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European Penitration in to the Cardamom Hills of Travancore Principality: Facts and Reality.

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Abstract: The topography of Travancore was ideal for the natural growth of plant life due to the wide range of elevation, temperature and rainfall. This facilitated the existance of vast natural resources in Travancore, which acted as a treasure house of biodiversity. During the time of Europeans,the utility and commercial importance of forest resources especially spiceswere known to the natives. Cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*), widely known as the "Queen of Spices," is a high-value perennial plant in the ginger family (*Zingiberaceae*). The social,economic and the geographical history of high ranges of Travancore closely connected with the growth and spread of cardamom cultivation.

Keywords: CHR- Cardamom Hills Reserve, HH Maharaja- His Highness Maharaja, Anatharakal-Elephant path, ela-Cardamom

The cardamom hills (locally known as **Yela Mala**) are the place was situated between 1000 to 1800 metres altitude. Cardamom has been native to the moist, shaded Ghats for millennia, with historical texts mentioning the spice as early as the 4th century BCE. Until 1860, the hills were inhabited almost exclusively by indigenous tribal populations who engaged in shifting agriculture within the natural forest canopy. Southern parts of Idukki Districts Kottayam Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta, and Northern parts of Kollam are comprised of Central Travancore Central Travancore region is known as Peerumedu Hills. Since British power in India, Their appointed Trained European officers to study and survey the tools for economic extraction. As a result of the studies The British crown systematically organized plans for resource extraction, at first they were catogorised forests. The Europeans formed laws for wildlife resources. Formalized further by royal proclamations in 1897, the Cardamom Hill Reserve was established as a protected geographical and economic zone spanning thousands of acres to regulate spice cultivation and timber management.

The history of the hills traces back to the history of the human race. Historians say that it was Kuzhimore the capital of the second Chera empire[1]. Then it was the direct supremacy of the Changanassery King. During 1756 Travan core Raja concurred Changanassery king. European surveyors CHR and planters (such as J.D. Monro in the 1820s) leased land from local rulers like the Poonjar Maharaja, paving the way for organized plantations.
[1]The Cardamom Hills came under the nominal control of Travancore state in 1755-1756 when Travancore conquered the small principality of Changanacheri. The Maharaja monopolized all the timber, and the cardamom.(,Lovat 1972).In their survey of Travancore and Cochin statesbetween1816 to 1820,lieutenants Ward and Conor found that disagreements over the collection of cardamom has caused boundary disputes between Travancore and Cochin as early as 1808(Ward and Connor,1827,P.42)The hills rapidly became a source of government revenue.

The ruling kingdoms viewed the dense rainforests mainly as a source of timber and wild spices. Wild cardamom grew abundantly in the natural undergrowth of the moist tropical forests. He brought under this place his direct Supremacy. At that time Kuttikkanam and Peerumedu Hills were outside human intervention.During 1880 British colonists and commercial planters arrived at high ranges of Travancore establishing large-scale estates for tea, coffee, cardamom, and timber. Henry Baker a CMS Missionary discovered the unique wilderness of this place.

After the coming of Henry Baker Junior, several European planters explored this area. Roads were built through the rugged terrain for political access, timber extraction, dam construction, and plantation transport. Tribal groups gradually retreated from core plantation zones.Natural forests were systematically cleared or replaced with monoculture and mixed plantations.At first coffee plantations started here by this time Sreemoolamam Thirunal was the Raja of Travancore. The first traders came here in search of wild spices. Tribals collected these spices from the jungles and dried them on the rock surface[2].

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Lakshmi Raman The Chief Executive Director of Sanctuary Magazine pointed out that the first traders came in search of wild cardamom and Pepper. Trade routes to the Coromandel coast by the Arabs and the Malabar coast by the Portuguese later they were the champions of the spice trade in this region[3]. During 1600 The Portuguese signed a treaty with Travancore Raja. The Agreement concerned the Monopoly of the spice Trade with Travancore. There was an opening of the spice trade in front of Europeans.

Another opportunity for the Traders for Elephant capturing. The thick forest area was full of elephants. They were the natural inhabitants of the jungle. At that time the new people accepted a new trick for elephant capturing. Those are elephant pits. The elephant hunters dug the pits, and then they filled the pit with green grass. this was a common method followed by the local hunters. Then the coming of Europeans used guns to kill this animal. The Tibals called the elephant path " Anatharakal "[4]. Another important revenue for the state was timber extraction. The common trees seen in these forests were Anjelly, Mahogany, wild mango tree, etc…[5]The British crown utilized efficient officers for the supervision of geography surveys. the officers noticed that these hills were treasures of valuable timber. After the Sreeranga Pattinam Treaty Travancore turned its special attention to its mountain region. Tree felling was increasing in this period. At that time this hilly region was known as Cardamom Hills[6].

Cardamom belongs to the family of Zingiberaceae and it is known as "Queen of Spices". From ancient periods to today's world cardamom has been an important spice. Cardamom production in ancient times has been referred to in Vedic texts as "Ela"[7]. India, Guatemala, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Papua, and New Guinea are the leading producers in the world market. India is the second producer in the world among the small cardamom-producing countries. Cardamom production is highly influenced by climatic conditions. A category of cardamom called small cardamom is cultivated in the southern parts of India.

European planters started cardamom cultivation in the Peerumedu, Udumbanchola, and Devikulam regions. At that time these places had very cold climates and light rain which was favourable for cardamom cultivation. In the Udumbanchola region, Mr. John Joseph Murphy established the first plantations in this area. The accounts of Mr . Munroe and Mr.Bourdillion tell that Cardamom Hills contributed a good portion of revenue for the state. The process of commercialization started when the Travancore Rajas established its supremacy over the High Ranges. It has been a turning point in the history of cardamom cultivation in high ranges. At that time Travancore was the

centre of cardamom cultivation. During that period cardamom forest covers about 40% of the high ranges[8]. High ranges produce 30% of the total production of Kerala. Travancore's government received liberal trade policies for the well-being of the state. Until the first half of the 19th century cardamom collected from the forest maharaja appointed special officers for that purpose. Long before foreign ships entered the Kerala ports they collected spices from the high ranges of Kerala. Except this different varieties of wood, resin, Wild honey, etc… were collected from different parts of Kerala[9].

The reason behind the liberal policies of the Travancore Government against cardamom trade was the international demand for spices. During the reign of Rani Gouri Lakshmi Bhai Travancore decided to renew the jurisdiction of Poonjar in 1841. Lt. Ward and Coner conducted their geographical and economic survey at the time of Gouri Parvathy Bhai. For this survey, the high-range region was inspected between 1817 and 1820. In 1822 Travancore Government declared this region as a monopoly land. After the survey of the ward and Coner, a separate department was formed for the collection of cardamom. As a part of this a separate forest conservator to make things easier. In 1840 Urben Virgos M first Forest

Conservator Munroe The British resident was appointed as the first forest conservator of Travancore. As a part of Cardamom department gives special consideration to monoculture plantations like cardamom, Rubber, Tea, Coffee, etc…

Formation Of Cardamom Department

In the year 1867, Mr.Urben Virgos Munroe was appointed as chief Forest Conservator and he was in charge of Cardamom Hills in Peerumedu. Munroe has formed the Cardamom department. It paved the way for cardamom research and related studies. The main duties of the cardamom surrender were to collect the yield, prevent smuggling, cultivate, and control cardamom dippos. There have been no changes in the structure and administration of the cardamom plantation. The tenants were allowed to cultivate cardamom in cardamom hills. The Maharaja of Travancore issued a royal Decree in 1822[10]. As per the Royal Proclamation, Cardamom Hills were reserved and the cardamom forest was known as Cardamom Hills Reserve. After this Travancore Raja proclaimed Elam as a National product. The sale of Cardamom was only carried out by the hands of the Government. Experimental farming or scientific farming started. The Travancore Government encouraged cardamom cultivation in this region. This was a turning point in the history of Western Ghats. The royal proclamation encouraged the migration of cardamom farmers. The Government accepted liberal policies for cultivation. And also Government implemented new administrative measures for cardamom farmers.

The royal proclamation dated 15th Madam.997 ME.(1822 April).It was by this proclamation that certain hill landsin the present udumbanchola Talukhas been declared as the Cardamom Hills Reserve lands which was set apart for theThe purpose of the said proclamation cardamom cultivation as state monopoly. The purpose of the said proclamation said to encourage the cardamom cultivation to augment the revenue of the state. The cardamomcultivation at that time was the state monopoly. Rani Parvathy Bhai, the present regent of Travancore announced a royal proclamation about the expansion and protection of cardamom cultivation in the high-range areas. It was mainly intended for the expansion of cardamom cultivation. Also, this proclamation paved the way for people from the outside world to collect cardamom from the deep forest. Before this, the hill tribes collected cardamom from the forest areas. They are well-known for their forest route.

Mr. J.D Munroe was appointed as Superentend and Mjistrate of cardamom hills in the year 1864.Apart from appointing the said officer some special arrangements were made for the administration and better conserevncy

of cardamom hills and his duty was prescribed as to collect the cardamom grown and prevents smuggling and see that the growers are fully promptly be paid their dues. Prior to 1896 cardamom cultivation was state monopoly.The state monopoly was lifter in 1896 . subsequent to this years cardamom were subjected to assessment of land tax. In the mean time the monopoly of the government was lifted in the year 1896 so as to attract more and more cultivators in to the cardamom cultivation.

Rules regarding the assessmentsof cardamom gardens and lands granted for wet and dry cultivation within cardamom hills and periyar reserves were sanctioned by the H.H Maharaja on 12/08/1905. The first registries were made at a Tharavila of Rupees 10/- acre and assessment at 2/- acre. Tharavila was raised to Rupees 25 /- acres in 1914 and Rupees 85/- in the cardamom hills Reswerve and the Periyar Reserve and at Rupees 65 in the Pallivasal Unreserves As per the Konni Elam Lease rules of 1927 as amended again in 1941 cardamom periodsat an annual rent of Rupees 4/-per acre.These rules were passed inaccordance with the concession granted to cardamom Riots-As per the rules,Application for assignment of wet and dry lands shall be made to the Superindentent of cardamom hillson 15/01/1910.The cardamom Department was absorbed in toLand Revenue Department and the area comprised in the jurisdiction superindentent and Majistrate,Cardamom hills constituted the Devikulam division.

The roads, hospitals, bridges etc., were initiated based on the planter's interests. K. Raviraman, in his „Global Capital and Peripheral Labour', says that the entire system of communications in the plantation regions was designed to transport the rich commercial crops of the state including the tea, coffee, cinchona, pepper, ginger, cardamom, rubber etc., to the nearest ports by the „cheapest and safest routes of exportation. The roads also helped to speed up the process of plantation labour migration. The establishment of the Public Works Department (P. W. D.) in Madras in 1848 and in Travancore in 1860 facilitated the construction of the roads on a massive scale. Many roads were constructed during the subsequent years on behalf of the request from the planters and thus the roads later become known as the plantation roads.

The main agenda of the development of forestry and expansion of mono culture plantations was to provide an uninterrupted supply of financial profit. The British began to consider the forests as a renewable resource to meet their imperial needs and accumulate maximum profits began to introduce a series of forest policies for the management of these forests. The concept of colonial scientific forestry denoted the process of application of scientific forestry practices by the colonial state in order to enhance the productivity and regeneration of forest potential. The revenue orientation of the colonial land policy also worked towards the denudation of forests. The dominant thrust for the contemporary agrarian policy was to augment the cultivated land and therefore, the watch word of the time was to destrthe forests with this end in view.

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