



Hundred Years of Exile: A Study of Mappilas (Moplahs) of Andaman Islands



Moplah prisoners under British guard
Photo Courtesy: Illustrated London News [London, England], 10 December 1921

Principal Investigator

Dr. M. Sasikumar, Joint Director

Research Team

Shri Sajib Ghosh, Research Associate (Cultural)

Shri Kanike Veerashekar, Research Associate (Cultural)

Y. Rupa Mounika, Senior Research Fellow

Anthropological Survey of India
Andaman and Nicobar Regional Centre
Sri Vijaya Puram

PREFACE

The study of displaced people and settlers has become a significant area of research in the disciplines of sociology and social anthropology in recent years. It examines the processes of displacement, migration, and adaptation of communities and groups in exile settlements. Ethnographic accounts of labour migration and narratives from victims of development-induced displacement have broadened further the scope of interdisciplinary studies of displacement and migration. The last decades of the 20th century and the early 21st century witnessed a surge in the refugee population. It added another dimension to this field of research. Uprooting, exile, and coerced relocation of victims of rebellions were common occurrences during the colonial period. However, studies of such societies did not garner much attention in the traditional anthropological discourses. Deportation of war convicts and rebels was one of the stringent punitive measures adopted by the British Raj in India from the 18th century onwards. The third quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed more global powers competing to engage and invest in such repressive measures. The involuntary relocation of the convicts and their coerced labour played a crucial role in extending and establishing the colonial regime to other terrains and territories. Thus, such penal measures served a two-fold purpose for the empire: suppression of struggles for freedom by the natives and the establishment of political power in an alien land using the coerced labour of convicts. The deported convicts were deployed to establish colonies and settlements. Prior to 1858, convicts from India were deported to Straits Settlements (Malacca, Penang, and Singapore) and to New South Wales and Botany Bay in Australia. After the first war of Indian Independence, a penal colony was established in Port Blair in 1858 by the British. The initial interest of the British 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 islands habitable. Deportation to Andaman was considered one of the harshest forms of punishment during the colonial regime. In terms of the number of convicts deported, Andaman had been the largest penal colony in the entire British Empire. It was estimated that about 83,000 convicts from India and Burma were deported to the Andamans between 1858 and 1939.

Oliver-Smith (1991:132) perceived forced migration and resettlement as a ‘totalizing phenomena’ 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”. The experiences of displacement and migration can be traumatic, but communities also show remarkable resilience and adaptability in the face of adversity. Displacement and migration can lead to complex issues of identity and belonging, as

individuals and communities navigate new cultural contexts and try to maintain their sense of self.

The Mappila uprisings had taken place in the South Malabar region of the then Madras presidency 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 culmination of a series 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 offices and institutions were subjected to fervent attack by the aggressive crowd. The jails in Madras Presidency were packed with Mappila protestors. The Government of India, as a measure to release the pressure in jails, decided to transfer some of the Mappila prisoners to the Andamans. The Mappilas punished for transfer to Andamans were deported in batches. The first batch of 210 Mappila prisoners was dispatched to Andaman on 1st March 1922. The deportation that began in 1922 continued till the end of the decade. Thus, hundreds of people were uprooted from their homeland and deported to the Andaman to suppress the riot. According to the census of 1931, there were 1885 Mappilas in Andaman. The present-day Mappilas (Moplahs) of Andaman are the descendants of those Mappila convicts deported to Andaman for their participation in the Malabar Rebellion. In this study 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 their struggle for survival thereafter. It also enquires what had happened to them once they were left in a culturally incongenial and ecologically inhospitable island known as *Kalapani* (the black water). We hope that the study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities of colonialism and its impact on marginalized communities.

Mundayat Sasikumar
Principal Investigator

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The team would like to express sincere thanks to Prof. B.V. Sharma, Director, Anthropological Survey of India, Kolkata, for involving us in the project “*Hundred Years of Exile: A Study of Mappilas (Moplahs) of the Andaman Islands.*” We also extend our gratitude to the Principal Investigator, Dr. Mundayat Sasikumar, Joint Director, Anthropological Survey of India, Kolkata, for assigning us the study of the Moplahs of the Andaman Islands. Special thanks are also due to the Head of Office, Kolkata; the Head of Office, Andaman and Nicobar Regional Centre; and all colleagues at the Andaman and Nicobar Regional Centre, Port Blair, for their timely guidance, support, and assistance in conducting the fieldwork.

We are grateful to the officials of the South Andaman district, who helped in various ways by sharing information about the Moplah community and extending their cooperation during the study. We are indebted to the Andaman and Nicobar Archives for providing historical documents and valuable information about the community. Our deepest appreciation goes out to all those who contributed to making this study possible.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the Moplah respondents from different villages who volunteered their time and participated in the study. Additionally, we extend heartfelt thanks to the entire Moplah community for their active assistance in providing essential information during our fieldwork. We are also thankful to the officials of Ferrargunj Tehsil, as well as the Panchayat Pradhans, Up-pradhans, and Ward members, who facilitated our visits to various villages and cooperated in conducting the study in the South Andaman district.

Finally, we extend our deepest gratitude to all the members of the Anthropological Survey of India for their unwavering support throughout the study.

Shri Sajib Ghosh, Research Associate (Cultural)
Shri Kanike Veerashekar, Research Associate (Cultural)
Y. Rupa Mounika, Senior Research Fellow

Contents

S.No	Chapters	Pages
	<i>Preface</i>	ii
	<i>Acknowledgements</i>	iv
Chapter I	Introduction	1
Chapter II	Moplah Rebellion: Historical Antecedents of Deportation and Resettlement	7
Chapter III	Adaptation to the Andaman Islands	21
Chapter IV	Inter-Ethnic Relations: Moplah with Jarawas and Other Later Settlers	30
Chapter V	Socio-Cultural Position of Moplah at Present in the Demographic Landscape of Andaman Islands	40
Chapter VI	Summary and Conclusions	58
	References	64
	Annexures	65
	Photographs	70

Chapter 1

Introduction

Anthropology addresses the complexities of displacement and rehabilitation by analyzing how affected communities navigate and adapt to their altered circumstances while striving to preserve their cultural identities. The discipline focuses on the processes through which displaced groups reconstruct social structures, uphold cultural practices, and maintain linguistic and traditional customs in unfamiliar settings. For instance, the Moplahs' experience in the Andaman Islands exemplifies their resilience; despite the challenges of relocation, they successfully established mosques, reconfigured social networks, and sustained their cultural wisdom. Through ethnographic research and cultural analysis, anthropology elucidates the dynamic interplay between adaptation and identity preservation, highlighting the agency of displaced populations in managing and overcoming displacement-related adversities.

Displacement as a Tool of Control

In the shadow of the British Empire, the Indian subcontinent witnessed waves of displacement that reshaped its social fabric. These displacements were not mere relocations; they were calculated moves in the imperial chess game of colonial domination. The Andaman Islands, a remote archipelago surrounded by *kalapani* (black waters) symbolizing hopelessness by marking boundaries for convicts in exile, was selected as the ideal location for penal settlements due to its isolation. The British Empire used this desolate place to break the spirits of those who dared to challenge its authority by isolating them from the world they knew.

Convicts from Bengal, soldiers from the 1857 Indian Rebellion, and political prisoners from across the subcontinent found themselves neighbors in exile. Each group brought with it its own narratives of displacement, each trying to carve out a space for survival in the most challenging environment of the Andaman Islands.

The Moplahs: A Community Enduring a Century of Exile

Into this already volatile mix of exiles arrived the Moplahs, who were deported enmasse following the Moplah Rebellion of 1921. Unlike the other prisoners in penal settlement, Moplahs were not just individuals or small groups—they were a community, uprooted from their ancestral homes in Malabar and thrust into the penal settlements of the Andamans.

The Moplah Rebellion had been a complex affair, driven by a potent mix of economic hardship, religious fervor, and anti-colonial sentiment. The British, eager to quash the uprising and prevent its spread, responded with typical severity. At the same time, there was a pressing need for manpower to make the island habitable, which required substantial labor. This initiative, originally proposed by Lord Mayo, was fully

implemented by Ferrar, who corrected earlier mistakes in the plan. Economically, utilizing prisoners as laborers was deemed feasible. By 1921, there was a search for prisoners to fulfil this role, and the Moplahs emerged as an optimal solution. Indian jails were unable to accommodate the large influx of prisoners, making the Moplahs a suitable choice to deport Andamans. Consequently, despite the previous closure of the Andaman Islands to new prisoners as per the Jails Committee's report, the islands were re-opened in 1922 specifically for the Moplahs.

Thousands of Moplahs were exiled to the Andamans in batches, where the British hoped the isolation would extinguish their rebellious spirit on one hand, and on the other it would serve their purpose in making the island habitable. Also, British people have earlier implemented some policies to bring women prisoners to island which proved to be inefficient, but Moplahs arrival, they were permitted to bring their families along with them.

But the Moplahs, much like penal settlement prisoners before them, proved resilient. They arrived in the Andamans, grown as a community and worked to preserve that sense of togetherness despite the challenges. They built mosques, recreated their social structures, and held on fiercely to their language and customs. The Andamans may have been intended as a place of punishment, but for the Moplahs, it became a place where their identity was tested and, ultimately, preserved. The Moplahs, in particular, exemplify the strength of a community determined to survive and preserve its identity despite the profound challenges of displacement.

Objectives of the Study

With this background, the objectives of the present study are taken as:

1. To provide an overview of the historical antecedents of the exile, deportation, and forced resettlement of the Mappilas of Malabar to a distant, isolated island inhabited only by hostile aborigines and deported convicts.
2. To enquire what happened to them after they were left to find their way on a culturally uncongenial and ecologically inhospitable island, known as *Kalapani* (the Black Water).
3. To understand their relationship with the host communities, such as the Jarawa, as well as with later settlers.
4. To assess the place of the Mappilas in the specific socio-cultural and demographic landscape of the island.

Methodology

This research aims to explore the historical antecedents, adaptation processes, inter-ethnic relations, and current socio-cultural and demographic positioning of the Moplah community in the South Andaman district. The study adopted a mixed-method approach,

employing both qualitative and quantitative techniques to gather comprehensive data on various aspects of the Moplah community.

The fieldwork for the study of the Moplah community in South Andaman district was conducted over a span of 28 days. South Andaman District is divided into three tehsils: Port Blair, Ferrargunj, and Little Andaman. This study covered Ferrargunj and Port Blair tehsils, which are significant as the majority of the Moplah population resides in these areas. Out of the 19 panchayats in Ferrargunj Tehsil, 12 panchayats were covered, and 1 out of 6 panchayats in Port Blair Tehsil was included in the study. Detailed administrative setup of the South Andaman District is provided in Annexure 1.

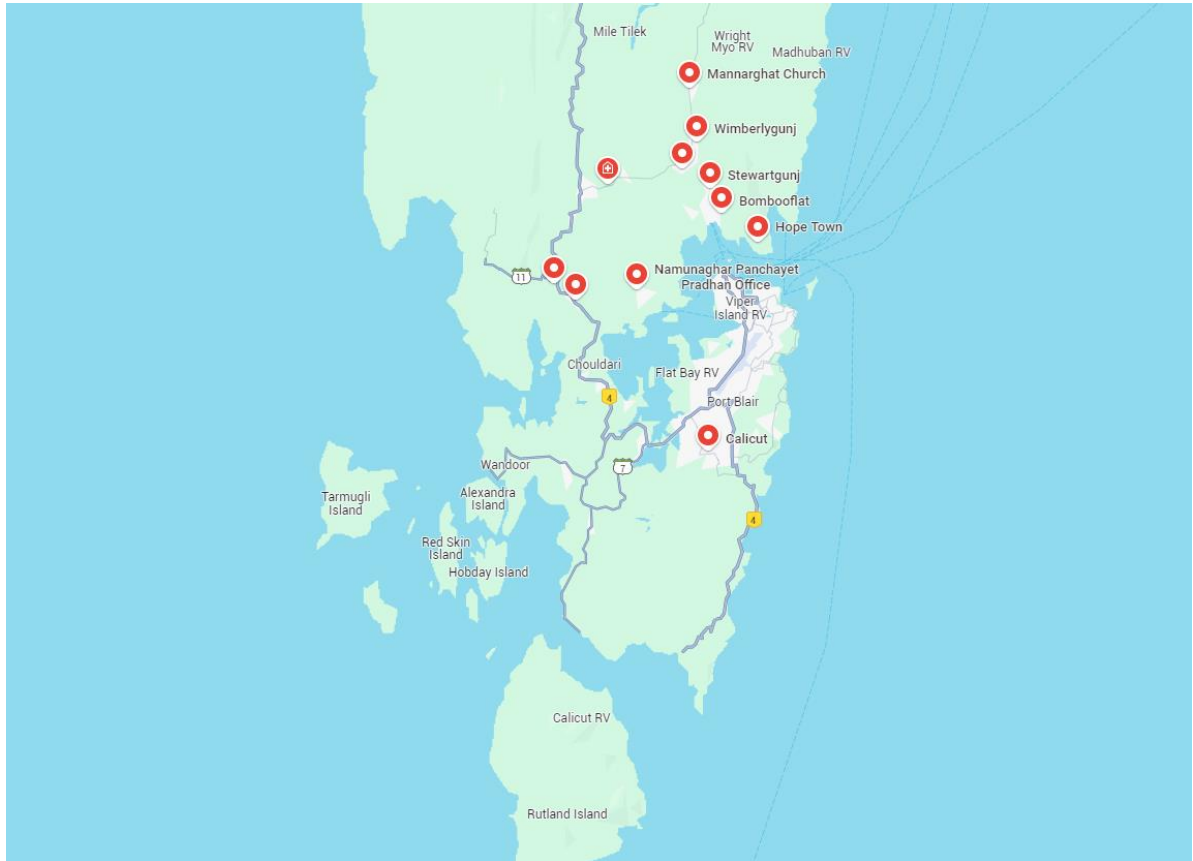
To obtain demographic variables such as age, gender distribution, sex ratio, literacy rate, educational status, and occupation, a household survey was conducted among the Moplah households in 19 villages across 12 panchayats. The total sample size included 147 households, comprising 674 individuals.

Table 1. Panchayat-wise Distribution of Total Number of Households of Moplah of South Andaman District surveyed under this study

S.No	District	Tehsil	Panchayat	Villages Covered in the Panchayat	No. of Households	No. of Individuals		
						Male	Female	Total
1.	South Andaman	Ferrargunj	Namunagar	Namunagar and Dundus Point	5	16	16	32
			Tushnabad	Tushnabad and Hobdipur	13	28	30	58
			Mithakhari	Ograbraj	12	23	24	47
			Hopetown	Hopetown I, Hopetown II and North Bay	27	56	57	113
			Mannarghat	Mannarghat, Malapuram and Wright Myo	29	80	81	161
			Kanyapuram	Kanyapuram and Nayapuram	5	11	9	20
			Wimberlygunj	Wimberlygunj	11	24	25	49
			Stewartgunj	Stewartgunj	5	12	12	24
			Brindaban	Mathora	6	11	12	23
			Bambooflat I	Bambooflat I	9	13	17	30

		Bambooflat II	Bambooflat II	12	26	27	53
	Port Blair	Calicut	Calicut	13	33	31	64
Total				147	333	341	674

Figure. Fieldwork Conducted Places to Study the Moplah of South Andaman District



Source: Pinned fieldwork locations in Google Maps

The methodology was divided into four primary objectives, each addressing a specific aspect of their life in the Andaman Islands. Below is a detailed description of the methodologies employed, along with the tools, techniques, and sample sizes.

Table 2. Objective-wise Methodology Implemented during the Study of Moplah in South Andaman District

S.No	Objectives	Tools and Techniques Implemented	Number of Sample Collected
1.	Historical Antecedents of Deportation and Resettlement	1. Life Histories of Moplah convicts (Collected from their families)	26

2.	Adaptation to the Andaman Islands	2. Semi-structured Interview Schedule for Key Informants (Pradhans, Upa-Pradhans, President and General Secretary of AMSO, Age-old Moplah Members, Officials of BDO office, Ferrargunj and Burmese individuals in Mannarghat)	30
3.	Inter-ethnic relations	1. Focus Group Discussion (2 Age-old Moplah, Burmese, Malayali who is not a Moplah)	1
4.	Position of Mappilla in the present socio-cultural and demographic landscape of the island	2. Household Schedule	147

Organization of the Study

The study has been structured into six chapters:

1. **Introduction:** This chapter sets the foundation by outlining the research objectives, scope, and significance.
2. **Historical Antecedents of Deportation and Resettlement:** This chapter delves into the historical context of the deportation of the Mappilas from Malabar. It examines the circumstances leading to their forced exile and the broader political, social, and colonial factors that shaped this resettlement in the Andaman Islands.
3. **Adaptation to the Andaman Island:** This section explores the Mappilas' adaptation to the new environment, highlighting how they navigated the cultural and ecological challenges of the islands. It covers their strategies for survival and integration, as well as their efforts to build a sustainable community in a foreign and hostile landscape.
4. **Inter-ethnic Relations: With the Jarawas and Other Later Settlers:** This chapter investigates the relationships the Mappilas formed with indigenous communities such as the Jarawas and other settlers who arrived later. It assesses the nature of these interactions, including conflict, cooperation, and coexistence, and how these shaped the Mappilas' place in the island's socio-cultural fabric.
5. **Socio-cultural Position of Mappilas in the Present Demographic Landscape of the Island:** This chapter examines the current socio-cultural status of the Mappilas in the Andaman Islands. It assesses their demographic position, their role in the local economy, social hierarchy, and how their identity has evolved over time within the broader multi-ethnic landscape of the islands.
6. **Summary and Conclusions:** The final chapter synthesizes the findings of the study, summarizing the key points discussed in previous chapters. It provides conclusions on the impact of exile and resettlement on the Mappila community.

and their place in the Andaman Islands today, and offers reflections on potential areas for future research.

This structure allows for a comprehensive exploration of the historical, social, and cultural dimensions of the Mappila community's resettlement and adaptation in the Andaman Islands.

Chapter 2

Moplah Rebellion: Historical Antecedents of Deportation and Resettlement

Moplah (Mappilla)

The term "Mappila" (Moplah) is derived from the words '*maha*' and '*pilai*', meaning 'the great children'. The Moplahs are also often referred to as '*Kaka Muslims*'. The Moplahs, the largest Muslim community in Kerala, are primarily concentrated in the northern region known as Malabar. This community emerged due to both pre-Islamic and post-Islamic Arab contacts. The majority of the Moplahs were *verum pattam kuttians* (tenant farmers) under the Nambudri and Nair *janmis* (landlords), agricultural labourers, daily wage earners, petty vendors, and those connected with mosques (Sasikumar, 2021).

The Khilafat Movement and Moplah Rebellion

The Khilafat Movement, which began in 1919, was a significant political and religious campaign that emerged in India to protect the Ottoman Caliphate, a symbolic institution of Islamic unity. This pan-Islamic movement gained momentum after the end of World War I, when the Treaty of Sevres dismembered the Ottoman Empire, and many Indian Muslims, particularly those of Sunni persuasion, perceived it as an affront to Islamic sovereignty. However, in India, the movement soon expanded beyond its religious context and intertwined with the larger Indian struggle for independence from British rule.

Impact of the Khilafat Movement on the Moplahs in Malabar

In the Malabar region of southern India, the Khilafat Movement had a profound impact, especially on the Moplah (or Mappila) Muslim community. The Moplahs, who were primarily tenant farmers, had suffered for generations under an oppressive land tenure system dominated by *janmies*. These landlords exercised near-feudal control over vast areas of land, and the Moplahs were often subject to severe economic exploitation, living in poverty and facing immense hardships (Ahmed, 2012).

The British tenancy reforms played a critical role in exacerbating the socio-economic tensions that culminated in the Moplah Rebellion of 1921. These reforms, introduced by the colonial administration in the 19th century, fundamentally altered the agrarian structure of Malabar and disproportionately benefited the landlords, particularly the Hindu *janmis*.

Prior to the British reforms, the Moplah workers had the right to claim a decent share of the farm produce. The new land laws introduced by the British government in the 19th century gave the legal ownership of the land solely to the landlords, most of

whom were upper-caste Hindus (Kannan, 2007). The Moplah community, who were tenants and agricultural workers, lost their formal or customary rights, which they had enjoyed for a long time. This shift not only stripped the Moplahs of their historical claims to land but also subjected them to increased rents, arbitrary evictions, and other forms of exploitation by landlords.

The formation of *Kuttiyan Sanghams* or Land Reform Sanghams was a direct response to these oppressive conditions. These organizations started *anti-jenmi* movement and sought to address the inequities created by the British-imposed tenancy laws and mobilized tenant farmers, agricultural labourers, and other marginalized groups to demand fairer land rights, improved wages, and better working conditions. The *sanghams* played a crucial role in organizing protests and educating the Moplah community about their rights, aligning themselves with broader leftist and socialist movements advocating for land redistribution and economic justice.

The tenancy reforms, therefore, added a strong class dimension to the Moplah Rebellion. What began as a movement fuelled by religious fervour under the Khilafat banner quickly morphed into a broader socio-economic struggle. As the movement gained momentum, Khilafat committees were established in villages across Malabar. These committees began organizing the Moplahs, mobilizing them to resist both British rule and landlord oppression.

The Moplah Rebellion of 1921

The key figures in mobilizing Khilafat Committees included leaders like Ali Musaliyar, KM Maulavi, and Variam Kunnath Kunhammad Haji, who played instrumental roles in galvanizing the Moplahs against the British and their Hindu allies (Ahmed, 2012) (Thomas, 2005). Ali Musaliyar, who was the official in charge of Tirurangadi Mosque, used his influence to enlist volunteers for the Khilafat cause. On August 20, 1921, the British had attacked the Tirurangadi mosque and arrested Musaliyar. The large group of Moplahs marched to Tirurangadi mosque in response to the act and the first violent clash occurred that day between the Moplahs and the British police, who opened fire on the crowd without warning, killing nine people. This provoked a wider revolt, as news of the killings spread throughout the region, prompting Moplahs from surrounding villages to join the fight. The Moplah rebellion begun.

By 30 August 1921, tensions in Malabar had reached a boiling point, leading to the Moplah Rebellion, also known as the Malabar Rebellion. The Moplahs, enraged by both British repression of Khilafat volunteers and their historical exploitation by Hindu landlords, attacked British officials, Hindu landlords, and government offices. The rebellion was thus a complex blend of religious fervour, class struggle, and political protest, which terrified the British colonial administration.

British Response and the Fierce Repression

The British government responded swiftly and harshly to the Moplah Rebellion. Martial law was declared in Malabar, and additional troops, including Gurkha regiments, were deployed to crush the uprising. One of the most infamous acts of British repression during this period was the Wagon Tragedy of 19th November 1921. After capturing hundreds of rebels, the British authorities packed them into overcrowded railway goods wagons, where they suffered in unbearable heat without adequate food, water, or ventilation. As a result, 64 Moplah prisoners died from dehydration and suffocation, an incident that came to symbolize the cruelty of British colonial rule (Thomas, 2005).

By the end of the rebellion, over 50,000 Moplahs had been arrested, and many were subjected to court-martial proceedings, of those arrested, more than 14,000 were sentenced to death or transported to penal settlements, including the Cellular Jail in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Report of the Indian Jails Committee, 1921) (Ahmed, 2012). This mass imprisonment of Moplahs was a direct consequence of the British government's desire to prevent future uprisings by breaking the spirit of the community through severe punitive measures.

The Aftermath of the Rebellion

In 1922, in an effort to relieve overcrowded prisons in the Madras Presidency, the British government decided to transfer thousands of Moplah prisoners to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. This decision went against the previously declared policy of closing down penal settlements as recommended by the Indian Jails Committee (Report of the Indian Jails Committee, 1921).

The Condition of Penal Settlement before Moplah Arrival

Before the arrival of the Moplahs in the Andaman Islands, the penal settlement system had already been firmly established following the First War of Independence in 1857. The British sought to utilize the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as a penal colony, both to segregate rebellious mutineers and to facilitate the establishment of a civilized population in a geographically isolated location. This penal system, adopted from the original colony in the Straits Settlement, where convicts were divided into four classes and promoted from one class to another after definite periods of good behaviour or reduced to a lower class for any lapse of good conduct (Ghosh, 1951).

Table 3. Hierarchical Convict Classification in Penal System of Andaman Islands before 1921

Class	Penal Conditions	Duration	Privileges/Punishments
Lower-class convicts	Convicts were held in the infamous Cellular Jail, kept in solitary confinement at night, and during the day	6 months	Strict discipline, no privileges. They wore convict clothing, iron neck bands and wooden tickets

	they were engaged in forced labour like pounding coir or extracting coconut oil.		displaying their crime and sentence.
3rd-Class Labour Convicts	After 6 months, those who exhibited good behaviour were promoted to 3rd class. They were released from the Jail, and posted to gang working free from confinement except in a barrack at night.	4.5 years	Still subject to hard labour but lived in barracks. No wages, but received basic convict rations. Discipline was less rigid than in the lower class.
2nd-Class Labour Convicts	Convicts who maintained good behaviour for over five years moved to 2nd class. But the confinement to the barrack at night is same.	5 years	The punishments began to decrease. They were now eligible for a small wage ranging from 12 annas to Rs. 1.4 per month in addition to convict rations for the labour.
1st-Class or Self-Supporter Ticket Convicts or Ticket on Leave Men	Convicts who completed 10 years in the penal system were given a self-supporter ticket, granting them semi-independence, allowing them to earn their own living and even bring their families from India.	10 years	Could marry, and receive a Rs. 5 monthly earning for their labour. The married and who wished to stay along with their families in Andaman got an additional allowance of Rs. 5/-. Under this system, only one-month free ration had been provided to them. From the next month, they had to self-support themselves either by doing agriculture or petty trade. Agricultural land (as tenancy) was provided, and they could receive <i>taqavi</i> loans to help with farming. Materials to construct the houses were provided.
Free Men (Ranchi Coolies and Karens)	These groups were free labourers brought to Andamans by the British for colonisation work. They were paid for their work, unlike convicts.	Till agreement of Contract	Rs. 20 per month, plus Rs. 3 for rations

*The table has been prepared based on archival research provided by the Andaman and Nicobar Archives Department.

First to third class convicts were referred to as *talabdars* and the best behaved among them were selected as *sirdars* granting them a certain amount of authority over their fellow-convicts (Bonington, 1932). In addition to the convict population, several groups of free men, including Ranchi coolies and Karens, were brought to the islands to engage

in forest clearance and other labour-intensive tasks. They were not part of the penal system but were essential to the infrastructure development of the islands.

In 1921, the Indian Jails Committee (IJC), tasked with reviewing the conditions of jails in India, recommended the complete abolition of the Andamans as a penal settlement. This recommendation was based on the significant financial burden, as it was reported that maintaining a convict in the Andamans was three times more expensive than in mainland jails. Additionally, the inhumane conditions and harsh punishments at the infamous Cellular Jail were major concerns. The IJC stated that the continued operation of the Andaman penal settlement could no longer be justified on financial grounds. The committee also highlighted the proliferation of unnatural offenses, such as homosexual practices, on the island. There was a persistent complaint that life in the Andamans was unhealthy due to the incessant hot weather and the numerous swamps, which made the area highly prone to malaria and other mosquito-borne diseases, as well as to Andaman fever, cholera and tuberculosis (Report of the Indian Jails Committee, 1921).

However, the abolition of the settlement was deemed impractical for several reasons:

1. The existence of a free population of approximately 3,000 local borns (descendants of convicts), who could not be repatriated to any specific province in India (Bonington, 1932).
2. Due to severe financial constraints in the post-first world war period, it was difficult to find the necessary funds for transporting convicts and constructing new prisons for the returning men.
3. 'Jails' were the subject for the provinces to manage under the new constitution based on the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms in 1919. Given the substantial sums the provinces had to transfer to the centre under these new constitutional arrangements, provincial governments were reluctant to take on any new additional financial burdens (Taylor, 2009).
4. The commercial value of the forests.
5. The strategic importance of the islands.
6. The substantial financial investment already made in establishing the settlement.

Moplah Deportation to Andaman Islands

Due to the overcrowded jails resulting from the Moplah Rebellion in the Madras Presidency, the gates of the Andaman Islands were reopened to accommodate the Moplahs as a penal settlement. The deportation of Moplah convicts and their families to the Andaman Islands between 1922 and 1930 can be divided into two phases. The first phase (1922 to 1926) was marked by the forced deportation of the Moplahs, accompanied by consistent efforts from the British authorities to persuade them to establish a colony in the islands. The second phase (1926 to 1930) saw a significant shift in British policies towards the voluntary establishment of the penal colony, spurred by the agitations that occurred in 1925. The year 1926 is pivotal as it marked the introduction of *New*

Regulations III by Colonel Ferrar, which granted self-supporter convicts occupancy rights to the land they cultivated.

Phase 1 (1922 to 1926)

The first phase of Moplah deportation is characterized by the batch-wise deportation of Moplahs to the islands, and the efforts of notable figures like E.H.S. Abraham, P.P. Govindan, and Kunhiram Nair to persuade the Moplahs to stay and settle in the Andaman Islands.

On March 1, 1922, the British government began deporting Moplah convicts to the Andaman Islands, with the first batch of 201 prisoners transported from Bellary Camp to Port Blair aboard the S.S. Maharaja ship. The journey, however, proved perilous. Upon arrival on March 6, 1922, the physical condition of the prisoners deeply concerned the authorities in Port Blair. Many convicts had been severely weakened by prolonged imprisonment, malnutrition, and disease. One prisoner died shortly after arrival from pneumonia, while twenty-two prisoners were suffering from malaria. Additionally, two convicts exhibited symptoms of partial paralysis, and twenty-five adolescents, some barely over twenty years of age, were included in the group (Ghosh, 1951).

The authorities at Port Blair expressed their dissatisfaction with the physical state of the convicts, deeming most unfit for labour. Archival letters exchanged between Port Blair and Madras officials revealed that the prisoners were ‘only good for the hospital’¹. Consequently, they requested that future batches of Moplah convicts sent to the Andamans consist of men physically capable of performing labour to help make the islands more habitable. To enforce this, medical examinations before boarding became mandatory for all convicts.

In response to these concerns, only 189 prisoners were deported in the second batch, even though the ship had the capacity to accommodate 250 prisoners². The authorities prioritized sending convicts fit for labour, reflecting the British administration’s desire to maximize the utility of the penal colonies for the empire’s economic and strategic purposes.

Table 4. Batch-wise Deportation of Moplah Convicts from Malabar Region to Andaman Islands in 1922 as Per the Available Records.

S.No	No of Convicts	Date
First Batch	201	01 st March 1922
Second Batch	189	15 th April 1922
Third Batch	160	9 th May 1922
Fourth Batch	129	30 th May 1922

¹ Retrieved from the Tamil Nadu Archives (1922-1935) Volumes, Andaman and Nicobar Islands

² *ibid*

Efforts of EHS Abraham

The Government of India deputed E.H.S. Abraham, Deputy Tehsildar of Quilandy, Malabar District to address issues related to the proposed importation of the families of Moplah convicts to the Andaman Islands, as suggested by the Government of Madras in December 1922. Abraham submitted a comprehensive report in January 1923, detailing the condition of the Moplah convicts in the Andamans. The key points of his report are as follows:

1. **Climate:** The report mentioned that the climate of the Andaman Islands was similar to some parts of Malabar, which could help the Moplah convicts adjust more easily. However, while the climates were alike in some ways, the Andaman Islands received much heavier rainfall.
2. **Health:** As per his observation, the general health of the Moplah convicts was relatively good. However, malaria remained the principal disease affecting the population in Port Blair. Nevertheless, the incidence of malaria was decreasing due to the ongoing efforts to clear jungles and drain swamps. Despite these efforts, some Moplah convicts continued to suffer from hookworm infections, and treatment outcomes were not always satisfactory.
3. **Changes in Penal Policy:** The report highlighted the shift in penal policies regarding self-supporting tickets, a system that allowed convicts to work and sustain themselves rather than being wholly dependent on the British. Previously, convicts had to wait for a decade to qualify for such tickets, but Colonel Ferrar had reduced this period to just one month. Abraham emphasized the benefits of obtaining self-supporting tickets, which allowed convicts to bring their families to the islands, and the alternative hardships they would face if they remained as labouring convicts for the entire duration of their sentence. He also mentioned that convicts who agreed to settle permanently in the Andamans were eligible for a remission of one-third of their sentence.
4. **Willingness to Import Families:** It is reported that 123 convicts, including both Moplahs and non-Moplahs, expressed their willingness to take up self-supporting tickets. Many of the married men provided addresses of their wives. The British authorities saw the importation of families not only as a way to stabilize the convict population but also as a method of turning them into permanent settlers, thereby reinforcing the colonial presence in the islands.
5. **Livelihood Measures:** The report suggested the Chief Forest Officer to employ around 50 Moplah convicts for the colonization work being carried out in Middle Andaman as part of an experimental initiative after lot of deliberations.
6. **Language:** The report also noted that the Moplah convicts faced significant communication challenges in the Andamans due to the language barrier. As most Moplahs spoke Malayalam, they struggled to interact with the largely Hindi-speaking and English-speaking administrative staff. To address this issue,

Abraham suggested that the government consider employing subordinate officers who were fluent in Malayalam.

7. **Religion:** The Moplahs were deeply religious, and the report emphasized their strong adherence to Islamic practices. They were particularly keen on religious observances, especially the *juma* prayers (Friday congregational prayers). However, many complained that they did not have sufficient time to observe these prayers in congregation. Abraham suggested that, if practicable, the authorities should consider granting Moplah convicts a half-day off on Fridays to allow them to fulfil their religious obligations. He also recommended that they work half a day on Sundays to compensate for the lost time. Additionally, Abraham noted that *Mollas* (religious leaders) should be distributed across various stations in the Andamans to help conduct *jamat* prayers on Fridays.

Based on Abraham's recommendations, the British government initiated the process of importing the families of Moplah convicts.

Gender Imbalance and Family Separation and Importation of the Families of Moplah Convicts

The colonial administration's handling of gender and family in the Andaman penal settlements reveals the deep anxieties surrounding social order and control within convict societies. Before the arrival of Moplah convicts, the British government had opted to remove female convicts from the Andamans, relocating them to mainland prisons. This decision was primarily influenced by concerns about the potential for disorder arising from unregulated sexual relationships and the fear of moral corruption in a predominantly male convict population. According to Sen (1998), in *Rationing Sex: Female Convicts in the Andamans*, the British viewed women as both a stabilizing force through the establishment of families and a source of social instability due to potential sexual relationships, pregnancies, and prostitution.

However, the government's approach shifted in October 1922, when the transportation of female convicts to the Andaman Islands was reopened. The policy reversal followed the government's recognition that the absolute prohibition on transporting women had made it difficult to create stable convict communities in the Andamans. Still, certain conditions were imposed on female convicts sent to the islands:

1. Willingness of the convicts.
2. Only non-criminal convicts were eligible.
3. Preference was given to marriageable women, including unmarried women and widows.

The rationale behind these conditions was to ensure that these female convicts would marry self-supporting convicts already residing in the penal colonies, aiding the administration's goal of turning the islands into a self-sustaining community.

The penal colony's overwhelming gender imbalance created additional social challenges. The penal population was predominantly male, and convicts were separated from their families back in Malabar. Recognizing that this separation could lead to unrest, the British government eventually began allowing some convicts to bring their families to the Andamans.

After six months of imprisonment of Moplah, the British government decided to begin the importation of the families of Moplah convicts undergoing sentences in the Andamans. On March 13, 1923, five Moplah women and seventeen children were brought to Port Blair from Madras aboard the S.S. Maharaja, escorted by a female warden. The British government covered all travel expenses, including conveyance, dietary, railway, and steamer charges, and provided an advance of Rs. 10 to each woman³.

However, when the families arrived in Port Blair, their husbands refused to receive them, leading to an embarrassing situation for the British authorities. The families were sent back, and many Moplah convicts subsequently refused to allow their wives and children to join them, fearing that their families would suffer the same harsh conditions they faced⁴.

Despite these initial setbacks, the British continued their efforts to reunite families. On June 10, 1923, the S.S. Maharaja left Madras again, this time carrying 30 women and 60 children to the Andamans. These were the wives, mothers, and mothers-in-law of Moplah convicts. The government had recorded that Moplah convicts and their families could safely be kept in the Andamans as part of a free colony of self-supporters rather than in closed prisons. On December 20, 1923, 14 families arrived as free settlers, and they were allocated lands in areas like Herbertabad, Hobdaypur, Ograbraj, and Tusnabad as self-supporter cultivators.

By 1924, the British began a more formal colonization scheme, under which Moplah convicts were settled permanently in the Andamans. On August 26, 1924, 122 Moplah men willingly arrived in Port Blair and were allotted paddy lands in villages such as Kadakachang, Manpur, Calicut, Navashaher, and Mannarghat⁵.

Establishment of Moplah Villages

As the deportation of Moplah families was ongoing, a major challenge arose concerning the scarcity of land suitable for agriculture, which hindered many from opting for Self-Supporting Tickets. In the correspondence between P.P. Govindan, appointed as Deputy Jailor of the Cellular Jail in June 1923 to oversee the settlement of the Moplahs, and the Chief Commissioner of the islands, it was highlighted that the available land was situated

³ *ibid*

⁴ Retrieved from Malabar Magistrate Office Records, 25th May 1923, Tamil Nadu Archives, 1922-1935 Volumes

⁵ *ibid*

only in the northernmost parts of South Andaman. These areas were in close proximity to the Jarawa tribe, a community seen for their hostility towards outsiders, making it dangerous for the settlers. As a result, many Moplahs who initially intended to become self-supporters returned as labour convicts, unable to sustain themselves in such perilous regions.

Kunhiram Nair, a special officer from Malabar, was also assigned to the Moplah Colonization Scheme. He rigorously searched for suitable lands for cultivation and managed to settle the Moplahs in various villages, despite the challenges posed by Jarawa hostility and inadequate agricultural land. The following table details the timeline, the number of settlers, and the villages established during this phase of Moplah settlement in the islands.

Table 5. Establishment of Moplah Villages

S.No.	Month and Year	Number of Moplahs	Village	Details
1	June 1923	40	Herbertabad	First settlement of Moplahs in the Andaman Islands. The village was abandoned earlier due to proximity to Jarawa territories, but Moplahs began cultivating.
2	July 1923	39	Balughat	Moplahs refused to settle due to fear of Jarawa attacks and returned to their previous status as labor convicts.
3	August 1923	39	Muslim Basthi (now Ograbraj)	Moplahs relocated here from Balughat, raised vegetables, poultry, and cattle as there were no paddy lands.
4	September 1923	25	Hashmatabad	Moplahs agreed to clear a distant jungle to convert it into paddy land, despite no paddy lands being available in the village itself.
5	December 1923	6	Herbertabad and Tusnabad	Four Moplahs allotted to Herbertabad and two relocated to Tusnabad. A school was also sanctioned in Herbertabad, and a Moplah teacher was appointed.
6	March 1924	22	Mannarghat	Settled in Mannarghat as part of continued expansion of Moplah settlements.
7	April 1924	60-70	Malapuram and Calicut	Another large batch of Moplahs settled in two villages, contributing to the expansion of the community.

8	May 1924	30	Gobhang	Establishment of another settlement in Gobhang by a new group of Moplahs.
9	June 1924	30	Prothropole	Further expansion with another 30 Moplahs settling in Prothropole.
10	October 1924	75	Kadakchang, Calicut, Manpur and Navasahar	Settlement in Kadakchang, with 25 men: 10 in Calicut and 40 directed to Manpur. 25 Moplahs refused to settle in Manpur due to the Jarawa proximity and moved to Navasahar.

Source. Analysis of Tamil Nadu Archives (1922-35) Volumes, Andaman and Nicobar Archives.

Phase 2 (1926-1930)

While the British administration in the Andamans commended the Moplahs for their adaptability, nationalist Muslims in Madras launched a public campaign opposing their transportation. This campaign included public protests and resolutions passed in both the Madras Provincial Legislative Council and the Central Legislative Assembly, condemning the scheme (Taylor, 2009). As a result of these protests, the Moplah Colonisation Scheme was revised. According to the Government of India's order dated 4 October 1926, Moplahs in the Andamans were offered the following choices:

1. Any Moplah settlers in the Andamans who wished to return to Indian jails and send their families back to Malabar would be permitted to do so.
2. Long-term Moplah prisoners currently in Indian jails were given the option to either remain in jail or become settlers in the Andamans.
3. Prisoners who may volunteer hereafter to go to the Andamans will also have the option, after they have been in the Islands for one year, of returning to jails in India and sending their wives and families back to Malabar.
4. Where Moplah convicts have chosen life in the Andamans and wish to have their wives and families with them, Government will arrange to convey their wives, and near relations to the Islands. Able, bodied relations will be required to earn their own living after the first month.

Ferrar reported that another 448 convicts in Madras elected to establish themselves in the islands while the option to return to the mainland was made use of by 80 single men only⁶.

Colonel M.L. Ferrar's Reforms

⁶ Retrieved from M.L. Ferrar to his mother, dated 6 November 1925 and 14 December 1925, Ferrar papers, CSAS, The Tamil Nadu Archives (1922-1935) Volumes, Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Colonel M.L. Ferrar's reforms in the Andaman Islands represent a significant transformation in both penal policy and colonial governance, particularly in their impact on the Moplah community. These reforms not only altered the structure of penal discipline but also facilitated the Moplahs' transition from marginal convicts to settled agriculturalists, effectively reshaping their socio-economic and cultural landscape.

Ticket on Leave within a Month:

By accelerating the timeline for convicts to leave institutionalized imprisonment and participate in agrarian labour (Follow British English throughout), this policy allowed for early integration into the local economy. For the Moplahs, this facilitated a relatively swift transition from penal subjects to productive settlers, promoting a form of rehabilitative labour that aligned with colonial notions of reform through agricultural work.

One-Third Remission

The introduction of a one-third remission of sentences for good behaviour reinforced the disciplinary logic of the colonial penal system, where incentives for good conduct were linked to early release. This policy created a pathway for convicts, including the Moplahs, to gain conditional freedom, thereby reinforcing the idea that labour and moral reform were intertwined. For the Moplahs, many of whom were imprisoned under colonial suspicion of rebellion, this remission policy provided a means to navigate the penal system and reclaim autonomy.

Land Tenure and Convict Settlement

A key aspect of Ferrar's reforms was the reconfiguration of land tenure for convicts. Under previous systems, convicts working the land had no security of tenure, as their property reverted to the British upon release. Ferrar's policy that allowed convicts to acquire land after five years of paid labour fundamentally altered this dynamic. By granting occupancy rights upon release, the policy enabled the Moplahs to secure land ownership, transforming their status from transient labourers to permanent settlers. This reform, introduced by Ferrar, provided the Moplah community with a sense of security, facilitating their migration to the island. It also marked a shift in their housing practices, as they transitioned from temporary *kachha* dwellings to more permanent *pucca* structures, reflecting a significant socio-economic transformation. Back in Kerala, the tax paid by Moplah tenants is thrice more than what they pay in Andaman as penal labourers, moreover after these new regulations they became owners of the land, and their status shifted from *kutiyans* to landowners. This shift was pivotal in enabling Moplahs to establish agrarian livelihoods, providing a measure of economic stability and social continuity within the colony.

Installation of Sluice Gates

Ferrar's installation of sluice gates to regulate water flow and protect agricultural fields represents a strategic colonial intervention aimed at maximizing the productive capacity of convict labour. For the Moplahs, who were primarily engaged in paddy cultivation, the introduction of water management infrastructure enhanced their ability to farm the land effectively. This infrastructural development contributed to the Moplahs' successful adaptation to the Andaman environment.

Mosque Construction (February 1927)

The construction of mosques in Moplah settlements under Ferrar's administration underscores the colonial recognition of the importance of religious and cultural institutions in the stabilization of settler communities. By facilitating the establishment of mosques in villages such as Mannarghat, Kanappuram, Muslim Basti, and Herbertabad, Ferrar enabled the Moplahs to maintain their religious practices and communal identity. These mosques became central to the preservation of Islamic traditions among the Moplahs, serving as spaces for both religious observance and social cohesion in the context of forced migration and settlement.

Ferrar's initiative to construct mosques, each funded with a grant of Rs. 10,000, was instrumental in shaping the Moplah community's cultural and religious life on the island. These mosques, designed as wooden structures, were strategically built along the banks of water streams. This location ensured adherence to cultural prescriptions, enabling the Moplahs to perform cleansing rituals before their prayers, thus reinforcing their cultural and religious practices in the new environment.

Nine mosques were built by the British under the Ferrar period in the following villages:

1. Mannarghat
2. Kanyapuram
3. Muslim Basti
4. Herbertabad
5. Calicut
6. 2 at Hashmatabad
7. Manpur
8. Navashahr

Appointment of Moplah in Administrative Roles:

Ferrar's appointment of Moplahs to positions of local authority, such as Chowdhari (Village Headman), Chowkidar (Village Watchman), and Patwari (Record Keeper), reflects a strategic colonial policy aimed at harnessing their labour to make the island habitable. By integrating Moplahs into the administrative framework through these roles, Ferrar simultaneously advanced his colonial objectives and cultivated goodwill within

the Moplah community. This approach also served to 'tame' the Moplahs, aligning their efforts with the broader goals of colonial settlement and governance.

Drainage of Swamps and Quinine Distribution for Malaria Control:

The drainage of swamps near Moplah settlements was a crucial public health intervention in the Andamans, where the prevalence of malaria and other vector-borne diseases posed a significant threat. Ferrar's efforts to improve sanitary conditions through swamp drainage not only reduced the incidence of diseases but also facilitated the expansion of agricultural land, thus contributing to the economic viability of Moplah settlements. Ferrar entrusted the provision of distribution of quinine tablets with Chowdharies of the villages. This measure further integrated the Moplahs into the broader colonial health management system, positioning them as active participants in their own welfare.

In a nutshell, Colonel M.L. Ferrar's policies not only redefined the penal landscape of the Andamans but also significantly influenced the social, economic, and cultural integration of the Moplah community. By facilitating land ownership, enhancing public health, and supporting religious and administrative structures, Ferrar's reforms enabled the Moplahs to transition from a marginalized convict population to a more settled and stable community within the colonial framework. Whereas before these policies, only 10% of inmates had been on ticket on leave, by 1930, 56% had been granted this self-supporter status (Taylor, 2009).

Endeavouring to recruit more volunteers, the Government of India published a pamphlet in 1940 designed to encourage convicts to leave behind their jails in India and embark on a new life in the Andaman Islands. 'Free' was the catchword. They were promised free health care and free education for themselves and their families, as well as access to facilities for sports, recreation, and worship, 'without let or hindrance' (Taylor, 2009). Describing the living quarters in which recently arrived convicts were housed, it was written:

"These barracks are not surrounded by walls or fences, and the talabdar leads a free life, except that he has to complete the daily task of government work assigned to him. The talabdar earns wages for his work... after the day's work, the talabdar is free until 8 pm. The talabdar wears his own clothes and buys his own food or forms a 'mess' with some of his friends... The system developed affords an excellent opportunity for a man, should he so desire, to make a new start in a new country where prejudices do not exist."

However, on March 23, 1942, the islands fell to Japanese occupation.

Chapter 3

Adaptation to the Andaman Islands

The Struggles of the Japanese Period in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (1942–1945)

The Japanese occupation of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands during World War II (March 23, 1942-October 7, 1945) is a tragic period in the history of the islands. Before the Japanese Occupation in these islands in 1942, many people who had any link at mainland left Andamans. Moplah settlers remained here with the Local Borns⁷, and faced the atrocities of Japanese Imperial Force. By 1942, there were 6000 convicts and about 12000 local born population in Andaman Islands (Ghosh, 1951). The Japanese occupation to the Moplah was an episode of torture, fear and the hunger. It is said that many of the age old and infirmed Moplah were imprisoned and tortured by the Japanese Imperial Force.

The atrocities committed by the Japanese armed forces against civilians in territories such as Nanjing, Manila, and Singapore during World War II are well documented and widely recognized. However, the brutal campaign that the Japanese forces waged against the people of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, who had initially welcomed them as liberators, remains less known. The Japanese seized control of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands on March 23, 1942, after having already taken Singapore, Rangoon, and much of Southeast Asia. Prior to their arrival, most members of the British colonial administration in the islands had been evacuated to the mainland.

The local people of these islands, including the Moplahs, initially welcomed the Japanese as liberators from British colonial rule. A peace committee, composed of prominent islanders, was formed to assist the Japanese authorities in administering the islands. However, this initial goodwill soon turned into a nightmare. Even after being expelled, the British continued to bombard Japanese strategic sites such as ships and harbours on the islands under the command of MacCarthy, leading the Japanese authorities to suspect local residents of aiding the British (Mujtaba, 2015). The islanders, who had formed the Andaman Branch of the Indian Independence League (IIL) in April 1942 and the Indian National Army (INA) in June 1942, soon came under Japanese suspicion. This growing mistrust resulted in severe repression of the local population.

Dignabad Incident

On March 30, 1943, seven members of the Indian Independence League were arrested and shot dead on the Dignabad shore. Among the victims was Dr. Dewan Singh, the

⁷ The descendants of the convicts who deported to Andaman and Nicobar Islands before 1942 are called Local Borns in the islands. They were shortly called as Pre-42 people.

President of the Indian Independence League, who lost his life due to mere suspicion by the Japanese (Mujtaba, 2015).

Homfreygunj Incident

In the early hours of January 30, 1944, 44 members of the Indian Independence League were taken from the Cellular Jail, where they had been imprisoned, and transported by trucks to Homfreygunj Hill. There, they were shot dead by a Japanese firing squad in batches of five. Their bodies were then buried in a mass grave. Abdul Jalil, a Moplah was also one among the 44 died⁸.

A memorial to the martyrs of Homfreygunj was constructed in 1979, 35 years after the incident, by a committee consisting mainly of the martyrs' descendants. The memorial now features slabs bearing the names of the martyrs. Every year on January 30, the Homfreygunj Martyrs Memorial Committee pays tribute to them⁹. Additionally, photographs of the victims of the Dignabad and Homfreygunj incidents have been placed in the Cellular Jail as a mark of honour.

The comparative statement of the population in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands from 1901 to 1951 is as follows:

Table 6. The population figures of Andaman and Nicobar Islands from 1901-1951.

Year	Andmans	Nicobars	Total
1901	18138	6511	24649
1911	17641	8818	26459
1921	17814	9272	27086
1931	19223	10240	29463

⁸ M. Abdul Jalil S/o Nazir Mohd., born on 31st January 1909 at Ross Island. Completed his teacher's training from Rangoon, Burma. He was posted as Teacher, Government High School, Quarry Hill, Phoenix Bay, arrested on false spy case by Japanese Military Government on 22nd October, 1943. Retrieved from Mujtaba, M. A. (2015). *History of School Education in Andaman and Nicobar Islands*. Kolkata: Insha Publications.

⁹ The 'Balidan Vedi - the Martyr's Memorial' described the Homfrygunj incident as: "The Humfrygunj massacre is a mute witness to the untold sufferings and indomitable spirit of 44 members of Indian Independence League and INA who were arrested on false espionage charges and tortured in the Cellular Jail by the Japanese Imperial Force during their occupation of the islands from 1942-45. On 30 January 1944 (Basant Panchami) forty four of them were taken out of Cellular Jail and loaded in trucks and brought to this place, about 15 kms away from Port Blair. They were forced to climb this hillock at the point of Bayonet. All of them were asked to sit in front of a "L" shaped trench. Black Badges were pinned on their left chest. Firing squart of Japanese soldiers fired on the Black Badges and their dead bodies were pushed inside the trench by charging bayonet on them. The Homfraygunj Martyr's Memorial Committee erected 'Balidan Vedi - the Martyr's Memorial, where floral tribute is paid and mass prayer is conducted every year on the day of martyrdom- 30 January."

1941	21316	12452	33768
1951	18962	12009	30971

Source: Census of India, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Volumes 1901 to 1951

In the Japanese period, the population decreased by 3,300 due to a shortage of food, as well as the torture and systematic killing by the Japanese forces. The Japanese evidently decided that the population needed to be reduced because the food supply was inadequate, and no food could be brought in from outside due to the Allied Force blockade around the islands. They, therefore, set about systematically destroying the aged and infirm. Several hundred were shot, while several hundred more were taken out to sea in launches and thrown overboard miles from the nearest land (Ghosh, 1951).

During interviews, it was continuously emphasized that the Moplahs, being the predominant agricultural community around Port Blair, were often targeted by the Japanese Imperial Army personnel in their search for grains. The soldiers would confiscate food grains from households, leaving just the bare minimum needed for their survival. It was narrated that the Moplahs would hide paddy and other food grains by burying them in pots in the fields and covering them with banana trees. However, if the Japanese Army discovered such attempts, the individuals involved were met with brutal punishment and sentenced to death by being crushed under elephants, a tactic used to instil fear and deter others from attempting the same.

Throughout the Japanese occupation, almost all the schools established by the British were closed. The Japanese government reopened a school for general education at Quarry Hill in Phoenix Bay, where all subjects except English were taught. Additionally, at Ross Island, a Japanese school called 'Khaiho Shionen Juku' was opened to teach the Japanese language to local youths. In this school, children were taught Japan's national song, learned Japanese games, and were taught to count Japanese digits. They were then assigned as interpreters to Japanese officers (Mujtaba, 2015).

Due to the continuous air raids by the Allied forces, the Japanese school at Ross Island was relocated to Bambooflat, where the Japanese came into direct contact with Moplah villagers¹⁰. The Moplahs mentioned that there was a fear of attending school because of the Allied forces' bombardment on Japanese strategic assets. They reported how they would hide under their cots whenever they heard the sounds of air raids.

It was also said that the Japanese army used the Moplahs to construct bunkers around South Andaman Island. Some of the youngsters also received military training

¹⁰ The Japanese authorities deputed M. Abdul Gafoor, a Moplah teacher to visit schools and guide the teachers and students, how to take precautions at the time of Air raids by the Allied Forces vide order No. 69 dated 27 September 2602/1942. See. Mujtaba, M. A. (2015). *History of School Education in Andaman and Nicobar Islands*. Kolkata: Insha Publications.

under the banner of the Indian National Army. Later, all schools were closed after the British forces reoccupied the Andaman and Nicobar Islands on October 7, 1945.

The Mappilas of Andaman – Sustenance of relations with Malabar

Despite the century-long exile, the Mappilas of the Andaman Islands have retained their cultural roots, religion, language, and customs, even as they have integrated with their new surroundings. Deported in the aftermath of the 1921 Malabar Rebellion, these resilient people, uprooted from the fertile lands of Kerala, have managed to turn an inhospitable penal colony into a thriving community while maintaining an unbreakable connection to their ancestral home. This story of displacement and survival offers a fascinating insight into how diasporic communities preserve identity in the face of adversity (Sasikumar, 2021).

Retaining Connection to the Motherland through Religion, Education, and Marriage

Despite the geographical distance and the passage of more than a century, the Mappilas have never severed their ties to Kerala. The Moplahs regard their ancestral homeland, Malabar, as their cultural womb, a source of identity and tradition that continues to influence their lives in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Despite their physical displacement, the Moplahs maintain a deep emotional and cultural connection to Malabar, which they view as the origin of their spiritual and cultural values.

Marriage and religion serve as the umbilical cord that ties the community to their cultural roots. Traditional marriage practices often draw upon customs from Malabar, ensuring the continuation of cultural norms and familial ties. Similarly, religious practices and institutions, such as mosques and Quranic teachings, provide a spiritual framework that reinforces their connection to their homeland. Through these practices, the Moplahs sustain a living bond with Malabar, nurturing their cultural heritage while adapting to the realities of life in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Religion has played a central role in preserving their connection to the motherland. As devout Muslims, the Mappilas have maintained their religious practices, rituals, and traditions, which remain deeply rooted in their faith. The establishment of mosques in their settlements and the practice of daily prayers, particularly the Friday congregational prayers, has kept the community's religious identity intact.

A remarkable feature of the Mappilas' connection to Kerala is reflected in their approach to education and marriage. Over the years, marriage among the Mappilas in the Andaman Islands has followed the tradition of endogamy, with many marriages being arranged with families from Kerala. This has allowed the community to retain close family ties and cultural bonds with their ancestral land.

Table 7. Distribution of Afinal Relations of Moplah of South Andaman District

Place of residence before Marriage	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Kerala	3	0.72	36	8.63	39	9.35
A & N Islands	192	46.04	186	44.60	378	90.65
Total	195	46.76	222	53.24	417*	100.00

*No. of sample derived from the excluding of unmarried individuals

The individuals marrying from Kerala reflects the gradual integration of the Moplahs into the social fabric of the Andaman Islands while still maintaining strong cultural and familial links with their ancestral homeland. The data suggests that while there is a preference for local marriages within the Andaman Islands, especially among males, the higher number of females from Kerala indicates a deliberate effort to maintain cultural and familial continuity with their homeland. This practice helps the community sustain trans-local kinship ties, which are important for social, economic, and cultural exchanges between the diaspora in the Andaman Islands and their socail networks in Kerala. By bringing in brides from Kerala, the community reinforces its traditional cultural values, religious practices, and linguistic continuity.

It is said that, social media, a modern tool of connectivity, has played a crucial role in the past decade in reconnecting the Mappilas with their forgotten relatives and communities back in Kerala. Platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook have enabled the community to stay in touch, exchange news, and even arrange marriages across the waters, thus reinforcing these intergenerational connections.

The educational aspirations of the Mappilas also reveal their strong desire to retain ties with Kerala. Many families continue to send their children to Kerala for higher education, especially in religious studies. This reinforces the connection with their homeland while shaping the younger generation's understanding of their cultural and religious identity. Additionally, the community's practice of naming their settlements in the Andaman Islands after towns and villages in Kerala—such as Calicut (Kozhikode), Tirur, and Mannarghat—demonstrates a physical and symbolic effort to recreate their native land in their new environment.

Pilgrimage as a Social Bond

Another significant aspect of the Mappilas' relationship with Kerala is the annual Hajj pilgrimage. For the Mappilas, the pilgrimage to Mecca is not just a religious obligation but also an opportunity to reconnect with the wider Muslim world and with Mappila communities from Kerala. The Hajj serves as a social gathering space where the Mappilas from different parts of India, including the Andamans and Kerala, come together, share stories, and exchange experiences. For the Mappilas of the Andamans, this pilgrimage

strengthens their sense of identity and belonging to a broader cultural and religious community.

Health- Infrastructure and Strengthening Bonds with Kerala

Health infrastructure in the Andaman Islands is significantly underdeveloped compared to that of mainland India. This disparity has resulted in the Mappilas frequently traveling to Kerala for medical treatment, particularly for major surgeries and specialized care. This necessity for medical attention also acts as a vital link between the Mappilas of the Andamans and their counterparts in Kerala. These trips for healthcare purposes are more than just logistical—they provide opportunities for individuals and families to renew old ties, reconnect with relatives, and strengthen bonds with the Mappila community in Kerala. In this sense, health challenges have become a unique, though unintended, avenue for maintaining familial and social connections

Preserving Identity: Settlement Names and Cultural Memory

One of the most poignant symbols of the Mappilas' enduring connection to Kerala is the naming of their settlements in the Andamans after the towns and villages they were exiled from. The village of 'Calicut' in the Andaman Islands, for example, retains the original name of the coastal city in Kerala, even though Calicut has since been renamed Kozhikode. This act of naming is not simply an administrative formality but an expression of nostalgia and remembrance. The names of these settlements are a living testament to the community's desire to keep their past alive and to honour their ancestors' struggles and sacrifices. Through these names, the Mappilas have ensured that the memory of their homeland continues to live on, even in exile.

A Century of Resilience and Adaptation

Today, the Mappilas of the Andaman Islands stand as a testament to human resilience, adaptability, and the power of memory. They have managed to build a vibrant community in the face of exile, adversity, and isolation while never fully severing their ties with Kerala. Their story is one of continuity and change, of adaptation to a new environment, and of the preservation of identity through religion, education, marriage, and social gatherings like the Hajj pilgrimage. Over time, they have transformed the Andaman Islands from a place of punishment into a place they call home, while Kerala remains etched in their hearts. In essence, the Mappilas of the Andaman Islands have woven their exile into a narrative of strength, resilience, and connection, a narrative that continues to shape their identity and future as a community

Economic and Environmental Adaptation

Moplahs were tenants in the Malabar region prior to being imprisoned in the Andaman Islands. As soon as they released from jail, 1170 Moplahs being scattered at various places in Port Blair and among them 143 were settled down as agriculturists. Government of India under British rule depute officers to discuss with the Andaman authorities for necessary arrangements for the retention of Moplah convicts as permanent settlers in the Andaman¹¹.

Under the colonization scheme, several Moplahs were willing to take out self-supporters tickets and settle down as agriculturists. They got a handful of lands for agricultural purposes and started cultivating crops to sustain themselves and their families. Many of the lands were in hilly areas, and some of them were near present-day Baratang, where Jarawas were widely distributed. While discussing their relationship with Jarawas, it is important to note that the Moplahs had to navigate potential conflicts over land use and resources with them. This interaction with the Jarawas highlights the complexities of colonization and its impact on indigenous populations, as the Moplahs sought to establish themselves as agriculturists in the region. Despite challenges, the Moplahs persevered and gradually transformed the barren lands into fertile fields, establishing a thriving agricultural community in the region. They also got ploughs and cattle, especially buffalos, to assist them in their farming endeavours. As there were no sufficient cattle in the settlements, cattle were also imported from mainland India¹².

They began agriculture with paddy cultivation and gradually expanded to include other crops, viz., vegetables, and cash crops such as coconut and areca nuts over time. While interviewing, despite many challenges, many of the descendants of convicts expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to start over and rebuild their lives through agriculture. Some even mentioned that farming in the Andaman Islands provided them with a sense of freedom and independence that they had never experienced before.

The Japanese aggression (1942) disrupted their farming activities, forcing them to give up their harvest crops and vegetables to them, which led them to starve and somehow sustain their livelihood. Once they got rid of them, they regained their sense of security and were able to continue cultivating their land for sustenance and income. Over time, despite becoming successful farmers opted out of agriculture at a slow pace due to the harsh conditions of the islands, the unwillingness of new generations towards agriculture and allied activities, etc. One of the remarkable factors was the tsunami (2004), due to which the agricultural lands became waterlogged and their harvested crops became ruined in one instance, which also led many of them to curve out of agriculture and diversify their sources of income by venturing into other sectors. While conducting the field, it was observed that, till date, the tsunami affected lands are still waterlogged. The barrage near Stewartgunj, which used to control the water flow, has been severely

¹¹ (Page 695, SI No. 40, Dated 13-08-1924, Sub: Jails: Prisoners in the Andaman – Colonization Scheme – M. R. Rao Sahib, M. Kunhiraman Nayar – Special duty in Malabar).

¹² Ibid

damaged. Although several attempts have been made to repair the barrage, the extensive damage has made it difficult to fully restore its functionality. The Moplahs and other community members demanded land compensation after the tsunami, leading to the government establishing a committee on land matters in Andaman and Nicobar Island in 2017. While interviewing, they also agreed that as a relief package, whose lands were submerged during the tsunami in 2004 got a handful amount based upon their land holdings as compensation.

The community engages in a variety of occupations in the current scenario. The subsistence economy that followed in the earlier 1920s is diversified into various sectors. Although some of the elderly individuals still engaged in agriculture as a primary source of income. But they are only harvesting cash crops (coconut and areca nuts) and selling them into the market. When it comes to agriculture, there is an interethnic relationship, particularly with the Ranchis who arrived on the island as labourers during the British period (Sasikumar, 2021). As agriculture is no longer their primary source of income, many Moplahs are leasing their land to Ranchis for cultivation. In return, they got cash or kind from the produce grown on their land. This relationship has helped both communities economically and has fostered a sense of cooperation and mutual benefit between them.

Regarding pastoralism and fishing, those are no longer their sources of earnings. Although, it was observed that a few households of Mithikhadi and Namunaghar have continued to practice agriculture along with cattle rearing. A few individuals are still engaged in fishing in Bambooflat and Hoptown. Despite the fact that very few people still practice these, they are not mentioned in the table because all of them are over the age of 60 indicating the fact that it may be the last serving generation still involved. Many elderly individuals mentioned that fishing was not their traditional occupation. As a source of meal, they used to catch fish and the seashore was not far away from their locality. Now, the majority of the community has transitioned to other forms of work in order to sustain themselves financially. The traditional way of life among Moplahs is slowly fading away as newer opportunities arise for the younger generation.

All of the male individuals are employed in different sectors, and those who are not employed are still continuing their education. However, the vast majority of females are housewives. This could be due to societal expectations and traditional gender roles that place a heavier burden on women to manage household responsibilities. Only a few Moplah females are pursuing higher studies, and some of them are in private as well as in government jobs, but the numbers are significantly lower compared to those who are housewives.

Education is one of the primary factors that have stimulated the community to seek out new opportunities and adapt to changing economic conditions. This reflection was found in terms of government as well as private jobs, businesses, and other allied activities, which are the main source of their primary incomes at present. Many of them

are in prestigious posts like civil servants, doctors, engineers, etc. Although the male-to-female employment ratio is much higher, efforts are being made by both parents and community members to uplift them and break the stigma of society. This indicates a positive trend towards gender equality in employment opportunities, with women actively participating in various professional fields. These changes inspire the younger generation to pursue higher education. Beside this, they have started exploring other avenues, such as tourism and small-scale industries, to supplement their income. This shift has not only improved the economic status of the community but also enhanced their overall quality of life. They mentioned that the struggle of their forefathers has paved the way for present generations to thrive and succeed in a more diverse and sustainable economy.

Table 8. Primary Occupational Status of Moplah of South Andaman District

Primary Occupation	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Agriculture	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Fishing	1	0.23	0	0.00	1	0.23
Pastoralist	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Govt. Employee	69	15.68	19	4.32	88	20.00
Private Employee	75	17.05	12	2.73	87	19.77
Business	34	7.73	0	0.00	34	7.73
Others (Driver)	7	1.59	0	0.00	7	1.59
Not working	37	8.41	186	42.27	223	50.68
Total	223	50.68	217	49.32	440	100.00

*Total No. of Eligible Individuals (N) = 440 [Exclusion criteria: Age groups (0-14 yrs.) and (60 yrs. & above)]

In terms of family income, they are unwilling to share the exact figure, but it was evident that 47 out of 147 households have pucca houses, which stands at 31.97% of the total households, and most of them have all rudimentary household amenities. It was also observed that the majority of the households have at least one two-wheeler, and many of them have cars as their mode of communication, indicating a better standard of living.

Chapter 4

Inter-ethnic Relations: Moplah with Jarawas and Other Later Settlers

The Jarawa Resistance and the Role of the Bush Police: A Historical Perspective on Territorial Hostility and Settler Relations

The Moplah recounted that settlements for them were determined by the availability of *meeta pani* (fresh water), as remembered from stories shared by veterans. However, some of these settlements, particularly in places like Herbertabad, Balughat, and Manpur, were perilously close to the Jarawa territories deep within the forests. Fearing Jarawa attacks, many Moplahs abandoned these settlements, leading to tensions that would shape the broader narrative of settler and indigenous relations in the Andaman Islands.

The Jarawa Resistance: A Cultural Assertion of Territory

The Jarawas' resistance to settler encroachment was deeply rooted in their cultural understanding of land and territorial sanctity. For the Jarawas, the forest was not merely a source of sustenance but a sacred space essential to their identity. Colonial boundaries and settlements were foreign concepts to the Jarawas, who fiercely defended their lands against any perceived intrusion, including the new settlements established by the colonial government. The Moplah settlers, unfamiliar with the hostility of the Jarawas and unaccustomed to the dense forests of the Andamans, were particularly vulnerable to these attacks.

In 1921, the first recorded instances of Jarawa hostility occurred when they began attacking convict settlers in South Andaman, reacting to the clearing of the jungle for settlements. The Jarawas viewed this as a direct invasion of their ancestral lands. Between 1921 and 1924, the Jarawas launched several raids, resulting in the deaths of 21 settlers. In response to the escalating violence, the British administration organized a punitive expedition in 1925, led by Captain West and a platoon of Kachin Military Police (Ghosh, 1951). Despite the campaign, which resulted in several violent encounters, the Jarawas continued their resistance, further exacerbating tensions on the island. During the expedition, it was claimed that 37 Jarawas were shot, though only six bodies were found. Jarawa area was being combed; their huts were being destroyed. The number of Jarawas hurt or killed in course of the expeditions would never be known.

Moplah Settlers and the Abandonment of Settlements

The fear of Jarawa attacks was especially acute among the Moplah settlers, many of whom agricultural lands are at areas bordering Jarawa territories. Although these regions were fertile and ideal for settlement due to the presence of *meeta pani*, their proximity to the Jarawa's forested lands made them vulnerable to frequent raids. The Moplahs, aware of the Jarawa's reputation for swift and violent attacks, abandoned many of these

settlements out of fear, preferring to relocate to safer areas further away from Jarawa territories.

The abandonment of these settlements highlights the deep tension between settler communities and indigenous tribes in the Andamans. The Moplahs, brought to the islands as prisoners, had little control over where they were placed, yet their fear of Jarawa hostility made it difficult for them to remain in settlements near the forest. This abandonment created logistical challenges for the colonial government, which had aimed to utilize the labour of the Moplahs to develop the islands. Furthermore, the unwillingness of the settlers to live in Jarawa-proximate areas left certain colonial settlement plans incomplete and forced the administration to reconsider their strategies for utilizing the island's resources

The Role of the Bush Police and Settler Protection

To manage the ongoing violence and protect the settlers from Jarawa attacks, the British colonial administration established the Bush Police, a unique force tasked with maintaining security in the conflict zones. The Bush Police were stationed at strategic points across the islands, patrolling the borders of Jarawa territories and protecting settler communities, including the Moplahs. Their primary responsibility was to prevent Jarawa raids and ensure that both settlers and the Jarawa remained within their respective boundaries.

The Bush Police played a critical role in safeguarding the Moplahs and other settlers. However, despite their efforts, the threat of Jarawa incursions remained ever-present. The Jarawas continued to launch raids on settlers and forest camps, often targeting unarmed parties. Even well-guarded police camps were not immune from these attacks. The presence of the Bush Police provided a measure of security, but it could not fully eliminate the tension between the two groups. Moplah settlers, especially those in areas near the forest, remained cautious and reliant on the Bush Police for protection, further complicating settler-indigenous relations on the islands.

Statistics on Conflict and Attacks

The period between 1921 and 1929 saw several significant violent encounters between the Jarawa and settlers, with statistics reflecting the intensity of the conflict. Between 1921 and 1924, 21 convict settlers were killed by the Jarawa, prompting the British administration to initiate a punitive expedition in 1925. The expedition claimed to have killed 37 Jarawa during its four-month campaign, although only six bodies were recovered. Despite this effort, the Jarawa continued their resistance, with further raids occurring throughout the late 1920s. In one instance, a Jarawa attack on a patrol at Ike Bay involved around 40 tribesmen, including a runaway convict, resulting in casualties on both sides. Jarawa raids remained frequent in areas like Ferrarganj and Hobdaypur, where settlers and police forces were targeted.

By the 1931 census, the Jarawa population had declined to 70 individuals, a significant decrease from the 114 recorded in 1921. This decline was attributed to violent encounters with settlers and colonial forces, as well as punitive expeditions that inflicted casualties on the tribe. Despite these losses, the Jarawas' determination to defend their territory remained undiminished. Notably, the Jarawas never bowed to the pressures of colonization and resisted vacating South Andaman completely.

Though punitive expeditions ceased after independence, the strained relations between the Jarawas and their neighbours persisted. According to the Moplahs, several factors contributed to this ongoing hostility.

1. Firstly, large areas of forest were cleared under the guise of colonization programs. Often, these areas extended beyond the boundaries of the designated Jarawa Reserve. The Jarawas traditionally relied on these forests for their sustenance and would gather resources as far as Aniket, approximately 30 kilometers from Port Blair.
2. Secondly, forest operations, including timber extraction, continued unabated, causing significant disturbances to the Jarawas and depleting their resources.
3. Thirdly, settler populations, including the Moplahs, extracted various resources from within and near the reserve. For the settlers, the forest was an essential source of timber and non-timber forest products.
4. Fourthly, fishermen from villages, including Moplahs who had adopted fishing as a livelihood, fished in the creeks and along the coastline of the reserve, further encroaching on Jarawa territory.
5. Fifthly, many agricultural fields belonging to the Moplahs and other settlers were located at the fringes of the Jarawa Reserve. It was reported that the Jarawas frequently attacked these fields during the night, stealing crops before retreating into the forest. Moplah farmers often recounted incidents of being wounded by arrows while attempting to protect their fields.
6. Finally, the construction of the Andaman Trunk Road (ATR) through Jarawa lands significantly increased contact between settlers and the indigenous tribe, leading to more frequent and escalated conflicts.

Boundaries of the Jarawa Reserve Area

The southern part of South Andaman Island was colonized long ago in the nineteenth century, displacing the Jarawas from their land and settling self-supporting convicts there. These self-supporters, including the Moplahs, were allowed to settle in villages as cultivators after serving a certain period of their sentences. Among these settlers were people from both India and Burma. Later, in the 1920s, other convicted populations were also settled in the area. These self-supporters, who came from various parts of the subcontinent, formed a diverse social conglomeration within the penal settlement.

The Moplahs, originally from Malabar in south-west India, and the Bhantus from the erstwhile United Provinces of northern India arrived in the Andamans in large groups, often accompanied by their families. Unlike earlier convicts, these groups were not imprisoned but were directly settled into villages. During the pre-independence period, these settlements formed the southern boundary of what is today the Jarawa Reserve. From the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Jarawas and their neighbouring settlers frequently clashed, with many of these encounters marked by violence.

The northern part of the present-day Jarawa Reserve, located in Middle Andaman Island, began to experience similar conflicts when forests in that region were cleared, and villages were established around the mid-twentieth century. A majority of the settlers in this area were Bengali refugees displaced from eastern Bengal due to the Partition of India in 1947. Around this time, a significant portion of the pre-independence population in South Andaman migrated to mainland India or Burma. Their vacated lands were rehabilitated with Bengali settlers. As a result, the northern villages near the Jarawa habitat became predominantly Bengali, whereas the southern settlements reflected a mixed population of pre- and post-independence settlers from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

For the Jarawas living in the northern part of South Andaman Island, Baratang Island served as the nearest point of non-Jarawa habitation. Separated from the Jarawa habitat by a creek, this area provided the Jarawas with some respite from disturbances. A large portion of Baratang's population consisted of Ranchi settlers. These people, originating from various tribal regions of eastern and central India, had migrated to work as blue-collar employees in the forest and police departments. Over time, they settled in Baratang and other areas, forming a distinct community.

Of the three primary neighbours of the Jarawas, the Ranchis were the most knowledgeable about the forest. This understanding stemmed partly from their tribal heritage in forested regions and partly from their occupational roles, which required them to navigate the Andaman forests. Pre-independence settlers, though from varied backgrounds, acquired some familiarity with the forest and its indigenous inhabitants over their long stay on the islands. The Bengalis and other communities, although arriving later, quickly adapted to their surroundings. They learned survival techniques and resource exploitation methods from earlier settlers, allowing them to become proficient in using the forest and adjacent waters.

Despite the distances between their villages and the Jarawa habitat, settlers frequently encroached upon the Jarawas' territory. These intrusions included activities such as forest plantations, timber extraction, hunting, fishing, and the presence of police and road construction workers in and around the reserve. The construction of the Andaman Trunk Road (ATR) further penetrated Jarawa land, escalating contact and conflicts.

It is worth noting that, historically, only a small section of the non-Jarawa population—forest workers, poachers, policemen, and road construction labourers—had direct interactions with the Jarawas. The majority of the islanders preferred to avoid both the Jarawas and their habitat. It is only in recent years that face-to-face interactions between the Jarawas and the islanders have become more common.

In April 1996, a Jarawa boy named Enmei met with an accident during his usual hunting and gathering activities. He was found immobilized due to a leg injury on the fringes of Kadamtala village in Middle Andaman Island. The Andaman and Nicobar Administration provided him with medical treatment at the G.B. Pant Hospital, where it was determined that his leg bone was fractured. After recovering, Enmei was sent back to his own area in Middle Andaman in October 1996, carrying numerous gifts as tokens of goodwill.

In October 1997, Enmei, accompanied by a few other Jarawas, visited Uttara Jetty in Middle Andaman in broad daylight. This marked a historic moment, as it was the first time the Jarawas had come out of their forest abode in daylight in a friendly manner. The following year, in October 1998, the Jarawas of South Andaman exhibited similar behaviour by venturing out of their forest habitat during the daytime. It is reported that since 1997, there were no major conflicts or attacks between the settlers and Jarawas.

Conflict and Cooperation: Moplah with Other Homogenous Ethnic Groups- Burmese, Banthus, Karens and Other Linguistic Groups

The Britishers influxed multiple ethnic groups into a land that was once home to indigenous people. Besides political prisoners, they also brought multiple ethnic groups, including the Mappilas (or Moplahs), Burmese, Banthus, Karens, and others over time. Following the Khilafat movement to crush the rebellion, the British brought the Moplahs here as convicts. Over time, they settled in the Andaman Islands, particularly after British colonial policies relocated prisoners and their families to these islands. The Burmese and Karen people migrated to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands primarily due to British colonial expansion in Southeast Asia. The Karens, an ethnic group from Myanmar (Burma), were brought to the Andamans on the promise of a grant of land and employment in the forest departments, and now, in the present day, they settled in Mayabunder of Middle Andaman. Similarly, some Burmese people migrated to the islands seeking economic opportunities. The Banthus are one of India's many wandering gipsy tribes that survive on organized robbery and dacoity and are therefore classified as criminal tribes by the British Indian government. Many Bhanthus are also deported here in order to curtail their criminal activities. The Ranchis, a group of tribes of Jharkhand, were brought by the British for clearing of forests, and now they have made Andaman their home. Beside this, Bengalis from East Pakistan, Tamils, Telugu, and numerous other ethnic groups from mainland India have also settled in the Andaman Islands over the years. These deportations and migrations have contributed to the diversity of the population in the Andaman Islands, as these groups have established communities and

integrated into local society over time. The presence of different ethnic groups has enriched the cultural tapestry of the islands, creating a unique blend of traditions and practices.

This transformation has been influenced by administrative categorizations that classify the settler population into distinct groups: Pre-42 (Local Borns), Pre-61 but Not Pre-42, and Post-78 incomers. These distinctions reflect the historical, political, and cultural evolution of the islands and continue to shape their social dynamics, particularly in terms of resource allocation, political representation, and cultural preservation.

Pre-42 Settlers (Local Borns): Historical Custodians

The "Local Borns," comprising descendants of early convicts and settlers, represent the foundational population of the islands. Groups such as the Moplahs, Bhantus, Karens, and Ranchis who arrived before 1942 fall under this category, having their origins in the penal settlement system. This community experienced significant challenges, including the Japanese occupation during World War II, which solidified their collective identity.

The Local Borns enjoy Other Backward Class (OBC) status in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, granting them socio-economic advantages, particularly in education and employment. Organizations such as the Local Born Association and the Andaman Moplah Service Organization (AMSO) have worked to preserve their cultural heritage and advocate for their rights. However, their privileged position often creates tensions with newer settler groups, who view the benefits accorded to Local Borns as exclusionary.

Pre-61 but Not Pre-42 Settlers: Transitional Migrants

The Pre-61 but not Pre-42 settlers represent a critical demographic in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, encompassing migrants who arrived after the Local Borns but before India's independence in 1947 or the union territory's reorganization in 1961. This group includes Bengali refugees, Tamils, Telugus, and others who were either displaced by the Partition or recruited for labor as part of government colonization schemes. To address land scarcity and socio-political challenges on the mainland, the Government of India continued large-scale colonization initiatives in the islands during the early years of independence. As part of the First and Second Five-Year Plans, the government aimed to clear 20,000 acres of land to settle 4,000 families. Many of these families included refugees from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) fleeing religious persecution. Other groups, such as Tamils and Telugus, were recruited for labor in agriculture, forestry, and other developmental projects. Unlike the Local Borns, who share a legacy tied to the penal settlement system, the Pre-61 settlers lack historical ties to the islands. This distinction has often marginalized them in socio-political narratives despite their significant contributions to the islands' development. This group brought a rich variety of languages, traditions, and practices, enriching the islands' multicultural fabric.

Post-78 Incomers: The Newcomers

Post-78 incomers are migrants who arrived after the 1978 Forest Conservation Act, often through unofficial means. This group primarily comprises economic migrants from mainland India and those displaced by environmental crises, such as the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. They are often labeled as "encroachers" due to their unauthorized settlement, contributing to their stigmatization.

These settlers frequently live in informal settlements with limited access to basic amenities, reflecting their marginalized status. Their arrival has led to demographic shifts, intensifying competition for resources and creating tensions with older settler groups. Local Boms and Pre-61 settlers often perceive them as threats to the islands' ecological balance and cultural integrity.

Population Growth over the Decades

The islands were initially populated through penal settlements starting in 1858. Between **1901 and 1951**, the population remained relatively stable, ranging between **25,000 and 30,000**. However, the post-independence period saw a dramatic shift as large-scale colonization policies were implemented to alleviate land pressures on the mainland. This is reflected in the population census data:

Table 9. Comparative Statement of Censuses 1901-2011

Census Year	Population	Decadal Growth (%)
1901	24,649	-
1911	26,459	7.34
1921	27,086	2.37
1931	29,463	8.78
1941	33,768	14.16
1951	30,971	-8.28
1961	63,548	105.19
1971	115,130	81.17
1981	188,741	63.93
1991	280,661	48.70
2001	356,152	26.90
2011	380,581	6.86

Source: Census Data

The period between 1951 and 1981 is particularly noteworthy, with the population growing six fold from 30,971 to 188,741. This dramatic surge was driven by the government-sponsored resettlement programmes targeting various migrant groups,

including refugees from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), Tamils, and other displaced populations.

OBC Status and Affirmative Action

A landmark development in the social landscape of the islands was the recognition of certain communities as Other Backward Classes (OBC) under the Andaman and Nicobar Administration. This was formalized through the Andaman and Nicobar Gazette Notification No. 343/2005 (F. No. 8-3/2003-TW), dated 16th December 2005.

Key groups recognized under this notification include the Local Borns, Moplahs, Bhatus, Karens and Post-42 Bengali Settlers, who settled in the islands under various rehabilitation schemes by the central government. This designation ensures socio-economic benefits such as 38% reservation in jobs and services under the Andaman and Nicobar Administration. The OBC recognition has played a pivotal role in uplifting these communities, ensuring representation in education, employment, and governance. However, it has also led to tensions with other groups, particularly newer settlers, who feel excluded from these benefits.

The total OBC population, including Pre-42 settlers and Post-42 rehabilitated groups, accounted for 1,64,731 individuals out of the islands' population. The breakdown is as follows:

Table 10. The Estimated Population of OBC Communities by Andaman and Nicobar Islands Backward Class Commission

Community	Population (1998)
Bhatus	1,448
Moplahs	26,569
Local Borns (Pre-42)	77,254
Post-42 Settlers (Bengalis)	57,948
Karens	1,512
Total	1,64,731

Source: The Andaman and Nicobar Islands Backward Class Commission Report.

Moplah Community and OBC Certification

The Moplah community, a significant group among the Pre-42 settlers in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, has been recognized under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category. However, the eligibility for OBC certification within the Moplah community is contingent upon specific historical and administrative criteria: The eligibility criteria for OBC Certification are as:

1. The applicant must belong to a Moplah family that arrived and settled in the islands before 1942.

2. Proper land documents issued by the British colonial administration must be available to establish the family's historical settlement.
3. A detailed family chart tracing the applicant's ancestry to a Moplah convict is required as mandatory proof.

During interviews, it is said that Moplahs who arrived after 1942 and were not part of the convict population are not eligible for OBC status. This distinction reflects the socio-historical significance attributed to the Pre-42 settlers, particularly those connected to the penal settlement system, in shaping the islands' legacy. While it preserves the authenticity of OBC recognition for the Moplahs, it also creates a clear divide between Pre-42 and Post-42 Moplah arrivals. By linking OBC status to documented historical lineage, the policy ensures that benefits are reserved for families with deep roots in the islands' penal settlement history. However, this also highlights the challenges faced by newer sections of the community in accessing similar socio-economic opportunities.

Interfaith Marriages

It is said that the *Sharia* law prescribes the right behavior of a believer in all aspects of life including interfaith marriages. According to this tradition, Moplahs believe that each person has two angels—one seated on each shoulder. The angel on the right meticulously records the individual's good deeds, or *guna*, while the angel on the left keeps track of their misdeeds. At the end of life, these accounts are tallied, determining the believer's fate in the afterlife. This cosmic bookkeeping significantly shapes the Moplahs' way of life as per their religion, revealing their deeply ingrained religious faith.

Marriage, especially with someone of a different faith, is viewed through this spiritual lens. Such unions are considered to add to a person's bad *guna*, and corrective measures—like religious conversion—are seen as essential for rectifying this imbalance. Conversion becomes a redemptive act, allowing the person of another faith to join the fold of Islam. This redressal process is formalized through two main steps: first, the individual must adopt a Muslim name, and second, they must recite the *kalma* (declaration of Islam faith), a sacred religious text, in a mosque. This process not only redeems the converter, granting them ten times the usual amount of good *guna*, but also benefits the convert, who is spiritually elevated within the community. This moral framework also influences every aspect of their life. It is observed that many women are reluctant to use birth control or consider abortion. According to their faith, they believe that anything given by *Allah* should not be rejected, and doing so would increase their bad *guna*.

Conversion, therefore, is not just a personal choice but a moral obligation within the Moplah community, deeply tied to the cosmic balance of good and bad conduct. Out of the 18 interfaith marriages documented, 16 individuals had converted, highlighting the significance placed on this practice. Interestingly, women are often more pressured to convert due to their role in passing on faith to future generations. For a Muslim woman

marrying a non-Muslim man, the redressal mechanism often involves converting her spouse, emphasizing the community's belief in maintaining religious purity.

In contrast, the Andaman Islands, with their unique history as a melting pot of cultures, present a more tolerant attitude toward inter-religious marriages. Here, economic interdependence and absence of vertical hierarchy among various communities appears to dilute the strictness seen in Moplah communities elsewhere. Conversion is not always enforced, and those who do not convert generally face no harsh consequences or ostracism.

Now-a-days, financially stable Moplah families maintain strong religious beliefs, yet those who choose not to follow the conversion practice show less concern about its implications. Their financial independence allows them to navigate life without relying heavily on community guidance for matters like their children's education or religious instruction. This independence provides them with a certain degree of autonomy, suggesting that economic security can sometimes buffer individuals from the communal pressures typically associated with religious adherence. This reflects a dynamic where faith remains important, but the need for community validation diminishes in the face of financial self-sufficiency.

Service Exchange between Moplah and Ranchi

In the Andaman Islands, the Moplahs and Ranchis shared a mutually beneficial relationship characterized by service exchange. The Ranchis, known for their hard work and familiarity with agricultural practices, often worked as labourers in the agricultural fields and coconut and betel nut plantations owned by the Moplahs. At times, the Ranchis also served as tenants on Moplah-owned agricultural land, cultivating crops and sharing the produce as part of tenancy agreements. Ranchis often worked in Moplah-owned agricultural fields, performing tasks such as sowing, harvesting, and maintaining crops. In coconut and betel nut plantations, they were responsible for activities like tree climbing, fruit collection, and general upkeep, which required both skill and physical endurance. This relationship not only supported the Moplahs' agricultural ventures but also provided the Ranchis with livelihoods, fostering interdependence between the two communities.

Chapter 5

Socio-cultural Position of Moplah at Present Demographic Landscape of Andaman Islands

The Moplah community, the largest Muslim group originating from Kerala, has a unique history in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, rooted in both resilience and adaptation. From 1922 onwards, the community settled permanently in the Andaman Islands, with many deciding to make it their home after serving their sentences. By the 1931 Census, the Moplah population in the Andaman Islands was recorded at 1,885, with 1,171 males and 714 females, representing 610 females per 1,000 males. Following this census, no separate enumeration of the Moplahs has been conducted to date. However, the 1998 Report of the Andaman and Nicobar Commission for Other Backward Classes estimated that the Moplah population had grown to 26,569 by that time. According to officials of the Andaman Moplah Service Organisation, the Moplah population may now be around 40,000. This increase over the decades reflects their adaptation to these islands over a century, by withholding their strong rootedness to their cultural heritage.

The Moplahs in the Andaman Islands are now widely spread across villages such as Mannarghat, Malappuram, Wright Myo, Wimberlygunj, Stewartgunj, Kanyapuram, Ograbraj, Calicut and Tushnabad. In the Port Blair Municipal Area, there is a smaller presence in localities such as Junglighat, Prem Nagar, Aberdeen Bazar, Dilanipur, Phonix Bay, Haddo, Shadipur and Lillipur. A very small Moplah presence can also be observed in Diglipur, Little Andaman, and Campbell Bay, due to employment opportunities in the Andaman and Nicobar Administration. The table below represents the age and gender-wise distribution of a sample collected from Moplah households in the South Andaman District.

Table 11. Age and Gender-wise distribution of Moplah of South Andaman District

Age Group (Years)	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0-5	13	1.93	22	3.26	35	5.19
6-10	25	3.71	41	6.08	66	9.79
11-15	32	4.75	25	3.71	57	8.46
16-20	18	2.67	19	2.82	37	5.49
21-25	26	3.86	20	2.97	46	6.82
26-30	27	4.01	29	4.30	56	8.31
31-35	25	3.71	31	4.60	56	8.31
36-40	33	4.90	38	5.64	71	10.53
41-45	33	4.90	19	2.82	52	7.72
46-50	23	3.41	21	3.12	44	6.53
51-55	18	2.67	22	3.26	40	5.93
56-60	13	1.93	20	2.97	33	4.90
61-65	18	2.67	11	1.63	29	4.30

66-70	10	1.48	10	1.48	20	2.97
71-75	9	1.34	7	1.04	16	2.37
76-80	3	0.45	3	0.45	6	0.89
81-85	4	0.59	2	0.30	6	0.89
86-90	1	0.15	0	0.00	1	0.15
91-95	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
96-100	2	0.30	1	0.15	3	0.45
Total	333	49.41	341	50.59	674	100.00

*Sex Ratio= (Total Female Population / Total Male Population) X 1000 = 1024 females per 1000 males

The growth of the Moplah population and improvement in the sex ratio can be attributed to the following reasons: improved medical conditions, their cultural and religious practices, the sustenance of relations with Malabar region through marriage and religion, their settlements being close to Port Blair (the capital of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, where the first signs of development typically occur), and the Pre-42 policy, which granted them OBC status in the islands, among other factors. As the Moplahs continue to evolve in their adopted homeland, their demographic profile stands as a testament to their endurance and successful integration into the Andaman Islands.

There are many cases related to diabetes and cardiovascular diseases being observed in the middle aged as well as in the case of older individuals. This could be due to their changing lifestyle and dietary habits over the years, leading to an increased risk of developing these health conditions.

Social Organization of Moplah

The social organization of the Moplah community revolves around their adherence to Islamic faith, with interpretation of *Shria law* and its practices playing a central role in structuring their group identity. Intra-group divisions exist within the community, largely based on differing interpretations and applications of religious laws. These divisions include groups such as the Sunni, Wahabi, Qaidani, as well as sub-groups within the Sunnis, namely the EK and AP factions. The disagreements over clarifications of Islamic jurisprudence and ritual practices contribute to the formation of these groups and sub-groups.

For instance, while both Wahabis and Sunnis identify as followers of Sunni Islam, the Wahabi group diverges from mainstream Sunni practices, particularly in their views on mosque access for women and mourning rituals. Wahabis permit women to enter mosques, which contrasts with Sunni prohibitions. Additionally, the Sunnis observe a 40-day mourning period after a death, a practice rooted in their cultural interpretation of impurity associated with death. Wahabis, however, believe that any ritual impurity is cleansed immediately after burial. The Qadiyani group (Ahmadiyya) presents a more pronounced doctrinal difference, as they consider Ghulam Mirza Qadiyani as the last

prophet of *Allah*, in contrast to the Sunni and Wahabi belief in Prophet Muhammad as the final messenger. Consequently, the Qadiyanis practice a distinct form of Islamic rituals, creating further religious differentiation.

Religious leadership within these groups is also a source of social distinction, as each group has its own *Imam*, who leads prayers in mosques and provides religious guidance. Differences in the interpretation of prayer rituals, such as the timing of the *Namaz*, the number of prayers, and prayer etiquette, contribute to internal divisions. These ritual variations have fostered the emergence of sub-groups like the EK and AP factions within the Sunni group, each maintaining its own mosque for communal prayers such as *jummah* (Friday prayers). This differentiation extends to death rituals, with funerary prayers being performed only in the mosque of the deceased's respective group. In addition to these religious distinctions, the practice of *sadka* (almsgiving), where each household contributes a portion of their income (usually one-third, according to Shariah law) to the mosque based on their capacity. In return, the respective mosque provides services like *Madrassa* education to the children, religious guidance at various stages of life according to *Shariah*, offers the final funeral prayer for the deceased etc.

However, despite these internal schisms, the Moplah community exhibits inter-group solidarity in contexts of outside religious rituals. While divisions based on religious practices persist, social cohesion is maintained through practices such as intermarriage, which is permitted across all groups except for Qadianis, with whom marriage is generally not preferred. Moplahs practice patrilineal descent and patrilocal residence, wherein women adopt the religious practices of their husband's group upon marriage. The intergroup marriage pattern fosters a sense of community integration despite internal sectarianism. It has been mentioned that to unite all these factions and groups, and to represent the togetherness of the Moplahs, the Andaman Moplah Service Organization was formed in 1973.

It can be inferred that the principle of 'fusion' and 'fission' is evident in the social organization of the Moplah. Fission occurs through religious sectarianism and the subsequent ritual practices that distinguish one group from another. However, fusion is equally apparent in how these groups unite for collective action, marriage alliances, and broader community representation in the demographic landscape of the Andaman Islands.

Moplah are close-knit community with the Mosques as their center. As stated above, the mosque serves as the central hub for the Moplah, acting not only as a place of prayer but also as a center for madrasa education, social welfare, community gatherings, and dispute resolution. For them, the mosque holds deep emotional significance, representing both their religious devotion and their sense of community. It plays a vital role in their daily lives by providing a space to connect with their faith and with each other on multiple levels. This emotional attachment was evident during the Moplah Rebellion of 1921, which spread widely after the British and Gurkha regiments attacked

Tirungadi mosque where Ali Musaliyar had taken shelter. The attack on the mosque was seen as a direct assault on their faith and identity. In the late 1920s, the Moplah sought assistance from Lieutenant Colonel Michael Lloyd Ferrar, the Chief Commissioner, to build 6 to 9 mosques at their early settlements near the *nallahs*, (water course) reinforcing the mosque's central role in their community. All disputes, such as those involving marital affairs, property matters, inter-religious marriages, and other petty conflicts, are addressed at their respective mosques under the guidance of the *Mulla* or *Molvi*.

Hajj Pilgrimage

The practice of the Hajj pilgrimage, one of the five pillars of the Islamic faith, is deeply embedded in the religious life of the Moplah community in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It is said that a devotee engages in stringent and continuous prayers, approximately 200 in number, before embarking on the sacred journey to Mecca. For an individual undertaking Hajj for the first time, the pilgrimage is a solo endeavor. For subsequent pilgrimages, it is customary to bring one's parents on the second journey, the spouse on the third, and children on the fourth, and so forth. This structured, multi-generational approach to pilgrimage emphasizes the intertwining of religious obligations with family roles and highlights the strong familial bonds central to the Moplah social structure.

In recognition of the importance of the Hajj, the Haj Committee of India (HCOI), under the Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India, has established state-wise quotas of 500 seats per state to facilitate the pilgrimage to Mecca¹³. The Moplahs, being a significant Muslim population in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, utilize a substantial portion of this allocation. The number of seats utilized by the people of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands against the government quota has been mentioned in Annexure III.

The Hajj pilgrimage also serves as a vital link between the Moplahs of the Andaman Islands and their ancestral homeland in the Malabar region of Kerala. Since the embarkation points for Hajj are located on the Indian mainland, many Moplah pilgrims begin their journey by visiting their ancestral homeland, re-establishing cultural and familial ties in the process. It has been mentioned in many interviews that many members of the Moplah community stated they had visited Kerala during the Hajj pilgrimage.

Additionally, the exposure to Gulf countries during the Hajj pilgrimage has provided familiarity with these regions among the Moplah community. As a result, some members have found employment opportunities in Gulf nations, as noted in interviews.

¹³ The Haj Committee of India (HCOI) is a statutory body under the Ministry of Minority Affairs (MoMA). The HCOI is responsible for conducting Haj pilgrimages in India. The HCOI was established under the provisions of the Haj Committee Act of 2002. The MoMA also registers private tour operators (PTOs) who conduct Haj pilgrimages. The annual quota of pilgrims is divided between the HCOI and PTOs.

Family (*Tharwad*) Structure

The *tharwad* (family) plays a central role in the social organization of the Moplah community, reflecting broader patterns of kinship and household structure. Although the Moplahs traditionally practice patrilineal descent and patrilocal residence, certain deviations occur within this system, particularly regarding post-marital residence patterns. Under the customary laws of the Moplahs, inheritance of the *tharwad* primarily passes to the youngest son. This pattern of inheritance, sometimes referred to as ‘ultimogeniture’, is linked to the responsibility the youngest son bears in caring for his aging parents.

The elder sons, however, practice ‘neolocal’ residence after marriage. They establish new households, either adjacent to the *tharwad* or in a location where they possess household land, demonstrating a form of ‘fragmented patrilocality’.

Table 12. Types of Family among Moplah of South Andaman District (According to P. Kolenda’s Classification)

S. No	Types of Family	Number of Households	Percentage
1	Nuclear family	75	51.02
2	Supplemented nuclear family	3	2.04
3	Sub-nuclear family	5	3.40
4	Single-person household	2	1.36
5	Supplemented sub-nuclear family	0	0.00
6	Collateral joint family	0	0.00
7	Supplemented collateral joint family	3	2.04
8	Lineal joint family	30	20.41
9	Supplemented lineal joint family	19	12.93
10	Lineal-collateral joint family	5	3.40
11	Supplemented lineal-collateral joint family	5	3.40
12	Other	0	0.00
Total		147	100.00

Due to these practices, most Moplah families are structured as nuclear families (51.02%) in the studied areas, consisting of parents and their children, followed by lineal joint families (20.41%), where multiple generations co-reside in the same household, and further followed by supplemented lineal joint families (12.93%). These joint families are supplemented by the inclusion of collateral relatives.

Another significant factor influencing the prevalence of nuclear families among the Moplahs, particularly in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, is their high level of participation in government services. Many Moplahs are employed across various administrative sectors in the Andaman and Nicobar Administration, with postings that range from Diglipur in North Andaman to Campbell Bay in Great Nicobar. The

geographical dispersion of employment opportunities has also necessitated the formation of nuclear families. It has been noted that, irrespective of their location or where they reside, members of the family come together to celebrate *Eid al-Fitr* (commonly referred to as *Eid Mubarak*) at the *tharwad*.

Marriage and Marital Status

Table 13. Marital Status of Moplah of South Andaman District

Marital Status	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Married	188	27.89	188	27.89	376	55.79
Widowed	4	0.59	31	4.60	35	5.19
Divorced	2	0.30	0	0.00	2	0.30
Deserted	1	0.15	3	0.45	4	0.59
Un-married	138	20.47	119	17.66	257	38.13
Total	333	49.41	341	50.59	674	100.00

The marital status data reveal that 55.79% of the studied population are married, with an equal proportion of men and females. Whereas, 38.13% of the population are unmarried, with a slightly higher number of males (20.47%) compared to females (17.66%). While interviewing parents and elderly members, most of them believe that the optimal time to marry is between the ages of 20 and 25 years for both males and females. It was evident that throughout the course of the fieldwork, no such instances of child marriage were discovered, though some individuals had married as young as 18 years old. Presently, there are many factors that influence them to not marry at a younger age, such as increased educational opportunities, awareness through digital media, financial independence, etc. In the case of males, those who have stable incomes are more likely to marry, while parents are also insisting females to do so after completing their education and establishing a career. Overall, the trend towards delaying marriage is becoming more common among young adults in this community due to changing societal norms and economic conditions.

Widowed stands at 5.19%, with a higher proportion of females (4.60%) compared to males (0.59%) being observed. Divorcees account for only 0.30% of the studied population, and they are all men, while deserted individuals account for 0.59%, with more females (0.45%) than males (0.15%). Some of the elderly members clarify that they used to follow only religious laws regarding divorce, but now, in addition to religious laws, they seek legal counsel and go through civil courts for these matters. In many situations, they do not file for divorce and end up abandoning their parents' homes. It has been noticed that generally females, together with their children, return to their parents' homes after deserting their husbands.

Traditional Music, Dance and Folk Songs:

The Moplahs brought their festivals, cultural practices, and music with them to the Andaman Islands from the Malabar region. The traditions they have preserved even to this day include *Oppana*, *Daffu*, *Kolkali*, and *Mappila Pattu*.

Oppana

Oppana is a popular form of social entertainment among the Mappila community, traditionally performed during wedding ceremonies. It is a group dance where women clad in traditional attire circle around the bride, clapping rhythmically and singing melodious songs, often teasing and praising her. The dance moves are graceful and symbolic of joy, celebration, and blessings for the bride.

Daffu

Daffu, or *Duff Muttu*, is a traditional Mappila dance form accompanied by the rhythmic beats of the *Daffu*, a percussion instrument made of wood and animal skin. Performers, usually men, sing and dance to the beats, showcasing synchronized movements. It has religious and cultural significance and is performed at various celebrations, including weddings and festivals.

Kolkali

Kolkali is a traditional folk dance of Kerala performed with *kol* (sticks). This rhythmic dance involves participants forming a circle and moving in sync, tapping their sticks to the beat of accompanying music. It is particularly popular among the Muslim communities of Kerala and showcases agility and coordination. *Kolkali* is often performed during festivals and social gatherings.

Mappila Pattu

Mappila Pattu refers to the traditional folk songs of the Mappila community. These songs are typically written in a mix of Malayalam and Arabic and often narrate stories of love, devotion, valor, or social issues. Mappila Pattu holds a significant place in Mappila culture, with its unique blend of musical styles and lyrical content reflecting the community's history, beliefs, and traditions.

A traditional Mappila Pattu song: *Kozhikode Ponnani, Kunnummal Oru*

(Lyrics in Malayalam)

*Kozhikode Ponnani, Kunnummal Oru
Oru Vattam Muthassikkoru Mappila
Bharanikkayal Koodi Vannaanu
Hamsa Kunni, Kallayi Oru*

Muthassikkoru Mappila

(Translation)

*Kozhikode, Ponnani, and Kunnummal
In these places, lived a noble Mappila
Gathering together, with a noble spirit
A swan and a mountain, a family gathering
A noble Mappila.*

This song reflects the cultural and regional pride of the Mappila community, celebrating their heritage and the beauty of their homeland. It is said that the Oppana, Kolkali and Duff Mutt are regularly presented by the children of the Moplah community during the Island Tourism Festival and broadcast over Doordarshan regularly.

Syncretism of Education and Religion

The amalgamation of religion and education among the Moplah community in the Andaman Islands highlights an elusive balance between preserving Islamic traditions and embracing modern educational practices. This syncretism reflects the community have created a unique educational framework that supports both cultural continuity and socioeconomic mobility.

The history of education among Moplah in Andaman began with the establishment of Madrasas as soon as they settled on the island. Under the supervision of the then Chief Commissioner, Lieutenant Colonel Ferrar, various mosques as well as madrasas have been built that serve the community's centres of worship and education (Mujtaba, 2015). As the population of Moplah began to raise rapidly, these institutions in due course developed by them as well. The motive for such development was to reinforce a strong sense of identity among the Moplahs, linking them to their Malayalam Muslim roots in Kerala and maintaining the cultural practices of their ancestors.

The Moplahs, as convicts who came here in the 1920s, did not prioritize education, as they came from a time when access to education was minimal and the necessity for education was not high. So, they rely on Madrasa education, which was the only option for them, focusing on basic literacy and religious teachings. This limited their opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration into this island over time. The community gradually recognizes the importance of mainstream education for socioeconomic advancement and its role in the betterment of individuals as well as the community as a whole. This approach ensures that children receive a comprehensive education that nurtures both their religious values and their academic skills. Alongside religious education, the Moplahs have strived to balance religious and mainstream education by sending their children to both Madrasas and schools.

While conducting the field, it was observed that most of the children start their education by going to Madrasa. From a very young age, parents and elderly people insisted that their children should learn the Quran and Islamic teachings first before pursuing formal education. While their main purpose is to teach religious education, madrasas also teach their students how to pray religiously, behave morally, and understand Islamic norms and values. They believe that this early exposure to religious education helps inculcate moral values and a sense of religiousness in the children, shaping their character and manners as they grow older.

It is worth noting that 44 Madrasas and 5 Islamic schools are currently operating in the Andaman Islands¹⁴). The majority of them are located in the regions where the majority of Moplah populations are concentrated. During the interviews, the residents stated that the children began attending Madrasas at a young age, typically between the ages of four and five. Along with the Madrasa, they also get the opportunity to go to mainstream schools or Islamic schools to complete their schooling. They insist their children to complete at least basic Madrasa education without opting out of mainstream education. When speaking with the key informants, almost all agreed that they had completed the basic Madrasa education. Beside this, certain Islamic schools offer religious teaching along with formal education and also provide residence facilities for students who come from distant areas, ensuring a holistic learning experience. In these schools, they started their day by reciting Quran and other religious practices and subsequently with academic subjects. They believe that the combination of religious and formal education in Islamic schools provides a well-rounded education that prepares students for success in both religious and academic pursuits.

It was also observed that those who wish to pursue higher education in Islamic education after completing the basic Madrasa course travel to Kerala and other locations in India, where higher education in the Islamic faith is offered, and get a certificate as well. After such completion, they got the title *Moulavi* or *Maulana*, which is a respected title in the Islamic community, which allows them to serve as religious preachers in mosques or teachers in madrasas, as well as Islamic schools and allied institutions. This additional certification enables them to deepen their knowledge and understanding of Islamic teachings, making them more qualified to educate others in their community. Many of the Moplahs completed those higher studies and are currently serving as religious leaders, guiding and educating others on Islamic principles and practices.

Education was formerly restricted to school education due to the mind-set of unwillingness and scarcity of opportunities in job sectors opting out of them for pursuing education. During Japanese aggregation (1942-45), various places on this island were bombarded, including schools and educational institutions, creating a fear to go to school and disrupting the learning process over a period of three years on the island. One respondent told a story about her grandmother, who was in class 5, when bombing began,

¹⁴ See. Annexure II

causing chaos and destruction. Because of this horrifying incident, she chose not to continue her schooling. Beside that English was supposed to be a sign of hostility to the Japanese at that time, so many of the locals who could read and write it was taken prisoner and subjected to torture. This led to a significant decline in the literacy rate on the island during that period. The educational system failed due to ambiguity and confusion. Despite these hurdles, efforts continued after the Japanese left the island. The British endeavour succeeded in rebuilding and revitalizing educational possibilities in due course of time.

Table 14. Educational Status of Moplah of South Andaman District

Educational Status	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Non literate	23	3.41	47	6.97	70	10.39
Below Primary	5	0.74	11	1.63	16	2.37
Primary Class 1-5	36	5.34	59	8.75	95	14.09
Middle Class 6-8	42	6.23	36	5.34	78	11.57
Matriculation/Secondary Class 9-10	78	11.57	82	12.17	160	23.74
Higher Secondary Class 11-12	96	14.24	68	10.09	164	24.33
Technical Diploma or Certificate not Equal to Degree	2	0.30	3	0.45	5	0.74
Graduation	49	7.27	30	4.45	79	11.72
Graduation with Bachelor of Education	1	0.15	1	0.15	2	0.30
Post-Graduation	1	0.15	2	0.30	3	0.45
Post-Graduation with Bachelor of Education	0	0.00	2	0.30	2	0.30
Total	333	49.41	341	50.59	674	100.00

*The literacy rate of the sample Moplah population in South Andaman District is 89.61%

In terms of formal education, the studied as well as the adjoining areas have plenty of primary, secondary, and higher secondary schools that provide quality education to students. Beside Madrasa, they are also going to those schools, and the reflection may be seen in the increasing literacy rates, with 89.61% of individuals being literate in the present studied population. It was noticed that in Moplah-concentrated areas, a few secondary private schools are run by community members by contributing their own funds, to which Moplah and children from other communities also have access. The community's commitment to education is evident in their efforts to establish and maintain schools, showcasing their dedication to future generations.

Previously, there was a Malayalam medium school in Mannarghat Gram Panchayat. Many of the respondents stated that the school was founded in the early 1980s, but they were unsure of the exact date. Because the medium was Malayalam, the children found it easy to understand because it was their native language. However, it was restricted to class 5. Despite its limitations, the Malayalam medium school played a crucial role in providing basic education to children in the area. Once they completed class 5, they then attended another school that employed a different medium, such as English, Hindi, Tamil, etc., because they had no other options. This impediment put them in a difficult situation in which, after completing a basic education up to class 5, they had to change the medium of instruction, and it was extremely difficult for the children to learn such curriculum activities in a different language. This language barrier hindered their academic progress and led to a high dropout rate among students transitioning to a new medium of instruction. The lack of continuity in language instruction posed a significant challenge for these students, impacting their overall educational experience. This lack of consistency in language instruction also affected their ability to fully grasp the concepts and performance. As a result, many students struggled to keep up with their peers and fell behind in their studies. The community investigates every nook and corner to determine whether the scope of education in their mother tongue can be expanded, at least to the secondary level. However, the scarcity of teachers and declining student enrollment in Malayalam medium schools make it difficult for the school to survive. The Malayalam school eventually shut down. Parents gradually begin to send their children to Hindi or English medium schools after realizing that it would be beneficial if they studied in the same language throughout their academic career; it would be easily understood and would open up more opportunities for their future. This shift in language of instruction ultimately contributes to a lower dropout rate and better educational outcomes in the community. In the current scenario, the outcome can be reflected in terms of enrollment in schools.

Non-literate reflects 10.39% of the population, with women (6.97%) outnumbering men (3.41%). Although this percentage is dominant in the older generations, there has been a gradual decline in non-literacy rates among younger individuals due to increased access to education and growing awareness. The community members accepted that there was a time when many Moplahs with minimal educational qualifications were hired in government jobs due to the scarcity of workforce at that time. However, over time a number of circumstances, including expanding educational opportunities, a growing influx of population, and competition in every economic sphere, made it difficult for them to secure stable employment in the long term. This change has led to a greater emphasis on literacy and education within the community, encouraging more individuals to pursue higher levels of learning. Many families now encourage their children to seek higher education after they complete secondary school, aiming for employment in disciplines such as medical, engineering, government jobs, private jobs, business, and so on, which are viewed as roads to better economic opportunities.

It is noteworthy to mention that although 89.61% of the total population is literate, the dropout level is quite high in the population, with 38.88% of the total population with equal numbers of males and females having dropped out at various levels of education below secondary. While interviewing, they expressed that there are only a few colleges with limited sets of courses available in the region. This lack of access to higher education opportunities in the region may contribute to the high dropout rates observed. Additionally, the financial burden of traveling to the mainland for education can further deter individuals from pursuing higher education. In the current scenario, there are 14 colleges (andaman.gov.in) offering a variety of courses. This includes medical science, engineering, technological courses, law, arts, science, and vocational courses. These colleges aim to provide diverse educational opportunities to students in the region, reducing the need to travel for higher education. According to the current field data, 13.51% of Moplah individuals (consisting 7.87% males and 5.64% females) pursue higher education beyond secondary school. However, the limited availability of courses may not be able to fulfil those who are interested in studying further as the overall population in this island continues to grow and competition for higher education increases. This could potentially lead to a gap in the educational needs of the community, highlighting the importance of expanding educational resources in the region to accommodate a larger number of students seeking higher education opportunities. Aside from these obstacles, many of them are moving to the mainland to pursue higher education. It was also observed that after completion of colleges, universities, technical as well as allied disciplines, many of them returned to Andaman and held prestigious posts serving in various government offices in Andaman. This trend has contributed to the overall development and progress of the community, as these individuals bring back valuable skills and knowledge acquired during their education. Their presence in key positions helps in effectively implementing policies and initiatives for the benefit of the community.

Table 15. List of Minority Schools in Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Sl. No.	School Name	Place
1	IQRA Public School	Wimberlygunj
2	Shakeeba School	Bambooflat
3	Al Amin School	Ferrargunj
4	Dar Al Arkam Public School (DAPS)	Stewartgunj
5	Muslim Education School (MES)	Azad Nagar
6	Ummat Public School	Middle Point
7	Crescent Public School	Wimberlygunj

Active Participation of Moplah in Political Institutions: Pradesh Council to Three Tier Panchayat System

The political participation of the Moplah community in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is an important aspect of their social integration and adaptation to the region's political landscape. After the establishment of Moplah settlements in the late 1920s, a few members of the community were appointed as Chowdhurys by the British colonial

administration. These Chowdhurys were tasked with managing the settlements, handling self-supporter tickets, and playing an essential role in public health by distributing quinine tablets to combat malaria, a prevalent issue due to the island's swampy conditions.

During the Japanese occupation of the islands in World War II, the Moplahs continued to maintain their political involvement. A notable example is Abdul Jalil, who joined the Andaman Branch of the Indian Independence League and collaborated with the Japanese Imperial Forces in the administration of the islands.

Post-independence, the Moplahs continued to actively engage with the evolving political structure of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The Pradesh Council, a representative body, was established to provide local governance and advisory functions to the Union Territory's administration. It acted as an advisory body to the Lt. Governor, the administrative head of the Union Territory. The council comprised both elected and nominated members. This hybrid structure was designed to balance local representation with administrative oversight. The elected members of this council were regarded by the local people as being equivalent to state ministers or state deputy ministers. Prominent Moplah members, such as A.P. Abdullah Mohammad Kutty and Sheksha Ali, played a critical role in this body, advocating for employment opportunities for the Moplah community within the local administration.

The transition from the Pradesh Council to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Panchayati Raj system in 1994 further democratized local governance by establishing a three-tier structure, including Gram Panchayats, Panchayat Samitis, and Zilla Parishads. This system allowed for greater local self-governance and grassroots democratic participation. The Moplahs have maintained a significant presence in this system, particularly in Ferrargunj Tehsil, where they hold leadership positions in 7 out of 19 Gram Panchayats. Moplah Pradhans (village heads) serve in Wimberleygunj, Stewartgunj, Kanyapuram, Mannarghat, and Mitikhari, and as ward members in other Panchayats such as Tushnabad, Hopetown, and Namunaghar.

The Moplahs' active involvement in local governance and political institutions reflects their efforts to establish a sense of belonging and agency in their new environment. Their participation in the political institutions of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, from colonial-era appointments to contemporary Panchayati Raj governance, highlights their resilience and adaptability. This political engagement has been central to the community's efforts to integrate into the island's socio-political fabric, secure economic opportunities, and ensure their community's development and welfare.

Impact of Tsunami on Moplah Community

Based on significant ground movements and historical seismicity, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) created a seismic zoning map of India that divides the whole nation into

four zones: V, IV, III, and II. The Andaman & Nicobar Islands fall in Zone V, which has the highest seismic risk of any of these zones. This risk manifests itself in the form of a catastrophic tsunami on December 26, 2004. A 9.1 magnitude earthquake hit Sumatra, Indonesia, causing towering waves, and the largest impact was felt in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. Following the earthquake, 14 aftershocks with magnitudes between 5.7 and 7.3 occurred along the arc from Sumatra to Nicobar and the Andaman Islands. Although in Andaman and Nicobar Islands there are historical evidences of earthquakes in 1679, 1762, 1847, 1881, and 1941 exists¹⁵, but the earthquake that occurred in 2004 was unprecedented in terms of magnitude and resulting tsunami. The disaster led to significant loss of life and devastation in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The 2004 tsunami had a profound impact on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands where the official death toll reached over 1,300, with over 5,500 missing. Relief camps were established, and aid was provided to help the affected communities to rebuild their lives. Approximately 40,000 survivors were displaced and had to be evacuated to relief camps. Many of these camps were set up in Port Blair, the capital of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Beside human life, the tsunami caused extensive damage to infrastructure. About 85 of the 322 government schools on the islands were washed away, and another 34 were left completely dilapidated. Homes, roads, and bridges were also severely damaged or destroyed. The saltwater inundation from the tsunami affected agriculture and freshwater sources, which affects the socioeconomic permanency of this region.

While conducting the current field study, the tsunami's aftermath was observed in terms of the impact on local infrastructure and the surrounding study areas. On the onset of the tsunami, Moplahs became eyewitnesses to the devastating power of nature as the massive waves swept away much of the infrastructure along the coast. Along with that, an earthquake shook the ground, causing further destruction and chaos in the region. While interviewing with the community members, they share the terrifying experience, which makes them helpless and vulnerable. Large cracks appear on many of their buildings, and several houses are destroyed. A sudden surge in water along with the coast washed away their harvested crops in a matter of minutes. Plantation crops like coconut, areca nuts, and vegetables are severely damaged. Many of the community members lost their lives, although the exact figure is still unknown. One elderly Moplah from Tusnabad talked about his son, who was a police officer and became a tsunami victim while stationed at Campel Bay, Great Nicobar. There are many stories that highlight the devastating impact of the tsunami on the community, showcasing the widespread destruction and loss experienced by its members.

¹⁵ Retrieved from: Malik, J. N., Johnson, F. C., Khan, A., Sahoo, S., Irshad, R., Paul, D., ... & Chopra, S. (2019). Tsunami records of the last 8000 years in the Andaman Island, India, from mega and large earthquakes: Insights on recurrence interval. *Scientific reports*, 9(1), 18463

Immediately after the catastrophic event, the disaster left many families mourning the loss of loved ones and struggling to rebuild their lives amidst the wreckage left behind. They also suffered from health crises, including the spread of diseases and a lack of access to medical care. They also go through psychological impacts, such as trauma and stress, which affect the well-being of individuals and the community as a whole. The destruction also disrupts social structures and cultural practises. Traditional ways of life also impacted, leading to a sense of loss and disorientation among the affected population. Additionally, the economic repercussions of the disaster further compounded the challenges faced by the families as they struggled to secure basic necessities and livelihoods in the wake of the devastation.

The members of the community revealed that in immediate response to this crisis, various search operations were made by the Indian government with the help of the Andaman Administration to coordinate relief efforts across the affected regions. Homeless people and farmers affected by land submergence were relocated to relief camps and intermediate shelters by the Andaman & Nicobar Administration. They received free ration in intermediate shelters before being rehabilitated in permanent shelters. A total of 9797 permanent shelters were constructed and allotted to the victims. The Deputy Commissioner of South Andaman District formed a damage assessment committee, which visited the affected areas and reported on the damage to buildings, household objects, and livestock. As a result, families affected by the tsunami received prompt ex-gratia relief. However, no compensation for agricultural damage was paid at that time. Survey teams were also formed to assess the submerged land in Port Blair and Ferrargunj Tehsils, where the current fieldwork was carried out¹⁶. The South Andaman District was found to have three main submergence patches: the Sippighat Patch, the Stewartgunj Patch, and the Mithakhari Patch. In these locations, the majority of the Moplah concentration is seen during the fieldwork. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) granted an additional Rs. 70.28 crore as compensation for farmers who lost crops during the tsunami, divided into two categories: loss of paddy/vegetable/root crop and loss of plantation crops (coconut/areca nut).

Although various destructions affect the socio-cultural landscape of Moplahs, the key worry revolved around the land that had been damaged adversely by the tsunami. The sluice gates that were meant to protect the agricultural fields from flooding were overwhelmed by the force of the tsunami, leading to extensive damage and seawater inundation resulted in widespread destruction. Many of them lost their harvested crops and were left with no means of livelihood, as many Moplahs relied on agriculture as their main source of income. They waited, thinking it might only have a temporary effect. However, the effect is long lasting, and the agricultural fields where they used to grow crops are still submerged. The water that entered the landmass during the tsunami carried huge amount of chemicals from the lower level of the sea and deposited in the land mass

¹⁶ Retrieved from the Report of the Committee on Land Matters in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, December 2017

during its entry and recession which led to a decrease in agricultural productivity, exacerbating the already challenging economic conditions in the region. The Moplahs, who lost their land in the tsunami, have raised these concerns continuously with the local administration as well as the Indian government.

The authorities endeavoured to provide alternate land to all impacted landowners and farmers in place of their drowned land due to the tsunami. However, this could not happen due to a lack of revenue land in the South Andaman District. The tsunami-affected Moplahs, along with other communities, have filed several petitions on land matters.

The Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, constituted a committee to examine and make recommendations on certain land matters dated 08/06/2017 of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands with Shri Vivek Rae as Chairman. The committee made a terms of reference among which the most important suggestion was “whether amount paid as compensation to the people/farmers, whose land(s) were submerged during Tsunami-2004 should be treated as a relief package and land surrendered in lieu thereof to the government be returned to them¹⁷”.

In the background of tsunami relief and before recommendations on the land matters several meetings were taken place. In the 13th meeting of the Island Development Authority (IDA) held on 15th June 2011 under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, it was decided that,

“The A & N Administration will provide an option to the victims of tsunami, whose land has been permanently submerged under the sea water, to accept monetary compensation in lieu of the submerged land. The compensation amount was directed to be reworked on the basis of the extant rules/guidelines and the market value of land in location adjacent to the submerged land parcel.”

The District Administration sought specific consent from affected farmers/tenants regarding alternative land or monetary compensation for their submerged land after the Tsunami. The submerged land was re-verified by Tehsildars, and the initial submerged area was reduced due to land reclamation, allowing for final payment of compensation. The decision was made to finalize the compensation payment. The Assistant Commissioner (R&DM) assessed the market value of interest in land adjacent to submerged land and provided a requirement of Rs. 245,75,14,500/- (Rupees Two Hundred Forty Five Crores Seventy Five Lakhs Fourteen Thousand Five Hundred Only) for payment based on market value. After that, Andaman and Nicobar Administration, addressed to the Joint Secretary (UT), GOI, MHA, forwarded an expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) memo and commented that,

¹⁷ See. Report of the Committee on Land Matters in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, December 2017

“Since the land is submerged under water there are practical problem associated with the estimation of value of interest in the land. Further, the value of permanent loss of interest in the submerged land arrived at is at best guess estimated rather than the value of interest in the actual submerged land. Hence instead of assessing the present actual market value of the submerged land, the lower conservative figure (of 9.39 Lakh per hect.) has been adopted as the rate for compensation. A uniform rate will also help avoid litigation that may arise out of variable market rate for various parcel of land”.

The proposal was approved by the Ministry of Home Affairs, and before making compensation, it was ensured that in that the compensation recipients must surrender the land they receive in lieu of submerged land and have not encroached on any government or forest land. The disbursement of cash compensation is being closely monitored and given to the affected families.

Table 16. Compensation in lieu of submerged land disbursed till date in South Andaman District

Sl No.	Total submerged area (in hect.)	Area opted for cash compensation	No. of affected farmers/tenants whose compensation has already been disbursed	Area involved in lieu of which compensation has already been disbursed (area surrendered)(in Ha)	Total amount disbursed (Rs. Lakhs)	Balance area involved for disbursement of cash compensation	Balance amount involved for disbursement (Rs. Lakhs)
1	916.217	808.956	1158	432.94784	4065.38	376.00816	3493.11

Source: Order No U-13018/1/2010-ANL dated 30/07/2012 of GOI, MHA, compensation in lieu of submerged land disbursed till date in South Andaman District.

The committee ruled that those who surrendered their submerged land for compensation do not have legal entitlement over the land, as their interest has been extinguished under Section 162(b) of the A & N Island Land Revenue and Land Reforms Regulation, 1966, and the compensation of Rs. 9.39 lakh per hectare was paid as compensation, not as relief. Further, they also recommended paying additional compensation based on the market value of the land.

Aggregate 2012 Market Value of submerged land (Calculated on the basis year 2012 Market Value of the adjacent land) under South Andaman and Nicobar District

Port Blair Tehsil	Rs. 59.21 Crore
Ferrargunj Tehsil	Rs. 186.54 Crore
Campbell Bay Tehsil	Rs. 32.20 Crore
Grand Total Tehsil	Rs. 277.95 Crore

For calculation of current market value of the submerged land, simple interest at the rate of 12% per annum for the last 5 years can be added to the year 2012 market prices (as is done in land acquisition cases)

Simple interest (@ 12% for 5 years) = Rs. 166.77 Crore
Current market value of the submerged land = 444.72 Crore
Proposed compensation per ha = $444.72/1244.4942$
=Rs. 35.73 lakh per ha

Source. Report of the Committee on Land Matters in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, December 2017

The Committee recommends a standard rate of compensation rather than varying rates for different places, keeping in mind that their previous compensation of Rs. 9.89 lakhs per acre was similarly uniform. After reviewing several options, the Committee recommends higher compensation of Rs. 35.73 lakhs per hectare for submerged land to be surrendered to the government.

While discussing these facts with the tsunami affected Moplah community members, they also agreed on the compensation that had been paid to them. Many of them felt that the compensation was inadequate to cover the losses they had suffered. They spent the majority of their funds on the reconstruction of their dwelling. Some are now advocating for the return of their lands as a more meaningful form of restitution.

Chapter 6

Summary and Conclusions

Over the past century, the Moplahs have established themselves as a significant community, blending their Malayali Muslim cultural heritage with the socio-political fabric of the islands. From their deportation as convicts to their current integration into Andaman society, the Moplahs' journey reflects a narrative of resilience and transformation. Their contributions to agriculture, infrastructure, and community building in the islands demonstrate a unique ability to balance the preservation of cultural identity with adaptation to new challenges.

The Moplah Rebellion of 1921 in Malabar was a pivotal socio-political and economic uprising fueled by grievances over oppressive tenancy systems, anti-colonial sentiments, and the broader pan-Islamic Khilafat Movement. The rebellion highlighted the struggles of Moplah tenant farmers against the exploitative *janmi* (landlord) system under British colonial rule. While initially centered on protecting the Ottoman Caliphate, the Khilafat Movement in Malabar became a platform for addressing systemic inequalities, mobilizing Moplahs through Kuttiyan Sanghams to demand land rights and better conditions. The rebellion escalated into violent confrontations with the British and Hindu landlords, resulting in severe reprisals, including mass arrests and deportations, culminating in the tragic Wagon Tragedy.

In the aftermath, thousands of Moplahs were deported to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as part of British efforts to suppress dissent and utilize them as a colonial labor force. Between 1922 and 1930, Moplah convicts relocated to the islands under harsh conditions. Despite challenges such as penal servitude, malaria, and limited land availability, the Moplahs adapted through reforms like land tenure rights and early ticket-on-leave policies introduced by officials such as Colonel M.L. Ferrar. Settlements like Herbertabad, Mannarghat, and Calicut gradually became agrarian hubs, supported by community integration and infrastructure improvements, including construction of sluice gates, mosques, and public health facilities.

The Japanese occupation of the Andaman Islands (1942–1945) during World War II was a harrowing period for the Moplahs, marked by systemic killings, forced labor, and severe food shortages. Vulnerable groups, including older Moplahs, were targeted, with brutal punishments inflicted for hiding resources. Despite the hardships, the community demonstrated remarkable resilience, using strategies such as burying food grains to safeguard their supplies.

Moplah settlers, placed in regions like Herbertabad and Balughat due to the availability of land, were vulnerable to Jarawa raids and eventually abandoned many settlements out of fear. The situation escalated in the 1920s, with repeated violent encounters prompting the British administration to deploy punitive expeditions and establish the Bush Police for settler protection. Despite these measures, the Jarawas

remained resolute in defending their lands. The Jarawa resistance in the Andaman Islands stemmed from their deep cultural connection to the forest, which they viewed as sacred and integral to their identity.

The construction of the Andaman Trunk Road (ATR) and continued resource extraction from Jarawa territory by settlers further exacerbated tensions. Encroachments by settlers, including agricultural expansion and fishing, frequently led to violent encounters. However, following the 1996 rescue and medical treatment of a Jarawa boy named Enmei, a turning point emerged. Friendly interactions gradually replaced hostilities, marked by Jarawas venturing out in daylight to interact with settlers by the late 1990s. These developments significantly reduced violent conflicts, hinting at the possibility of coexistence.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a melting pot of diverse ethnic groups, were shaped by British colonial policies, which brought multiple communities, including the Moplahs, Burmese, Bhandus, Karens, Ranchis, and others, to this remote archipelago. The Karens, an ethnic group from Myanmar, were relocated to Mayabunder with promises of land and employment, while the Burmese arrived seeking economic opportunities. The Bhandus, labeled as a "criminal tribe" by the British, were deported to curtail their activities. Ranchis from Jharkhand were brought to clear forests, and other groups, including Bengali refugees, Tamils, and Telugus, arrived over the years.

The administration classification of settlers into categories—Pre-42, Pre-61 but Not Pre-42, and Post-78 incomers—continues to influence the social dynamics of the islands. The Pre-42 settlers, also known as "Local Borns," include Moplahs, Bhandus, Karens, and Ranchis, who share a collective history tied to the penal settlement system. This group faced significant challenges, including the atrocities of the Japanese occupation, and now benefits from Other Backward Class (OBC) status.

The Pre-61 settlers, comprising Bengali refugees and other labor migrants, arrived as part of government-led resettlement programmes. Though they significantly contributed to the islands' development, they lack historical ties to the penal settlement system, which often marginalizes them in socio-political narratives. The Post-78 encroachers, largely economic migrants and displaced individuals, face stigmatization as unauthorized settlers. Their arrival has intensified competition for resources.

The Moplah population in the Andaman Islands has grown significantly since their initial settlement as convict settlers in the early 20th century. From 1,885 individuals recorded in the 1931 census, the community is now estimated at over 40,000. This demographic expansion reflects sustained marital ties with Kerala, and their designation as an Other Backward Class (OBC) under the Pre-42 policy, which facilitated their social upliftment. The current sex ratio of the studied Moplah population is 1,024 females per 1,000 males reflects the community's progressive demographic profile. The Moplahs are primarily concentrated in South Andaman villages, such as Mannarghat, Wimberlygunj,

Stewartgunj, Mallapuram, Wright Myo, Calicut, Bambooflat, Ograbraj and Tusnabad, with smaller populations in Port Blair and other areas of the islands.

The Moplahs are patrilineal and practice virilocal residence. The Moplahs exhibit a strong adherence to Islamic faith, with mosques serving as the focal point for religious, educational, and social activities. Internal divisions exist within the community along sectarian lines (Sunni, Wahabi, Qadiyani), yet inter-group solidarity is evident through shared religious practices and intermarriages. The mosque continues to be a hub for dispute resolution, religious education, and community welfare, reinforcing communal bonds. Cultural practices such as Oppana, Daffu, Kolkali, and Mappila Pattu remain integral to the Moplah identity, with their performances featuring prominently in local festivals and celebrations. The practice of Hajj pilgrimage also underscores the Moplahs' religious devotion while fostering familial and cultural ties with Kerala.

Education has played a transformative role in the Moplah community's socio-economic trajectory. The community has evolved from relying solely on Madrasa education to embracing formal education, achieving a literacy rate of 89.61%. Younger generations are pursuing higher education, with many attaining prestigious positions in government and private sectors. Despite this progress, limited local higher education opportunities and high dropout rates at secondary levels remain challenges.

Economic diversification among the Moplahs has been significant. While agriculture was once the dominant occupation, many have transitioned to government and private sector jobs, business ventures, and allied activities. Tsunami-induced land loss accelerated this shift, with government compensation enabling investments in alternative livelihoods such as retail, tourism, and plantation crops. The tsunami of 2004 stands as a pivotal moment in the community's history, catalyzing shifts from agriculture to urban livelihoods.

The 2004 tsunami caused unprecedented devastation in the Andaman Islands, submerging Moplah agricultural lands, destroying infrastructure, and displacing families. The Moplahs were severely affected, losing both lives and livelihoods. Government compensation schemes, while providing some relief, were criticized as insufficient to address the scale of the losses. The Moplah community has since utilized these funds for housing reconstruction and economic diversification, albeit with lingering challenges such as waterlogged fields and inadequate land compensation.

The Moplah community's socio-cultural and economic evolution in the Andaman Islands reflects a narrative of resilience, adaptation, and transformation. From their origins as convict settlers to their current prominence in local governance and socio-economic structures, the Moplahs have navigated complex challenges, including sectarian divisions, educational limitations, and natural disasters. Their ability to preserve their cultural identity while integrating into the broader Andaman society highlights their adaptability.

Prospects for Future Development: A Way Forward

The Moplah identity in Andaman Islands today is shaped by the interplay between the historical convict legacy and cultural preservation through connections with the motherland, forming the basis for their aspirations and demands.

Demand for Inner Line Permit and Resource Protection

The Moplahs strongly advocate for the implementation of an Inner Line Permit (ILP) system to regulate migration into the islands. With increasing pressures on limited resources and the growing demographic presence of non-islanders, the Moplahs view the ILP as a crucial mechanism for safeguarding their rights, cultural heritage, and economic stability. This demand reflects their concern about unregulated settlement and the subsequent risks of resource depletion, loss of land, and marginalization of local communities.

Restoration of Pradesh Council for Community Based Development

Political representation remains a pressing concern for the Moplahs. The community emphasizes the need for the restoration of the Pradesh Council, a body that previously allowed for greater local input in administrative decisions. The Moplahs believe this will enable democratic participation and ensure that the voices of island communities, particularly marginalized groups, are heard. Furthermore, the community advocates for a bottom-to-top approach in policymaking, urging the administration to involve local stakeholders and consider ground realities when formulating strategies for the islands' development.

Socio-Economic Justice and Reservations

The Moplahs seek justice through the increased OBC reservation percentage, aligning with their demographic representation in the islands. They argue that existing reservations do not adequately address their needs in education and employment. A significant portion of the unreserved quota, they argue, is effectively dominated by mainland applicants who benefit from access to superior educational facilities, putting islanders at a disadvantage in competitive recruitment processes.

Additionally, they call for separate reservation quotas for island students in higher education institutions, which they believe are essential to bridge disparities in access to quality education between islanders and mainland students. This demand stems from the recognition of a growing disparity in access to quality education between island-born students and their mainland counterparts. Island students often face challenges such as limited availability of advanced educational facilities, inadequate resources, and geographical isolation, which hinder their ability to compete on an equal footing with students from the mainland. The Moplahs believe that a dedicated reservation policy for

island students would help bridge this gap, resulting in equitable opportunities and ensuring that island-born students have better access to higher education and professional growth.

Returning of Submerged Lands Surrendered During the Tsunami

The Moplah community has expressed a pressing demand for the restoration of lands that were submerged and surrendered by Moplah families during the devastating 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. These lands hold immense significance for the community, extending beyond their economic value. For the Moplahs, these lands represent a vital connection to their historical roots and cultural heritage.

The loss of these lands has had profound socio-economic consequences, disrupting traditional occupations such as farming and eroding the community's sense of belonging to the islands. Many Moplah families, whose livelihoods depended on these lands, have struggled to rebuild their economic stability in the aftermath of the disaster. The community views the restitution of these lands not only as an essential step toward restoring their economic resilience but also as a symbolic acknowledgment of the sacrifices they have endured.

Restoration of the Subsidy for the Hajj pilgrimage

The Moplahs have expressed concerns about the erosion of cultural and religious practices due to economic and social constraints. A significant demand is the restoration of the subsidy for the Hajj pilgrimage, which they view as a recognition of their religious identity and spiritual aspirations. The Hajj pilgrimage holds profound significance in Islam, symbolizing unity, equality, and devotion. For the Moplahs, undertaking the Hajj is not merely a personal spiritual journey but also a collective affirmation of their heritage and connection to the global Muslim community.

The economic barriers to undertaking the pilgrimage are particularly acute for island-based communities like the Moplahs. The additional costs of travel from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to mainland embarkation points, coupled with the overall expense of the pilgrimage, make the Hajj financially inaccessible to many. The subsidy was instrumental to bridge this gap, enabling Moplah families to participate in this vital religious practice without undue financial strain.

Diversification of Economic Opportunities

Economically, the Moplahs emphasize the urgent need for creating new avenues for livelihood beyond government employment. They highlight the islands' over-reliance on government jobs and propose the development of industries such as tourism, sustainable agriculture, and fisheries. These initiatives could reduce dependency on government

resources, promote self-reliance, and ensure long-term economic stability for the islands' residents.

The Way Forward

The Moplahs firmly believe that the present Andaman Islands owe their existence and development to the sacrifices of their ancestors. As one of the earliest settler communities, the Moplahs endured the hardships of penal servitude, the challenges of resettlement, and the difficult process of cultivating the land to make it habitable and productive. Their ancestors transformed the islands from an isolated penal colony into a thriving agricultural and cultural landscape.

This legacy, built on the toil, resilience, and perseverance of their forefathers, forms the cornerstone of the Moplahs' collective identity and pride. They view the islands' modern prosperity as a testament to these sacrifices and expect that their contributions be acknowledged and respected through policies that ensure their inclusion, upliftment, and representation in the socio-political and economic frameworks of the islands.

References

- Ahmed, Z. (2012, September 2 Sunday). The Moplahs Rebellion and Andamans. *Being Islander (Blog)*. Port Blair, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India.
- Bonington, M. (1932). *Census of India, 1931, Volume- II, The Andaman and Nicobar Islands*. Port Blair: Directorate of Census Operations.
- (2011). *Census of India 2011 Andaman and Nicobar Islands Series-36 Part XII-B*. Port Blair: Directorate of Census Operations.
- Ghosh, A. (1951). *Census of India 1951: Andaman and Nicobar Islands*. Kolkata: Government of India Press.
- Kannan, K. (2007). *Repression and Resistance: A Study of the Moplah Rebellion*. Oxford University Press.
- Majumdar, A. (2020, December 10). *Tragedy of Homfreyganj*. Retrieved from Millennium Post: <https://www.millenniumpost.in/opinion/tragedy-of-homfreyganj-425569>
- Mujtaba, M. A. (2015). *History of School Education in Andaman and Nicobar Islands*. Kolkata: Insha Publications.
- (1921). *Report of the Indian Jails Committee*. Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing.
- Sasikumar, M. (2021). Rebellion, Exile and the Forced Displacement: The History of Mappilas of Andaman Island. *Journal of Human Sciences*, 27-44.
- Taylor. (2009). From Hell to Paradise? Voluntary Transfer of Convicts to the Andaman Islands. *Modern Asian Studies*, 367-388.
- Thomas, P. (2005). Colonial Repression in India: The Case of the Wagon Tragedy. *Historical Journal of South Asian Studies*.

Annexures

Annexure I: Administrative Set-up of South Andaman District:

The South Andaman District comprises one Municipal Area and 30 Panchayats in its three tehsils namely: Port Blair, Ferrargunj and Little Andaman. The highlighted villages and panchayats are studied under this project as they have sizable Moplah population.

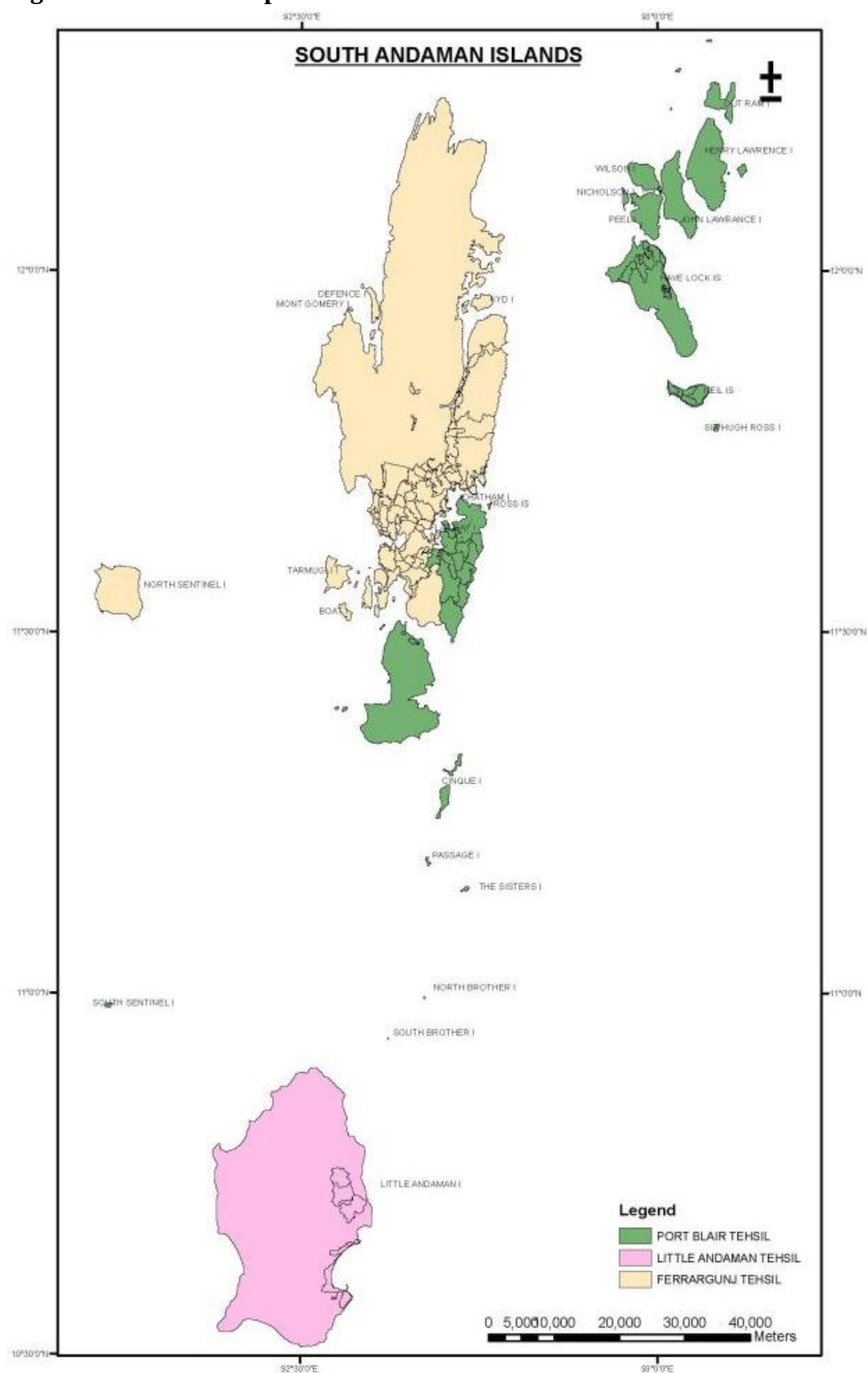
Administrative Set-up of South Andaman District

District	Tehsils	Panchyats	Villages/Wards
South Andaman	1. Port Blair	Port Blair Municipal Area (24 Wards)	
		1. Govind Nagar	Govind Nagar and Bijoy Nagar
		2. Shyam Nagar	Shyam Nagar, Krishna Nagar and Radha Nagar
		3. Niel Island	Lakshmanpur, Neil Kendra, Ramnagar, Bharatpur and Sitapur
		4. Beodnabad	Beodnabad, Rangchang, Chudiyatapu, Rutland
		5. Calicut	Calicut
		6. Sippighat	Sippighat, Bimbiltan and Telarabad
	2. Ferrargunj	7. Shoal Bay	Shoal Bay
		8. Mannarghat	Mannarghat, Wright Myo, and Malapuram
		9. Wimberly Gunj	Wimberly Gunj
		10. Kanyapuram	Kanyapuram and Nayapuram
		11. Stewartgunj	Stewartgunj and Govindapuram
		12. Bambooflat I	Bambooflat I
		13. Bambooflat II	Bambooflat II
		14. Shore Point	Shore Point
		15. Hope Town	Hope Town and North Bay
		16. Brindban	Brindban, Mathura and Kadakchang
		17. Ferrargunj	Ferrargunj, Milepilak and Jirkatang, Aniket and Caddlegunj
		18. Namunaghar	Namunaghar and Dundus Point
		19. Tushnabad	Tushnabad and Hobdipur
		20. Collinpur	Manpur, Collinpur, Temple Myo, Herbertabad and Tirur

		21. Mithakhari	Mithikhari, Muslim Basthi and Ograbraj
		22. Chouldari	Port Mount, Chouldari, Craikabad and Badmash Pahar
		23. Humphry Gunj	Humphry Gunj, Mangulatan and Dhanikari
		24. Wandoor	Wandoor, Hashmatabad, May Myo, Lohabarrack
		25. Guptapara	Manjeri, Nayashahar, and Guptapara
	3. Little Andaman	26. Ramakrishnpur	Ramkrishnpur
		27. Vivekanandapur	Vivekanandapur
		28. Rabindranagar	Rabindranagar
		29. Netaj Nagar	Netaji Nagar and Hut Bay Netaji Nagar
		30. Hut Bay	Hut Bay

The highlighted villages are the Moplah Settlements

Figure. Tehsil-wise Map of South Andaman District



Source: South Andaman District Website (<https://southandaman.nic.in/map-of-district>)

Annexure II. List of Madrassas in Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Sl No.	List of Madrassa	Place
1	Badriya Madrassa No. 1	Ograbraj
2	Badriya Madrassa No. 2	Ograbraj
3	Muneerul Islam Madrassa	Junglighat
4	Imdadul Islam Madrassa	Calicut
5	Mahdanul Uloom Madrassa	Stewart Gunj
6	Darul Uloom Madrassa	Bambooflat
7	Hidayathul Anam Madrassa	Wimberlygunj
8	Noorul Huda Madrassa	Wright Myo
9	Thanveerul Islam Madrassa	Manarghat
10	Noorul Islam Madrassa	Haddo
11	Hidayathul Muslimeen Madrassa	Delanipur
12	Madarikul Islam Madrassa	Aberdeen Bazaar
13	Malahirul Uloom Madrassa	Lillypur
14	Hidayathul Ssibiyun Madrassa	Panighat
15	Hidayathul Islam Madrassa	Kodiyaghat
16	Rifahhiya Madrassa	Azad Nagar
17	Siddeeqiyya Madrassa	Padauk Bagheechea
18	Raulathul Uloom Madrassa	Wimberlygunj
19	Noorul Huda Madrassa	Diglipur
20	Sublussalam Madrassa	Tushnabad
21	Idara Khasiful Uloom, Aberdeen Village, Port Blair	Aberdeen Village
22	Madrasathu Swahaba	Markaz Nagar, Kanyapuram
23	Ayanul-Huda	Delanipur
24	Ayanul-Huda	Garacharama
25	Madrasa Faizanul Quran/Makhtab	South Point
26	Fazle Haq Khairabadi	Mayabunder
27	Jama Masjid Madrassa	Mayabunder
28	Juma Masjid Madrassa	Rangat
29	Nabbiya Madrassa	Betapur
30	Madrasathul Quadriyya	Hutbay
31	Gausiya Madrasa	Rangat
32	Jama Masjid Madrassa/Makhtab	Aberdeen Bazaar
33	Aqsa Madrasa	Prem Nagar
34	Iqra Madrasa	Prothrapur
35	Ilahi Madrasa	Buniyadabad
36	Darul Jannah Madrassa	Machhi Lane
37	Bilal Madrasa	Bathubasti
38	Noor Masjid & Madrassa	Phongy Chaung
39	Masjid-e-Noor Madrasa	Namunaghar
40	Masjid-e-Tayyeba Madrasa	Dollygunj
41	Masjid-e-Ittihadul Muslimeen/Makhtab	Phoenixbay
42	Mithakhari Madrasa	Mithakhari
43	Imdadul Islam Madrassa	Calicut
44	New Pahar Gaon Masjid Makhtab	Pahar Gaon

Source: Waqf Board, Andaman and Nicobar Administration

Annexure III. Details of Haj Pilgrims of Andaman and Nicobar Islands Proceeded for Haj 2007 to 2023

Year	No. of Pilgrims Applied for Haj	Total No. of Pilgrims Proceeded for Haj
2007	73	73
2008	79	67
2009	130	104
2010	119	110
2011	79	30
2012	79	61
2013	62	57
2014	123	115
2015	123	73
2016	110	48
2017	115	56
2018	184	183
2019	115	110
2020	114	Due to Covid-19 Haj-2020 has cancelled
2021	27	Due to Covid-19 Haj-2021 has cancelled
2022	123	102
2023	157	148

Source: Directorate of Social Welfare, Andaman and Nicobar Administration

Photographs



Photograph 1. ‘Balidan Vedi’-the Martyr’s Memorial; a mute witness to the untold sufferings and indomitable spirit of 44 members of the Indian Independence League and INA who were arrested for false espionage charge, shot dead, and buried in an L-shaped trench at Homfregunj by the Japanese Imperial Force.



Photograph 2. Old photographs of the Martyrs of Homfregunj incident, including Abdul Jalil (marked in the above photograph), a Moplah convict by the Japanese Imperial Force.



Photograph 3. On February 8, 2006, this memorial was built in the memory of Lord Mayo situated near Bambooflat Jetty. On this spot at 7 p.m. on 8 February 1872, Richard Southwell Bourke-GMSI, Lord Mayo, then Viceroy of India, fell victim to an attack by Sher Ali Khan.



Photograph 4. Photographs from the past show Indian Independence League members being detained and killed on the shores of Dignabad, also known as Dignabad Massacre.



Photograph 5. The ruins of the infamous jail on the Viper Islands now come under Mithikhai Panchayet, where the present study conducted bears evidence to the untold miseries that freedom fighters endured. Dangerous criminals who were found guilty were restrained and made to work on this island. Work on this prison began in 1867, before the cellular jail was established. Because of its working conditions, the jail earned the nickname Viper Chain Gang. The gallows, built on top of a hill, were used to execute individuals found guilty.



Photograph 6. The research team along with principal investigator, Dr. Mundayat Sasikumar, is conducting fieldwork on a Moplah household.



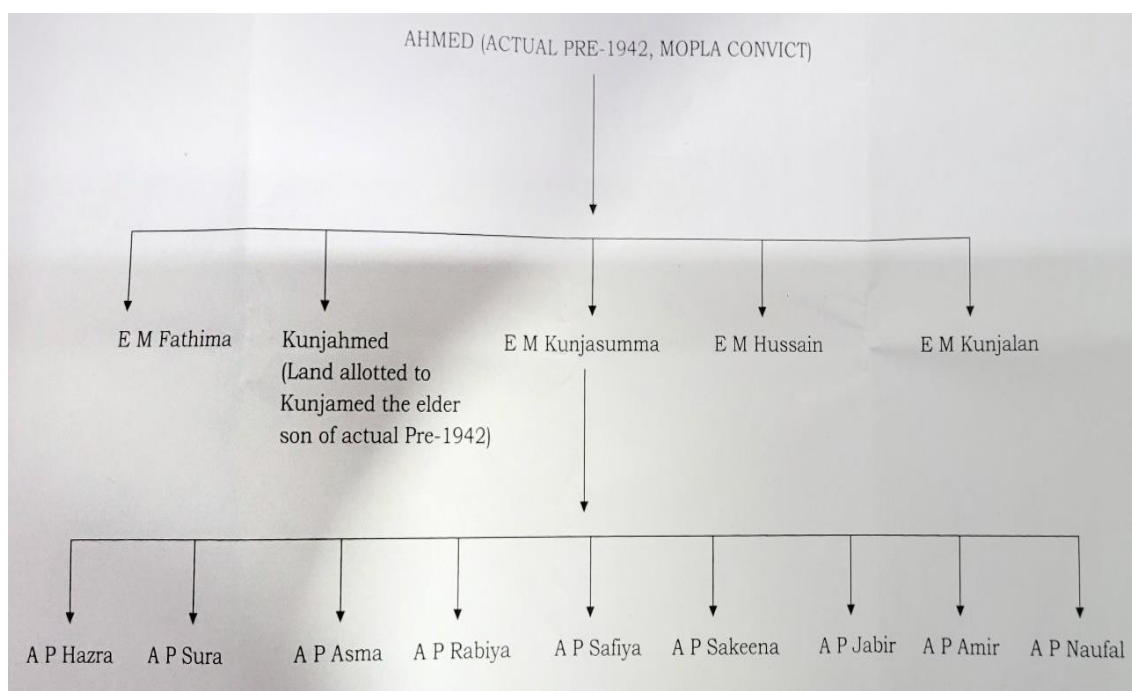
Photograph 7. The Up-Pradhan of Mannarghat Gram Panchayet, together with Moplah household members and the research team while conducting the field.



Photograph 8. Team members met with a 96-year-old Moplah man whose brother was killed in a Jarawa attack near Jirkatang.



Photograph 9. A 98-year-old Moplah woman in traditional Moplah attire.



Photograph 10. A family tree of a Moplah individual. The Moplah community got the OBC status; however, in order to obtain an OBC certificate, one must provide proof of their lineage in terms of family tree and relation with the Moplah individual who came

to Andaman as a convict. This certificate grants access to certain government benefits and opportunities reserved for OBC individuals.



Photograph 11. An abandoned house that was severely damaged in the catastrophic tsunami in 2004 has become a haunting reminder of the destructive power of nature.



Photograph 12. The sluice gate near Stewartgunj village was severely damaged during the 2004 tsunami. Although it was repaired, the extensive damage makes full restoration became difficult.



Photograph 13. Once an agricultural field situated at Stewart Gram Panchayet, now submerged due to seawater inundation as a result of the tsunami. This agricultural land supported a large number of Moplahs.