

**Community, Class and Conservation:
Development Politics on the
Kanyakumari Coast**

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In this article I trace the chequered history of 'community' in the coastal belt of Kanyakumari district, from its immediate post-independence role as a mechanism of state intervention in fisheries development to its use in the 1990s in fisher claims to rights and resources, and as a means for devolving conflict management to the local level. I show that the expansion of the state system, in part through development intervention, opened up a charged political arena where Kanyakumari's fishers acquired new tools to negotiate political authority, redefine community and articulate new rights of citizenship. Most importantly, I demonstrate that the development process furthered the mutual implication of state and community, a process that the state has been reluctant to acknowledge. I end the article by arguing that the Tamil Nadu state government's neglect of marine conservation is a function of a bureaucratic sensibility that distinguishes 'state policy' from 'community politics', and resource conservation from social justice, an attitude that has hardened with economic liberalisation. This perspective has prevented the government from taking seriously artisanal fisher demands for trawler regulation and from recognising artisanal activism as a defence of both sectoral rights and of conservation.

We didn't need the government or the church to endorse the agreement; we had Mary Matha (Mother Mary) as our witness. We know best what is just: where to fish, how to fish, and how to protect the sea.

Stephen, kattunaram fisherman,
Mutton village, Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu

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We are the real force of national development, not the *kattunazams*, not the foreign vessels. *Kattunazams* can't harvest enough fish for national growth and the foreign vessels just want to deplete our seas. Only India's trawlers can help the country prosper.

John, trawler owner, Colachel village,
Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu

Here, they are not integrated into the wider society and so we have to deal with them more carefully. They're like a sea tribe; they don't understand the laws that govern the rest of the society. They're very volatile and superstitious, and they don't respect state authority. Only the church can tell them what to do.

District Collector, Nagercoil,
Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu

IN RECENT YEARS, the valorisation of 'community' in participatory development and conservation has received critical scholarly attention. Scholars have cautioned against the easy assumption that community involvement itself is a corrective to the ills of top-down development and conservation, and have instead encouraged attention to the internal heterogeneity of community, the power of elites to authorise themselves in the name of community, the histories of state intervention in the production of community, and the unleashing of new forms of neo-liberal governmentality through the deployment of community.¹ At the same time that they insist on a more sustained, critical engagement with the dynamics of community formation and reproduction, they acknowledge that the ambiguity of community—its meaning, location, boundaries—renders it a particularly charged field of political negotiation.

In this article I trace the chequered history of 'community' in one southern Indian locale—the coastal belt of Kanyakumari district—from its immediate post-independence role as a mechanism of state intervention in fisheries development to its political centrality during the 1990s within fisher claims to rights and resources, and as a means for devolving resource conflict management to the local level. The politics of community in Kanyakumari's fishery is particularly interesting because of the cultural make-up of its coastal population. Located at the south-western tip of the Indian subcontinent in the state of Tamil Nadu, the district of Kanyakumari has a 68 km coastline that is dotted with forty-two coastal villages and is inhabited by the fishing population of low-caste Catholics numbering approximately 150,000.² Unlike in many other parts of the country, where fisheries development gave rise to a new entrepreneurial class that entered the industry solely for its profits, Kanyakumari's developmental beneficiaries arose from within the existing fishing population. This sectoral divide within a community sharing a low-caste, religious minority identity has generated a politics around community that is quite distinct from other arenas of conflict where antagonists are marked by cultural difference. Here, caste and Catholic identities

have been wielded by both sides of the sectoral divide in staking claims to territory and citizenship rights. Village fisher councils and the Catholic church have become embroiled in the development debate, lending moral credibility to one or the other sector.

The role of community in conservation has been particularly striking in Kanyakumari. The recent rise of a new sectoral consensus among fisher artisans against trawling has allowed for timely interventions for conserving marine resources and regulating trawler activity. These interventions have usually taken the form of violent attacks on trawlers transgressing the inshore commons or causing damage to artisanal craft and gear. At the urging of state fisheries officials seeking to maintain 'law and order' on the coast, the Catholic church has begun to oversee conflict resolution and facilitate informal agreements between warring fishers on rules of resource use and access. In some ways, these informal agreements continue long-standing patterns of local resource management through the mediation of village fisher councils. However, the polarised understandings of community that have divided fisher artisans from both owners and workers in the trawling sector and the mediation of the church, have made these agreements far from consensual and instead have deepened mutual mistrust. As a result, trawler fishers utilise every opportunity to violate agreements that they see favouring the artisanal majority while artisans respond to every small infraction with violent attacks on trawlers. While the church has witnessed the increasing coastal violence with great concern, state officials have remained impassive, conveniently choosing to interpret the violence as a community problem best addressed by the church, an attitude which relegates Catholic fishers to the margins of the secular nation and interprets intra-community conflict as *sui generis* rather than the result of state developmental intervention.

As I show later, the political history of the community in Kanyakumari has been animated by fisher engagements with state developmentalism, regional political formation and transnational political mobilisation. Through the past fifty years Kanyakumari's fishers have come to understand the community increasingly in terms of rights and entitlements, and themselves as citizens. This is the consequence, I argue, not of their passive incorporation into a state framework, but of their dynamic interaction with state categories and initiatives. The expansion of the state system has opened up a charged political space and provided fishers with new tools to negotiate political authority, redefine community and articulate new rights of citizenship.

FROM COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TO THE BLUE REVOLUTION

On the eve of independence the National Planning Commission (NPC) formulated a national fisheries policy at its 1946 gathering. An expert committee constituted by the NPC had found that the standard of living of India's coastal population was on par with that of poor farmers, and that the majority of fishers were in the clutches of debt to merchants and middlemen. Assessing the harvest potential of

the Indian Ocean, the committee further determined that less than 20 per cent of the marine resource was being harvested by artisanal fishers whose technologies limited their radius and efficiency of operation (Shah 1948). Even while recommending the technological restructuring of Indian fisheries, however, the NPC affirmed the Gandhian ideal of sustaining the 'organic solidarity' of the fishing village as a foundation for development. The Commission finally decided that community development, which would retain the fishing village as a basic unit of the development process, would be the ideal approach to ensuring the smooth transformation of the coast. By making 'community' the basis of development, the NPC hoped to mitigate the turbulence of change.

The First Five-Year Plan (1950–55) emphasised institutional reorganisation towards the more efficient use of manpower as the basis of community development. Accordingly, the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department identified two priorities. First was the building of cooperatives. The department's fisheries cooperative societies, which numbered 259 by 1956, localised the presence of the state. They provided loans and marketing channels with a view to 'eliminat[ing] middlemen'.³ As Ludden (1992: 275) remarks in the case of colonial agriculture, 'The "removal of intermediaries" resonates with the language of Munro and Jones, who understood it to mean an increase in centralized state power and rationality . . . Putting the peasant and state face to face, with no mediating institutions between them, did, however, imply that the state would become part of every farm's operation.' Similarly, community development inserted the state into the everyday life of the fisher through the presence of the cooperative societies. The second focus of fisheries community development was 'to advance motorization without significantly changing the structure of the fishery', a scheme that the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department initiated with the help of the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO). In 1955 the department outlined the technical objectives of fisheries development to be reached with the FAO as: (a) evolution of a suitable beach-landing craft; (b) modernisation of existing craft; and (c) introduction of new but traditional designs. All the craft designed by the FAO were to be distributed evenly across the coastal belt to fishermen's cooperative societies for collective use by five-person fisher groups. Although the provision of modern scientific inputs for increasing production was a priority, primary emphasis was placed on building cooperative institutions for the more efficient use of manpower, to undercut the power of local middlemen and merchants, and to instil an ethic of egalitarianism among fishers.⁴ In the final version of the First Plan lower levels of output were attributed less to the absence of modern technology than to exploitative socio-economic relations that prevented more efficient use of existing labour-intensive production methods.

However, this scenario changed with the food crisis of the late 1950s. The food ministry's solution to the crisis was 'a reorientation of agricultural policy to restore the priority for the introduction of scientific inputs over changes in organization as the foremost instrument of increasing agricultural productivity and surpluses' (Frankel 1978: 147). Without the growth of technology and the application of

science on a large-scale, natural resources, the ministry felt, could neither become fully known nor most effectively put to productive use. Communities would have to be educated at the grassroots level and organised to place common and long-term objectives above individual and short-term interests. Education and technology proceeding apace, the former creating the desire for change and the latter the means to fulfil it, would help preserve and enrich further 'the heritage which a community receives in the form of its natural resources' (Singh 1969: 345).

Alongside this embrace of technology came a shift from the First Plan's emphasis on comprehensive, extensive development to the Second Plan's on selective, intensive development. The impact of the First Plan's extensive community development agenda, planners now felt, had been spread too thin, and as a result had not gone far enough in developing the intrinsic resources that local communities could mobilise. Now, areas with favourable conditions for growth would first be 'test cases' for speedy changes in organisation and technology and, later, points of diffusion to other areas (ibid.: 312). Across Tamil Nadu, the Fisheries Department constructed training centres at 'test case' fishing centres to instruct fishermen in the use of mechanised craft and gear, including elements of navigation such as a compass and its uses, upkeep and maintenance of marine diesel engines, fishing gear utility in different types of fishing and modes of operation, and theoretical knowledge of fish habits, oceanography, fishing craft and boat building.⁵

In Kanyakumari fisheries mechanisation was launched as part of the Second Plan (1956–61) under the leadership of Congress chief minister, K. Kamaraj, and coincided with the district's merger with Tamil Nadu.⁶ Narendra Subramanian (1999: 69–70) observes that Kamaraj exemplified the Congress's style of bureaucratic clientelism characterised by preference for long-term development strategies which deferred mass share in development benefits; distribution of patronage through social elites; dependence for its vote share on the power of local elites to enforce support among their followers. Kamaraj, an avid moderniser, distributed contracts and industrial licences associated with Second Plan projects to habitual supporters and to win over other industrialists. When it came to rural community development programmes, he solicited the support of 'traditional' authorities for endorsement.

The general elections had been held the previous year and Kamaraj, in true clientelist style, had chosen Lourdammal Simon, a Catholic woman from an elite fisher family in Kanyakumari and a prominent member of the Catholic diocese of Kottar as state fisheries minister. Kamaraj's efforts won him the support of the Tamil Nadu Catholic clergy. Regionally, the Congress's promise of support for religious minorities helped assuage the fears of a church that was watching the rise of the 'atheistic ideologies' of communism and Dravidianism with alarm. In both the 1957 and 1962 general elections, Catholics were asked by the Tamil Nadu Catholic Bishops' Conference to vote for Congress—'the party of God' (Narchison et al. 1983: 95). This state-level clerical consensus was also reflected in Kanyakumari. Even prior to Kanyakumari's merger with Tamil Nadu, the groundswell of support for the Communist Party of India in Kerala had set off

warning bells in Kanyakumari's churches and consolidated clerical support for the Congress. Kamaraj's selection of a Catholic minister only strengthened the Kanyakumari clergy's political allegiance to the party. Simon's selection signalled Kamaraj's acknowledgement of Catholic fishers as a politically significant population, and his respect for the church as its moral authority (*Then Oli* 1956). On the eve of the 1957 elections the bishop of Kanyakumari's Kottar diocese sent out a circular requesting the faithful to exercise their right by electing candidates who would fight for freedom of religion, for educational rights of private institutions and against birth control (Nardhison et al. 1983: 96).

When the state introduced the development programme, the local clergy were quick to identify it as a much-needed catalyst for fisher integration into the national economic and cultural mainstream, and the long-awaited counterpart in the fisheries sector to the commercialisation of agriculture. The development programme promised to level older hierarchies and provide an avenue of economic and social mobility for the community as a whole. The clergy embraced the programme, speaking of its necessity from the pulpit, and urged their fisher congregations to take up the new technology without hesitation. The development programme was proof, they claimed, that the state was finally recognising the needs of poor Catholics and their rightful place in a new nation.

Simon set about implementing the mechanisation programme across Tamil Nadu with particular attention to her home district of Kanyakumari. The subsidised gill-netters were channelled mainly to the village of Colachel, a natural harbour in an otherwise turbulent coastline that made it a good test case for the technology. Coincidentally, it was also the minister's marital village, where her husband A.M. Simon was president of the fishermen's cooperative society. In the year of Lourdammal Simon's election as fisheries minister the Tamil Nadu government decided to constitute a State Fisheries Advisory Board. Of its four non-official members, A.M. Simon was one. He was succeeded as the Colachel Fishermen Cooperative Society president by a series of three Congress loyalists, which firmly secured Colachel's place within the Congress Party's patronage system.⁷

The village's privileged place within the district, and unique relationship to the state, quickly became evident. Kanyakumari district's Fisheries Training Centre was opened at Colachel, in a part of the village that was newly named Simon Colony (after minister Simon's husband). Out of the twenty-one gill-netters' boats allocated for intensive fishing operations in Tamil Nadu in 1956, Colachel's cooperative society received two. In the same year the Tamil Nadu government decided to import nylon nets from Glasgow for distribution at 25 per cent subsidy. Of the sixty-five nets received by the end of 1957, Colachel secured twenty-four. Also in 1956 the government bought 'terylene' from a local branch of the British Imperial Chemical Industries as a cheaper alternative to Glasgow nylon; Colachel's society was the only one of the sixteen societies functioning in Kanyakumari to receive 25 pounds of the material. In 1957 the government distributed twenty-six boats with nylon gill-nets at a 25 per cent subsidy across the state, of which seven went to Colachel.⁸

The Blue Revolution

In the late 1960s there was another, more dramatic, shift in the direction and pace of state fisheries development. In 1953 a private merchant in Kerala had taken the bold step of exporting 13 tonnes of frozen prawn to the United States. This was followed by a swift increase in demand for frozen prawn in the US, which had lost access to China's exports, leading to a quantum increase in exports for India. By 1957-58 five more firms had joined the fray and exported a total of 458 tonnes of frozen prawn to the US. The success of the private entrepreneurs and rapidly expanding market for prawn in the US, and subsequently in Japan, which lost access rights to Mexican waters, led in 1956 to a collaboration between an Indo-Norwegian project and the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute for an assessment of the marine wealth of Kerala (Kurien 1985). The marine survey led to the discovery that Kerala's waters were one of the world's richest prawn grounds, and to a radical shift in the Indo-Norwegian project's goals from motorisation of artisanal craft to the introduction of bottom trawling for prawn.⁹ From a commodity formerly used to provide manure for coconut palms, prawns rapidly became the 'pink gold' of marine exports from India. From a beach price of Rs 240 per tonne in 1961-62, prawn prices reached Rs 14,120 per tonne by 1985 (Mathew 1986).

The initial escalation in value happened at a time when foreign exchange was a crucial need. Immediately, the Ministry of Commerce formed the Marine Products Export Development Authority for the specific purpose of promoting the export of fish and fisheries products. Nurtured in every way by the state, the export of marine products from India exploded from a meagre 15,732 metric tonnes in 1961 to 296,277 metric tonnes in 1995 (Marine Products Export Development Authority 1997: 60). In 1995 marine products formed the fourth largest category of foreign exchange earners in India after gems, cotton and textiles, and had reached an estimated value of over US\$ 1 billion.¹⁰ By 1973 India emerged as the premier producer of prawn for the world market. Unlike other major producer countries, India was exporting 100 per cent of the catch. By 1983 it was the country's sixth largest export, and prawn alone accounted for more than 60 per cent of the total quantity and 85 per cent of the total value of India's marine product exports (Mathew 1986).

Following Kerala, the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department shifted emphasis to the rapid distribution of subsidised trawling boats for prawn harvest in the late 1960s. The pink gold rush restructured domestic fishing for private, mono-crop, export-oriented production. During the Fourth Plan period (1966-70), the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department allocated Rs 200 million, of which half was provided by the central government to increase the tempo of the development programme.¹¹ Soon, Tamil Nadu began to compete with Kerala's skyrocketing marine exports. In 1967 exporters shipped 5,438 metric tonnes of seafood products from Tamil Nadu's ports. By 1993 the volume had increased to 24,336 metric tonnes, which equalled 10 per cent of India's marine exports. Through three decades the main income earner continued to be prawn, accounting for 59 per cent of the export

volume and 87 per cent of earnings in 1993.¹² In four decades marine catches in Tamil Nadu increased more than seven-fold, from an estimated total landing of 45,700 tonnes in 1952 to 337,552 tonnes in 1993 (CMFRI 1995).

In Kerala, parts of the Tamil Nadu coast and in other coastal states the prawn rush attracted entrepreneurs from outside traditional fisher groups to fishing, and created a class of non-operating merchant capitalists, most of whom had no previous connection to the sea, but now owned the means of production and employed a rapidly expanding labour force from the fishing community. In Kanyakumari, however, the class of mechanised fishers arose from *within* the population of Catholic fishers. This was largely due to two factors: one, the relative lack of infrastructure in the district and the proximity of two bigger harbours in Tuticorin on the east and Trivandrum on the west coast; two, the treacherousness of the Kanyakumari sea and its vast stretches of rocky seabed over which trawling nets could not operate. Both factors kept new entrepreneurs out of Kanyakumari's fisheries, limited participation to its original Catholic practitioners, and thus maintained the links between economy and community.

CONFLICT AND COMMON PROPERTY

In this section, I explore the emergence of sectoral conflict on the coast from the first years of community development through the start of the Blue Revolution and what the pattern of conflict suggests about local power relations and understandings of common property.

The picture that emerges of the south-western coastal belt immediately before the onset of mechanisation of fisheries is of a varied productive environment. This eco-zone was characterised by the availability of a wide array of fish species, and in Colachel at the western end of the district about nineteen major varieties were caught up to 1956. The *kattunaram* and the boat-canoe, or *vallam*, were the main craft used in the region. The diversity of gear was the coast's most striking feature. According to the 1978 fishery census reports, more than forty varieties of nets were used in Tamil Nadu, grouped into three basic types: seine nets, bag nets and gill/drift nets.¹³ Apart from these, hook and line fishing was also prevalent. Each type of gear corresponded to specific seasonal use, a particular organisation of labour and level of capital investment. All artisanal fishing operations were organised on the basis of shares of the catch and not wages, although the share system differed from one operation to the other.

Most of the village elite who were not teachers, civil servants or priests either owned *karamadis*, a dragnet that required the highest level of investment and was operated by sixty to 100 fishermen, or were merchant middlemen who could rely upon a steady supply of fresh fish by advancing loans to fishers. They were usually closely linked to the parish church and were members of the local governing body, the *oor* (village) committee. They helped priests with administrative tasks and determined the percentage of catch to be extracted from each production unit

as contribution to the church fund. This compact between church and fishers facilitated by middleman merchants was known as the *kuthagai* system.¹⁴

In spite of the stranglehold of middleman merchants on credit and trade, there appears to have been relative autonomy among fishers in determining codes of resource access and harvest. John Kurien, an analyst of south-west coast fishery of India, has pointed to a code of 'common property' that structured artisanal fishing. He points out that the pre-mechanisation code had inbuilt barriers to access: technical barriers, such as the need to have fishery-specific skills and the need to use technologies acceptable to the collective of fishers, and social barriers, such as the caste basis of fishing, which prevented free entry of capital and persons from outside fishing communities into the fishery (Kurien 1991). Rather than free, unregulated access, then, common property was a system of inclusivity and exclusivity. It referred to specified sets of use rights based on customary agreement, which itself presupposed social concern and even conflict over the use of common resources.

When mechanised gill-netters were first introduced through the Colachel Fishermen Cooperative Society, their substantial catches generated considerable tension on the coast, and finally exploded into a clash at sea in 1959. On one side were the artisanal fishers of Pudur, the next biggest fishing village east of Colachel, and Colachel's merchant elite; on the other, the gill-netter owners of Colachel. The fishermen who perpetrated the first clash recollected that they had first tried to impose sanctions at the village level against the new craft, but had finally resorted to violence when the gill-netter owners persisted in using their superior technical power to outrun the *kattunarams* and amass personal profit. During the clash, considerable damage was done to the new craft, but the battle was contained at sea.

After this first confrontation, most of Colachel's mechanised gill-netter owners shifted operation to the harbours of Quilon and Cochin on the west coast of Kerala, and to Veerapandiapattanam on Tamil Nadu's east coast. This was largely because of the lack of docking facilities in Kanyakumari. Due to the absence of a harbour in the district, they were forced to anchor their crafts at sea and rely upon the help of *kattunaram* fishers to transport men and material from the shore to the boats. The tensions created by mechanised gill-netting made such an arrangement impossible to uphold. However, within a few years many of these state beneficiaries reverted to artisanal fishing. The relatively low price at the time for all species of fish, the lack of infrastructural support for the new craft, and their inability to invest money in repairs spelled short-lived financial success for them. As a result, many who originally acquired gill-netters through the cooperative society either lost their craft to disrepair or sold them to Kerala fishermen.

Others, however, were able to make the shift to trawling in the late 1960s. These included more prosperous fishing families, merchants and moneylenders who had previously controlled fish marketing. Bottom trawling had begun in neighbouring Kerala as early as 1961 under the auspices of the Indo-Norwegian project, and Colachel's gill-netter owners who operated out of Kerala's harbours

saw first-hand the profits from trawling for prawn. As in Kerala, the pattern of trawl-net acquisition through loans from private exporters was established well ahead of the Tamil Nadu government's own initiation of trawl boat construction and distribution. As the price of prawn gradually rose through the 1960s, more of Colachel's elite, including those who had initially resisted the mechanised gill-netters, were drawn to trawling. By 1966 approximately thirty Colachel families owned trawl-nets, which they operated mainly out of Kerala's harbours. By 1969 the Tamil Nadu government's promotion and provision of subsidies for trawling, evidence of rich prawn grounds off the Kanyakumari coast and the spread of trawl boats to coastal centres on the east coast brought them back to their home sea for part of the year.

By this time opposition from Colachel's merchants had died down, but other villagers, especially those where village waters were rich in prawn, were poised to strike. When Colachel's trawl boats first began operating in Kanyakumari in 1967, twenty-four villages together registered a court case against them.¹⁵ However, A.M. Simon, husband of Tamil Nadu fisheries minister Lourdamal Simon, wielded his influence within Congress Party circles and managed to get the case dismissed. Having failed to get their grievances addressed through legal channels, the twenty-four villages finally orchestrated an attack on Colachel in early 1970.¹⁶ This second confrontation brought the fight onto the shore and identified Colachel village itself as a symbol of a newly emergent threat.

There are significant differences between the first and second confrontations, which reflect the dawning of a sectoral consciousness. For one, the second attack was not simply a stand-off between fishermen of two villages, a phenomenon that had historically occurred with some frequency on the coast. This time twenty-four villages stood together against one, in the process isolating Colachel as the aggressor. Second, the battle was brought onto the shore. The son of Cruz Antony, one of Colachel's most prosperous men in 1970, recollected that this attack targeted all visible signs of wealth. In addition to the trawl boats themselves, *kattunaram* fishers attacked all property accrued through the profits from trawling. In 1969 Cruz Antony's family had acquired five trawl boats and laid the foundation for a large house in Colachel. During the attack *kattunaram* fishers entered Antony's compound and destroyed the foundation. Fearing for their lives, the thirty trawler-owning families abandoned the coast and fled Colachel village to the town centre where they sought refuge with other castes and communities.¹⁷

Veena Das argues that violence has the capacity to produce boundaries and hierarchies, to change the very language in which people conceptualise themselves, the 'other', and the relations between them. Where boundaries are indeterminate or fluid, violence has the capacity to render them rigid (Das 1992). The confrontations of 1959 and 1970 each produced two boundaries: the first separating two forms of fish harvest; the second separating Colachel as a prosperous trawl boat centre from the other coastal villages. Through these two incidences of violence, Colachel became the material and spatial representation of a new mode of production that was distinct and opposed to the predominant form of harvest on the

Kanyakumari coast. However, this gradual polarisation primarily expressed enmity towards an emergent class empowered by its links to the state. None of the artisanal fishers who orchestrated the attacks of 1959 and 1970 had an understanding of the exhaustibility of the resource, or of mechanised fishing as a potential cause of resource depletion. Rather, they expressed opposition to the immoral material advance of a few at the expense of the majority. It was based on a notion of the 'common good' that ruled out unfair competition and temporary harm to the livelihood of the majority, but not on a critique per se of technology or development.

There are also differences between the state's responses to the two clashes. The state fisheries department was quick to explain artisanal opposition to the mechanised gill-netters in terms that justified its development drive. Its 1959 Annual Report states: 'Although there had been sporadic protests about the use of this gear by persons with vested interests supported by middlemen fish-merchants, there has been a great awakening at all fishing centres about the use of this modern gear.' This and subsequent reports contrast the benevolence of the state to the oppression of the middleman and attribute resistance to mechanisation to middleman machination. Although it is indeed the case that merchants like Colachel's Barnabas were among those who opposed the new technology, they did not orchestrate the protests as the fisheries department conveniently assumed to be the case. Unlike its colonial-era predecessor, the Madras Fisheries Bureau, which recorded the existence of a fisher code that was often deployed to challenge the introduction of new technology on the grounds that it was disruptive to livelihood (Madras Fisheries Bureau 1915), the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department chose to interpret the protests as animated by ignorance and jealousy. Its easy interpretation of all protest as signs of resistance by an old elite to structural change failed to recognise that fisher opposition to mechanisation expressed a code of fisher conduct.

By the time of the second attack, however, the state's interpretation had shifted. Now it was no longer elite manipulation and fisher jealousy that were identified as causes of violence but artisanal fisher resistance to change.¹⁸ Significantly, while the state recognised differences of power within the coastal population during the early years of community development and saw the programme as a means to undercut the power of middleman merchants over indebted fisher artisans, these differences were underplayed with the onset of the Blue Revolution whose beneficiaries included these very elites. Instead, artisanal opposition to the state's investment in an export-driven development drive became increasingly interpreted by state officials as signs of 'backwardness' and resistance to change by fishers trapped in their traditional ways. Ironically, these interpretations of artisanal fishers as static traditionalists by the state coincide with their dynamic innovations in customary law and creative incorporation of state and other institutional initiatives to craft new ideas of belonging and rights.

The prawn rush consolidated the wealth of Kanyakumari's trawler class and secured its link to the state. But it also took them out of the district. The difficulty of operating trawlers without a harbour, the threat of a much bigger artisanal

sector and the absence of big fish export companies in the district took most of the trawl boats owned by Kanyakumari fishers further north to the harbours of Kerala and northern Tamil Nadu. Through the 1970s and 1980s the relocation of trawlers to these northern harbours produced a temporary lull in inter-sectoral conflict. But the calm was ruptured in 1993 when the Indian supreme court issued a verdict in favour of the Kerala State government's decision to ban trawling during the monsoon season. The verdict signalled the court's recognition of artisanal fishers as an economic minority with a right to state protection against the excesses of private capitalism.¹⁹ Significantly, the verdict coincided with the Indian government's decision under the auspices of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) to licence foreign vessels to fish within Indian territorial waters. Together, judicial support for fisher artisans and the Indian government's deregulation of the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone highlighted both the territorial dimension of the marine resource question and the shifting position of the developmental state from protectionism to neo-liberalism. As I show later, this coincidence of emergent forms of subaltern rights and the state's retreat from existing protections against foreign capital investment catalysed new forms of collective mobilisation.

MAKING ARTISANAL COMMUNITY

With Kerala's ban on monsoon trawling, Kanyakumari's trawler owners returned to their district sea with great apprehension. But they returned home to a more consolidated and militant artisanal sector. In response to the influx of trawlers back into the district and the licensing of foreign vessels, Kanyakumari's artisanal fishers turned to a politics of community to constitute themselves as 'locals' with a privileged right to the resource. This new understanding of community has three key elements—territory, technology and ecology. As I detail later, each of these elements has a longer history. However, over the last decade artisanal fishers have redefined these elements and combined them to constitute an artisanal community rooted in locality.

Donald Moore has argued that, rather than 'inert, fixed backdrops for identity struggles', we need to see localities as cultural products of those contestations. Localities 'are not simply the backdrop of history but are made and remade *through* history' (Moore 1998, emphasis original). Finally, Moore points out that, while the politics of territory can be highly localised, it is never simply local, sealed off from the outside. Such an approach, he concludes, would recover the dynamic character of locality and its embeddedness within multiple fields of power. Following Moore, I show that Kanyakumari's artisans responded to their incorporation into a national developmental framework and their displacement by capitalist restructuring with a politics of locality that incorporated 'outside' initiatives into the very meaning of community. In this section, I look in particular at three discursive currents—Dravidianism, liberation theology and environmentalism—that provided artisans with the tools to constitute a new moral community.

Territory

The reworked understanding of territory that grounded artisanal politics in the 1990s reflected a spatial shift from village to zone. As mentioned earlier, fishers previously asserted their right to shore space and the marine resource through the village. By the late 1980s, however, the village was supplanted by the zone as the primary basis for territorial identity. Interestingly, this shift was catalysed by a state initiative.

In northern Tamil Nadu, where the biggest harbours are located, artisanal activism picked up pace in the mid-1970s, coinciding with early evidence of overfishing and with the shift in power from the Congress to regional parties that emerged from the Dravidian movement. In 1967 the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (Party of Dravidian Uplift, or DMK) supplanted the Congress and became the first regional party to secure state power. When the DMK came to power, it was with the support of middle-class Tamils who were socially powerful, but nevertheless marginal to national party politics. But there were also poorer Congress supporters who were won over to the DMK by actor-turned-politician M.G. Ramachandran, popularly known as MGR. MGR's carefully crafted screen personalities as agricultural labourer, urban worker and fisherman had a tremendous impact on the Tamil poor who for the first time were seeing their identities and social reality represented in the mainstream media.²⁰

With the success of the Dravidian movement, fishing communities across Tamil Nadu moved away from the Congress. The spread of coastal support for the DMK is attributable to MGR's rise to prominence within the party. From the late 1950s MGR fan clubs sprouted like weeds in fishing villages. His roles as a boatman in *Padakotti* (Boatman) and a poor fisherman in *Meenavar Nanban* (Friend of Fishermen) consolidated the bulk of the fisher vote behind the DMK. Even in Kanyakumari, which for the most part remained a Congress bastion resistant to the Dravidianist wave, the coastal population defied church authority and voted overwhelmingly for the DMK in the 1967 elections. Significantly, only Colachel remained loyal to the Congress Party of Lourdamal and M.A. Simon, overlaying the emerging sectoral divide with that between regional and national party loyalties.

When MGR split from the DMK to form his own party, the Anna-DMK (ADMK), the Tamil poor followed and won him the state government in 1977. MGR's electoral triumph is most often seen as a masterstroke by a canny politician adept at crafting his image for mass appeal (Pandian 1992). But image makers rarely have complete control over their masterpieces. Four months after the ADMK formed the government in Tamil Nadu, the simmering tensions between artisanal and mechanised fishers exploded into large-scale riots that shook the northern coast and thrust artisanal fishers into the spotlight. The intensity of the inter-sectoral clashes, the active role played by MGR's fan clubs in the violence against trawlers and their invocation of MGR as an inspiration in their fight for economic justice forced the ADMK government to formulate an official policy to regulate trawling.

In 1983 the Tamil Nadu government implemented the Marine Fisheries Regulation Act. The conflicts of the previous decade defined its content. Two principal clauses of the Act limit the operation of mechanised vessels. The first directs that 'no owner or master of a mechanised fishing vessel shall use or cause or allow to be used such fishing vessel for fishing operation in the sea within three nautical miles from the coast line of the state'. The second determines that 'the mechanised fishing vessel . . . shall leave the notified place of berth only after 5 A.M. and . . . report back at the notified place of berth concerned not later than 9 P.M.'. The Act explicitly allows for the possibility of further regulation by government notification. Section 5.1 empowers the government to introduce supplementary regulations on fishing activity in certain areas, during defined hours or with certain kinds of fishing craft and gear. Section 5.2 specifies the main grounds for such regulations as needed to protect the interests of a particular group of fishermen, the conservation of fish stocks, and the maintenance of law and order.

The Act was mainly compelled by 'law and order' concerns: its primary purpose was to separate fisher antagonists into distinct zones to stave off conflict with the secondary purpose of conservation. In effect, however, it aggravated tensions between warring fishers. In Kanyakumari, the line in the sea substituted a horizontal boundary for the vertical ones separating villages and became a territorial marker for the divisive hostility between mechanised and artisanal sectors.

Technology

Like territory, artisanal fishers' redefinition of technology was also compelled by another institutional initiative, this time by the church. With the expansion of the development arena in the 1970s to include non-state actors, the Catholic church too entered the fray. A decade after the onset of the prawn rush and frequent clashes, a section of the Kanyakumari clergy began to question the liberatory potential of the state's development agenda and rethink its own role as moral custodians of the coast. Drawing inspiration from Latin American liberation theology and the Indian communist movement, they began talking about the economic and cultural rights of the poor and how to extend the church's 'natural authority' to fill a development gap left by the state. The ensuing 'option for the poor' was manifest in a church project to motorise artisanal craft funded by Caritas Austria and the Belgian Freedom from Hunger Campaign. The aim of the project was to create an intermediate technology that would in turn create an intermediate category of motorised fishers and help undercut the polarisation of artisanal and mechanised fishers. After much trial and error, a motorised canoe with a speed equal to the trawler became operational in the late 1980s.

Instead of undercutting sectoral tensions, however, the spread of canoes increased the militancy of artisanal politics.²¹ With trawling identified as the only real enemy, the new motorised technology was assimilated into the original antagonism between sectors. The inclusion of motors into the category of 'artisanal fisher' reflected its increased flexibility and specificity. Now, artisanal could

include new forms of technology as long as they weren't trawlers. The opposition between artisanal and mechanised technologies has been codified in institutions like the fish marketing *sangams* (cooperatives) that come under the umbrella of the Kanyakumari District Fishermen Sangam Federation (KDFSF). Village fishermen's *sangams* were initiated in 1973 by a local parish priest who saw the monopoly of power exercised by merchants and moneylenders over the state fisheries cooperative societies. Significantly, the goals of the non-state *sangams* echoes the original goals of the community development programme: they provide loans and marketing channels to eliminate the power of middlemen; although they endorse the use of motors as a necessary means of competing with trawlers, they place primary emphasis on institutional change; and they identify local social hierarchies as the key source of fisher poverty and not the absence of modern technologies. In the 1990s the KDFSF changed its rules for *sangam* membership, limiting it to fishermen who owned *katturams* or *vallams*, were not in debt to moneylenders and did not own trawlers. By associating trawling and moneylending with a breakdown of social relations, artisanal fishers constructed a new moral economy that made the very ownership of trawlers and usury capital a transgression of community.

Ecology

Finally, artisanal fishers redefined ecology to reflect the global concern with sustainability. The lives of artisanal fishermen are marked by the unpredictability of harvest. While seasonal variation and individual skill do contribute to the outcome of fishing trips, there is also a great deal left to chance. On any given day, two groups of fishermen operating in the same area using the same craft and gear may be either blessed with a full net or cursed with an empty one. Artisanal fishers often contrast the unfathomable nature of the sea with the farmer's mastery over land. One elderly fisherman explained to me about the integral role played by *kadalamma*, the goddess of the sea, in the lives of fishers: 'The land can be owned and farmers plant seeds knowing exactly what crop they'll harvest. But the sea isn't anyone's property. We never really know what our *kadalamma* will give us.' Although it causes bitterness, divine providence as a reason for empty nets is accommodated within the moral universe of artisanal fishers. This makes it all the more unacceptable that mere human beings would usurp this divine right through technological capability.

From the early 1990s artisanal outrage at such hubris on the part of the trawlers found new expression through the language of 'sustainability'. Sustainability as a concept entered the political lexicon of local artisans through the mobilisation work of the National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF), an umbrella body of artisanal fisher unions. The NFF's work in Kanyakumari began in 1993 when, under GAIT dictates, the Indian government deregulated its 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone and licensed the entry of over 2,000 foreign industrial fishing vessels. In its anti-globalisation campaign, the NFF stood development on its head by equating

trawling with destruction, not production, and by identifying artisanal fishing as the only means to a sustainable future. This initiative drew Kanyakumari's artisans into a global political arena that linked local struggles over use and access of marine resources. But even as they were incorporated into a global politics of opposition to capital-intensive fishing, artisanal fishers increasingly used the language of fate and faith to characterise trawler aggression. They began to speak of trawling, not simply as an expression of greed and unequal distribution, but as hubris against divinity. Resource depletion was a warning from above not to disrespect the gift of nature. Significantly, 'nature' also included the god-given skill of artisanal fishing, which made the deskilling effect of mechanised trawling an added affront to nature and divinity.

Mobilising a New Moral Community

Together, territory, technology and ecology grounded a new moral community that excluded trawler owners sharing the same caste and faith. This reconstituted community had a territorial basis (the 3-mile zone), a technological basis (artisanal craft and gear) and an ecological basis (a symbiotic relationship to the marine resource). Most importantly, it was the assertion of belonging to a locality. Consider this statement by Constantine, a district leader of the NFF: 'Trawlers can go anywhere to fish, but we have to rely on our local sea and protect it for our children. Who else will do it? Certainly not the state or the church! We have to because *kadalamma* is our mother and without her, we will die.' This striking convergence of an older sense of the sea as an unpredictable, all-powerful force with a more recent recognition of its vulnerability has contributed to artisans' sense of collective destiny as the protectors of the sea against the threat of trawling.

Apart from being a threat to the sea, trawler ownership now signalled an uprooting from the sea and, by extension, from the community. This reconstitution of community is expressed strongly in this explanation provided by a fisherman who participated in the fire-bombing of a trawler owned by a friend's relative. When I asked him how a population sharing caste and faith came to be so divided, he explained, 'It's because the trawler owners have forgotten who they are and what they know about the sea. You see, anyone can use a trawl-net—a farmer, a teacher, even a bureaucrat. But when we go out to sea, we have an instinctive sense of where the fish are. We can read the water like others read the land. It's this shared sense of the sea that makes us a community.'

Opposed to a new moral community expressed through what Liisa Malkki (1995) has called a 'sedentarist metaphysic' was the trawling class, characterised in artisanal fisher discourse as mobile, accumulative and profiteering. Although artisanal fishers too have historically migrated to other parts of the coast to fish during their local lean season and continue to do so, they now affirmed a rootedness in locality that they claimed trawler owners had lost. Connected to trawler mobility was their privileging of personal gain over social responsibility and of private wealth over marine wealth. I was told several times that as trawler owners grew

richer, they contributed less and less to the church fund from which the needs of the village poor were met. This social irresponsibility was expressed further in their immoral neglect of the future of the resource.

When Kanyakumari's trawlers returned to their home district in 1993, they found themselves confronting a more forceful artisanal opposition. Between 1993 and 1995 a series of clashes took place.²² The first occurred in the village of Kanyakumari (not to be confused with the district), which had the largest concentration of artisanal craft and a sizeable MGR fan base. In 1993 village members decided to take seriously the 1983 Act's devolution of power to the locality. In the presence of the assistant director of fisheries, the village council forced the approximately ten trawler owners in the village to sign an agreement containing two clauses: (a) to observe a trawl ban of five months from 1 May to 30 September in order to protect fish stocks during the monsoon spawning season; and (b) to leave the shore after 6 A.M. and return before 6 P.M. in order to promote the visibility of their operations. When the trawler owners argued that these rules were at variance with the rules framed in the Act, council members pointed out that the Act allowed for reinterpretation in line with local needs. The assistant director of fisheries supported the informal agreement without notifying it, which appeared to him to be 'the most neutral way of solving the law and order problem'.²³

However, village council members decided to provide their own 'notification'. They carved the text of the agreement on a stone tablet, which they then erected in front of the village church. As G. Stephen, one of the village councillors, remarked to me: 'We didn't need the government or the church to endorse the agreement; we had Mary *Matha* as our witness. We know best what is just: where to fish, how to fish, and how to protect the sea.'²⁴ This expression of artisanal rights constituted a new 'moral economy' of the artisan. However, this reconstituted moral order was by no means distinct from the state. Indeed, many of Kanyakumari village's fishermen and women invoked none other than the figure of MGR as the moral authority behind their cause. Significantly, they made a point of distinguishing between the district state officials whom they encountered in their local negotiations with trawlers, and the idea of a moral state as exemplified by years of MGR rule and used the figure of MGR to criticise state embeddedness in local power relations. But they did so in order to articulate an ideal relationship to the state rather than to assert their autonomy. Artisanal use of state laws such as the 1983 Act and state authorities such as MGR in redefining community exhibits their clear sense of themselves as a population within the parameters of the state and very much in dialogue with it. As I show in the final section, by the mid-1990s they began to express this intimate link to the state in terms of citizenship.

Kanyakumari village's enforcement of the monsoon trawl ban caused a chain reaction, in particular within villages with motorised *vallams*. Beginning in August 1993, village after village began to target trawling boats. In August 1993 motorised *vallam* fishers burned three of Colachel's boats, which they claimed had come into the 3-mile zone and destroyed two of their nets. In August 1994 they seized seven Colachel boats and took them to their village. In 1995 came the biggest

conflagration of all. In August, the state fisheries minister visited Colachel to survey the shore for the proposed construction of a harbour. In anticipation of his visit, Colachel's boat owners anchored their boats and called off fishing for the day in order to welcome him. News of the minister's visit and the proposal to construct a harbour to facilitate trawling caused an uproar. To register their protest against this sign of collusion between state and mechanised sector interests, *vallam* fishers from three villages spirited away four of the anchored boats. In retaliation, Colachel's boat workers caught two *vallams* and fifteen *kattunarams*, and locked up fifty-two fishermen in their village trawl boat association office. It took a meeting with the superintendent of police, the collector and the bishop for each group to release its captive people and craft. In spite of the mutual compromise, tempers were running high. Two days later, Colachel boats damaged the hooks and lines of two *vallams* that were fishing at the 3-mile border. In response, artisanal fishers from seven different villages joined hands and burned fourteen boats anchored at Colachel. In a final retaliation, Colachel villagers turned on an artisanal village and caused extensive damages to houses and craft. When three priests arrived to try to intervene, Colachel fishermen locked them in the village church. It was only then that the police arrived in force and ended the fighting with a display of gunfire that claimed the life of one *vallam* fisher.²⁵

MAKING TRAWLER IDENTITY

Kanyakumari's trawler class was by no means passive in the face of artisanal militancy. From 1993, in response to the political consolidation of fisher artisans, Colachel's trawler owners embarked on their own politics of representation as a modernising Catholic middle class committed to development. Theirs was equally territorial an expression of community, but they articulated a sense of communal belonging not to locality but to the nation. However, to think of their nationalism as derivative in any sense would be mistaken. As I hope to show, their understanding of the nation and their part in it had everything to do with the shifting terrain of local social dynamics.

Through the 1980s many of Colachel's mechanised fishers had diversified their investments, buying land as well as more trawling boats. The time spent in the big harbours of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, and the ownership of property away from the coast, brought them into greater contact with interior caste groups and gave them a new affiliation with other economically mobile communities. Increasingly, they began to describe their own set of changing values by using the primitivising language of the higher castes and government officials to distinguish coastal from agrarian culture. A disposition to save money rather than spend it rashly on liquor, to foster an ethic of cleanliness, to resolve conflict through dialogue not force, and to give up insular thinking and foster ties with other communities are some of the ways in which they characterised their cultural transformation from 'primitive' to 'modern' fishers. Their consumption practices also changed dramatically. Big concrete homes, motorcycles and cars became a more common sight in Colachel,

and with these came a sharp rise in dowry rates. By the early 1990s the dowry demands in Colachel were the highest in the district as a whole, reaching an upper limit of a million rupees. Along with lavish homes and exorbitant dowry rates, women's domestication also became a symbol of household status. These markers of 'civilisation' further insulated Colachel from other artisanal villages.

Significantly, the polarisation of Colachel and surrounding villages by sectoral affiliation has produced a discursive erasure of class *within* the mechanised sector. As Colachel came to be known as the 'boat village', the owners and coolies within the mechanised sector came to be defined by outside villages collectively as 'the boat fishers'. Even within Colachel, villagers refer to the collective of boat owners and coolies as the village's 'majority' although there are many more owners of artisanal than of mechanised craft. This erasure of class has been made possible by several factors. First, the spatial polarisation of Colachel and artisanal villages, and the increasing violence against boats when they are operating at sea, has produced an identification of boat coolies with their sector. Second, in spite of a decisive shift in the mode of production, boat work continues to be structured in many of the same ways as artisanal production. For instance, the term *thozhilali*, or worker, is still used to refer to both owners and coolies in the boat sector as it does in artisanal fishing even though an increasing number of boat owners are now absentee capitalists who no longer participate in fish harvest. Also, like artisanal fishing, boat fishing is organised on a share and not a wage basis, which generates a different experience of work. Although the distribution of shares—65 per cent for the owner and 35 per cent shared among six to eight labourers—is far more hierarchical than in most forms of artisanal fishing where the owner gets only one extra share than a coolie, boat coolies will leap to the defence of boat owners and argue that the share system allows them to accumulate savings and eventually invest in a boat of their own. Rarely will a coolie speak of the distribution of shares as unfair, mainly because even the small percentage he receives is usually higher than the shares from artisanal harvest. Most point to the level of investment required as justification for the owner's far higher share.

Faced with the militant artisanal claim to locality, Colachel's mechanised fishers began to invoke a link to the nation as the basis of *their* right to the resource. Their use of new technology and the openness to 'development' that it signalled was pivotal to their identity as a modernising middle class. But what did the 'nation' mean to them?

In his analysis of changes undergone by the California fishery in the early twentieth century, Arthur McEvoy argues that mechanisation fundamentally changed the character of fishing. 'Fossil fuels', he points out, 'enabled Californians to tap new fisheries resources whose wealth the . . . fishers of the late nineteenth century could scarcely have imagined' (1986: 124). Mechanisation extended the range of fishing craft and allowed for more effective use of active fishing gear, such as trawl-nets. These advantages permitted mechanised boat fishermen to seek out marine life in a larger expanse of sea, and consequently to be less dependent on the resources of a particular water space. A new production requirement—

regular access to prime fishing grounds—replaced the reliance on a small territory. If denied a significant proportion of the sea spaces they use, mechanised boat fishermen face serious economic trouble. It was this new production requirement that was increasingly denied to Kanyakumari's trawler owners. Faced with increasing restrictions on their mobility imposed by both Kerala's trawlers and their district artisans, and with the new threat of a foreign trawler force, Kanyakumari's trawler owners began to argue forcefully for their right to an open-access, de-territorialised—indeed, a *national*—resource.

Colachel's reputation as the success story of the Blue Revolution contributed to their demand for unlimited access to the national sea. This statement by Bergmans, an older fisher who was the 1997 president of the Colachel's Mechanised Boat Owners' Welfare Association (a strategic 1994 change of name from the previous Colachel Mechanised Boat Owners' Organisation), encapsulates the trawler owners' national identification:

When the government first introduced the boats, Colachel was the only village to accept them because we believed in development more than the rest of the coast. But now we're being stopped from fishing. We just want to trawl in peace. We have developed, and we can see how limited our lives were before. We can see the important role that our community has to play in national development. If we fall behind, who will represent our community nationally? When will we ever have another Lourdamal Simon?

Confronted with artisanal bans on trawling, Colachel's boat owners turned to state machinery—the courts and the police—and to Congress Party leaders for support in opposing what they characterised as unconstitutional threats to their livelihood. Their crusade as an embattled coastal middle class committed to national development depended on the reverse image of a tyrannical artisanal population manipulated by regressive local forces. The welfare association began to print and widely distribute pamphlets discrediting the mobilisation work of their artisanal adversaries. One such pamphlet, titled 'Boat Work and Fishermen's Development: The Real Story', is representative of their overall message, and begins with a strong statement in favour of modernisation:

It is not wrong for people practising traditional methods to change with the times and adopt new ones. This is evolutionary growth. People who used to walk now travel in vehicles. People who lived in caves now live in mansions. They used to use leaves to cover themselves; now they wear colourful clothes and live in sophisticated surroundings. They ate raw meat and now they eat cooked food. In agriculture, single cropping has given way to cultivating the land three times a year.

But: It is a mystery that the fishermen who used *kattumarams* and *vallams* are still not accepted by many when they start using mechanised boats to catch

fish. Are these people living in this century? Are they regressing? Are they being kept from developing by others?

The pamphlet distinguishes a generic 'people's' natural evolution to modernity from the artisanal fishers' manipulative regression 'by others'. Significantly, *kattumaram* and *vallam* fishers are not even attributed the capacity to be self-willed for, if that were so, the pamphlet implies, then they too would 'naturally' believe in evolution. As it stands, however, they are 'regressing' and being 'kept from developing'. We learn from other pamphlets that this regressive force is the clergy who 'instead of preaching and tending to religious matters march on the streets like Communists and incite ignorant fishermen to violence'. These denounce the un-Christian values of the artisanal sector, which 'only practices violence while the trawlers multiply the fish just as Jesus did'. In contrast to these 'bad' fishers and priests are the trawler owners who 'contribute financially to Catholic festivals and to the upkeep of parish churches' and have 'given the fisher caste a national name'.²⁶ Through these publications, Colachel's mechanised fishers underscored the greater contribution of trawler over artisanal fishing to the building of caste, church and nation. By rhetorically fusing sector, community and nation, they constructed Colachel as a place of nation building, presented their own interests as the national interest and contested local territorial barriers to occupational mobility.

The Indian government's 1993 decision to license foreign industrial vessels to fish in Indian waters precipitated a crisis within the mechanised sector, which had adopted the self-image as representatives of national development. In response to the combined threat of artisanal fishers on one side and foreign vessels on the other, both owners and workers in the mechanised sector began to selectively deploy ecological discourse to argue for their own role as the force of national development. Interestingly, their arguments against the Indian government's decision to license foreign vessels ran parallel to those of artisanal fishers against the Tamil Nadu state government. These statements from boat owners and workers in Colachel reflect some striking similarities with artisanal arguments against trawling:

They are not allowed to fish here; only in the deep sea. But they violate the permit and come to the offshore area where we fish. Because of this, we get nothing. After coming back with empty nets over and over, we finally gave a report to the Fisheries Department saying 'foreign vessels are trawling close to the shore and this is damaging our livelihood so please restrict their operations'. They took no action.

They have a zone. If they stay there, there's no problem. Most of us have taken out loans from the bank to purchase fishing boats. If the resource is destroyed, what'll we do? We have to meet loan payments, interest payments, and already our wives have no gold in their ears or around their necks. What'll we do?²⁷

Even while arguing that foreign vessels transgressed into the territorial sea reserved for domestic craft and depleted the national resource, mechanised fishers insisted on the sustainability, indeed the *necessity*, of domestic trawling. They vehemently denied the applicability to their own work of the ecological arguments they themselves used against foreign vessels. Consider the following statements that are broadly representative of the way boat owners and workers characterised the nature of trawling:

Only if we trawl is there catch for others. With the trawl net, we bring up plants for small fish and they come out to feed. Without trawling, small fish would just hide.

Fish life is very short so we need to catch them before they die. Prawn has to be caught within five months. *Kattunaram* and *vallam* fishers don't let us trawl close to shore, but they're not able to catch these prawn so they just die.

The monsoon trawl ban is rubbish. I don't believe that eggs are destroyed by trawling, or that the catch will go down or is going down. Only with mechanized boats operating can India's annual income grow.

We are the real force of national development, not the *kattunarams*, not the foreign vessels. *Kattunarams* can't harvest enough fish for national growth and the foreign vessels just want to deplete our seas. Only India's trawlers can help the country prosper.

With this rejection of local artisanal and global capitalist production, trawler owners articulated an idealised image of national development consistent with ecological sustainability with themselves at its centre. The particular terms in which they constituted themselves as a nationally-oriented community can only be understood relationally: their claim to a de-territorialised, national sea arose at just the moment when artisans demanded state regulation of trawling and global actors were encroaching on national waters.

THE ANTI-POLITICS MACHINE AND FISHER CITIZENSHIP

Once the clashes in 1995 subsided, the district collector, revenue divisional officer and assistant director of fisheries called upon the Catholic church to act as a mediating force between the warring fishers. In response, the Kottar church established a Coastal Peace and Development Council in November 1995. Although it was established as a 'coastal peoples' body', the council came under the jurisdiction of the church and had a clerical leadership. The assistant director of fisheries was an invited guest at the council, and was requested but not required to attend. Its main task was to facilitate fisher agreements that functioned as informal rules governing use and access of the resource and prevented outbreaks of violence. In council meetings, and during interviews after, the clergy repeatedly invoked caste uplift and minority community solidarity as reasons for reconciling sectoral differences. Resource conservation was clearly a secondary concern, as expressed

by the council director who said to me: 'We are a backward community and have always been one. This *sahodarar yudham* [war of brothers] is not helping us achieve a respectable standard of living. First we must stop the war, then we can turn to other issues like conservation.'

All three of them—the district collector, revenue divisional officer and assistant director of fisheries—explained their decision to approach the church as a necessary measure for restoring peace within a population that privileged religious over secular authority. Significantly, they distinguished between coastal peacekeeping in Kanyakumari and in other parts of the Tamil Nadu coastal belt where the fisher population is Hindu or multi-faith in character. 'Here, they are not integrated into the wider society', the collector explained to me, 'and so we have to deal with them more carefully. They're like a sea tribe; they don't understand the laws that govern the rest of the society. They're very volatile and superstitious, and they don't respect state authority. Only the church can tell them what to do'.

Along the same lines, the revenue divisional officer who organised several peace talks between artisanal and mechanised fishers also protested that the fishing community only respects church authority. 'If you want to attract their attention', she said in an exacerbated tone, 'you only have to ring the church bell and they'll come running. And if the *government* requests them to attend a meeting, they won't move an inch!' Most telling was the reaction of the assistant director of fisheries who has worked with coastal populations for over three decades. In the middle of a conversation, he confessed that the Kanyakumari fishers were a group he just 'cannot relate to'. When pushed on why a population of fishermen and women would seem so alien to a fisheries official, he finally answered that it was because they were 'even more inward-looking than other fisher communities'.

While all three acknowledged that the presence of numerous civil institutions on the coast represented competing representative authorities, they assured me that all such secular institutions were ultimately subject to the sway of clerical power, and that therefore efforts to institute law and order could only succeed when brought under the umbrella of the church. As a consequence, their answer was to devolve more responsibility to the 'natural leaders' of the coast, and fall back on the 'traditional' identities of caste and religion to mitigate the class tensions generated by development modernisation.

This raises the question of why, after forty years of development intervention, state officials continue to characterise Catholic fishers as an insulated community outside the parameters of state power. Why do they see coastal conflicts as problems of 'intra-community law and order' when artisanal fishers have consistently demanded that the state intervene in the local fishery to regulate trawling? Why, to paraphrase Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1990), have Kanyakumari's fishers come to occupy 'the savage slot'?

I maintain that the state's blindness to the mutual implication of state and community through forty post-independence years is a mode of bureaucratic practice that has hardened in the post-liberalisation period. As Partha Chatterjee (1994)

has argued, the developmental state has long exhibited the propensity to distinguish the spaces of 'policy' and 'politics'. For most Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department officials, artisanal activism is simply 'community politics' and cannot be used as a means to craft 'state policy'. As should be clear from the discussion of the community development era, this attitude towards the targets of state developmentalism is of earlier vintage. However, I would argue that the recourse to 'community' in the 1990s in Kanyakumari also signals a departure from the 1950s understanding of 'community'. One key difference is in the privileging of religious authority and not state mediation in resolving rural social ills. While the 1950s developmental state recognised rural social hierarchies as a problem to be solved by state intervention, the wealth generated by the Blue Revolution has obscured increasing coastal conflict and inequality. Now, 'law and order' has become a much more pressing concern than wealth redistribution and, in this cause, church mediation has been enlisted. To put it differently, 'community' has come to serve as a means for the liberalising state to protect the conditions for capital accumulation and disregard distributive justice.

The state's growing neglect of distributive justice is reflected in the perceived cultural difference between the 'modern' department and the 'pre-modern' community it governs. Fisheries Department officials constantly invoke the cultural gulf separating them from the mass of fishers in a tone dripping with paternalism. They clearly feel burdened by the need to accommodate the volatility and temperamental ways of the fisher population, and often refer to them in terms more befitting children. Most speak bitterly about the 1980s decade of ADMK rule as the period when 'fisheries development' was abandoned for 'fishermen welfare'. For instance, Tamil Nadu's joint director of fisheries explained that before 1979 all allotment of funds was for 'productive schemes', but that in the 1980s 'funds for developmental activity started drying up for political reasons'. From 1979, he bemoaned, the department had witnessed a slow shift to an emphasis on socio-economic measures such as free housing, savings-cum-relief schemes for the lean fishing seasons and insurance schemes for accidental deaths at sea. This, he stated dryly, 'was a political manoeuvre for cheap popularity', a characteristic 'of ADMK rule'.²⁸

Like him, Kanyakumari's assistant director of fisheries also complained that after 1980 all 'real development' was transferred to the private sector, leaving the Fisheries Department with the 'non-productive' task of 'appeasing poor fishermen with welfare handouts'. He also remarked on the effect of this shift on the work of department officials: 'Before 1980, we were in charge of developing new technology and improving the condition of the coast. Now we're just here to listen to the fishers' demands for everything, from money to buy[ing] a new net to vaccines for their children. We're all skilled engineers and we're not using our skills anymore!' ²⁹ This disregard, even dismissal, of social policy in favour of a narrowly-defined economic policy is symptomatic of a more general disaffection in the post-liberalisation period with the role of the state as an engine of social change. The valorisation of 'productive' schemes and critique of the bureaucracy's

relegation to 'non-productive' work points both to a dissatisfaction with the increasing privatisation of development and an internalisation of a neo-liberal logic that sees the state as less and less accountable to the poor.

Significantly, this growing disregard for the social dimensions of state policy has coincided with the call for decentralised management of resources and devolution of authority to 'the community'. One would expect that the valorisation of devolution would provoke a reappraisal of the rigid divide between 'policy' and 'politics', and between 'state' and 'community'. What we see instead is a hardened stance against local politics. Most fisheries officials contrast fisher politics, which they regard as whimsical and reactionary, to 'real' development and conservation work, which they locate firmly within the domain of state science. This instinct to rationalise development as a neutral zone set apart from the vicissitudes of political life echoes James Ferguson's (1990) characterisation of development as 'an anti-politics machine'. As several Fisheries Department officials indicated, for them devolution meant standing by local agreements, which was simply the quick and easy way of dissipating tensions on the coast and assuaging the volatile passions of the fisher population. Even when they agreed that resource management was needed, they were quick to assure me that this recognition was in no way produced by artisanal fisher activism against trawling, which was driven purely by 'jealousy' and had no 'scientific basis' whatsoever.

What this has meant in Tamil Nadu is that the political ramifications of developmental intervention are systematically placed outside the boundaries of state responsibility. This negligence is seen in every dimension of the government's approach to its fishery in spite of its purported commitment to resource management. Unlike Kerala where the government has responded to pressure from the substantial numbers of mobilised artisans in its largest industry, commissioned scientific studies of resource depletion and legislated regulatory measures to curb stock depletion, the Tamil Nadu government has done next to nothing to look into artisanal fisher complaints of stock collapse and increasing social vulnerability. Rather, the Fisheries Department has counted on the steady rise in value of fisheries products, and the increasing number of species in demand for export, and remained complacent and unresponsive on the issue of resource management. It has not responded to artisanal activism to determine ceilings for the number of mechanised boats in any fishing port or for the state as a whole. Trawl-net mesh size, which determines whether adult or juvenile fish are caught, also remains unregulated. Finally, the linchpin of the 1983 Tamil Nadu Fisheries Regulation Act—the prohibition of mechanised boat fishing within 3 nautical miles from shore—is also basically unenforced as patrolling capacity is very limited. All in all, mechanised boat fishing in the state remains fundamentally unregulated and subject to the local agreements made with artisanal fishermen.

To some extent, the argument of fisheries officials that fishers are best left to decide fishing rules through local agreements has merit. Officials argue that any effort to impose formal laws would have no effect since fishermen will simply

not respect them. There are several problems, however, with this argument in favour of localised, informal regulation. First, because such agreements have no legal status, they can and are overridden by state courts to which trawler owners have routinely turned. Second, as I have argued earlier, the state's willingness to turn over regulation to the local level stems from its understanding of conflict as a problem of law and order rather than of resource conservation and social justice. For fisheries officials, local regulation is a quick fix for coastal turbulence, but should in no way be confused with the 'science' of conservation.³⁰ This attitude has allowed the Fisheries Department to relinquish authority over the course of fisheries development to 'the free market' just when the negative fallout of development is being most acutely felt. Finally, in Kanyakumari the church's role in overseeing informal agreements has increased fisher frustrations over their lack of access to the state. As I show later, these frustrations on the part of both artisanal and mechanised fishers have led, not to the rejection of the state, but to a rejection of church mediation that they have increasingly experienced as a limit on their rights of citizenship.

Trawler Citizenship

The 1995 attack on Colachel damaged the craft of many boat owners and reflected new heights of artisanal militancy. In particular, it hurt the assets of Selvanayagam, a prosperous fisherman who owns five trawlers, is a private seafood exporter to Japan and has a net manufacturing factory in the interior part of the district. When the church established the Coastal Peace and Development Council, Selvanayagam and other trawler owners reacted with scepticism at the mediating ability of a church that they perceived as fomenting artisanal militancy. After some deliberation, a group of them decided to seek out the support of the Swadeshi Jagaran Manch (Movement for Economic Self-Reliance or SJM), the economic wing of the Sangh Parivar or Hindu Nationalist 'Family'. In exchange, they promised to deliver Colachel to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the upcoming election. To publicise the alliance, district leaders of the SJM and BJP flagged off a march at the end of which Colachel's Catholic trawler owners and Hindu nationalists together submitted a memorandum to the collector highlighting the significant contribution made by trawlers to national development and the right of trawlers to their nation's marine resource.³¹

Colachel's choice of the SJM is very revealing. Like the National Fishworkers' Forum, the SJM too had expressed its opposition to the licensing of foreign vessels. But instead of opposing capital-intensive fishing altogether, the SJM advocated the total mechanisation of domestic fishery. Sustainability in the era of globalisation, its leaders argued, is sustainable national resistance to Western domination, which can be ensured only by industrialisation under the auspices of a strong Hindu state. Speaking of what he referred to as 'Indian capitalism', the SJM's national co-convenor S. Gurusurthy explained to me: 'We will have capitalism,

but nationalist capitalism like Japan does. Indian capitalists will not be greedy. They will spend large amounts for Dharmic purposes.'³² Like the East Asian articulation of national culture with a capitalist narrative (Dirlik 1996), the SJM constructs its own narrative of Hinduism as a conduit for an indigenised capitalism that will release 'the Indian mind from its ideological prison'.

The SJM's idea of a communitarian capitalism resonated with the trawler owners' own sense of themselves as an entrepreneurial middle class that was uplifting the fisher community as a whole. The BJP's articulated commitment to the capitalist development of domestic fisheries provided Colachel's fishers with the assurance of support against artisanal activism. Against the artisanal sector's claim to locality and common property, trawler owners and workers asserted their right to private property and national resources. This reliance upon the national—and a particular class perspective on the nation—secured their alliance with Hindu nationalism.

Their choice of Hindu nationalism also had a territorial logic that was astutely spelled out to me by Selvanayagam. He began with a cultural map of the district strikingly similar to the BJP's own chauvinistic cartography. 'The Catholic coast,' he explained, 'is hemmed in by the Hindu interior. On the coast, the church is the real authority; in the interior, it's the state.' He then laid out two kinds of dynamics, one local and the other national. Speaking of the local situation, Selvanayagam defined Colachel's villagers as a 'minority' besieged by the combined force of the artisanal 'majority' and religious orthodoxy. To defend *their* rights on the coast, he explained, Colachel's villagers had to turn once again to a national party as they had done previously with the Congress. The force of the national, as represented by the SJM and BJP, would curb the local power of the Catholic church and its artisanal fishers. In delineating 'locality' from 'nation', Selvanayagam actually pointed to a line between the fishing villages and the interior where the coast ended and 'nation' began. 'Now, if the artisanal fishers attack Colachel,' he exclaimed triumphantly, 'we can escape to the interior Hindu villages which are controlled by the BJP and they'll be trapped on the coast. They can't tell us what to do anymore. We're with the BJP now and they're just poor locals.'

Artisanal Citizenship

Colachel's trawler owners were not the only ones unhappy with the Coastal Peace and Development Council. Kanyakumari's fisher artisans were also deeply suspicious of a council that prioritised communal peace over social justice. The prevailing opinion was that the council had made it more difficult to get justice. Now, when they tried to meet state officials directly to express concerns over livelihood and trawler aggression, their complaints were deflected to the council where religious community solidarity took precedence over material concerns. Many also felt that the emphasis on peacekeeping by the church meant that, most often, their attacks on trawlers were interpreted as a worse 'sin' than the everyday violence of resource depletion and gear damage committed by the trawlers.

Consider the following statements by artisanal fishers who participated in the council's sessions. Voicing his frustration about this growing trend, one of the artisanal fisher leaders who failed to get compensation for a net torn by a Colachel trawl boat exclaimed: 'We are not interested in being in the council any longer. I used to speak out strongly against trawler aggression. Now, because I've been incorporated into the council, I've been silenced. Now, if we approach the collector or revenue divisional officer with a complaint, they tell us that they'll only talk to the priests!' Another fisherman identified their predicament as a local one. He spoke of other parts of the Indian coast where 'the government listens to fishers, and the church has no say in fishing matters. Why is the church interfering here?' A third fisherman spoke of the council's 'trick' of appearing more powerful than it was: 'The council acts like it has the same power as the government, but really, the priests can't do anything but scold us. Every time we demand punishment for the boats, they say, "The council cannot punish, only the government can." Well, we'll just forget about the priests then and go straight to the government!'

In 1996 another clash occurred within the 3-mile zone between Colachel's boats and fisher artisans where seven trawlers were fire-bombed. Following the attack, the council called an emergency session that began with priests distinguishing the actions of the two groups. While acknowledging blame on both sides, they asserted that there was no justification for the scale of the attack and the financial loss incurred by the trawlers. The clergy concluded that while the boat fishers had committed a *kuttram* (sin), the artisanal fishers had committed a *maha kuttram* (great sin). After days of negotiations, talks broke down and the artisanal fishers boycotted the meetings, incurring a clerical sanction against fishing for a week. They chose, however, not to obey it and instead made the unprecedented move of taking their church to court.

In their petition, they called upon the Tamil Nadu government to recognise and protect their rights as custodians of the local sea, to regulate trawling and to reject the intermediary role of the church. Significantly, the village councillors who drafted the petition on behalf of thirty artisanal fishing villages made a point of distinguishing between the district state officials whom they encountered in their negotiations with trawlers, and the state as a moral umbrella that transcended the vicissitudes of local politics. One of them, a fisherman in his sixties who had served as a village councillor for ten years, stated this distinction most clearly and vehemently: 'Shame on the bishop and fisheries director! Instead of protecting us, they have established a rule of corruption that favours the rich. They have betrayed the state with their immoral neglect of poor citizens.' With this demand that the state act as benefactor of the poor and patron of the artisan, they expressed a desire not for autonomy but protection. Most importantly, by claiming a privileged link to this moral state as locals, artisanal fishers hoped to bypass the developmental calculus of a national framework that placed them at a disadvantage vis-à-vis their mechanised brethren. They in effect delinked the state from the middle-class nation and crafted a sense of local citizenship, in the process redefining not only community and state, but also the relationship between the two.

CONCLUSION

In this article I have traced the dynamics of community formation on the Kanyakumari coast over a forty-year period from the onset of 1950s community development through the post-liberalisation years of the 1990s. What is most interesting to me about the development process is that, in spite of the state's effort to render it an 'anti-politics machine', it has created a charged political arena that is constantly reworked by competing meanings and demands. Rather than producing docile subjects, then, the state system actually opens up new spaces in a manner often unforeseen for the articulation of subaltern cultural rights and sovereignty. More broadly, what I am arguing for is a return to a Gramscian understanding of subalternity in dialectical terms rather than in terms of cultural autonomy. This suggests that we need to understand state and community as mutually implicated and post-colonial citizenship not as a derivative, juridical construct that is a less authentic expression of cultural subjectivity, but as a dynamic, locally constituted process through which people envision their relationship to territory, community, nation and state.

What does this mean for the practice of conservation? As I hope to have shown, neither an approach to conservation as state science nor as community practice is adequate for sustainable resource use. Rather, the thorough implication of states and communities through the development process suggests that any effort at redressing its ills has to be a joint one. The efforts by both artisanal and mechanised fishers to draw state actors and institutions into their resource conflicts suggests that they are more than willing to recognise a role for the state in regulating the fishery. The question remains, however, whether the state is willing to recognise the knowledge and practices of local actors as a valuable contribution to the conservation effort, and if it is willing to challenge the current emphasis on capital accumulation to seriously address the goal of conservation. At the moment, the Tamil Nadu state government is far from committed to marine resource conservation as evidenced in its convenient interpretation of coastal conflict as a problem of intra-community law and order. However, the increasing number of social movements in Tamil Nadu that articulate citizenship rights in terms of resource rights may just force the government to pay more than lip service to the idea of resource renewal and finally respond to artisanal demands for regulating trawlers, and for prioritising the livelihoods of small producers over production for profit and domestic consumption over the rapidly expanding export trade in fish.

Notes

1. See, for instance, Sundar and Jeffrey (2001), Agrawal and Gibson (2001), and Li (2001).
2. For more on south Indian Catholicism and Christian missionising more generally, see Schurhammer (1997), Villavarayan (1956), Narchison et al. (1983), Kooiman (1989) and Ballhatchet (1998).
3. *Administrative Report of the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department (1961-62)*. Madras: Government Press.

4. Ibid. (1955–56). Madras: Government Press.
5. Ibid. (1961–62). Madras: Government Press.
6. With the linguistic reorganisation of states in 1956, the four southernmost predominantly Tamil-speaking revenue districts of the state of Travancore-Cochin were merged with Tamil Nadu as the district of Kanyakumari.
7. Interview with D. Peter, current president of the Colachel Fisheries Cooperative Society.
8. *Administrative Report of the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department (1957–58)*. Madras: Government Press.
9. Trawling opened up the possibility of year-round fishing for prawn. Unlike artisanal gear, which can catch prawn only during the monsoon months when it becomes a mid-water, or semi-pelagic, species, trawl-nets can effectively 'vacuum' the seabed in active pursuit of fish. While the mechanised gill-netters did increase the efficiency of harvest by speeding up the pursuit of fish, they too were limited to the harvest of pelagic species. By contrast, the operation and mesh sizes of trawl-nets, which are much smaller than those of surface nets, overcame both the need for using different types of nets in harvesting fish and also permitted the harvest of both adults and juveniles of a variety of species.
10. *Outlook*, 17 January 1996.
11. *Administrative Report of the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department (1971–72)*. Madras: Government Press.
12. Ibid. (1993–94). Madras: Government Press.
13. Ibid. (1981–82). Madras: Government Press.
14. The *kuthagai* system is mentioned in a variety of historical sources on fisher Catholicism, including, Villavarayan (1956) and Narchison et al. (1983). I also gathered information on it from interviews with Frs. A. Dionysius, Jacob Lopez, and A.J. Joseph.
15. Interview with T. Charles, Colachel, Kanyakumari, May 1996; Fr Jacob Lopez, Parish Priest of Colachel, 1957–67, May 1996.
16. Interview with Fr Jacob Lopez, Parish Priest of Colachel, 1957–67; and with Cruz Antony, Simon Colony, Colachel village, May 1996.
17. Interview with R. Vincent, Simon Colony, Colachel, Kanyakumari, March 1997.
18. Interview with ex-minister Lourdamal Simon, Madras, June 1996.
19. The remarkable statement on development made by Justice Jeevan Reddy is worth quoting at length:

We are of the opinion that the Government of Kerala is perfectly justified in adopting the attitude that the public interest cannot be determined only by looking at the quantum of fish caught in a year. In other words, production alone cannot be the basis for determining public interest. The government is perfectly justified in saying that it is under an obligation to protect the economic interest of the traditional fishermen and to ensure that they are not deprived of their slender means of livelihood. Whether one calls it distributive justice, or development with a human face, the ultimate truth is that the object of all development is the human being. There can be no development for the sake of development. Priorities ought not to be inverted nor the true perspective lost in the quest for more production. (In the Supreme Court of India, Civil Appellate Jurisdiction, Civil Appeal No. 4222 of 1993 with Civil Appeal Nos. 4223–26 of 1993. Kerala Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation and other Appellants versus Kerala Trawl-net Boat Operators' Association and other Respondents.)

20. For work on the role of film in the Dravidian movement, see Baskaran (1981), Dickey (1993) and Pandian (1992).
21. For a similar argument about the political repercussions of motorisation in the fishery of the Coromandel coast, see Bavinck (1997).
22. Letter from Rabindranath, Revenue Divisional Officer, Nagercoil to District Collector, Kanyakumari District, Rc. No. 3093/95, dated 5 April 1995.

23. Interviews with P. Siluvai, ex-Assistant Director of Fisheries, Marine, Kanyakumari district; N. Pathinathan, President, Boat Owners Association, Kanyakumari and Chinnattu villages; G. Stephen and P. George, members of the village council, Kanyakumari village, March 1996–April 1997.
24. Interview with G. Stephen, Councillor, Kanyakumari village council, Kanyakumari, June 1996.
25. Letter No. Z2/423/95, dated 9/11/95, from R. Rajagopal, Collector of Kanyakumari, to District Magistrate; letter from Jyothi Nimala, Revenue Divisional Officer, Padmanahapuram, Kanyakumari, to the Collector of Kanyakumari, Ref. B3.13504/95, dated 11/19/95; statement of Velusamy, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Colachel, dated 9/29/95.
26. From pamphlets circulated by the Kanyakumari District Mechanised Boat Operators' Welfare Association.
27. Interviews with trawl boat owners and workers in Colachel and Chinnattu, Kanyakumari, February–May 1997.
28. Interview with R. Rajamanickam, Joint Director of Fisheries, Marine, Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department, Madras, April 1997.
29. Interview with P. Ravindran, Assistant Director of Fisheries, Kanyakumari, April 1997.
30. Maarten Bavinck has argued that the relationship between the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department and fisher approaches to marine resource management and conservation constitutes a system of 'legal pluralism', within which the state absents itself from certain areas of fishing practice while intervening actively in others. See Bavinck (1998, 2001).
31. *Dinamani*, 11 December 1995.
32. Interview with S. Gurusurthy, National Co-Convenor, Swadeshi Jagaran Manch, Madras, April 1997.

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