

REBELLION, EXILE AND THE FORCED DISPLACEMENT: THE HISTORY OF MAPPILAS OF ANDAMAN ISLAND

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Abstract

The study of displaced people and immigrants is now a major area in the disciplines of Sociology and Social Anthropology. It examines the process of displacement, migration and adaptation of the communities in alien lands. Ethnographic accounts of labour migration and narratives from victims of development-induced displacement has widened the scope of interdisciplinary studies of displacement and migration further. The last decades of the 20th century and right through the 21st century witnessed a surge in the refugee population. It added another dimension to this field of research. Uprooting, exile and forced displacement of victims of rebellions were not a rare phenomenon during the colonial period. However, studies of such societies did not find much attention in the traditional anthropological discourses. In this paper, an attempt has been made to overview the historical antecedents of the exile, deportation and forced resettlement of the Mappilas of Malabar in a far-flung and isolated island inhabited only by hostile aborigines and deported convicts. It also enquires what had happened to them once they were left in a culturally uncongenial and ecologically inhospitable island known as *kalapani* (the black water); to find their own way.

Key Words

Mappila, rebellion, convicts, deportation, penal colony, settlement, importation, Jarawa.

Introduction

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Deportation of war convicts and rebels was one of the stringent punitive measures adopted by the British Raj from the 18th century onwards (c.f William Logan 1995). The third quarter of the nineteenth century saw more global powers competing to engage and invest in such punitive measures. The punitive relocation of the convicts and their coerced labour played

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a crucial role in enabling the empires to extend and establish territorial regime on a piece of land which other colonial powers had not hitherto ascertained their rights. Thus, such deportations served as a two-fold purpose for the empire; suppression of struggles for freedom by the natives and the establishment of political power in a foreign land with the coerced labour of the convicts. The deported convicts were employed to establish colonies and settlements. Taking everything into account, in the early period, convicts were expelled to Singapore and different spots like Botany Bay and Australia. A penal colony was established in Port Blair in 1858 after the first war of Indian independence. The initial interest of the British with in the Andaman Islands was to establish control and supremacy over the waterways in the Bay of Bengal to develop trade and commerce and to make the island habitable. Extradition to Andaman was considered as probably the harshest type of discipline during the frontier system.

Oliver-Smith (1991:132) perceived forced migration and resettlement as a 'totalizing phenomenon' that "involve or evoke rapid and radical changes... The process is invariably difficult and painful, engendering feelings of powerlessness and alienation as people are uprooted from their familiar circumstances. Whole communities suffer acute degrees of disintegration as community structures, social networks and even kin groups may be dispersed to different resettlement sites. The affective ties between individuals and communities and their material environments are destroyed by uprooting and resettlement". It remains enlightening to examine the historical context of deportation and forced resettlement of the Mappilas in the Andaman Island and their struggle for survival thereafter.

Origin of the Andaman as a Penal colony

The Andaman Islands lie about 1260 kilometres away from mainland India. The Andaman Sea has been an important sea route since historical times. It suffered a setback due to the threats from the hostile inhabitants of the island and Malay pirates. In 1788, the British East India Company under Lord Cornwallis commissioned Archibald Blair and Lt. Colebrook to study the possibility of setting up a settlement in Andaman. The East India Company expected that the establishment of a settlement in the island would avert the peril both from the Malay pirates and the aboriginal inhabitants. The settlement was successfully founded, despite the hostility of the natives, in September 1789 at Chatham Island, situated near present-day Port Blair, which was then known as Port Cornwallis. The convicts were deployed as labourers. The settlement suffered a setback when it was transferred to a spot in the North Andaman, now known as Port Cornwallis, in 1792 owing to its vastly superior harbour. The new settlement proved to be very unhealthy and finally was abandoned in 1796; the convicts were transferred to Penang and the settlers returned to India (Bonington 1932).

In 1858, in the aftermath of the first war of Indian Independence, the East India Company was stripped of its remaining political power by the Parliament and was transferred to the crown. The visits by various vessels to the island and the shipwrecks involved their crews in scuffles with the Andamanese. Such scuffles often ended in a general massacre. Situations like these along with the necessity to establish a penal colony called for by the first war of Indian independence, forced the British government to establish a colony again in the Andamans. A special committee was constituted to submit a comprehensive report on the possibility of establishing a penal settlement. In 1857 Port Blair was chosen as the best site for the settlement and it was established in 1858 inducted by Dr J.P. Walker arriving in the Andamans with 200 convicts and a guard of fifty men from the Old Naval Brigade. The number of convicts increased over the years and in 1864 it reached the mark of 6965 (Bonington

1932:6). In 1896 the British started the construction of the infamous Cellular jail and completed it in 1906. Before its construction male convicts were detained in Viper Island and female convicts in a barrack at South Point. (Census of India, 2011:5).

The Rebellion of 1921 and Deportation of Convicts

The Mappila uprisings had taken place in the South Malabar region of Kerala in 1921, in the backdrop of the Khilafat movements. Malabar was then under the direct rule of the British and was part of the erstwhile Madras Presidency. The uprising was the conclusion of a sequence of revolts that occurred in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century against the British by the Mappila Muslims. The armed resistance turned violent in many parts of the region and several government establishments like police stations, courts, treasuries etc., were subjected to vehement attack by the violent mob. The Mappilas were largely *kudiyans* (tenants) under Nambudiri and Nair *jenmies* (landlords) and petty traders. The rebels did not spare their exploitative landlords too who were mainly Hindus and indulged in armed resistance. The British Government suppressed the rebellion with an iron hand by invoking martial laws and by deploying British and Gurkha regiments. On 14 March 1922, Major General Stuart wrote: "the rebellion has lasted six months during which period the Moplahs controlled large areas of Malabar...the rebellion has cost 10,000 lives" (Zubair Ahmed, 2012). According to some unofficial estimates, about fifty thousand Mappilas were imprisoned, of whom a few thousands were deported, mainly to the penal colony in the Andaman Islands. Though it was preponderantly a Mappila movement, several non-Mappila leaders were also in its forefront expressing solidarity to the rebels' cause. It gave the revolt the character of national upheaval. The very first batch of convicts deported to Andaman included one Nambudiri and four Nairs. In 1971, the Government of Kerala authoritatively perceived the dynamic members in the occasions as "political dissidents".

The jails in Madras Presidency were overcrowded with Mappila rebels, and as a measure to release the pressure in jails, the Government of India in 1922 decided to transfer the Mappila prisoners to the Andamans. The Mappilas thus sentenced for transfer were deported in batches. The first batch of 210 Mappila prisoners was dispatched to Andamans by SS Maharaja, a ship built in 1879, on 1st March 1922 and reached Andaman on 6th March 1922. The deportation that began in 1922 continued till the end of the decade (Zubair Ahmed, 2012). The exact number of Mappila convicts deported to Andaman is not known. It is estimated that the number was around 1400. In a common sitting in February 1924, Mr J. Expectation Simpson, Member of Parliament, House of Commons, requested the Under Secretary from the State for India about the quantity of the Mappila detainees who have been shipped to the Andaman Islands, and were kept there; regardless of whether they were treated as conventional hoodlums; and whether any Mappila ladies and kids were inhabitants in the punitive settlement.

Mr Richards, the Under Secretary for India, replied:

In July last, there were in all 1,235 Moplahs in the Andaman—all in Port Blair. Seventy-two were in the cellular jail, twelve in the adolescent gang, forty agriculturists and self-supporters, and the rest in convict barracks. There were no special arrangements for segregating Moplahs from association with other convicts. They were treated like others, except that the initial period of cellular confinement was frequently shortened. The Government is willing to settle any who desire to stay, with or without their

families; with this object, agricultural and other tickets are issued freely, and the families of all who ask for them are sent to the islands at Government expense. Up to July, one family—a wife and four children—had been settled, and the settlement of three more was expected shortly.

Thus, hundreds of people were uprooted from their motherland and deported to Andaman as part of a "Moplahs Scheme" as a final solution to suppress the riot. As per the census of 1931, there were 1885 Moplahs in Andaman, of whom 1171 were males and 714 females. The present-day Mappilas (Moplahs) of Andaman are the descendants of those Mappila convicts deported to Andaman for their involvement in the Malabar Rebellion.

Change in the Policy and the Transformation of Andaman into a Free Settlement

The treatment meted out to the Mappilas in Andaman were much liberal as compared to the convicts deported before them due to a change in the policy of the government in the 1920s. During this period the colonial administration seriously considered the abolition of penal colony in Andaman and its conversion into a free community settling free citizens in response to the recommendations of the Jails Commission which visited the island in 1919-1920. The formal abolition of the penal colony was proposed in March 1921 by Sir William Vincent, a member of the Viceroy's executive council (Mazumdar M, 2016:35). One of the main grounds for this policy shift was its financial implications. The average cost per prisoner in Port Blair was estimated to be three times as much as that in mainland India (Sherman, 2009:372). Measures were taken by the central administration instructing the provincial governments to transport the convicts back to the jails in their respective provinces. At that time there were about 11532 convicts and about 3000 local borns (children of the convicts) in Andaman jails (Sherman, 2009:373). But the nullification of the punitive settlement was not materialised practically and deportation of prisoners from the mainland were continued.

As a first step around 4000 convicts who were 'ill, infirm and incorrigible' have been sent back to the jails in mainland India. But many of the jails of India at that time were over congested and ill-equipped to house the convicts returning from Andaman. As a result, the provincial governments were against the plan of ending transportation altogether (Sherman, 2009:373). Moreover, bringing free settlers to Andaman was not an easy thing for the administration, owing to many reasons. The foremost of them being the sinister reputation of the island as a place of banishment. Further, the island was also known for malaria and other mosquito-borne diseases. Cholera and tuberculosis were common. All these factors individually and collectively affected the plan of the administration to deport free inhabitants. This has made the government to bring a shift in the strategy by putting the convicts at the centre of the scheme. The plan was to settle convicts rather than free men and women by encouraging the convicts to bring their families to Port Blair to settle freely. Lieutenant-Colonel Michael Lloyd Ferrar, the then Chief Commissioner of the island (1923-1931), thought that importation of the families of the convicts would be the most reliable source of labour to expand agriculture in the island (Mazumdar M, 2016:47). By around this time, the Malabar rebellion took place and proposals were accepted to send a section of them to the Andaman jails against its declared policy of abandonment of the Penal Settlement. The uproar and upheaval in mainland India against the Mappila colonization scheme made the government leave it to the Mappilas' own wish to choose between repatriation to Indian jails or free settlement with family in Andaman. Options have been given to them either to settle freely in the Andaman with their families or return to the Indian jails in the mainland and bear the conviction till the completion of the tenure. In order to witness the conception of the free settlement programme

into a reality, the colonial government brought many reforms in its established policies. As a first step the government cut short the period of conviction in the Andaman jail. Earlier, a person had to spend at least nine and half years in a labour corps, toiling on public works before earning 'ticket leave' to work on the land; the new regulations provided for the grant of this dispensation after only one month on the islands (Sherman, 2009: 376). Reforms were brought in the island's land regulation as well. Under the old system, convicts on ticket leave worked on the land had to return their property to the state, once released. As per the new regulation, after five years of working as a paid labourer, one would be given a piece of land to work, for him and his family with the occupancy rights, even after release (*ibid*).

Importation of Families and the Settlement Programme

The Government of Madras through a proposal dated 9th October 1922 requested the Government of India to consider the importation of families of Mappila convicts to Andaman and it was accepted but the matters pertaining to the method of giving effect to it and the speed of issuing self-supporting tickets to Mappila convicts were left to be decided by the Chief Commissioner in direct consultation with the Government of Madras (Zubair Ahmed, 2012). Colonel James Barker, an officer of the Indian Medical Service who stayed at the penal settlement in Andaman in the 1920s observed that:

The Andamans would be an ideal location for the Moplahs settlers on account of the similarities of the weather in the Andamans and in Malabar.... the rich valleys lying within the virgin forests in the islands were waiting to be cultivated by a range of agricultural produce. The Moplahs would have the opportunity to engage in fishing and forest work and hence carry-on similar subsistence activities as they did in Malabar (Quoted in Mazumdar M, 2016:48).

For the Mappilas, it was a perplexing situation. Taking a decision was extremely difficult for them in the complicated socio-political circumstances. Due to the large-scale agitations against the Mappila colonization programme in mainland India the British administration was compelled to give an option to the convicts to decide either to go back to the jails in mainland India and complete their tenure of imprisonment or to bring their families to the island and live a free life supported by the administration for travel and initial settlement by allocating land for cultivation. It was a matter of compulsion as well as choice. If chosen for resettlement they were entitled to a waiver of punishment and free settlement. Otherwise, they had to complete their tenure of imprisonment. Different officials were sent from Kerala on deputation to Andaman to supervise the colonization scheme and lure the Mappilas to its favour. The trustworthiness and the fast-adjusting nature of the Mappilas to the island situation made the government prefer them for the scheme.

There were many reasons for the disinclination of Mappilas to take self-support tickets. The moral standard in Andaman at that time, due to the low number of women in the jails and penal colonies, was very coarse. There were reports of using the Burmese people as prostitutes in the convict camps. The incidence of homosexual activities among convicts and settlers were also high (Sherman, 2009). In this situation, the Mappilas were hesitant to bring their families to Andaman. There were other factors too. Rumours were widespread among the convicts that they were all going to be released from the Andaman jail soon. Further, there were extensive protests in India against the Mappila colonization scheme. Many of the convicts believed that

the scheme was a colonist conspiracy to deport the Mappilas from the mainland and to eliminate them forever. All these factors together bemused the Mappilas from taking a firm decision. A deep sense of anxiety persisted among them.

At the same time, there were other factors that motivated the Mappilas to opt for self-supporting ticket. The main stimulus for the Mappilas to accept the colonization programme was the promise of possessing the land. The Mappilas being the *kudiyans* (tenants) under high caste *janmies* (Landlords) have the innate aptitude for agricultural work. A spatial shift from Malabar to Andaman had the advantage of the elevation of status from tenancy to freehold. The urgency of the government to augment and reinvigorate the settlement programme made it to go ahead with the land reform programmes restructuring the rules of land rights. It motivated many to accept the offer of deportation of their families to settle anew in Andaman. The landscape, topography and climates of Andaman were another stimulus. There is a resemblance between Andaman and the Malabar Coast. The environment and topography are more or less the same. The climate is similar but the rainfall in Andaman is heavier. As in the Kerala coast, there is the absence of winter in Andaman too. As the climate and landscape of the island were similar to that of the Malabar Coast the Mappilas could easily acclimatize to the island situation.

The British administration in Malabar deputed E.H. Abraham, a special official from Madras, to conduct a study on the status of Mappilas in Andamans, especially the issues about the importation of family members of the convicts for constructing a settlement of self-supporters. He arrived at Port Blair on 15 December 1922 and submitted a detailed report on 26 January 1923, in which he vividly described the life of the people in Andamans during 1922. In his report, Abraham says that, he had cross-examined all the Mappilas and Hindu convicts in the Andamans, experiencing various terms of transportation. He disclosed to them the benefits of taking out self-supporting tickets and bringing their families. One hundred and 23 men communicated their ability to acknowledge the tickets. The wedded men among them gave the addresses of their spouses in Malabar. Abraham also stated in his report the reasons behind the unwillingness among the Mappila convicts to take out self-supporting tickets to settle down in Andamans. Some of them were newly released from the Andamans and sent back to mainland India presumably due to the intervention of the High Court. This had happened only a few days before his arrival there. This caused much excitement and thought that the release of the rest of the convicts would happen in the near future. Another factor that he describes was that certain Mappilas got letters from Malabar in which they were told that the Government was releasing rebellion convicts on a large scale from the Madras jails (Ahamed V, A 2016:664). These two causes had made an impression in the personalities of the Mappilas that they would be sent back to their homes in a few months. In view of the suggestion of Abraham, the Government began the importation of groups of Mappila convicts to Andaman, and the principal cluster of five families showed up the Andamans on 17 March 1923.

The “Moplah Scheme” of the British invited much criticism from various quarters. It was strongly alleged that the British plan was to wipe out the Muslims. The fact that the land they were deported to was infamous for malaria and other lethal diseases made many strongly believe so. When the protests in Malabar strengthened, the British administration was forced to send a fact-finding mission to Andaman, which comprised of four members, including one European and three Mappila representatives; Dr K.D.Mugaseth, Mahmud Schamnad Sahib, Syed Murthaza Sahib and Mir Abbas Ali Khan. In the first week of December 1925, the

committee visited the villages where the Mappilas were settled. It collected information and submitted the report. The reports of the three Mappila members were similar and corroborative of the allegations. The report revealed the poor hygienic conditions in which they were living and the lack of minimum infrastructure facilities like sanitary and drinking water. The villages were situated away from the market places and medical facilities were mostly inaccessible. The houses provided to them for stay were in extremely bad shape and the lack of availability of proper food could be gauged from their mere appearance. The committee apprehended that if the living conditions were not improved, they might get infected by malaria and other life-taking diseases. They also pointed out that there was an imbalance in the male-female ratio among the Mappilas. There were only 241 females for 2591 males. The committee felt that such a situation may lead to serious moral issues. Hence the members strongly recommended to the government to give up the "Andaman scheme" and to transfer the Mappila convicts to Indian Jails in the mainland, also to transit the women and children to their respective home villages (Majumdar, 1975).

But Dr Mugaseth disagreed with the other members of the committee and submitted an entirely different report supporting the government action. The government, as expected, accepted the report of Dr Mugaseth. Even then the authorities conceded to the general public feeling and made certain amendments in the scheme on 4th October 1926. According to the amended scheme, though the process of settling the convicts would continue, it would be subjected to their own will. If any convict desires to move to any other jails in the mainland, it would be fulfilled at the expense of the government, and if any culprit in the Indian jails desires to move to Andaman with his family the authority would welcome that as well (Vijayan, CK 2010:20-21).

This turn of events disquieted Ferrar, the then Chief Commissioner, as it adversely affected the prospect of establishing a full-fledged agrarian society in Andaman by importing families of the convicts as the source of labour. This is evident from a letter he sent to his mother on 8th February 1927; he wrote:

The Indian politician is a parrot and a dishonest man. Yet it (the Moplah immigration) has started again with renewed strength as it is purely voluntary and 840 free people have chosen to come here and live with their convict relatives. The politician may as well go shut up and acknowledge himself to be wrong (Quoted in Mazumdar M, 2016:49).

However, Ferrar was a little relieved from the fact that while 448 convicts in the Madras jails expressed their willingness to settle in Andaman along with their families, only eighty individuals elected to return to Madras (Mazumdar M, 2016:49).

In 1924, Ferrar proposed to the Government of India to get plough cattle for the Mappilas to enable easy cultivation. He proposed for 100 pairs for the year 1925, to be obtained from Madras at a cost of Rs.100/- per pair. Ferrar, the Chief Commissioner of Andaman, was particularly interested in ensuring the welfare of the Mappila settlers. He took a special interest in draining the swamps close to the villages to get rid of the malaria menace and to make them suitable for paddy cultivation. He also constructed many mosques and opened schools for them. They were allowed to start Madrasa education. Six mosques; one each at Mannarghat, Knappuram, Muslim Basthi, Herbertabad, Calicut, and Hashmatabad were erected. Besides, he dug wells at Mappila villages like Calicut, Herbertabad, Hashmatabad, and Manpur. Ferrar

attracted much respect from the first generation Mappila settlers as a man who worked for their welfare (Zubair Ahmed, 2012). A village was named after him as Ferrargunj originally settled by Bhandus, a “criminal tribe” (as per the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871) deported from United Provinces for settlement under the supervision of the Salvation Army, now being predominantly inhabited by refugees from East Pakistan. Subsequently, in villages, namely Knappuram, Mannarghat, Manjeri, Wandoor, Myo and Tirur, Moplah self-supporter men were settled with the facilities to cultivate the land. The self-supporter was given the ticket of leave so that they were free to live in any of the villages doing works of their choice.

The Mappilas in Andaman appeared to be upset despite the fact that the treatment dispensed to them was all good. A sort of enslavement to acknowledge the settlement conspire was disturbing them. Even though the British administration showed considerable interest in bringing and settling the convicts' families in Andaman to develop it into a free society the officials at different levels were sceptical of their demeanour and the bad reputation as insubordinate rebels. As a result, they faced difficulty in finding adequate employment in the initial phase. The reaction of Mr J.W. Bradley, the Chief Forest Officer, towards a proposal to employ Mappila deportees in the Andaman Forest was self-revealing. His reasons for refusing the proposal were:

1. The Mappilas have come to Andaman with a bad reputation of being rebels.
2. In his opinion, the Mappilas were unfit for forest work.
3. He had decided to import a large number of Karens with their wives from Burma. Being free men, they would refuse to work with convicts. They were law-abiding people. They were good at shifting cultivation. As an officer who had served in Burma, he was known to the manners and approach of the Burmese and the Karens.
4. From a financial point of view, he thought that the importation of Mappila deportees and their families or at least a few of them would impoverish the government (Ahamed V A 2016:666).

The findings of the three members of the fact-finding mission which were sent to Andaman to study the condition of Mappilas settled there were self-explanatory of the precariousness towards the life of the deportees in Andaman. Out of the 210 people deported in the very first batch of deportees; one died the very next day itself. More than forty people were suffering from different ailments like tuberculosis, malaria, meningitis, piles and abscess. The food which was provided to them in the jail was alien to them and the dress code of the Mappila prisoners were inappropriate to offer prayers. The Malayali officials deputed at Andaman were sympathetic to the Mappilas and they tried to ease their genuine problems by bringing them to the notice of the administration. Mr.P.P. Govindan, a revenue inspector from Malabar, assumed charge as Deputy Jailor in Cellular jail in Port Blair. As he was well-aware of the Mappila lifestyle, customs and language reported the above problems to the administration. Accordingly, the initial cellular confinement for Mappila prisoners was cut short (Zubair Ahmed, 2012).

E.H.Abraham also was concerned about the issues relating to the Mappilas particularly about the formalities of religious observances. Abraham put forward the following suggestions in his report to ensure that the Mappilas were comfortable in the new setting:

1. For participation in the congregation on Fridays, Mappilas may be given a half-holiday. They may be made to work half a day on Sundays to make up for the deficiency.

2. In some stations, there are no “Mullahs” whereas in other stations there are more than one. The Mullahs may be distributed among all the stations to help in conducting Jamaat prayers on Fridays. If this privilege is extended to the Mappilas they will be very happy and deeply thankful to the Andaman government (Ahamed V, A 2016:665).

When years passed, they quickly adapted to the new situation. However, a feeling of deprivation was prevalent among them when compared to their counterparts in Kerala who chose to repatriate. The Kerala Government in 1971 officially recognized them as “freedom fighters” and extended all the privileges entitled by the freedom fighters of the state. But those who decided to stay back in Andaman were devoid of such benefits. In 1972 on the occasion of the 25th year of Indian independence, the Government of India announced that the people who had taken part in the Khilafat non-cooperation movement will be granted pension benefits as freedom fighters. However, the government made it clear that those who have participated in the Malabar rebellion of 1921 and those who had been transported to Andaman *en masse* will not be considered for this benefit (Anderson C, 2016:81). In 1975 the Union Home Minister visited Andaman and met different community representatives to hear their grievances. The Mappila community representatives also met the union minister and represented their case that the living participants who were part of the rebellion, to be eligible for pension which are given by the Union Government to the freedom fighters. Their representation says:

We firmly believe that most of us are sentenced and deported to these islands on charges of revolt against the crown and that we are eligible for pension under the scheme for grant of pension to freedom fighters sanctioned by the Government of India (quoted in Anderson C, 2016:82).

The Government of India later decided to recognize the Mappilas in the Andamans as freedom fighters eligible to avail the same pensions as their counterparts who were repatriated to Kerala (Anderson, C, 2016:82). The Mappilas were also unhappy with the fact that they were very improperly labelled as ‘convicts’ or ‘criminals’ even though they were deported from their homeland for involvement in the struggle against British rule. They felt that it was a derogatory description undesirable for the cause they had fought. They wanted the government to take appropriate action to remove this age-old stigma attached to it and give their due to their ancestors for their struggle for the freedom of the nation. They placed this demand before the Andaman and Nicobar Commission for Other Backward Class Development. Even though this demand of Mappilas had nothing to do with the terms of reference of the Commission, the Commission made a reference to this in its report with the request to consider their demands with all the seriousness and solemnity as it deserves.

An association of local borns named Local Born Association (LBS) functioned in Andaman since the 1920s. It underwent name changes twice; firstly, as Andaman Indian Association (AIA) and then as Andaman Association (AA). Finally, they adopted their original name, that is, Local Born Association. The Mappilas at times get associated with its activities and two of its members, KunjiMoideen Kutty and Aly Ahmad, represented the Mappilas in the six-member delegation which visited New Delhi in 1956 to press different demands of the islanders (Anderson C, 2016:74). The Mappilas of Andaman later formed an organization called Andaman Mappila Service Organization (AMSO) to work for the welfare of the community. AMSO celebrates the 6th March of every year as Andaman Mappila Day to commemorate the landing of the first batch of Mappilas on the island, on 6th March 1922. In

2017 March the veteran community leaders of the community laid the foundation stone for Moplah Bhawan at Kanyapuram, WimberliGunj. These functions generally attracted large numbers of community members.

Andaman had in history the sinister reputation as a place of banishment. The term *kala pani* itself signifies the stigma attached to it. The infamous Cellular Jail in Port Blair was the symbol of torture, bloodshed, pain and suffering of hundreds of Indian nationals who had been deported for the crime that they fought for the freedom of their motherland. The Cellular Jail which was the symbol of torture during the colonial era has been declared as a National memorial by the Government of India. Today, however, for the Indians Andaman is a *punyabhoomi* (sacred land), a place of pilgrimage where hundreds of their countrymen shed their blood for the freedom of the country. Hundreds of people used their blood, sweat and tears to make it habitable for the people. The forests have been felled and cleared by them, the swamps which were breeding ground of malaria spreading mosquitoes were filled and made cultivable to feed the ever-increasing population of the island. The Mappilas being one of the early settlers have had their share in transforming the island to what we see it to be today.

The Host Communities and their Survival

Before the advent of the British and the establishment of a penal colony, the Andaman Islands were the exclusive homeland of the different ethnic groups of the so-called Negrito stock, collectively known as the Andamanese. The Nicobar group of Islands, which was annexed to British India in 1869, had been inhabited by two ethnic groups belonging to the Mongoloid stock. At the time of the establishment of a penal colony in Port Blair, the total population of the Andamanese was estimated to be around five thousand. The occupation of their land by the British was much disliked by the Andamanese and resisted with the limited weaponry of bows and arrows. The British confronted them with firearms and the bloody skirmishes have taken the lives of the hundreds of tribes. Besides, the friendly contact led to the spread of several diseases, which were unknown to them till then. It also caused a sharp decline in their population.

Until the establishment of the second settlement in 1858 nothing, much was known to the outside world about its inhabitants except their exotic descriptions by early traders and travellers. In the early literature, its inhabitants were referred to as cannibals and were dreaded by the passengers and captains of the ships as it had been a busy trade route of India, Burma and the Far East. The first-ever reference about these islands was said to be in the writings of the great traveller Claudius Ptolemy who lived in the second century of the Christian era. In his writings, the inhabitants were described as cannibals. Another reference about the people of these islands was made by Marco Polo, the 13th Century Italian traveller and explorer. "Cannibals", "savage", "brutish", "dog-headed", "barbarous", etc., were the popular perceptions about these people. The charge of cannibalism in the past had never been proved against them. The origin of this legend about the Andamanese probably developed due to the fact that the Andamanese attacked all strangers who landed on their coasts and often disposed the bodies of the slain enemies by cutting them into pieces and burning them (Brown, 1922:8). The cannibal myth was largely dispersed with the contact of the aborigines. Some believe, the reason for the Andamanese hostility and enmity was because of the harsh treatment they had received from early Chinese and Malay traders. It was believed that they visited the island on slaving expeditions, raiding and carrying of the aborigines to be sold as slaves in the Malay Peninsula, China, and Ceylon (Kloss 1971).

The resistance from the Andamanese against the settlement was frequent and serious and such scuffles culminated in the Battle of Aberdeen on 14th May 1859. The battle was the culmination of a series of tussles between the aborigines and the settlement ever since the establishment of the colony in 1858. The natives were armed with bows, arrows and spears confronted the officers and convicts bearing firearms. Unfortunately, for the natives, their plan of attacking the settlement leaked out to the Britishers and they were brutally suppressed. To establish friendly relations with these hostile aborigines, who gave much trouble to the settlement, an institution known as Andaman Home was founded. It provided free rations, lodging and medical attendance to such of them as could be induced to visit the settlement. Through the efforts of the successive officers in charge of the Home, friendly relations were established, first of all with the Aka-Bea tribe in the neighbourhood of Port Blair, then with the other tribes including the Onge of Little Andaman except the Jarawas and the inhabitants of North Sentinel Island (Brown, 1922). During the 1870s it came to the notice of the authority that the Andamanese were suffering from syphilis owing to their intimacy with the convicts. Syphilis along with an outbreak of measles during this period caused the reduction of the number of aborigines to a great extent. Von Eickstedt, a German anthropologist, who visited Andaman during that period commented that the Andaman Home was the door of death to the Andamanese race (Bonington 1932).

The Jarawa tribe continued their hostility towards the outside world despite the attempt of the colonial administration to contain them both by might as well as friendly gestures. The Jarawas suffered serious violence from the part of the colonial administration as they sent out armed parties comprising of officials, convicts and the Great Andamanese people for punitive expeditions for their disinclination to surrender. The attacks resulting from these punitive expeditions against them were resisted by them with utmost might and will. They also indulged in occasional raids in the settlement, attacking armed personnel and other intruders in their area. During the period of Japanese occupation (1942-1945) the condition of the aborigines was not different from earlier and they suffered for being suspected as the secret agents of the British people. The Jarawa area has been machine-gunned from the air on the report that two Japanese soldiers had been allegedly killed by the Jarawas (Pandit and Chattopadhyay 1989:171).

The Mappilas were mainly resettled in Middle and South Andaman. The prominent aboriginal communities inhabiting these areas were the Great Andamanese and the Jarawa. By the time the Mappilas were resettled, the Great Andamanese tribe had almost been pacified by the colonial administration, both by war as well as by conciliatory efforts and their number came down to very few. The Jarawa continued to be hostile. They caused panic and terror for the administration. Conflicts between settlers and the Jarawa were common. With the ever-increasing number of settlements in the neighbourhood of the aboriginal Jarawa territories, the resource base of the hunting-gathering community has shrunken further. But the government was not interested to know the impact of large scale and the continued settlement of alien people in their area. This intensified the aboriginal-settler conflicts even further. Furthermore, many suspected that the establishment of Mappila settlements on the periphery of the Jarawa territory was to create a human wall so that it could save the settlements from their attacks. The raids by the Jarawa into the settler homesteads in search of iron and other items later came to be known as 'Jarawa incidents. Such conflicts increased in the post-independence period especially after the large-scale rehabilitation of Bengali refugees in the Jarawa area.

The first among the Mappilas to come forward and accept the self-supporter scheme requesting to allot land for himself and his fellow-men for cultivation was a prisoner from Cherupulassery. They were offered a village named Herbert Abad, in the northern part of South Andaman, an area which was abandoned by its previous residents. At that time, the Mappilas were ignorant of the fact that its previous occupants abandoned it due to its proximity with the Jarawa territory and that the government originally built the village intending to protect the settlement from direct attacks by the Jarawa. However, the Mappilas were lucky enough that no case of confrontation was reported between the Jarawa and them. They were successful in cultivation and were well established. (Zubair Ahmed, 2012).

The Mappila colonization scheme did not get momentum despite various efforts made by the colonial administration. P.P.Govindan, Deputy Jailor of Cellular Jail, volunteered to work for the recruitment of Mappila convicts without prejudice to his duties. He was successful in recruiting 39 men to settle down at a suitable place which was available in South Andaman. He approached the Revenue Assistant Commissioner, Mr Hasmat Ali, who wielded much authority in the settlement on questions of land and revenue. He replied that land is not available for allotment to Mappilas and if they wanted, they could go and settle in Balughat. Govindan gladly accepted this offer. He went there with his team of Mappilas to settle. On reaching Balughat they found that it was a Jarawa area and the convicts refused to stay there even for a minute and everyone returned as labouring convicts. Though the Mappilas felt humiliated Govindan did not give up. His continued efforts were successful when the Deputy Commissioner allotted a village site known as Muslim Basti for the self-supporters. The site was not very far from the office of the Deputy Commissioner. But unfortunately, the land was not suitable for paddy cultivation making them rely entirely on Government ration for sustenance. Another batch of 25 men settled in a distant valley wherein a new village named Hashmatabadb was established (Zubair Ahmed, 2012).

In 1925, 75 self-support tickets were issued, forty of them were sent to Manpur village for settlement. This village was also very close to the Jarawa village. Hence the self-ticket holders refused to stay in the village. They founded another village near Navashahr and they were sent there (Zubair Ahmed, 2012). Subsequently, more villages were established at Tusonabad, Hobdaypur, Gobhang, Prothropore etc. In June 1924, a Mappila settler of Hobdaypore was murdered. The suspects were Pathans residing in that area. The Pathans used to raid the Mappila villages and steal things. (Zubair Ahmed, 2012).

It was clear from the nature of the three sites allotted for their settlement that the Deputy Commissioner had something else in mind. Probably it might be to use the Mappilas as a type of human wall to protect the settlement from the frightful Jarawa, who were uncompromisingly and tirelessly fighting against the British settlement. If there are villages in between the Jarawa territory and settlement the confrontation between settlement and Jarawa would be minimal. The last decades of the 19th century and early 20th century witnessed continuous raids of settlements by the Jarawas. The Census 1911 citation reveals that:

They have assaulted convicts usually at their work on 20 events and agreeable Andamanese camps on 12 events. That is they have made 32 assaults in 30 years. In these assaults 27 convicts and 4 Andamanese have been killed; 7 convicts, 2 police constables and 5 Andamanese have been injured. In counter-undertakings and looks for the thieves 3 Jarawas have been killed, 9 injured and 20 caught. Of the caught 18 have been delivered in a brief time frame and 2 have passed on. It

will be seen in this way that the antagonism of the clan is towards all outsiders, including their own kin, and that the arrangement of catch, graciousness in imprisonment, and delivery with presents has not state-of-the-art borne any great organic product whatever.

The British considered the Jarawas as the most fervent enemy of the settlement. The letters written by Ferrar, the Chief Commissioner, to his mother reveals that:

There are two thousand square miles of a country teeming with food for the Jarawas and unoccupied by any human being. Why must they keep coming over to our hundred square mile settlements and keep killing our wretched convicts? (Quoted in Mazumdar M, 2016:53).

In his letter to his mother on 18th May 1930 Ferrar explained:

The Jarawas have at last have had their go at Ferrargunj and killed a man at about midnight in a sugar-cane machan. The arrow fastened his arm to his side and passing through the lung, the sharp wooden point was embedded in his spine. I have sent out a party of some six rifles, forty slug guns to beat up their rains quarters and kill as many as possible during a week's hunting. There is nothing else to do. They are implacable and their outrages without any object of sense" (quoted in Mazumdar M, 2016:53-54).

Though the man killed was a Bantu, it was self-explanatory of the general situation that existed in Andaman during that period and the Jarawa-settler relationships. The 1920s witnessed a series of punitive expeditions to the Jarawa area intending to kill the Jarawa to retaliate. Due to the disturbance from the Jarawas, the Mappilas were forced to abolish one of the villages which was developed and then named as Tirur. This area was later resettled by the refugees from East Pakistan. They were also not free from the proverbial hostility of the Jarawas. In January 1952, a refugee woman was killed by a group of Jarawas who shoot a flurry of arrows. The incident frightened its inhabitants and they instantly abandoned the village (Sinha, S.C 1952).

The Later Settlers

Andaman is another India away from mainland India or as it is popularly called a 'Mini India'; within it a cross-section of the Indian population having diverse social, cultural, linguistic, religious and regional background living together. Its population consists largely of the descendants of convicts called 'local borns' who intermarried irrespective of their caste, religion or any other identities; the different ethnic groups who have been either deported for their involvement in struggles against the colonial rule or brought to the island as agricultural labourers such as the Mappilas, Karens, and Bantus who are known as pre-42s (1942 is the year the island was occupied by the Japanese force); the refugee population from East Pakistan, a diverse group but having a singular identity as the Bengali settlers; and different sets of the population who migrated and settled voluntarily in the post-independence period in search of jobs in the Andaman administration or as traders or wage labourers. They are officially known as post-42 settlers. The Mappilas, Karens, Bantus and Ranchis largely try to maintain their distinct ethnic identities.

When the British reoccupied Andaman from Japan in 1945 there were about 7000 convicts in Andaman. Half of them opted for repatriation. The remaining opted for settlement in Andaman. Besides them, there were another 3000-4000 convict descendants known as local borns (Anderson, C 2016:135). A considerable number of Bhandus, a criminal tribe of the Central provinces, were deported to Andaman in 1926 from different Indian Jails to extend agricultural operations in the island. Initially, they were kept in the Cellular Jail and in Bamboo flat barracks. The Bhandus were given to prove their credentials as good prisoners and they settled in a village named Ferrargunj, which was named after the then Chief Commissioner of Andaman. Incentives such as land for agriculture and construction of huts, monetary advance to meet expenses of agriculture and maintenance of family were given to them. In 1928 they were allowed to bring their families. During 1926-1928 about 300 Bhandus were brought to Andaman by the British. Ferrar took a special interest in their settlement and developed the village into a well-established one. Ferrar was happy that their deportation did not involve much trouble unlike in the case of Mappilas. Furthermore, after being settled in Andaman they became an agricultural community. After the Japanese occupation of the island, many of them preferred to go back to the mainland but in a brief period they expressed their willingness to return to the Andaman but unfortunately by that time the villages which once housed them have been occupied by other inhabitants and they were forced to settle in other villages like Caddlegunj and Aniket. The effort they made to get back their original villages did not materialise. Their estimated population is around 1500 (Raviprasad and Sasikumar, 2019).

The Karens from Burma were brought and settled in Andaman largely on the promise of possessing land and offer of work in the forest Department in the 1920s. They were largely settled in the northern part of Middle Andaman. They are mainly Christians. Their population today is around 1600. Another group of people who still maintain their distinct identity is Ranchiwala or Ranchis. The local distinguishing term Ranchi itself is a misnomer as it is a group of people belonging to six different tribes of the Chotanagpur area (Oraon, Munda, Kharia, Baraiks, Lohars and Kumbhar) brought to Andaman by the Christian Missionaries as labourers during the British period. Due to transportation mainly from Ranchi, they earned that name and identity. Their journey started in 1906 and continued even after independence. They are settled in different parts of South Andaman and Baratang Island.

Thus, the people of Andaman are a conglomeration of the diverse populace. Some of them came as a group and because of this they could maintain their distinct identity to a certain extent. Others who reached there as individuals or in small groups were unable to uphold the culture and the way of life of their people in respective homelands. Irrespective of the fact that whether they could maintain their group identity or not they all have adjusted and adapted to the island situation signifying the term 'Mini India'. The Mappilas maintained a cordial relationship with them and practically there were no socio-economic tensions among these different sets of people. They co-existed amicably as a secular, progressive and egalitarian society.

The Social life of Mappilas in the Andaman Islands: Continuity and Change

The Mappilas initially tried to overcome their homesickness by transplanting their own culture and tradition in Andaman. They were very religious people and were not ready to deviate from their traditional religious practises even in the hostile and indifferent island situation. Albeit an enormous number of Mappilas got back to the terrain not long after the Japanese attack and after autonomy, a decent number of them liked to remain back. The Mappilas have stayed inside an affectionate local area and still follow their social and strict

customs. Malayalam is their native language. The language they talk actually echoes the semantic highlights of the 1920s as their language nearly stayed frozen on schedule with no improvement. The younger generation, however, communicates in Hindi. Mosques were established in almost all of their villages and the system of prayers continue. Many villages were established and most of them we named after the villages of Kerala like Mannarghat, Malappuram, Calicut, Wandoor, Manjeri, Tirur etc. As in Kerala Paddy was cultivated and had a good crop. The Mappilas were largely tenants in Malabar and in Andaman they became owners of the small portions of land which was allotted to them. They constructed huts with thick mud walls in the fashion as they did in Malabar.

According to the census of 1931, the total population of the Moplahs in Andaman was 1885, of whom 1171 were males and 714 females. After that, they have not been enumerated separately. The actual population of the Mappilas today is not known. However, the Report of the Andaman and Nicobar Commission for Other Backward Classes in 1998 has estimated the population of Moplahs to be 26,569.

There are three religious' groups among the Moplahs of Andaman; Sunni, Wahabi and Qadiani. There is no status differentiation among them. Marriage between Sunni and Wahabi is permitted. But the Qadiani sect does not generally intermarry with the other two groups. Similarly, the Sunnis and Wahabis attend prayers in the same mosque if there are no separate mosques. The Qadianis generally avoid this. A majority of the Moplahs are Sunni and follow the Shafi school of Islam. They have their folk-art tradition largely based on religion. This is practised by both men and women, to the accompaniment of string instruments. Though they are endogamous and a close-knit society strictly adhering to cultural and religious tradition, they generally do not disapprove of marriages with other communities. Few cases of marriages with Hindu communities have been reported. Both nuclear and extended families comprising of three to eighteen members are reported. They are a Patri-kin based society and their residence after marriage is patrilocal (Coomar, P.C, 1994).

The staple diet of Moplahs is rice. They are non-vegetarians and eat beef. However, pork is taboo. The mainstay of the community is agriculture and they live in permanent villages. The land is their main economic resource and is individually owned. They were allotted three to four acres of agricultural land at the time of their settlement in the 1920s. Paddy is their main crop. Some of them grow coconuts, betel nuts, fruits, vegetables, etc. Many of them are now found engaged in petty businesses as well. They also rear cattle like cows, goats and keep poultry (Coomar, P.C, 1994). Those who have no land under their possession take land on lease and cultivate or work as agricultural labourers. The women work in their own land and they do all the household works. The women also work as daily wage earners. Their representation in government service is very low. Women also contribute economically to the sustenance of the family and enjoy equal status. The Backward Class Commission observed that:

The financial capability of the members of the community is rather low. Half of the population have no agricultural land. The area of the land held by those who have land is very small. A few have become Doctors or Engineers or Government Officers due to the concessions given by the Local Administration towards their education, but they are far outnumbered by those who have no significant resource base and depend upon jobs of the lowest rung, or daily labour or small businesses. The performance of the members of the community in the field of education is not at all encouraging. The percentage of literacy

matriculates and graduates is extremely low and this may be due to the lower financial capability and general backwardness of the community.

The Andaman and Nicobar Commission for Other Backward classes recommended the pre-1942 settlers comprising the Local Borns, the Bhatu, the Moplas and the Karens in the Other Backward Classes list of the islands.

Conclusion

The Mappilas eventually evolved as a close-knit society in the distant island maintaining their specific socio-cultural and religious identity. Though inter-religious marriages were not uncommon they were successful in maintaining their distinct identity and tradition. The demographic structure of the Andaman Islands offered only a limited opportunity to its inhabitants to maintain community endogamy as it was mainly a “convict society”, an amalgamation of different streams of the convict population. Being demographically sound and strong in the male-female ratio, the Mappilas could sustain and maintain their distinct socio-cultural identity intact. It was a gradual process that came not easily or immediately. They adjusted and renegotiated faster and their adaptation to the physical and social environment was stable and less conflict-ridden. The memory of shared experiences of rebellion, uprooting and resettlement helped them evolve to a new form of identity. Once they overcame the initial homesickness and the grief for the lost home, they renegotiated and adapted fully to the island situation. In their hundred years journey, there were two occasions they felt like leaving the island; during the Japanese occupation of the island and the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. During the Japanese occupation (1942-45), the island as a whole was in a traumatic situation as the Japanese forces imposed many restrictions on them and inflicted mental and physical tortures. Many of the Mappilas have narrated about food scarcity and the feeling of general insecurity they faced during the Japanese era. During the post-independence period, the island witnessed large scale development which benefited all peoples including the Mappilas. As the Mappilas are mainly settled in South and Middle Andaman, close to the headquarters of the island groups, Port Blair, they were more accessible to the benefits of development. They were fast in recovering from the initial state of shock, helplessness and trauma. They mobilized themselves to take risks so that they could attain their new goals.

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