for Cinchona reported unfavourably. But Heather Lovatt [op.cit.p.15] has pointed out that between 1870 and 1880 there was wide planting of Cinchona when quinine was selling at ten to twelve shillings an ounce.

16. See for details Tharian George K and P.K. Michael Tharakan, "Penetration of Capital into a Traditional Economy: The Case of Tea Plantations in Kerala, 1880-1950", Studies in History, New Series, Vol.2, No:2, July-December 1984, pp.199-230.
17. Labour Investigation Committee, [Report ..., op.cit, p. 96] says "that a small holding may be defined as a holding on which plantation crops are grown by a cultivator and his family with the help of occasional outside labour". This definition will not suit the European proprietary planters who were small only relatively. Only in that sense they are also included in our discussion. To understand the difficulty involved in distinguishing between small holdings and estates, let us draw upon further from the same Report. On page 99 it is said that "it is very difficult to strike the dividing line between a small holding and an estate, which is the generic term for a large holding under a plantation crop". The Plantating Directory of Southern India has classified holdings of 10 acres or more as estates. The Payment of Wages Act, 1936, defines a plantation as any estate which is maintained for the purpose of growing cinchona, rubber, coffee or tea and on which 25 or more persons are employed for that purpose. The Assam Maternity Benefit Act 1944 defines a plantation as an estate in which ten or more women are employed at any time during a year. The Travancore Public Health Bill 1943 defines an estate as "any agricultural land where there is a labour population of more than twenty persons who are resident on the land for not less than thirty consecutive days in the year. The Association of Planters of Travancore wanted a plantation to be defined as an area of hundred acres or more, or any agricultural land with more than 25 resident labourers. The Mysore Planters Association and the Indian Planters Association of Mysore wanted estates below 100 acres to be considered as small holdings.
18. J. Edwin Craig Jr., "Ceylon", in W Arthur Lewis [ed], Tropical Development 1880-1913, Study in Economic Progress, Allen, London, 1970, p.226.
19. Somerset Playne: op.cit.p.219.
20. Labour Investigation Committee, Report ... op.cit.p.96.
21. Dick Kooiman, op.cit, p.32.
22. J. Edwin Craig, Jr: op.cit 224.5.

23. Paul Erik Baak, op.cit, p.41.
24. Ibid.
25. “Agreement dated 27th Mithunam 1024 ME (Malayalam/Malabar Era) [1849], Huzur Records”, The Travancore Land Revenue Manual [In 5 vols], Vol.V, Selection of Old Records, Govt. Press, Trivandrum, 1916, p.501. The agreement was renewed at least twice more in the 19th Century itself; once in 1852, by the Agreement dated 6th Meenam, 1027 ME (Huzur Record), [p.509] in favour of Messers Binny and Co. Madras and once in 1877 by Agreement 6th Medom 1052 ME (Huzur Records) [p.657] in favour of Travancore Plantation Company.
26. Huzur Central Vernacular Records, Anu of Huzur Order No.784 dated 10th Edavom 1013 ME [1838] The Travancore Land ..., Op.cit.Vol.V, p.443. Also Paul Erik Back, op.cit.p.43.
27. Terms like cash, commercial and plantation crops are normally used synonymously. Here a distinction is drawn between non-plantation cash crops and plantation crops.
28. The Travancore Land ... op.cit, Vol.V, p. 362.
29. The Travancore Land... op.cit, Vol.V, p.295 also Ibid., Vol.IV, Land Revenue History, p.253.
30. See Uma Devi, “State Policy towards the cultivation of cash crops in Travancore, 1860-1920”, Paper presented at the Seminar on Commercialisation in Indian Agriculture held at the CDS, Trivandrum, November 23-25, 1981 and also S. Uma Devi, Plantation Economies of the Third World, Himalaya Publishing House, Bombay etc. 1989, Ch.II..
31. See P.K. Michael Tharakan: “Dimensions and Characteristics of the Migration of Farmers from Travancore to Malabar, 1930-1950”, Journal of Kerala Studies, Vol.V, Part.II, June, 1978.
32. The Travancore Land ....., op.cit, Vol. V. p. 432.
33. Robin Jeffrey, op.cit, p.100.
34. See Royal Proclamation dated 28th Medom 1050 ME, (Travancore Government Gazettee) [1875], (p.652), Royal Proclamation dated 31st Medom 1052 ME [1887], (Travancore Govt. Gazattee, (p.660), Royal Proclamation dated 6th Edavom 1066 ME [1891] (Travancore Govt. Gazette, (p.1007), Huzur Sadhanom No.4325 dated 6th Meenum 1076 ME (1891), Huzur Central Vernacular Records, (p.1111), Travancore



Land... op.cit., Vol.V. A set of Rules passed on 13th Medom 1040 ME (24th April 1865) for the Sale of Wastelands on the Travancore Hills, P.374, Agreement dated 14th Vrischigom 1054 ME (28th Nov.1878) p.434, in Travancore Land Revenue...op.cit., Vol.IV. It is clear from these documents that the major concern of the Govt. was to get increased revenues either through export duties or through land tax. Given a chance the planters preferred a reduced duty to enhanced land-tax. [See Royal Proclamation dated 31st Medom 1052 ME [12th May 1877], p.429 of Vol.IV]. This is understandable because they had to pay duty only on their current produce. Otherwise they have to pay tax for the whole land-cultivated and uncultivated-under their possession. It is possible that the planters were relectant to furnish details of land under their possession and under different crops for the same reason.

35. “On the 21st Edavom 1040 ME [2nd June 1865] the famous Pattom Proclamation which has ever since been recognised as the Magna Carta of the Travancore ryot was issued. It enfranchised the Sirkar Pattom lands and converted a large body of the agricultural ryots from the position of tenants at-will to that of full proprietors”, The Travancore Land... op.cit., Vol.IV, p.374.
36. See Tharian George K and P.K. Michael Tharakan: op.cit and Dick Kooiman: op.cit, pp.119-20.
37. Uma Devi, (1981) op.cit.
38. Dick Kooiman, op.cit, p.123.
39. “By Regulation II of 1040, passed on the 13th Medom 1040 ME [24th April 1865] a definite procedure was laid down for the adjudication of claims to waste lands proposed to be granted for the cultivation of coffee... The Regulation was part of a general scheme then introduced for the encouragement and promotion of the coffee industry in the State”. See The Travancore Land... pp.cit., Vol.IV, p.373.
40. First on Acting capacity See Ibid, p.349.
41. Ibid.p.369.
42. Jan Kieniewicz, “Pepper Gardens and Market in Precolonial Malabar”, Middle East and Indian Ocean, Societe D’Historise de L’Orient,, Paris, n.d.,pp.1-36.
43. Dick Kooiman: op.cit. Ch.VI, Most of the information in this section is derived from his writing.

44. Ibid. p.126.
45. Kanganis were labour contractors or labour recruiting agents.
46. Jaiprakash Raghaviah, Basel Mission Industries in Malabar and South Canara: 1834-1914, A Study of its Social and Economic Impact, Gian Pub.House, New Delhi, 1990.
47. K.K. Kusuman, Slavery in Travancore, Kerala Historical Society, Trivandrum, Trivandrum, 1973.
48. R.J. Yesudas, A People's Revolt in Travancore: A Backward Class Movement for Social Freedom, Kerala Historical Society, Trivandrum 1975.
49. P.K. Michael Tharakan, "Socio-economic Factors in Educational Development Case of Nineteenth Century Travancore", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.XIX, No.45 and 46, November 10th and 17th, 1984.
50. Dick Kooiman, op.cit, p.132.
51. Kooiman questions the claim made by Reverend Mateer writing in the 19th century that "European push and activity have moved and guided the inert natives" [p.133]. He makes another claim in the same page that the small holder coffee production ie. production by local peasants on plots smaller than 10 acres preceded the plantations, admittedly on inadequate data (p.134). He thinks it was "just as in Ceylon and elsewhere" [p.133]. One may wonder whether South Travancore ever reached the proportions of Ceylon in this matter: for a LMS source referred to by Kooiman says that in 1859 there were 46 little coffee gardens in the neighbourhood of Kandy and another source in 1878 says that there were 82 Sinhalese, 33 Chettiars (a Tamil Caste) and 20 Tamils and several others as owners of regular plantations, apart from hundreds of native coffee gardens.
52. Ibid. p. 134. Footnote 54.
53. A.V. Jose: Agricultural Labour in Kerala, An Historical cum Statistical Analysis Ph.D thesis, University of Kerala, 1980, Ch.II.
54. "By notification dated 30th October 1884 (16th Thulam 1060 ME) it was declared that proprietors of coffee lands were at liberty to cultivate on their estates other products than coffee....". The Travancore Land... op.cit., Vol.IV, p.470.
55. D.R. Gadgil, op.cit, p.82. Somerset Playne, op.cit p.222, in 1914-15

wrote that the price realized for coffee during the past thirty years have undergone many fluctuations”. Compared to 1893 price, in 1900 it was too low but “since then it has steadily risen”.

56. D.R. Gadgil, op.cit, pp.117-9.
57. Labour Investigation Committee, Report... op.cit., p.9.
58. Somerset Playne, op.cit.p.221.
59. Ibid. pp.221, 258.
60. Labour Investigation Committee,Report ... op.cit, p.47.
61. C.A. Innes: op.cit.p.225.
62. Labour Investigation Committee, Report ... op.cit., pp.101.
63. Somerset Playne: Op.cit.p.227.
64. Ibid. p.240.
65. Labour, Investigation Committee, GOI: Report on an Enquiry ...op.cit.97.
66. Ibid. p.100
67. Somerset Playne, op.cit.p.296.
68. Tharian George K. and P.K. Michael Tharakan, op.cit. pp.203-4.
69. Labour Investigation Committee, Report ... op.cit, p.106 pointed out that “The tea planter...requires more capital than the coffee planter”.
70. Memorandum submitted by the UPASI to the Commission of Enquiry into the Foreign-owned Plantations in Kerala, UPASI, Coonoor, 1970, App.I, referred to by Tharian George K and P.K. Michael Tharakan, op.cit.
71. Most Managing Agencies were Firms operating from the coast of India. See WKM Langley, “The Coast Firms”, in SG Speer (ed), Planters’ Association of South India (1893-1953), Coonoor, 1954.
72. Dick Kooiman [op.,cit pp.137-8] refers to the Administration Report of 1869-70 to say that “Coffee plantations and Public works department had ameliorated the condition of the ex-slaves...[while] in the more northern taluks the ex-slaves were said to be as yet too dependent on the landowners and too wanting in self-reliance to migrate to the distance of even a few days journey in search of other means of livelihood. A report

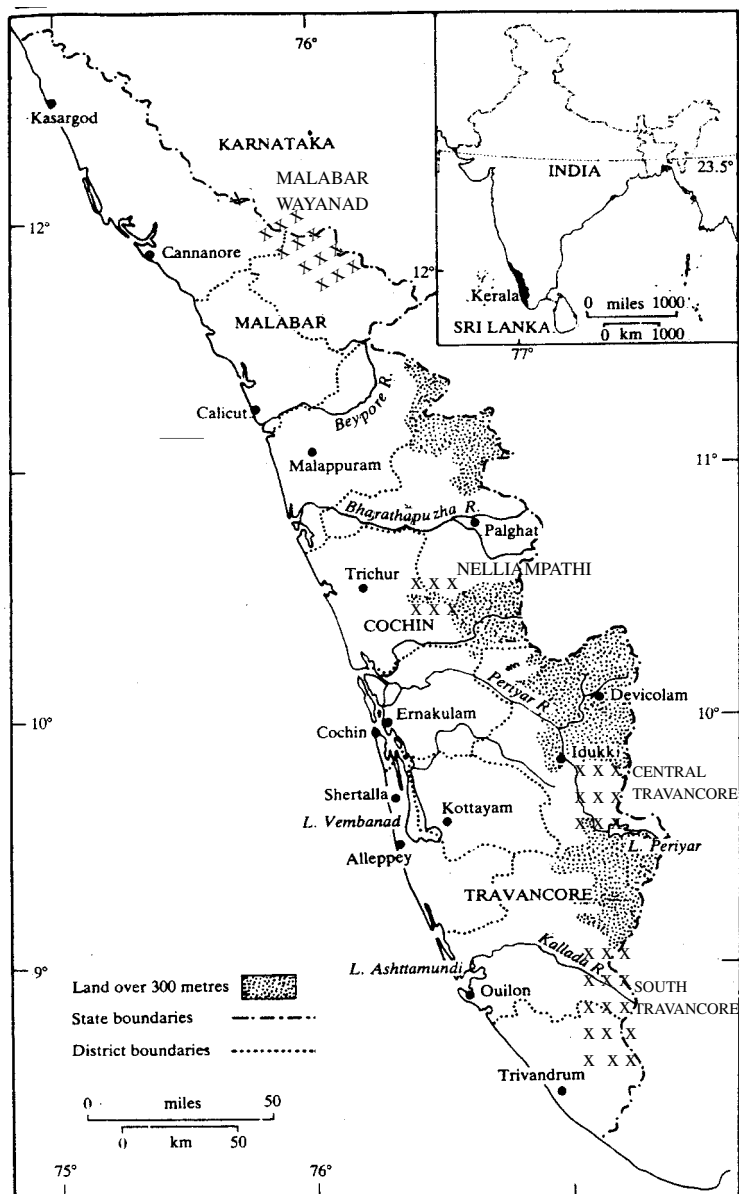
by the Dewan Peishkar of Padmanabhapuram...in 1873 [said that]many ex-slaves in his division were no longer in the service of their old masters, and went about for work just as other labourers, acquiring property in the shape of land, cattle and houses...almost all the coffee plantations in South Travancore held by Indians were owned by LMS converts. In their estates as well as in many others the leading positions of conductor or Kangany, writer and sometimes even manager were occupied by those who had received their education from the LMS... they usually recruited the necessary labour from among their own family and friends, we may assume that many Christians from South Travancore were working as Coolies in the plantations in the Ashambo Hills”.

73. Robin Jeffrey who pointed out the initial fears with this regard of the Travancore Government that if “high-paying European planters were allowed to establish themselves in the State”, was of the opinion that “the expansion of planting did not create the shortage of labour which the sirkar had feared, for the population was increasing rapidly”. *Op.cit*, 99-100.
74. J. Daniel Moor, “Plantation labour in Mysore, 1871-1941: An Historical Approach to Migration Analysis”, in N. Gerald Barrier [ed], The Census of British India, New Perspectives, Delhi, 1981.
75. Here the problem was one of local recruiting. As already mentioned and emphasised by Robin Jeffrey”... low caste Malayalis were reluctant to abandon their traditional occupations to go to the hills. Much of the labour came from the Tamil districts of British India and on some estates all the coolies were Tamilians”. [*op.cit*, p.100].
76. Paul Baak, “Out of the Shadows, into the Spot lights, The `Indigenous` Aspects of Plantation Development, the Case of the Emergence of Syrian Christian Planters in Princely Travancore in the First Half of the Twentieth Century”, Ininerario, 1994, pp.94-96.
77. Travancore Government Gazatte, The Travancore Land...*op.cit.*, Vol.V, p.914-4.
78. Robin Jeffrey, *op.cit*, pp.118, 126.
79. *Ibid*.p.126. Referred by Dick Koiman, *op.cit*, p.128 but slightly differently.
80. Dick Kooiman, *op.cit*.p.128.
81. Palakunnel Kudumbavum Kerala Krithavarum [Malayalam], Palakunnel Kudumba Charithram Editorial Board, Kottayam, 1979, pp.132, 155-6.

82. Robin Jeffrey: op.cit, p.127.
83. See Tharian George K and P.K. Michael Tharakan, op.cit.
84. T.K. Velu Pillai, The Travancore State Manual, State Gazatteer Dept., Trivandrum, 1996 (1940), Vol. 3, p.343.
85. K.N. Raj and Michael Tharakan: "Agrarian Reform in Kerala and its Impact on the Rural Economy - A Preliminary Assessment" in Ajit Kumar Ghose (ed) Agrarian Reform in Contemporary Developing Countries, Croom Helm and St. Martin's Press, London, New York, 1983, pp.31-90.
86. The Syrian Christians were divided subsequent to the arrival of European Missionaries into several factions, one accepting Roman Catholic affiliation.
87. Antony Vallavanthara, India in 1500 A.D., The Narratives of Joseph the Indian, Rishi, Mannanam, 1984, p.247.
88. P.J. Thomas, "Kerala's Trading Class", Journal of the Ramavarma Archacological Society, Vol.XIV, Reprinted and Pub, by The Kerala Sahitya Akademy, Trichur, 1980, pp.8-13.
89. Jan Keiniewicz, "The Portugese Factory and Trade in Pepper in Malabar in the 16th Century", Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol.VI, No.1, March, 1969, pp.61-84.
90. When Robin Jeffrey Says that "Travancore had no tradition of large gardens devoted solely to export crops" and that "Ryots grew a little pepper and sold it to the sirkar; hill tribes collected wild cardamoms", [op.cit p.127] it has to be contradicted as only partially true. For counter-evidence, See K.N.Ganesh, "Keralathinte Innalakal", (Malayalam), Cultural Publications Department, Govt. of Kerala, Trivandrum. 1997, pp.89-90, and Jan Kieniewicz. "Pepper Gardens...." op.cit p.12. For Pepper and for Cardamoms See The Travancore Land...., op.cit, Vol.V, p.337 where in the "Royal Proclamation dated 15th Medom 997 ME" (Huzur Central Vernacular Records) (1822) clearly says that besides the Tahisldar for Thodupuzha Mandapathumvathuckal (Taluk) a new Thasildar is appointed for matters relating to the Cardamom Hills and Cardamom Gardens. They are to cater to the mercheants, cultivators (Kudiyavanamar) including Malayadiyar [Persons belonging to Hill Tribes]. Obviously cardamoms were not only collected. Further V. Nagam Aiyah, TSM Op.cit, Vol.III, p.92 discusses a native system and a European System of cultivation and harvesting. Further, Jeffrey himself admits [op.cit, p.202] that the kinsmen of the Syrian Christians" in the lowlands... were already profiting from pepper...".

91. Jan Kieniewicz, "Pepper gardens..." op.cit, p.21.
92. Ibid. p.22.
93. 155/VOC 201-4222/NN2928/ON2820/Yr1759/ZEVENTENDE BOEK MALABAR/ Register der brevenen Paperon Van Malabar/Overgekomen/ 1759, Algemeen Rejkarchief, Hague.
94. Hans Schenk, Views on Alleppy, Socio-historical and Socio-spatial perspectives on an Industrial Port town in Kerala, South India, Academich Proefschrift, University of Amsterdam, 1986, p.36.
95. In 1855 itself a proclamation was issued abolishing the pepper monopoly. This was revised and issued again on 13th November 1860, V.Nagam Aiyah: TSM, op.cit Vol.I, pp.540-2. For details See. C.U. Aitchison (Compiler), A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads, Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries, Vol.V, Containing the Treaties etc. Relating to Madras and the Madras States, Central Publications Branch, GOI, Calcutta, 1930, Pp.202-240.
96. Paul E Baak, op.cit, 1995, p.39. T.W. Venn Says that "as the incidence of taxation increased on the commodity so did the smuggling fraternity flourish until in the 1850s, they became organised and daring bands", op.cit.p.179.
97. In 1842, it was estimated that the average produce per Coffee tree will be at the rate of 1 lb from the 6th year. So 10,000 trees would produce 10,000 lbs of Coffee which at Rs. 1 and 4 annas per lb. will aggregate Rs. 12,000. Annual average expenses for maintaining the plantations, including rent, plucking and preparing the produce was estimated at Rs.800. This meant a profit of nearly 11 percent. See T.W. Venn, op.cit., p.178.
98. See C. Achyuta Menon, op.cit. p.243.
99. Thomas W Shea Jr., "Barriers to Economic Development in Traditional Societies, Malabar, A Case Study", The Journal of Economic History, Vol.XIX, No.4, 1959, Pp.504-522.
100. Jan Kiewiewicz, "The Portugese Factory...." op.cit., p.74.

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