

THE
TRAVANCORE
TRIBES AND CASTES
VOLUME I

BY

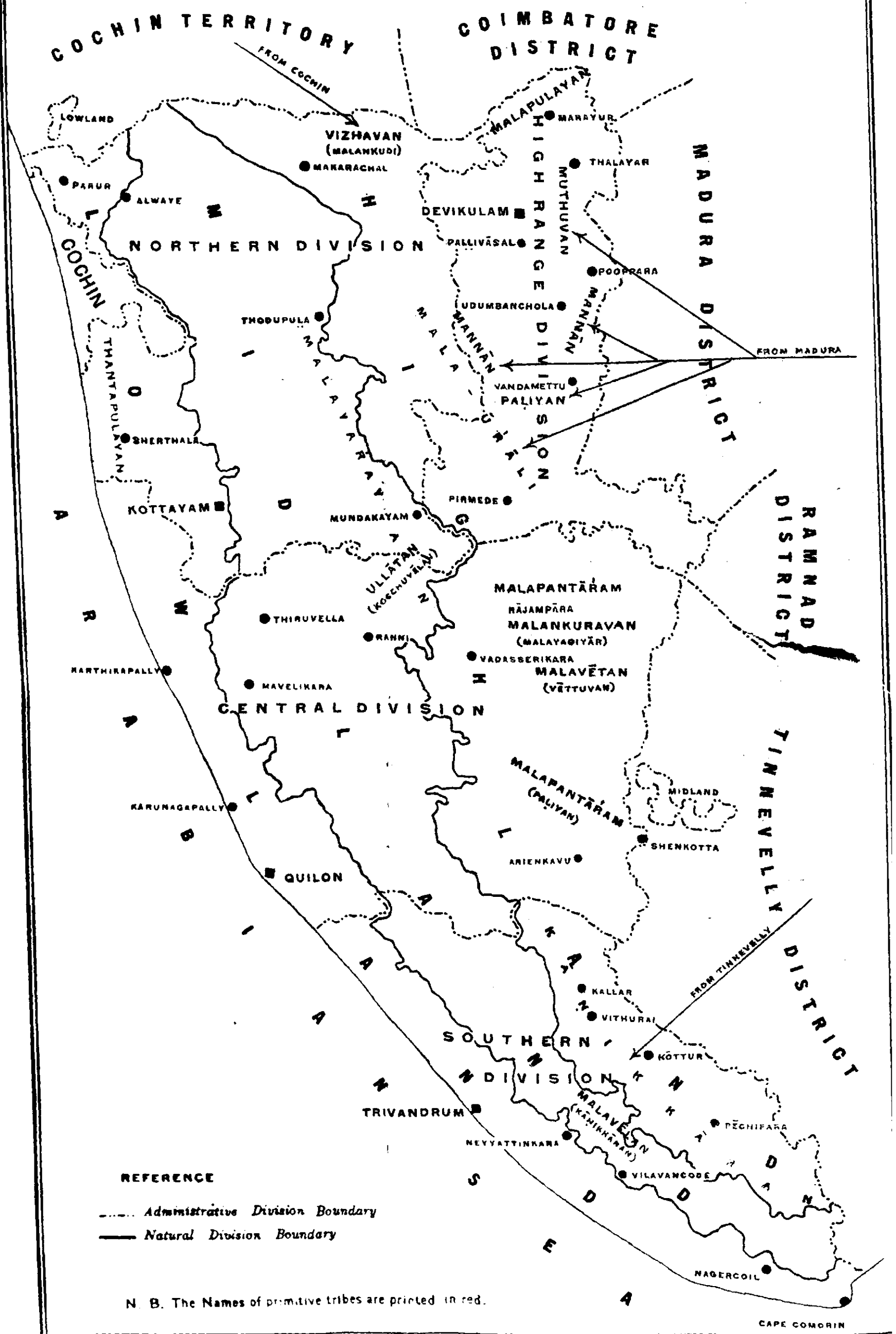
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MAP OF TRAVANCORE

Showing the Geographical Distribution and the Past Migration of Primitive Tribes.

Scale 1 Inch = 16 Miles



REFERENCE

- Administrative Division Boundary
- Natural Division Boundary

N. B. The Names of primitive tribes are printed in red.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

In pursuance of a scheme inaugurated in 1901 by the late Sir Herbert Risley, when Director of the Ethnographic Survey of India, for a comprehensive Ethnographic Survey of the whole of the Indian Empire, an Ethnographic Survey was conducted in all the Provinces and States with a view to investigating and recording the manners and customs of the tribes and castes in their respective areas. The results of the survey were duly published in book form. In Travancore, the work was conducted under the instructions of Mr. N. Subramania Iyer, who was in charge of the Ethnographic Survey and was also the Census Commissioner of the State in 1901. The materials thus collected were incorporated in "The Castes and Tribes of Southern India" by Edgar Thurston.

The importance of Ethnographic research on a scientific basis received the attention of Government during the census of 1931, when an enquiry was conducted by the present writer on the "effect of contact with civilization on the primitive tribes of Travancore" on the lines required by Dr. J. H. Hutton, the Census Commissioner for India. The notes furnished by the author formed the subject of Appendix I on the "Primitive Tribes of Travancore" which was added with numerous illustrations to the Census Report of 1931. This appendix was republished by Dr. J. H. Hutton in the Census of India, 1931, Vol. I. Part III B.

The need for pursuing the study of the tribes and castes of Travancore on a systematic basis, and the urgency of taking early action, were felt by Government in 1933. The customs of the primitive tribes were undergoing rapid and destructive changes. By contact with low-countrymen and missionaries, the tribes were losing their primitive conditions, and the opportunities for studying them were becoming less and less.

The Government, therefore, in November, 1933, ordered an ethnographic survey not only of the primitive hill-tribes but also the different low-country castes "with a view to publishing a comprehensive work on the castes and tribes of Travancore corresponding to such publications in the States of Mysore and Cochin, and the different Indian Provinces." Government, however, instructed the author that he should first concentrate his attention on the hill tribes which are fast dying out or are getting mixed up with the tribes and castes of the plains. The survey of thirteen tribes was completed in 1935-36. Three more tribes remained for a complete study of the Proto-Australoid element in the population of the State, and Government directed the author to complete this part of the work as early as possible. The present volume is therefore, the outcome of the warm interest evinced by His Highness, Sri Chitra Thirunal Maharaja, in the subject. Her Highness, Maharani Setu Parvathi Bayi has also been equally interested in the publication of the volume. The author is under a deep

debt of gratitude to the Dewan, Sachivottama Sir. C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, K. C. I. E. for his valuable help in the various stages of the publication. But for his sympathetic support, it would not have been possible to publish the work in such a short time.

The present volume gives a descriptive account of seven out of the sixteen primitive tribes which have been surveyed—the Kanikkar, Malankuravan, Malapantaram, Malapulaya, Malavetan, Malayarayan, and Mannan. Investigations on the tribes were made by himself first-hand. In the handling of such a large number of facts, accuracy in the statement of them has been the aim of the author. The photographs were either taken by himself or under his supervision. It is proposed to deal with the remaining tribes, the Muthuvan, Palyan, Ullātan, Urāli, Vishavan, Nāyāti, Parayan, Pulayan and Thanda-pulayan, and the physical Anthropology of the primitive tribes, in the second volume, which is expected to be published before the middle of 1938.

The author takes this opportunity of recording his deep sense of gratitude to Lt A. C. Haddon, M. A. Sc. D., F. R. S., Past President of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, for his appreciative Preface. To those scholars who have given him of their time and learning, he is very much indebted and here offers his grateful thanks. To Dr. J. H. Cousins, he is very thankful for editing the manuscript and writing his Foreword on certain aspects outside the province of the

author. To Rajyasevanirata Rao Bahadur Dr. N. Kunjan Pillai, Chief Secretary to Government, and Mr. R. Dhannukoti Pillai, Conservator of Forests, he expresses his great sense of indebtedness. In conclusion, he desires to acknowledge with thanks the co-operation of Mr. T. Nilakanta Pillai, Superintendent of the Government Press, and his staff in the speedy publication of the volume.

L. A. KRISHNA IYER.

FOREWORD

BY

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FOREWORD

The study of anthropology has presented such allurements of travel and contacts with *homo sapiens* in picturesque garb and conditions that it has, within recent years, overflowed from the category of decorous sciences into that of colourful careers, documented by bright personal statement and knacky illustrations.

This volume, however, is a plain unvarnished contribution to the study of man as a social being. It is not a record of anthropological adventures from outside, but of the day-to-day observations of a professional anthropologist whose duty as Officer in charge of the Ethnographic Survey of the State of Travancore took him patiently in the course of years over the terrain of the book, accompanied by the records and speculations of previous explorers. To duty was added something from heredity as the son of the late Dewan Bahadur Dr. L. K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, whose books on the ethnology of Mysore and Cochin States, and other themes, have taken their place among the classics of Indian anthropology. Thoroughness and accuracy have therefore been to the author of the present work not merely a professional obligation, but a natural propensity which has already shown itself in various articles and pamphlets leading up to this his *magnum opus*.

The book and its prefaces speak for themselves as regards its study of the primitive tribal survivals in Travancore State. But, as the work is likely to reach the hands of readers to whom the name of Travancore has recently come to represent interests other than that of science, it is well to point out one or two matters concerning the bearing of a specialised study on the normal life of the State in order to forestall the possibility of a work of science in a restricted field being inadvertently made the apparent basis of generalizations not in keeping with the complete facts.

For example : the descriptions given herein of the lives of the tribes people, if accepted without qualification or perspective, could conceivably leave the impression that they represented a large part of the general life of the people of the State ; just as a series of photographs or models of the tribes people, not balanced by other types, might create an erroneous mental image of the Travancorean physiognomy ; unless it were clearly borne in mind that the number of individuals living the tribal life was a small fraction of the population of the State, and that, too, a rapidly diminishing fraction, as indicated in the census records of the last thirty years, in which the numbers of those maintaining the primitive animistic religion appear as follows : 1901 28,193 ; 1911, 15,773 ; 1921, 12,637 ; 1931, 2,907. These figures would appear to prophesy the early extinction of the true primitive, and justify the publication of this work as a record of human

manners and customs regarding survivals that have now almost reached vanishing point as a mere .06 of a population of just over five millions in 1935.

To those who are sensitive to the cultural and economic problems concerning the tribal survivals which this book is calculated to raise, the proportion of primitive to civilized population indicated above is likely to suggest ease and rapidity in solutions. To bring within the civilizing influence of either of the two preponderating faiths of the State, one primitive individual in 1,600, and to confer economic amelioration on one semi-primitive individual in 40, might seem to be but a day's work. But the main habitat of the tribes is the forested and out-of-the way highland district, whose remoteness and natural circumstances are conducive to the retention of immemorial habit, especially when coupled with traditions of former sovereignty of the hills which has been usurped by the development of commercial planting and which bends to the inevitability of change mainly through hard necessity.

All the same, that there are cultural and social influences at work which are calculated to produce a marked psychological effect on the lives of the tribes people is indicated in the figures given above, to which may be added the fact that at the census of 1931 the number of declared tribal Hindus in a tribal population of 128,838 was 115,151, and the number of Christians 10,780. The effect of such cultural influences on tribal

psychology and life is likely to be increased from the Hindu side, if not numerically, certainly culturally, through the stimulus to self-respect and the sense of larger human affiliation that has been given to former "untouchables" by the recent Proclamation of His Highness the Maharaja granting access to temple-worship to all of the Hindu faith. Anticipated development in mass education will add to the movement towards State-wide cultural uplift which is observable.

On the economic side the tenacity of tribal habit and the continuity of tribal gregariousness, apart from cultural influences mentioned above, do not permit of the initiative in production and trading that is possible in other areas and circumstances. Assurance of food, clothing and shelter from readily accessible sources of supply, and protection from unnecessary outlay and indebtedness, are the chief natural needs of the tribes people. To this end, the Government of Travancore in 1909 laid down "Rules for the treatment and management of Hillmen" ("who have been living in the hills from time immemorial") which planned a system of agricultural rotation, set a scale of payment for the collection of forest produce, and made regulations for purchasing from outside at reasonable rates and avoiding credit.

Supplementary to such Rules, problems are bound to arise from seasonal variations making differences in natural yield. and through changes of habit, such as the

supersession of flint-and-steel by matches and of cloths by coats. The opinion may however be hazarded that the Government will deal with such problems in such a manner as to produce the maximum of economic amelioration without encroaching on traditional sentiment and custom, and will also encourage and support all bona fide efforts to raise the standard of living both as regards use and supply, among the survivors of a form of life in which those interested not only in science but in the possible application of even primitive experience to the solution of the growing pressing problems of modern life, may find material for consideration.

J. H. COUSINS.

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