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## **Mapping, Surveying and Categorization: Locating Colonial Landscapes in Malabar**

This paper is an attempt to unravel the process of British engagements with nature through the methods of surveying and mapping, and how the colonial administration reshaped the landscapes of Malabar. Moreover, this study also explores the British administration's constant efforts to reconstruct the Malabar region into a governable space. Surveying and mapping were the central tools of this endeavour. These methods also helped the colonial power to weave the new regions into the British administration. The broader aim of this study is to trace out the British administration's efforts to transform the Malabar region into a governable landscape and locating the colonial landscapes in Malabar.

Nature can be understood in the totality of things including living and growing organisms. The nature and natural resources can be entered in the academic scenario with the growth and development of the Environmental History, the new emerged branch of discipline of History which mainly focuses on the study of the nature, natural resources and engagement with large historical process. By the onset of the new discipline hitherto unexplored areas of the man's engagements with his or her natural world has come to forefront of academic discussions. Environmental History hence explores colonial intervention and attitudes towards environment.

The idea of a politicized environment is thus central to the distinctive contribution of political ecology to an understanding of the politics of environmental change in the Third World.<sup>i</sup> The full implications of that idea nonetheless bear reiteration. It is, above all, a specific acknowledgement of the growing human production of 'nature', and the political forces behind such production.

Environmental history was first constituted in the United States and planted its roots in the 1960's and 1970s, as a part of environmental movements. In the 1990's, historians' increasingly widespread recognition of environmental history is impacted by the internationalization of subjects of research, which encourages a certain number of redistributions. Environmental history is usually concerning human interaction with the natural world or, to place it in our own way, it studies the interaction between culture and nature. The study of the inequalities of standards of living and of power on the planetary scale is one of the seminal questions of environmental history; starting in the 1970's,

approaches like Crosby's have irrigated the study of the "first colonization." Nonetheless, research addressing the colonial question under the angle of environmental history became particularly pervasive starting at the end of the 1980's. These studies have first of all allowed an environmental assessment of colonialism to be established alongside a measurement of the often disastrous ecological effects of the dismantling of the political economic systems in place before conquest.<sup>ii</sup>

The principal goal of environmental history is to deepen our understanding of however humans has been tormented by the natural environment within the past and conjointly however they need affected that environment and with what results.<sup>iii</sup>

Malabar has been an emporium of pre-modern commercial transactions of the Indian Subcontinent. The etymology of the name Malabar has given rise to much controversy. Al-Beruni (970-1039 AD) appears to have been the first to call the country Malabar; but long there before his time Egyptian merchant Cosmas Indicopleustis, mentions a town *Male* on the west coast of India, as the great emporium of pepper trade. The term Malabar was there for derived from *Mala* but most probably it is a compound of the Dravidian *Mala* a hill, and either the Arabic *barr* a continent or a country. Malibar, Manibar, and the Melibar of Marco Polo are perhaps the most common among the many variants of the name founded in the ancient Muhammedan and European writers.<sup>iv</sup> Malabar province which consist of an area of 5,802 square miles and bounded on north by province of Canara, east by those of Coorg and Mysore, southeast by Coimbathur and south by the small province Cochin. It divided into 18 taluks or districts containing 2,222 *deshoms* or villages.<sup>v</sup>

Colonialism is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another. Colonialism wielded incredible influence on the life and society of the colonized territories. The process of colonialism was experienced by mainly Asian countries. Through the British intrusions, economic exploitation, conquests and oppressive measures in Malabar witnessed far reaching changes in its administrative political economic and religious life of the people. Till 1800 Malabar formed a part of the Bombay presidency, thereafter it was brought under the Madras presidency and became one among the twenty seven districts of erstwhile Madras presidency.

In the course of the colonial and imperial machinations of the Europeans, finally the British could emerge themselves as the greatest imperial and colonial power in Malabar. The

economic interventions of the colonial state forced the local economies and production system to reshape their everyday life. The dual economic and administrative projects of the colonial state fundamentally reshaped the structure of power and authority of existing system. The drastic socio-economic and administrative changes took place in Malabar after the late eighteenth century by the Treaty of Sreerangapattanam 1792. This treaty ensure power and control over Malabar, they primarily trying to monopolized and control the natural world of Malabar.

### **Mapping, Surveying and Categorization**

The company traders found India to be great and opulent natural resources, state tried to launch internal control along the Malabar Coast. Surveys became important during the British rule because they believed that the knowledge of a country is necessary to administer that region. Comprehensive surveys were performed to map the whole country in 19 century. Detailed surveys were carried out by the British to map all of India and revenue surveys were conducted in the villages in order to know topography, the quality of soil, flora, fauna, cropping patterns etc. The purpose is to determine the rate of land revenue, the system of surveying general under the colonial rule because British considered that a nation had to be accurately known before it could be effectively regulated. Detailed surveys were conducted out by the British officials to map the entire land. Surveys are important because of knowledge of country is necessary to administer that region properly. The British conducted various types of surveys including Anthropological, Forest, Archeological, Zoological and Botanical surveys. Comprehensive surveys were performed to map the whole country in 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Nature and natural resources of Malabar is highly attracted by the colonial authorities and them extremely trying to perceive the nature by adopting various methods and strategies. Due to the different purposes colonizers aimed to control the natural world of Malabar. Because the abundance natural resources of the region is the easy way to make maximum profit and emerged became an economic superiority and authority and power in the Malabar. The valuable trees are the prime resources noticed by the colonial state and realized that though the strategic use of these natural resources especially tree or timber make triple profit than spice trade. The shipping interest of the company and the quality of the Malabar teak and other valuable timber trees accelerated the speed of this process of perception. The colonial authorities adopted different methods and strategies for the fulfilment of these goal.

Primarily adopted the methods like surveys, mapping, framing forest laws and regulations etc. through these typical and dynamic methods colonial state reached its agenda of economic exploitation.

For the proper understanding of land and landscapes of Malabar colonialists conducted numerous surveys in various part of the province. The proper understanding of the region can make smooth functioning of the administration, this realization resulted method of surveying and mapping. They appointed special officers' includes military engineers, civil surgeons, botanists etc. The new appointed officers sincerely completed their responsibilities and submitted detailed reports to the government. Actually the curiosity about the natural world of Malabar intended the officials to work more practically by the assistance of the local inhabitants and Rajas. These entire forest survey report vividly explains each and every minute elements in natural world of Malabar. They gave prime importance to revenue end forest surveys during the initial period.

In other parts of the British Empire in India they experimented the various revenue settlements one after another with the ulterior motive to earn maximum profit. In Malabar they resorted to other methods to exploit the maximum revenue. So they undertook detailed survey of the land.

The first detailed survey was conducted by Bengal-Bombay Joint Commission in 1792-93.<sup>vi</sup> A Joint Commission Bengal-Bombay appointed to inspect surveyed in the state and condition of province of Malabar. After each and every survey the officers submit a detailed and informative survey reports to the government. The Joint Commission Report of 1792-93 report reflect the history of Malabar from the days of *Cheraman Perumal* to the appointment of the commission on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1792. The survey aimed to establish a system for their future government as should be calculated to prevent internal dimensions among the chief and to the company which their situation and valuable productions are capable of affording both in revenue and commerce. This survey embodies the details about different places and principalities of Malabar both major and minor at its historical canvas. It delves deep into the life of the people (occupation, source of income, system of administration etc.)<sup>vii</sup>. Finally the survey prepared the ground for the division of Malabar into a number of taluks for the purpose of revenue administration. It is also a first detailed survey on lands of Malabar during the colonial period.



Another revenue survey conducted on 1801 by J. Strachey on the northern division of Malabar. It is mainly to know about the revenue settlement, measures for the realization of source of revenue, nature of cultivation of various tenants, commerce etc. The survey mostly centered around the claims of the government, *jenmamkar*<sup>viii</sup> and cultivators of the land in Thalassery, Mahe, Randethra and Dharmapattanam<sup>ix</sup>. The second and important revenue survey took place in Malabar by Graeme, special Judge in 1822. Government of Madras appointed H.S. Graeme, as special commission to submit proposal for improving the revenue administration of the province. Graeme surveyed the whole province including land and fields, understanding the tenancy structure and cultivation practices, after he submitted a detailed report on revenue administration<sup>x</sup>.

Another significant reports on revenue and land on Malabar done by Clementson, Sullivan and W. Robinson in early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Clementson surveyed throughout Malabar and submit a report regarding revenue, trade, manufacture agriculture, revenue settlement, land value, currency etc<sup>xi</sup>. In 1841 Sullivan surveyed and submit a report about the about revenue and trade of Malabar and Canara. ‘ Report traces the steady growth of revenue from land, trade and agricultural products like pepper, paddy, coconut, jack, oil, coffee, cotton, silk, sugar and cinnamon. W. Robinson, Acting Collector of Malabar conducted a survey at Wynad region and calculated to assess the nature of land ownership, resources and their settlement. The survey intended to promote and proper the plantation sector. It is a crucial document that reflect the major stages in the process of colonization and exploitation of internal resources<sup>xii</sup>. Besides above mentioned revenue surveys there are various major and minor surveys conducted during the colonial period to assess the land and revenue.

From the late 18<sup>th</sup> century botanists and other scientists in the colonial service observed the combined impact of imperialism and local overexploitation of the forests in tropical landscapes. Colonial state first show of its interest in forestry was evident in the later part of the eighteenth century, there were several motives for this change in the attitude towards the preservation or perception of natural world and forest wealth in India by the company. So they conducted forest surveys throughout the province. The first step to achieve control over India’s forests was through surveying and mapping, to demarcate the forestlands that were state property. The mapping of forests also provided data that made the introduction of scientific forestry management practices possible. Scientific forestry was imported from

the major continental European powers, France and Germany, where it had developed since the late 18th century.

In the year 1804, Cap. Johnson, military engineer in the Bombay Government was appointed Surveyor and ordered to prepare and submit a report on the conditions of the Malabar forests. According to his report there were valuable species of teak in the Malabar and other valuable trees were Veteak, Beety, Irumber, Anjley etc. On surveying in the region, Johnson also noticed that the inhabitants of this area cut very small trees for their local purposes and suggested that the Government should take charge of the forests of the province to procure continuous supply of teak and appoint an officer as the Conservator of Forests. The main objectives of practical forest conservancy are the definition and demarcation of reserved forests, the prevention of jungle fires, the exclusion of cattle, opening out of roads, cutting and clearing away of creepers and grass round the young trees .<sup>xiii</sup>

The second strategic survey in Malabar province conducted in 1806 by Mr. Licheme, and Mr. Money, the Superintendent of Marine were the English officers assigned with the job of survey of the Malabar forests. The officers were given wide and meticulous report on the composition of forests, differentiate between public forests and private estates and notify the government about the property rights claimed by the inhabitants.<sup>xiv</sup>

The initial surveys conducted by various commissions and officials between 1804 to 1812 submitted different reports of Malabar region about its forest and natural wealth particularly trees. The surveys further categorized the whole natural world of Malabar into various categories or zones. These major zones differing in climate soil and rainfall. On the basis of survey reports forest growth of Malabar was divided into five zones. They were,

- 1) Deciduous forests in the plains and in places which extended up the hill side for some 1500 feet. 11 inches. Commercially the most valuable trees were the Bombay Blackwood, Ventek, Nir, and Irul.
- 2) Evergreen forests of the Ghat slopes were found on the Eastern and Western sides. The trees of immense size which attained a diameter of ten feet at the base and a height of more than 200 feet grew in this part.
- 3) Evergreen forest or shola forests were also found on the high slopes of the Ghats and Attapadi Valley.
- 4) Bamboo forests of Waynad stretched from the narrow belt lying east of the Ghats from the foot of Nilgiris to the Brahmagiris.

- 5) Deciduous forests of Waynad plateau and Attapadi valley extended from the eastern border of Waynad Taluk to the Attapadi valley and teak grew in abundance here. The other timber trees were Vengai, Matti, and Ventek etc.<sup>xv</sup>

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century East India Company introduced scientific forestry in India, as a result of this in 1856 Dietrich Brandis introduces scientific forestry in India.

The myriad of categorizations of forests exists in administrative parlance; some of them are the following: reserve forests, protected forests, village forests, national parks, sanctuaries, closed areas, biosphere reserves, tiger reserves, elephant reserves, core areas, buffer zones. At the same time, the forestry experts distinguish forests into production and protection forests; although, ecologists identify nearly more than 25 types of forests in a small State such as Kerala.<sup>2</sup> Concern of this thesis is to discern how differential landscapes of forests were shaped, conceived, categorized, managed, and perpetuated in the process of forest resource utilization under Colonial conditions and at the moments of reordering the relationship between Man and Nature. In the process of redefining the meanings of forest and reconstituting the practices in it, contrasting and conflicting discourses were enabled by the nexus between power and knowledge<sup>xvi</sup>.

After the forest surveys and mapping the British authority formulated number of regulations and policies for the controlling and perceiving the natural world of Malabar. The superior forest officers came from Europe and having passed a competitive examination before the civil service commissioners in England – studying practical and theoretical forestry, surveying, road making and the natural sciences.<sup>xvii</sup> Through these various policies company trying to categorized the whole land into different types for the purpose of administration. The Madras Forest Act of 1882, was significant and prominent legislation by the colonial state regarding the natural world of Madras Presidency, particularly Malabar province. Madras Forest Act was drawn up on the same general lines as the Indian Forest Act of 1878. Ribbentrop was enthusiastic to recommend the Madras Act to the whole of India with slight alterations.<sup>xviii</sup>

The act classified the forests or land into various categories on the basis of nature of land, vegetation, physiology etc.

Under this Act following Classes of forests were constituted,

- 1) Reserved Forests



- 2) Land at the disposal of Government and not included in a reserved forest which may be managed under rules framed under section 28.
- 3) Forest or waste land not the property of Government which special reasons, may be placed under the control of Govt. under section 29&31.
- 4) Forest belonging private owners – Government undertake those forest as per the request of owner under section 32.
- 5) Forest in which Govt. or any other any other person are jointly interested.<sup>xix</sup>

The Forest Policy of 1894, the initial formal policy in India gave a lot of importance to industrial exploitation of forest product, state situation and permanent cultivation.. In this policy, the forests were divided into four categories. The initial category usually set in hill slopes and essential to safeguard the cultivated plains from landslides and they vie a conservation role for the profit of cultivated plains and guaranteed revenue to the state. The second category of forests consisted of valuable timber trees like *devadharu* (*Cedrus deodara*), *Sal* (*Shorea robusta*) and teak (*tectona grandis*), and because of industrial interest natural regeneration of devadharu and Sal are promoted and artificial regeneration of teak was developed. The third class of forests as per the categorization underneath this policy meant for minor forests, that yields quality timber, fuelwood and fodder and for meeting the stress of native people. Finally, the fourth category lined the pastures and grazing lands, the native folks were allowed to use them with restrictions<sup>xx</sup>.

East India Company emerged as an imperial power in Malabar by the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. East India Company undergone three strategic methods to regulate the landscapes of Malabar, such as surveying, mapping and categorization. British considered that a region had to be accurately known before it could be effectively regulated. So they first take initiative to conduct detailed survey throughout the region under the supervision of experts. Comprehensive and effective surveys were performed to map the whole country in 19<sup>th</sup> century. The government appointed botanists, military officials, environmentalists, and civil surgeons etc. as surveyors to proper identification of the province. Company gave prior importance to the revenue, forestry and land surveys for extreme utilization of resources and accumulate maximum profit. Whole land was categorized into various types on the basis of nature and character of land. Such as farms, production zones, estates, waste land, reserved forests, protected forests, hilly tracts etc. As result of the major legislations, control and implementation of policies entirely transformed the natural world of Malabar in to a colonized landscapes. Due to the policies implemented by the colonial state the landscapes of the colonized Malabar was reoriented and new production zones have been emerged.

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- <sup>iv</sup> . C A Innes I.C.S, *Malabar Gazetteer*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1951, p.2.
- <sup>v</sup> . Ward and Conner, *A Descriptive Memoir of Malabar*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1995, p.1.
- <sup>vi</sup> . *Joint Commissioners Report on Malabar 1792-93*, Thiruvananthapuram, 2010, p.7.
- <sup>vii</sup> . *Ibid.*
- <sup>viii</sup> . *Jenmamkar – Owners of land*
- <sup>ix</sup> . J.Strachey, *Report on the Northern Division of Malabar (1801)*, Regional Archives, Kozhikkode.
- <sup>x</sup> . *Graeme's Report on the Revenue Administration of Malabar 1822*, Regional Archives Kozhikkode, p.3.
- <sup>xi</sup> . Sullivan, *Report on the Province of Malabar And Canara, Calicut, 1910*, p.2.
- <sup>xii</sup> . Robinson, *Report on the History, Condition and Prospects of the Taluk of Wynad, Calicut, 1917*, pp.2-4.
- <sup>xiii</sup> . *Manual of the Administration Madras Presidency (Vol.I)*, Madras, 1885, Regional Archives Kozhikkode, p. 312.
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- <sup>xix</sup> . Madras Forest Act V of 1882, Regional Archives Kozhikkode.
- <sup>xx</sup> . *Forest Manual*, Madras, 1906, p.44.

