

# MITAGARS OF GOA

(A Sociological Study of a Community  
in Transition)

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## DECLARATION

I, Ms. Reyna Sequeira, hereby declare that this thesis entitled “*Mitagars of Goa (A Sociological Study of a Community in Transition)*” is the outcome of my own study undertaken under the guidance of Dr. R. B. Patil, Reader and Head, Department of Sociology, M.E.S. College of Arts and Commerce, Zuarinagar, Goa and Dr. Ganesha Somayaji, Head Department of Sociology, Goa University. It has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or certificate of this or any other university. I have duly acknowledged all the sources used by me in the preparation of this thesis.

Place: Goa University

Date: ~~28-12-2009~~

9/7/2010



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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “*Mitagars of Goa (A Sociological Study of a Community in Transition)*” is the record of the original work done by Reyna Sequeira under our guidance. The results of the research presented in this thesis have not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or certificate of this or any other university.

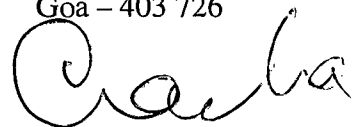
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## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The salt industry in Goa is one of the oldest traditional industries. This industry is in a precarious situation now and needs serious attention from academicians, policy makers and politicians. There is a drastic decline in the number of villages producing salt. Out of the 20 traditional salt producing villages of Goa, only 11 villages produce salt in Goa today. This in turn affected or led to the displacement of the salt makers engaged in traditional occupation. There are five different jatis extracting local salt working in this sector in Goa. They are the Mithgaudas, the Gauddis, the Bhandaris, the Agris and the Ager.

My association with the Agris of Batim of Tisvadi taluka in Goa began when I worked on my M. A. dissertation in the academic year 1992-1993 wherein I had studied this community. Later, in the year 2006, while deciding to register for Ph.D., I felt the need to continue to work on the same topic. Before registering for Ph.D., I revisited villages producing salt after almost a decade and a half. I noticed that the salt-making community in Goa is experiencing transition and in consultation with my guides, I decided to study this transition.

I received help from a number of people and institutions in the course of this study. First and foremost, I take this opportunity to express my profound sense of obligation to my guide Dr. R. B. Patil, Ph. D. guide in the Department of Sociology, Goa University for giving me the opportunity to work under him. I am grateful to him for his patience, help and encouragement. Likewise, I express my sincere gratitude to my co-guide Dr. Ganesh Somayaji, Reader and Head, Department of Sociology, Goa University, for his generous help, advice, support and encouragement throughout this study.

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

“Although there may be someone who does not seek gold, there never yet lived the man who does not desire salt...”

*Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus Senator (c. 485 - c. 585), Roman statesman and writer commonly known as Cassiodorus (ASAP 2003: 1).*

Salt has played an important role in human history. No substance other than water has been used with such regularity as salt (Petch 2006: 2). The value of salt was known long before humans began to write their history. Given its socio-cultural importance, many questions arise when one undertakes a study of salt makers whom this researcher calls Mitagars. Who produces salt? How is it produced? Why is salt produced? When is it produced? How is salt sold? What has been the economic history and relevance of salt to Goa? Behind all these questions lie socio-cultural dimensions, many of which are still not adequately understood. These aspects are also linked to a range of other aspects that affect the lives of a significant section of Goa's coastal population.

This study discusses the transition experienced by the salt making community in Goa. In recent decades, the salt industry of Goa has been declining, and the number of salt pans (field-based pools used for obtaining salt by the natural evaporation of sea water) has also dwindled. This has resulted in a further decrease in the traditional occupation of the salt makers of Goa.

This study discusses the salt-manufacturing community found in Goa, which comprises five different *jatis*. It tries to discuss the transition within the salt-making

community of Goa, with a particular emphasis from 1992 till date.

Salt has long been a major industry in Goa, given this small state's relatively lengthy coastline and many rivers which get salt water during high tide. Salt prepared in Goa comes solely from the sea water. Traditionally, Goan salt has been considered to be of a high quality. In the past, Goan salt was exported to several African and Arabian regions during the post-medieval period, as evident from historical records.

The salt industry, however, suffered a setback over the past four or so decades, and the large-scale changes brought on in the wake of the end of Portuguese colonial rule in 1961. There was a steady decline in the traditional salt production sector.

Since India's Independence in 1947, salt-production, being a traditional village industry, was given Constitutional protection. Due to its role in Indian history, salt also resonated with the national freedom struggle, and thus is considered to have wider significance. However, the salt-industry in Goa did not receive any specific benefits or support after Liberation, the end of colonial rule having come here nearly a decade-and-half later.

Resultantly, the number of villages producing salt has drastically reduced, the number of salt pans decreased and the salt production fell sharply. This fall in the salt pans led to the steady decline in the number of salt producers in Goa. This phenomenon of passing from one state to another or the transition of the salt makers of Goa is dealt with and examined in its various dimensions in this study.

Transitional aspects as the division of labour, involvement of the different *jatis* in this occupation, status of women, ownership patterns, and pisciculture – as playing out in both the Old Conquest and the New Conquest areas - have been delineated in the thesis.

There are other aspects which emerge. For instance, in the caste system

prevailing in India, each *jati* was associated with one or more hereditary occupations. For example, the Brahmin is supposed to follow the priestly occupation, and so on. But, the occupation of salt-making in Goa is not *jati* specific. Neither is it entirely caste-neutral (as in the case of certain occupations like agriculture). Here, there are some apparent differences emerging between the way caste works itself out in Goa and the rest of India.

According to the available literature, the salt-making occupation in other parts of India is restricted to one particular caste group. As pointed out earlier in Goa, there are five different *jatis* that operate in the salt making occupation. Significantly, of these, the Mithgaudas claim to be from the Kshatriya segment of the caste hierarchy, the Gauddis- some do not reveal their caste and others say they are from Chardos, and prefer to project their currently higher economic status rather than their caste position in the social hierarchy. The Bhandaris claim to be from the O.B.C., and lastly the Agers acknowledge themselves as being part of the Dalit caste.

Reality may be different from the claims though, as caste is an easily misunderstood topic in Goa, and definitive academic studies are still lacking. The make-up of this wider salt-making community is also in transition. So is their perceived position in the caste hierarchy. All these five *jatis* also do not work solely in this occupation of salt making, but have now moved directly to other occupations as well.

In the ambitious '*People of India*' series, published by the Anthropological Survey of India, the Goa volume includes only a brief account of the Mithgauda among all the five salt-making *jatis* that this researcher has studied. In the absence of any other detailed existing sociological or anthropological study on the *mitagars* of Goa, the researcher developed an interest in this area.

The salt-making community has, of late, witnessed changes, especially in the period under study, and it faces a serious threat to its continued existence. This chapter conceptualises aspects of community. It also attempts to deal with the recent literature on communities.

This chapter also describes the various salt-making communities that exist in other parts of India and in Goa. The ambiguity regarding the *jati* status of the Gauddas and the Mithgaudas in Goa is studied. It also deals with a literature review on various aspects of salt, salt-making communities, their problems, their decline and related issues.

In the absence of sociological/anthropological studies on the salt making community in Goa and in India which was the specific topic for this study, the researcher has linked the research to other studies on common themes, for example occupational communities such as those involved in fishing, the Bhangis (scavengers of human wastes) etc. This was also done since this was a community study and the objective of this study was to study the salt making community of Goa in transition. Secondly, these too were caste-based communities.

### **The Concept Community and its Sociological Study.**

Before going into the details it is necessary to understand the concept of community. In the last few years, community studies have received considerable attention from scholars and academicians. An understanding of what is meant by community is enhanced if one possesses the knowledge of the perspective from which its examination is approached.

The sociology of community has long been a dominant source of sociological inquiry. Each of the three most influential nineteenth century sociologists – Marx,

Durkheim, and Weber – regarded the social transformation of community in its various forms to be a fundamental problem of sociology and sociological theory. Thomas Bender (1978) suggests that as early social thinkers observed the disruption of the traditional social order and traditional patterns of social life associated with industrialisation, urbanisation, and the rise of capitalism, significant attention was focused on the social transformation of community and communal life.

Since the late nineteenth century, 'the use of the term community has remained to some extent associated with the hope and the wish of reviving once more the closer, warmer, more harmonious type of bonds between people vaguely attributed to past ages' (Elias 1974, quoted by Hoggett 1997: 5). Before 1910 little social science literature was available concerning 'community' and it was really only in 1915 that the first clear sociological definition emerged. This was coined by C. J. Galpin in relation to delineating rural communities in terms of the trade and service areas surrounding a central village (Harper and Dunham 1959: 19). Community has been defined in competing ways - focusing on a geographical area; or on a group of people living in a particular area; or even seeing community as an area of common life.

Community can be seen in three different ways (Willmott 1986; Lee and Newby 1983; and Crow and Allen 1995). Firstly, it could be seen as a place. 'Community studies' and locality studies have emerged out of a territorial or place where people have something in common, understood geographically. It could also be seen as a shared interest. 'Elective' communities linked together by factors such as religious belief, sexual orientation, occupation or ethnic origin. (For instance, the 'Catholic community', the 'gay community' or the 'Goan diaspora') 'Elective groups' and 'intentional communities' (ranging, according to Hoggett op cit from cyber-communities to car-boot enthusiasts) are a key feature of contemporary life. Thirdly, it



can also be a communion – having a sense of attachment to a place, group or idea or a profound meeting or encounter (with people or God).

As there are many definitions of the term community available in social scientific literature let us now explore the few definitions and relate them to the Mitagars of Goa.

A community can be a collection of people who share something in common. It could be a collection of people who share a geographical territory and some measure of inter-dependency that provides the reason for living in the same place (Johnson 2000: 53). The salt-makers are such type of a community who share a common occupation. They live in a particular place, since the nature of occupation is such that it demands that people working in it have to reside in that geographical space where the salt pans are located.

Community can also be defined as all the people living in the same place and subject to the same law (e.g. the people of any district or town.) or a group of people living together or sharing something in common such as interests or vocations (Barnhart 1992). The salt makers fit into this definition; they constitute a collectivity which occupies a geographical area, which is engaged in the occupation of salt-making. Since salt-making is an occupation which cannot be carried out inland, the process and its community needs to be situated in a coastal area.

The essential aspects of community are that a community may be thought of as consisting of a group of people living in a contiguous geographic area, having common centres of interests and activities, and functioning together in the chief concerns of life (Osborne and Neumeyer 1933: 8). But the reverse may also be true, wherein a community may not occupy a common geography or have common interest and activities and may not function together in the chief concerns of life.

The village has been described as a community by almost every sociologist studying villages. Likewise, a religious community or an occupational community can be communities only in a very broad sense, in the sense of community of interests. This thesis considers the salt-making people in Goa as a community – which is an occupational community engaged in the salt-making occupation although their caste, religious affiliations, location differ from each other.

### **Community - Empirical Studies**

Main contents of a few studies focussing diverse communities are given below.

Gurdon P.R. (1990) in his book *The Khasis* has sought to offer a systematic account of the Khasi people, their manners and customs, their ethnological affinities, their laws and institutions, their religious beliefs, their folklore, their theories as to their origin, and their language. This work presents the complete description of primitive customs and manners.” The work presents a complete description of primitive customs and manners.

Sharma (1982) in his book *The Tai Phakes of Assam* has studied the Tai Phakes who inhabit the riverine areas of Dibrugarh district of upper Assam. They are found in areas extending up to the Chinese province of Kwansi and from Bangkok to the interior of Yunnan province. While studying the Tai Phakes, their manners and customs, material culture, social and religious institutions, their folklore and religious affinities, the author noticed that the small but homogeneous Tai Phakes had been maintaining their traditional distinctiveness even though they are surrounded, on all sides, by cultures and peoples with whom the pacific Tai Phakes have imperfect sympathies.

Cristoph Von Furer Haimendorf (1979) in his book *Gonds of Andhra Pradesh* presents the social and cultural life as observed over a period of thirty eight years in Adilabad district, a part of the erstwhile Hyderabad state. The author drew a picture of the life of the village community and traced the fates of men and women over a long stretch of time. A special emphasis has been laid on the economic and social changes which have transformed the character of Gond society in recent years.

Gorer, Geoffrey (1996) in his book, *The Lepchas of Sikkim* studies the Mongoloid ethnic group of the Lepchas as a tribe. They are seen as sharply different from their eastern counterparts like the Bhutanese, Daflas and Akas or from western neighbours such as the Gorkhas, known for their aggressive character. Lepchas are projected as marked by traits like absence of aggressiveness, “obsession with sex” and optimistic character. And this is what makes the Lepchas look unusual, looked in the light of popular beliefs about the tribal way of life of swashbuckling people having skirmishes at slightest provocation.

Ravindranath Rao’s (2003) study of the *Kudubis of South India* deals with a tribal society, comprising a community that migrated out of Goa further along the south coast, and has been described as a warrior and wild animal-hunting community. The main objective of this study was to examine the social changes that have occurred in the social structure and the functions of Kudubi society. In a similar manner, this study will focus on the social changes that are being felt on another section of the population in a period of transition in the Goan society.

Maruthi (2003) in his study of *The Holeyas*, examined the social, economic and cultural situation of the untouchable community who have a social status at the very bottom of the caste pyramid, namely Holeyas in Karnataka. The author has analyzed the social organization of Holeyas community, covering the changes in the

caste-based endogamy, structure of the family, residential pattern, occupational pattern particularly focusing on the access to agricultural land and dependence on wage labour, the economic condition in terms of access to housing, social services, education and also political participation. Aspects taken up in this study help to understand the various aspects of the researcher's study.

K. S. Singh (1993), in *People of India – Goa*, identified 34 communities from within the region of Goa. The Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI) had done this work as part of a project to study the people of India; the objective of the project was to generate a brief, descriptive, anthropological profile of all the communities in India. This study has touched upon the salt-makers of Goa but only the Mithgauda community has been studied. Other castes that are operating on the salt making occupation have been overlooked by this study. No mention has been made of the salt-making Agris, Gauddis and the Bhandaris in this study.

S. K. Pramanik's (1993) study on the *Fishermen Community of Coastal Villages in West Bengal* is based on the study of the fishermen who constitute a community only by virtue of their common occupation and all that the common occupation entails. It is, in other words, an occupational community. The fishermen of the Hara and Sultanpur however constitute real communities as well, by virtue of their living in particular localities. In the case of Hara, the territorial and occupational aspects are overlapping because the village is exclusively a fishermen's village. However in the case of Sultanpur, the fishermen constitute only a part of the village population. So, the fishermen here constitute an occupational community within the territorial community composed of fishermen and non fishermen. It may be noted, of course, that fishermen of Sultanpur live in a particular locality of their own, and hence here the community has a spatial basis, the aerial unit here being not the entire village

but the particular locality in it.

O.J.F. Gomes (1996), in his study *Village Goa* deals with the social structure of Chandor village in Salcete. It delves deep into the social structure of Chandor village. This work also focuses on its position in the rest of Goa, in comparison and contrast, and records the social changes that have come about in it during the last twenty five years, since the liberation of Goa for four centuries of Portuguese rule. It is mainly a descriptive study of the physical environment, demographic characteristics, caste structure, economic affairs, cultural activities, religious practices feasts and festivals, influence of the church and folklore of the Goan society, but appears to fail to understand the changes that have emerged in the Goan society. The study depicts that all the castes are prevalent in Chandor except the caste of Gaudo the Goan counterpart of Karnataka's Gowda and possibly convert from the Vaishya-Vani caste. But the author overlooks the fact that the social changes which took place in the Chandor village cannot be generalized for the whole of Goa. As Chandor falls in the Old Conquests and the changes which emerged for the Old Conquest were not similar to those which emerged in the New Conquests. These aspects are dealt in detail in the chapter on Salt Making of Goa.

Thakur's (2007) work on the *Agaris of North- West Maharashtra: An ethnographic Study* is an ethnographic and historical account of the Agari community. Her study on the Agaris of Maharashtra clearly indicates that the Agaris belonged to the Shudhra caste. They reside mainly in six districts of Maharashtra – Thane, Raigad, Ratnagiri, Pune, Nashik and Mumbai city. With the exception of Nashik and Pune, which are inland districts, the remaining four are coastal districts. The traditional occupation of this caste community, from which it derives its caste name, is salt making. The Marathi word for salt pan is agar: from which it derives its caste name

Agari. But salt making is not the Agaris main source of livelihood. The majority of the community members are also cultivators. Salt making is a seasonal activity carried out during the summer months. The proportion of the community members earning their livelihood through salt making has also declined over the years. She has traced the historical trajectory which would unfold the emergence of that Agaris as a caste and delineate their process of marginalization. The specific objective was to trace the particular pattern of this process in a village and its surrounding region. This thesis hinges upon three concepts: caste, peasants and history.

P. L. Souza's (2005) *A Socio- Economic Study of Salt pan Workers with special Reference to Uttara Kannada District* reveals that mostly Agers are employed in the salt field and belong to the scheduled caste population, they specialize in the work of salt pans, maintain their traditional occupation and are considered as despised classes. He dealt on the importance of salt and the growth of the salt industry. His work throws light on methodological aspects, including theoretical orientation and the aspect of poverty, the social, economic, and health problems of the salt pan workers of the Salt Owners Co-operative Society, Sanikatta.

The present empirical study has been undertaken with an objective to explore the economic, social, religious and cultural aspects of the Mitagar community of Goa. The work focussed on how the salt-making community of three pockets of Goa is experiencing transition.

## **Transition**

The common definition of transition is a passage from one place or state to another; the transition of the weather from hot to cold. Another definition of transition is a change from one form to another or the act of passing from one state or place to

the next. It is a change from one place or state or subject or stage to another. Transition is also an event that results in a transformation (<http://ardictionary.com/Transition/> 6133Communities in Transition).

According to the *World Book Dictionary*, 'transition is a change or passing from one condition, place, thing, activity, or topic to another. According to Roget's Super Thesaurus the term transition implies a change, transformation, switch, shift, conversion, changeover, metamorphosis, passage, transmogrification and transmutation. Apart from this dictionary meaning, "Transition" is one of the important concepts in sociology. Transition is a complex process involving many dimensions of change. Classical sociologists like Ferdinand Toenies and Emile Durkheim explained the concept of transition with modernity. Such an understanding informs this thesis.

Tonnies' work 'Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft' (can roughly be translated as Community and Society in English) was first published in 1887 (Salaman 1974: 5, Bell 1971: 24). According to Tonnies, there are two basic types of social organizations: the Gemeinschaft and the Gesellschaft (Tonnies 1955: 57, Bell 1971: 23). In Gemeinschaft ('community'), human relationships are intimate, enduring and based on a clear understanding of where each person stands in society. A man's 'worth' is estimated according to who he is, not what he has done. Tonnies (1855-1937) viewed modernization as a progressive loss of gemeinschaft, or human community (Macionis 2009: 630). In other words, status is ascriptive in the case of the Agris, Mithgaudas, Agers and Gauddis – except in the case of the Bhandaris wherein it is achieved. The very core of the community concept is the sentimental attachment to the conventions and mores of a beloved place. The salt makers fit well in the Gemeinschaft ideas of Tonnies wherein the relationships are more intimate,

enduring and based on where each person stands in society.

In the context of Goa, B.G. D' Souza's (1979) *Goan Society in Transition* and P.D.Xavier's (1993) work *Goa: A Social History* are of relevance in further an understanding of these concepts. B. G. D' Souza's (1975) Study includes an analysis of the nature of the pre-Portuguese Goan society, with regard to its political, economic educational, religious and social systems. Together with this, the value system which integrated traditional Goan society has also been studied. Further, the study also examines the new systems introduced by the Portuguese rulers and their impact on the traditional systems and how such impact helped to modernise the traditional Goan society. In his study, D' Souza has attempted to study the social change and the social transformation experienced by the Goan society during Portuguese rule.

P. D. Xavier's (1993) study deals exhaustively on the social and cultural life of the people in the early years of Portuguese conquest. He has shown how the timid but friendly attitude of the coastal people in contrast to the belligerent and bellicose disposition of the people from the north speaks volumes on the social transformation that took place on the coastal regions of India. His work describes the heroic struggle of people to preserve their identity in the face of innumerable odds mounted by the Portuguese regime.

### **Mitagars**

This section focuses on the communities engaged in salt-farming in India and Goa, and gives an outline of the nature of their community and relationships among themselves.



## Meaning

In common parlance, the people engaged in salt extraction are called 'Mitkaars' in Goa. However, in this thesis, the neologism *mitagar* has been coined from two words: *Mith* means salt in Konkani and *Agar* refers to the salt pan in Konkani. The Mitagar, for the researcher, signifies the occupational community of the salt makers found in Goa. This section is about the actual people engaged in the salt production in India and Goa in particular.

## Salt-Making Communities of India

AGER / AGRI: The word agri means salt pan. It is claimed that during Emperor Akbar's (1542-1605) reign, the Rajput ruler of the north-west Indian state of Mewar, Maharana Pratap did not follow Akbar's advice and fled the historical place of Chittor along with his soldiers. A few of them settled down along the Luni river and started making salt (Rose: 1919). Sherring (1872), on the other hand, states that the Agri are a subdivision of the Kunbi and a subgroup of the Koli. At present, they are distributed in Rajasthan, Delhi, the union territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Gujarat and Maharashtra (Singh 1998: 41).

According to Enthoven (1990: 9), the Agris are also known as Agle and Kharpatil. They are principally found in Thana, Colaba and in the sub urban areas of Bombay city. There are two endogamous divisions of the caste: - (i) Shudh-agris (pure agris) who are also called Mith-agris (salt makers), Jas-agris (toddy drawers), Dhol-agris (drummers), Son-agle and Pan-agle. (ii) Das-agris (probably from *dasi*, a term applied by the Aryans to those of mixed descent or of a different race where the meaning of the word is dealt with in connection with Visa and Dasa sections of the Vanis). The Urap or Varap-Agris or Nava-Marathas were originally Agris, but were

converted by the Portuguese, before they subsequently reverted to Hinduism. They are now not recognized as Agris.

The Ager of Rajasthan, also known as Agri, is chiefly distributed in Aiwari district. They claim to be of Rajput descent and call themselves Sisodia Rajput. It is believed that they migrated from the Mewar and the Marwar regions of Rajasthan. Khadiboli is their mother tongue and they use the Devanagari script (Singh 1998: 41).

In Delhi, the Agri are also known as Noongar, Kharwal or Sisodia Rajput. They migrated to Delhi from Rajasthan and are now distributed all over the city. They speak Khadiboli as their mother tongue, but are conversant with Hindi and use the Devanagari script. They are vegetarian; wheat and rice are their staple cereals. They sometimes eat jowar, bajra, maize and barley as well. Alcoholic drinks purchased from the market are occasionally consumed by the men (ibid: 42).

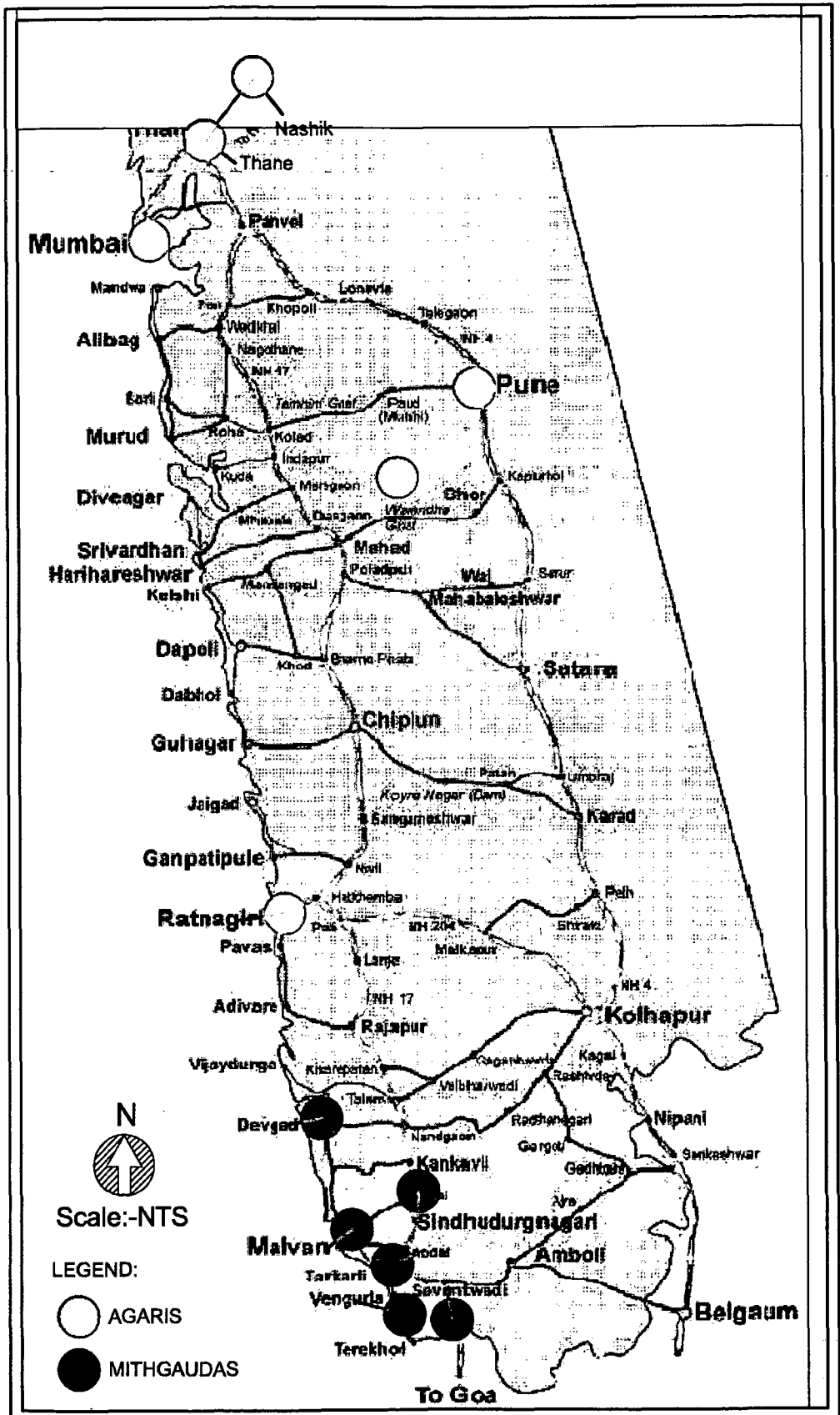
The Agri of Gujarat believe that their ancestors migrated from Maharashtra to Agra and only later came to Gujarat. As they first migrated from Agra, they are identified as Agri. They live in the Valsad district of Gujarat. A dialect of Marathi is their mother tongue, but they are bilingual as they also speak Gujarati and use the Gujarati script. They are non-vegetarian but do not take beef. The staple cereals taken are rice and wheat (Singh 1998: 42).

The Agris are also distributed all over the union territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, the former an enclave in Gujarat and the latter wedged between Maharashtra and Gujarat on the west coast of India. According to an account, they migrated from Agra during the period of the Mughals and took asylum in the Maratha state and finally settled there before the advent of the Portuguese. They speak Gujarati and use the Gujarati script. They are non-vegetarian, and their staple diet includes rice and ragi (Singh 1998: 43).

The Ager treated as Scheduled Castes and specialized in salt work in the coastal region of Uttar Kannada district are largely concentrated in the Kumta, Ankola and Karwar talukas of the State of Karnataka. They speak the Kannada language and use its script. The Ager caste belongs to the scheduled caste. The Halakki Vokkal, a tribal community of Uttara Kannada district, consists of farmers who had joined salt making. Recently the Naik and other caste groups work as salt carriers or load salt in trucks or work in iodized plants (Souza 2005: 126).

In Maharashtra, the Mith Gauda is locally called Mitgaoda. They are distributed in the coastal belt of Maharashtra, but are concentrated in the areas of Kudal, Malvan, Deogarh and Vengurla talukas of Sindhudurg district. They speak Marathi and use the Devanagari script. They are non-vegetarian and rice is their staple cereal. The surnames used by them are Gawade, Jethe, Walke, Dhotam, Nare, Phansekar, Loke, Manjankar, Raule, Pathak and Chauhan. These surnames also represent their clan names (Singh 1998: 2314).

Map No. 1.1  
 MAHARASHTRA: Mitgaudas & Agaris in the Konkan



Source: <http://www.konkanyatra.com/images/konkanroadmap.gif>  
 Hindu Salt-makers are Known as Mithgaudas in the South Konkan and Agaris in the north konkan. They are Kshatriyas and Shudras respectively.

## The Salt Makers of Goa

In the northernmost taluka of Pernem, the people engaged in salt making are known as Mithgaudas. The Mithgaudas are a sub-division of the gauda or gavada community. In Maharashtra, they are known as Mithagavada.

The name of the community has been derived from their occupation, as is also the case elsewhere. According to Mithgaudas, Gaude means villager and therefore, the village people, who are salt makers by tradition are called as Mithgauda. They are mostly concentrated along the coastal belt of Maharashtra and Goa. In Goa, the Mithgaudas consider themselves as being much higher in the caste hierarchy. They try to mark their difference from the other Gaudas of Goa by saying that they are different from the *Dhetlle* Gaude. The latter refers to a community of women who did not wear a blouse with their sari, but tied their sari over their chest with a knot which is referred as the *Dhetlle*, and hence the community name.



A typical *Dhetlle* Gauda woman

In *People of India: Goa*, K. S. Singh makes no mention of the Gauddó, Bhandari, Agri and the Ager castes operating in the salt-pans along the coast in Goa, but refers instead only to the Mithgaudas as being involved in this job. This book doesn't make a mention of the other castes that are operating in the traditional salt sector in different parts of Goa. For instance, there are Agris who are the Christian salt makers and belong to the Shudra community; the Bhandaris claim to belong to the Kshatriya strata; and the Gauddis are Christians who claim to be the twice-born.

Singh mentions in this book that the Mithgaudas of Maharashtra claim that they are from the Maratha community and do not have any connection with the Gaudas of Goa. The Mithgaudas claim to be higher than the Gaudas in the social hierarchy and belong to the Kshatriya caste.

In Maharashtra, they are found in the areas of Malvan, Vengurla, Deogarh, Sawantwadi and Kudal in the coastal Sindhudurg district. In Goa, they are mostly settled in the Pernem block of the North Goa district, adjacent to Sindhudurg. They are believed to have migrated from the Konkan belt of Maharashtra into Goa. They have their relations in Maharashtra (Singh 1993: 162, cited in Mitragotri 1999: 60). They speak the Indo-Aryan language, Konkani, which is their mother tongue (Singh 1998: 2313).

The Agris of Salcette and Tisyadi talukas of Goa and the Gauddis of Bardez are engaged in the salt-extraction or are farmers and landlords. The Census of India distinguishes the Agris from the Mit-Gaudes or Mit-Gavadas. The Mit-Gaudes or Mit-Gauddes are distinct from the Gaudde of the Novas Conquistas even in their physical features. The Agris live mainly in the Indian districts of Thane and Kolaba and the Mit-Gauddes in Ratnagiri, Kanara and Sawantwadi.

The Mithgaudas (who are involved in the salt-related work) should not be

confused with the Gauddas of Goa, a local aboriginal population who bear a similar sounding name, but share few other characteristics. The Mit-Gauddes or Mit-Gauddes are distinct from the Gaudde of the Novas Conquistas even in their physical features (Couto 2008: 43).

### **Salt- Making Communities: Issues, Problems and Changes**

The present study primarily deals with the *jatis* involved in salt making in Goa – the Agris, the Mithgaudas, Bhandaris and the Gauddis. These *jatis* are caught up in the throes of transition, with the traditional lifestyles and economics coming under increasing pressure, even while they find it difficult to move into alternative jobs and occupations.

The main concern of this research was not salt and salt industry as such but was of the community involved in salt production. However the study will also cover salt and salt industry as studies pertaining to different sections of the Mitagars can be categorized under several headings like salt-manufacturing, the salt industry, decadence of the industry, and decline of the salt workers. Such studies also highlight the various problems of salt workers like poverty, poor living conditions, water, electricity, problems of women, employment opportunities, land, credit system, ecological consideration, pollution and the quality of salt. A few works, some academic and some journalistic, on salt and salt makers are described.

H. T. Nagvenkar's (1999) unpublished Ph. D. thesis on the economic history of salt in Goa helps us to understand Goa's salt industry and salt trade in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries during the Portuguese rule in Goa. He highlights the economic aspects of production of salt in Goa, including the quantity of Salt produced. This study discerns the impact of the different factors, which shaped the

destiny of the Goan salt industry during Portuguese rule till the Indian economic blockade on Portuguese-ruled Goa of 1955. It identifies factors which influenced the salt industry in Goa. It does not take into account the various aspects of the communities involved in salt making.

Frederick Noronha (Herald, May 16-31, 1997) in an article 'Salt Industry Turning Insipid' points out the decadence of this industry in the last century. An estimate of 28 villages earlier depended on a salt-based economy. But, over the years, that figure has come down to half a dozen. The changing lifestyles have led salt producers to newer means of livelihood, adversely affecting a number of people in this traditional profession. Authorities have been tardy in giving necessary encouragement, and, if properly utilised, salt farms could offer seasonal low intensive aquaculture, useful salt tolerant sea weeds and even environment friendly bio-fertilizers, it is argued. The study which the researcher has undertaken has shown the salt production areas which are shrinking in Goa resulting in the changing lifestyles of the salt making communities of Goa, the pressures on land which is diverted for more-lucrative alternative use, the age-old practices carried on by the salt, and the lack of official protection, among other factors.

Hayavandana Rao (1927) mentioned a salt based occupation of the Uppara caste, earth salt workers found chiefly in Mysore district. According to him, earth salt workers declined as the manufacture of earth salt is prohibited in Mysore and as sea-salt is comparatively cheap. An important observation of his study is that they are engaged in cultivation and labour.

S. Gaspar D'Souza (The Navhind Times, July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2005), highlights the poor conditions of the salt workers of North Goa. He focuses on the historical aspect of salt production in Goa. The salt pans were flourishing with salt used not only for



consumption and exports but also to fill the hull of ships to steady them as they crossed the seas. From these glory days, salt production has seen a steady decline, reducing salt pan workers to practical oblivion – an oddity for tourists at best, he writes. Facing a dismal condition and uncertain future, many are considering giving up their ancestral occupation, though there may not be any other occupation.

Many descriptive accounts of the problems of the salt workers are available in a few academic (Sequeira 1993 and Phyllis 1995) and many journalistic descriptions (Jani 1989, Choudhary 1995, Parmar 2005 and so on).

In the same way a few descriptive accounts of employment opportunities in the salt sector (Mohan and Elango 1980, Das 1996, Pednekar 1997, Dasgupta 1997, Perumal 2004, and Venkatesh 2005) are available. Salt production being symbiotically attached to nature the researcher could identify a few ecologically oriented accounts of salt industry (Aravindan 1989, Francis 1990, Punvani 1990 and Kamat 2006).

### **The Overall Issue**

This survey of related literature indicates that although there are many works and studies on the dimensions, problems, lives and conditions of salt makers, these studies are not exhaustive and comprehensive. Research carried out on various aspects of salt industry in India; in general do not focus much on the sociological aspects of this industry.

From the review of the literature, it is evident that not much work has been done pertaining to the social aspect of the salt makers especially in Goa. Many works, published and unpublished, do not feature the salt makers.

Till date, no systematic in-depth sociological study of the salt-makers of Goa has been attempted. There is a need for analytical and ethnographic literature on the

life and problems of this community. Hence, the researcher undertook a study of the Mitagars of Goa. The results of this study are presented in the following chapterisation scheme which consists of eight chapters.

*Chapter One - Introduction:* This first introductory chapter outlines the background of the thesis.

*Chapter Two – Studying Mitagars of Goa: Research Methods and Tools-* This chapter primarily covers a section on research methods. It also focuses on: statement of research problem, objectives of research, research questions, research design, area of study, research universe and sample techniques, purposive sampling, tools of data collection, and scope of the study and secondary data.

*Chapter Three – Salt making in Goa:* This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section is on some historical factors which have changed the salt making occupation in Goa. The salt makers of Goa are spread both in the New as well as the Old Conquests. The characteristics of the salt makers differ in these conquests. So the first section focuses on the understanding of the two Old and New Conquests regions in Goa. The historical aspects of exports and the socio economic history of Goan society are delineated.

*Chapter Four - Mithgaudas of Agarvaddo:* This chapter deals with the study of Mithgaudas of Pernem. It gives a brief introduction to the village followed by a discussion on the traditional roots of the Mithgaudas. The ownership pattern of the salt pans in Agarvaddo is also discussed. It also highlights the personal profile of the respondents, socio-cultural life, the economic life, the political life and the impact of modern technology. All these will show how the transition is taking place in the Mithgauda community.

*Chapter Five – The Agris of Batim:* This chapter consists of two sections. The

first section deals with the Agris of Batim. The general background of the village is given in the first part. Some aspects regarding conversion are dealt with in order to understand the traditional roots of the Agris of Batim. Then it has tried to explain the main findings based on the primary data. The findings have been divided into five sections. The transitions that have emerged in relation to their social organization, cultural organization, their economy, political life and the impact of modern technology are discussed.

The second section focuses on how migrants have been incorporated and how the community is organized around the salt-making economy. In the absence of local employment opportunities migration is the only available option for the migrant Agers to survive. They come to Goa to work on the salt pans where laborious work is involved. When this community returns to its native place it is influenced socially, economically, educationally and culturally. They are exposed to a new social milieu since migration is just not a physical migration of people but it involves a host of other things like a transfer of ideas, culture, language etc.

*Chapter Six – The Bhandaris and Gauddis of Arpora:* This chapter focuses on the Bhandaris and the Gauddis of Arpora. It discusses the history and the etymology of the village. It studies the historical and social aspects of the Gauddi and the Bhandari community engaged in salt making occupation. It has brought out the social changes that have occurred over a period of time. The Landlords of the saltpans of Arpora used to employ the Mithgaudas to perform the salt work. In course of time the Mithgaudas ceased to work in the saltpans in Arpora; as a result the Bhandaris slowly learnt the art of salt making and started performing the salt work. In Arpora the economy has changed. The landscape has been transformed by the emergence of star hotels in the place of the salt pans in Arpora. The data collected deals with changes in

the social, economic, political sphere and the impact of modern technology.

*Chapter Seven - Salt making Communities of Goa: Similarities and Differences:* In this chapter certain issues pertaining to all three villages are discussed. The findings point out that although the traditional occupation of salt making remains the same for all the five communities, there are regional variations with respect to the caste, status of women, ownership pattern and pisciculture. The study details the transition that the salt making communities have undergone from the year 1992 till date and the role of the state in implementing policies that impact the salt makers. These questions are related to cultural and economic dimensions of globalization. The traditional occupation of the salt makers has varied according to the village and the circumstances relating to that village. In Agarvaddo the salt makers have traditionally remained loyal to the work of salt making. They have still not become the owners of the land. In Arpora they have slowly ceased to do the jobs in the saltpans due to various reasons. In Batim the Agris have ceased to perform the jobs in the saltpans and preferred to employ the migrant workers from Karnataka.

*Chapter Eight - Summary and Conclusion:* This chapter summarizes the whole thesis. It contains the summary of the analysis of the various salt making communities which are presented in the substantive chapters from three to seven. The chapter includes some important conclusions and suggestions made by the researcher.

# **CHAPTER II**

**STUDYING MITAGARS**

**OF GOA:**

**RESEARCH METHODS**

**AND TOOLS**

## CHAPTER II

### STUDYING MITAGARS OF GOA: RESEARCH METHODS AND TOOLS

The present research had been undertaken to study the Mitagars of Goa. The main concern of the research is not about salt or the salt industry *per se* but about the community of Mitagars in transition. It looked at the recent and also more long-term changes taking place in the salt industry, and specifically how this was impacting the community that was involved in the salt making.

The concept of transition is crucial here, since this is obviously a period of rapid change both for the salt industry and, more importantly from our perspective, for the people who earn their living from it. All through the research, we find that these have been intense times of change. The salt industry no longer plays the dominant role it once occupied in the Goan economy. Areas of salt-farming are shrinking and many salt-pans are falling into disuse. This has pushed a number of the hereditary and traditional salt-farmers out of the sector. Salt, with its low-returns, can no longer compete with alternative uses for land - such as tourism, in places like Arpora - and this too is impacting the sector. Likewise, traditional salt-farmers find it a low-remuneration occupation today, and thus the sector finds it difficult to compete with alternative forms of employment too. The *Mitkaars*, have been facing a phase of rapid transition and uncertainty about their future.

Field work was done to collect primary data from the people involved in salt-making, and also from those who work close to the salt-making areas. Since there are differences in the manner in which the caste hierarchy was replicated within the salt-making regions of Goa, this study also looked closely at the status of women, caste and socio-economic activities in this sector in an effort to understand the complexities

of this community.

This was a qualitative study of this community covering the socio-cultural aspects, and comparing the communities involved in salt-making. So far, no systematic in-depth sociological study of the salt-makers of Goa had been attempted. There was a paucity of analytical and ethnographic literature on the life and problems of this community. The objective of this study was to explore the economic, social, religious and cultural aspects of this community.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

From a review of available literature it was evident that not much work had been done pertaining to the social aspects of the salt-makers in Goa. The many books, published and unpublished dissertations and Ph. D. thesis, purporting to take an overall comprehensive look at the various communities and people of Goa, do not feature studies on the salt making community. Much has been discussed regarding the trade and scientific analysis of salt, but studies of the salt producers themselves had been taken up.

Since sociological or social-anthropological study or research of Mitagars had not yet been attempted, analytical literature on the life and problems of this community was hard to come by. The present study attempted to study the historical and social aspects of the salt-making community in Goa – cutting across castes and region – and study the transitions that have occurred over a period of time. It also discusses whether the changes that had emerged are different or similar for the different *jatis*, specifically the *Agris*, the *Mithgaudas*, *Bhandaris*, *Gauddis* and *Agers*.

This was a comparative social-anthropological study of the diverse sections of people who form the salt-making community. To map out the larger picture, there was

a brief survey of the role of salt-making in Goa over the centuries, and the role it played in the past. This study made an attempt to understand the present socio-economic and living conditions of the *mitagar* in Goa, which is one of the early communities to be settled in the region.

Just as many indigenous populations had faced dramatic declines, sometimes even moving to the verge of extinction, and remained threatened in many parts of the globe, in a similar manner the salt producers of Goa too have undergone such changes. This is true specially with regard to the transformation of their culture, and the loss of salt making lands.

### **Objectives of the Research**

The specific objectives of the study are:-

1. To understand the historical aspects of the salt making community;
2. To provide insights into the contemporary socio-cultural and economic life as well as the social organization of the salt-making castes, viz *Mithgaudas*, *Agris*, *Gauudis*, *Bhandaris* and the *Ager*;
3. To identify the areas of salt production which are currently observed to be shrinking, and the effects of this on the salt-makers, and to study how the community is negotiating this transition ; and
4. To offer policy suggestions based on the findings.

### **Research Design**

After the selection and formulation of the research problem, the researcher decided about the type of research design to be followed to carry out the research. The design of a sociological research project can be said to be the action plan, the strategy



and the structure of the overall procedure by which we intend to gain more knowledge of a specific problem or a specific aspect of the society (Thakur 1998: 163).

The study has been undertaken within qualitative framework. In order to understand the objectives of religious conversion on some section of the salt making community and its consequences and the other objectives of the study - i.e. to analyse and understand the contemporary socio-cultural life and the social organization of the *Mithgaudas, Agris, Gauudis, Bhandaris* and the *Agers* - the researcher employed the participant observation, interview schedule, informal discussions, formal discussions, focused group discussions, household case study method, and the in-depth interview method.

These methods helped in collecting information to answer the research questions on the traditional roots of *mitagar* community in Goa, to understand the socio-cultural and economic differences found among these communities, to examine the nature of social organization of salt production and to locate the changes that had occurred in the community with respect to salt production and marketing and to explain the changes that had taken place due to the process of globalization, liberalization and government policies-which had on the salt production and the *Mitagar* community.

Lastly, to indicate the salt production areas which are shrinking, the researcher contacted the *talathis, sarpanchas*, secretaries and the salt workers and the landlords and adapted the village survey maps to indicate the various areas in Goa where salt production continues, and where it had stopped in recent years.

### **Purposive Sampling and Research Universe**

The villages that were producing salt in Goa were

- Tisvadi: Batim, Mercedes, Curca, (Santa Cruz) Calapur and Goa Velha.
- Bardez: Arpora, Calangute, Marra, Pilerne and Nerul.
- Salcette: Assolna, Chinchinim, Deussua, Telaulim and Cavelossim.
- Pernem: Agarvado, Arambol, Paliem and Korgaon (see maps).

Three villages were selected for the study from the above mentioned salt producing villages. In these three villages, 113 families were identified as the units of observation. All of these families could not be interviewed since some of them were either not available or had moved away from that village. The researcher could not trace some of them.

Besides these 113 families, the key informants from various salt-producing villages were also interviewed on various aspects of the salt-makers. For example, the *talathis*, *sarpanchas*, panchayat secretaries, advocates and other leaders of the village were consulted on various issues of relevance to the village. In the three villages under study, we find the salt makers belonging to two different religions and three different talukas of Goa. Religious diversity was the criteria in selecting them.

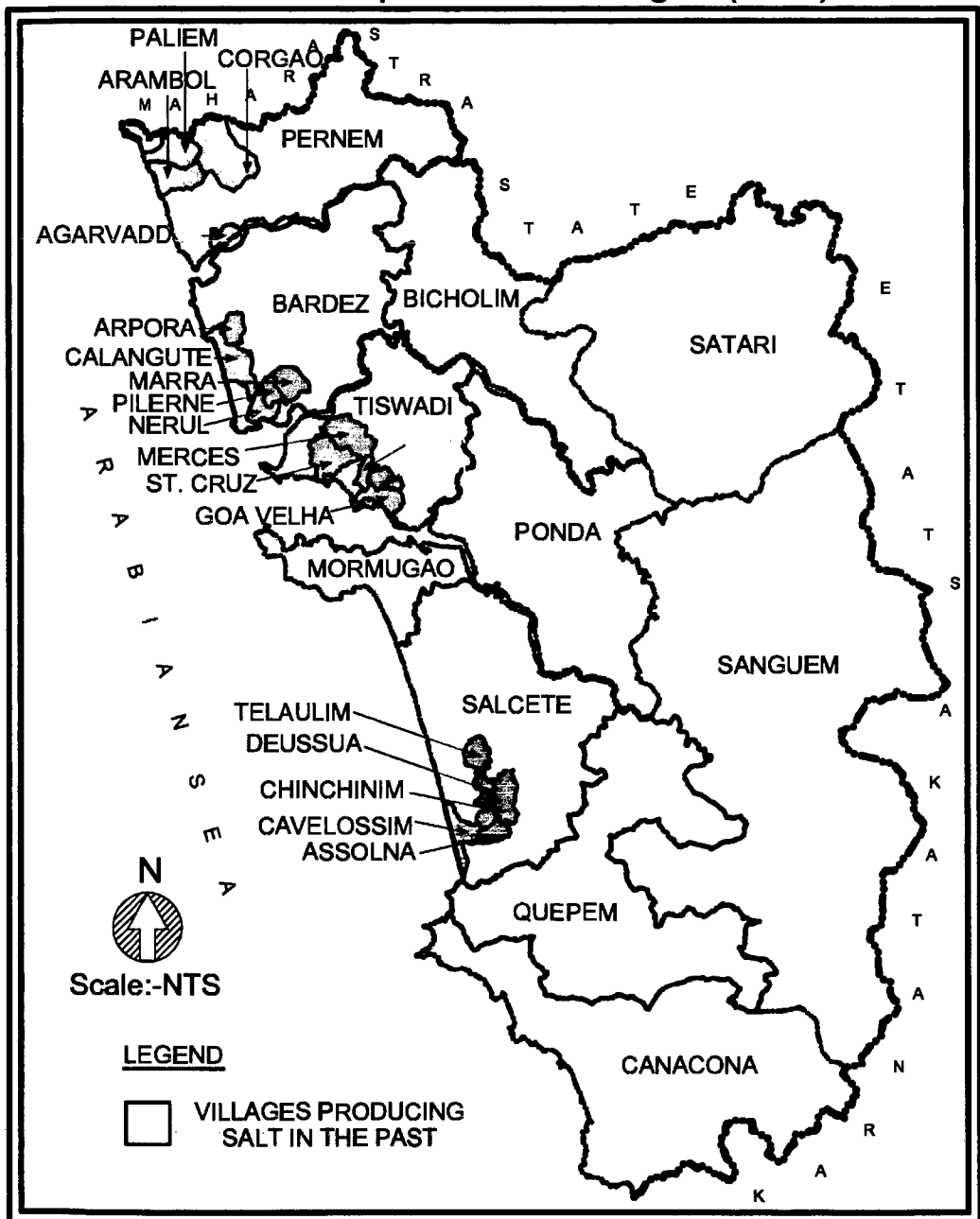
The first village, Agarvaddo, has Hindu salt makers i.e. the *Mithgaudas*; the second village Batim purely consists of Christian salt-makers, i.e. the Agris who have also employed the Agers from Karnataka. The Gauddis and the *Bhandaris* in the third village of Arpora comprise of a mixed group i.e. both Hindus and Christians.

Out of all the demographic factors, the researcher selected religion given that it is the dominant factor which affects the lifestyles of individuals in today's Goa. The researcher made the sample selection based on religion.

The purposive sampling method was employed in the identification of the villages. Purposive sampling, as its name suggests, is adopted in identifying a sample. Since it involves qualitative research, the dimensions or factors according to which

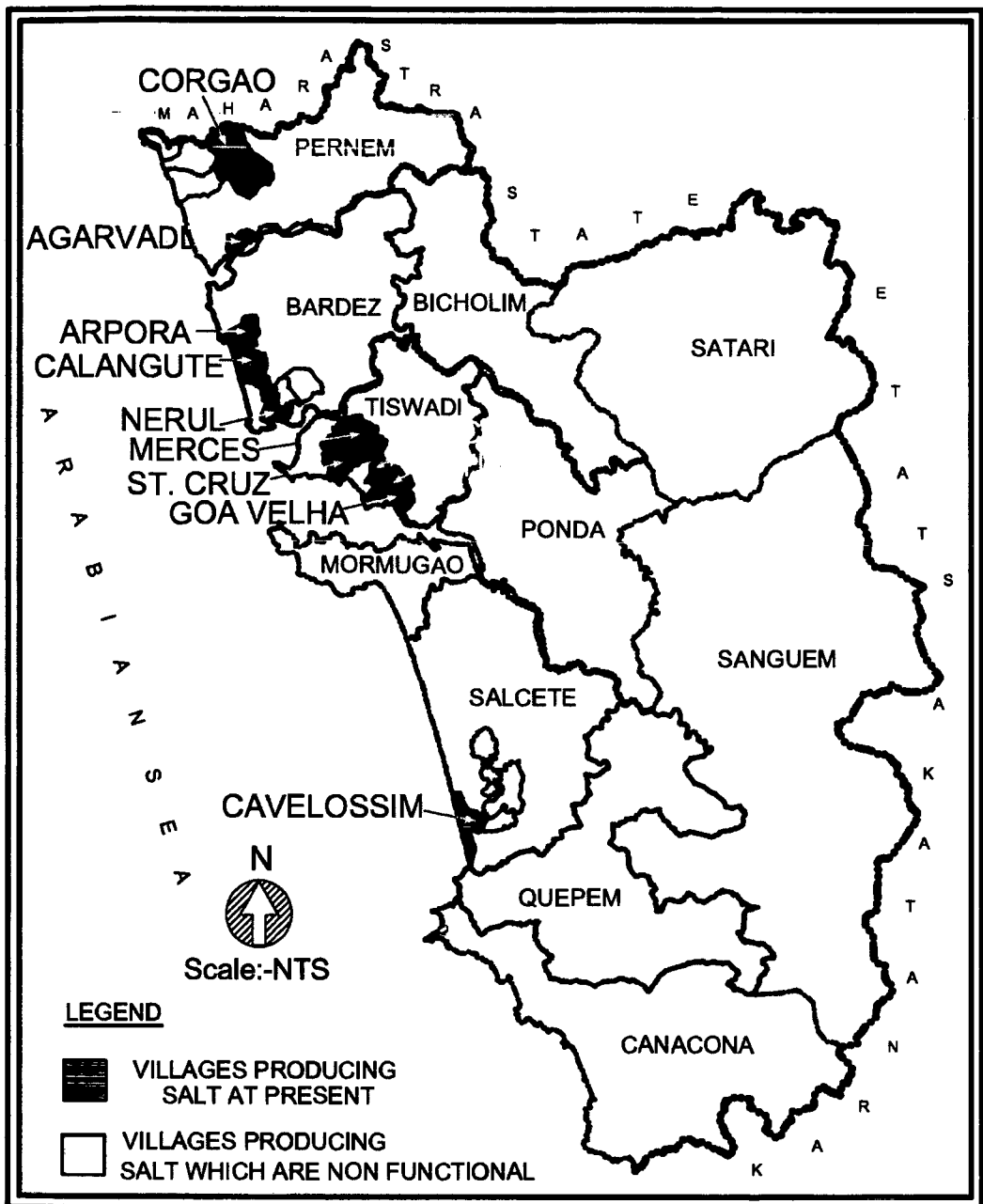
the samples were drawn up and analytically linked to the research questions being addressed. So the researcher visited all the salt producing villages of Goa based on the knowledge of the secondary sources and after that purposively identified the research universe.

**Map No. 2.1**  
**GOA: Salt production villages (Past)**



## Map No. 2.2

### GOA: Salt production villages (Present)



These villages were deliberately selected which have three identified categories of salt-makers in terms of religious background. Thus, this study explored three villages namely Arpora, Batim and Agarvaddo, which represented the Mitagars of Goa.

The migrant workers are also considered for fieldwork, since they are

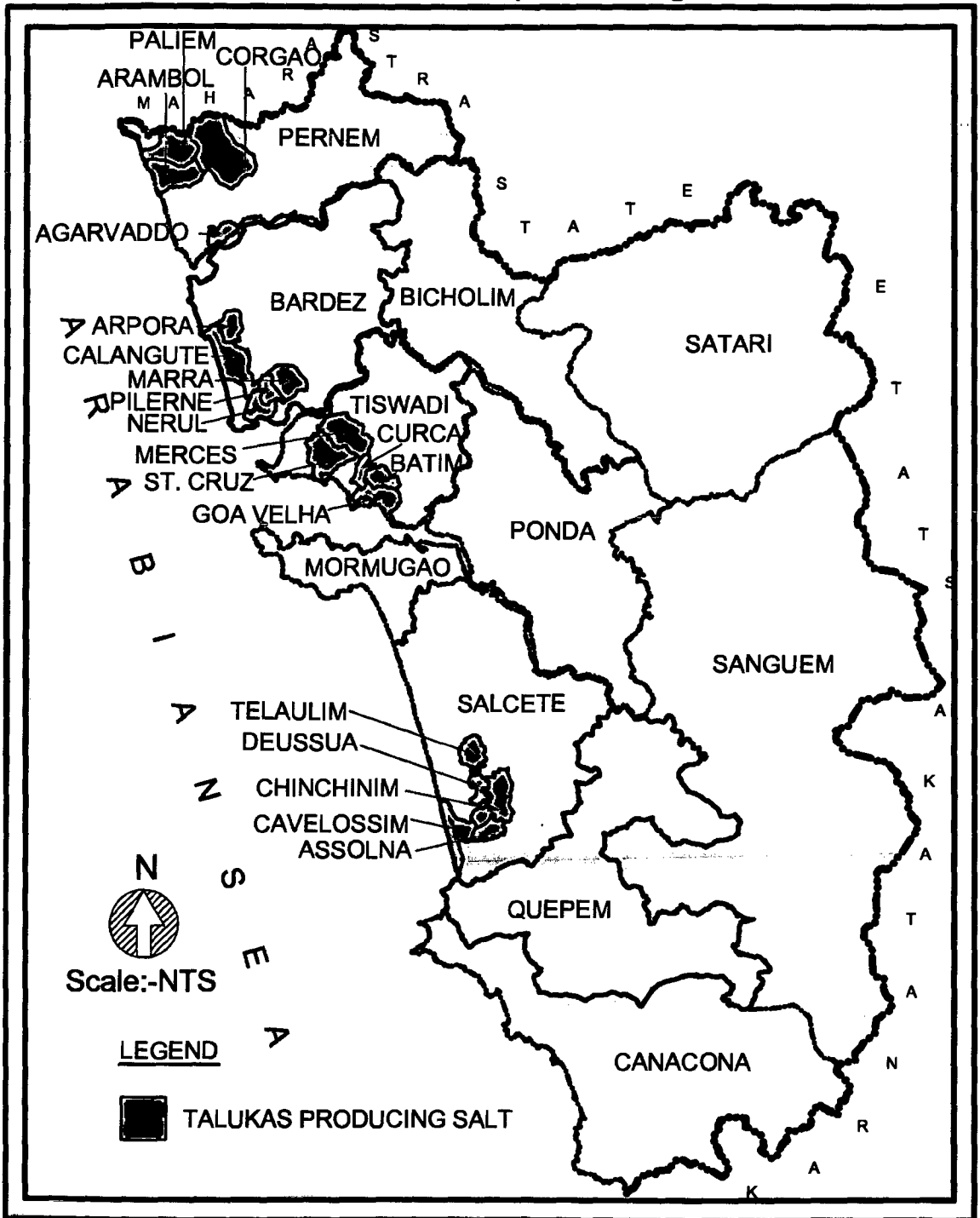
employed by the salt-makers of Batim and Arpora. These migrant workers hail from Karnataka, and usually come in pairs, such as husband-wife, father-daughter or mother-son etc. They are seasonal migrants, but working for several years for the original owners and the permanent tenant.

There is, however, not a single migrant worker in Agarvaddo village, where all the work was done by the *Mithgaudas* themselves. During the three years of the researcher's study in Arpora, different kinds of situations with regard to migrant workers were witnessed. In Arpora, in the year 2006, migrant workers from Karnataka used to work on the salt pans. In the year 2007, the laborers from Maharashtra were employed in the salt pans. Then, in the year 2009, the salt-pan owners personally went to Karnataka to bring-in the laborers but due to the non-availability of workers; they now employ the daily-wage migrant workers residing in Calangute.

### **Sites of Study**

Salt is produced exclusively in four talukas out of eleven in Goa. This study focusses on one village from each taluka, except Salcette since the Agris from Salcette (from Telaulim in Navelim) had migrated to Batim which was already selected for this study.

## Map No. 2.3 GOA: Talukas producing salt



In Salcette taluka, Cavelossim is the only village where salt is produced. The same situation prevails even today. The rest of the villages in Salcette have become

redundant to the purpose of this study, as can be noticed in the survey maps of Salcette in the chapter on salt making in Goa.

### Selection of the Respondents

Table 2.1 and Diagrams 2.1 and 2.2 explain the selection of the respondents.

**Table 2.1**  
**Respondents selected for the Study**

Selection of Respondents  
↓

	Village I	Village II	Village III	Universe
Original Owner	8	6	16	30
Present Tenant	15	18	12	45
Labor Operated in pairs	0	36	2	38
Total Families	23	60	30	113

The research was carried out in three villages: Village I, Village II and Village III.

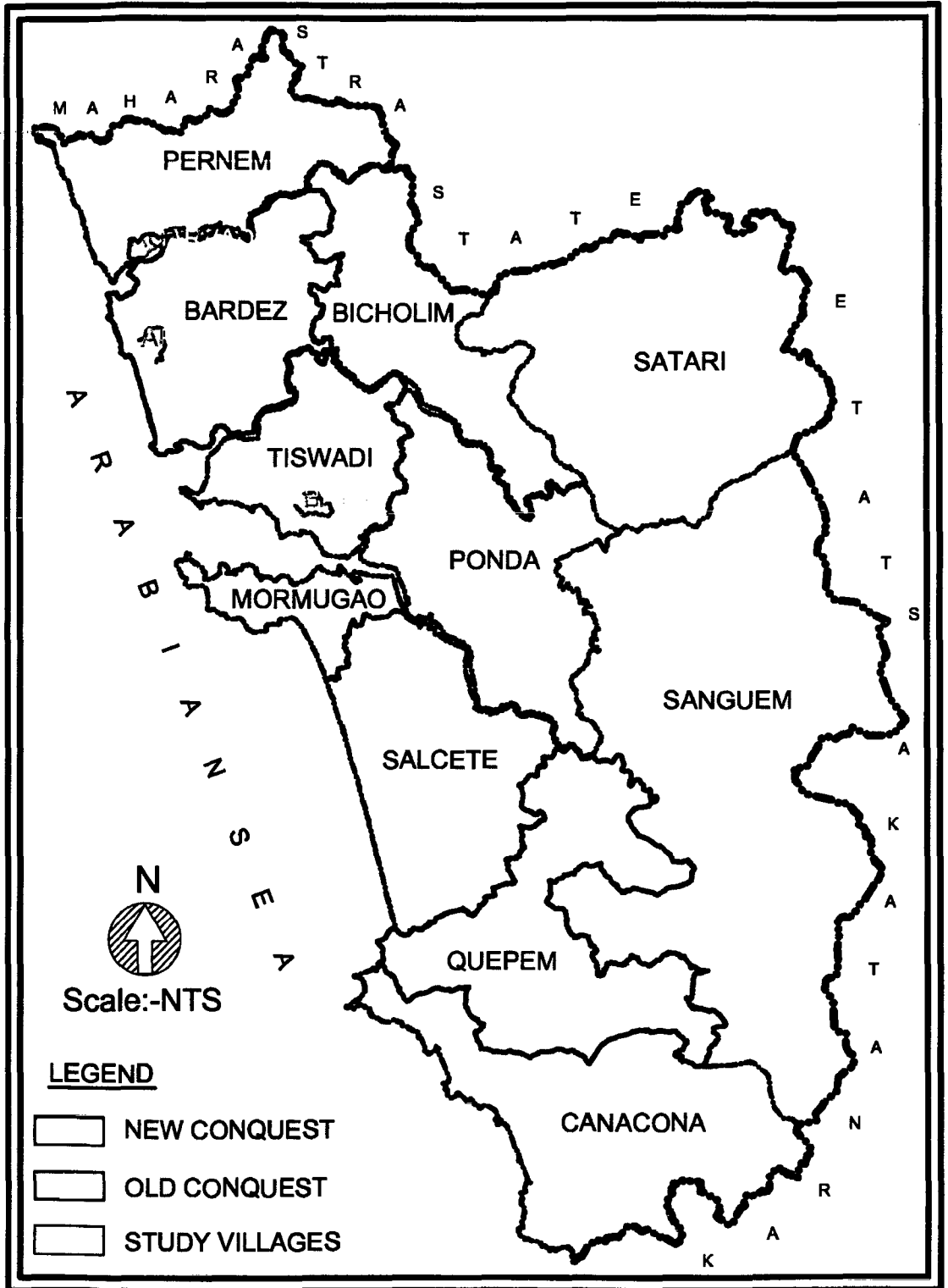
Village I, i.e. Agarvaddo, comprised of eight original owners, fifteen present tenants and all salt pans are self operated. So the total families involved in salt production are twenty three.

Village II, i.e. Batim, comprised of six original owners, eighteen present tenants and had a total of 36 laboring pairs operating in the salt pans. So the total families involved in salt production were sixty.

Village III, i.e. Arpora, comprised of sixteen original owners, twelve present tenants and have a total of two laboring pairs operating in the salt pans. So the total families involved in salt production were 15, but towards the end of the fieldwork there was just one family.

# Map No. 2.4

## GOA: Three study villages



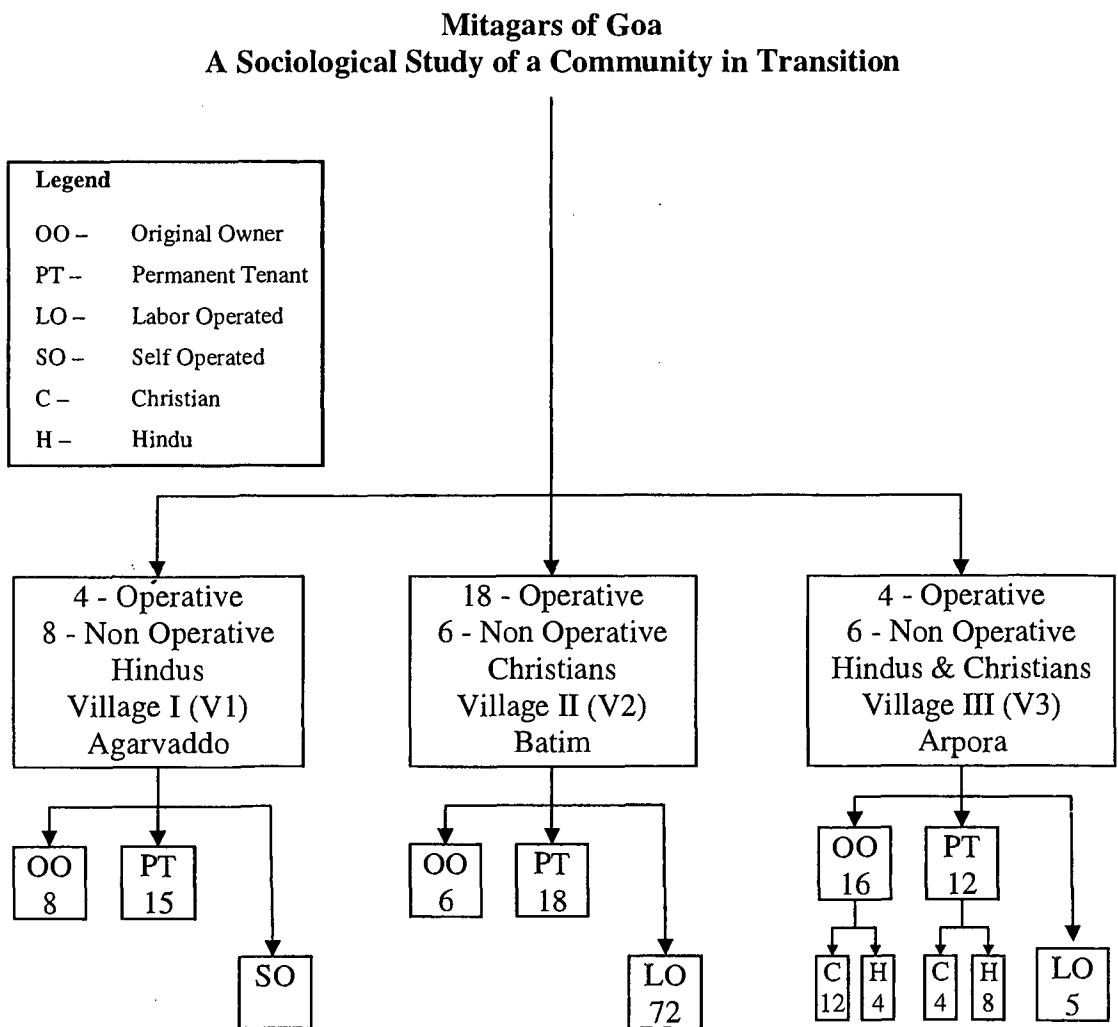
In all, from Village I; 23; Village II; 60 families and from Village III; 30 families were to be included for the study. The universe of the study was made of a



hundred and thirteen families. Since it was a qualitative study and the universe being small, there was no need to determine the sample size. Therefore, all the families were taken up for study. However in course of time many saltpans became non operative as indicated in the below table. All the 113 families identified were not available at the time of field work. Only 51 families could be contacted. Hence the researcher had no option but to finally interview 51 respondents as depicted in the below table.

**Diagram 2.1**

**Diagram showing declined Salt Pans and Salt workers**

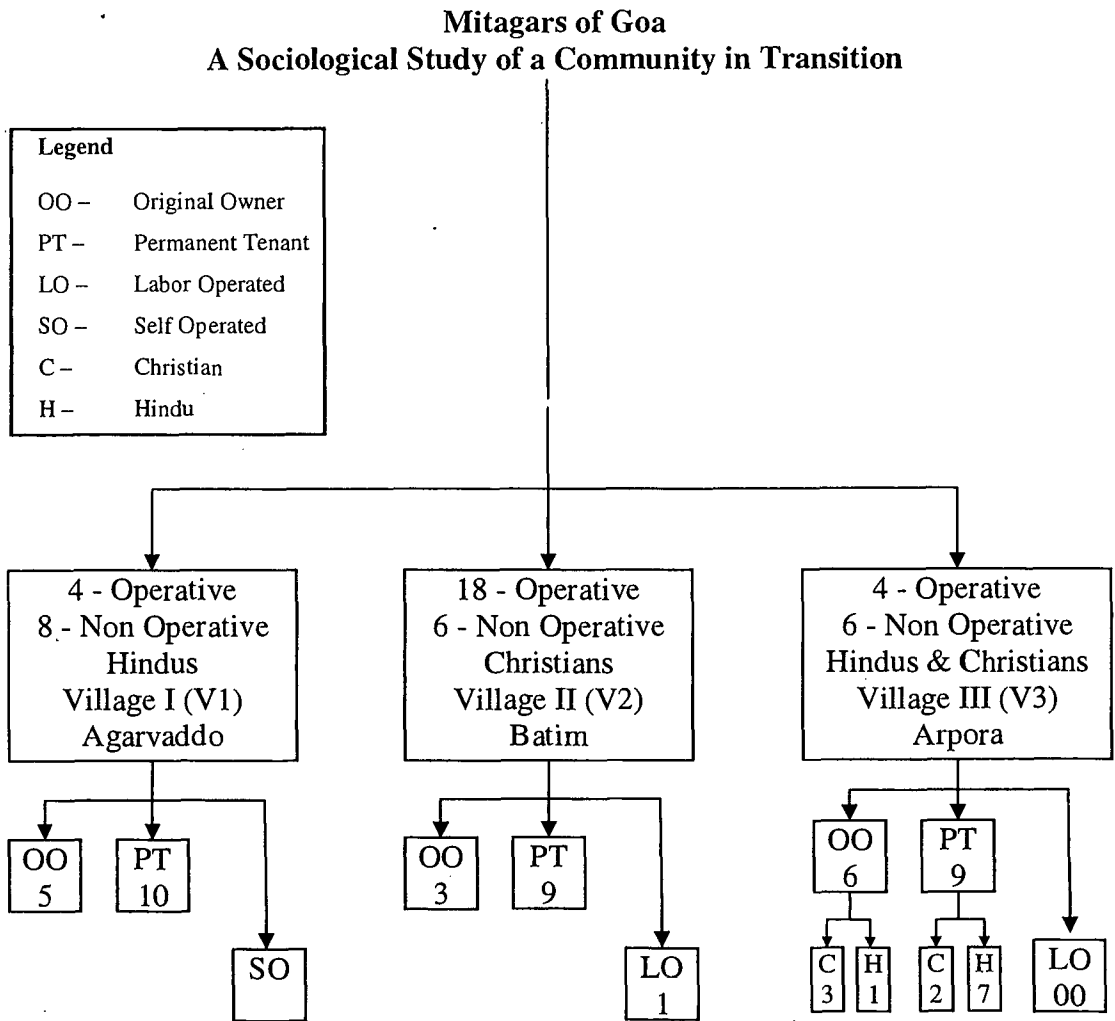


Note: Some saltpans in Agarvaddo were owned by the temple committee and some were owned by the Communidade. In Batim, too, some saltpans were owned by the church and some were owned by the Communidade.

In Agarvaddo, there were four saltpans which were operative and eight which were non-operative – comprising of eight original owners, fifteen permanent tenants and all the salt pans were self-operated. All those involved in salt making here were Hindus by religious affiliation. In Batim, there were 18 operative and six non-operative saltpans comprising of six original owners, 18 present tenants and 36 pairs of migrant workers who operated the salt pans. Here, all those involved in salt-making (except the migrant workers) were Christians. In Arpora, there were four saltpans which were operative and six which were non-operative in the year 2005, but towards the end of her study in the year 2009 there is only one saltpan which was operative in Arpora. In Arpora there were earlier sixteen original owners, twelve present tenants and five migrant workers who operated the salt pans.

Diagram 2.2

Total Number of Respondents Interviewed



Hence, the total number of respondents interviewed by the researcher is 51.

**Tools and Techniques of Data Collection**

The techniques of data gathering employed by the researcher included participant observation, interview schedule, informal discussions, formal discussions, focused group discussions, household case study method, in-depth interviews and written and documentary sources.

As mentioned earlier, the present study is empirical based on qualitative data. In this study, various socio-economic aspects of the salt makers were observed and

studied by the same processes and techniques as other aspects of human behavior. However, the main techniques employed in the study were the observational technique and interview schedules. In this study, the researcher was interested in observing the general environment of the salt makers.

The interview schedule was an instrument for data collection. A common interview schedule for all the three categories of respondents had been adopted i.e. with the original owners, the permanent tenants and the migrant laborers.

The permanent tenants of Agarvaddo were referred as Mithgaudas. The permanent tenants of Batim were referred as Agris and the permanent tenants of Arpora were the Bhandaris. The landlords, i.e. the Gauddis, also used to work in the salt pans in Arpora. Sometimes these above terms were used interchangeably in the study. The interview schedule contained all items of open-ended questions on which details were sought from the persons being studied. The schedule consists of five sections. Section one was a personal profile of the respondents. Section two focused on the socio-cultural life. Section three on the economic life, section four on political life and section five was based on impact of modern technology.

### **Informal Discussions**

Unstructured and informal discussions were held with the leaders, advocates, teachers, journalists, panchayat officials, government officials and members of the general public. This informal knowledge gave an idea of the *Agris*, *Agers*, *Gauddis*, *Bhandaris* and the *Mithgaudas*.

## **Focused Group Discussions**

Focused Group Discussions were carried out with a group of people rather than with an individual. Sometimes, the women of Agarvaddo felt freer to speak in groups rather than individually. So they were interviewed in group whenever they came to the temple for *fugddi* (a religious-dance programme) or for other programs. This method provided an opportunity to discuss certain matters in depth, since people more freely expressed their views when in groups rather than when interviewed individually. This helped to improve the quality of information collected.

A sound recorder, digital camera, as well as video camera and a laptop were used to record the feeling, expressions of the *Mitagar* community.

## **Formal Discussions**

Formal discussions were held with various kinds of village leaders. For example, to determine the areas under salt production and to map the areas which are shrinking, the researcher contacted all the sarpanchas, talathis, some panchas, secretaries of the village panchayats and the salt makers of all the salt producing villages of Goa.

## **Household Case Study Method**

Household Case Study method was used for some households from the three villages. Households were identified during the household interviews and the interviews were pursued over a number of sessions, wherein in-depth information was collected. These informants were the key respondents based on the willingness, time factor and the approachability of these persons.

This was the most effective method to understand the *Mitagar* community,

which is in a process of intense transition as is obvious from the changes taking place in their areas of work, economy, priorities and the productivity of the field that has sustained them over generations. This method helped improve the qualitative strength of the research. It also helped to fill the gaps which were there in the interview schedule.

### **Household Interview Schedule**

A household interview schedule was used to explore the *Mitagar* community, wherein a rapport was established before interviewing them. Household interview schedule was a mixture of both open-ended and closed-ended questions covering various aspects of socio-cultural life, economic life and political life. The rapport was established through the parish priest, the temple *bhatji* (religious priest), sarpanch or any other influential person in the village

### **In-depth Interview Method**

The in-depth Interview method was adopted to collect detailed information of the *Mitagar* community, which is a repository of a high proportion of opinions, attitudes and personal experiences. The objective of such an interview was that the respondents should be able to discuss at length a subject which was of equal interest to them and the interviewer. Key respondents were selected, on the basis of the personal experiences and observations of the researcher, and these key respondents were contacted several times to update gaps in information.

### **Secondary Data**

Secondary data was collected through library work done in various libraries

such as (i) Mumbai University Library, (ii) Centre for Communication, Education and Documentation (CED) Suleman Chamber Regal Street behind Regal Cinema, Mumbai, (iii) Elphinstone College, Mumbai, (iv) Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, (v) I.I.T Powai Mumbai, (vi) M. S. University, Baroda, (vii) JNU, Delhi, (viii) Lucknow University, (ix) Karnataka University, Dharwad, (x) University of Madras, (xi) ISSEC, Bangalore, (xii) Rajasthan University at Jaipur, (xiii) Kuvempu University, (xiv) the American Library at the US Consulate, Chennai, (xv) Xavier Centre for Historical Research, Porvorim and (xvi) Gomant Vidya Niketan Library Margao. The information was also sought from various college libraries of Goa, and from the internet, magazines and newspapers. This researcher also visited the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Deonar Mumbai with some interview schedules and got them examined at the computer centre (EDP section) of the TISS to understand the validity and relevance of the questions asked. Work was done under Ashish Govekar, who instructed in the process of feeding data into the computer using the SPSS software package.

# **CHAPTER III**

## **SALT MAKING**

### **IN GOA**



## CHAPTER III

### SALT MAKING IN GOA

In order to understand salt production and the salt-makers of Goa, it is essential to have an understanding of the historical aspects related to this sector in the region. This includes the prominent place Goa's salt once commanded both in the local economy and among salt-exporting regions globally; the steady decline of the salt industry here together with the falling status of the salt-makers; and the factors responsible for such a decline. These themes will be discussed in this chapter.

To get a better understanding, what is also needed is an understanding of the various aspects of Goan society – geographical and historical facets too. This chapter will delve into such concerns. Empirical chapters dealt by the researcher later in this thesis, will be set in their context when these aspects, together with the prevalent nature of Old and the New Conquests are studied.

To reconstruct the past of any village requires a careful study of archaeological evidences, written records, as well as stories based on the oral history of that village. Dynasties and names of persons can confuse the researcher undertaking attempts to reconstruct history in chronological order, while not helping understand the bigger picture. In addition to written documents, one needs a careful study to understand contemporary society, the social and economic life of the people, their habits and uses, and their contacts with other regions. Systematic and skillful observation is required to understand the above facts (Rao 2003: 23).

Literature relating to the historical past of Goa is abundant, though much of this focuses on the period that is better documented, since the arrival of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. Before the conquest of Goa by the Portuguese,

Goan society was subject to a long experience in political systems under the aegis of the ancient Mauryas, followed by the medieval Kadambas, the Hindu Vijaynagara empire, the Muslim kingdoms of Bahamani and Bijapur and the Maratha rulers (D'Souza 1975: 20).

The pattern of political system that emerged due to the interplay of several influences, ancient and medieval, Hindu and Muslim, on the eve of the Portuguese conquest of Goa was not characteristic of any particular type (D'Souza 1975: 20).

### **Location of Goa**

Goa, currently the smallest state in the Indian Union, lies on the south west coast of India and its geographic position is 15-48' 00"N and 14-53' 54" N latitude and 74-20' 13" E and 73-40' 33" longitude. To the north lies Sawantwadi taluka of Ratnagiri district and the Kolhapur district, both of Maharashtra state. To the east and south lie Belgaum, Dharward and North Kanara districts of Karnataka state. Goa is bounded on the west by the Arabian Sea (Mascarenhas 1987: 53). See map

Goa is surrounded on the east, north-east and south-east by sub-mountainous region of the Sahayadri ranges, and by the Arabian Sea on the west (Rajendran(ed) 1971: 1). Goa is situated in the coastal belt known as the Konkan. This closeness to the coast is not incidental in the development of the traditional salt industry here. The salt industry in Goa first developed more than a thousand years ago. The area we today know as Goa in fact had virtually a complete monopoly over salt production in the region.

Out of the 29 states which currently form the Republic of India, Goa is amongst the smallest in terms of area. In comparison with the size and magnitude of India, Goa would certainly appear to be insignificant and not meriting any attention.

Yet, Goa has a special aura of its own and is already a major centre of national and international attraction. It has been a meeting point of different strands of history. Besides having a past which is untypical in the rest of South Asia, it is also one of the first and the longest-held European colonies in Asia. It comprises an area of 3702 square kilometers and is ensconced in the ecologically-sensitive hilly Western Ghats of India. The palm fringed coast is interrupted at places by the sparkling estuaries of the Mandovi, Zuari and a number of other small rivers (Bhandari 1999: 7). Today's coast of Goa extends over an area of 105 kilometers from Tiracol in the north to Galgibag in the south; and this coastline is conducive to this sector as salt is extracted from the freely available saline seawater.

In Goa, salt is produced in four talukas i.e. Pernem, Tisvadi, Bardez and Salcette taluka (see map). Of all the coastal talukas, it is not produced in Mormugao and Canacona sub-districts. All the villages that once had been known for their traditional salt pan production currently do not carry out the conventional salt-farming activity currently. (See map)

### **Geographical Features of Goa**

Goa has an extensive riverine system, which drains major parts of its lands. The rivers are perennial in nature, and good sources of transportation. The topography of Goa shows an east-west tendency from the Western Ghats to the Arabian Sea and flows towards the west. The largest river, the Mandovi whose ancient name was the Gomati, is seventy seven kilometers long. Second largest among the rivers is the Zuari which is sixty three kilometers long. The River Terekhol and River Chapora drain the land of Goa on the north, and Rivers Zuari, Maina, Paroda, Dudhsagar, Kushavati,

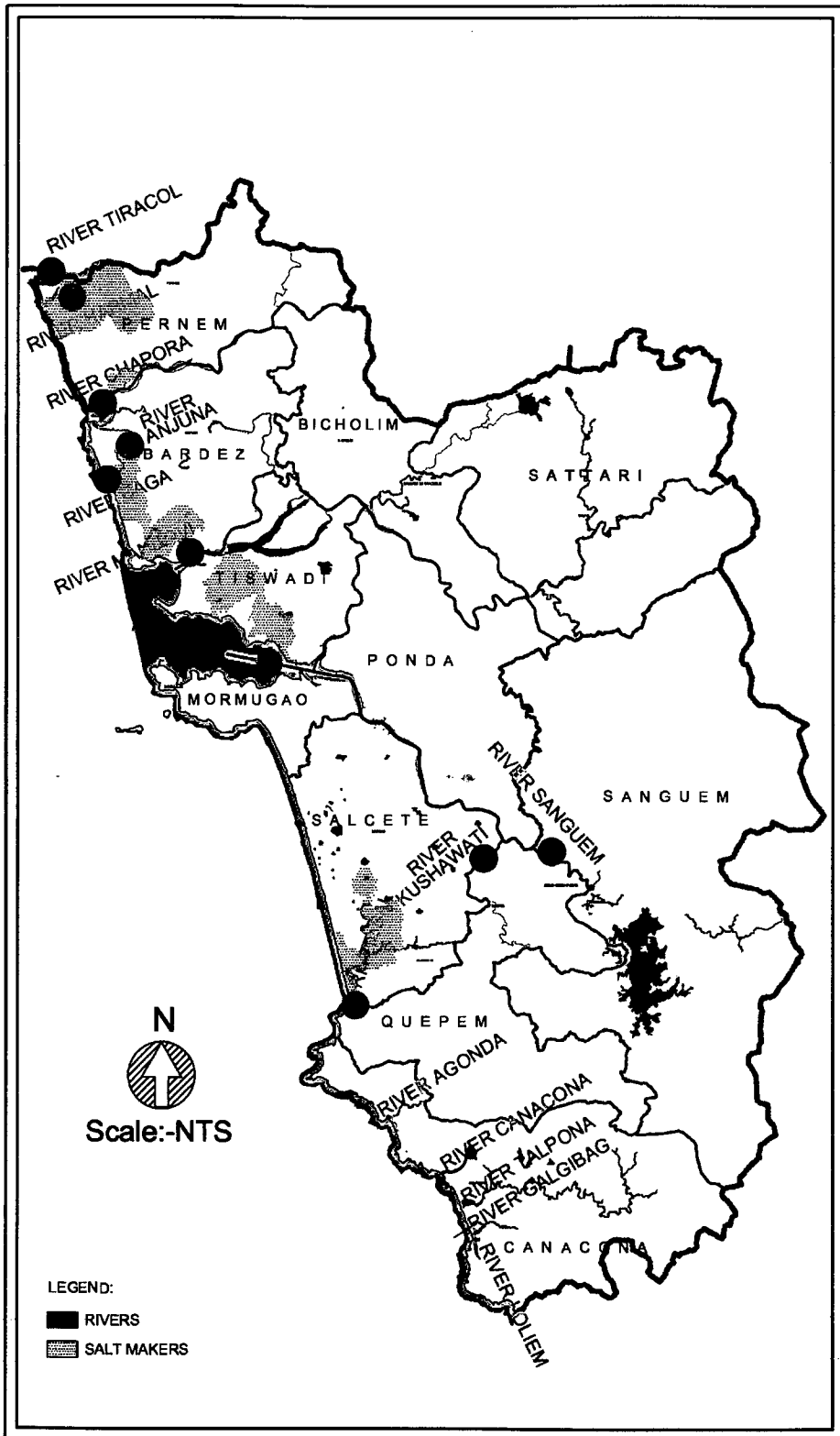
Khandepar and Sanguem are present in the central part, and the Rivers Sal, Talpona and Galgibag in the south.

Goa's waterways have always been the main means of communication from the sea and also to inland settlements. These waterways developed fishing industries, transport and the systems of defensive forts (Rao 2003: 4).

This riverine system has been discussed here because of its relevance to the economics of both the fishing and the salt industry of Goa. Since the salt industry basically thrives on tidal influence which occurs twice a day in the estuarine rivers of Goa, and Goa has a lot of these estuarine rivers, a significant amount of salt production has been taking place here over centuries. Rivers such as the Ganga, Mahanadi, Godavari and Kaveri have no estuaries, but are delta rivers and a result of which no salt production takes place there.

As noted earlier, in Goa, salt is produced in four talukas: Pernem, Bardez, Tisvadi and Salcette. These talukas or sub-districts are separated from each other by rivers descending from the Western Ghats. In Pernem, the saltpans are situated on the banks of the river Tiracol. Pernem has the river Chapora to the south. Saltpans in the taluka of Bardez are on the banks of the River Baga at Arpora. In Tisvadi taluka, the salt pans are located on the banks of the river Mandovi in Panaji, Ribandar, and Santa Cruz and on the banks of the Zuari River at Siridao, Curca and Batim. Salcette lies south of Tisvadi and is separated from this taluka by the river Zuari in the north and from its neighboring eastern and southern regions by the river Sal. (See map on rivers and distribution of Mitagars.)

**Map No. 3.1**  
**GOA : Rivers and**  
**Distribution of Mitagars**



## Original Settlers

Ancestors of the majority of the present Goan population, according to various beliefs and myths, originated around the 4<sup>th</sup> century from elsewhere in India (DeSouza 1979: 55-7). Multiple roots seem likely when we find that Goa has several diverse folklores, each spontaneous and distinct from the other, which vouch for more than one set of original settlers. They speak the same language but the intonation is sufficient to tell from where, and even from what social class, one comes. There is historical evidence that castes have an ancestry which may be based on ethnicity as much as functional (Mascarenhas 1987: 15).

The technique of salt extraction in Goa was discovered by primitive man from periodic notices of sea –salt formation on rock and cliffs and encrustations left by receding salt-water on land. The secret of salt making was monopolized by the ‘Shamans’ of the ancestors of Mithgauda community of Goa. Primitive salt works probably began in the late megalithic period in the South Konkan, Goa, Gokarna and Kumta. From these works salt trails were laid out to the ghat areas for marketing surplus salt. Halts on these trails became the salt-camps and later on nuclei of trading post (Mhamai 2000:11).

As the rest of India, Goa too has been a witness to the Aryans entry (or invasion) from the north and settling down in the region. There still exist some tribes who were the original settlers much before the Dravidians invaded and occupied the Konkan region. At a later part the Aryans descended into the Konkan area and Goa (Bhandari 1999: 135). It is not certain whether, or which of, the tribals were the original inhabitants of Goa (Saldanha 1952: 3).

Goa went through a natural evolution with other tribes coming in, subjugating the locals and imposing their imprint. The Asuras came from Chota Nagpur region of

Madhya Pradesh in Central India. They brought their deities with them. The Asura tribes were subsequently subdued by the Kol tribe who also brought their own deities and modified those of the Asuras, It was around 3,000 BC, soon after the Kols, that the Mundaris and the Kharwas came to Goa from the same area as the Asuras. It was Kols who appear to have first introduced the fertility cult as a form of worship. Their main goddess was Ro-en (the ant-hill). This goddess was later termed Santer by the Aryans and is the origin of goddess Santeri who is still widely worshipped in Goa (Bhandari 1999: 22). The Mithgaudas of Agarvaddo worship the goddess Santeri till today.

### **Goa under Portuguese Rule**

With the 451 years of Portuguese rule in parts of Goa, many locals were converted to Christianity. The Inquisition ensured that those who converted stayed within Christianity; but changing one's culture and lifestyles was not very easy. In spite of all these factors there were many rituals and practices associated with salt making which continue till date even in the Old Conquest areas with some modifications. This will be discussed in detail in the empirical chapters.

Goa is often perceived from the outside as being predominantly Christian. This impression probably comes about because of the area most often visited by tourists. But this perception is not accurate; and here the difference between the Old and the New Conquests comes into the story yet again.

At the end of the last century, out of Goa's population some 65% were Hindus belonging to diverse caste groups, 32% Catholics and 3% belong to other religious persuasion (Bhandari 1999: 145). Census of India 2001 says Goa has a population of 13, 47,668. Of these, the Hindus form the largest religious community, constituting

65.8 percent of the total population while Christians account for 26.7 per cent and Muslims 6.8 per cent of the total population. Other religious communities like the Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, form the remaining part of the total population (Census Department, Panaji).

However, the Christians are concentrated in the Old Conquests and although even here they are still not a numerical majority, except in the sub-district of Salcette. Changing religious compositions in the Old Conquests have come about due to the migration of Hindus from outlying sub-districts into areas like Mormugao, Vasco, Bardez and Tiswadi. Salcette, with its Christian majority, is the only taluka where this position has been maintained. In contrast, in the New Conquests, some eighty five percent of the population is Hindu. These statistics are reflected in the character of the different areas (Hall 1995: 57).

Various factors in the history of Goa changed the status and economics of the once-prominent salt making occupation in Goa. The salt makers of Goa are spread both in the New as well as the Old Conquests. As mentioned earlier, in the introductory chapter, the characteristics of the salt makers differ in both these areas, so the proceeding section will focus on building an understanding of the two diverse areas of Goa.

### **Old Conquests, New Conquests**

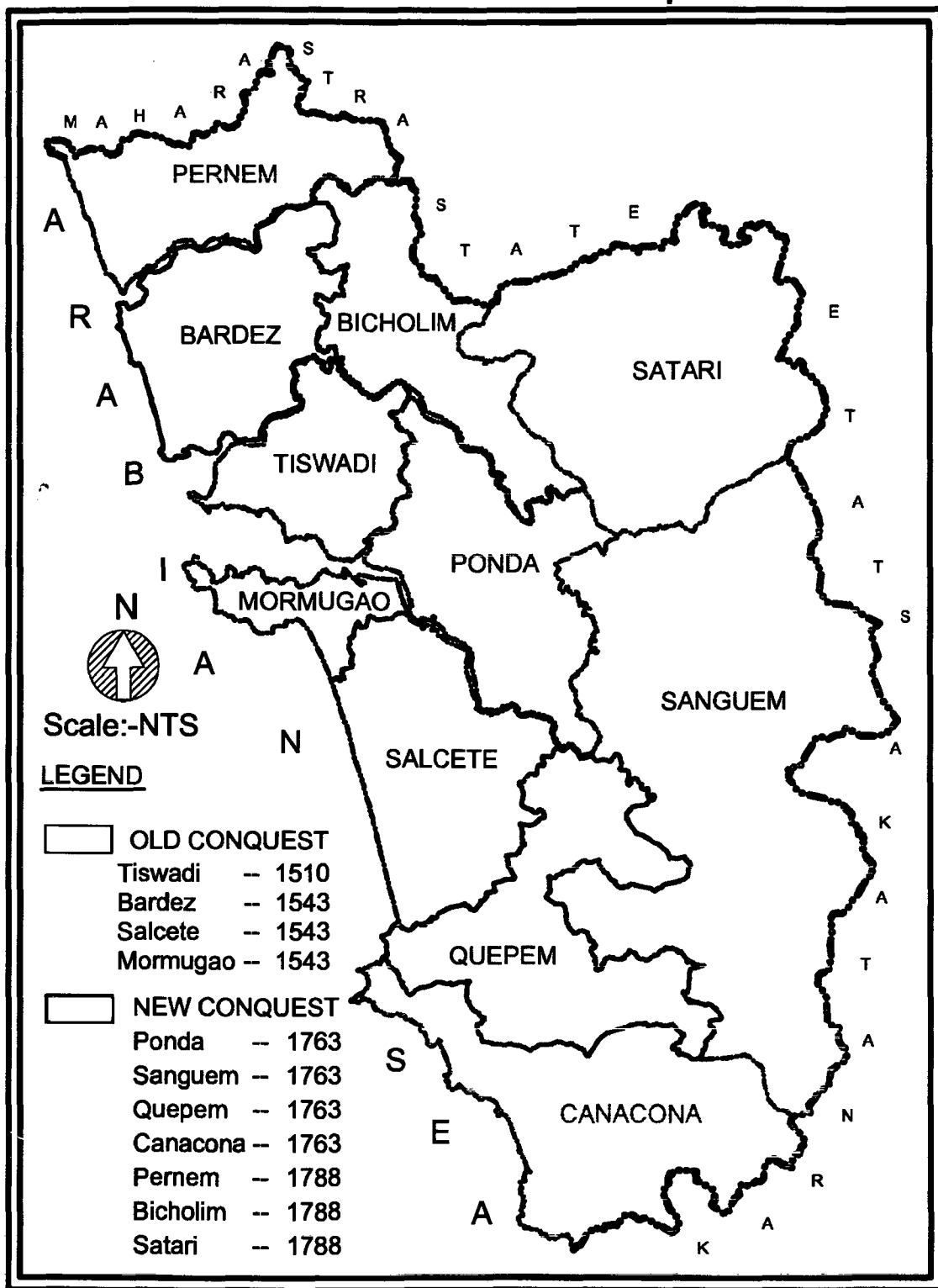
The present territory of Goa consists of two divisions, called the Old Conquests and the New Conquests that are a legacy of the different histories of the region. The Old Conquests form all the four talukas that were conquered by the Portuguese between 1510 and 1543 – the Goa Island and its outlying villages (called Ilhas, and now Tisvadi or Tiswadi), Salcette, Marmagoa and Bardez. The New



Conquests consists of the remaining seven talukas or sub-districts forming the north-eastern and south-eastern hinterland of Goa. They are Pernem, Bicholim, Sattari, Ponda, Sanguem, Quepem, and Canacona (D'Souza 1975: 18). The "Old Conquests" lies almost at the centre of the west coast of Goa. The three provinces (Salcette and Marmagao were a common province earlier, but now four (De Souza 1979: 51) (See map).Tisvadi, Bardez, Salcette and Mormugao talukas cover an area of less than seven hundred square kilometer (two hundred and seventy square miles), only one-fifth of the total area of modern Goa. The conquered themselves already had a long history and a well-founded culture of their own (Hall 1995: xii)

In the sixteenth century, Goa experienced a strong cultural transformation - a more violent, alien conversion of the Lusitanian brand of Christianity (Kamat 1999: 41). The conversions to Christianity in Goa saw three fairly distinct phases. The first when, on the one hand, pressures were exerted through destruction of temples, confiscation of properties and expulsions, as sanctified by edicts and laws, and on the other hand, through allurements given by way of jobs, lands and other benefits. The second phase was when the missionaries were able to break the resistance earlier sustained by the upper caste, particularly the Brahmins. They were the ones who had set an example to others in resisting conversion. Once this had been achieved, several others followed in hoards without the sense of being ashamed as to what their neighbors and associates would think of them. The third phase is when it was found that in spite of being converted to Christianity, the converts continued to adhere to the customs, practices and even rituals of their earlier religions. It marked the advent of Inquisition in Goa (Bhandari 1999: 62).

# MAP NO. 3.2 GOA: Old and New Conquest



One theory prevalent in the oral history of the area is that the Gauddis of Arpora might have got the salt pans as an allurement from the Portuguese. Incidentally, the customs and practices and the rituals of earlier practices among the Agris of Batim have continued till date.

Thus the island of Goa was under the Portuguese rule from 1510, Bardez, Salcette and Marmagoa from 1543 and parts of the hinterland New Conquests from as late as the eighteenth century. It was in this period that the Portuguese permanently annexed the *talukas* of Ponda, Bicholim, Sanguem, Quepem, Canacona, Sattari and Pernem (D'Souza 1975: 19).

Thus, the New Conquests were not added to Portuguese territory till more than two hundred and fifty years after the first invasion. Not only therefore they were subjected to Portuguese influence for a much shorter period of time compared with the four-and-a-half centuries of the Old Conquests, but, in addition, were acquired almost unintentionally and at a time when Portuguese administrative vigor and religious fanaticism were considerably diminished. As a result, these outlying areas were left relatively unaffected in religious terms by their new masters. Most of the people were Hindus and, together with a small number of Muslims, were put under little pressure to change their religion - a far cry from what happened during the early years of conquest. All of this, together with geographical differences, results in two areas contrasting in atmosphere to the extent that one can sense, quite distinctly, the crossing from one to the other (Hall 1995: xii, D'Souza 1975: 19).

Whatever the original motives and methods, the historic encounter has resulted in something which, in time, proves to be not altogether deplorable: a mixture of cultures, like a mixture of races, leaving a beauty and richness that 'pure 'cultures' and races lack. Today, when the Goan boasts of the uniqueness of his culture, it is just

to this mixed culture that he is, perhaps unconsciously, referring” (Menezes 1977: 11-32). The transition that occurred among the salt makers of the Old Conquest villages among the salt making community was different as compared to the New Conquest villages of Goa.

The researcher in her study selected three villages from Goa - two from the Old Conquests and one village from the New Conquests. The differences between these areas became evident. (See map).

The split between the coastal region and the hinterland closely, but not entirely, parallels the historical division of Goa into the Old Conquests and the New Conquests (Mascarenhas 1987: 59).

### **Salt in Goan History**

Goa has been called a once glorious entrepot of the commerce between East and the West, a centre through which merchandise was imported and re-exported. But this dwindled into insignificance over time. Its export trade was limited to Bombay, the bulk of its cargo being coconuts' and salt, areca nuts, poultry and fruits (Pinto 1994: 219,220).

Celsa Pinto's (1996) study deals in a comprehensive adverse impact of the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty of 1878 on the Goan salt industry. She mentions the workings of the main elements of the Treaty of 1878, under which Custom barriers existing between the British and the Portuguese dominions were demolished, so as to smoothen the flow of goods across the frontiers. However, an exception was made in the case of articles like salt, opium, liquors, arms and ammunitions.

By another treaty concluded in 1880, the manufacture of salt in Portuguese India was placed under British control and supervision for a period of 12 years. The

British salt monopoly had severe consequences on Goan society, since the quota of salt assigned to a person annually was very low. Some people had no other option but to extract salt from the sea water and also from the silt of sea water inundated fields, which led to health problems. Such was the distressing state of affairs in every household in Goa. The salt monopoly came down heavily on the Goan economic system and even provoked widespread resentment and hostility in Goa, which even the British officials present in Goa could not turn a blind eye to (Pinto 1996:121).

In accordance with the stipulations of the treaty of 1878, Custom barriers existing between British and Portuguese dominions were got rid of, so as to smoothen the flow of goods across the frontiers. But salt was an exception – together with opium, liquors, arms and ammunition (Pinto 1996: 114).

Salt was one of the chief items of export of the *Estado da India*, as the Portuguese colonial state was called. In February 1808, Thomas Dineur, a long-time resident of the French territory of Mahe, requested the prominent trading house of the Mhamais in Goa to help Vithoba of the coastal vessel *Laxmy* to buy salt from Nerul. In June 1811, Dineur enquired whether the Mhamais were willing to enter into contract to supply four hundred *cumbos* [a local measure of the time] of Nerul salt at the rate of rupees twelve per *combo* before the year terminated and that the penalty for every *maon* short supplied would involve a deduction of rupees five. The payment would be made in three installments: the first at the time of signing the contract, the second when half of the delivery was made, and the last one when the entire order was executed. In February 1822, Suba Kamat dispatched 376-1/2 *cumbos* of salt to Allepey. In 1844, Goa's salt exports totaled 59,579 *candis* and six *maons* while in 1849 they amounted to 74,284 *candis* (Pinto 1994: 220). These figures from history

give an indication of the importance of Goan salt to markets in diverse parts of the sub-continent.

According to local statistics, there were 658 salt extractors at Goa, 84 at Daman and 24 in Diu in 1850. Locally produced salt was extensively used in the fishing industry. On days when the catch was abundant, the fishermen found it impossible to dispose of all the fish. As the climatic conditions in India did not permit fish to remain for more than five hours without decaying, the surplus fish was salted and dried. A substantial quantity of salt was required to increase the fertility of the fields and palm groves. In Portuguese India, the cooking of rice and fish demanded the use of much salt. The actual average need of a person was a minimum of 32 lb annually (Pinto 1994: 219, 220).

### **Salt Monopoly**

By a treaty concluded in 1880, the manufacture of salt in Portuguese India was placed under the control and supervision of the British government for a period of twelve years. On the expiry of the first three years, private manufacture was suppressed in all the salt works except those worked by the proprietors themselves under the British agents and those worked on behalf of the British government by the contractors and sub-lessees paid a price to the British government and sold on their own account (Pinto 1996:118).

Sub-lessees had to execute only the repairs of the salt work under their charge, while the contractors duly executed only the petty repairs. All extraordinary repairs of salt work under contractors were to be commissioned by the British agents. Fallow works were also kept in repair (pinto 1996:118).

The British Government not only monitored the production, but also the supply of salt in the Portuguese dominions. Economic historians like Pinto argue that the weaknesses of Portuguese colonialism of the later 19<sup>th</sup> century was revealed from its policy of accepting the Treaty of 1878, allowing British agents in their territory and “empowered them to suppress or cancel the working of a salt-work considered unnecessary or injurious to British interests, to enter and inspect places intended for the storage of salt, to search persons, animals etc., to seize any quantity of salt suspected of being smuggled, to arrest anyone engaged in smuggling activities and even to adopt legal proceedings and penalties in force in British India” (Pinto 1996: 118-120).

By capturing the monopoly of the manufacture and the sale of salt in the Estado da India, the British had taken a calculated step in the direction of safeguarding their interests. Salt was available in the Bombay Presidency and in the native state of Sawantwadi at the rate of two rupees and two annas per maund, inclusive of the tax and the ground rent; but in the nearby Portuguese territories the salt price was as low as one real per pound. Cheap salt from Portuguese India was very much sought after in the British territories and therefore the salt channel between the two dominions was quite active a lucrative source of income. Probably around three lakhs of maunds of salt were being clandestinely admitted into British India annually. This caused an annual loss of about six lakhs of rupees to the British exchequer (ibid 1996: 120).

### **Consequences of the British Salt Monopoly**

The quota of 14 lbs of salt per person was far below subsistence levels in Portuguese Goa, where the cooking of rice and fish demanded using much salt – more

like 32 lbs. Faced with insufficient supply or highly-priced salt, some opted to extract salt from seawater or from silt of sea-water inundated fields. Others abstained from salt, facing health problems like anemia and other diseases.

The British salt monopoly had damaging consequences on the agrarian sector - the main stay of Goan economy - since quite some amount of salt was needed to increase fertility of fields and palm groves. British agents sold salt at prices too costly for farmers to use as manure. Rice production was seriously affected, so cheap rice was brought in from neighboring regions. Comunidades, landlords, fishermen suffered from this impact. Salt robberies were reported (Pinto 1996: 122-3).

Salt played a role in early Goan history too. A standing order (*regimento*) issued to the Salcette Customs in 1619 noted Maratha exchanges with copra, palm sugar, areca nuts and salt produced in Goa. When Shivaji established a salt monopoly in his lands and created salt depots at Manneri and Fatorpa in the vicinity of the Portuguese territory of Goa, it became difficult to find an outlet for the salt which was the main exchange commodity for Goan traders of the time. The Portuguese authorities began compelling the fisher folk of the Maratha territory who came to fish in the rivers of Chapora or Aldona to buy all the salt they required to salt the fish they caught (De Souza 1979: 42). Besides, Sambhaji's invasion in 1683 destroyed the palm-groves and paddy crops of Bardez and salt industry of Salcette (ibid : 43).

After demands came up from what was then the Portuguese territory, salt was allowed to be exported from Goa to the British India of pre-Independence times. It crossed Castle Rock, the railway station close to the border between Portuguese Goa and British India, where the duty on Goan salt was collected. Goan salt was in demand in Belgaum, Karwar and in adjoining Mysore and Nizam ruled areas. It came



into competition with Shiroda in Maharashtra salt in Belgaum and Sanikatta salt in Mysore.

### **Salt Industry in Goa**

As seen above, Goa's salt production has long played a prominent role in the local economy. Salt production was a prosperous local industry in Portuguese India, particularly in Goa. Extracting salt from the saline sea water is today a traditional occupation of many descendants of the salt pan workers who, in the course of the last few centuries, have sustained this industry against all odds.

Nagvenkar (1999) says salt was an important traditional industry, and that Goa's salt production could have continued to play a significant role in the economy of this tiny territory, if certain steps had to be taken at the production, marketing and other fronts.

Among the obstacles that blocked the speedy growth of this industry, the outdated process of production of salt stands out as the most significant factor. Despite favorable natural conditions for the production for salt in Goa, the salt industry in this territory could not prosper on account of the primitive method of production which has survived till modern times with marginal changes incorporated (Nagvenkar 1999: 55, Lobo 1967: 22).

Nagvenkar's (1999) study deals with the Goa, Daman and Diu's balance of trade - the difference in the value of exports and imports of visible commodities only - which was during many points in its history, unfavorable. Exports' value was less than the value of imports. In this context, salt exports had played an important role on the export trade of Goa, Daman and Diu. During the economic blockade of the 1950s too, exports to the Indian Union were totally paralyzed, since trade with Portuguese-ruled

Goa was disallowed. After the year 1961, exports of salt totally stopped. The future of salt turned bleak. Since the main importer at that time was the Indian Union, salt could also not be considered as part of exports since Goa itself became a part of the Indian Union in 1961, and any sales of salt within the rest of India would be considered domestic sales. Besides this aspect though, the entire salt trade with India was in addition stopped. This was unfortunate more so given the fact that after the Independence and Partition, the Kherva mine was allocated to Pakistan, and what was indeed needed was a stepping up of salt production for India.

### **The salt makers of Goa**

The technique of salt extraction in Goa was discovered by primitive man from periodic notices of sea –salt formation on rock and cliffs and encrustations left by receding salt-water on land .The secret of salt making was monopolized by the ‘Shamans’ of the ancestors of Mithgauda community of Goa. Primitive salt works probably began in the late megalithic period in the South Konkan, Goa, Gokarna and Kumta. From these works salt trails were laid out to the ghat areas for marketing surplus salt. Halts on these trails became the salt-camps and later on nuclei of trading post (Mhamai 2000:11).

The salt pans, salt manufacture and the salt industry are all a part and parcel of the reclaimed mangrove areas (Alvares 2002:158).

Salt making is a very ancient occupation for human society. Many in the coastal areas depend on salt making for their livelihood. The Mithgaudas, Gauddis and the Agris were traditionally engaged in salt-making in Goa. Salt making was an inherited occupation, it was mandatory that the descendants of salt makers would stick to the occupation of their ancestors.

The state of Goa entirely depends upon the natural salt, along the refined factory-based salts. Naturally extracted salt is prepared by different jatis in Goa. They are the Mithgaudas, Agris, Gauddis, Bhandaris and the Ageris. There are also different castes among the Christians involved in salt making in Goa, such as the Gauddis in Bardez in the Old Conquests region. The Agris belong to the Shudra category whereas the Gauddi belong to the higher Varna hierarchy of the caste set-up.

Today, in many parts of Goa, there are communities of the descendents of the old salt pan workers. The salt they provided was of superior quality and large quantities would be exported by rail and country craft to the interior hinterland as well as to the coastal regions of India, and beyond the ocean i.e. to parts of Arabia and Africa (Nagvenkar1999).

### **Salt Making Process in Goa**

Being a traditional and labour-intensive industry, salt-making requires very few implements. The heat of the sun and the wind are the prime environmental factors that lead to the formation of salt. In Goa, conventional salt farming is carried out in man-made salt pans, on large, low-lying, *khazan* (riverine reclaimed) shallow land. These areas are located on the bank of estuaries, protected from the action of tides.

In the reservoir (also the heater or the *Tapovanim*) salt water gets heated and is left for heating in the brine. This heated water is then let in the *pikchi agor* or in the actual salt producing pans. The more the area kept for heating, the more is the salt produced. The ratio of the heating area to the salt-pan area is usually 70:30. Salt pans receive saline water from the nearest creek at high tides, via the flood gates or sluice gates. The bottom of this land is laid out perfectly even, and the soil is mostly clay like, and retains the water.

Fields used for salt farming are prepared during November or December, while the actual salt farming process takes place from January till the first showers of rain, sometime in the month of May or June.

The land is not used as salt pans for the rest of the year – as the salt process has to be suspended with the onset of monsoons. During this period, the salt-pans get filled up with rain water and gets submerged or water-logged from the months of June to September. The water level is generally one or two meters above the soil, depending on the amount of rainfall received. Some of these salt pans are used for pisciculture of fish, mollusks and crustaceans. After the monsoon, in the month of October, the waters are drained (Fernandes 2006: 53).

### **Various Stages in Salt Making**

- During the month of December, water is sucked out from the submerged fields (*agor*) with the help of a pump (*bhom*) which is hired every season at the cost of Rs. 2000 for 24 hours. During this period, a big pipe (*mus*) is inserted where the water is let in from the rivulet into the submerged fields. The pipe in the past was made out of a tree (*maadi*) but recently people have started using readymade cement pipes. The pipe is then blocked with a *ghuddo* made out of hay and clay like soil (*thonn* and *chikol*) for 4-8 days and the rivulet is opened. Even before this, however, the first and foremost task in the beginning of the salt activity is some repair of the *bundh*, then followed by digging or ploughing of the salt pans or *Agor*. Then the pans are leveled by stamping which is done with the help of “*saalon*” It is an instrument made of teak wood. It helps in leveling the salt pans and to collect the salt.

- Then follows a process of putting in place the bundhs (*mero*). Two persons prepare them with the help of a *fhor* (*fhor marta*). The first stage wherein the bunds are being leveled and the bunds are formed. A third person does the *poshevop*, a work which involves the bunds being molded into a particular shape.
- The pans are levelled by stamping to make the bed flat and solid. The extra clay-like soil is removed with the help of the *fhor*, and the pans are levelled. This soil is beaten hard and smooth during the preparation of land for salt farming. The water in the reservoir (*tapovanim*), gets warmed in the sun's rays, and begins to evaporate, causing the formation of brine or water saturated with salts.
- Now all is ready for saline water from the adjoining river to be let into the first bed (*caaw* or *caal*). Water is let in through one of the rows of three beds in the first two beds and each day in the *podshing* it gets heated up.
- After being let into the second bed (*podshing*) it is let through an opening from the second bed (*daaw*) to the third bed to a high level place (*antni*). The water is let through a (*paall*) which is a narrow passage in one corner of the salt pans. This passage is connected to the other salt pans. Through this, water is provided for each salt pan.
- It takes roughly about 22 days of some forceful stirring during which time the *chikol* (sandy clay/loam) in the salt bed is raked up. Meanwhile the natural process of evaporation goes on. As part of this, the teeth shaped tool (*daanto*) is used to mix the mud. The layer visible at the top is called the froth (*sai*) (see photo). After that, a slightly smaller tooth shaped tool (*nivddo*) is used to level the pan, which now consists of soft salt. (See photo)

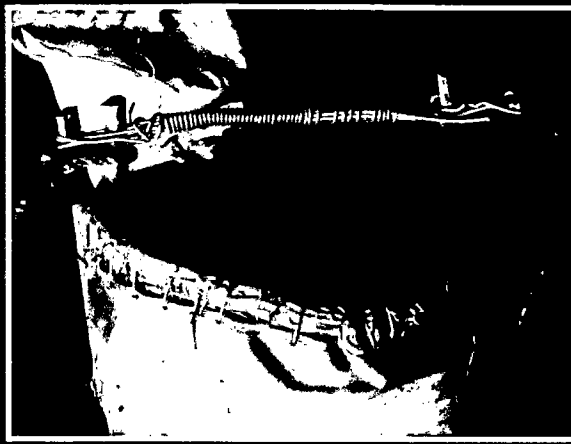
- At this stage of operations, some amount of salt which was stored in the hut (*maangor* or *khop*) is taken and sprinkled on the layer which looks like salt in the salt pans.(see photo). In some cases it is necessary to sprinkle two or three times.
- All one has to do now is to let in water from the second bed into the third bed each day. Depending on the heat of the sun, the water from the third bed dries up by evening and white crystals of salt are ready for the picking. (See photo).
- This layer of crystals is created by gently pulling a flat shovel (*fhoem*). (See photo).
- Then the place is dried up and water has to be let in for four to five days so that salt hardens. Then it has to be turned rapidly with the *fhoem* (*bhauri*).
- Salt crystals are collected with the help of a shovel and rinsed with the brine water and later, sometimes kept in a place at the intersection of four bunds, whereas in Agarvaddo it is kept on the centre of the bund. These newly formed crystals are kept till the next morning.
- These crystals are left overnight to dry and the next day they are piled into the big heap just off the salt pans with the help of a “*pattlo*” or “*pahllo* (a basket made of bamboo which is used to carry the salt from the salt pans.)
- This place where the salt crystals are collected is called *fhoear* or as *foyaa* in Arpora. (See photo).
- The crystals are left overnight to dry (*Nistovpaak*) and, the next day morning, they are piled into a big heap (*raas*) in the salt pans on the *bund*. This salt is carried in a bamboo basket (*pahllo*). Actually it takes roughly five hours for the formation of the salt.

- The local salt is now ready for consumption. Throughout the entire process great care is taken to maintain cleanliness and nobody is allowed to step into the pans with footwear on. In the olden days, the salt was transported to the nearby villages by bullock carts and sometimes through the use of canoes (*vhodien*) but later it was transported with the help of the railways to the neighboring states.

In the salting pans, brine soon begins to deposit salt, in the form of crystalline crusts, which is either collected with special wooden rakes as soon as they form, or allowed to accumulate at the bottom, until they form masses of salt several inches in thickness. These masses are then broken up and piled as small mounds at the intersection of the pans.

This process is then followed by the purification of salt. The method used consists in simply washing the crude salt with concentrated brine, which removes impurities of salt. The crude salt thus obtained, is collected in bamboo baskets and dumped as heaps on the *bundhs*, in a process called *uttorni kaddop*. Finally, the extracted salt is transferred in the store house called the "*Khop*". This is a store house made of palm leaves specially to store the salt, before it is sold to the people who come to buy in the salt pans or it is sold in the market. In Agarvaddo this store house is referred to as *Maangar*.

This salt extracted for the first few days at the start of the season contains impurities like sand and mud particles, and is therefore not used for consumption purpose. It is used as manure for coconut trees, for the preservation of dry fish or in chemical factories in the industrial estates.



A water pump or 'ghudgo' made of bamboo and ropes that is used to remove the excess water from the salt-pans. It is lifted by two persons, one on either side



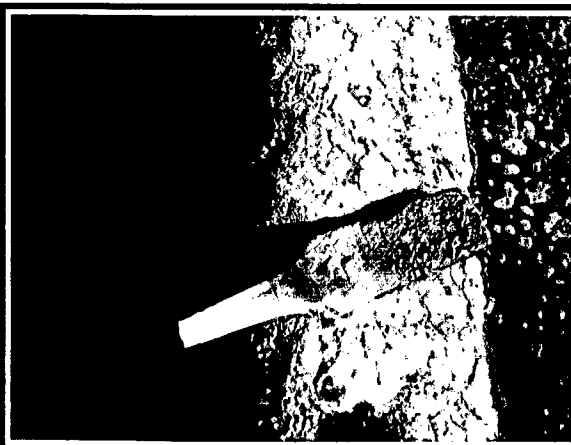
A plug made of hay or a cement-bag (ghuddo) is used to block a leak of water entering into the salt-pan. This is opened or closed depending on whether the tide is flowing in or out



Building the 'mers' (separating walls between salt pans). These are built to compartmentalise the large pans



The pans must be levelled by stamping



The petnem, used very frequently in Agarvaddo to smoothen the dividing walls ('mero') of the salt pans

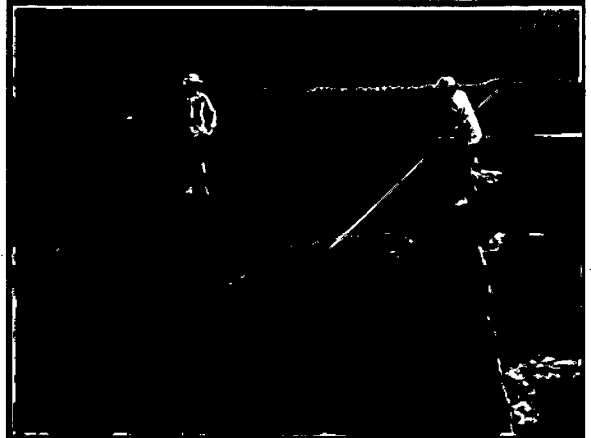


Stirring the salt pans. A teeth-shaped tool (daanto) is used to mix the marshy soil (chikol)





Old salt is sprinkled in the pan at the start of the season to promote the growth of new salt



Layering of the crystals done with a long, flat 'sallan'. Every morning, the salt needs to be raked, and by evening, some amount of salt is ready for collection



Water is let in and out of the pans at the right time



Gathering salt crystals at Arpora



The 'nivddo', used to remove the salt, after it is accumulated in the centre/intersection of the 'bund'



Salt formed in the pans at Agarvaddo



Salt... just harvested



The 'mangor'/'khop'/'bimutt grass' where the salt is stored after harvesting in Agarvaddo, Arpora and Batim respectively



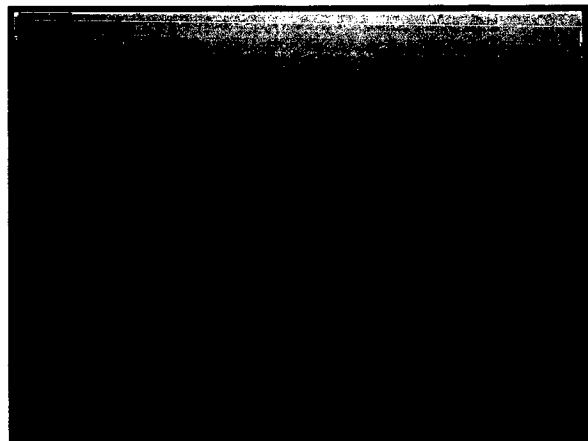
Salt being packed in sacks, prior to selling in Agarvaddo



Salt being transported to the other villages from Batim



Repairing the broken bund at Agarpoim



Tidal variations occur everyday within a limit of 56 minutes, the sea water can be let in/out when the rocks are seen in the sea



Photos show the salt-making activities in others parts of Goa (Santa Cruz, Talaulim, Mercas, Cavelossim, Nerul) and the rest of India (Mumbai and Maharashtra). Also seen in the photos are beaumameter, used to read the density of sea-water and its ability to make quality salt; and Deputy Salt Superintendent of India Mr. Pansurang Kamat

Salt is then graded as follows: (i) market grade, for sale for human consumption, used as food seasoning; (ii) preservative grade, a lesser impure salt used for salting of fish, on account of its tendency to keep them moist; (iii) fertilizer grade, for fruit-yielding trees, as coconuts, mango, jackfruit etc. (Fernandes 2006: 54).

Labour is an important factor of salt production. In the salt panning season, the work usually starts at the early stages, where the nature of work is more tedious in the month of December to February. The laborers have to put in a hard physical work during these months. But once the actual salt production takes place in the month of February, work is much lighter than the early stages from November to February where the work is more tedious.

The brine on the salt-pans is renewed daily, or every two days, depending on the rate of evaporation taking place; whilst the reservoir as well as basins are constantly supplied with fresh brine. The concentration of the brines (“*mother liquors*”) in the salting tables is carefully watched, and their density never allowed to exceed a certain level, as otherwise a deposit of sulfate of magnesia (Epsom salt) would be formed, rendering the salt impure. In case this happens, then the *mother liquors* are allowed to flow out as a run-off, three or four times during the season (Fernandes 2006: 54).

In times past, bullock carts were used to transport salt to the neighboring villages and to the market. The seller was called as ‘*Ghaddiakar*’, or bullock-cart driver (see photo). At present salt is transported with the help of pickups. The local people buy it from the ‘*agor*’ whereas it is transported for sale in neighboring villages by a pickup, or even via a bullock-cart sometimes maintaining the earlier tradition. Throughout the entire process, great care is taken to maintain cleanliness and nobody is allowed to step into the pans with footwear on. If they do so, it is believed that their foot will get burnt because it is very hot; in their words “*bakar kashi bazun eta*” (roasts like a *chapatti*).

Salt farming that is carried in Goa is simple, traditional, and highly economical. Among all the salt pans the researcher visited, the last one she came across is one known as Adso Agor situated in Nerul in Bardez belonging to the landlord Govind Usno Bhobe from Nerul, a practicing lawyer. Due to the renovations and improvements that he has made in the salt pan, Advocate Bhobe says salt production and its quality have tremendously increased. He had converted the small pans into big ones by removing the muddy ridges (*mero*) existing between them. This he said (personal interview) was done to minimize the number of small pans. Lot of

time is wasted by the salt makers who go all around the pans in order together or collect the crystallized salt formed in the pan. He converted seven or eight smaller pans in a row into only two large pans and thereby not only increased the production but also saved time. He has systematically removed all the mud ridges (*mero*) existing between the *tapovanim* (the bed for accumulating the heating of the salt water) in order to make beds of water (*tapovanim*) and thereby he claimed that he increased the salt production by 15% to 20%. As a result, this innovative change has helped him to produce 500 tones of salt annually, according to the informant.

Salt produced in Agarvaddo is brownish grey and there is a clay loam, while the salt in Arpora is of reddish color with a muddy texture and from Batim has brownish black salt with the texture of clay loam. At present, the findings of the study indicate that there are no records maintained by any government authorities in Goa about then estimates of salt production or the present day salt production in Goa. Hence the contribution of the Goan salt industry cannot be ascertained with any measure of certainty.

### **Goa Assembly debates (1964 onwards)**

To track possible discussions on this issue in the Legislative Assembly of Goa, the researcher went through the legislative debates covering the period of 1964 to 1987 (when Goa was part of the Union Territory with Daman and Diu) and from 1987 till date, covering the post-Statehood period.

On April 6, 1964 the member of the legislative assembly (MLA) from Diu said that technical guidance to the salt producers was needed to be given on the basis of cooperatives.

On March 20, 1964, the issue of financial assistance was discussed and salt came under item No. 63, wherein three units were given financial assistance.

Chief Minister Dayanand Bhandarkar stressed in the question and answer(s) session of April 6, 1964 that in order to give technical guidance to the salt cooperatives in Diu, the Government of India had posted a Salt Inspector in Diu.

A resolution was proposed by M.L.A. Orlando Sequeira Lobo dated March 23, 1968 regarding the appointment of a committee of experts to study the problems of the salt producers with an aim to improve the salt industry and expanding the scope of employment in the union territory of Goa, Daman and Diu. Mr Sequeira Lobo said that if this was done at some or the other stage, the salt industry in Goa would have flourished.

His aim was to propose a resolution: To improve the quality of salt produced to boost export of salt to other states and to provide the necessary technical and financial assistance to salt producers. With regard to this issue, Speaker N.S. Fugro suggested that a government advisor be appointed for salt production. In the year 2008, M.L.A Mrs. Victoria Fernandes of Santa Cruz constituency - an area which includes salt pans too - argued in favour of assistance to the Mitagars, saying they should be protected and assisted and the damaged embankments should be repaired. In 1988, the member of The Legislative Assembly Mrs. Victoria Fernandes organized a committee of the Traditional Salt Producers of Goa for the first time in Goan history and formed the All Goa Salt Producers Action Committee to highlight the problems faced by Traditional salt Industry involving more than ten thousand salt workers as a result of which the state government invited experts from Gujarat to prepare a report on Goa's salt industry. There was also salt makers committee in Agarvaddo called as the Pernem Mith Utpadak Sangha for assistance of salt producers of Pernem. From

the above, it would appear that the salt issue has figured only infrequently, and on a few occasions, in the Goa assembly.

### **Salt, an industry or part of agriculture in Goa?**

Salt as considered by the salt makers of Goa is a part of agricultural operations. But the fact is that it is not. This is a delicate matter, as it could have implications for tenancy relations within existing salt-pans.

The question of importance is whether salt-pans would be covered under the Goa, Daman and Diu Agricultural Tenancy Act, 1964. This issue has been exhaustively, elaborately and finally settled by the Supreme Court of India by the Division Bench in the case of Dharangadhara Chemical Works Ltd V/S State of Saurashtra and others reported in AIR 1957 Supreme Court Page 264.

Salt pans do not come within the ambit of the provisions of Agricultural Tenancy Act as they are specifically excluded from the definition of agriculture, allied pursuits, Garden and land etc.

‘Agriculture’ has been defined as including horticulture and raising of food crops, grass or garden produce, but does not include **allied pursuits**. “**Allied pursuits**” has been defined as rearing or maintaining plough bulls, breeding of livestock, dairy farming and poultry farming etc. Garden has been defined as land used primarily for growing coconut trees, areca nut trees, cashew trees or mango trees and “Land” has been defined as land which is used for agriculture.

This issue is of much importance, especially because salt pans are surrounded on all sides by protective bunds and embankments. Besides, the salt pans are sometimes used for fish-cultivation during the monsoons, giving a direct practical relevance to this debate.

Doubts had been raised in many quarters whether the protective bunds and embankments all around the salt pans can be considered as agricultural land and the salt pans as a whole should be brought within the purview of Agricultural Land.

As observed, it is very important to note that protective bunds are integral part of salt pans without which salt pans cannot exist. Besides, area of bunds form a small part of land in proportion to the actual salt pan area under the extraction of salt. However, the full bench of Supreme Court in the judgment referred to above held that the salt makers are workmen and they come under Industrial Dispute Act, 1947 holding that the extraction from the salt pan is an industry and the salt extractors employed do the work in the industry.

The Supreme Court judges have further held that there exists a relationship between the employer and the employee; in the Employer there exist a right to supervise and control the work done by the servant (salt extractor). So, the Industrial Tribunal came to the conclusion that the Agris are not an Independent Contractor but Workmen and judges of the Supreme Court in the above judgment endorsed the decision of the Industrial Tribunal.

In one such case that came up in Goa, the landlord argued that salt was an industry while the tenant contended that it was part of agricultural operations. This case was in Batim. The matter reached the court in the year 1978 and a decision remained pending till 2001. After twenty years, the landlord won the case as per the Supreme Court judgment of 1957. Salt pans are not included in the agricultural land since they are manufacturing lands. In the fields, paddy is grown so the product is not converted but in the salt-pans the sea water gets converted from sea water to salt, hence it is included as manufacturing. Ironically, in spite of salt being an industry, the state of the salt industry has only worsened over time (AIR 1957 Supreme Court



Judgment by Bhagwati Venkatrama Ayyar Pg.264, S.K. Das & Govinda Menon Civil Appeal No. 85 of 1956).

### Salt Pans and Salt Production Industry in Goa

The table below indicates the deteriorating condition of salt pans and salt production in Goa. This is reflected both in terms of the shrinking number of villages actively producing salt and also the declining number of salt pans.

**Table 3.1**

#### The Deteriorating Conditions of Salt Industries situated in the Khazan Land Areas of Goa

Year	Taluka	No. of Villages Producing Salt	No. of Salt Pans	Area Under Salt Pans	Total Production
1876	Pernem	5	21	40	3000
1881	Pernem	5	19	35	2700
1891	Pernem	5	16	28	2200
1961	Pernem	3	10	18	1500
1991	Pernem	2	9	16	1000
1876	Bardez	8	64	110	8500
1881	Bardez	8	64	110	8000
1891	Bardez	8	61	106	7700
1961	Bardez	5	50	93	7500
1991	Bardez	3	30	60	5000

Year	Taluka	No. of Villages Producing Salt	No. of Salt Pans	Area Under Salt Pans	Total - Production
1876	Tiswadi	11	104	260	18000
1881	Tiswadi	11	83	230	16800
1891	Tiswadi	11	80	224	16500
1961	Tiswadi	9	70	197	15000
1991	Tiswadi	5	45	108	9000
1876	Salcette	12	197	210	14000
1881	Salcette	12	164	155	10500
1891	Salcette	12	111	120	8500
1961	Salcette	8	90	103	7000
1991	Salcette	3	35	55	3000

Note: The figures for area are in hectares and for production in metric tons. Production figures are reasonable estimates only on the basis of production technique, season and salt content of feed water.

Source: Unpublished research data of Nandakumar Kamat on the Economics and cultural history of Salt Industry of Goa, Konkan and North Kanara.

In Goa the salt industry is suffering from a situation of long neglect. This is evident from the fact that there has been a consistent and overall decline in the salt pans in all areas of Goa leading to a further decline in the salt production and salt makers of Goa respectively. Telaulim in Salcette was the highest salt producing village in Goa; however all the salt pans in this village have become defunct. At present Batim village is the highest salt producing village in Goa. In Agarvaddo more than sixty families of Agarvaddo derive their livelihood from Salt-production. (<http://www.peacefulsociety.org/env/salt.htm>). But now out of the twelve salt pans in

the village only four are presently used for salt production and four are practically damaged.

There are many factors for the decline of the salt pans in Goa. Main factors are due to lack of availability of labour, destruction of outer protective embankment and sluice gates (*manos*), salt pans used for pisciculture, tourism, decline in the salinity of the water in the area- as a result, there is no yield of salt etc.

Survey maps of the salt producing villages of Goa also depict this decline of salt producing areas. The Land Survey Department had updated these village maps from the year 1967 to 1974. Different village was updated in different year. These village maps were prepared by the researcher with the help of talathis, sarpanchas, and secretaries of the village panchayats.

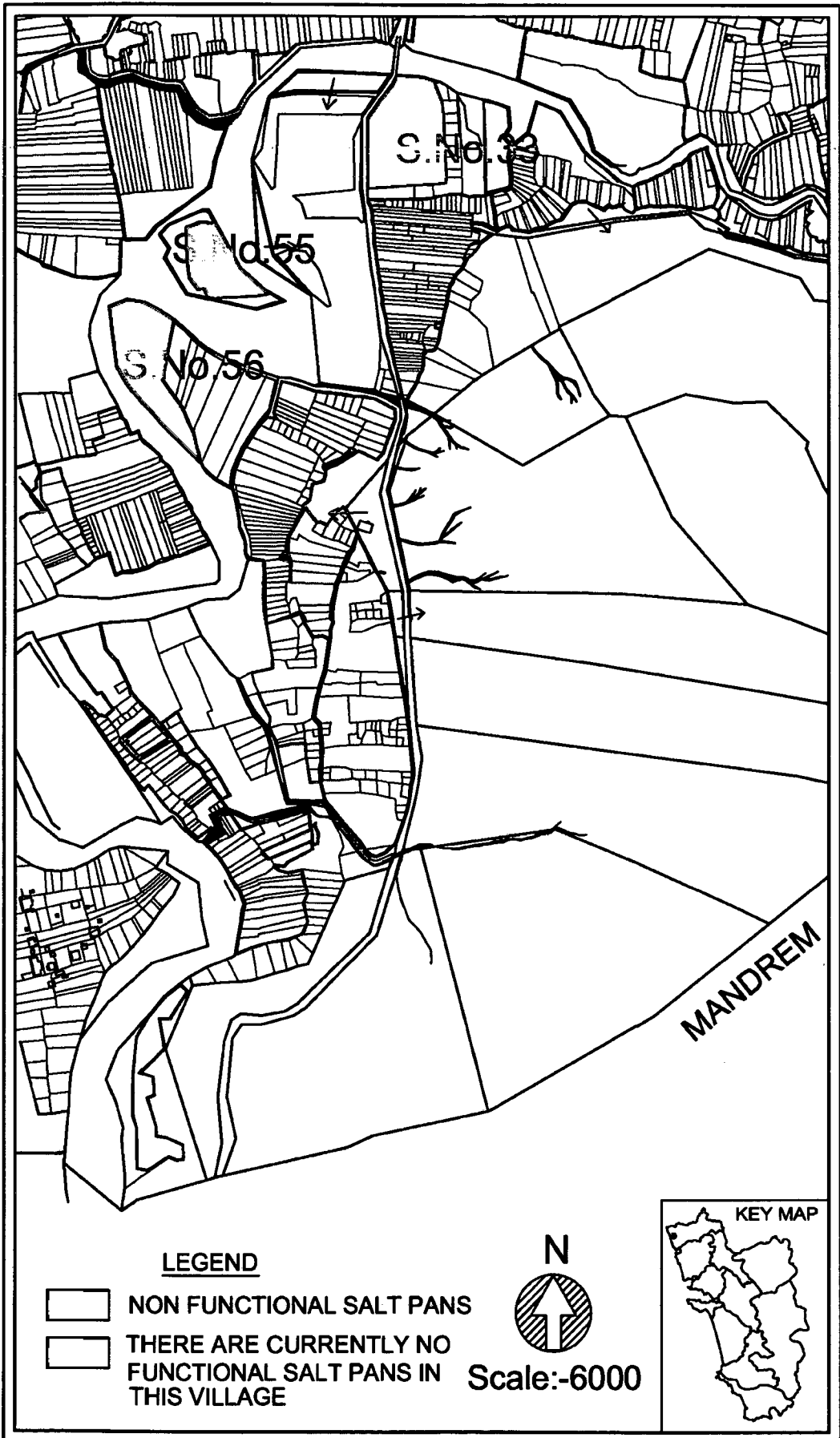
Salt makers of Goa who are into salt making and those that have left the business of the occupation of salt making were also consulted. In some cases like the Santa Cruz and Mercedes villages the salt pan area was deleted from the village panchayat area records and was included in the ODP (outline development plan). Some influential members of the village had also to be contacted with regard to the mapping. The succeeding chapters will consist of write ups of each of the three salt-making villages covered according to the scheme of research study described in the introductory chapter.

In the chapter on Batim, there will be a separate section on the migrant workers from Karnataka, who form part of this study. Where the village consists of different religious groups with substantial differences in social life, these will be highlighted separately. The process of salt making is almost the same in all the three villages studied, and so this aspect of salt making process will be taken up in the common chapter which will be dealt with after the three.

# Map No. 3.3 PALIEM: Salt Pans



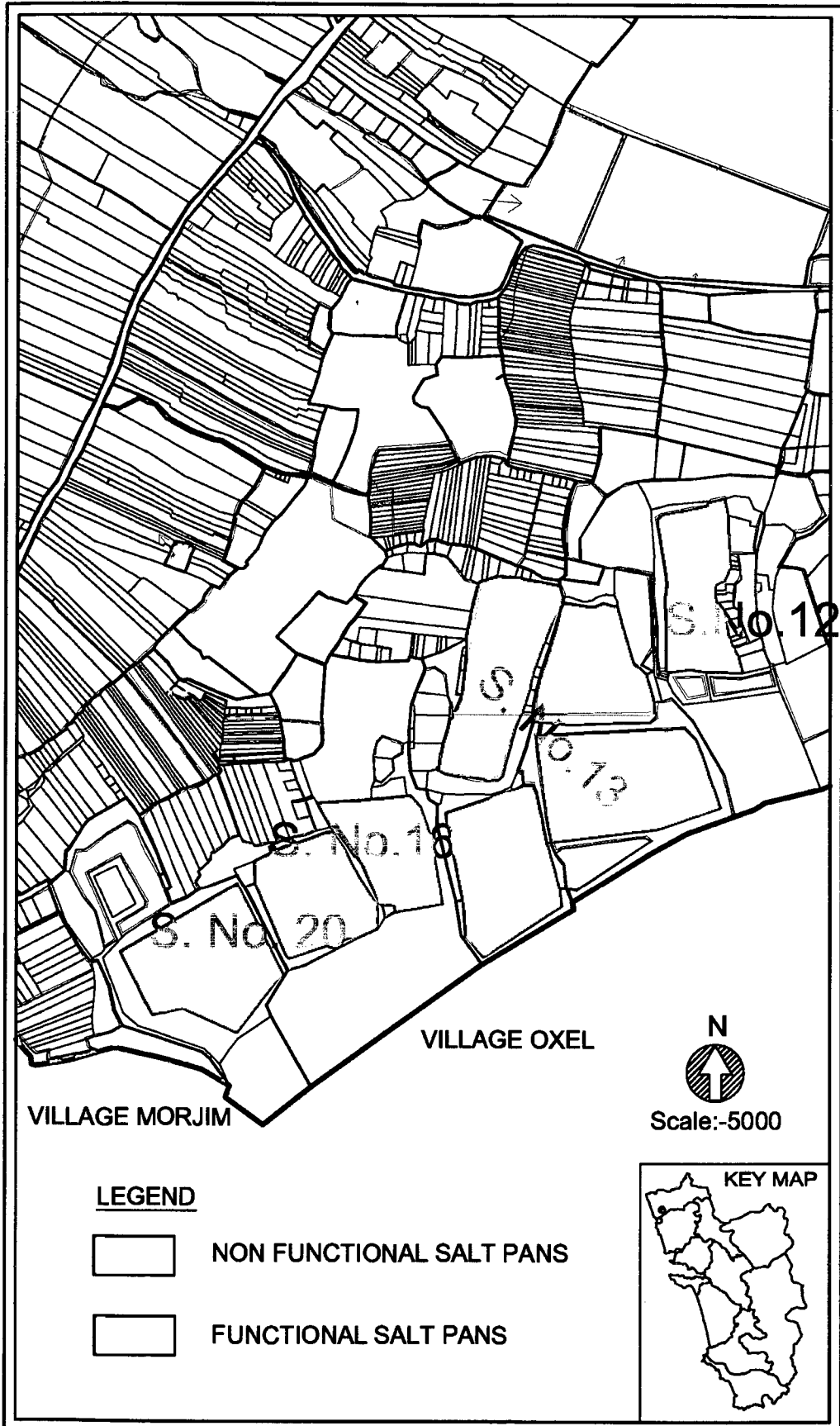
Map No.3.4  
ARAMBOL: Salt Pans



# Map No.3.5 CORGAO: Salt Pans



# Map No. 3.6 AGARVADDO: Salt pans



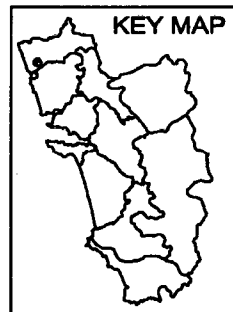
**LEGEND**



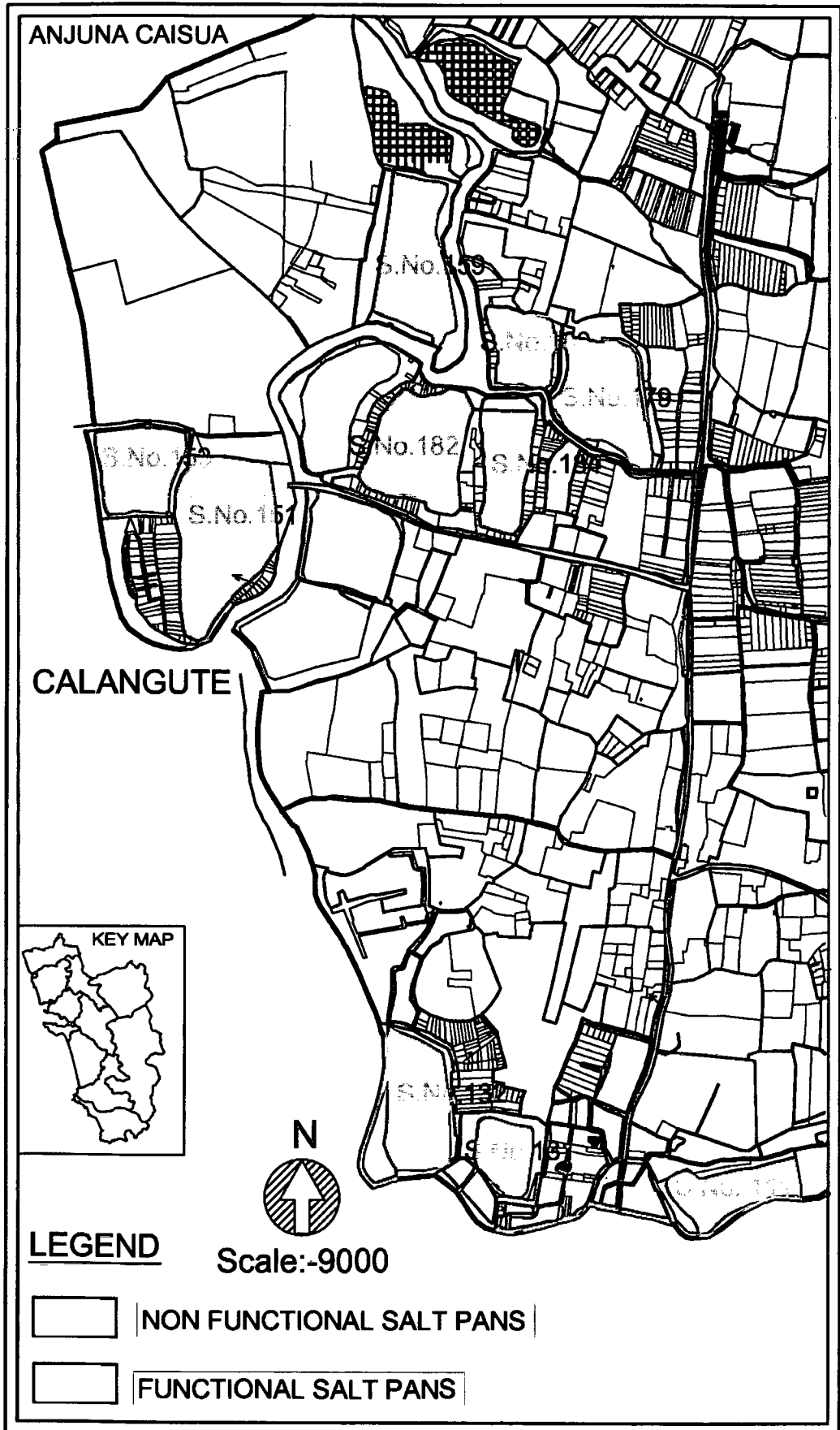
NON FUNCTIONAL SALT PANS



FUNCTIONAL SALT PANS

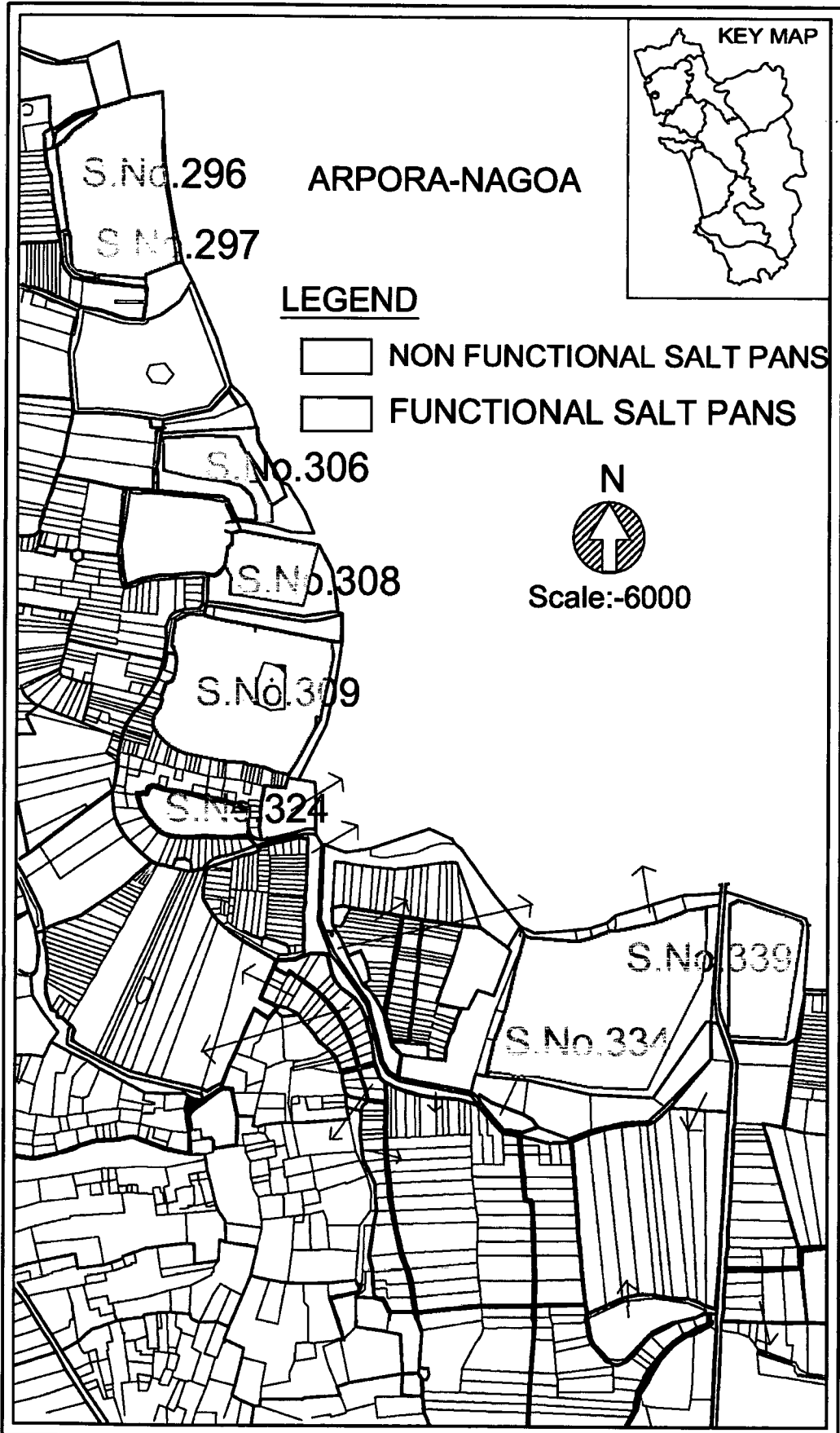


# Map No. 3.7 ARPORA: Salt Pans

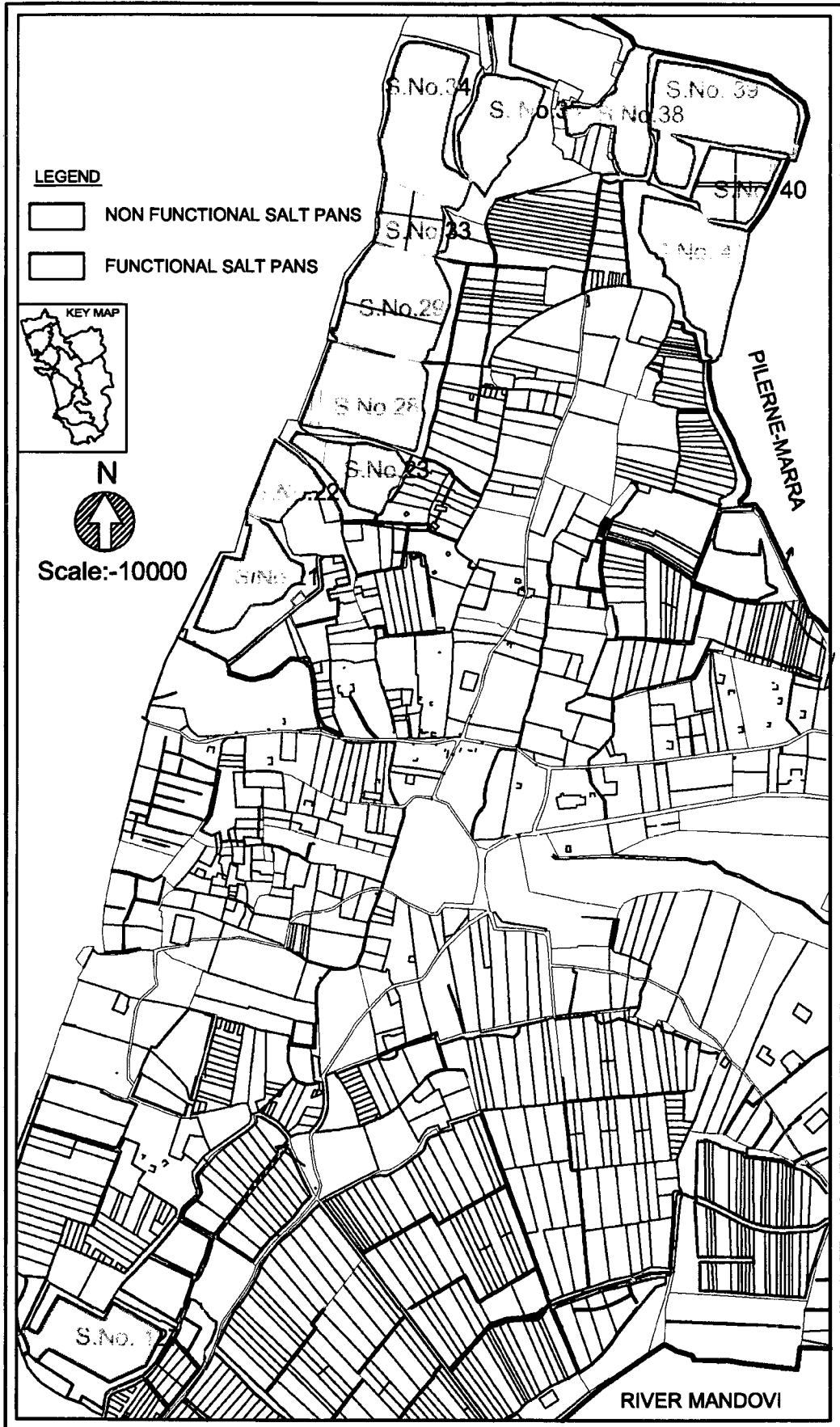




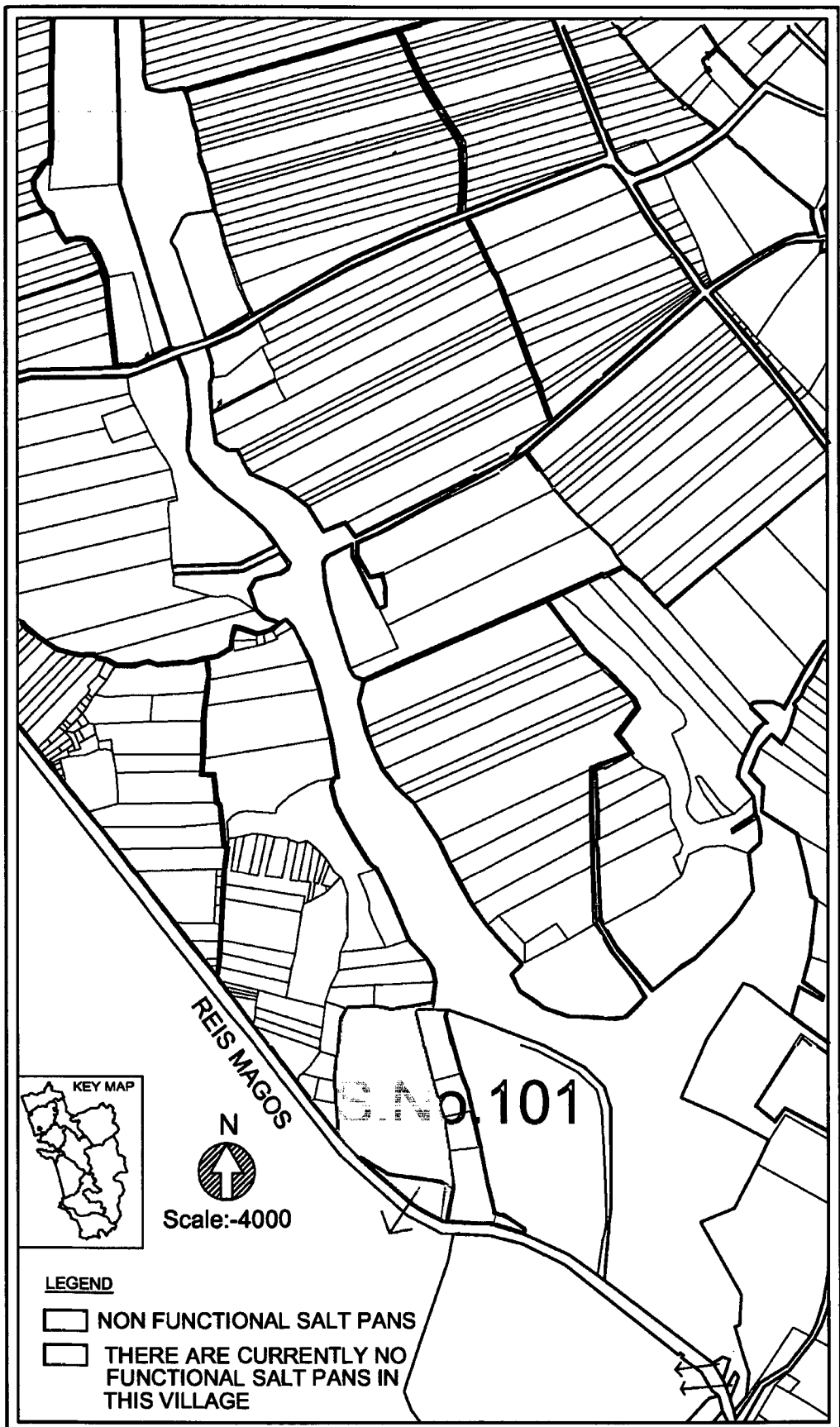
# Map No. 3.8 CALANGUTE: Salt Pans



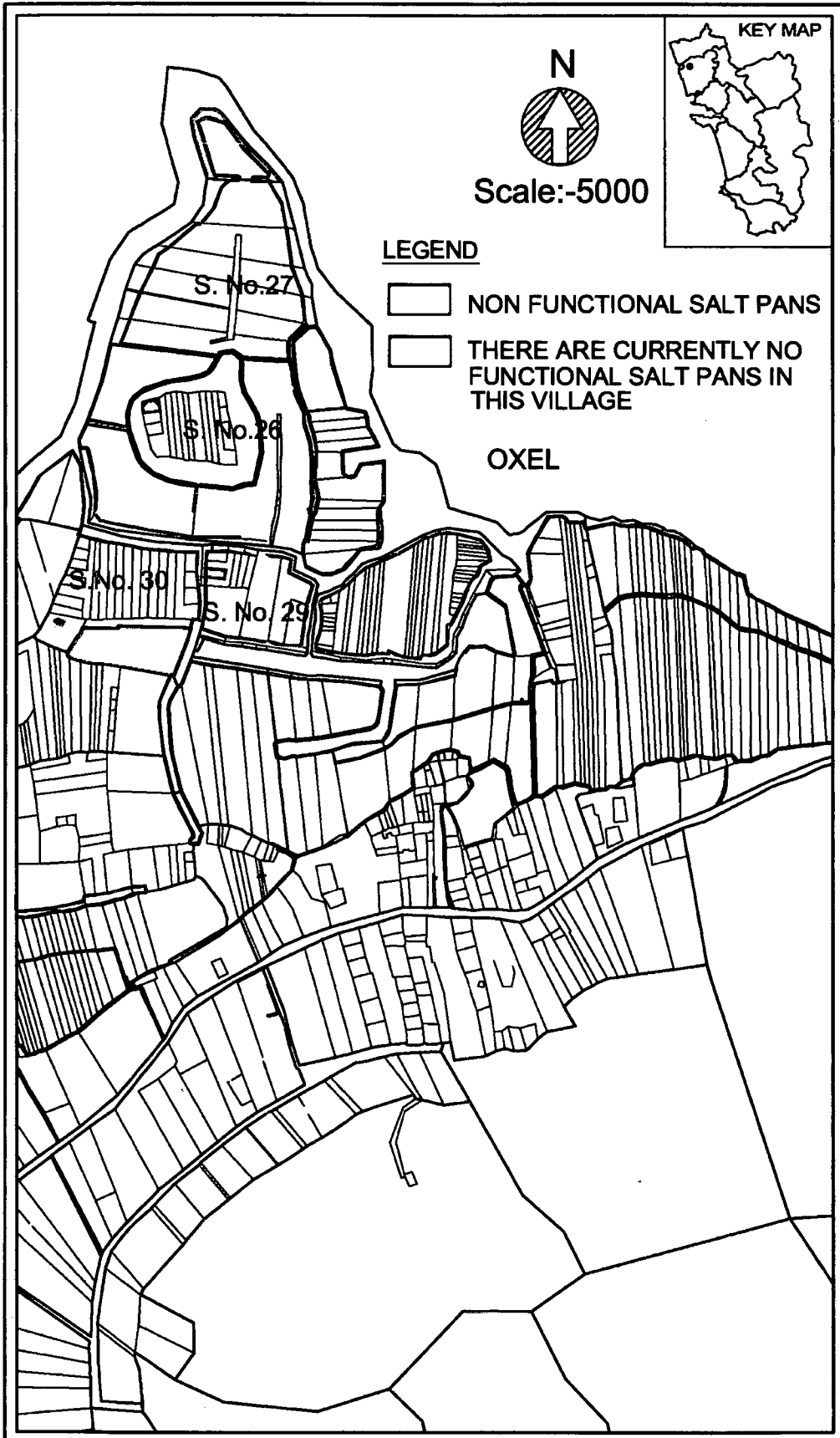
# Map No. 3.9 NERUL: Salt Pans



# Map No.3.10 PILERNE: Salt Pans



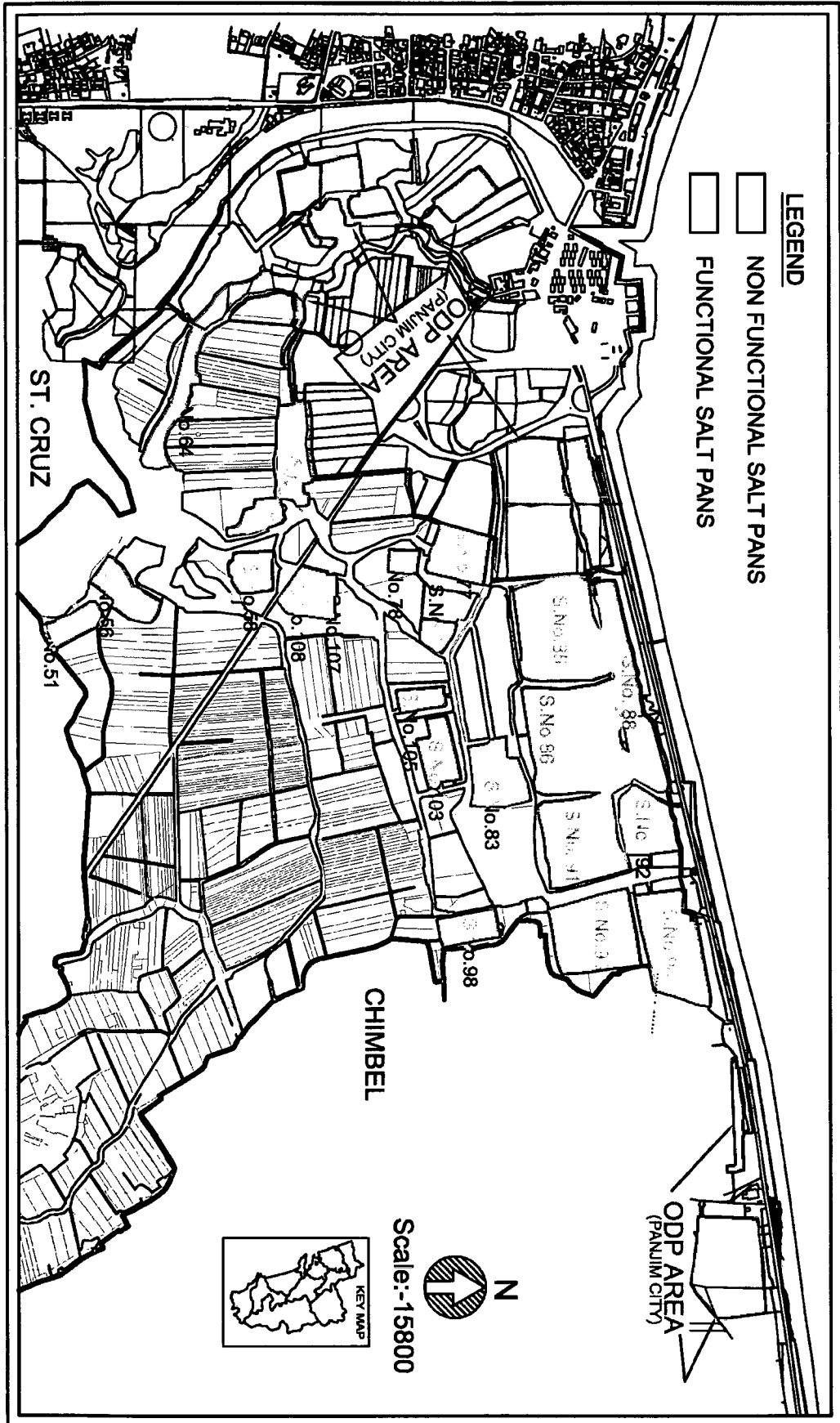
# Map No. 3.11 MARRA: SaltPans



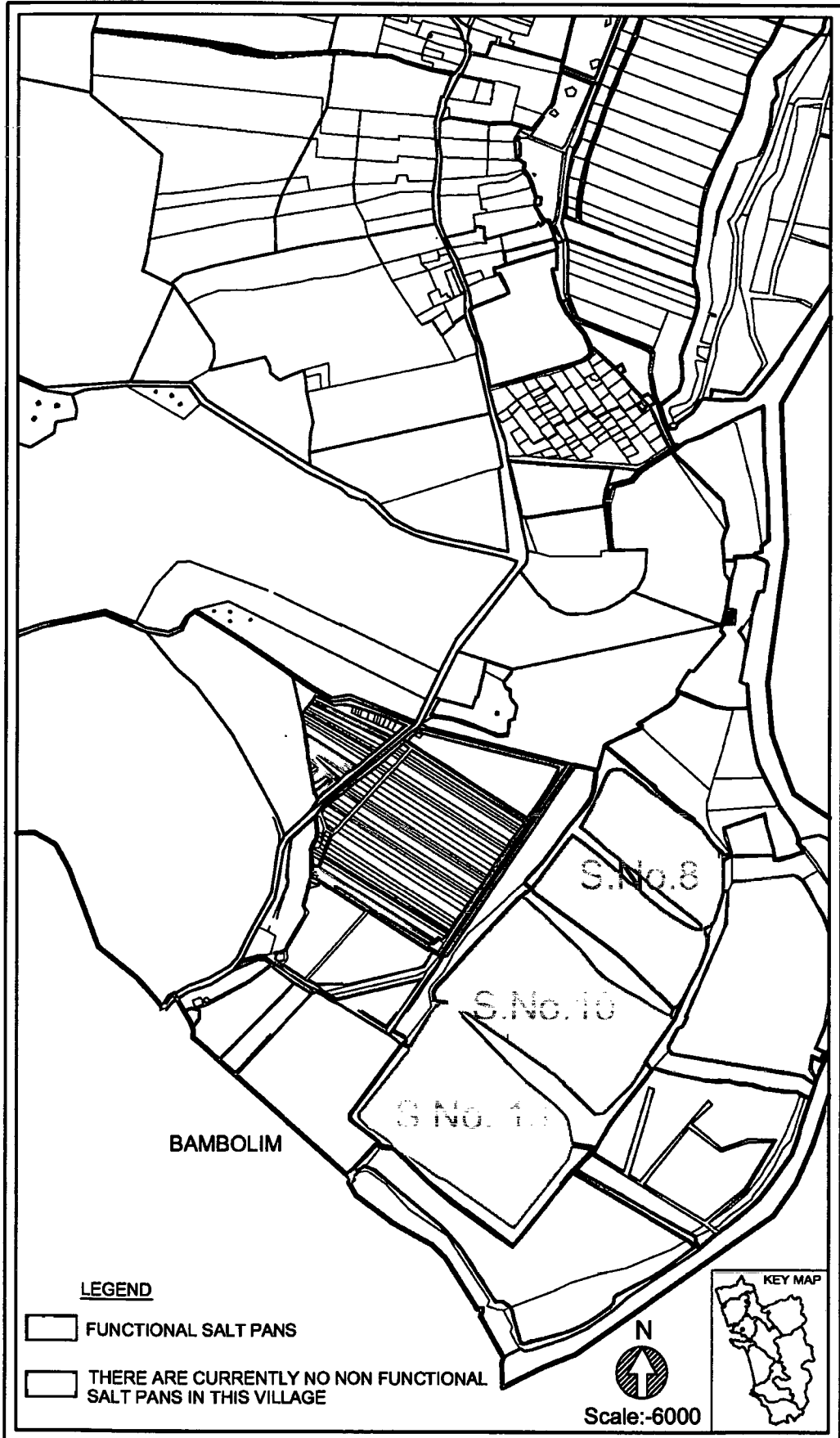
Map No. 3.12  
CALAPUR (ST. CRUZ): Salt Pans



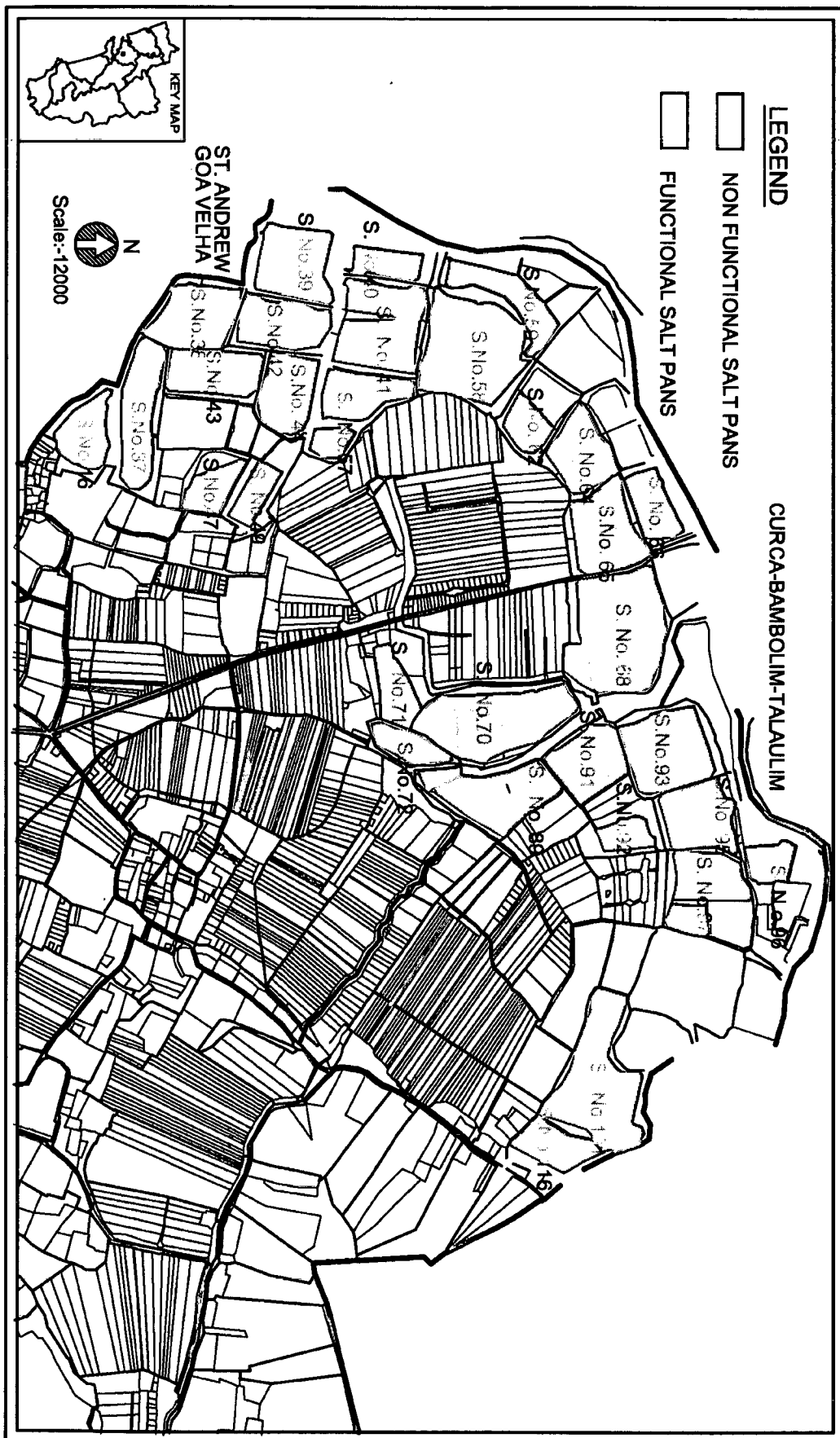
Map No.3.13  
MERCES: Salt Pans



# Map No. 3.14 CURCA: Salt Pans

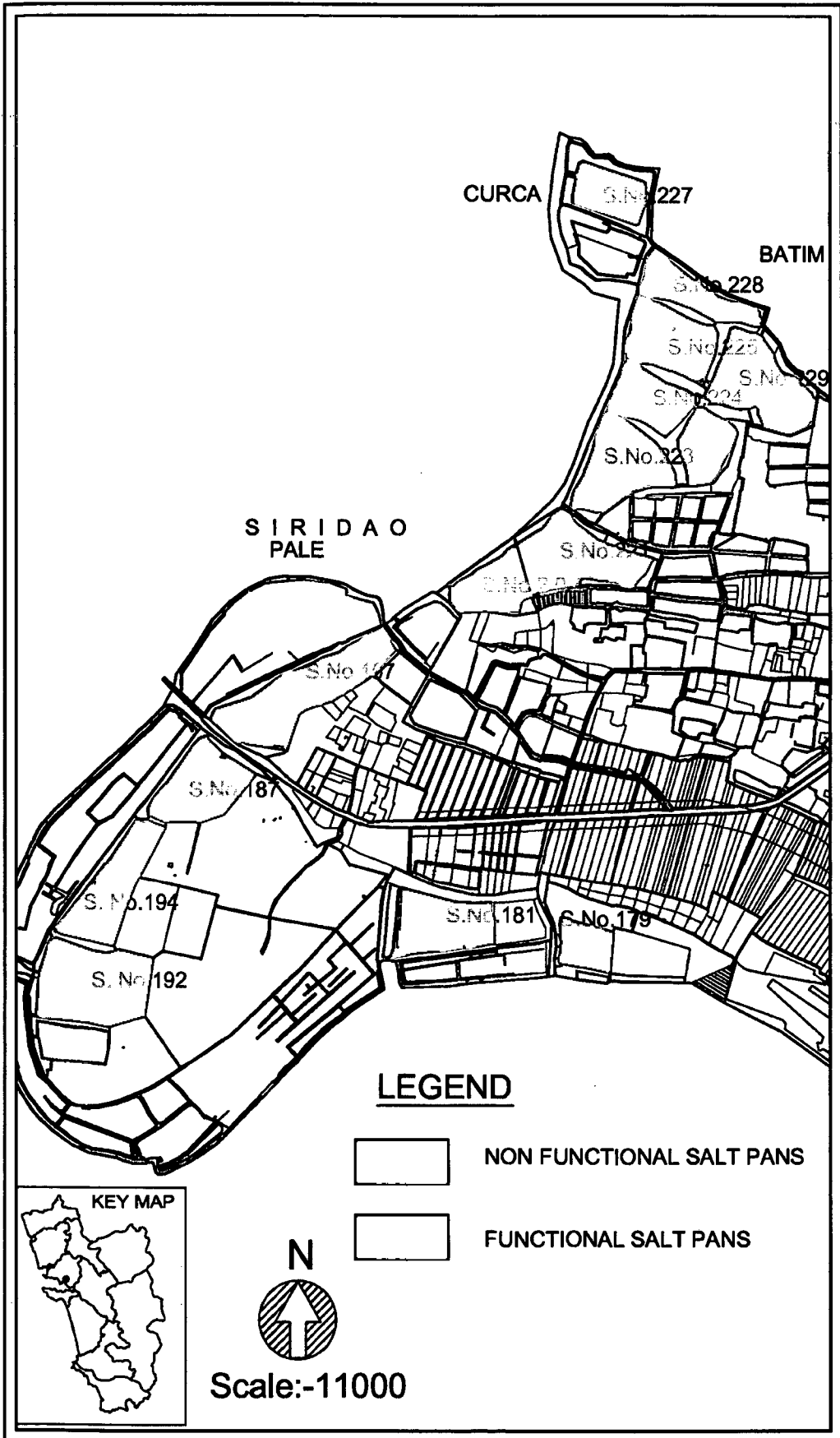


# Map No. 3.15 BATIM: Salt Pans

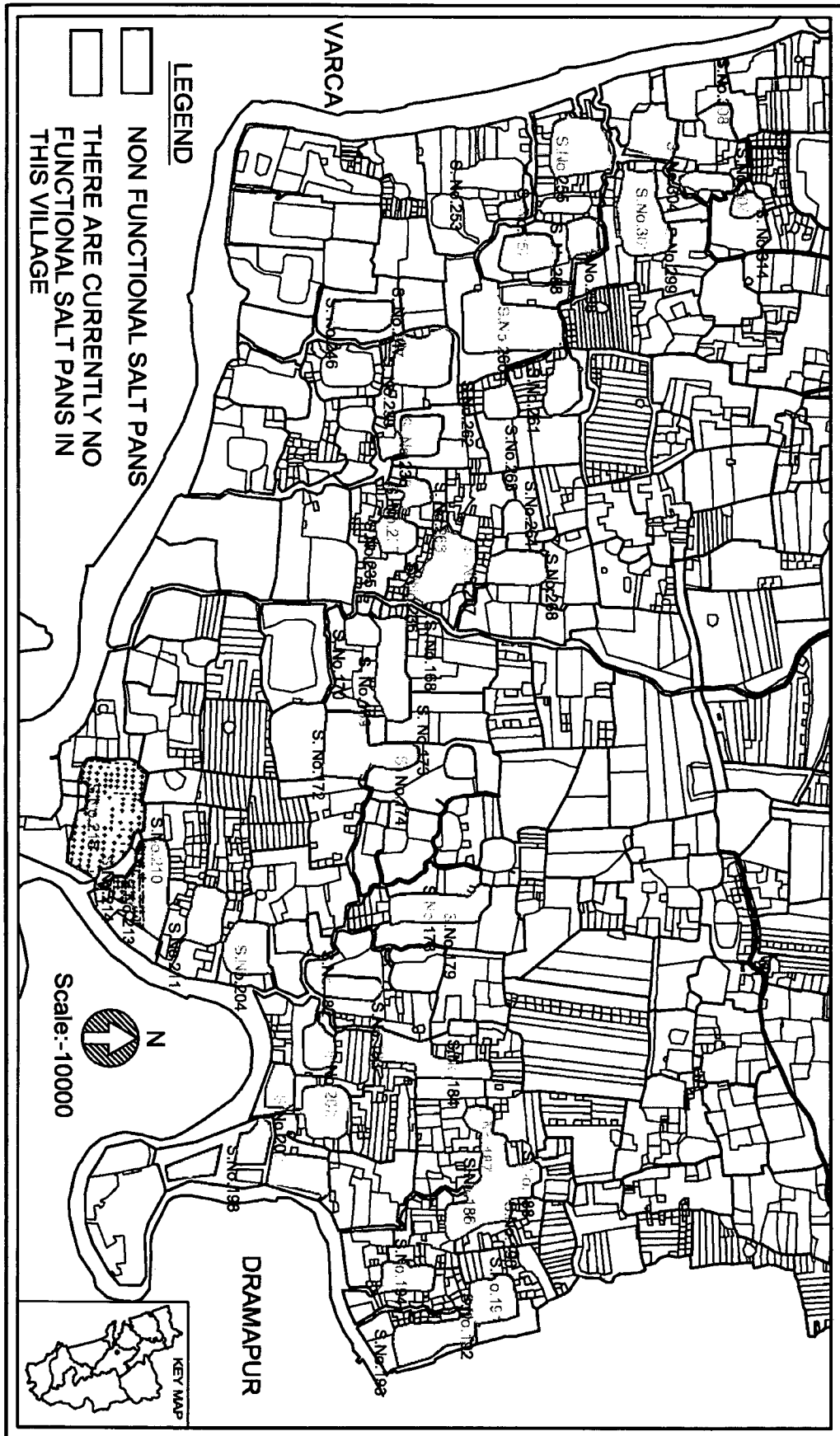




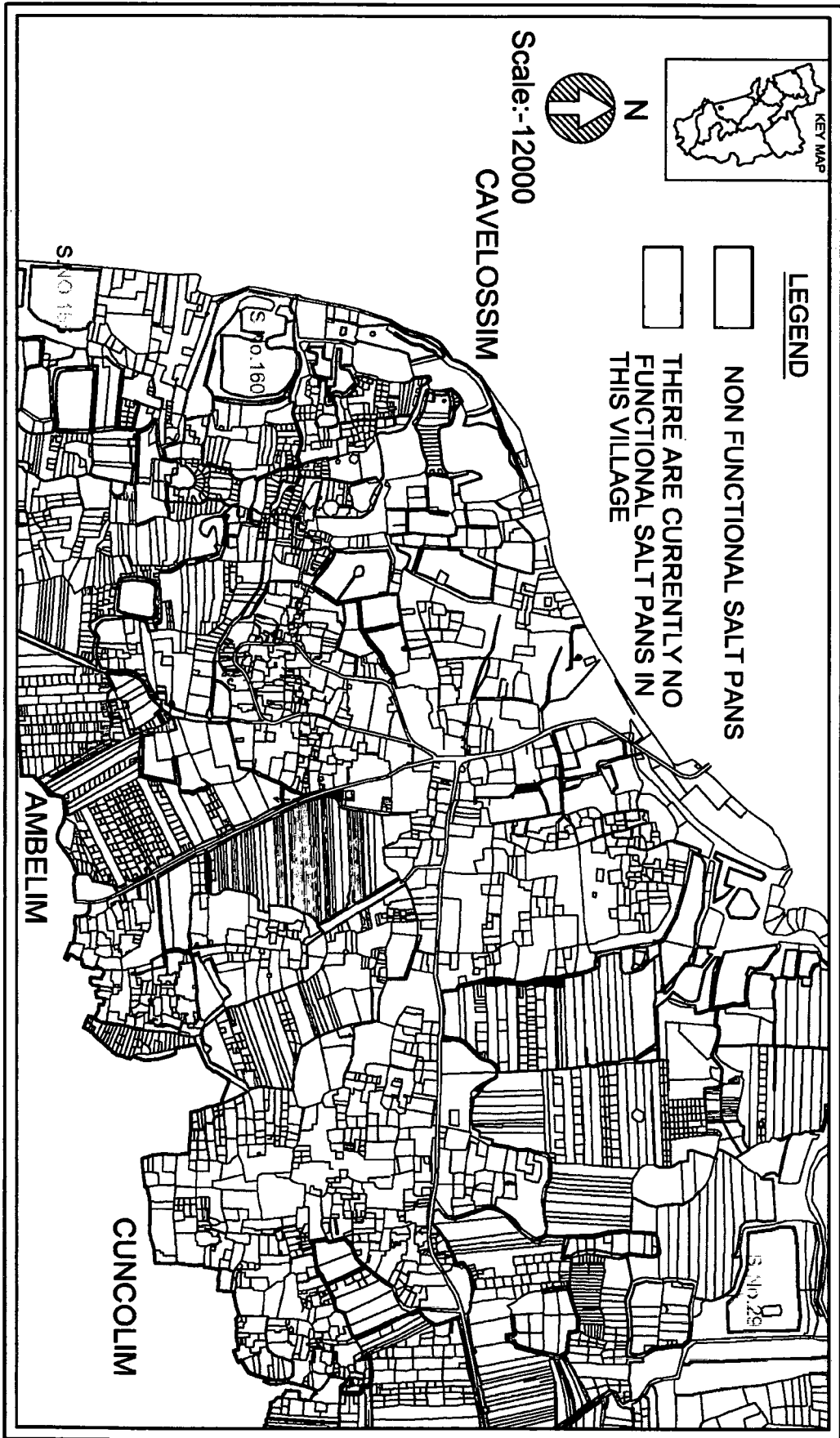
# Map No. 3.16 GOA VELHA : Salt Pans



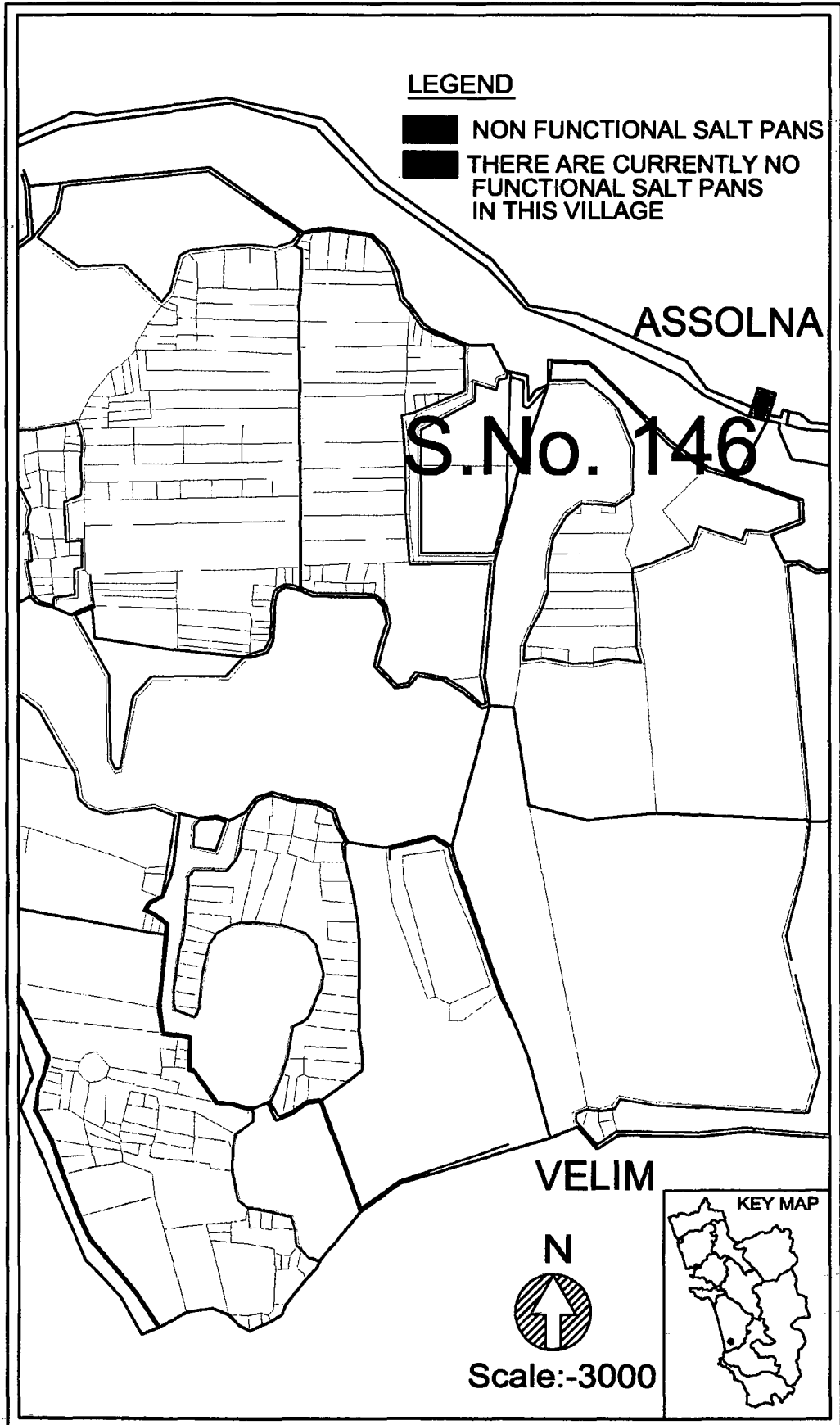
# Map No.3.17 TALAULIM: Salt Pans



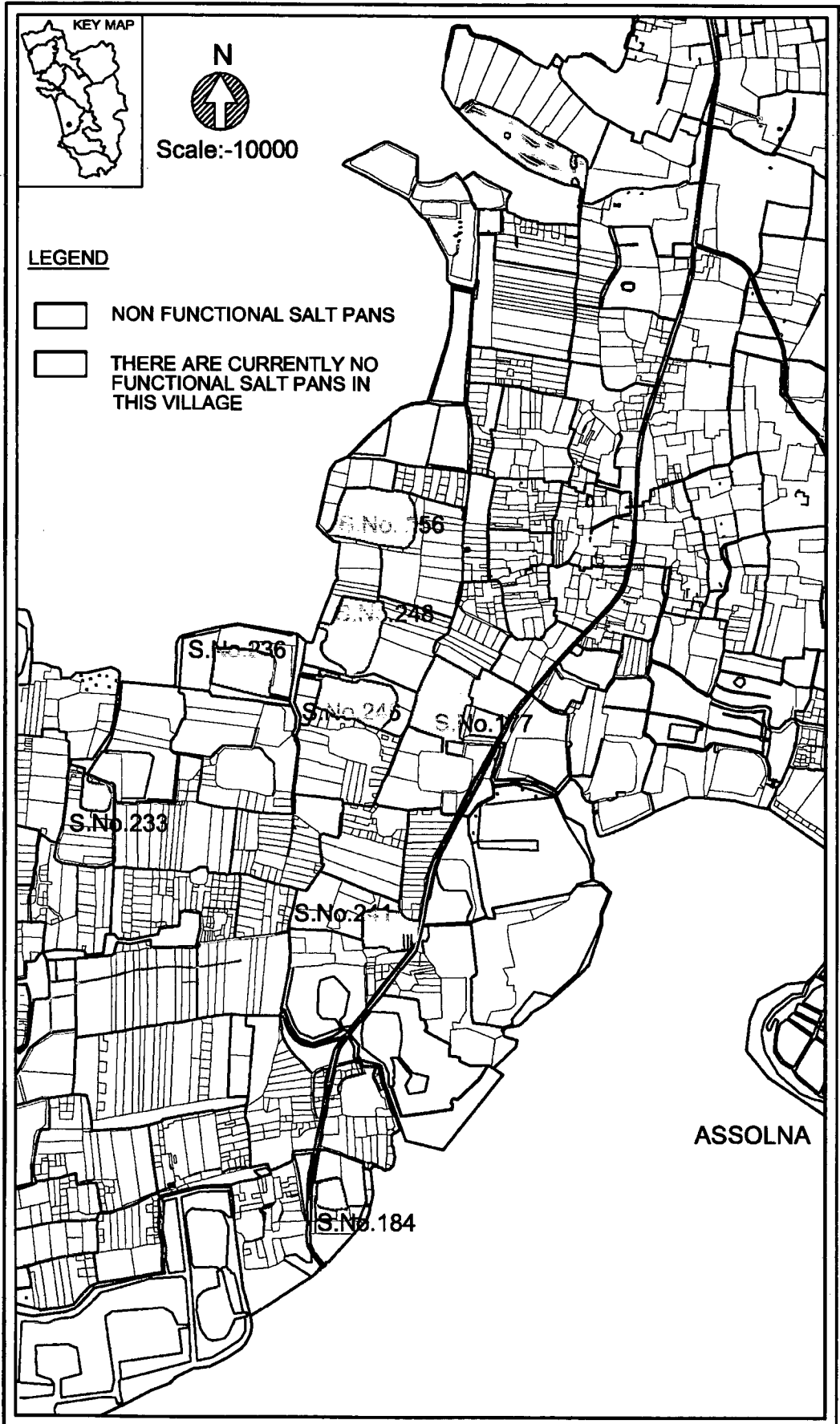
Map No. 3.18  
ASSOLNA: Salt Pans



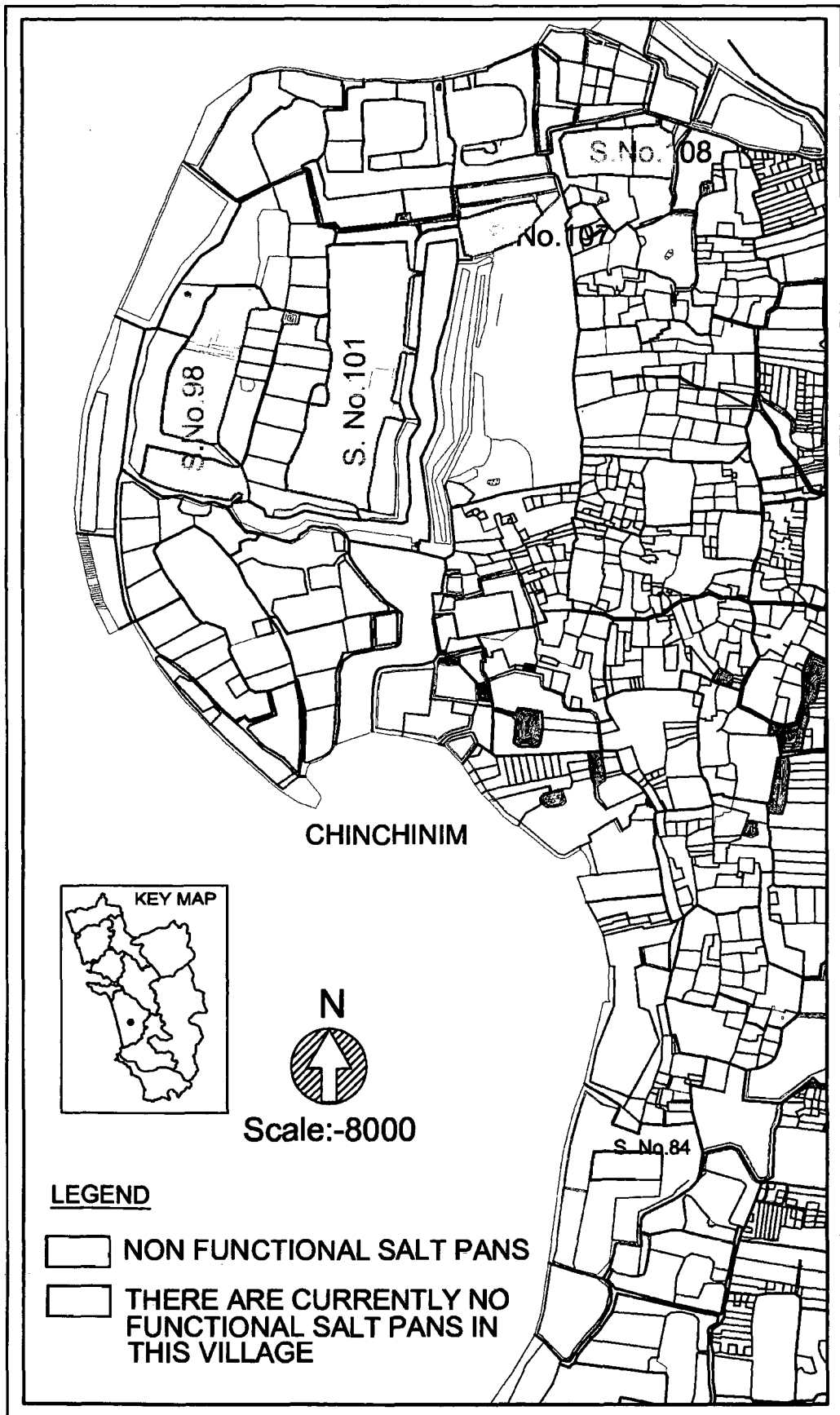
# Map No. 3.19 AMBELIM:Salt Pans



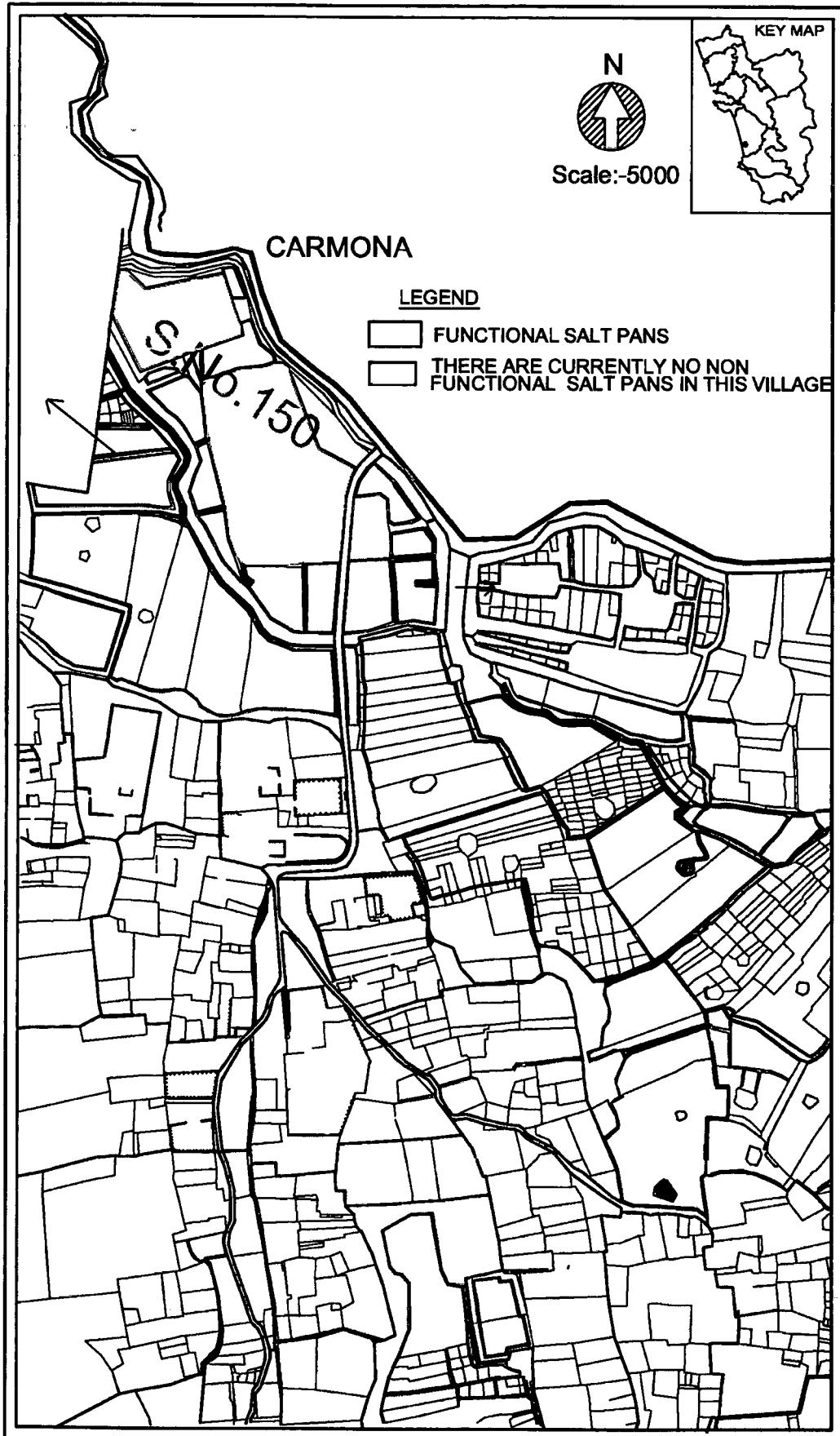
# Map No.3.20 CHINCHINIM: Salt Pans



# Map No.3.21 DEUSSUA: Salt Pans



# Map No.3.22 CAVELOSSIM: Salt Pans



**CHAPTER IV**

**THE MITHGAUDAS**

**OF PERNEM**



## CHAPTER IV

### THE MITHGAUDAS OF PERNEM

#### About the Village

##### Location

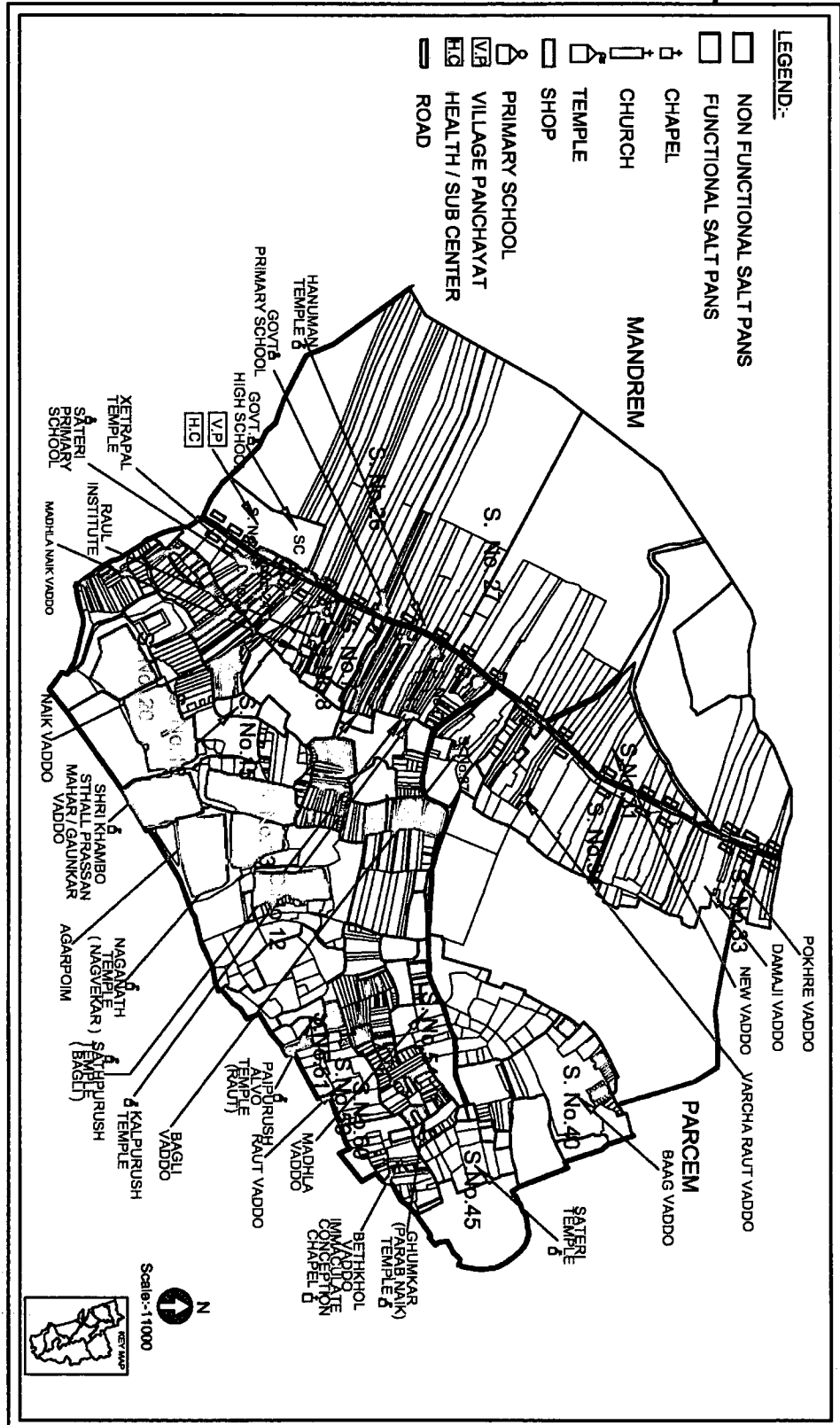
Agarvaddo is a village located towards the southern part in the Pernem taluka, It lies in the northernmost extreme of coastal Goa. It is situated a few kilometres from the Arabian Sea on the north bank of the Chapora River and is surrounded by three villages – Parcem which is two kilometers away, Mandrem which is five kilometers from it, and Morjim which is three kilometers away. The traveling distance of the village from taluka headquarters is twelve kilometers. The area of the village is 221.1 hectares. The total number of agriculturists is 42. The weekly bazaar is held in Pernem town on Thursdays. It has an independent Panchayat situated in Agarvaddo, but the neighbouring village called Chopdem also comes under the jurisdiction of Agarvaddo Panchayat. The Mithgaudas reside only in Agarvaddo.

##### Etymology

Agarvaddo, as the name suggests, is a village made up of many *agors* or salt pans; locally *Agar* refers to a salt pan and *vaddo* to a hamlet. This village is one of the ancient salt-production centres on the north-west –coast of Goa. In terms of similar etymologies, Calangute too has an Agarvaddo, which has been known for its salt-pans (D'Souza 1997:7). In Batim village, the gaunkars (village comunidade members) refer to the salt-makers of their area as the people of Agarvaddo, though no ward is thus formally named. Similarly in Calangute there is a ward called Agarvaddo which is full of salt pans and the residents of this ward were once engaged in salt pan operations

(D'Souza1997:7). Similarly, the Gaunkars of Batim refer to the salt makers of Batim as Agarvaddo people although there is no ward by the name Agarvaddo in Batim.

**Map No.4.1**  
**AGARVADDO: Location Map**



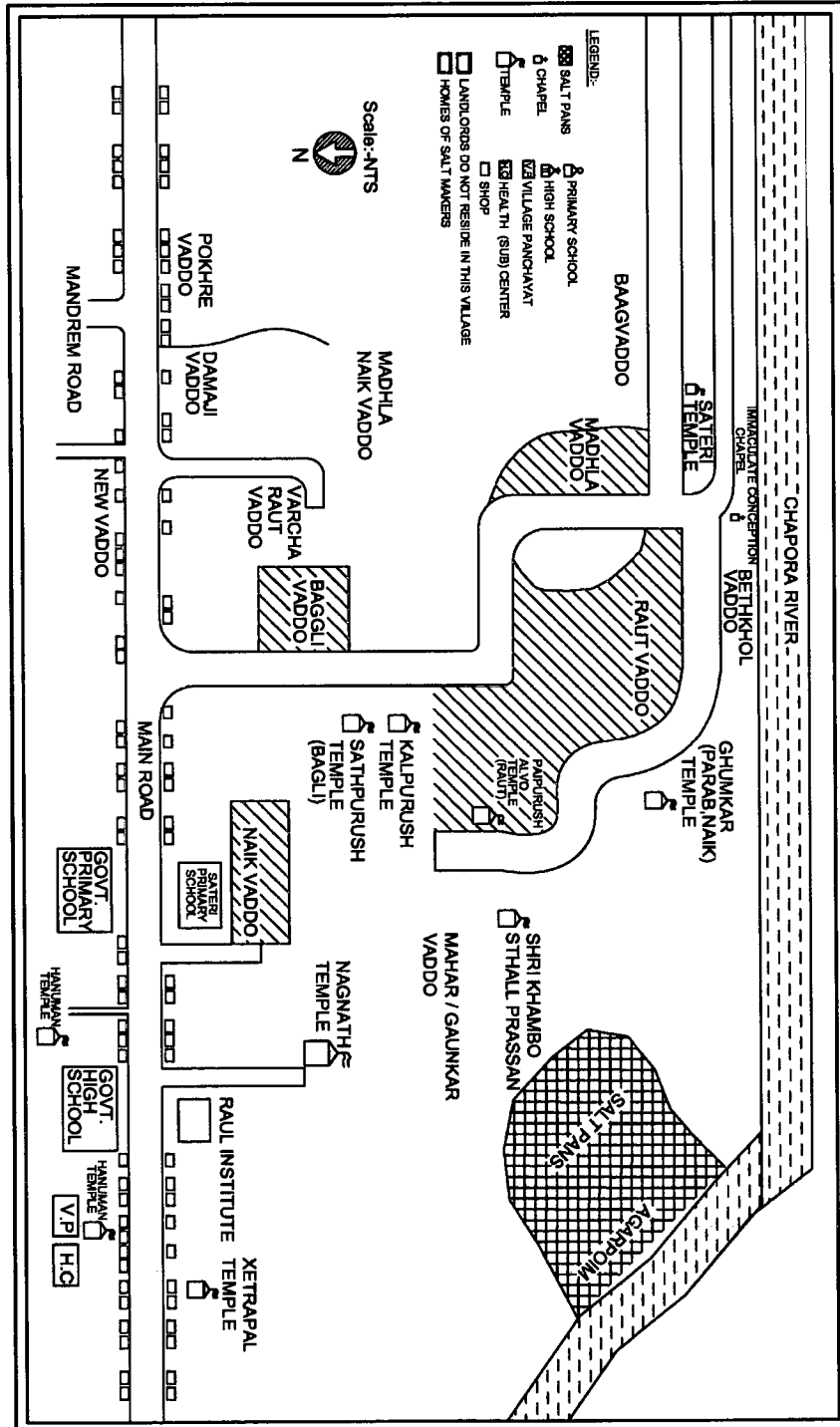
## Village Settlement

There are eight wards (or *vaddos*) in Agarvaddo.

- Bagglivadda: The Bagglis reside in this area of the village, and hence it is referred as Baglivadda.
- Rautvadda; The Rauts reside in this ward.
- Naikvadda: The locality of the Naiks.
- Damajivadda: The people who reside here bear the surname Damaji, who are all Bhandaris by caste.
- Maharvaddo: As the name suggests, the Mahars reside in this ward, which is situated on the outskirts of the village. Residents prefer to call this ward as Gaunkarvadda, given the derogatory connotations of their caste name. Village temple rituals don't usually start without beating the *dhol* (traditional drum), which is traditionally done by a Mahar. They are considered to be "untouchables". Typically, untouchable *jatis* are kept residentially segregated in their villages and forbidden ordinary access to village temples, the homes of the touchable villagers and the wells and tanks that are the sources of their domestic water supply. Touchable villagers relegate them in a lowly place (Stern 1993:75). Although the Agers in Goa belong to the untouchable caste, the Mithgaudas of Agarvaddo who are also employed in the same work are not "untouchable". Mahars are segregated at one end of the village and disallowed by the Mithgaudas from entering the village temple. The Mithgaudas are large in number in Agarvaddo. They are excellent examples of what M. N. Srinivas calls a dominant caste in Indian society after independence. They have also become political leaders of the village.
- Bethkolvadda: This ward is close to the river and part of Agarpoim, where salt

is being manufactured in Agarvaddo. Locals believe that this part was “hollow” (*To Agarvaddeacho khol bag va sakoilo baag thai bhar ghatli ani ghara ubhi keli. Aaste aaste irmith bandhli*) and hence it was reclaimed and the Christian houses were built there. Later, a chapel was built, going by oral history of the area.

Map No. 4.2  
**AGARVADDO : Wards Location Plan**



According to an elderly respondent this village comprised of three parts. One that is on an elevated part called as the Dhongor, where the cashew plantation is found. The second on a plain area or the *madhlo baag* in the village where the Mithgaudas reside- is the prime part of the village; and the third low lying area (*Khailo Baag, or the lower part*) where a few Christian families reside.

## **The Mithgaudas**

### **Historical Roots**

The origin of the Mithgaudas is shrouded in mystery. Many authors have tried tracing the probable travel routes of this people from their supposedly original homes to Goa in pre historic times. As noted in the third chapter the Aryans were followed by the Dravidians and later by the Asuras who came from Chotta Nagpur and then by the Kol, Mundaris and Kharwas who came to Goa (Bhandari1999). The Mithgaudas probably came to Goa by one or two mixed routes mentioned by Dr. Irawati Karve. Some families of that tribe might have established themselves in the Northern Konkan under the name of 'Agri' as well 'Mith Agri' or 'Mith Gavdi', employing themselves in agriculture and later in salt pans for preparation of salt. In Goa, at present, we find some of these families under the latter designation in some villages of Pernem and Bardez talukas. They entered Goa probably around 3500 BCE or say after the pastoral tribe and after the *Kols* and *Mundaris* (Dhume 1985: 78). People of Agarvaddo do not recall if their ancestors have migrated from any other place. Likewise, landlords owning the saltpans are not aware whether they originally migrated in from some other place. In Goa, the Gaudas working on the saltpans are called *Mith-Gavdas* (Mitragotri 1999:60).

The *Mithgaudas* are not a subdivision of the *gauda* or *gavda* community. In Maharashtra they are known as *Mithgavada*, but in Goa in Agarvaddo they are called *Mithgaude* or *Mithgavdas*. *Mith* means salt and the name of the community is derived from their occupation.

However, it needs to be noted that the *Mithgavdas* of Maharashtra claim that they are part of the Maratha community and do not have any connection with the *Gaudas* of Goa. According to them, *Gaude* means a villager and, therefore, village people who are salt-makers by tradition are called *Mithgauda*. They are mostly concentrated along the coastal belt of Maharashtra and in Goa.

In Maharashtra, the *Mithgauda* are largely found in Malvan, Vengurla, Deogarh, Savantwadi and Kudal areas of Sindhudurg district. In Goa they are mostly settled in the Pernem block of the North Goa district, adjacent to Sindhudurg. They are said to have migrated to Goa – but the date is not clear – from the Konkan belt of Maharashtra. Currently too, they have their relations in Maharashtra.

## **Social and Demographic Aspects**

### **Age Composition**

According to the Panchayat record of the year 2008, Chopdem has a population of 1025, out of which 506 are males and 519 females. Agarvaddo had a total population of 1345, out of which 645 were males and 705 were females. Females outnumber males in Agarvaddo, probably suggesting that there is out-migration from this area. There are 865 children and students in this village. At present there is a lot of migration due to the changed economic life in Agarvaddo.

Among the permanent tenant's respondents, five belonged to the age group of 40 to 45 years and another five belonged to the age group of 70 to 76 years. However,

there was hardly anyone from the younger generation of the 16 to 40 years age group to be seen working in the salt pans. There was only one respondent who was twenty five years of age working in the salt pans, assisting his elderly father in the salt-making operations as he had no job and there was no other household labour available.

### **Educational Background**

There is one government high school and one private primary school named the Sateri Primary School, one computer 'academy' (or rural training centre), and four sports and cultural clubs. Very few of the permanent tenants belonged to the group of educated. Some of them were less than S.S.C educated, especially those who belonged to the age group of seventy to seventy six. Few permanent tenants also got education above the S.S.C. level.

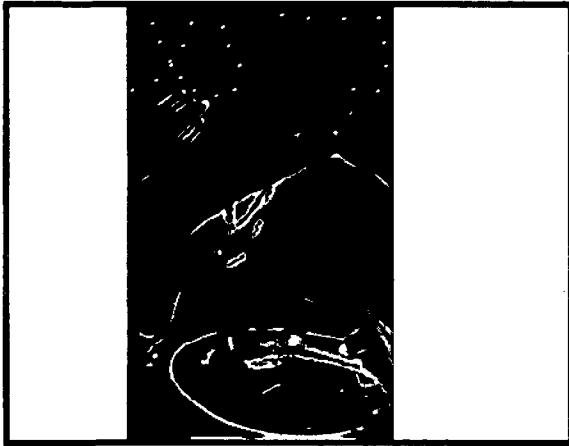
Mithgaudas seldom go for education beyond their S.S.C. or secondary school examination. There are a few graduates. Respondents interviewed were either not educated or educated up to the fourth standard. The level of education of the father or guardian is an important factor while considering the status and position of the household. An illiterate or with only low level of education, the father or guardian is unable to take a rational decision regarding the education of the children in the family, or for he being himself illiterate may not be generally in a position to appreciate the value of education for his sons or daughters(Souza 2005:76). Secondly the nature of jobs in the salt pans did not require formal training; it was a skill that was imparted in the family itself. With the exception of a few who were educated up to S.S.C and one respondent who had done B.P.Ed, who was in this field because of his inability to find a suitable job.

In a patriarchal society, the father or the guardian plays an important and pivotal role as he is the head of the family and takes important decisions (Souza 2005:76). Women do not go for education beyond the S.S.C. But, of late, some women are taking up to higher education. A few educated Mithgaudas also work in the salt pans, as they cannot get jobs easily in the job market. The men folk do not encourage higher education for women – one reason being that there were no high schools in Agarvaddo till a few years back and higher education meant travel to places like Mapusa. One respondent claimed, *chedvank bhiraant distali*, meaning the girls were frightened to go in for education to far off places to seek higher education.

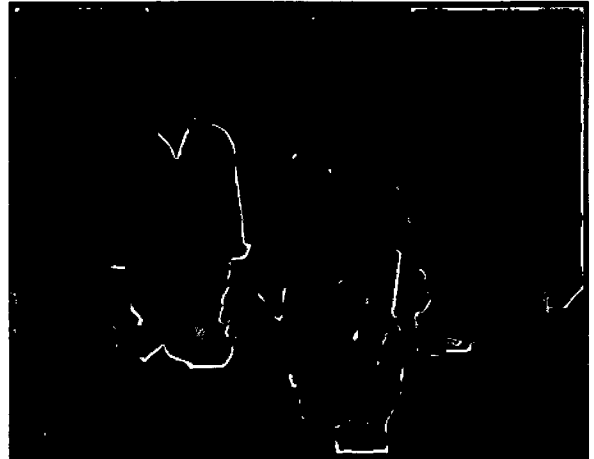
As a Mithgauda respondent explained, “*Sushikhshit zale zalear dusreacher aadharuun ravchi garaz na*” (Instead of depending on others it is better to be educated.) Despite their own low education, there is a strong feeling that their children should get a good education. Therefore they would employ migrant labourers in the salt pans, so that their children are not unnecessarily caught up in such work. They think that the girls, too, should receive education, since they believe, as one elderly respondent put it, that if the girls get educated ‘*tenka saglle kallta*’ (“they will understand everything”).

The various reasons they felt for promotion of education were: it will keep crimes away; if people are educated they will become independent; the educated person was more respected. Some respondent’s i.e. fathers, mothers and young adults were in favour of female education but others felt that if women get education there would be *prem prakaran*, meaning the girls would be susceptible to falling in love. There are currently no girls in the community having a college education but nowadays this trend is slowly changing.





An elderly woman from a Mithgauda family, during a religious ceremony at Agarvaddo, in December 2007



An elderly Mithgauda couple, in their traditional clothes in front of their house in Naikvaddo, Agarvaddo



Saltworkers at a religious function - the regular bhajan - in Agarvaddo



An elderly Mithgauda key respondent in Agarvaddo



A woman salt-vendor who carries salt in a basket for sale in Mapusa town, seen before the Ganesh pandal, during the Chaturthi season



Elderly Mithgauda men are being felicitated by the villagers

The landlords feel that the Mithgauda community should get education. The Government of India-run Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, working on universalization of elementary education, helped to improve the educational scene. Girls too should get education since nowadays there is no difference between girls and boys. Some landlords interviewed by the researcher were however of the view that once they are educated; there is a trend where the common folk do not work in the field anymore.

### **Linguistic Background**

The Mithgaudas of Agarvaddo speak Konkani. The other languages that are known to them are Marathi and English. The Konkani dialect of Agarvaddo has been influenced by Marathi, on account of its geographical closeness to Maharashtra.

Marathi, being a language long used particularly by Goa's Hindu community for literary and religious purposes, was also the language used in school and the local schools run in the Marathi medium. Marathi was also the language used for official

matters, and local newspapers read are mainly in Marathi. However, Konkani and its dialects dominate the spoken discourse.

Most respondents were not members of any political parties but two respondents were members of the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party and the Bharatiya Janata Party, respectively. The MGP is Goa's former ruling party (1963–1979), while the BJP is currently the main Opposition in Goa, having ruled the state (initially in alliance) between 1999 to 2005. One respondent's father and party workers inspired the respondent to join politics. Another respondent contested panchayat elections thrice. The landlords who were interviewed were not in politics.

## **Religion**

Religion may be said to be a system of belief about the individuals place in the world, providing an order to that world and a reason for existence within it. It has been institutionalized over the centuries (Jayaram1987:150). Since Agarvaddo village lies in the areas of Goa known as the New Conquest the influence of Christianity was less. The New Conquests were not under the suzerainty of the Portuguese, except at the fag end of the Portuguese regime when the activities of the colonial State had dwindled considerably. Secondly, the Portuguese wealth and power in the East had greatly diminished and this factor had a sobering effect on their proselytizing activities. As a result, the people of the New Conquests and Agarvaddo which is one such example were spared the coercion of conversion and the terrors of the Inquisition, as noted earlier. Moreover, a proclamation was issued by the Portuguese Governor guaranteeing to the people of New Conquests the right to follow their own rites and customs (D'Souza 1975:97).

The Goan village of olden times (as elsewhere in India), did not refer merely to a street or group of buildings as in urban Europe today, but it included both the cluster of houses and the surrounding lands, cultivated as well as uncultivated. The village community members in Agarvaddo were all Mithgaudas.

“Such a group had a local name and known limits. The land was collectively owned by a body of persons thereon. The body of persons formed the village community. The villagers lived in the central place outside the dwelling site was an open place for the village, assembled in the evening and where the village artisans produced handicrafts. There was usually a common tank or a pond or a well for general use. There was also a village temple or shrine where the village deity (*gramdevata*) was worshipped. Usually there was a small grove or at least a spreading tree with a raised platform around it on which the village council (*gauponn*) met” (D’Souza1975:27).

The landlords and all the salt makers of Agarvaddo were Hindus. This is their original religion. As far as the Gods and the Goddesses worshipped: Goddess Sateri was the village God of the salt-makers, and the family God of the Naik and Parab’s was Ghumkaar, while Satpurush was the family God of the Baggli caste and the Pai Purush or the Alvo was the family God of the Rauts.

They usually did fasting on Ekadasi and Vinayaka. They had annual *vaad divas* (celebration) of the village God in December. The family God of the landlords was Goddess Bhagwati. They also worshiped Ganesh, Laxmi and Maruti. The landlords visited religious places like Swayambhu and Vani in the area of Nasik, in the adjoining Maharashtra State.

Nagnath temple is originally from Bardez taluka (Nagoa). But during the Portuguese time, the temple was brought to Agarvaddo almost several years ago (by

the temple *mann kari* (persons who had the right over the temple) that is, by the Parab family.

There is one chapel named the Immaculate Conception Chapel and eight temples in the village – The village temple of Agarvaddo is dedicated to Goddess Sateri. It is known as *Jagrut Dev* (“*jagrut*” means *wakeful*) it is believed that the presence of the God is felt in the temple. Goddess Sateri is a village Goddess of the people of Agarvaddo and this folk deity is also a very popular local Goddess elsewhere in Goa. Sateri is also called Ela or Bhumika in parts of Goa such as Pernem taluka and the nearby Sattari taluka.

When the temple was built, they also constructed a *thikaannn* – residence for the temple priest – in Agarvaddo. Ancestor-worship is common in Agarvaddo. Kalapurush, Gramapurush, Mulapurush, Adipurush are forms of ancestors worshipped in Agarvaddo. The heroic man of the family was idolised as Kalapurush; it is believed that a heroic man would have some spiritual powers even after death to protect the living from unwanted evils. Blessings given by the elderly, according to them, were required to protect and safeguard their lives.

Ancestor worship takes place in the form of a small plaque or stone in some places in Goa and the ancestors like Grampurusha, Adipurush, Kanadipurush, Satpurush occupied the position of *Parivaradevata* (attendant of the chief-deity) presiding over the family welfare in some temples in Goa (Rao 2003:83).

The village temple is dedicated to Sateri Devi. There are four subsidiary temples dedicated to the *kul dev* (family God) which were affiliated to the three *maankaris* of the village based in Agarvaddo. These were the Pai Purush or Alvo affiliated to the Rauts, the Ghumkar temple affiliated to the Parabes and the Naik caste, the Sath Purush related to the Bagglis and the Maharingan temple in Maharvaddo.

Maharingan belongs to the Mahars of Agarvaddo. Locals see Maharingan to be the guardian of the village. This temple of the Mahars is located at the village outskirts.

Two other temples were re-built in this area, after being shifted from elsewhere during the time of religious intolerance during a phase of Portuguese rule in Goa. The deity of Nagnath was brought in from Arpora. The old Xetrapal temple has been closed for the last 50 to 60 years and its devotees are believed to have migrated or fled away to Shiroda in Maharashtra.

Agarvaddo village also has *sati* stones which have a fixed area outside the village temple, since the practice of *sati* were in vogue in upper castes before this was stopped during Portuguese rule. Sati is the custom of Hindu widows being burnt on the funeral pyre of their husbands (D'souza 1975:65, 66). People of Agarvaddo are generally aware that these are *sati* stones, but do not have any memories of sati being practised locally or when this was done in the village.

### **Feasts and Festivals**

Ritual behavior concerning food preparation, marriage, worship, fasts and festivals provide some of the most significant indicators of the Mithgaudas traditional position. Some festivals and rituals being observed in the area which are specific to the Mithgaudas like Naagpanchami, Lalita Panchami, Saptah, Devaachi Poonav.

Historical evidence shows that the earliest known settlers of Goa belonged to a Dravidian clan, linked to areas peopled by those whom we would now consider Kannadigas. These were the descendants of the Naga tribe. It is known that the Kuntala country – which included parts of Karnataka and the western Deccan (probably including Goa) – had been ruled by the Nagas. (D'Souza 1975: 14). On the day of the Nagpanchami festival, the Mithgaudas of Agarvaddo do not worship the

*Mhoorti* or the idol of the *Naag* or cobra. There is a legend by which the salt makers believe that their ancestors killed the *naag* (cobra) and did not bury it. As a result of which they, were not allowed to worship a clay *Naag*. So, *dhuronn pujpaak suru kelem* (*worshipping of the image of the snake was started instead*). (see photo). They worship the picture of the *Naag* which is painted on the wall and worship it on the Naagpanchami day.

**Devaachi Baskaa Ceremony:** *Baskaa* takes place annually over a period of three days. *Baskaa* is an occasion where the village Goddess enters a human body and people go to seek solutions to their problems with the possessed person in the village temple.

On the first day, all the people gather in the temple and two people get possessed and then on the second day which is called *Maandri ghalap* meaning they laid the mat and some more get possessed or fall into a trance (locally called the '*bhaar*'). On the third day, some more get possessed.

Mithgaudas offer coconut in the temple and consult the person who gets possessed, to settle their problems. The person who is possessed becomes supreme. He has the authority even over the temple *bhatji* or priest. They believe that the person who enters into a trance will attain the power and wisdom to settle all their problems.

When the Mithgaudas get possessed in the temple, the Mahars tend to get possessed outside the temple; even in the possessed state they are not allowed to enter inside in the temple.

The researcher witnessed this event for three days in the village temple. On the first two days there were only males in the temple and not a single female in the

temple except the *Bhavin* (traditionally, a menial servant) temple servant and this event takes place only after ten p.m. On the third day, the possessed persons have the authority even over suspected wrong doings of the temple priest. If the temple priest does not perform his duty properly in the village temple, the possessed people will advise the temple priest. Sometimes, if the villagers have some problems of health, family disputes, unemployment problem, or any other problem, the person who is possessed (enter into a '*bhaar*') will advise the person who is in problem. The people of Agarvaddo, till today, prefer to get their problems settled in this manner.

**Devaachi Poonav:** During the time of *Poonav* the Goddess Bhagvathi, visited Agarvaddo temple *tisaal aan ek dhaa* once every three years in Agarvaddo and stayed with her "sister" for one day *bhaini bhainicho maan aso ho moolcho rivaaz* meaning to respect the sister, she visits her every three years this is an ancient tradition. Bhagvathi was the village deity of the landlords from Parcem, and is considered to be the elder sister of Goddess Sateri which is the village God of the Mithgaudas of Agarvaddo. The Goddess Bhagvathi also goes to Tuem in Pernem for one year and for one year she remains in the temple at Parcem. The people from Tuem had stopped taking over the Goddess for the last hundred years, but in the year 2007 the researcher witnessed, the Devaachi Poonav this tradition had been revived again.

The people from Agarvaddo go to Parcem to get the deity Bhagvathi, and return back the same night walking to Agarvaddo; so by the time the procession reaches Agarvaddo it is dawn. The Goddess Bhagwati is kept in Agarvaddo village temple and the next night she is reached back, walking the entire journey back. On the first day the entire road is lit up in the night and the Goddess gives her blessings in each and every house. Married women and the others fill *Votti* on the way.



In the temple, the deity is given befitting hospitality by the host village. At the end of the day, she refuses to leave her sister on the next day. So the devotees take the permission from the Goddess before departing by taking *prasad* and then letting her go.

This money is deposited in a bank and, after three years, food is served to the guests from Parcem at the time when the Goddess Bhagvathi is brought back to the village. This food is called Neveidh. On the next day, an *Adesari* is offered to all the people who have gathered in the temple from Parcem. *Deva kadde lok eilele* The *sevekari*, i.e., the people who are in the services of the temple at Parcem, would also earlier be given rice by the people of Agarvaddo, but some years ago there was not much rice grown in the village so they started giving a fixed sum of money to all the *sevekari* and the committee members including the members of the former untouchables castes (Dalits) gathered in the temple.

There is a *Koulacho Kungho* literally meaning the salt pans belonging to the temple or the saltpans which were donated to the temple. The money generated from such saltpans was spent for the temple maintainance. Earnings generated out of the 'Devaachi thikaana' i.e. from saltpans, fields and cashew plantation kept aside for the Gods, is called as *Paagvath*.

**Saptah in Agarvaddo:** Amidst the lush green beauty and the light showers of rain in the *Shravan* month, the Hindu festivals begin. The first festival of the year is *Nagpanchami*. On the next day of *Nagpanchami* comes the sixth day of the Shravan month of the Hindu calendar.

Besides devotees from the village, devotees from other neighbouring states of Maharashtra also visit Agarvaddo to pay homage to the deity of the village and to celebrate all seven days in glory. Besides other devotional programmes, the main

celebration is the singing of '*bhajans*' (devotional songs). Women from the village married outside also attend this function.

On the day of the *Saptah*, the Goddess Sateri is taken in a *pallkhi* (palanquin) procession around the temple by the people of the village.

In the month of Shraavan (roughly corresponding to the month of August), the fifth day is called *Nagpanchami*. *Bhajan Saptah* starts on the Nagpanchami day at about 3 p.m. and is continued for 24 hours. The *Bhajan Saptah* ends at 3 p.m. the next day. There are four participants who take part in the *bhajan Saptah* – one each representing the Naik Parab, the Rauts, the Bagglis and the Nagvenkars.

The first three hours of the bhajan sees a Naik Parab holding forth, followed by the Rauts for three hours, the Baggli for the subsequent three hours and the Nagvenkars for the next three hours. This cycle is repeated. At the end of the Saptah, a *pallkhi* (palinquin) ceremony is held. The Pallkhi takes one *pradakshana* (*circumambulation*) around the temple followed by the *visarjan* (*ritual immersion/bathing*).

At the end of the whole programme, there is an auctioning of clothes and fruits offered to the deity. Money collected out of the auction is used for the *devasthan* (temple) committee funds. Married daughters visit their parents' homes and come and worship the village God.

The *Saptah* is a tradition which is of the Sateri Goddess and is an annual traditional festival. Before starting the *saptah*, the *samai* (traditional lamp) is worshipped thoroughly in front of Goddess Sateri. While the *bhajan* continues, this lamp is lit throughout for twenty four hours, signifying that offering the oil lights the premises of God and God in turn takes the responsibility to light one's life, education, children, or business.

Other festivals in Agavaddo like Dussehra, Diwali and Holi are celebrated in the same manner as in the rest of Goa. The Goan Hindu community mainly celebrates Ganesh Chathurti, Gudi Padwa, Diwali, Dassra (Dussehra), Holi, Rakshabandhan, Ramnavmi and Krishnajanmashtami.

**Shigmo Festival:** In the New Conquests, the *Vodlo Shigmo* is widely celebrated and commences with the Holi Pournima (full-moon day of the month of Phalgun of the Hindu calendar) and continues for five days. Shigmo festival occupies an important place in their cultural life.

**Devachi Parab:** On these days, all the *ganvkars* (village community members) bring one coconut. This *Parab* is important because they say the *garane* (prayers) for each family and pray to God to protect the village. The *devachi parab* is considered to be important by the villagers because it asks God for protection.

**Dussehra:** Dussehra day is considered the most auspicious day. There is a belief among the Mithgaudas – as with other sections especially of Goa's Hindu population – that if any new venture is started on this day, it is bound to be successful. Hence, any auspicious undertakings like buying of new house, new consumer durables, laying – in of foundation of a new building, opening of a new commercial establishment.

Also, on this day, tools and implements of salt making, agriculture, machines, household articles, and even children's school books are placed before the idol of Durga and worshiped.

Navarati, or the Festival of Nine Nights associated with Lord Rama's Defeat of Ravana, the “demon” King of Lanka, culminates in the grand festival of Dussehra. Dussehra is celebrated by devotees of the Mother Goddess as her festival. The Sri

Bhagavati Temple in Pernem town has a fortnight's festivities on the occasion. Special celebrations for Navaratr Utsav are also held at the Santeri temple in Agarvaddo.

**Diwali:** Another festival of Mithgaudas in Agarvaddo is the *Deepawali* or Diwali festival, which is also celebrated with lots of enthusiasm and happiness all over India. This festival is celebrated for five continuous days with the third day being celebrated as the *Dhakkti Diwali* (Small Diwali) or the 'Festival of Lights'.

Fireworks are closely associated with this festival. The day is celebrated with people lighting *diyas* (oil-fuelled earthen lamps) or, less often, candles all around their houses. *Lakshmi Puja* is performed in the evening to seek the blessing of the Goddess of Wealth. Diwali gifts are exchanged among all near and dear ones. Then is followed by *Vhodli Diwali* (Grand Diwali) or the *Tulsi Lagn* (Tulsi's Wedding).

**Zatra:** Agarvaddo's temple has its annual local feast in honour of Sateri Devi each year. Devotees from other parts of Pernem and from Agarvaddo come to participate.

Celebration begins with the worship of Goddess Sateri: early morning with different religious rituals. Later, the *palkhi* (palanquin) procession of Goddess is carried out. When the statue of the Goddess Sateri: the village deity is carried in a huge wooden chariot around the temple, the crowds of devotees follow in a procession. The Mahar beats the drum early in the morning. This is done to inform the people about the occurrence of the local feast. In the night, the Dashavatari *natak* (drama performance) is held in the temple premises. This also provides recreation to the village.

It is a festive and colourful occasion in the temple complex, with thousands of devotees taking part in the celebrations and the *palakhi* (palanquin) procession. All

the people later participate in the *Garanhe* (a prayer to God usually in the local dialect).

A small local fair, including stalls selling everything from imitation jewellery to eatables, is setup in the temple ground in Agarvaddo. People from the village living outside it, as well as the married daughters of Agarvaddo settled elsewhere, come in especially for the village fair.

**Dashaavtari Natak:** It is a folk play staged through music and dance greatly influenced by the South Indian traditions. The dancing style and martial art patterns are the specialties of this theatre form. Actors are hired from outside the village (often from the neighboring state of Maharashtra) to entertain villagers, helping them to stay up through the night for the wake.

**Divjaanchi Zatra:** As the festival of Diwali comes to end one well-known religious festival is the "Divjaanchi Zatra". The Divaj a set of five lamps made of terracotta, a copper, brass or silver metal. The Divja fair is mostly celebrated on the occasion of new moon day of Kartik, the eight month of the Hindu calendar or on the first day of the Hindu month of Margashirsh. In some parts of Goa and in Agarvaddo, having the Divaj is considered to be a prestigious symbol. On this day, women light the divaj in front of village temple and pray for a long life of their husbands. A full day fast is observed mostly on this occasion.

Divja are lit as darkness falls, and five rounds are taken around the temple. Extreme care is taken to ensure that the lamps stay continuously lit for at least some time. If the wick extinguish before the stipulated time, it is considered to be a bad omen. The researcher witnessed such an event in Agarvaddo.

Styles of celebrating this occasion tend to vary from place to place. Agarvaddo, a beautiful village located in Pernem taluka, is well known for its own style of divja celebration from other parts of Goa. A woman who attends the divja ceremony has to maintain a strict fast throughout the day. The fast starts at sunrise and ends only after the divaj celebration. One cannot consume even single drop of water during the fast.

Male folk light the *divaj* in front of Goddess idol and hand it over to women outside the temple. Women then take five rounds around the temple by holding the divaj on their hands, with drums in front of the queue played by people belonging to the community of the Mahars. In some parts, a newlywed couple carries the *divaj* hopping for the arrival of prosperity and happiness in their future life.

By sunset, the womenfolk start gathering near the Nagnath temple wearing traditional *navvaari* (nine yard) saris, ornaments, and deck their hair with a lot of flowers on this occasion. Three gents light the *divaj* in front of the God's idol after breaking two coconuts and filling it with oil and insert a wick and light their *divaj*. Immediately after that, the women start lighting their *divaj* outside the temple. Women then take the five rounds, mentioned above, around the temple.

The beating of the drums is done during this time in front of the queue by the *mahar* or the former untouchable of the village. Holy water is offered to the God, and the fast ends. Women have to burn out the entire oil in the lamp, or wait till it is over. But nowadays, a special area is demarcated wherein the women may just dump the oil instead of waiting to complete the burning.

Landlords celebrate a grand local festival in Parcem called as the Lalita Panchami, and they also celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi and the Ramnavmi festival. Landlords from Parcem celebrate the Lalita Panchami, another name for Durga Puja.

Panchami is a day in the Hindu calendar between full moon and new moon. In Parcem, the puja (religious rites) are performed in three landlords' houses. This is the only feast where non vegetarian food is cooked. Large amount of fish is bought by the landlords. Around two hundred people are called to have lunch in the landlord's house. Another festival is of Sima Ullangan, held during the Dussehra, where the warriors cross the border, they clean the swords cut the head of a fowl and then touch it with the sword.

On the ninth day, they chop the head of a goat. But nowadays, they cut a *ganvtti* (local) cock. The head of the cock is chopped off and cooked and placed in boiled rice. Then, rice is sprinkled around the house as protection for the house

Puja is performed by the Mithgaudas each day and devotees do not remove the flower garland that is put each day on the idol or image of the deity. After nine days, all nine garlands are removed together. Young girls who have not attained puberty are invited to eat, play games, dance and sing. Then they are fed a meal of their choice.



A joint Mithgauda family prepares for the Ganesh Chaturthi festivities. The entire family meets up at their ancestral home, and prepares a joint meal and traditional sweets. Cooking is done by the womenfolk



Mithgauda men smear one another with the colours of 'Oolli', the local spring festival (called 'Holi' elsewhere in India), at the Sateri temple in Agarvaddo



The Taranga ('Umbrella') Festival, which sees the Goddess Bhagvati being brought from Parcem to her "younger sister" Sateri's village of Agarvaddo, via an overnight walk. Photo shows the procession at night



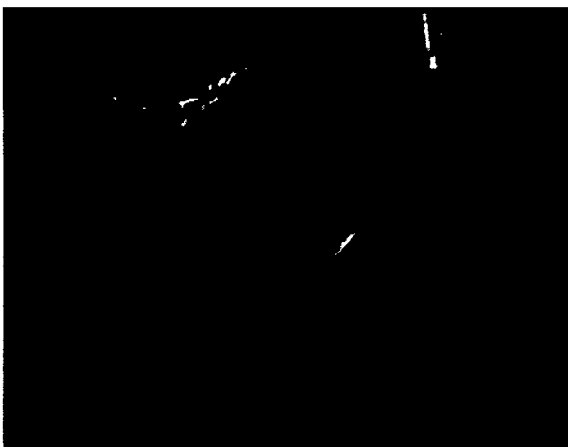
Nagnath, the deity at Agarvaddo



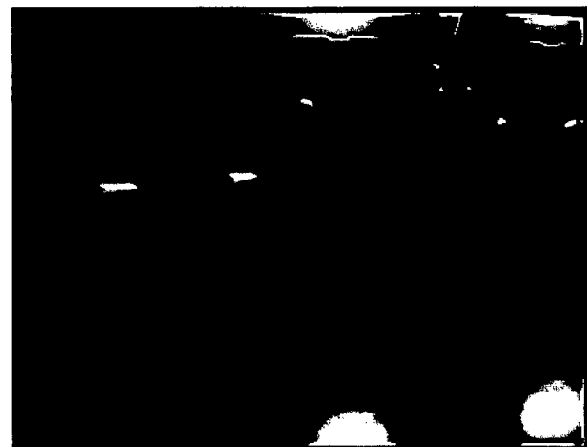
Villagers touch the feet of the Brahmin temple priest, on the deity Bhagvati reaching Agarvaddo early morning



Members of the Mahar community beat the drums at a religious procession in Agarvaddo



A man creates a 'dhuromni' on the Nagpanchami day (see explanation above)

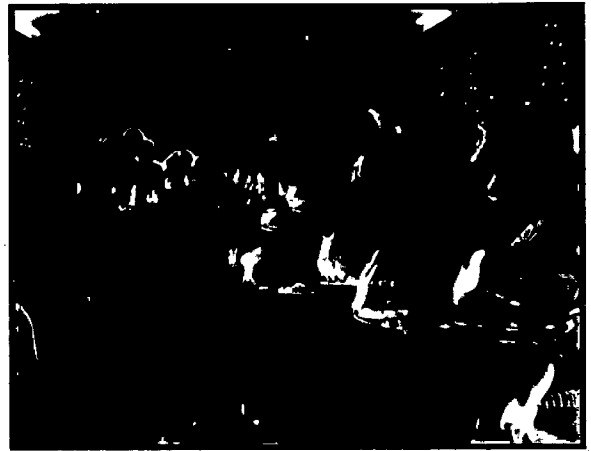


Dalit Mahars, on entering a trance, lie prostrate outside of the garbagraha (sanctum sanctorum) of the temple, which they are never entitled to enter even in normal times





Women wear their traditional nine-yard sari, and go with the lamp around the Nagnath temple during the 'divzachi raat' (the night of lamps). Both salt-makers and the Bhandaris take part in this festival. Women wear their traditional nine-yard sari, and go with the lamp around the Nagnath temple during the 'divzachi raat' (the night of lamps). Both salt-makers and the Bhandaris take part in this festival



In Agarvaddo, Mithgaudas carry a typical brass-made plate, called the 'podgo', in which the wicks are lit with oil for the 'divaz' ceremony. Photo shows the temple of the Naiks at the Dev Ghumkar temple



A Christian devotee (as obvious from the clothes) comes in to take 'prasad' (an offering) from the Nagnath deity, whom she sees as her family God



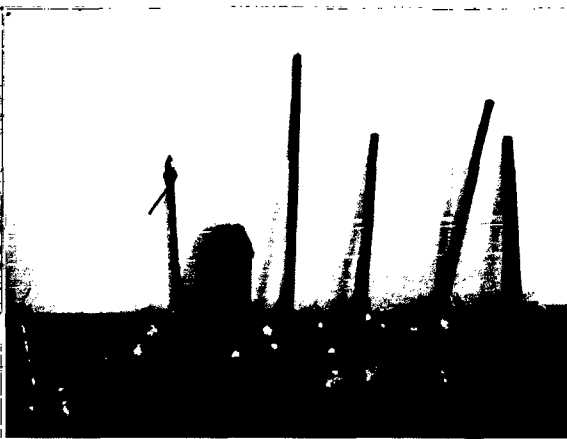
A 'pathir' of brass, used by the jogi (religious functionary of the Mithgauda community), who visits the Mithgauda families and accepts a donation of paddy during Dusserah festivities



The 'palkhi' (palanquin procession) takes the deity around the temple perimeter during the festival



The 'Zamballeo', a zamblam (*Syzygium jambolanum*) tree, which is considered as the salt-pan protector by the Mithgauda



Villagers worship their implements - including some salt-making tools - on Dusserah day



A 'bhakri' (rough bread made of wheat) being specially prepared for the village 'devachar' (protective spirit)

### Rituals, Customs, Festivals, Fairs and Practices in Relation to Salt Making

Durkheim initiated sociological analysis of religion as a “unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things”. In his formulation, religion involves a set of beliefs and practices that are uniquely the property of religion— as opposed to other social institutions and ways of thinking. The *sacred* encompasses elements beyond everyday life which inspire awe, respect and even fear. People become a part of the sacred realm only by completing some ritual, such as prayer or sacrifice. Believers have faith in the sacred; this faith allows them to accept what they cannot understand (Lamm1999: 416). In the Mithgauda society too there are many beliefs and rituals to appease the sacred.

During the time of *Mirg*, the festival which marks the start of the monsoon in Goa around early June, the salt makers brought a local cock and offered it to the Gods. They kept it near a jamun (*Syzygium cumini*) or *zamball* tree in the salt pans. (See picture). They then placed some liquor and home-cooked chicken for the *Devchaar* (local protective spirit or deity) so that the *Zamballeo* protects them. This

practice can be traced to the original Goan practice of appeasing the *zageiavoilo* or the *deuchar* till today. He is supposed to protect them in their life. The elderly Mithgaudas had full faith in the *Devchar*. '*Zanttiacho visvas baslelo asa*' (The faith of the elders is in place.)

The salt makers light *agarbathi* (*incense sticks*) and perform a *puja* and keep salt, coconut and sugar in the salt pans. Local belief also subscribes to the existence of a *bandhacho dev* (the 'God of the bund') and to please the God, the Mithgaudas cook chicken and serve it to their friends.

In addition, there is also belief in a *Thallacho Brahman* also called *Thallacho Maalak*. To propitiate him, the temple priest cooks vegetarian food in the salt pans, the temple priest prepared food according to his custom. He charged a fee of Rs 50 to 100 for performing this custom. It is believed that if this ritual is not performed, the Mithgaudas will have problems. Interestingly, landlords of the Agarvaddo salt pans had never seen the practices that are followed in the salt pans neither do they knew the stages of salt making.

With the majority of the population being Hindu in Agarvaddo, it had many festivals that were celebrated all around the year, in keeping with both festivities from the overall Hindu calendar, and local festivities. All these festivals are not celebrated on fixed dates of the contemporary calendar year, since they are based on the Hindu (lunar) calendar, and the date on which these fall varies on a year-to-year basis.

### **Folklore, Drama and Dance**

The folklore of Agarvaddo includes folksongs, *nataks*, *fugdi*, *folktales*, *the shigmo etc.* all of which are related to socio-religious concepts.

Many of the folk dances in Goa are performed in and around the month of *Phalgun* (the last months of the Hindu calendar) and also around the time of harvesting (Majik 2002:63).

Among the three *Maankaris* (the main castes) in Agarvaddo, the Rauts were at the top level followed by the Naik-Parab and then by the Baggli. One Baggli respondent has narrated his version as to how the Bagglis got the lowest status.

They wanted to decide who should get the highest *Maan* (status). So each *maankari* decided to grow a coconut sapling and the sapling which bore fruits first would get the highest rights. The coconut sapling which was grown by the Bagglis bore fruits first. The Bagglis would not usually go out in the night. So the Rauts cut the *maadaachi poim* or coconut sheath borne on the Bagglis' sapling in the cover of the dark and put it for their coconut sapling. The researcher asked how this legend continued, and they said that it was not possible to change since whatever was written was transferred down the generations. '*Asso amcho maan ukallo*,' ("Our rights were thus snatched from us.") He later said this same thing was continued in the field of politics too, suggesting a feeling of disempowerment felt by those on the lower hierarchical rungs.

### **Folk Drama**

**Kalo and Dashavatari Natak:** In Agarvaddo, the Dashavatari *natak* is a popular form of folk drama, besides being a source of entertainment. Its name Dashavtar refers to the *Dha avatar* (ten incarnations) of Lord Vishnu.

The *natak* (drama) is performed on the modest stage of the village temple. The artists are usually from Maharashtra. These *nataks* are based on religious themes and artists play the personalities of rajas (kings). Most of the *nataks* performed are in

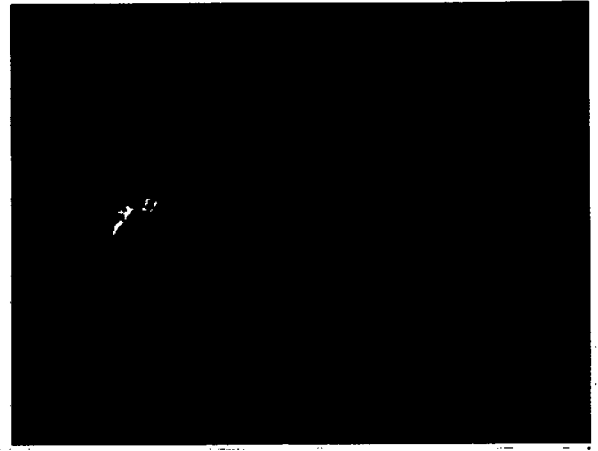
Marathi and are centered on incidents in the Ramayana and Mahabharata, Puranas and on different incarnations of Gods and Goddesses.

Village artists direct their own dramas but the village girls do not participate in the same. Girls are brought from outside the villages to act in the dramas. It is considered demeaning for the village girls to act in dramas. The researcher witnessed a theater rehearsal in the Agarvaddo temple premises. The actress who had come from another caste and from another village to take part in the *natak* because such a role was below the status of local girls (but this was not considered so in the case of local men).

The researcher noticed that this theatre group was trying to revive Hindu traditions. In a world where change has become the norm, it appeared to be a return to the past and to local identities to 'batten down' as if in a storm and to resist the uprooting forces of change. These dramas start after midnight and end at dawn, little children and older women sleep in the temple premises itself when the *nataks* go on.

**Fugddi:** *Fugddi* is an important folk dance performed during Ganesh Chaturthi (also called the *Chovoth* festival in Goa). It is a group dance performed by women and girls only. *Fugddi* songs are based mainly on a religious story, especially those from the Ramayana and Mahabharata, the two great epics of India, and their songs are in the Konkani and Marathi language.

This dance has two major variations. In one, it is danced in a circle or in rows, a few fixed steps, while hand gestures and handclaps are associated with it. The other is characterized by the absence of any accompaniment. Besides the epics, the songs also centre on Puranic stories, family life, complaints, rivalries, people or customs (ibid 2002:65).



The script of the fuggdis played in Agarvaddo reveal the social aspects of the mithgaudas



Actors hired from out of the village (often from the neighbouring state of Maharashtra) entertain villages, helping them to stay up through the night for the wake. Above is the Nagnath temple premises at Agarvaddo



Women from within the Mithgaudas are not allowed to take part in the local dramas due to which women are hired from outside the village

## Caste System

The salt makers of Agarvaddo who are in a majority belong to the Mithgauda caste that was of traditional salt-workers. However there are an insignificant number of families belonging to other castes like one Devlli family (also known as Bhavin, whose traditional role has been to assist the temple priest) and a few Gosaavi or Jogi, some Bhandaris, Dalit families and a few Christians exist in this village. The Dalits live in the outskirts of this village. The numerical strength of a caste influences the kind of relations which it has with the other castes, and this is one of the reasons why each multi-caste village to some extent constitutes a unique hierarchy (Srinivas

1987:100). The Mithgaudas of Agarvaddo are numerically larger than all the other castes as a result they exert a larger influence than the other castes.

The *Mithgaudas* claim to be higher in the social hierarchy than the *Gaudes* and say they belong to the *Kshatriya varna*. They are not classified as a backward community. They form an endogamous group, divided into several exogamous clans (*kuls*) (Singh 1993:165).

The Mithgaudas of Agarvaddo and the Gauddis of Arpora are placed at a much higher rank in the caste hierarchy as compared to the other three castes of the salt-makers in Goa. In such cases, a discrepancy crept in between their traditional local caste rank and their higher but newly acquired secular position. Acquiring economic affluence might account for this changing status. One way of resolving this has been by Sanskritizing their way of life and claiming high caste status. Bailey has shown how the board distillers of Phulbani in Orissa rose up from their previous position as one of the “low Hindu” castes, below the barbers, to the “high Hindu” category, disputing with the warriors for the second place. Sanskritization, then, restored the equilibrium, and traditionally it has been able to do this in the case of all castes except the Harijan (Srinivas 1987:72, 73).

They considered themselves as belonging to the Kshatriyas stratification of the four-level Hindu caste structure. One Mithgauda respondent told me of a belief that they got a ‘*khali darzo*’ meaning lower status in the caste system since salt gets formed with the *suryakiran* or with the sunrays. ‘*Mhannon khali theile*’, meaning, that’s the reason we were kept in the lower rungs.

‘*Aple barobar amkam bhamnaani kurchi diunk na,*’ means, “We do not get the same status as the Brahmins”. The Harijans ‘*ap aple siment ravle*’ (*stayed within their own boundaries*).

During the time of the conversions, they believe, the Mithgaudas provided *aasro* meaning shelter to the Nagvenkars who came from Nagoa in Bardez probably during the sixteenth century and the phase of religious intolerance in Goa. As I was told, '*Bhata bhatti zalle tednam ami Nagvenkaarank aasro dilo*'. *Bhatta bhaatiche velar ushte takith and te samaann ani dev gheun Agarvaddear eile ani ami tanchea adarak pavle* meaning they converted us by throwing their left over's so the Nagvenkars took their belongings and family God and came to Agarvaddo where the Mithgaudas provided them with shelter and the latter the Nagvenkars too began extracting salt in Agarvaddo.

One member of the Naik family got converted during the time of conversion to Christianity, so the Mithgaudas do not give their children in marriage to that particular converted family. However this family still comes and participates for the religious functions in the village temple at Agarvaddo.

### **Marriage System**

Marriage is an aspect, which determines ones position in the society. It also determines ones role in the society and is closely linked to parenthood and head of the household (Souza2005:71). In fact, the marriages in Agarvaddo are governed by the rules of endogamy. Due to a common occupation that the Mithgaudas performed, the network of kinship relations developed by families in Agarvaddo are undisturbed. Behera(1990:74) has highlighted the importance of kinship relations in the social life of the people. He opines: "kinship relationships in any society are central to its social structure, patterned interactions, claims, obligations and sentiments are determined in a society by kinship relationships. Kinships have to do with relationships of consanguinity and affinity. In simple societies, every individual is related by kinship



or affinity to everyone else and affiances are limited for practical purposes to a selected few”.

In the present study, all Mithgaudas respondents were all married in Agarvaddo itself with the exception of a few who were married in the southern Konkan of Maharashtra where their relations existed. The average age of marriage was from thirty to thirty five for males and nineteen to twenty eight for females.

However, probably due to the spread of education and the socio economic changes taking place, the Mithgaudas have now started getting married outside their sub caste. In keeping with the general trend prevalent in Goa, here too the custom of early marriage did not prevail among the Mithgaudas. The average age of marriage was from thirty to thirty five for males and nineteen to twenty eight for females. Among the respondents interviewed, non-marriages and late-marriages were not reported. Similarly, there has been not a single case of divorce among the Mithgaudas. Among the Mithgaudas, the norms of endogamy and the decisive role of parents in arranging the marriage have been very strong. Mithgaudas children used to get married only with others from the same Mithgaudas community, but there is a restriction on a Raut-Baggi marriage, as the Rauts and Bagglis were seen to have a relationship of being “brothers”.

Although Mithgaudas nowadays have started getting intermarried with the Bhandaris, there has not been a single case of a Raut marriage to a Baggli.

All the Mithgauda respondents that were interviewed did not favour inter-caste marriage especially when it involved getting married to someone of a “lower” caste. If at all, the respondents felt that a marriage could be with someone from “higher” than one’s own caste while half of them felt that it should be from any caste.

The Mithgaudas felt that they should get married within one's own caste, but the landlords felt that their marriages could be from one's own caste or any other caste. Half of the respondents felt that if economic incentives are given, there would be inter-caste marriages while half of them felt that even if economic incentives are given, there would not be a growth in inter caste marriages. They said they maintain relations with the people who are married outside their caste. They permit widow remarriage and approve of divorce. They felt that the ideal number of children should be three to four per family.

Landlords said that no one should get married outside boundaries caste and religion. One of the respondent who was a landlord- his wife's brother got married to a French lady.

Mithgaudas were not in favor of conversion to other religions. Both the Mithgaudas as well as the landlords felt that election increases a person's prestige.

Some landlords however say they are not in favour of the intercaste marriage since the person's links get severed from the family. So long as such marriage works, its okay; workability is very important. They felt that marriage should be within one's own caste, or if the caste is similar than it is better.

If economic incentives are given, and then also there may be no increase in inter-caste marriages, it was felt by some of the young adult respondents who were interviewed by the researcher. If both are educated, the person is more acceptable and nobody should be against the same, it was felt by the older respondents interviewed. Widow remarriage was favoured by the landlords, but they did not approve of divorce as stated by them in the interview schedule. They felt divorce had significant ill effects on the children, so it was better to compromise on certain issues. They were

not in favour of conversion to any other religion. They felt that participation in politics increases a person's prestige.

**Marriage rituals:** The salt makers perform traditional Hindu rituals and local customs during the time of marriage. These are as described below. Marriages are usually arranged by family or neighbours. In addition, there are also love marriages nowadays within the same caste and the same village.

Sometimes, marriages take place outside the village. A young woman from the neighbouring State of Maharashtra married in Agarvaddo is considered as '*Englezintle cheddum Portuguezant lagn kelam*'. (Literally, a girl from a British-ruled region wed a Portuguese-ruled one. Of course, neither Maharashtra nor Goa is ruled by the British and Portuguese any more, but this manner of speaking continues) Marriage negotiations are initiated by the family or neighbours. When the bride-seeing takes place the groom gives the bride *saris*, money or a *shalu* (an expensive sari).

**Prasad Pakhlli:** Hindus in Goa, during the difficult times, consult or seek advice of the oracles and the Gods. This is done in many temples of Goa. Specialists perform the *Prasad Pakhlli* (is a process of conversation with God through a mediator to seek the approval of God over the concept of marriage or whatever ails the devotee). And seek advice on how to deal with special problems and during the settlement of marriage, unemployment, sickness, any such difficulties etc. The people of Agarvaddo consult or seek the advice of Gods during the difficult life situations. This applies for marriage too.

At the time of engagement, they invite close relatives. They exchange rings and sometimes give them *pattle* (bangles). *Mavodde sakricho puddo fodop ani*

*vaantap* is another practice; a cone of sugar is opened and distributed (refer to the photograph). Five coconuts, one sari and flowers are distributed. The Votti is filled. (This refers to a tradition wherein traditional sari, flowers are offered and reverently received in the *pallu* or on the lap.) Coconut pieces are distributed to all those who assemble there.

During the marriage, the rites meant for bride and bridegrooms are followed. So far no one from the Mithgaudas family has married outside their caste. The Hindu priest officiates the marriage ceremony. The rites meant for the bride and the rites meant for the groom are performed during the marriage. None of the respondents gave dowry to their daughters since they say this is comparing them to being like '*dhoovek vikap*' (selling their daughter). Some respondents said that dowry was not given when there are love marriages or sometimes if they are poor. Marriage was usually arranged by the parents, married brothers and sisters, wife's brother or friends.

The Mithgaudas invite friends, relations and all the people they know for their marriage and other religious festivals. They invite the Dalits too for their festivals but there is a taboo for the Dalits to enter into the temple.



A Mithgauda marriage at Agarvaddo. The bride and groom are seen in their traditional clothes



The Yajman, who acts as the escort to the to-be-wed couple, leads the couple (above).



The 'votti borop' ceremony, in which women are gifted a coconut and rice, is placed in their lap. Votti borop literally means, filling the lap, in the local Konkani language



A newly-married couple is greeted at the reception hall, to the spraying of rice (akshatha), considered a fertility symbol

## Family

The most common form of family prevalent among the Mithgaudas in Agarvaddo was the joint family. However, in recent years, the joint family system has disintegrated, giving rise to nuclear family. Each joint family is split into several nuclear families. As each joint family normally has one salt pan, salt making is done on rotation basis by the split nuclear families. Joint-families hardly exist anymore.

Each family is given its turn based on the number of families that are there in each family. For example if the joint family consists of three sons, then each son will get his turn every three years. Salt making is normally a family-based occupation, where the whole family works in the process. This working together builds a bond within family members, as visible from their close dependence on each-other and also the willingness to fit into the traditional family structure largely without questioning its logic. Elderly parents join their sons and daughters (who have not yet married and moved out) in their salt pans. School-going children also accompany their parents and sometimes carry tea and snacks for their parents to the salt-pans. Grandparents keep children occupied or offer distractions and blandishments by way of pocket money

during the salt season- is a unique aspect which the researcher has not observed in the other two villages. (See photo)

Family ties are stronger in this village than the other two villages. As one respondent put it, getting embroiled in needless controversy and unnecessary disputes at home would only mean extra trips to the police station. (“*Vaad noko, ami sushikshit maansa barobar firle, police stationaar vaad korun gele zalear kuthre kaxe lomkavunk patta*”).

Some of the Mithgaudas live in joint families and others live in nuclear families. But for certain occasions, the latter too gather under one roof. This is explained as *Kaslia sannak ekeshini ravtat*, meaning an occasion on which all get together as a common family. During Ganesh Chaturthi, the most popular Hindu festival in Goa, the whole family gets together. The men women and children dine together for Ganesh. . On the first day of Ganesh Chaturthi Gauri pooja is performed and then Lord Ganesh is venerated. Gauri pooja is performed as a mark of respect to Lord Ganesh's mother. They celebrate Ganesh for five days in Agarvaddo. First two years the idol may be immersed on the second day and in subsequent year i.e the third year *tisaal* it has to be compulsorily immersed on the fifth day only.

The landlords also have big houses in Parcem. They mostly work and live in the towns. The landlords do not remember whether their ancestors worked in the salt pans. Since inception, people lived like landlords and felt it that it is below their dignity to work in the salt pans. The landlords remember times when their grandfather used to travel in a palanquin to see their salt pans.

## Status of Women

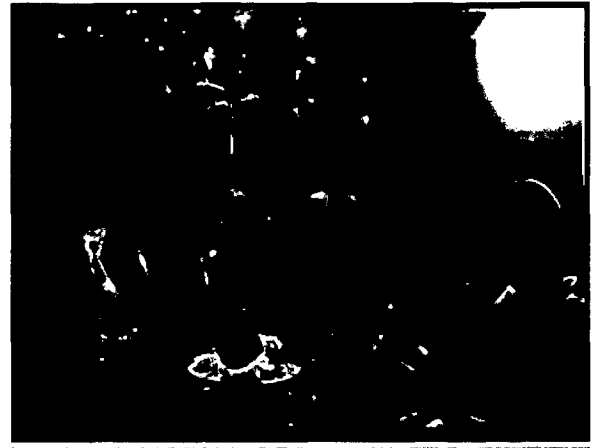
In a society like India gender plays a very important role. There are markers which give a hint of the lower status of women in Agarvaddo. Pregnant women are permitted to visit the family village temple till four months into the pregnancy. Newly born girl babies are brought inside the temple on completion of three months and boys have to wait to complete six months. Distinction was thus made between girls and boys from a tender age. While this particular example may not underline the inferior status of women, it does indicate that boys and girls are treated differently from a very tender age.

The women in Agarvaddo were allowed to pluck coconuts with a long bamboo stick, which was a job once performed by the men. They even smashed cashews with feet – to extract juice that goes into the making of cashew feni – by wearing gumboots, which was a task once performed solely by the men. But as far as politics is concerned, men feel that if women go out for political meeting there would be no one left to “do the cooking”, as one respondent put it. It is a patriarchal society. Women are also not encouraged to speak out in public, as is the case in Agarvaddo. They feel that women should be confined to domestic tasks like cooking and looking after the children. Women have worked alongside with men in the fields and salt pans, but are not encouraged to similarly venture into fields like politics in Agarvaddo.

As noted earlier, the men folk felt that if girls take up to higher education there will be *prem prakarn* (love affairs) and so girls are not allowed to go for education above the secondary level. A handful of girls are now however countering this trend of thought and taking up higher education in Agarvaddo.



A woman plucking coconut at Agarvaddo



A man serving food to all the women who are dining during the Ganesh festival

## Economic Life

### Occupation

Traditionally the economic condition of the Mithgauda family had been bad. Salt making was not the only source of livelihood of the Mithgaudas. It provided income and employment to the Mithgaudas. They have supported their families by salt making, agriculture, selling vegetables, cashew cultivation and rearing cattle. The main economic activity of this village consists of farming, cashew cultivation, the *Kaath* business and manufacturing of natural salt.

Salt work is done on the basis of rotation. So each married son – since daughters move out in marriage – gets a turn once in so-many years, depending on the number of sons in the family. The Mithgaudas feel that '*Tinsaan takh thallmallunk zai*' or they have to slog for the whole day in the salt pans. As far as employment of the Mithgaudas is concerned, they get their salt production for three months only. The remaining nine months they have to remain idle due to climatic reasons. Sometimes salt-making is undertaken by one person and the cashew plantation is done by the uncle or cousin. This is explained as: "*Choolto dongor karta.*" (My cousin works the hill.) They have to save the money they get on the salt



production because their turn for farming could come only once in three to four years. The head of the family, or the eldest male, usually delegates jobs to the others in the saltpans. Some landlords do not get any income from their salt pans. By way of rent from the trees in the property, the landlord stands to get rupees twenty thousand to thirty thousand depending of course on the size of the property.

The people of Agarvaddo, till recently, used to rear cattle too. The (*Kaath*) business involves the Khair tree, from which juice is extracted, then boiled and hardened to make *vaddi* used to make for betel leaf, add color to tea and for color in clothes. This business is undertaken by these people from Agarvaddo who are based in Rajapur in Maharashtra. In Goa licenses are not given for this business. The *Kaath* business requires an investment of around four to five lakhs. They would undertake this business from February to May and the rest of the year they would carry out agricultural operations).

But, over the last few years, there have been other economic activities which have begun in this village. For example, there is cashew nut processing unit which has begun over the last 17 years on the Agarvaddo–Mandrem junction.

Previously, in the year 2005, when the researcher had begun her study, there were very few shops but according to the village Sarpanch, there were only two shops in the year 2001 in Agarvaddo; but because of the road widening today there are a total of 48 shops in Agarvaddo today. There are 20 self–help groups and two bus owners belonging to a Raut family. There is one Goa Dairy branch at Naikvaddo in Agarvaddo near the village panchayat. The milk is supplied to this dairy by the locals who own the cattle in Agarvaddo. There are two cooperative societies i.e. The Pernem Taluka Farmers Cooperative Society situated at Naikvaddo and The Camp Urban Credit society (comprising of Chopdem, Agarvaddo, Morjim, and Parcem villages in

Pernem) Urban credit society situated at Rautvaddo. All this indicates a growing monetization of an economy, which a few decades ago also depended a lot on barter, and the local produce.

This village is close to the beaches – include Morjim, Ashvem, Mandrem, Arambol – there has been a growing number of foreign and domestic tourists who visit and has added to the improved economic life of the Mithgaudas. The main road that runs through the Agarvaddo village is connected to Arambol beach and other side to Morjim beach – both popular tourist destinations – thus attracting tourists, shacks and restaurants to the vicinity. Various tourists from India and people or picnickers from Goa especially visit to partake in the peace and tranquility of these two mentioned beaches.

During the tourist fair-weather season, all tourists pass the main Agarvaddo-Chopdem road where all the new shops have been set up by locals. Nearby banks are situated in Parcem, Mandrem and Morjim. Agarvaddo itself has no bank in the village.

**Sources of Income:** The Mithgaudas have supported their families by salt making, agriculture, cashew cultivation and rearing cattle and sale of milk, growing paddy, and vegetables for sale in the local market, coconut crops, work in nearby companies and factories and have their own business. Their income has barely provided sustenance to their family. However, in recent years, some of the economic changes and new measures might have helped them to access monetary earnings. *Paixe rakhun thevunk zai,*” as one respondent put it, meaning we have to save money and keep to spend for the rest of the year.

Huge catch of fish of fine varieties is made in the salt pans. Fish is available, when the water level is low. Perhaps the increasing salinity and the lack of space for free movement makes the life of the fish in the waters uncomfortable. In the local language one refers to “*agor marlo*” implying that the large scale fishing operation has taken place in the saltpan. The local market is full of tasty fish in those days (D’Souza:1997:53).

“They add that if they take fish from the salt pans we have to pay an extra amount of fees to the landlords. There are only two seasons when we get money from our salt one is when the *Gabit lok mitt vartaa tednam mitt khaptalem ani May mhaineant* meaning the fisher folk community take salt for drying fish from the months of November to January and the other time is in the month of May. So we have to save money for the remaining months to pay electricity water bills, food, clothing and other essential needs that we have.

**Annual Income from the Land:** When respondents were queried about the income from the salt pans they were working on, they preferred not to reveal the same. When the researcher tried to convince the respondents that this would be used for academic purpose only, a few respondents answered by saying that the annual income on land is between rupees twenty thousand to rupees one lakh rupees. Some feared that the researcher might relate or report this figure to the landlord.

Others were reluctant to mention the total income of their land. They would generally keep quiet. When the researcher persisted, suggesting they could state any figure, since this would not come in for verification, and neither was it in any way linked to an Income Tax query, they would suggest they earned Rs 50,000 per season.

Most salt farmers were entirely dependent on this occupation alone. They continued working on the pans even after riverside walls (bunds) and sluice-gates were damaged, and water flooded part of the pans. There is no alternative for them besides salt making, apart from seasonal cashew plantation work for some. There are no other means of livelihood in this village. Thus, this occupation gives each member a sense of belonging since each member of the salt-making family finds it necessary to undertake the tradition and family-ascribed job of salt making as part of the family.

This occupation of extracting salt demands a lot of hard work. Villagers have to work round the clock during the salt season as they cannot take a break. The community of salt makers has been faithful in pursuing this work for ages now.

The seriousness of the unemployment situation is evident from the fact that some educated graduates were also found working on the salt pans. Some had become graduates and one respondent had even done a B.P.Ed (Bachelor in Physical Education) degree but could not secure a job suitable to the qualifications.

Among the original owners, a majority of them were from the age category of 40 to 45, 55 to 60 and 70 to 75 years. They were mostly graduates and were holding good jobs like that of a director, politician, and bank employee, working for the government or teachers.

**Occupation-preference for Children:** Occupation is hereditary. The Mithgaudas felt that their children should, if possible, take up prestigious jobs like those of being a doctor or mechanical engineer. One respondent said, when asked about what occupation the children should take up: '*Bhurgim zotitt tim khavshit. Paim Mai Ghoo Khatith.*' (The children should earn decently to eat; their parents eat crap!).

**Assets and Liabilities:** The Mithgaudas have assets in the form of the land (*Dhongar*). They take loans from the bank when they face problems like a *Vhodlem Khaavte* (big breach in the bund). Although the landlords own the saltpans, some of them do not know how much of land they own. The hold over land by landlords has been diminished since the 1960s in particular, due to steps like the agricultural land-tenancy laws.

**Duration of Work:** The Mithgaudas work from 7.30 am to 9.30 am and then from 2.30 pm to 6.30 pm. The peak salt producing season is from February to May, due to there being the right temperatures for evaporation, and no interruption by the monsoons rains.

### **Spending Habits**

Salt makers usually spend their income on food, clothes, investment on their children etc. Landlords spend their income on family life, children's education, transportation and food. The saving habits of the landlords are good. They usually spend on mutual funds, fixed deposits etc. They are of the opinion that unless one saves, the money will not grow. They feel that they produce more than their needs.

### **Special Schemes for the Salt Workers**

There are no special schemes for the salt makers in Agarvaddo, from either the State or Central governments currently available or being availed of.

## Division of Labour in the Salt Pans

The Mithgaudas do the digging, level the floor by smashing the earth with a *sallnem* (an instrument used in salt-making) and then use the *pavni* to flatten the floor. Women perform simple tasks like filling the salt and carrying it on the bundh. They also collect the *shimpi* (shards of broken shell) from the saltpans. The women usually do the jobs like *shello kadap* (removing moss out from the saltpans) and *shipio ani gunne kadop* (removing tiny stones and shells) from the saltpans. The women also carry the salt by the head load.

## The Ownership Pattern and the Current State of Salt Pans

There are altogether nine agars (*bogaatto*) meaning one salt pan is further divided into parts in Agarvaddo. Of these, there are five salt pans in operation. The names of the different *agars* are; *Naanaacho agar*, *Gaanvcho agar*, *Saabaacho agar*, *Aagurli agar*, *Aadnumber agar*, *Raasvoll agar*, *Kaanso agar*, *Baapaacho agar* and *Pednekaracho agar*.

The four agars which are not in use are: *Aagurli*, *Raasvoll*, *Aadumber agar* and *Naanacho agar*. There is one called the *Gaanvcho agar* for which a tender (*leelanv*) was put out. It is owned by the Sateri temple in Agarvaddo.

Of the nine saltpans in the village only five are presently used for salt production and four are practically damaged. Damage has occurred due to destruction of outer protective embankment and sluice gates i.e. *manos* since 1987–88. This caused a loss of Rs. 8.9 lakhs per year (<http://www.peacefulsociety.org/env/salt.htm>). Four large breaches have wrecked havoc by incessantly flooding the saltpans with saline water. This saline water entered in the salt pans and then reached the fields resulting in damaging of the fields too. Such breaches were in olden days repaired by

the landlords but nowadays landlords do not take interest in the salt pans since they do not earn much out of it. When the researcher had registered for her Ph.D. in the year 2006, this problem of the breach sharply affected the area, so much so that the people were even reluctant to speak to any outsider regarding the same. But towards the end of the Ph.D., by 2008, this problem had been solved and villagers could once again extract salt in the salt pans.

The landlords from Parcem own the salt pans in Agarvaddo. In the New Conquests, there were large number of Marathas as well as Desais who have been gauncars or members of the land-controlling comunidades (D'Souza 1975:29).

While part of Goa was already under Portuguese rule, the other areas ('New Conquests') had not yet been colonised by the Portuguese. During the rule of Yusuf Adil Shah, the Hindus enjoyed religious freedom and were also appointed to important civil and military posts. Lands were given in the charge of, and for the collection of revenue, to loyal Hindus, chiefly Brahmins, Lingayats and Marathas with the titles of *Jagirdaars* (estate holders) or *Deshmukhs*. These appointments were made on the basis of hereditary principles. Some Hindus were also given the titles of Desais and Sardesais, and placed in charge of revenue collection of some lands. Hindus who distinguished themselves in the king's services were given Hindu titles of *Rajah*, *Naik* and *Rao*. A number of Marathas were recruited into the Bijapuri army and Hindu garrisons were stationed in many hill forts (D'Souza 1975:22, 23).

Land was then not a commodity to be purchased in the market. Land was owned by the village communities or the dominant sections of it. During the Kadamba rule, one-sixth of the produce was considered to be the king's share. This was raised by the subsequent Muslim rulers to one-fourth. Revenue was mostly paid in kind. It was collected by the village council and passed on to the taluka officials to be

siphoned off to the king. The other sources of revenue were the taxes on oilmen, oil mills, betel leaves and salt. The Adil Shah appointed Desais and Sardesais to collect the revenue of certain lands. These men began to demand exorbitant amounts from the peasants and used a part of it to satisfy their own avarice. In course of time, they even expropriated community land. (D'Souza 1975:25, 26).

Landlords whom the researcher claimed that because of the services they performed in the Adil Shahi army, and since they had shown their bravery, five villages had been given to the Desais from Parcem as a gift. The villages are Parcem, Agarvaddo, Mandrem, Morjim and Carsarvornem. Earlier, the Tuem village was also a part of Parcem. Villagers who are not the landlords however have a differing oral history to narrate. They feel that it was their hard work, but the award went to the landlords. (*"Amcheani vasaiem ani bhatkarank inam mhunn dilem"*). An elderly respondent felt that since the villagers lacked education then, the ownership went to the landlords.

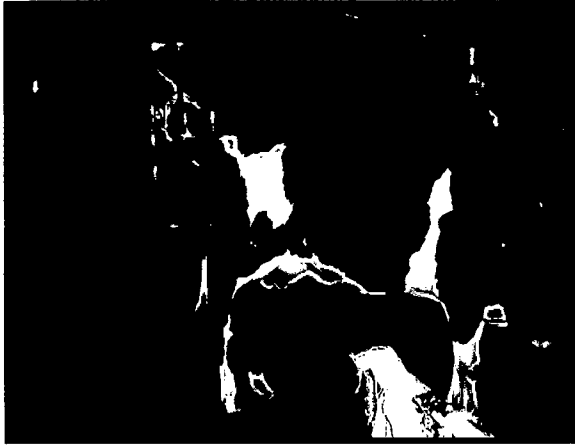
This happened in 1924, according to an old respondent. He feels that since they were not educated, it leads the landlords getting the salt-pans from the rulers. Another theory that has currency in the local oral history is that since they didn't pay the *leilav* or tax, the villagers might have lost their salt pans in auctions, maybe four centuries back (*Dasth na farik kelo mhunn paooni haddli chaarsim varsam adhi*).

### **Reasons for Abandoning the Salt Pans**

One reason is the embankment which was not repaired for a long time led to the destruction of the salt pan and indirectly also affected their fields and their pasture lands, which was used for the grazing of the cattle. They have had to either graze their cattle on the hill or abandon them. There have been no developmental activities in the



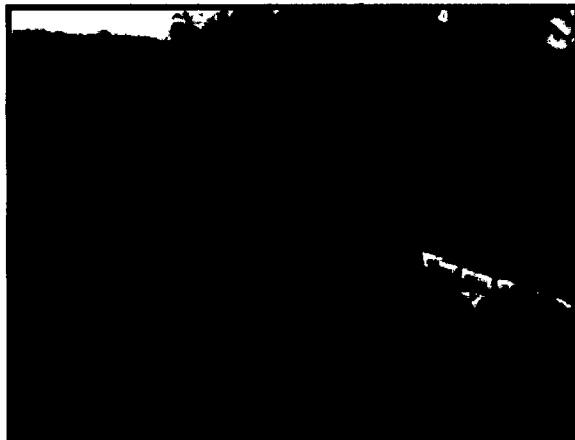
salt pans in Agarvaddo. Salt pans not damaged by breaches are used only for salt extraction. Secondly the people are leaning on too other sources of income like taking up jobs outside their homes, starting of new business ventures shops etc.



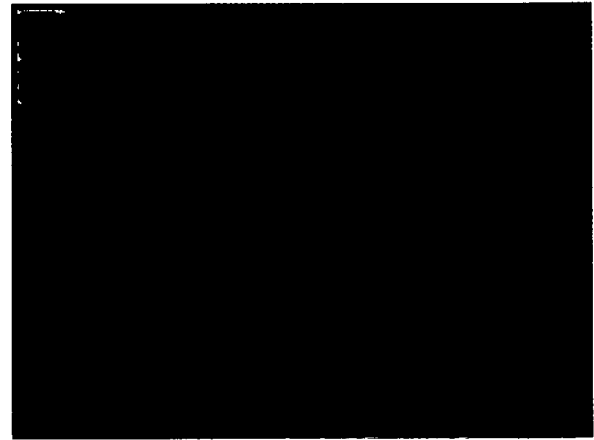
A cow in the shed of a Mithgawda family at Agarvaddo. Due to the salt-water intrusion into the fields, adjacent to the salt-pans, the cattle lack grazing areas and need to be taken to the adjoining hills



The broken bund (protective wall) at Agarpويم, which was kept unrepaired for many years, damaged the salt farming in Agarvaddo severely. The gap in the bund is clearly seen at the centre of the photo. This has been subsequently repaired.



Destroyed Sluice Gates (manos) due to the breach at Agarpويم in Agarvaddo



The 'bobdo' breach created in the salt pans is repaired by the mithgaudas themselves

### Modern Technology and its Effect

Social problems like alcoholism and poverty exist in Agarvaddo, as in other parts of Goa, particularly rural Goa. The landlords believe that there are problems in the neighbouring Parcem village like alcoholism; acute and visible poverty, to some

extent, has been wiped off. But to imagine that such problems do not affect the area is unrealistic.

If midday meals are not provided to less-affluent children attending government and government-funded schools, the children studying there find it difficult to concentrate on their studies. Poverty and malnourishment, besides unemployment (sometimes disguised unemployment or seasonal unemployment) cannot be overlooked. Consuming alcohol is one way of a poverty-stricken's person out of coping with strenuous work.

There are no new technological changes adopted in Agarvaddo since to employ the modern techniques of production that are employed in the other parts of the country like Gujarat require a large area. Due to the peculiar ownership patterns in the area – in part caused by Goa's higher population density, and also the fragmentation of land ownership here due to legal and other reasons – it is not possible to employ these techniques when the size of the salt pans is small. However there has been an attempt to consolidate the size of the area of salt pans. Multi-national companies had come and met the salt-farmers but offers were at rather low rates, so these were not accepted. Such a sell-out of the salt pans would also have an impact of their ownership structure.

A meeting was held with all the salt makers of the whole of Goa in Panjim wherein the multinational companies wanted to take over the salt pans, but the rate offered by the companies was comparatively less too.

The Mithgaudas feel that it is not necessary to add iodine to our salt since they feel that they have been consuming it for the past five hundred years. *Amche nadik ghaann na* (our river is not polluted), was the rationale of respondents queried. They felt that if iodization of salt plant was formed than there would be a chairman,

secretary and other officials working on the plant. *Ami pikaitale ani te aple kishe bhartale* meaning we would produce the salt and they would feel their own pockets. *Khatalean khaanvche ani na khatalean na khaanvche* meaning whoever wants to eat may eat.

A team from Gujarat had come to train the Mithgaudas. Sakaraam Parab and Uttam Balla Baggli were to be taken for training to Gujarat but they felt that *mazoorek manaai theile zalear khoop paixe modhunk zai* meaning if they go to Gujarat and keep labourers to work here we would have to spend a lot.

The *bund* (riverside protective wall) breaking has caused a great deal of losses for the salt makers of Agarvaddo, displacing a number from their traditional livelihood pattern. The bunds have since been repaired.

Local salt makers use the old outdated methods of salt production. The production of salt has improved the material conditions of the people.

### **Competition in the Market**

Agarwado Salt, being purest of natural Salt in Goa, with less silt and sand is highly prized (<http://www.peacefulsociety.org/env/salt.htm>).

Of late, there has been more of a demand for superior salt. Consumers prefer the Agarvaddo traditional salt since the suppliers from Tisvadi also come to Agarvaddo, since the colour of this salt is whiter than all the other traditional salt that is available in the market.

It is however priced costlier than the salt from the two other villages looked at in this study. Incidentally, a sample of the salt was sent by the elite Mithgaudas of Agarvaddo to the Excise Duty Officer at Shiroda (Maharashtra) and later sent to Delhi where it was rated high. *Mhaal ek number mhunn saangle* our product was rated

number one. *Ami tin khepo mero laita teka lagon amche mith barem asta* means we prepare the bunds for three times as a result we get superior salt in Agarvaddo. However, there is no minimum price support policy for locally manufactured salt. Agarvaddo salt-makers feel that their salt should fetch a higher price. Growing competition in the sector leads to dumping of sub-standard, adulterated with sand at cheaper rates, forcing the Agarvaddo salt-producers to lower their prices (<http://www.peacefulsociety.org/env/salt.htm>). The Mithgaldas of Agarvaddo take more trouble in the different stages of salt-making as compared to the other places in the rest of Goa.

### **Opinions on the Future of Salt Making**

Some pressures facing the salt-producers of Agarvaddo make their outlook gloomy for obvious reasons. These include:

The main hurdles that the salt-makers face is the problem of transportation of salt, since the salt pans in Agarvaddo are not connected by road. They have to carry the salt on their head or bring it across on bicycle, meaning that a lot of family labour is required to get the salt from the salt pans to the road.

The *khavtte* (breach) in the *bunds* (riverine protective walls) is another problem that the salt makers face in Agarvaddo. Each time there is a breach in the bunds, the repairs is done by the family members themselves.

However, there is a positive side too. None of the salt makers are planning to give up the jobs of the salt pans. None of the salt pans have as yet been converted into real estate zones for non-agricultural zones or for express highways. Likewise, salt pan land has not yet been taken or acquired for any other purpose by the government in Agarvaddo.

## Use of Traditional Implements

The Mithgaudas do not deploy the electric pump. Water is taken out of the salt pans using traditional means of letting the water out. During the low tide, a pipe is inserted to let the water out and during the high tide this opening is sealed. Thus minimizes the flow of water into the salt pans. The time required for preparation of salt pans before the actual salt crystals are formed is three to four months. This long wait-period is mainly because of non-availability of diesel pumps for removing water from the salt pans.

The Agarvaddo salt-pans have been constructed at below sea-level to allow the easy intake of water, while at the same time ensuring that during high tide there is a protection to block the water from entering in the salt pans. Provision of diesel-pump on subsidised basis would surely help in reducing the currently long pre-production period.

## Labour, Storage and Transportation

Goa being a land interspersed with many rivers, the easiest and most economic means of conveyance was the *alameda* (a local canoe). A number of *alamedas* bringing native goods called at the city dockyard. There were carts and coaches to take passengers from one place to another. Oxen and horses were used either to pull carts and coaches or to carry riders (Xavier 1993: 222).

The mode of transporting salt in the earlier years was by the use of *vaddi* is a canoe or the small country boat. In olden days, the salt used to be transported by tempo, *bailgaadi* or bullockcart taken by *vadient* or canoes to Menkurem, Saal, Pernem and Bardez. But since this sort of transportation system is no longer in use today, the Mithgaudas face a lot of problem to move salt from the salt pans.



Oldest means of transporting salt using canoes (vadi) and ghaddiakar (one who sells with the help of bullock cart)

Salt pans are inaccessible from the main road, and thus marketing becomes expensive. The people either carry one bag of salt on the head or bicycles are used to transport salt since there is no approach road. This leads to wastage of labour. The cost of transporting one bag of salt from the saltpan to the road is roughly Rs.6 which is about the same as the cost of transportation from Agarvaddo to Banda in Maharashtra. *Maal shilakh aasa thaich maal paddun urtaa mhunn maangor bandoon thaich vevasthin theilo* meaning since the salt remains idle in the salt pans and gets washed off in the rains, we constructed godowns in the salt pans.

An approach road from the Agarpaim embankment in Chopdem would solve the problem, since when the repair work of the *bandharo* or embankment was underway, the *manos* in between were filled with mud. This embankment, if widened for the road and properly developed from the embankment, is likely to solve the problem of the Mithgaudas. This will facilitate the transport of light-goods vehicles for speedy, cheap transport of salt from the salt pans. *Maanso sarke bandhunk zai meaning* the sluice gates which exist do not allow to transporting the salt by road

unless there are culverts on them. From the *bandharo*, there could be bridges or culverts which will help the salt makers to transport salt from the salt pans.

Storage of salt is another factor which leads to the decrease in the salt if not stored properly. There are five *khopi* (huts) to store salt in the salt pans. Four to five *Khandi* (measure of weight, three khandies made one deadweight ton) salt gets stored in each of these huts in the salt pans at Agarvaddo.

### **Association of the Mithgaudas**

The Mithgaudas had a salt-producers association called as Pernem Taluka Mith Utpadhak Sangha (<http://www.peacefulsociety.org/env/salt.htm>).

# **CHAPTER V**

## **THE AGRIS OF BATIM**



# THE AGRIS OF BATIM

## e Village

## e Geographical Location

Batim is a village that lies off the highway linking state-capital Panaji with north Goa (Margao and beyond, and to Vasco). The village lies between two other stages of central coastal Goa, namely Goa Velha and Curca. The boundaries of Batim are the Siridao River on the west, village Gancim (Ganzvim) on the north east, Curca-O-Pequeno (Neura) on the south east and Goa Velha on the south.

## ymology of Batim

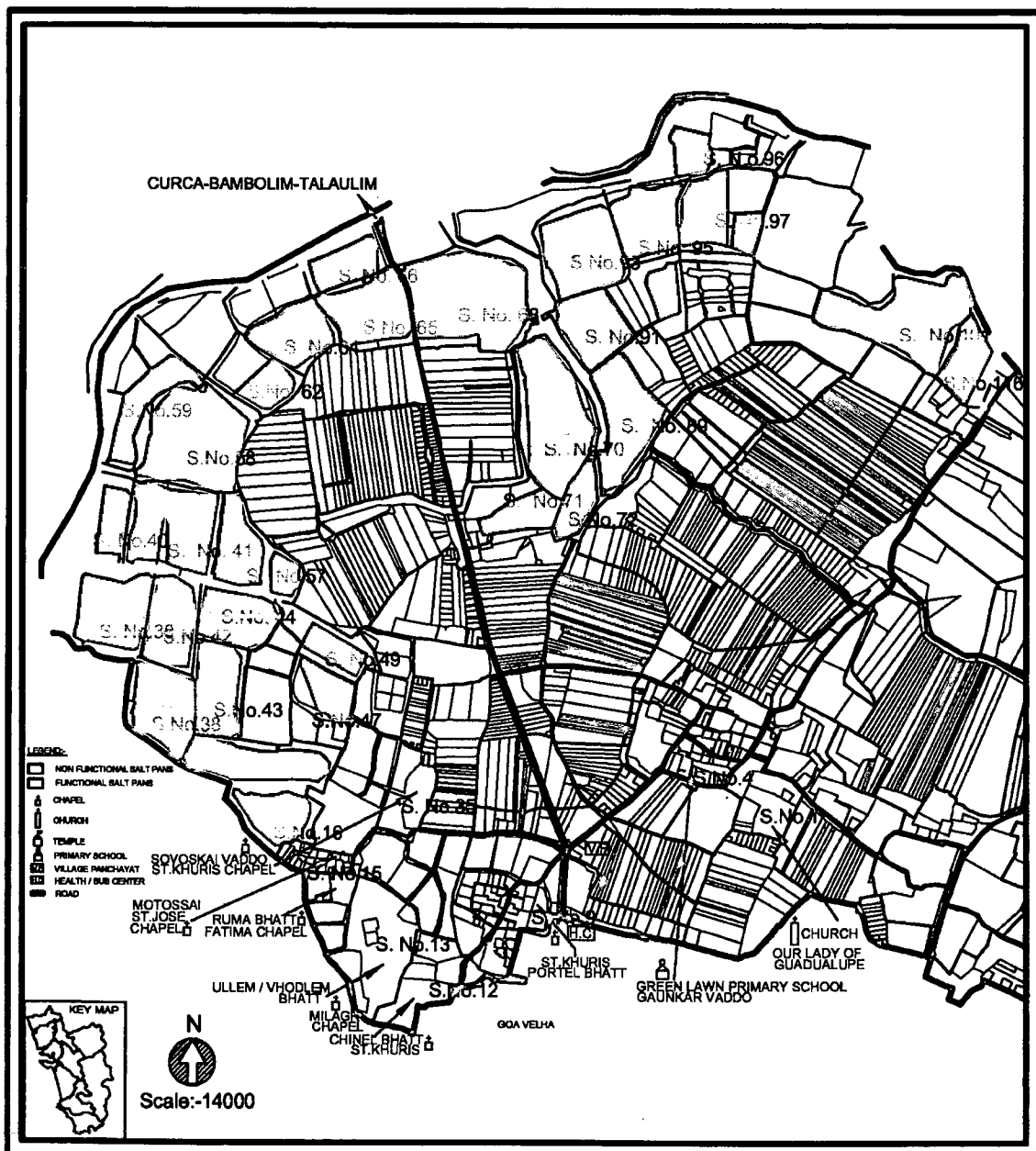
Bhati, a Konkani term, refers to a furnace. In another context, the same term refers to the place where traditional alcohol (*feni, urrack*) is processed in Goa. Salt-producing villages of Goa have a hamlet or a vaddo which is referred to as Bhati - for example in the village Nerul (which has the ward called Bhatier, close to salt-pans) and Arpora. This term could originate from the reservoirs that go alongside the salt-pans. These are also known as the heaters or the *Tapovanim*, and get used in salt-producing villages to heat the saline water while extracting the salt out of the brine or sea-saturated water.

Another possible meaning of a 'Bhati' is the place where the rainwater runoff from various places meets. In Portuguese, the word has got rendered as Batim (with final 'm' almost silent in pronunciation).

In the museum of the Asiatic Society at Mumbai, three copper plates bear inscriptions in the Sanskrit and Nagari script, referring to the donation made before

the deity Narayana, of a paddy field in the village of “Salibhatti” situated to the North of Gopakapuri, which is presided over by the deity Goveshwar. “Salibhatti” corresponds to Batim (Gomes Pereira: 1978: 40).

## Map No. 5.1 BATIM Location Plan



There could be other possible reasons for the name of the village. Goa was ruled by the Portuguese from 1510 to 1961, who came along with the intention of spreading the Christian faith. One of the possible reasons's for Batim's name emerges in this context. The word Batim could have originated from *Bhatle* in the local Konkani language, which meant "got converted". Incidentally, if asked about their ancestors' religious conversions many generations ago, the salt makers of Batim say to this day, "*Ami maas uddoile Kristanv*" ("We are converts who turned Christian as our wells were polluted with flesh and blood of animal's meat").

### **The Earliest Settlers**

The earliest settlers of Batim village are believed to be the Mitt Gauddas. Before the coming of the Gaunkars, who later settled in the Gaunkar vaddo in Batim, the Mitt Gauddas are believed to have been the original settlers. Later, however, they were forced to move to other areas of the village and beyond by the Gaunkars who reside in the Gaunkar vaddo area.

Another reason for the Mithgaudas to flee from Batim could be due to plague. The sixteenth century co-founder of the Jesuits religious order and the Catholic missionary-saint Francis Xavier preached in this village, when there was a plague in Ganvxim, the adjacent village to Batim. Oral history gives us an idea of the Batim of those times, and narrates those entire families were buried together in common graves at the time of plague, while the skeletons are still visible there.

Currently, however, residents of Gaunkar vaddo term those outside their area – i.e Agris – as "*Sokoile*" (those from beneath). They consider them as the lower members of the society, since the salt making occupation was considered to be of a low social status by them.

Most of the Agri respondents in Batim have come migrated to this village sometime in the past from areas like Telaulim in Navelim, Zuari and Uddi from Goa-Velha, Mercedes, Anjuna and Santa-Cruz. Some were brought here to do salt work and others came here because of family disputes in their respective villages.

Some of the original owners also, meanwhile, reside outside the village in areas like Goa-Velha, Siridao, Bicholim and the like. Some used to stay in Batim several years ago, but due to problems like the plague - or so they recall - they slowly moved to other villages like Goa-Velha. It is not known from oral history as to where exactly the original salt makers from Batim moved out to.

There are two possible explanations for the original *Mittkars* (salt makers) of Batim having disappeared, and for no longer continuing in the area. Firstly, unknown causes like diseases, plagues, wars and epidemics and secondly, the inquisition. Since there was deficiency of labour in salt pans in Batim, the owners brought the labourers from Telaulim (Salcette) and Anjuna to Batim. The people of Telaulim who came as labourers went back home to collect their *zonn* (i.e. the annual share they received on grounds of being male members of the village communities, or *comunidades*) in their own village. People currently explain this by using the Konkani explanation of "*Tari pailean vorun dovortale*" or "They collect and store it across the river".

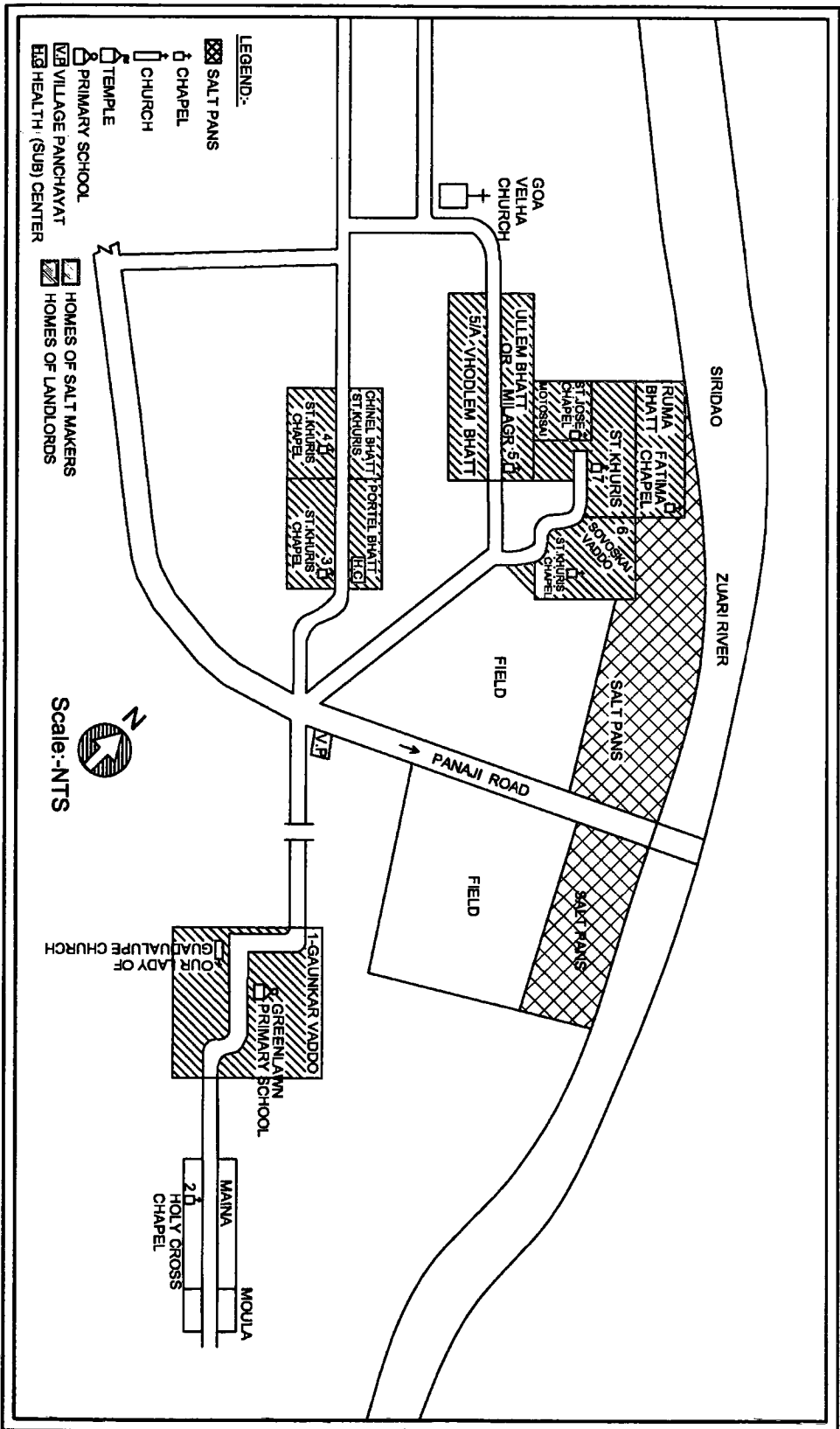
The *zonn* earnings received by the people was so meagre that it was only enough to pay the boatman his charges so people eventually stopped collecting the *zonn*. Some respondents from Batim who have migrated from Telaulim-Navelim used to collect the *Zonn* from Navelim. They had to spend four *annas* to collect their *zonn*. So the *zonn* amount would be less than the amount that was spent in the travel, and the belief is that, as a result of this, people slowly stopped going to Telaulim to collect the *zonn*.

## The Village Settlement

Batim names of properties and places or village hamlets (*vadde* or wards) apparently have a history that go back to remote times. The village currently consists of eight wards:

- The Church Ward, or Igroz Vaddo, is also the Gaunkarvaddo. That is, it is home to the Gaunkars, who claim to be the original or dominant owners (*nizaache*) of the village. The people from other wards are not allowed to reside in this particular ward.
- Maina Ward initially belonged to the neighbouring Ganvxim village, but is now part of Batim, and its residents are mainly toddy tapers (*render*).
- Portel Bhatt was the commercial ward of the oil extractors (locally known as the *teli*).
- Chinel Bhatt is where a Portuguese *saukar* or landlord resided. There is a belief or mythology that, before leaving, he gave some of his wealth to the people who worked for him. The people of Gaunkarvaddo were jealous of that, and, in order to secure what the *Agris* had received, told a person residing there to take his wife's *chinel* (which in Portuguese meant slippers) when he was getting his daughter married. The Gaunkar gave the Agri his *chinel* and took his signature and kept the Agri in debt. In a few years time, the Agri was asked to return the *chinel* which was by then worn out and thrown away. The receiver said that he cleaned the house, ("*ghor zaadlem*"), yet, the *chinel* was nowhere to be found. In this way, the story goes, the *Agris* surrendered themselves to the Gaunkars saying, "*mhoje mai, mhoje mai, atam kor zaiem*

# Map No. 5.2 BATIM: Wards Location Plan



tem” (Mother mine, now do what you want!). The Agris were made to pay whatever amount was prescribed to them by the Gaunkar. This ward, thus, got the name Chinel Bhatt.

- Ulhem Bhat (*Ulolem bhatt*) or the remaining piece of land.
- Sovoskai ward was called *Zoglle* Bhatt earlier. Originally *zoglem* refers to the blade used on the plough. The people later called it *Zogddem* Bhatt (fighters' ward). The then parish priest Fr. Pedro F. Pereira thought it was a depreciative term, and converted it to mean *Sovoskai* Bhat, meaning a land of peace.
- Ruma Bhatt. In the Portuguese language, 'ruma' means pomegranate. Since this ward had many *ruma* plants, it got the name of Ruma Bhatt.
- Motassai ward; inquiries did not reveal any significance for this name.

### Daily Routine

Batim's daily life routine is different compared to elsewhere in Goa. This, in part, is due to the predominance of the salt making work in this area. According to their caste and social status, village people are always engaged in some or the other kind of activity. From June to December, they are engaged in paddy cultivation and pisciculture and from December to the beginning of June with salt-pan activity.

Their meal consists of large quantity of coarse boiled rice and fish curry (*xith-koddhi*, literally rice-and-curry). After the lunch break, they return to work at around 2 p.m. and toil in the heat. At 6 p.m., while returning home in groups, they again go to the favorite *tavern*, as country liquor shops are known here, where they spend an hour or so and debate, sometimes heatedly too, on topics uppermost on their mind.

## Religious Compositions and Conversions

As a result of the religious conversions, which took place around the sixteenth century thereafter in Batim, which lies not far from the old capital of Old Goa, Christians form the bulk of Batim's population today. The Christian of Batim from Gaunkar vaddo has European-origin surnames – as do other Goan Catholics. These are believed to have been handed over to them by those who stood sponsors for their ancestors at the time of baptism. Given the manner in which religion shaped it in Goa, at the time of baptism, the converts were required to give up their Indian names and surnames and were given Portuguese names. Hence the Christian population of Batim has surnames like Braganza, Paes, Pires, Pacheco, Gomes, Pinto, Vaz, Fernandes, Da Cunha and Ferrao. Thereafter, following a Portuguese edict, it was considered an offence for a Portuguese to even address them by old Hindu names (Priolkar 1967: 10).

Local belief has it that in the past, during the early phase after conversions, the people of the village seldom went for Mass. So the parish priest of that time, Fr. Pedro F. Rodrigues, also known as *Lokond Pedru* ('Iron Peter'), went to the fields to get these people to church and bought their agricultural implements to church so that the people would not be able to work in the field. For the people who were at home, he used to tie them to a rope, *Razuvaak bandun igorjent hattallo*, and forcibly get them to church, so goes the belief. The penance was to keep them in a dark room in the church without food.

Going by the lore again, it is said that the Agris, who were wearing *kashti* i.e a modest loin cloth, were ashamed to be seen in church; so the Parish priest offered them Western clothes to wear to church.

Cunha Rivara (D'Souza 1975) is critical of the doings of his earlier



compatriots when he remarks: “In the first heat of conquest, temples were destroyed, all the emblems of the pagan culture were shattered to pieces and the books written in the vernacular were burnt for being guilty or suspected of containing precepts and doctrines of idolatry. The properties of Hindu temples were confiscated and given to the missions for the upkeep of the Christian churches. The demolition of the temples, the confiscation of the properties of the temples, the decrees of banishment and discriminations caused mass migrations of the Hindus to the neighboring areas outside the Portuguese territories and in this even the new Christians joined probably with the intention of escaping the attention of the Inquisition. The Hindus took away their gods with them and built temples in their new places of settlement.” (D’Souza 1975: 150).

Moren De Souza (1994) in his book ‘Tisvaddecheo Igorzo’ states that in the sub-district of Tisvadi, the task of preaching was begun by Dom Pedro Mascarenhas in 1554-55. The island was divided up between the Dominican and Jesuit priests. Villagers from the eastern side such as Dauji and St. Bras, Banastarim, Agacaim, Chorao and Divar came under the Jesuits. Some villages were distributed to the Franciscan missionaries, writes Jesuit priest Antonio dos Quadros (De Souza 1994).

Different early accounts of religious conversions, written in a manner that reflects the ideologies and beliefs of their authors, are still available, including covering the area of Batim.

In 1560, some sixty Brahmin boys came to train to become catechetical legionaries, who went to distant villages on Sundays. They taught the doctrine in palm leaf huts, to which other children, old women, and young mothers with their babies trooped. One young man is said to have walked into Guadalupe Church (Batim) one evening and asked for an explanation of the paintings on the walls. Among them

happened to be Christ's baptism in the Jordan. Next morning, the youth was back to the parish priest, telling him that all night he had been haunted by the explanation he had received; and to admit him for baptism (Mascarenhas 1987: 98-100).

Malu Camotim and Ramu Camotim of Batim were among the chief *gaunkars* of the leading villages of the islands of Goa who on June 28, 1541 attended the meeting held at the palace of the governor for the purpose of conversion (Xavier 1993: 122).

After the Jesuits reached Batim, Goa Velha was under the jurisdiction of Batim. Students of the St. Paul College, which was set up in the early colonial phase in the Portuguese colonial capital of the East, would come to teach catechism. By the year 1560, the Jesuits spread Christianity to all those villages which were under their possession. On July 28, 1560, Br. Martin Da Silva, a Jesuit, along with his companion fellow Jesuit, came to Batim to propagate Christianity. They had discussions with influential people of the villagers and took them to the Governor and they had to let know their vision and their work so they approached other priests in the college at St. Paul's College. The message was "so convincing" that they asked for Baptism and requested to be converted. The then Bishop was from Malakka, Dom Jorge de S. Luzia. The chiefs and *gaunkar* of this village went to Old Goa to request the missionaries to Baptize them in the same manner people of Goa Velha requested to be converted, the people of Batim were baptized on August 25, 1560 (Souza 1994: 139).

The letter of Luis Frois dated November 13, 1560 has mentioned that mass baptisms in Batim took place on August 25, 1560. It claims that when the priests who had been sent to make preparations for the christening were asleep, at midnight of August 24, more than two hundred persons, men, women and children knocked at their door and declared that they wished to become Christians. The women were very

well dressed and wore plenty of gold. The men were also well dressed with feathers in their caps and guns on their shoulders. The group was led by one man called Camotim (Kamat). He wore scarlet satin pants, had a silver sword at his waist and a gun on mentioned day. These people belonged to the Chardo class, consisting of warriors, men of a “much better personality” than the Brahmin (Gomes Pereira: 1978: 40, Mascarenhas 1987: 98)

Of course, this history is hotly contested. Depending on one's ideological perspective, the narration changes strongly from what is portrayed above. For instance: The destruction of the Hindu temples did not suffice to satisfy the fanatical zeal of the Portuguese rulers. Attempts continued to be made to convert the local population to Christianity and it was only natural that these should provoke stubborn resistance from their leaders (Priolkar 1961: 69).

The part played by group leadership in the conversion of Goa to Christianity is significant. The earliest appears to have been some solidarity in the menial classes that found leaders to form the vanguard of the first wave of Christian converts. They totalled twelve thousand at the mass baptism of January 24, 1560, and counted the entire villages of Daugim, Batim, Moula, Carambolim and Mercondim, with 2,270 from Agassaim and Ancient Goa (Goa Velha) (Mascarenhas 1987: 97).

“With evangelization becoming the *leit-motif* of Portuguese rule from the mid-sixteenth century, entire villages were converted to Christianity. The functions of the gramdevata (village deity) - of ensuring, for example, a bountiful harvest - now came to be appropriated by the parish church with the costs of being defrayed by the *gaoponn* as in the past. The syncretic dimensions of theology, visible particularly in the Santeri-Shantadurga-Milagres worship, and in religious festivals like the Hindu *zattras* and Catholic feasts, must be examined not only as cross cultural meeting points

between the two religions, but also as statements about the resistance offered by the Hindus. The *shakti-pitha* image of Goa - one of the ubiquitous places of cosmic power consecrated to the female deity - continues in the convert community with the worship of the local forms of the Virgin Mary, the *Saibin Mai* of the Goan Catholics” (Kamat 1999: 70).

The traditional Goan caste system was integrated into Christianity in spite of the latter’s tenet of universal brotherhood of man. Marginalized castes within the traditional Hindu hierarchy accepted the new religion with hopes of social and economic upliftment; while the elite caste groups did so with a view to protect their lands, privileges and even status (Kamat 1999: 72).

Although the Agris of Batim visit Pilgao before starting of the salt season to invoke the blessing of the deity Chamundeshwari. This temple was founded by the ancestors of the present Mahajans. It is affiliated to Gomeshwar, Kalbhairav, Khetrapall, Nirankar and Purusha. The Mahajans belong to the Vani or Vaishya class. The statutes of this Devasthan do not refer to the fact that the main deity belonged to Goa Velha of Ilhas taluka (Gomes Pereira 1978: 136).

The researcher also went to Pilgao in Bicholim along with the Agri from Batim. In spite of the Catholic Church being strict in wanting to avert cross-religious beliefs, the salt makers still visit their *gram devi* (traditional village deity) in Pilgao. The temple priest acts with due consideration towards the salt makers and the other Christians who come from Batim, as if acknowledging the historical and pre-conversion links.

But now-a-days, in Batim, a new trend is noticed wherein mediant women come with a statue of the goddess, claiming to have come in from Pilgao. Since the Agris cannot immediately counter-check at Pilgao, they prefer to offer some alms to

these women. When the researcher enquired with the temple priest from Pilgao whether such women had been sent by the temple, the latter replied in the negative.

At present, there is no Hindu temple in Batim. The temples which existed earlier in pre-conversion times in Batim were Bauca-Devi, Ravalnath, Santeri, Bhairao, Narana, Ramnath, Betall, and Brahmamn Purus (Priolkar 1961: 69). The temple of the deity Narayana was situated at the site of the present Church Of Our Lady Of Guadalupe. There are no vestiges of the transference of its deities. In the old records, a reference is, however, made to Gaunkars with the surname of 'Camotim' (the Portuguese spelling for Kamat).

There is another community – the migrant *Agers* who come in from Karnataka – whose religious background needs to be noted too. *Agers* who have migrated to Batim from nearby Karnataka are technically considered Hindus by religion. However, the *Agers* do not belong to the Varna system. They in fact are part of the Scheduled Castes, who fall beyond the Chatur Varna (four-fold system of *varnas* or hierarchical stratification). They worship the *Murkunde* as their village god or *gram dev*. Their *kul dev* or the family god is *Entramen* in Pandharpur. They also worship *Sabnamali* god. While based in Goa, they worship the god Ishwar, a shrine to whom is located at Santana village close to Batim. On the day of Shivratri, they offer coconut, flowers, *agarbatti* (incensed sticks) and bananas to the village god. With their busy schedule, the labourers hardly get time to go to the village temple.

**Land and Conversions:** Till very recently – possibly even the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – land in Goa was commonly owned and not private property. During Portuguese rule, however, village communities were permitted to sell land, which till now was held in common ownership by the communities.

In the early stages of Portuguese rule itself, the rulers confiscated vast

properties from the temples and mosques and donated them to influential high-caste members who made up the neo-elite of society as inducements for their conversions to Christianity. This, together with changes in the land-ownership structure in areas of Goa which were also not ruled by the Portuguese for long (the 'New Conquests'), brought into effect large scale landlordism in Goa.

Land could henceforth be bought, sold, mortgaged etc. Land became a market commodity and this rise of landlordism created a new class of landlords in the Goan society (D'Souza 1975: 197). It is possible that the salt pans owned by the landlords of Batim might have been gifted to the people of the Gaunkar vaddo after conversion. Some Hindu landlords have also bought land from the Catholic landlords in the early part of the twentieth century.

Conversion plays an important role in the history of Goa. As such a brief reference to the Christian origin is made vis a vis Batim church to illustrate the role of religion in the present context.

### **History of the Batim Church**

The church has its roots in a primitive small chapel, which itself had its beginning before 1541. This original chapel, which was located near the cemetery (see photograph), was demolished in 1859. The present church, whose foundation was laid in 1860, was rebuilt and blessed on June 30, 1867. (Lourenco 2006: 53, De Souza 1994: 139).

Moreno De Souza's (1994) book *Tisvaddecheo Igorzo* mentions that, in remembrance of the site of the old church, there exist small pillars with Latin inscriptions: "IN MEMORARIAM // QUARTI VET // USTAE ELCE // SIAE CENTE // NARI ERECT // UM FUT HOC // SYMBOLUM // BATIM. 26-02-1941."

Besides this pillar there is a *kurkut* (cave) where there is a small Hindu god. At the entrance of this place there is a grave of Salvador Pires, who is identified as "Bramane *escrivao*". Near the Batim church, there is a carved cross with the following inscriptions in it: *Louvado Seja o Santissimo Sacramento* (Praise to Holy Blessed Sacrament)

The present church was constructed on July 30, 1867. Its foundation was laid in 1860 and the previous church was demolished in 1859. The patron of this church is Nossa Senhora de Guadalupe, a 16<sup>th</sup> century icon of the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, who represents a Marian apparition according to belief appeared on a peasant's cloak near Mexico City in 1531. There are two alters on both the sides; on one side of the altar there is Our Lady of Assumption carved on wood and on other side there is a crucifix of Jesus.

There are a few more historical dates available. German Jesuit historian George Otto Schurhammer states that the church was built in 1539 by a lay person, Miguel Vaz, who was then the Vicar General of Goa Archdiocese. He had reached Goa in 1533 during the tenure of Dom Joao Afonso de Albuquerque. This church was converted into a parish; but according to Msgr. F. X. Gomes Catao the previous chapel was demolished in 1859 and the new church was constructed on November 5, 1867.

### **Caste Composition**

Catholics in Goa too follow a caste system, even though this is not ritually sanctioned. Caste has mainly social and marital implications. The traditional village structure - dominated by the vangors or clans who formed part of the gaunkaria or comunidade - consisted of 14 vangors, four of which are extinct. The sixth vangor

belongs to those with the surname of 'Camotim' (suggesting Brahmin roots) while all the remaining gaonkars belong to the Chardo caste. (Gomes Pereira: 1978: 40)

Over the years the caste composition of the village has obviously changed, even if the gaunkaria/comunidade tends to keep its doors open to the dominant communities. Besides the salt-making Agri community today, the other castes in the village are the Chardos and Brahmins. There are also a number of migrants who work in the salt-pans, and trace their roots to the neighbouring state of Karnataka in the most. This section will be covered later in this chapter.

A large part of the population consists of the lower-middle class who eke out a living as cultivators and labourers. In the fields, they toil very hard, and lighten their drudgery at times by indulging in banter or gossip on different matters like their landlord's character or talk relating to the parish and some current issues from their daily life. Around noon, they obtain a short break for the midday meal, which is usually preceded by a visit to the nearest liquor shop for a drink of the local brew *urrak or fenny*. Due to this demand, and also perhaps to the government licensing policy, bars or liquor shops have been on the increase in this village, which is the cause of some social problems, as noted elsewhere in this chapter.

### **Land Use Pattern**

Batim is, till now, known for its rice-paddy fields and salt-pans. Salt production requires easy access to sea water, open pans and ample sunlight. A tributary of the river Zuari flows right into Batim village, which makes it convenient for salt production.

The river which supplies water to the salt pans originates from the streams of Talaulim, Ganvxim and Moula region and runs a distance of eight kilometers to join



the Zuari River at Goa Velha. It may be noted that some important ancient villages, frequently mentioned in the Kadamba and Vijayanagara records, were situated close to this river.

The normal course of the four rivers joining the Siridao River have been silted and distorted over the centuries. The salinity of the Siridao creek increases rapidly near the Batim region, and several salt pans have been developed along the river by constructing sluice gates and bunds for salt making and pisciculture.

## **Education**

### **The Agris-Historical Background**

In order to get an idea of the Agris of Batim and understand the traditional roots of this saltmaking community, the researcher tried to use various secondary sources and collating an oral history of the people from Batim. It is nonetheless difficult to find out the precise origin and exact date when the Agris settled in Batim. There are also no answers to the question of how the original salt makers disappeared. Oral tradition gives a number of hints and potential answers. It is not clear whether the Mithgaudas or the Agris existed in Batim prior to conversion. It is also not clear whether they were displaced by other settlers, such as those of Gaunkar vaddo, or whether people simply migrated to the other villages as a response to a natural calamity or other such phenomenon. The Agris themselves give a number of differing answers to these questions. One version which people give is that some disease spread in the village and the original people may have migrated.

In the North Konkan, the community which engaged in salt manufacturing on the coast was called *Agris*. The salt pans are called *Mithagars*. Hence, the people working on them have been designated as Agris (Mitragotri 1999: 60). But apart from the similarity in nomenclature, the Agri respondents of Batim have no link with the

Agris of North Konkan, as opposed to the Mithgaudas of Agarvaddo who do have a link with the Mithgaudas of South Konkan.

Most of the Agri respondents in Batim have come in from Telaulim in Navelim, Zuari and Uddi from Goa-Velha, Mercedes, Anjuna and Santa-Cruz. Some were brought here to do salt work and others came here because of family disputes in their respective villages.

Some of the original owners reside outside the village in areas like Goa-Velha, Siridao, Bicholim and the like. Some used to stay in Batim several years ago, but due to problems like the plague - so says the local history - they slowly moved to other villages like Goa-Velha. But it is not known where the original salt makers from Batim moved out to.

There are two possibilities for the original *Mittkars* (salt makers) of Batim to have disappeared, and for no longer continuing in the area. Firstly unknown causes like diseases, plagues, wars and epidemics and secondly, the Inquisition. Since there was deficiency of labour in salt pans in Batim, the owners of Batim might have hired the salt makers of Telaulim (Salcette), which was the highest salt producing village in Goa in those times, and from Anjuna (Bardez) must have brought these workers to Batim.

Workers from these villages went back home to collect their *zonn* (i.e. the annual share they received on grounds of being male members of the village communities, or *comunidades*) in their own village. The respondents from Batim who had migrated from Telaulim-Navelim used to collect the *Zonn* annually from Navelim. People who were originally from Telaulim say "*Tari pailean vorun dovortale*" or "They collect and store it across the river". The *zonn* received by the people was of such a small quantum that it was only enough to pay for the canoe

charges. So, over time, people stopped collecting the *zonn*.

One respondent said that a salt maker went to get his *zonn* in Anjuna, and, while returning, he would bring a goat or a cow out of the money that he received out of the *zonn*.

### **Occupation**

The main occupations of the Agris of Batim are agriculture, cultivation, pisciculture and salt production. Toddy tapers residing in Maina and the Gaunkars are engaged in white collar jobs. But nowadays, people no longer undertake farming; the salt work is done mainly by the migrant workers coming from Karnataka.

The Agris now take up white collar jobs, some have moved abroad and others have taken citizenship in the United Kingdom, or other European nations. As a result, people are switching over to new sources of income and occupations. Lives of the people have changed. This was evident when the researcher was administering the interview schedule on the respondents. The relatives, family members and neighbours of the respondent were either abroad or worked on other jobs besides salt making. The people have constructed two-storey houses, and the lifestyle of the people too has changed altogether.



An elderly key respondent (Agri) from Batim



A culvert that drains the excess rains (*vow*) is converted into a salt-pan



Fish caught in the salt-pans in the non-salt producing season (agor marlo)



Fish being sold by the roadside, after being harvested from the salt-pans in the non-salt season

### **Nature of Family**

All the respondents interviewed in this village were married. The average age of marriage among the Agri males is 24 years and for females is 22 years.

However there were different opinions on the issues of marriage. All the Agri respondents are in favour of intercaste marriages. Members however mostly get married within their caste. Children from the Agri community feel that they can marry outside their caste. If economic incentives are provided, they believe this would lead to more intercaste marriages. They do keep relations with people who have married outside their caste. They permit widow re-marriage and approve of divorce, even though divorce is not much visible in the community currently. The average number of children in the family is two to three. They do favour conversion to any other religion and feel that participation in elections can increase a person's prestige. They feel that children and womenfolk should also join politics.

Only known people are invited for the marriage. Villagers - both Agris and others - are aware of, and practice, family planning.

Due rituals are performed at the time of marriage. Marriage negotiations tend

to be undertaken by the parents of the bride and the groom. When the “seeing of the bride” takes place, a gold ring is given to the girl, followed by another exchange of rings at the time of engagement. They also invite to social occasions the people married outside their caste. People who can afford dowry at the time of marriage usually give some money and gold ornaments in the form of necklace, chain, bangles, earrings, etc. whereas the poor may not give anything.

As elsewhere among the Catholic community of Goa, for the purpose of marriage, the Agris have an exchange of rings. They invite people, and have a *ross* (bathing in coconut-milk) ceremony, and a *bikrem jevonn* (special meal for the poor) around the time of the wedding. They also perform rites meant for the bride and the bridegroom. The nuptials are performed by the priest in the church.

In contrast, among the Hindu landlords in the older generation, “bride seeing” did not take place. The groom would usually see the bride only on the wedding day. There were no rituals performed at the time of engagement. There were direct marriages. Rites meant for the bridegroom, the bride, and for others were performed at the time of marriage. Marriage rites are officiated by the temple priest. Dowry is given in the form of ornaments. Marriages are usually arranged by the parents and inter caste marriages are allowed. They invite people from outside their caste for marriages, because, the landlords say, they respect the people of other caste.

The data that was gathered through the interview schedule from the Agris is divided into four sections. The Agri respondents interviewed were between the age groups of 50 to 60 years and 70 to 75 years, since it is people of this age category who tend to be more involved in the salt production. The younger generation appears disinterested in salt production, probably since it involves backbreaking work, low social prestige, low returns and is also labourious.

Jobs in the salt pans involve family labour. The Agris had joint families earlier but now they are slowly shifting to a nuclear pattern. An average Agri family consists of four members.

### **Religion and Associated Practices and Rituals**

The temple of goddess Chamundeshwari was originally in Goa Velha, and is the goddess which the Agris of Batim worshipped prior to their conversion to Christianity. This temple of Chamundeshwari was founded by the ancestors of the present mahajans. It is affiliated to Gomeshwar, Kalbhairav, Khetrapall, Nirankar and Purusha. The mahajans belong to the Vani or Vaishya class. The statutes of this devasthan do not refer to the fact that the main deity belonged to Goa Velha of Ilhas taluka. (Gomes Pereira 1978: 136)

But while a sense of community is observed during various festivities, there is also an element of discriminations in various forms encountered by the people through various institutions for social welfare set up by the Portuguese, such as the *confrarias* (confraternities), *the Santa Casa de Misericordia* (The Holy House of Mercy) and the *Hospicio Real* (Royal Hospital).

The *confrarias* were organizations of a brotherhood of sorts meant to assist the poor and the sick and founded in almost all churches in Goa. But in these organizations of charity too, caste-based and even racial segregation was a guiding principle. For example, in around 1613, two *confrarias* were set up in the *Casa Professa de Bom Jesus*, one for the Portuguese noblemen and officers and the other for Goans. It was only in 1720 that the first Indian Christian was admitted as a "brother" of the *Misericordia* (with his appointment being approved by the Crown as late as 1743), and even then his European or Eurasian colleagues were entitled to a

host of privileges which were denied to him. European membership to these bodies was scrupulously maintained even to the extent of preferring semi-literate or even illiterate Europeans to erudite the Goans (Kamat 1999: 92).

Caste-based divides were a reality too. Till not long back, the dress of the *Confraad* (*opa musa*), a cape used by members of the confraria for ceremonial occasions, was of a different colour for the Gaunkars and the Agris of Batim. The *Confraad* dress or the *opa musa* is a unique two piece garment in which the *mus* was white for both the groups and the *opa* was red for the Gaunkars or the landlords and blue for the Agris. This distinction made in the colour of *opa* led to protests over it. Since then, there has been the formation of a single confraternity in Batim wherein both the Agris and the Gaunkars wear white colour for both *opa* and *musa*. Nowadays some prefer not wearing the *opa* and *musa* at all.

Indian native Christians were not admitted to the Royal Hospital of Goa although they were employed there in menial capacities. They were treated at another hospital meant exclusively for the coloured people. In the prison of the Goa Inquisition, too, a distinction was maintained between inmates on the basis of racial considerations; while Goans were made to subsist on cooked rice and fish alone, the Europeans were offered a more varied fare (Kamat 1999: 92).

The Catholic Church has itself been accused of perpetuating racism in Goa despite its avowed tenets of equality, liberty and universal brotherhood of man. Colour prejudice coupled with politico-economic consideration was chiefly responsible for denying to the Goan clergy admittance into the Religious Orders and suppressing them in the diocesan set up (ibid: 93).

Such differences are witnessed in the village of Batim too. One argument put forth is that the people of the Gaunkarvaddo contributed to the construction of the

church in the form of money and land. Therefore, they claimed to be justified in having had more privileges in church matters. They also had separate benches to sit in the church, which is a reflection of their perceived superiority.

Gods and the goddesses worshipped: The Agris of Batim, who are traditional salt makers, have more recently acquired a *nouveau riche* status; resultantly, those who are unable to reconcile with the system have moved out of a 'socially low' profession. They worship the Christian as well as Hindu gods and they now own land and have become land owners.

The Agris worship Our Lady of Assumption, Jesus, Our Lady of Guadalupe and Orgaonkarin Chamundi. The Goddess Chamundeshwari is worshipped by the Agris till date after so many years of conversion. The researcher accompanied the salt maker to Pilgao in Bicholim, where the salt makers offer *naal, pod* (coconut, rice) and some amount of money to the goddess to protect them in their salt making business. The Hindu landlords worship their *kuldev* (family deity) Vaman Dhavlli and Ramnath in Ramnathi. The Catholic landlords worship Jesus, St. Anthony and the popular Goan religious figure from nearby on the route to sainthood, Father Agnelo at Pilar.



Chamundeshwari temple in Pilgao The deity was shifted at the times of conversions from Goa Velha to Pilgao, Bicholim



Christian salt maker giving his offerings in Chamundeshwari temple



**The Syncretism Practices in the Salt Pans:** Among the converted Christians of Batim, for some time, there was little understanding of the new religion. Consequently, ritual practices of the pre-conversion Little Tradition continued, with the objects of devotion now situated in the Christian greater tradition. This is visible in the annual ritual cycle of the lower castes. While the gods (the Christian Trinity), spirits and ghosts (*bhuts* and the family dead) feature as personal powers of spells, evil eye, black magic had to be dealt with by “specialists through breaking of coconuts and sacrificing cocks” (Kamat 1999: 69).

Syncretism influences are also visible in the religious art and architecture in Goa, with Hindus and Christian artisans being involved in the construction and decoration of each other’s shrines. In the context of the recent socio-economic transformation of Goa, a search for such syncretic aspects of Goan culture located in the Little Traditions of both Hinduism and Christianity becomes a meaningful assertion of the common identity of the Goans (ibid: 69).

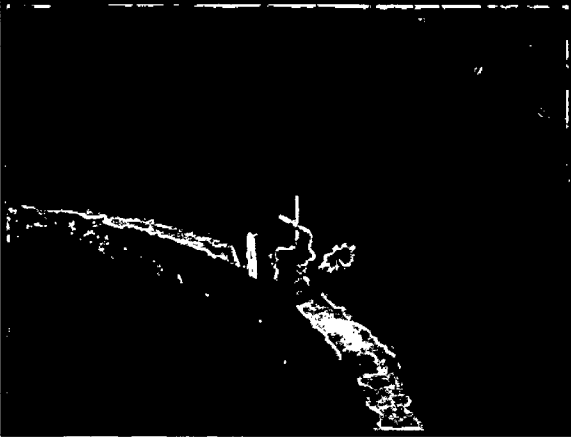
Some of the recent pressures that the region has been facing include the emergence of a political culture that is unscrupulous in its misuse of language, religion and caste: the presence of regional variants of the policies of *mandir* and *mandal* (referring to the increased communal and casteist politics that reign supreme in India today and increased communal and casteist politics that reign supreme in India today): the carnivalisation of Goan culture for touristic gains; the emergent Goan-*Bhaylo* (Goan-versus-migrant) tension; and the consequent crisis of Goan identity. However, historically, in the context of forced conversions, such syncretic practices can be regarded as forms of resistance offered by the Hindu community to Christianization, by appropriating the Catholic’ replacements’, and to Lusitization by continuing with some of the customs of their forefathers (Kamat 1999: 73).

## Social and Religious Practices and Salt Making

Certain practices are undertaken before the start of the process of salt making. Villagers kill a pig then they make a *gaanthon* (fish or meat pieces tied to a string) of it, cook it in a *thovlli* (small earthen vessel used in the cooking of curries). In the month of November or December, they kill a chicken. Earlier, the Agris used to offer two betel leaves, half a coconut shell, *sorro* or liquor, two *beedis* (Indian cigarettes made of tobacco wrapped in leaf), bread and bananas for the *devchar* (the local spirit, either benevolent or malevolent). But now-a-days, this custom of offering has been discontinued.

**Tiatr:** Tiatrs, or Konkani dramas, are staged for ward feasts. On such occasions, a temporary stage is set up, along with an enclosure for the audience. Actors taking part in the dramas are usually recruited from the same village, but nowadays, the dramas tend to be brought in from outside the village, and the drama is offered free of charge to the people since it is usually sponsored by well-to-do families. Due to the introduction of modern mass media like the T.V., and video, the popularity of the tiatr - once the only form of entertainment for locals in a language they could understand easily - is slowly dying out in the village.

**Zagor:** The Portuguese, in their long rule over Goa of four and half centuries, brought with them a number of traditions and cultures. But one popular festival of purely local origins is called the Zagor. This festival is only meant for men and boys. The word derives from the term 'zag' ('wake') and the staging of *zagor* occurs through the whole night (Mali 1968: 99). Zagor was also staged by the Agri community in Batim. This is one of the old cultural activities of Goa, which has been preserved by the Gaudda community. People beat the *gumott*, a percussion musical instrument made of an earthen drum covered on one end with the skin of a monitor lizard,



New salt is removed at Batim, after religious rites



Animal sacrifices at the Batim salt-pans. Earlier a pig or goat would be sacrificed, but with the arrival of the migrant workers, a rooster is offered



Salt storage in the home at Batim, called the 'kondo' or 'koronn'



Alvorad' (band) being played on the feast day in Batim



Corn-cutting festival called 'Neiem'



Procession of devotees in Batim for a feast procession

which is not otherwise played in the church, but at home on feast days. The *gumott* has a small hole on the reverse of this pot which controls the high and low pitch of the sounds. Men drink liquor or else, the belief is, they are not able to sing (*tallo suttona*). Women also participate as spectators. The *gumott* is played only by senior members. People break a coconut, and make fire with the help of palm leaves, broken earthen pot (*koilacho*) and kerosene. They also keep *agarbati* (incense sticks) and a lamp (*pontti*). In the broken earthen vessel, they put in cow dung, coconut shell and kerosene and light the fire. They perform a litany (*ladinh*) for St. Cruz (the Holy Cross) at Portel Bhatt. They go home for dinner and return at around 10 p.m. The local religious community head (*zolmi*) lights the lamp and breaks the coconut. Meanwhile, they play the *gumott* and sing the *noman* (benediction).

### **Caste Configuration**

The salt-makers belong to the Agri sub caste and belong to the Shudra category, being engaged in the manufacture of salt. The name of the caste is derived from their occupation. It is a self-employed community.

Catholic landlords from the Gaunkarward are Brahmins, and the area is also incidentally called Bamonnvaddo, Others belong to the Charddos and claim Kshatriya status. The Hindu landlords belong to the Brahmin caste too.

Most of the Agris are not the members of any political organization, with the exception of one respondent who joined the Congress party. His neighbour had inspired him to join this party. The Agris have never ever contested the Assembly and Parliamentary elections.

## Marriage: Norms, Practices, Customs and Rituals

Earlier, the marriages would usually take place in the village itself. Given the occupation they follow, this community does not allow their girls to move out of the community, since they say they need them for salt-work.

Marriage earlier used to take place within close cousins and at times with the next-door neighbours. Once the girl would attain the age of marriage, the boy would make a proposal saying, "*Tum mhojem*" ("You're mine") and in this way escort his future wife. The Agris would continuously observe a hardworking girl who would be suitable for them in the salt work. Agris had a belief among them '*Amkam bhaili chedvamm nooch*', meaning "Girls from outside the village are not meant for us."

But, nowadays, it appears that young women also move out of the village in marriage, since they do not work in the salt pans. As noted above, the jobs in the salt pans have been performed now by the migrant labourers from Karnataka. Society is changing from a traditional one to being a bourgeois capitalist one.

The day of engagement is called the *Mudhi* (literally, "the ring"). The to-be-married couple exchanges rings. There is *denem* on the same day, wherein the trousseau is brought over to the bridegroom's house. Sometimes, the bride comes along with the *denem*, sometimes there is *aachar* - meaning superstition, for example they were not allowed to get married on a Friday. One respondent said '*atam te aachar mandnai*' (they do not follow those outdated superstitions now). The ring which is used for the engagement is the same as the one which is used for the nuptials, but, if they can afford it, a couple would buy a separate ring. Sometimes a priest is brought in for the *mudhi* ceremony. *Vojem* (an offering of fruit and traditional sweet) is shared with neighbours and relatives in the form of *Bol-Doce* (local sweets) and bananas on the engagement day.

Bangle-wearing ceremony: The bangle-wearing ceremony that is held before the wedding for the bride to be is called the *Chuddo*. Bangles symbolise the married life for the bride, and they are broken only on her husband's coffin, once she is widowed.

Among the Agris, the bangles chosen are of four colors. These bangles signify the different stages of women's life: red signifying happy married life, green signifying fertility, yellow signifying middle age and white old age.

The *Chuddo* among the upper castes consists of a set of seven glass bangles of green colour on each wrist. In a normal case, these bangles are put on her wrist by the bangle seller. Other relatives and those present at the ceremony are also given, by the bangle-seller, a pair or more of their choice free of cost. Offerings of money in token of blessing are put into a tray placed before the bangle seller. The money collected thus is taken by the bangle-seller, over and above the payment that he gets for the work done. The bangle-seller charges a higher-than-usual rate for the *chuddo*, which is paid for by the bride. Generally, on this day, they would pay whatever amount the bangle seller asks for. Whilst going home, the maternal uncle gives the *vojem* to the bride, consisting of one *boshi* (plate) full of *doce* (sweet) and one dozen bananas. This *vojem* is distributed to all the brides' neighbours.

The *chuddo* ceremony is performed once the *chiiti vachop* – reading of the banns, announcing the intending marriage – is done in church. It is done at the *mamager*, i.e. at the bride's maternal uncle's house. The same day, they apply *ross* (coconut juice) on the body of the bride. Later, as per the wishes of other relatives, *ross* is applied to the bride at their house too on some other day. They have the *ross* ceremony for the bride and the bridegroom in their respective homes on the day before the wedding, in unison with the singing of verses in Konkani in praise of the

bride and groom and their relatives. Women, who are expert in singing special marriage songs called *zothis*, are sometimes employed for the occasion. They may also throw across taunts to the couple and other people of the home, i.e. people who are related and those who would shortly be related. The younger generations of women are unable to sing the traditional *zothis*.

*Bhikrem jevonn* (literally, the Beggars' Meal) is a meal given on the day before the wedding. In this event, the dead of the family are remembered and food is served and gifts are given to the poor in the hope of appeasing the spirits of the dead ancestors. People brought in to partake in the meal are called as *Bhikari*. They are often from the same village or from the neighbouring villages of Siridao, Goa Velha or Agacaim. For the *bhikrem jevonn*, a family would traditionally cook *chonem* (grams), *dukra maas* (pork), *sannam* (traditional bread), *tendlim* (local vegetables), *doodhi* (pumpkin), *dalliche godxem*, *undde* (local bread made by the *poder* or baker) and some fruits, wherein bananas are a must. Nowadays, instead of offering the *bhikrem jevonn*, people prefer to offer some money as a gift to the *Azilo* (home for the indigents) or the Home for the Aged.

On the wedding day, there is nuptials ceremony called the *Resper*, which takes place in the parish at which the bridegroom is affiliated. The groom's relatives come in with a *pett* (suitcase), with all the *nesounn*, i.e. brides' clothes to be worn for the nuptials, to the bride's house. The bride's relatives have to put some money into the suitcase, '*Pettenth khuxi te ghalop*'. (Place what one wishes into the suitcase.) This is done before the bride and the groom go for the *resper*. They take *besanv* or blessings from senior family members, friends and neighbours.

Decorations and the other church arrangements are traditionally done by the bridegroom. The church service is prepared by both the families. The bridal couple

then goes to the groom's house, where they give the *saddo* (a special red-and-white coloured flowery dress) which is stitched for the bride in both the houses. The dress stitched in the groom's house is worn by the bride in her house and that which is stitched in the bride's house is put on her in the groom's house after the *resper*. This is called as *oklelo saddo*.

Nuptials are followed by the reception, which would take place at the bridegroom residence. It would be conducted through the whole night until dawn. A local band is usually bought for the wedding, and people would dance through the night. Neighborhood womenfolk would help with the cooking and the preparing *doce*, and men would help to put up a big *mattou* (large tent or temporary pandal to accommodate the guests) in the vicinity. The *mattou* is draped with white decorated sheets brought in by the *mattovkar*. He was generally hired from the neighbouring village of Goa Velha. The chairs and tables and the band stage is all set for the reception. The dance floor was all sand-filled and packed with leaves to allow for easy dancing. But nowadays, the people of Batim prefer to have their reception in a professional wedding hall.

On the day after the wedding, the bridal couple would go to the bride's house. This is called as *Portounem* (The Return). At lunch time or late in the evening, there is a get together held for the close relatives, friends and neighbours in the bride's place. The newly married couple along with the relatives and friends is received at the bride's place and there may be a dance or a litany (*ladinh*) and a small get together where drinks and food are served.

Earlier, the bridal couple would stay at the bride's house for two to three days. They had to take '*paanch okhtaa*' – five meals – in the bride house. But nowadays, given the pressures on time and the changing reality, they stay for one day and have



dinner in the night followed by breakfast then some meal before lunch, and then lunch and evening tea. In short, five meals are condensed in two meals.

This can be seen as a parallel to the Hindu custom where the couple goes to stay in the bride's house which is called as *paanch dis*, meaning five days. When the bride returns back to the bridegroom's house they give the *sotti* - '*Naal ani kellim bandun hankeam ditai*'. Pieces of the coconut and small pieces of banana are then distributed to the neighbours.

In the past, the tradition was to give *vojem* to the bride before departing to the groom's house. This *vojem* consisted of *doce* and *bol* (both are local sweets) and one or two thousand bananas. Later on, the bananas that were given in the *vojem* were only five hundred in number. Nowadays, this trend is slowly changing wherein they give this *vojem* on the day of *denem*. After few days of the marriage, the newly married couple is invited to the bride's ancestral home to stay for a week; and whilst going back they are gifted with *dos* (a local sweet) as *vojem*.

When the bride gets pregnant, she is once again brought to her mother's home in the seventh or the ninth month; but if they cannot afford then the in-laws keep her at her husband's home. She remains there till her delivery and goes back with the baby after confinement for baptism. *Vojem* of *dos* and banana is again given to her when she returns back to the husband's house for the christening of her first child

For baptism, a *madrin* and *padrin* i.e. godmother and godfather are selected by the child's parents. The godmother and the godfather also give a gift of *vojem* for the baby – like the baptism clothes for the baby, a wine bottle, cake, bananas and *doce*.



Applying Ross (cocunut juice is applied on the bride)



Applying Ross (cocunut juice is applied on the bride)



The newly married bride is presented with a red and white colored dress (saddo)



Blessings are given by the elderly to the would be bride



They give cocunut and bananas to the bride



PORTOUNEM meaning the bride returns to her maternal home on the next day of marriage

## **Education**

A majority of the older Agris from Batim are uneducated, although some are educated up to the seventh standard (i.e. approximately seven to nine years of schooling). The younger generation does take up higher education, often up to the degree level. Landlords, on the other hand, often have education up to the degree level.

The Agris feel their community should get education because it would help them to learn to read and write, there would be fewer crimes, they would earn more income, get more access to employment, and be in a better position to face competition and employ labourers in the salt pans. The Agris also felt that the girls of the community should get education so that they will become independent and know of their rights and get good proposals for marriage. The parents of the Agri respondents were all uneducated. Some of the younger generation Agris have an education up till the twelfth standard (12 to 14 years of traditional schooling) while a few others have taken up education up to the post-graduate level.

## **Language**

The Agris of Batim speak Konkani and sometimes English, whereas the landlords speak languages like Portuguese, Konkani and English. Konkani is their mother tongue and the dialect used by the Agris of Batim appears somewhat different as compared to the other Konkani speakers of Goa.

The Konkani language has been the predominant language spoken in Batim for the last hundreds of years. There are also dialectical variations though, as noted above. This is evident from the various words and phrases used throughout this chapter too. For example *Hei, fui voita go eia?* (Hey, where are you going?) *Maiee*

*tum noko go te Josef melem fuiee mugo?* (Mother, you don't know Joseph has died?)  
*Fuiee gelolem?* (Where you had gone?) *Kitem nustea ahaa go tingaa?* (What fish is available there, i.e. in the market?)

### **Feasts and Festivals**

Post-conversions, the Agris of Batim celebrate feasts like those of Our Lady of Assumption or *Neiem*, Our Lady of Gaudulupe, Our Lady of Gloria, and the feast of St. Francis. Christian landlords celebrate the procession of saints. Hindu landlords also celebrate the feast of Jesus of Nazareth at Siridao. The feast of the patron Our Lady of Guadalupe Feast is celebrated on December 19 in Batim. The feast of Our Lady of Gloria is celebrated in the last week of April. Elsewhere in Goa the feast of St. Francis Xavier's feast is celebrated on December 3, but in Batim this feast is celebrated on August 16.

A typical culture has emerged which may be termed the Agri culture. It consists of the Alvorad (musicians moving around the village playing music to announce the feast day), feasts, tiatr and the zagor. By conversion, people created their own culture. They gave to church what belonged to it and continued their old practices at home followed before conversion.

Alvorad: This ceremony begins early in the morning. The *alvorad* (musicians) move around the village playing music to announce the feast day. The *alvorad* starts from the house of *the president*, and then goes to the church and ends at the *president's* house again, where the musicians are treated with snacks and tea. Sometimes, the people who play the *alvorad* would spend the previous night in the *president's* house.

The *alvorad* was played for the feasts like Our lady of Guadalupe, feast of The

Blessed Sacrament, *Neiem* (harvest festival) on August 24 and all the chapel feasts of the wards in Batim. The *Neiem*, the corn-cutting *neiem* ceremony celebrated on August 24, is one of the important feasts of Batim. On this day, the new corn is cut as part of the harvest feast.

The *alvorad* described above first proceeds to a place in a procession to the locality of Maina where the villagers cut the new sheaf and take it for blessing. The procession along with the *alvorad*, the parish priest, the president and the members of *confraad* go to another earmarked area to ceremoniously cut the corn. They cut a new sheaf and take it for blessing in a procession which is then offered in the church. The tray of the cut corns is kept at the altar. The Agris prepare *fhau* (beaten or pound rice) and beef on the day of *neiem* feast. On that day, they play a special game called as *Naal Fottai* wherein coconuts are hit, and the winner gets a prize. One person holds the coconut in one hand and hits on another coconut held in another person's hand. Whichever coconut breaks first is the loser.

The Feast of Our Lady of Assumption is celebrated each year on August 15, and also marked with the preparation of a special local sweet called the *patholli*. The popular Christian festival of Easter, which falls around March-April each year, is another prominent feast that is celebrated by the Agris of Batim. If new salt is prepared during Lent, the 40-days period of penance preceding Easter, the Agris of Batim do not kill a pig in the salt pans due to the abstinence from eating meat during Lent.

The other prominent festivals of the Agris are Christmas, New Year's Day, and the three days of Carnival preceding Lent, which falls in February or March. Besides this, ward feasts of the ward chapels are also celebrated. There is a marked difference between celebration of the festive mass in the church feasts and ward chapel feast.

People tend to enjoy the chapel feast more; since it is closer to the communities they live in and are part of.

## The Salt Making

### Location of Salt Pans

The different *agars* with their names and the names of landlords and tenants are given below.

**Table 5.1**  
**Names of the Landlords and the Tenants**

	Name of the Salt Pan	Name of the Landlord	Name of the Tenant	Total no. of salt pans
1.	Maina Agor	Marso Menezes	Narba Anton Pereira	3
2.	Vangod	Upendra Zuwarkar	Not known	5
3.	Vhodli Cantorli	Joao Andrade	Sabastiao	-
4.	Igorjecho agor	Church	Sabastiao	1
5.	Dhakti Cantorli	Joao Andrade	Sabastiao	3
6.	Novo Agor	Sinari	Not known	5
7.	Lumbod	Vaikunth Zuwarkar	Not known	7
8.	Bhakra agor	Church	Not known	1
9.	Jincho (Jinka)	Not known	Not known	2
10.	Jinka Agor	Upendra	Not known	1
11.	Jinka agor	Salvador Fernandes	Not known	1
12.	Vhodlea Ganvcho	Comunidade	Emiter Vales	10
13.	Anop(1 share)	Comunidade	Emiter Vales	2
14.	Morgado	Morgado	Not known	8
15.	Anop	Church	Antonio Vaz	2

	Name of the Salt Pan	Name of the Landlord	Name of the Tenant	Total No. of salt pans
16.	Novo Agor	Bought at auction by (Jamito)	not known	4
17.	Fol Agor	Comunidade	Jamito	4
18.	Dhakto Ganvcho	Comunidade	Antonio Cunha	4
19.	Anop	Comunidade	Victoria Fernandes	2
20.	Vhodlo Agor	Not known	Not known	7
21.	Zogul Agor	Not known	Lelis	3
22.	Correilo Agor	Not known	Paixao Vaz	3
23.	Chavcho Agor	Tito Menezes	Felicio Fernandes	9
24.	Anop	Tito Menezes	Lourens Cunha	3
25.	Budto Agor	Not known	Not known	-

Source: Personal findings by the researcher

### **Ownership of Salt Pans and its Use**

Most of the saltpans are owned by the landlords from Gaunkarvaddo. But some of them have moved to other places like Goa-Velha. There are also Hindu Brahmin landlords who have purchased the land and saltpans from the landlords from Batim.

One respondent said that some of the salt pans in Batim owned by the church were donated by the people of Gaunkarvaddo since they did not have anybody to look after them. Some salt pans in Batim are also owned by the comunidade, which, as noted above, comprises mainly gaonkars of the Chardo caste group.

There have been no developments on saltpans in Batim – like having an express highway, real estate, dams, or having their land being taken over by the government etc. The pressure on land is somewhat lower as compared to that in the

other villages in Goa. Batim has the maximum number of saltpans used for salt production. Very few saltpans have been used for pisciculture. The Agris have not abandoned the salt pans since they get the work done in the salt pans through the migrant workers from Karnataka.

### **Nature of Jobs Performed and Duration of Work**

Economic profile of the family: Male Agris in the age group of 60 to 80 years are employed in salt work, agriculture, fishing and olericulture (vegetable growing). Females are involved in housework and floriculture and some also worked as cooks.

Male Agris in the age group 40 to 60 years are mostly no longer involved in salt work. They have taken jobs abroad on board the ship and other jobs in offices in the cities. Most of the female Agris in this age group are housewives.

Younger generation Agris in the age group of less than 40 years are taking up higher education and are slowly moving up in the upper rungs of the social ladder. Landlords mostly got income from their properties; some are also doctors, medical representatives, advocates, teachers, computer engineers, businessmen, female nurses and housewives.

Among the Agris half of the family members are employed. The main source of livelihood among the Agris of Batim was salt making and farming. But now it has changed with the younger generation switching on to new sources of income like jobs in the private and the government sectors, migrating abroad, taking up jobs on the ship, etc.

**Total income of the family:** The Agri respondents refused to comment on the income that was generated out of salt. But they would reveal the income of the other family members who were in service. And their income ranged from Rs 25,000 to Rs



2, 40,000 per annum. The original owner's income varied from Rs 100,000 to Rs 20,00,000 per annum.

The Agri assets are mostly in the form of small landholdings, *comunidade* fields, and saltpans. The Agris usually avail of credit facilities from the landlords, bank and sometimes from their married daughters.

The organizational structure in relation to the saltpans is that the original owners or landlords are at the apex, the Agris below them, followed by the migrant workers from Karnataka. The saltpans are not ancestral but they possessed them from the landlords, *comunidades* and the church. One respondent said he had 44 saltpans or twenty-two *dhavam* (one *dhavam* equals two *khungo*, meaning saltpan). Some of the Agris have now started buying off the saltpans from the landlords.

Duration of work varies from one saltpan to the other. There are no regular timings followed in the saltpans. But, during the peak season, they work from 7.30 to 9.30 a.m and in the evening from 2.30 to 5.30 p.m.

Younger agris usually do not perform any jobs in the saltpans but the salt work has been performed by an earlier generations. Males usually undertake work like *chikoll ghuddaithale* (smashing of the muck), *fhoem odtalle* (loading salt in the vehicles).

But salt making work is no longer undertaken by the younger generations and the older generations have discontinued the work due to health problems and old age. Now, even as migrants are employed, the Agris would prefer their children to take up work outside of the saltpans - like in government service, small business, clerical job, job on the ship or whatever else they could get. The older generation of womenfolk used to also participate in the salt-related work like loading salt from the saltpans to the bunds. The employee-employer relations between the salt-making Agris and the

migrant worker, is good.

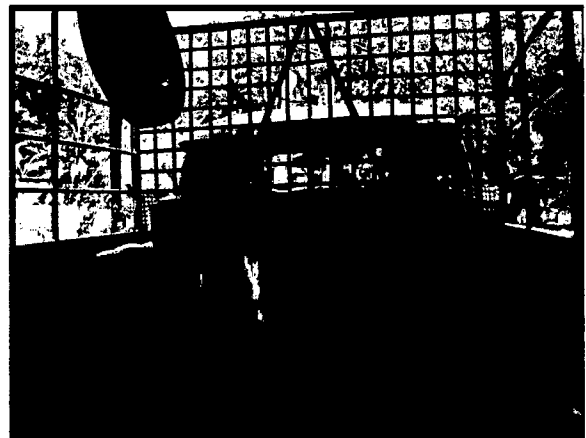
The Agris do not have any organization and are also not a part of any co-operative societies. There are no special schemes for the salt workers. The Agris also do not avail any special loan or credit facilities. Majority of the money is spent on food, hiring labour from Karnataka, on liquor, clothes, household items, children's education, etc.

### **Salt Production and Marketing**

Every year, from the month of March to May, pickups carrying locally-produced salt move from village to village selling local salt which is produced in the salt pans. The rates of the salt sold in the pickups are the same as that sold in the salt pans. It is sometimes believe by locals that this is possible because the amount of salt sold via the pickups was less than the quantity promised. This was done by denting the tins used to measure the salt sold. As one respondent mentioned, *Latthaak cheppam galtale* ("They would dent the tin," and thus give the customer a lesser quantity of salt.)



Salt sold on the salt pans in Batim, but notice the tin does not have dents and the rate is still the same as sold in other villages.



Dent on the tin 'cheppam' which reduces the quantity of salt sold to the consumers in the other villages

## **Salt Storage and Transportation**

Batim's saltpans lack a proper road to connect them; this causes transportation problems. At the back end of their homes, people in the villages store local salt during the rainy season. Salt is stored outside the house because it otherwise tends to corrode the walls of the house. As noted later on, there are no storage facilities for the Agris to store salt in the saltpans, as a result of which the salt decreases due to the moisture on the salt.

## **The Rituals Associated with Salt Making**

Several rituals performed at the salt pans have changed over recent times, a reflection in a sense of the process of social changes that is underway. On the first day when salt was harvested, in the past people would go around in the village, carrying the salt and distributing it in each and every house. While doing so, they would sing and play on the *gumott*, the traditional drum of Goa. But now, the hired laborers take the salt to the owner's house, burn crackers and the owner will give them something in cash or kind.

On the same day, in the saltpans, the people celebrate a feast of sorts, wherein a pig is cut and cooked there in the saltpan itself. Small pieces of each part of the pig are tied to a string (*ganthon*) and cooked. This pork is eaten with bread on the saltpans, in a function to which many people are invited. In all the saltpans of Batim, the tradition is to kill a pig; except in one saltpan where the slaughter of a pig is forbidden, and instead a goat is killed. Now, however, the migrants are given chicken, keeping their dietary preferences in mind. They kill and sprinkle the blood in the saltpans and cook and eat the chicken on the salt pans.

There is a ritual associated with salt making wherein a package known as the

*ell* is kept under a sacred tree close to the saltpan. The *ell* consists of the *ganthon* described above, a match box, *paan*, *supari*, liquor (*soro*), banana, *agarbatti* and candles. But this trend is slowly changing, wherein the labourers keep all these above mentioned items without the *ganthon*. On the feast day, a small vessel is made out of coconut leaves (*chuttechem kondul*) in which they put some salt and flowers. It is kept on the pan. But nowadays the migrant workers instead light agarbathis and candles on the salt pans.

Another impact of in-migration may result from the process of acculturation of the migrant groups in the new setting. Those coming in to work on the salt-pans as immigrants acquire some of the local cultural traits and new skills which they might introduce in their own social set up, thus, initiating a change process at their native villages. (Gupta1988: 19)

### **Modern Technology and the Future of Salt Making**

There have been no technological changes that have taken place here that could add value to the product, like the iodisation of salt. This is mainly because the Salt Commissioner's office is in Jaipur and there is not even a regional office in Goa it is affiliated to the Deputy Salt Commissioner office which is based in Mumbai. Secondly, the salt pan holdings are too small to employ the modern techniques of production found outside Goa.

In the 1990s, there had been a government proposal to iodise the salt produced locally, but it was found to be not feasible and subsequently dropped. There has been no positive impact on the salt production and trade and the Agris employ outdated methods of salt production. If the saltpan industry closes down, it would have a significant negative impact on the socio-economic life of the Agris. There is little or

no competition for the Batim salt in the market..

The Agris of Batim face a lot of hurdles, especially transportation problems. There is no proper road connected to the saltpans. Migrant workers have a major problem when it comes to water and electricity. Now-a-days, the Agris are facing the problem of a lack of skilled labour. However, although the Agris do not perform the job in the saltpans themselves, they are not planning to give up or convert the saltpans. There are no storage facilities for the Agris to store salt in the saltpans, as a result of which the salt decreases due to the moisture on the salt.

## **Economic Condition**

### **Migrants and Salt Making**

The Agris do not perform the work in the salt pans but employ migratory laborers from Karnataka. The second section of this chapter will focus on the migrant workers that Agris of Batim employ in the saltpans.

Migration: According to Ravenstein, migration was the product of the interplay of the forces of expulsion and impulsion released by industrialization: the factors which both pushed people to move from areas of deprivation and then pulled them in particular directions from their rural areas and small towns towards the ever-increasing urban and metropolitan centre's (Siddle2000: 3).

The migrants from Karnataka, the *Ager* (not to be confused with the Agri of Batim) are involved in the process of salt making in Goa. These migrants intend to stay only during the salt-making season, since their presence is not required during the monsoons. Here, the migration is seasonal and limited only to the salt making season; it never becomes permanent in nature.

As noted earlier, *Agers* who have migrated to Batim from nearby Karnataka

are part of the Scheduled Castes, who falls beyond the pale of the Chatur Varna (four-fold system of Varna's or hierarchical stratification).

Migration into Goa is incidentally seen by locals as having negative connotations, and the migrants coming in from other states tend to be looked down upon. Some of the derogatory terms used to describe migrants in Goa include *bhaile* (*outsiders*), *ghanti* (*those from across the hills*), *voile* (*those from out there*) or *bingtakar* (*peanut vendors*). But in Batim, migration is seen in positive terms by the locals. The Agris are not prejudiced against the migrant salt makers, because they do not fear job competition from them.

The Agris of Batim used to perform salt work in earlier years, but due to the social transformation in their community and the overall area, they employ the seasonal migrants from Karnataka who are referred to as the Agers, and belong to the Dalit caste. The Agers are a relatively unknown community in Goa. They are mainly engaged as labourers in the manufacture of salt. The term *Agar* in Konkani literally means saltpans and the name of the community is derived from their occupation. Their traditional and primary occupation is salt making, and this kind of migration is internal or interstate migration. Since this migration is seasonal, political parties too leave them out of their agenda as they do not constitute a viable vote bank.

Opportunities for employment are limited in their area because they get salt making work for only six months in a year i.e. from November to June. Thus migration is the only available option for them to survive.

They come to Goa to work on the salt pans, a task which involves laborious work. Back home, salt workers in the lean period, i.e. from the end of June to October, resort to farming either as landless laborers or marginal farmers. When this community migrates, it is influenced socially, economically, educationally and

culturally; they are exposed to a new social milieu since migration is just not a physical migration of people but it involves a host of other factors like a transfer of ideas, culture, language and the like.

This migrant community is often referred to as '*Gantti*' or '*Maanai*' by the local people. They get annoyed if they are referred as *gantti*, because it is used in a derogatory sense in Goa. So they prefer to be called as *maanai* (labourers). Their subsidiary occupations are agriculture and other labour work. They are a landless community.

The analysis of data indicates that there are differences prevailing in the basic socio economic characteristics of the migrant and non-migrant population. The Ager which are employed by the Agris are migrants who are Hindus who are mostly from the Bankikodla, Gokarna and Ankola areas of Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka. They assist the Agris with their work in the salt pans. These are temporary jobs. A middleman in Karwar and Bankikodla in Karnataka sends across labour in the form of bonded labour, and gives them a small loan at a high rate of interest. The agent earlier used to charge the local salt pan owner a sum of rupees fifty, but now they charge Rs 500 to recruit a labourer. If there has been any grievances regarding the labourers, the owners report it to the agent. But since the agents are seen as being involved in cheating the Agris, some salt pans owners personally go to Karnataka and bring in labourers in time for the season.

*Agers* forms endogamous community. They do not allow marriages with the *Moger* which is another Dalit caste in Karnataka and is considered to be lower than the Ager. But recently, there have been a few marriages with other communities. Early marriages have been stopped, as is the trend in the rest of Goa too. At present, the age of marriage varies from twenty to twenty five years for girls and twenty five to thirty

years for boys. Monogamy is the present norm. But exceptions are found in their society. The marriage of the Ager is solemnized by the temple priest. They distribute sweets like *jilebi*, *ladoo* and *godshe* (traditional sweets) for the marriage. At the time of the wedding they give their daughter utensils of copper, large utensils of copper (*aandho ani kallso*), chain, earrings for the bride and chain and finger ring for the groom.

As far as their food habits are concerned, R.V. Enthoven observes that these caste men eat at the hands of all castes except Mahars, Chamars, Lingayats, Jains and Holleers. No caste eats with them and they rank below the impure castes (Souza 2005: 35).

At times, the migrant workers take some advance from the saltpan owners and bring in additional labourers during season time. They may even fail to return this advance, and if asked could reply saying very humbly, "*Zaina patranv*," which means they cannot afford to pay.

The labour comes here in pairs and is paid also in terms of pairs. Each pair consists of husband and wife, father and daughter, or mother and son. An interesting characteristic of these migrants is that the majority of the pairs spend their time working together in a pair in the salt pans. The salt pan work involves the division of labour in terms of sex. The salt making occupation was the traditional occupation of the Ager. there are fixed tasks that have to be performed by men and women. Men perform all the tasks in the salt making whereas women usually collect the salt gathered at the end of the saltpans and fill it in the baskets and lift it onto the man's head; they also perform the task of letting the water into the saltpans.

The jobs that are usually performed by the men folk are those of the bunding process; the leveling of the pans by stamping, smashing and mixing the muck with



their feet; then, with the help of a plank with wooden teeth, the marshy-soil (*chikol*) is raked up to increase the surface area of crystallizing pans. There is also need for a sprinkling of salt on the top layer, and the collection in one corner of the salt pans of the layer of salt crystals which gets formed on the top. Women, meanwhile, gather salt crystals and keep them on the intersections of the bunds, and soon after the completion of the jobs by men the women let the brine water into the salt pans.

Workers build their huts on their salt pans and live there. Their dwellings are temporary in nature. They are made of thatched, coconut leaves. The material that is required to put up the huts is provided by the owners. Other material needed for day-to-day essentials, including the cooking utensils, are also supplied by the owners.

There are no basic infrastructural facilities like electricity, health and water supply. Previously, there were home deliveries but nowadays they send pregnant women to the maternity centers. Close relatives and neighbours assist the mother of a newly-delivered child in taking care of the newborn and the household chores, free of cost, in their hometown. Sometimes, the pregnant mothers come to Goa since the facilities at Goa Medical College are considered to be better than those available in their hometown. Salt pan owners help them to reach the pregnant woman to the hospital for delivery. Workers sometimes come even with very small children and live near the salt pans. The children are not enrolled in schools.

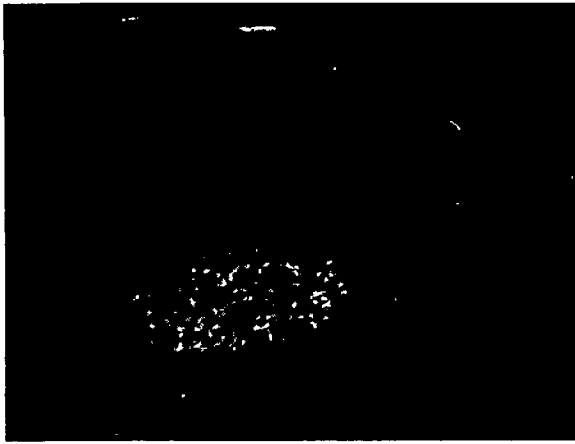
The Agers have to fetch water from far off places from the village well, so they are unable to wash their clothes. Sometimes they have bath with the salty water available near the salt pans. They also develop sores on the feet and palms due to the nature of their work. Their feet often get burnt with the hot water in the salt pans. Children who accompany their parents from the village to the salt pans are not bathed regularly, since they have to walk for long distances to fetch water for them amidst all

the other competing work and struggle to cope with a tough life. In earlier years, if the owners gave them second hand clothes, the *Agers* would use it without even washing them; but now the situation is slowly improving. There are social problems in the villages like alcoholism, poverty and domestic violence.

**Language and Dress Habits:** This community speaks Kannada language at home. But after coming to Goa for several years, the *Agers* can speak Konkani and Hindi as well. They address their employers as *Patrao* (for males) or *Bai* (for females), showing a respectful attitude. Men use a loin-cloth, locally called the *Kashti*, and wrap a towel on their waist and a *patгаа* on their head; but nowadays the younger men wear a pant and shirt whereas the older women wear a saree tied with a knot, without wearing a blouse. The modern generation wears saree with a blouse, while the younger girls wear salwars and western dresses, since the salt-pan owners give them hand-me-down second-hand clothes from their household.

**Food Habits:** Their habitation is characterised by the coastal environment, which favors them for extracting salt. The land receives the south-west monsoons and has high humidity and sufficient rainfall, which are characteristics of a rice zone. As a result, rice is their staple food. They eat rice twice a day along with fish curry. The food that is taken by the people consists of rice and curry and vegetable. They are non-vegetarians but abstain from beef, pork and the flesh of buffalo. But some men have started consuming pork in Goa.

Their menfolk tend to be addicted to alcohol, which is available relatively easily and cheaply in Goa. In their native village there is a ban on selling alcohol which is prepared out of jaggery. Following protests over growing alcoholism by women in Karnataka, the manufacture and sale of country liquor has been banned in



A young migrant girl spends her time at the salt-pans, while her parents are at work



Men and women work jointly for some operations in the salt pans. Both in the photo above are migrants from Karnataka



Migrant workers and their children at Batim



A typical Ager couple outside the temporary hut in Batim



A worker shows a contused and injured hand



and another shows his leg, the result of much work in the salt pans



Water being fetched from far off places by the agris wherein they have to walk for one to one and a half hour for water to a nearby village well



Migrant life in Batim, showing the traditional clothes of the agrers and the inside of a ager dwelling. Bottom right photo is of a Ager who sells fish in the home of the villagers which adds to the income of the migrants

some areas. Other kind of liquor is also available in liquor shops which are far more expensive than the country liquor, and this has to be consumed in the shop itself. A few women also imbibe alcoholic drinks but feel shy to consume liquor publicly in the bars.

Their relations with the other people, i.e. the *Agris* in the village, are reciprocal. In fact, their relations with the other villagers are cordial too. Owners take care of the needs of the migrant workers. If they are sick or the pregnant, the women are taken to the hospital by the owners. Money that is got through selling the salt in the salt pans in the owner's absence is given by the migrants to the owners. They display a sense of trust in the labourers. Sometimes they even offer them the transport as a way back home to Karnataka.

Migrant workers are paid by the owners of the saltpans in Goa, at a level of approximately Rs 1200 per month, in addition to four and half *paili* (approximately ten and half kilograms) rice and rupees two hundred for a week. They work from 5 a.m. to 8 a.m. and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. The time in between is utilised by them to work as manual labourers in the village. Besides this they also get an additional income of rupees seventy for filling one pickup of salt.

In Sanikatta, each *Ager* labourer is paid rupees one thousand five hundred a month or rupees four hundred a week for which they have to work only for three hours a day in the morning i.e. from 4 a.m. to 7 a.m. so the employer does not have to provide them sunglasses or gumboots during the day. Money that is meant to be paid to the labourers there is divided into three parts - one part is paid to them every month; second part is paid to them during the time of the festivals like village *zatra*, Chaturthi, Diwali etc. The third part is paid to them during the time of their retirement. The company also pays them a bonus of Rs 1000 to Rs 1500 to them at the

end of the season.

The Sanikatta salt society is a salt owners cooperative society; it is the only big licensed unit and the only salt owners co-operative society found to be registered in the entire Karnataka state. It has employed nearly 140 salt workers, including about 20 iodised salt workers. The salt pan workers who have been employed by the society receive the wages under the Minimum Wages Act and are entitled to the benefits like provident fund, and bonus. They also earn leave wages, national holidays and apart from rotation holidays. In the existing salt pans in the Sanikatta, mostly *Agers* are employed. (Souza 2005: 46, 61)

Those who worked as migrant workers preferred to come to Goa thirty to forty years ago, since in those days the employers at Sanikatta used to hire labourers from Mumbai so local people were made to work as daily wage labourers, but now the situation has improved wherein the local people employed there get all the incentives like bonuses, provident fund and other benefits even after their retirement. The migrants of Karnataka repent for not getting these facilities which their counterparts now get at their hometown.

We can say that inspite of their neglected state of the socio-economic condition of their community, the response of the *Agers* to the development programme is positive. Their children go to schools although very small children accompany their parents to the saltpans and miss school for roughly six months in a year. Schools and universities which are situated very far from their village. Some of them, including girls, have taken a keen interest in education. They participate in political activities and they are not reluctant in sending their girls in politics.

Low income and landlessness are the main causes of their indebtedness. And, this, in turn, is the main cause of their poverty. Poverty is their main constraint in

higher education. They have fully adapted themselves to the modern medical facilities and in case of a disease they visit either a government hospital or a private doctor. In Karnataka, they send a pregnant woman to hospitals and also respond to family planning programmes.

An ailing person is immediately sent to a hospital in Kumta or Karwar. Their village is electrified and connected with roads. Some of them have radio and television sets. They are aware of the development programmes launched by the Government in their localities. The facility of ration (fair-priced commodities) is used by them regularly in Karnataka.

The salt pans involve laborious work that mainly depends on nature. Their work is also affected by the unpredictable breach in the salt pans, which results in a flooding of the salt pans. And secondly, if it rains during the peak season, the saltpan owners suffer financially because of the decrease of temperature in the salt pans the salt crystals do not get formed in the salt pans. Sometimes they have to resort to other means, like deploying of electricity water pumps to drain the excess water from the salt pans, resulting in an approximate loss of one or two pickup per day per saltpan owner. In such circumstances, the loss is attributed to the owners and not to the migrant labourers - if they do not pay the laborers their share they will abstain from returning the next year.

There are gender differentials in the tasks performed in the salt pans. Although this community is a backward community, it has a comparatively better status. Unlike in many parts of Goa, where in-migration is seen as a major threat, they are not even seen as a necessary evil as they do not pose competition on the Agri community.

Salt work has acted as a catalyst in Goa in attracting the Ager community to a few parts of the state. The manner in which the locals address them is symbolic of

how they are seen. This is a transition phase for them too; they are getting some access to education, and possibly venturing into politics. There is a hope that this will move upwards and improve their status.

Several rituals performed at the salt pans have changed over recent times, a reflection of the process of social changes that is underway there too. On the first day when they get the salt, in the past people would go around in the village, carrying the salt and distributing it in each and every house. While doing so, they would sing and play on the *gumott*, the traditional drum of Goa. But now the hired labourers take the salt to the owner's house, burn crackers and the owner will give them something in cash or kind. This is a reflection of the changing culture of the workers in the salt-pans, and how this shapes the local mode of celebration, in turn.

There is a ritual associated with salt making, described earlier, wherein *Ell* is kept under a sacred tree close to the saltpan. The *ell* consists of the *ganthon* described above, a match box, paan, *supari*, liquor (*soro*), banana, agarbatti and candles. But this trend is changing, wherein the labourers keep all these above mentioned items without the *ganthon*.

On the feast day, a small vessel is made out of coconut leaves (*chuttechem kondul*) in which they put some salt and flowers. It is kept on the pan. But nowadays the migrant workers instead light agarbathis and candles on the salt pans.

In-migration is not the only change being witnessed at the salt-pans of Batim. As in other parts of the state, here too the salt-economy has been consistently devalued for a century and more. Technological up gradation is not happening. There are signs of the younger members of the Ager community not wanting to continue in the profession. As tradition slips away, the uncertainty of the future stares the salt-pans of Batim.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE GAUDDIS AND BHANDARIS OF ARPORA

#### **Location**

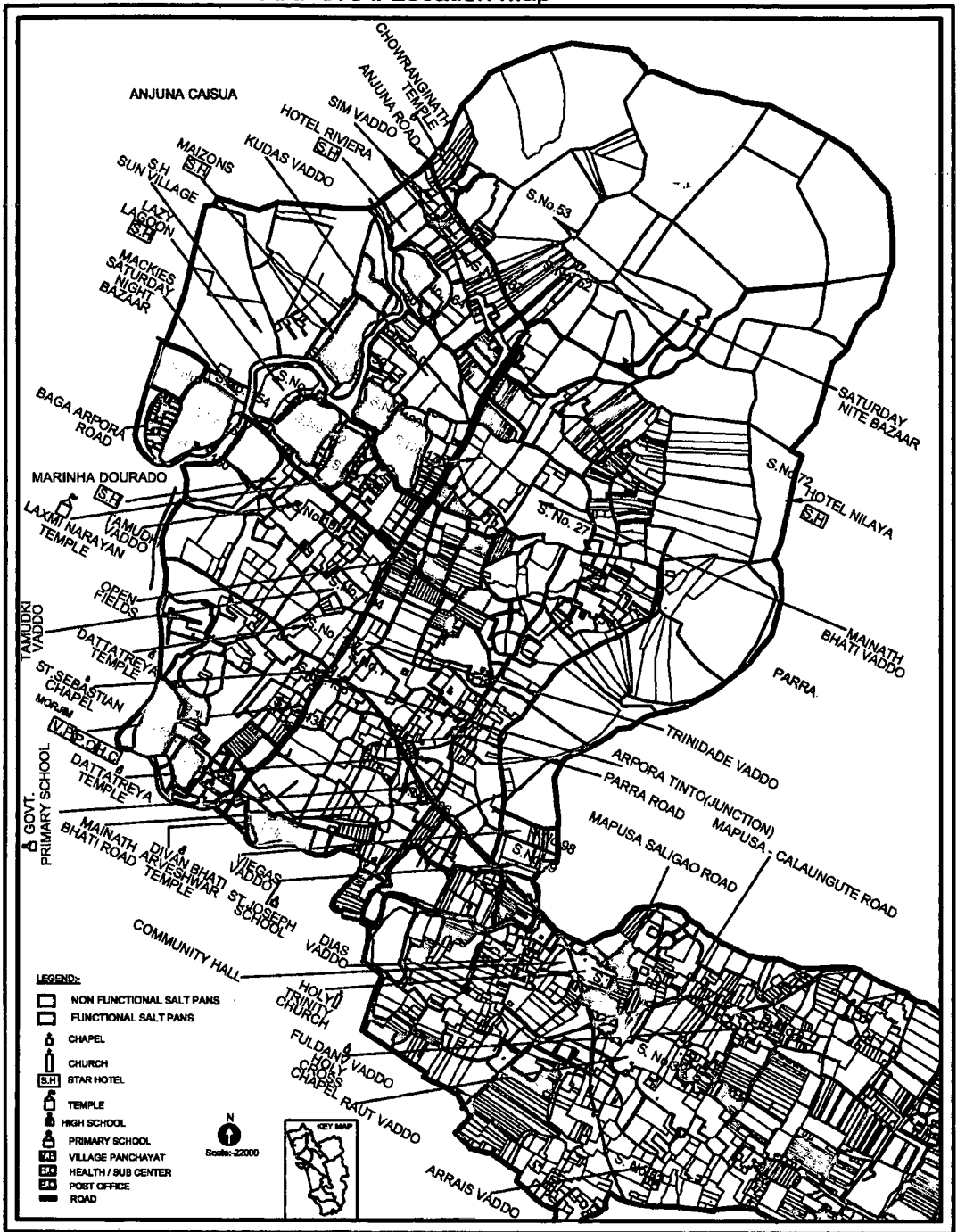
Arpora is one of the salt producing villages which is situated in the North of Goa, in Bardez taluka, near the Anjuna-Baga-Calangute tourism belt. The three neighbouring localities of the area – Arpora, Nagoa and Baga – are palm-bedecked coastal hamlets, clustered together to rig up a revenue village. It is the most prominent North Goa centre of tourism, as the nearby Anjuna (a former 'hippy capital', which once made Goa as famous as Ibiza in Spain and Kathmandu in Nepal, in the 1960s and 1970s) and Calangute villages which are famous for tourism in Goa.

Arpora is located in Bardez taluka. It is located towards the west of the sub-district, six kilometers from taluka headquarters. Its area is around 419.43 hectares and the total population is 4280. There are 2479 houses, flats and bungalows. Its main post office is in Calangute, which is two kilometers away, and it has a branch office at Arpora which was started on June 21, 1977. It is sixteen kilometers from the Panjim Kadamba bus-stand. Its closest taxi stand is at a distance of two kilometers i.e. at Calangute.

It has four schools, including St. Joseph's Higher Secondary School (credited with being the first English-language school set up in Goa in 1887), one government high school and four government primary schools. There is one church in the vicinity, the four-and-half century's old Holy Trinity Church. (The village of Arpora does not have a church but it comes under the jurisdiction of Nagoa church.)

# Map No. 6.1

## ARPORA: Location Map



The different wards in Arpora are Kuddos vaddo, Viegas vaddo, Trindade vaddo, Mainath Bhatti, Diwan Bhatti, Sankwadi, Tambudki, and Baga. There are several place names which defy analysis with ease. A systematic research is necessary to trace their roots back in the remote past. The Portuguese on setting their foot on the Goan soil, aimed at systematically colonizing the Old Conquests and simultaneously

tried to replace the old names by the Portuguese names or named them after Christian saints (Singh1993: 240). There are four chapels in Arpora - St. Anne's Chapel, which is situated on the border of Apora-Baga on the river banks, a part of it also falls in Calangute as Arpora is connected to Calangute by a bridge; St. Francis Chapel, situated in St. Francis Xaviervaddo; and St. Sebastian's Chapel situated at Trindadevaddo.

Professor Pissurlencar (quoted in Priolkar 1961: 83) gives a list of the temples that existed in Arpora before their destruction during the phase of religious intolerance of Portuguese rule. They were Santeri, Vetall, Vanadeuta and Chourungo. The ancient temples of this area are of Santeri, Vetall, Vana devta and Chourungo (Gomes Pereira1978: 66). But now there are temples dedicated to Sateri at Arwaant, Ganesh at Diwan Bhatti, Arveshwar at Diwanbhatti and Chowranginath at Ximer, Hanuman situated at Sankwadi and recently a new temple at Arpora Baga dedicated to Ramdas Swami located at Arpora Baga. . Besides these temples there are other small temples in Arpora.

### **Etymology**

Fr. Moreno D Souza, a Jesuit priest and author, in his book "*Bardezcheo Igorzo*" (1999), cites that Arpora was originally called '*Hadpaddem*' or '*Hadd-Phoddem*' or '*Vhodd-Phoddem*' as this village had large open spaces of fields and properties which were referred to as *Phoddam*.

These *Phoddam* or large open spaces of fields and properties were also known as *Chovkonnarnam* or square blocks. Translated into English, the word *Phodd* connotes a place of public business; the spot at which field produce is collected. Till today there are such large fields in the village.

Another version that comes as an explanation for the place getting its name is that it comes from Hadap+vadem, a place of Hadap who used to be an attendant of the king or his subordinate authority to serve betel (Singh 1993: 233).

### **Village Settlement**

Various wards of the village arpora as described below:

**Kuddos Ward:** In Konkani the word Kuddos is derived from “*Kudtar*” (*Moryo Kaso*) meaning a small ward. Initially there were only Christians who were residing in this ward, who migrated to different parts of the world, as Goa particularly the sub-district of Bardez is known to have a high level of out-migration from its shores. In Goa, members of the Catholic community were the first ones to migrate in large numbers to Africa, the Gulf, other parts of India and the other countries (Mhamai 2000: 187). Many people of this ward have migrated abroad from this ward. Now a majority of Hindus reside here. This hamlet's name could also come from Khursa vaddo (named after the Holy Cross, a religious icon) since many Christians lived here once upon a time in this ward. Kuddos could be a corruption of Khursa, i.e cross in Konkani language.

**Viegas Vaddo:** This ward is apparently named after the Viegas clan, believed to have been landlords and resident here and hence the reason for its name.

**Mainath Bhatti:** It is called as the *Modvaoche Bhatt*, or the place where *dhobis* (traditional laundrymen) reside. The Nath cult had been widespread in Goa during and after the time of Dnyaneshwar from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards. In the Nath cult, only the Siddhas pursuing the Adinath tradition are called Nathas and the rest are simply called Siddhas, like the case of Mainath Bhatti in Arpora (Singh 1993: 234). Several place names called Maina are to be traced in this region. The name is derived from the

Sanskrit word *Mahi*, meaning land or ground. So the place name is probably derived from Mahi+ van- Mahin. Main means forest land (Singh1993: 225). It is situated below the hill in Arpora.

Diwan Bhati: It was also called as *Vaniachi bhatti-Diwan ghar*. According to the Konkani dictionary *Diwan* refers to the residence cum office of a revenue officer. The comunidade office of this village existed in this ward. The *Karkoon*, or the secretary, of the comunidade used to sit in this office and hence the name Diwan Bhatti according to the respondent.

Baga Ward: Generally the word *Baag* means garden (Singh1993: 225), which was also mentioned by a Bhandari respondent who believe that there was a landlord residing in here he had a very big *baag* (garden) wherein there were lot of flowers. So the river Baga derived its name from the same. This is the near near the river Baga, from where a tributary flows through the Arpora village. The river Baga flows at the northern border of Calangute. It roughly separates the villages of Calangute and Arpora (D' Souza 1997: 9).

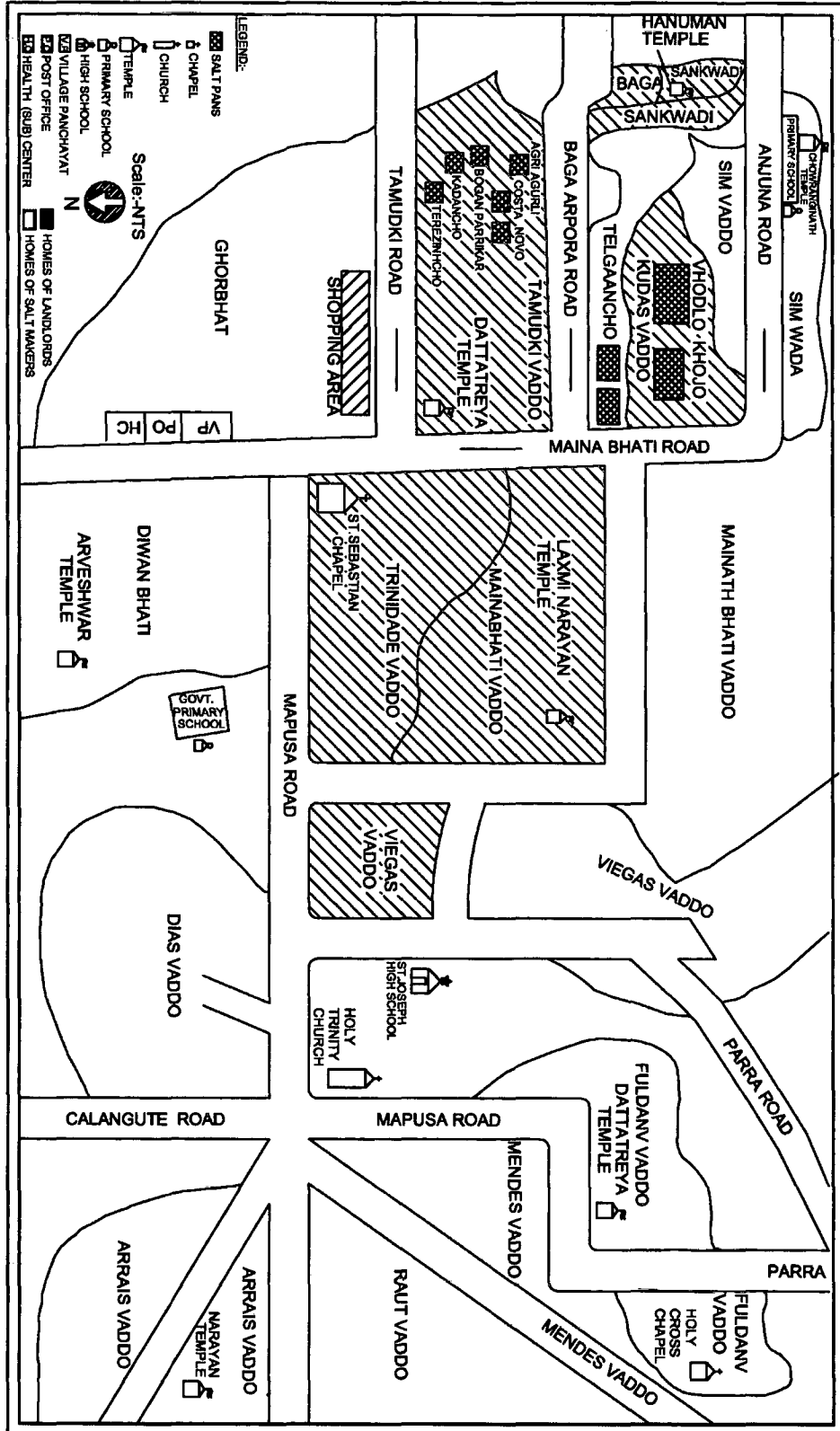
Sankwadi: The name is derived from '*Sankov*', means a small bridge. There is a local saying which says *Pravaas korunk vaat naasli baamboochi shidi ghali*. This suggests as there was no way to cross the flowing rivulet, a ladder of bamboo was made to cross the river – at three different places where the Baga River touched Arpora and hence the ward name Sankwadi.

Tambudki: This ward's name is probably derived from *Tamdi Maatih* (red mud, in Konkani), a reference to the colour of the soil in the area. Mostly the Hindu Brahmins resided in this ward.

Rautavaddo: People with the surname Raut lived in this ward. The Rauts belong to the Kshatriya Maratha community (Singh 1993: 222).

Gharbhatt Ward: *Gharchea Bhattant* meaning household property. The landlords had given this name.

**Map No. 6.2**  
**ARPORA: Wards Location Plan**



## **Migration Pattern**

Many Catholics earlier resided in places like Kuddos vaddo. People went abroad and opened up new avenues for employment; the fact that Goa's first English medium school is based in this village was not coincidental to the trend to migrate abroad, from all over Bardez, Arpora too. The younger generation migrated to Mumbai and other metros of India. Some went abroad in search of jobs in order to escape from the traditional jobs that they had to perform in the village that was once upon a time performed by their ancestors. Previously in Goan society particularly occupations were performed by particular castes. For example, the Sudir performed the job of agriculture; the Kharvi performed the occupation of fishing as a part of hereditary occupation. Such occupations were often considered to be of low social status and low incomes too.

Some people even went to Persian Gulf, drawn by the higher salaries there. With the money that their jobs fetched them abroad, they could somewhat adapt their social status in the village. During this time when the locals were migrating to the different parts of the globe, including Africa, their place was taken up by the Bhandaris who have migrated into Arpora.

## **The Bhandaris of Arpora**

The term 'Bhandari' refers to farmers and toddy-tappers. There are two sub-castes: Bhandari proper and *Poim-Kape* (toddy-tapper) Bhandari. The *Poim-Kape* distills local liquor and is known in the Velhas Conquistas as *reinderos* (an Indo-Portuguese word that comes from the word '*render*' or toddy-tapper).

The name Bhandari is derived from the word '*Bhandar*'. Since navigation was their prime occupation, and as they looked after the Bhandar as store men, they came

to be known as Bhandari. Some opine that the word comes from Bhandar which means treasury. Another version put forward by others is that for collecting *neera* for preparing toddy, a peculiar shaped vessel (*bhande*) is used by them (Singh 1993: 124). The word Bhandari could also have been derived from the Sanskrit word *mandharak*, for distiller liquor tapping and selling was the special work of the Bhandaris. It is said they were experts in navigation during the rule of Shivaji. They are also engaged in liquor contract, timber sawing, hand pounding etc (Mangelekar2006: 126).

Those who were once employed for the protection of the king's treasury were also called Bhandari. Now-a-days, Bhandaris call themselves Kshatriya Bhandari. During the Peshwa period, from the eighteenth century onwards, they are believed to have played a significant role in the Maratha Navy. Subsequently, when the Navy of the Peshwas disintegrated, the Bhandaris who had been earlier employed by them faced unemployment and took to toddy-tapping. Sometimes, they prepare at home the *feni* brew from the cashew fruits, or *sur* for fermented juice i.e *tadi* (or toddy) that is obtained from coconut trees. Hence they were called coconut cutters (*Maddcape*) or cutters of seed in the florescence of coconut (*Poicappe*). Since the coconut tree is considered Kalpvriksha (or the bountiful tree, due to the immense utility of its many products), cutting its seed in flourecence was treated as good as cutting a human embryo, a bad deed. Hence the Naiks of the area distanced themselves from the Bhandaris (*poicape*), putting a stop to marital alliances as well as other relations with them. They further treated them low in status (Singh1993: 124, 126).

One respondent said that the term Bhandari has evolved from the term *bhonnde*, meaning immature, unripe or useless coconuts, seen as an allusion too to this caste's involvement in the toddy-tapping process in a situation where physical labour is looked down upon. The majority of the respondents said they belonged to



the *Render* community and they are *Bhonde kape*. Some did jobs of taking on fruit-bearing trees on hire *rendaak (Arrament) ghetale*. They belong to the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) as per the list made by the Goa State Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation Limited on April 2, 1990.

The precise population figure of Bhandaris is not available in the census record. However, it is believed to be the community with the largest population group in Goa followed by combined groups of Gauddas (Singh1993: 125).

According to one recently translated work (Couto 2008), the surnames of the Bhandari across Goa are: Sanvol, Kanshe, Metor, Kudav, Raul, Zoshi, Kanoji, Esgi, Dhuri, Bisgi, Gaunde, Raoji, Koloji, Sidgi, Dadgi, Pokre, Karbe, Kale, Bodje, Lanshe, Ponvar, Naik, Pandre and Dabale. But the Bhandaris of Arpora involved in the salt making occupation bear mainly the following surnames: Kandolkar, Mayekar, Diukar, Satelkar, Shirodkar, Oshelkar, Pilankar and Govekar.

The Bhandaris had migrated from different places in Arpora and this is evident from the fact that the family god of the Bhandaris is often located in some other village.

For example the Diukars have their family god is Kaal Bhairav, Saptakoteshwar from Bicholim. The Pilankar family god is Shantadurga from Naroa. The Simepuruskars have their family god Sathpurush in Morjim. The Sathelkars have their god in Satheli in Vengurla, Maharashtra. The Shirodkars have as their family god Sateri in Siolim and their main family god is Mulgao in Bicholim; the Khanolkar family god is Shantadurga Khanolkarin in Nanora, near Assnora. However they visit different religious places like Shirdi, Dharmasthala, Gokarna, Gangapur in Karnataka, Kolhapur, Pandharpur, Tulsapur etc for the purpose of worship. Some of them were

not in favour of conversion since they felt *dharm saambhallun dovrunk zai* meaning “we need to protect our religion.”

One of the Catholic respondents the landlords said that they were originally from Mapusa since they were getting the *zonn* (an annual dividend from the *comunidade*) from Mapusa. Another said they were originally from Cuncoim.



A Bhandari woman in her festive clothes at Arpora



A landlady and a migrant worker working on her salt-pans at Arpora

### Sources of Income

The Bhandaris in the village were earlier entirely dedicated to salt making based on toil with hardly many profits from the occupation. Especially in the rainy season, when it was not possible to carry on their salt-work, they had to depend on what little savings that generated out of salt. The job was accepted as a part of life and the older generation trained their young one into it right from the childhood. But nowadays things have totally changed mainly due to tourism, the salt makers and their children are no longer interested in salt work. They see jobs in the salt pans as tedious and offering only low incomes, on which they have to eke out a living for the whole year.

Secondly, some salt pans have disappeared and got converted into being

recreation places by the starred hotels and they prefer to work in the tourism related jobs which are much easier than working in the salt pans. The Bhandaris usually sell agricultural products previously they sold salt. The tenants would pay the landlords in cash or kind viz. Rs 32 and a cartload of salt.

The Gauddis own properties and salt pans which serve as a source of income.

### **Population**

Arpora consists of one Comunidade and the old gaunkars were mainly persons who had the surname of Naique or Naik (Gomes Pereira 1978: 66). The comunidade consisted of seven *vangors* (clan groups) of which three still exist in the village. The gaunkars are of the Chardo, Sudra and the Gauddo castes.

Besides the traditional village population, the growth of tourism in the area and real estate too has led to the entry of people from other villages, States and even countries settling in Arpora for part of the year or the whole year.

### **Religion**

The name of the church is Holy Trinity (*Santissima Trindade*, in Portuguese). This church in Nagoa was founded in 1560 by the Catholic religious order of the Fransiscans. This church came to be called as the Matriz (Mother) – for its jurisdiction at one time extended over five neighbouring villages of Parra, Anjuna, Assagao, Siolim, Oxel, and Saligao, which were subsequently raised to the status of independent parishes. In 1679, the reconstruction of the church was carried out and it was further improved in 1893 (Lourenco 2006: 117). The feast is celebrated two weeks after Easter.

Conversion plays an important role in the history of Goa. To gain an understanding of the history of the villagers, and the origin of the community, one has

to see the historical forces that operated in that village. For example, a look into the history of the village church enables one to understand when the conversion in that village took place and who the original inhabitants were prior to conversion.

The Bhandari respondents of Arpora believe that the Holy Trinity Church in Arpora was a temple of Nagnath and the St. Sebastians chapel was a temple of Saat Purush. *Teka bhattoilo ani Sanse Bostiao kelo*, meaning Sath Purush the God of Hindus was converted to a Christian God.

### **Land Use Pattern**

Land in Arpora, like in other parts of Goa, was controlled collectively till a century back, approximately. But the comunidade institutions, which managed the land, were not egalitarian; neither did they allow membership to women.

In the nearby village of Anjuna, for instance, the Brahmins have the right to be enrolled as *gaunkars* (members and shareholders of the comunidade) at the age of ten, whereas those from the Chardo and Gauddo castes at fifteen (Gomes Pereira 1981: 116).

Arpora was one village under study which has been witnessing a steady decline in the salt pans and salt production due to various reasons.

Salt pans have been bought by those wanting to convert the area into a tourist hotel or for some business, which obviously earns huge returns, at a level which the traditional economy of salt cannot compete. Some salt pans are currently being used exclusively for pisciculture, while some are flooded.

In addition, there is a peculiar ownership pattern prevailing in Arpora, wherein even one tamarind tree could be owned by sixteen different landlords. This may be due to the fact that under the Comunidade system the land and other resources in the

village were owned in common. The *bhatkaars* also owned salt pans in Arpora under common ownership. Salt pans are owned by two different sets of permanent tenants - one of whom performed only pisciculture and permanent tenants who harvested the salt.

### **Salt Pans and Salt Production (Ownership Patterns)**

The names of the salt pans which are found in Arpora are *Vhodlo agor*, *Markacho agor*, *Firgualancho agor*, *Antaacho agor*, *Padricho agor*, *Kodoncho agor*, *Khojo agor*, *Telgaancho agor*, *Costaancho agor*, *Nevo agor* and *Juulli agorli*.

Out of all the above *Agors*, *Padricho Agor* was the main and the biggest in size and would extract good quantity of salt. One respondent said *Padricho Agor soglleam lokank sustence kortalo*, meaning most of the salt makers were thriving on *Padricho agor*. These *Agors* were owned by the *bhatkars* or landlords but nowadays many tenants have bought over the saltpans and have now become the owners of the salt pans. The Catholic *bhatkars* of Arpora belong to the *Gauddi* caste, are Christians and dress in a European manner. They often live in huge heritage-type houses like the ones used by the higher castes Catholics of Goa.

The salt pans in Arpora are owned by multiple owners. There are some diverse beliefs over their ownership. One of the salt pans, for instance, still called the *Paadricho Agor* was gifted to a priest so that he could offer Masses in favour of certain souls. Giving a Mass in Catholicism is generally considered a means of ensuring that the soul is prayed for.

Other views see the control of property as engineered by dominant groups in the locality by controlling the official press. Sometimes a landlord having many children could not suitably have them all continue in the salt-works, so he would sell it – and this is seen as another factor responsible for the multiple ownership pattern in

Arpora.

According to a document that the landlords say they possess, they were originally Naique in pre-conversion times. Historical records also show that the original gaunkars of Arpora were also Naique.

Regarding the question of ownership of properties and salt pans in Arpora one theory is of the Gauddis owning the properties and saltpans in Arpora is due to the marriage of the locals with the Portuguese. Other respondents felt that they were *regidors* during the Portuguese period, which might have led these people to own the land.

Right at the early phase of Portuguese rule in Goa, in the sixteenth century, while the Portuguese rulers were establishing their administrative and judicial machinery, the Christian missionaries were engaged in the activities of conversions. Already by this time, the first Portuguese Governor of Goa, Afonso Albuquerque had propagated arranging marriages of Portuguese men of good character with the widows and daughters of Muslim and Hindu who were killed in battle. With a view to providing the newly married couples with the means of livelihood, the Portuguese administration bestowed on them properties confiscated from the Hindu temples, village communities and from individuals who ran away from their village to escape religious persecutions at the hands of the Portuguese. The abandoned shares of the village comunidades were conferred on the Portuguese who married the local women and established themselves in the colony. (D'Souza 1975: 177)

One Bhandari respondent said that the Gauddis of Arpora owned lands since there might have been mixed marriages of the locals with the Portuguese, leading to the ownership of the salt pans. But it is difficult to establish the veracity of such beliefs in the case of Arpora.

The table below shows a listing of the salt-pans in the village, giving their ownership structure. **PT (Permanent Tenant)** refers those who work for the landlords on the landlord's land. **OO (Original Owners)** is a reference to those who own the salt pans and sometimes perform jobs on their own. **OT (Original Tenants)** those which have bought the salt pans from the landlords and have now become the owners of the land.

**Table 6.1**  
**Names of the salt makers in Arpora**

<b>Name of the Person</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Pedro Fialho</b>	Viegas Vaddo	PT
<b>Lucian D'Souza</b>	Tambudki Vaddo	PT
<b>Narahari Kandolkar</b>	Baga	PT
<b>Dyaneshwar Satelkar</b>	Baga	PT
<b>Rekap Almeida</b>	Tamudki Vaddo	PT
<b>Pandurang Mayekar</b>	Mainath Bhati	PT
<b>Nanda Divkar</b>	Sankwadi	PT
<b>Mahadev Divkar</b>	Sankwadi	PT
<b>Sailu Shirodkar</b>	Sankwadi	PT
<b>Dyaneshwar Shirodkar</b>	Sim Vaddo	PT
<b>Jaidev Divkar</b>	Sim Vaddo	PT
<b>Sanjeev Oshelkar</b>	Sankwadi	OT
<b>Anil P. Pilankar</b>	Sankwadi	PT
<b>Khemu Govekar</b>	Kudas Vaddo	PT
<b>Atmaram Diukar</b>		OT
<b>Gregory Almeida Paulo</b>	Sim Vaddo	OT

**Table 6.2**  
**Names of the Original Owners in Arpora**

Name of the person	Address	Status
Erasto Viegas	Viegas Vaddo	OO
Joseph Mack Pereira	Saturday Nite	OO
Costa Moniz	Marinha Dourada	OO
Abreu	Not known	OO
Arnaldo Cruz	Not known	OO
Silveira-Madgaonkar-	Amonkar-Maizon	OO
Moniz	Sim Vaddo	OO
Lobo- Santan Fialho	Not known	OO
Naguesh Gaad	Not known	OO
Agnelo Braganza	La Goa Azul	OO

Source: Personal findings through fieldwork

Note: Original owners above are those who are either original *bhatkars* (landlords) or those who have purchased the saltpans and have become the *bhatkars*. The salt pans have also been bought by some quarters either for salt harvesting or for conversion to real estate or for some business.

The present Gaunkars of Arpora bear surnames like Hodfoddkar, Gaonkar, Polle and Fialho but people who bear the surname Hodfodkar, Gaonkar and Polle do not currently engage themselves in salt production whatsoever. The Fialhos do engage themselves in the salt production in Arpora.

### **The Gauddis**

Caste is fundamental to village community, just as kinship is fundamental to



caste. The great rituals, events of the life cycle, marriages and funerals bring together the members of kin, that is, caste fellows. When a person goes to another village, he usually visits his caste fellows there. Communication between villages is largely between people of the same caste (Mandelbaum1972: 321). As stated in the introductory chapter one should not mix the Gauddis with the Gauddas of Goa. The Gauddis of Arpora was the only *jati* out of the five *jatis* which were the landlords as well as involved in extraction of salt from the salt pans.

They are however very few in number. Some of them work abroad; some were old and unmarried some did not want to be interviewed so the researcher had to rely on very few persons to get the information of the landlords.

The Mithgaudas who were converted, especially in the Bardez taluka, attained socio-cultural heights as priests, lawyers, journalists, doctors etc. The Mithgaudas in the Catholic community who refer themselves as Gauddis in Arpora, have fused completely into the Catholic mainstream without leaving any trace with the exception of a few who still toil as labourers in the fields (Singh1993: 165).

It is not known when the converted Mithgaudas were referred as Gauddis. When enquired with a respondent regarding the caste he said they belong to the Chardo caste which corresponds to the Kshatriya caste in the Hindu varna hierarchy. As lifestyles changed in Goa, traditional salt producers have found newer means of livelihood, a trend which has also adversely affected the number of people in the profession.

The Gauddis of Arpora, on conversion to Christianity, could have taken with them their pre-Hindu salt-making skills. For some reason though, in the past, the people of Arpora would give the salt pans of Arpora on contract to the people of Agarvaddo, and take a share of the earnings. It was not clear as what precise caste

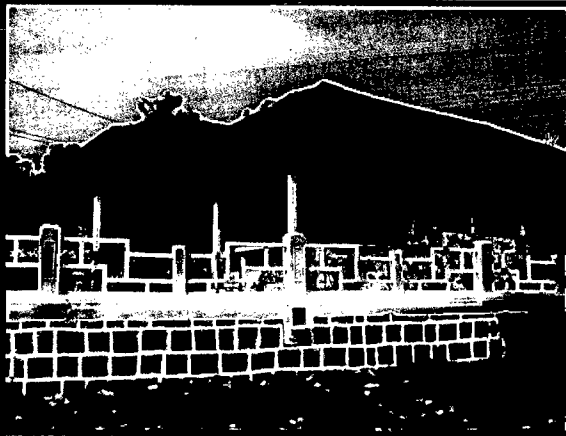
grouping the Gauddis in Arpora belonged prior to their religious conversions. But as stated earlier in the introductory chapter according to Gomes (1996), generally speaking, those of the Vaishya-Vani who could not get them merged as Christian Bamonn or Chaddhe, still appear as the “Gauddo”. In places in the Bardez, this caste is still considered as one of the three twice-born castes.

When asked, respondents from Arpora said that they are Gauddis which however is not to be confused with the aboriginal Gauddas of Goa. In one respondent's house, a Gaudda respondent had married a Gauddi groom. But from this single case, it is not possible to generalise at a wider case in Arpora, since it was only one family in Arpora that the researcher had witnessed. The woman tried to distinguish by saying that her family was different from the one she married into as she belonged to a category of *rostte ba kortat toslim Gauddas* (the Gauddas who build roads, and undertake other manual jobs, as against the other, landowning caste).

Another respondent when asked about the distinction of the two Gauddas and the Gauddis said that they were a separate category wherein the Gauddis were the landowning caste in Arpora, who were landowners as opposed to the Gauddas who they referred to as Kunbi-Gauddas. They said that they do not intermarry with the Gauddas of Goa but have their own relations with whom matrimonial alliances are built in Bardez, in places like Mapusa, Bastora, Guirim and Corgao in Pernem.

Goa is known to be a place for heavy out-migration. During the British time when their services were eagerly sought on land and sea (Hall 1995: 57). There were many Christian families from Arpora, especially around the St. Cruz Church, who migrated to Pakistan, Karachi, Nairobi and Africa. Following the migration, some Christian homes were taken over by Hindus.

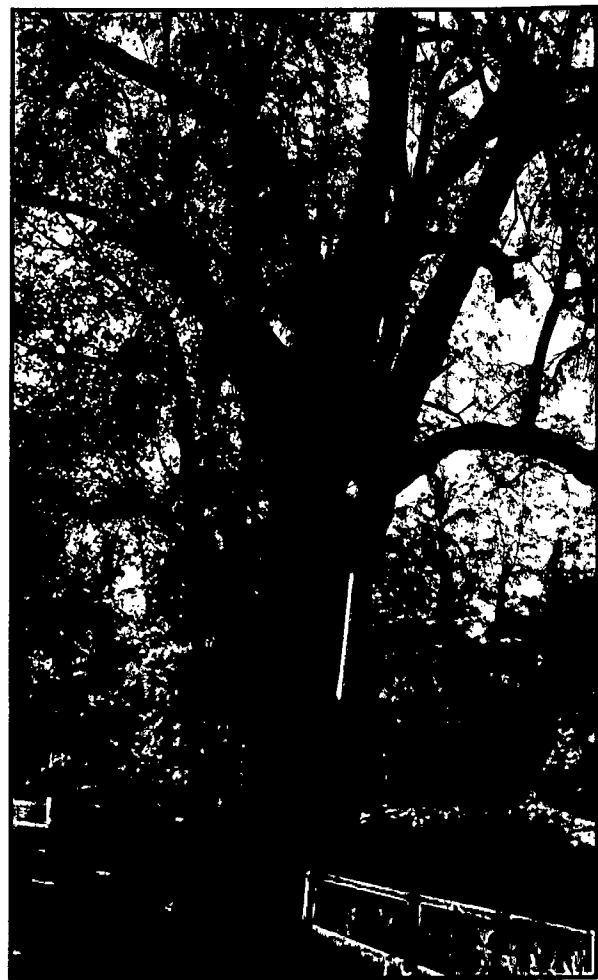
But the Christian families of Arpora are known to own some palatial residences. There is no clear idea on how this came to be, villages in Bardez tend to have a limited number of palatial homes. One theory regarding the ownership of palatial houses and ownership of land and salt pans by the Gauddis of Arpora is in part because they worked in professions such as *Regidors* (the Portuguese equivalent of the village Patel) for the Portuguese, as a result had access towards issues pertaining to land control. This is not a fully satisfactory explanation, because other dominant castes had similar access to officialdom, but not all grew similarly and neither did it reflect in the palatial homes as witnessed at Arpora.



The landlords of Arpora own some impression homes



Another impression home belonging to the landlords of Arpora



A tamarind tree in Arpora, owned by a total of sixteen different owners

## **Marriage System**

### **Marriage Customs**

The institution of marriage leads to the formation of a universal and primary group – the family (Maruthi 2003: 45). The marriage customs rituals and ceremonies vary from society to society. The marriage among the Bhandaris is usually arranged by the parents of the bride and the bridegroom, and the relatives or it could also be in some case as a love marriage. There is usually a belief that uneducated people attach great importance to rituals and customs during the time of marriage.

The average age for boys is 30 to 35 for boys and 19 to 28 for girls. There is engagement ceremony called the *sakarpudo* prior to the wedding in the groom's house or the bridegroom's house. They make use of a cone of sugar (*saakricho pudo*) in this ceremony, which is why it is referred as *sakarpudo*. Sugar is distributed to the people symbolizing the alignment between the two families. Rings are exchanged during this ceremony sometimes a gold ornament is given to the bride. An auspicious day (*muhurt*) is selected for the wedding. Before the wedding day turmeric paste is applied both to the girl as well as the boy called as the *halad lavap*. After the wedding ceremony is over the bride and the groom visit the brides place along with their friends and relatives where they are served grand non vegetarian food and liquor is served to the guests. Invitations are not restricted to family and relations but also friends, even those belonging to other castes.

### **Feasts and Festivals**

The Gauddis and the Bhandaris celebrate many festivals which are celebrated by the Hindus and Catholics of Goa. But only those feasts which are specific to the Gauddis and Bhandaris will be dealt in this chapter. Feasts and festivals are an

integral part of the socio-cultural ethos of a community. A study of these aspects of the socio-cultural life enhances our understanding of the community.

St Sebastian's feast in Arpora deserves a special mention in Arpora since Catholics and the Hindus observe St. Sebastian's Feast (Saint Sebastian, died c. 288, is believed to have been killed during the Roman emperor Diocletian's persecution of Christians). St. Sebastian later became a saint and martyr, who is said to have been killed while the Roman emperor Diocletian engaged in the persecution of Christians in the third century. When he tried to convert the people to Christianity, the emperor killed him and left tied to a tree. He is commonly depicted in art and literature tied to a post and shot with arrows. The feast of St. Sebastian is celebrated on January 20, every year.

One can feel the unique religious harmony between the Christians and the Hindus of the village at times like during the St. Sebastian's Feast. What makes this unique from other feasts celebrated in Arpora and the rest of Goa is that the Hindus as well as the Christians of Arpora participate in this feast.

One of the respondents even went to the extent of telling the researcher that this feast was celebrated by the Hindus since St. Sebastian was a Hindu God Sat Purush (*Nekkad Vaani*) who was himself converted to Christianity. The Hindus have great devotion to St. Sebastian, as they feel and say that *toh amcho dev teka portuguezani bhatoilo*, meaning that he was a Hindu who was converted to Christianity. When the researcher wanted to probe into the same and put some questions to a Catholic respondent, the latter turned angry for enquiring about the history of that chapel. This researcher tried to find out the history of St. Sebastian. When the researcher tried to investigate and find out about this aspect, the Christians of Arpora were annoyed or perplexed with same question. The once-holy sites that

suffered destruction at the hands of the Portuguese and were subsequently converted into Catholic places of worship, also attract devout Hindus (Kamat: 1999: 72). The elderly respondent went on further to state that their family God in Naroa temple and the Hindu shrine of Saptakoteshwar on the island of Divar have a similar dome as the one which is of the St. Sebastians chapel in Arpora. Hall (1992: 110-112) says that the chapel of Our Lady of Candelaria which was the former Saptakoteshwar temple in the village of Naroa. The Saptakoteshwar temple was built in Naroa in the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and was destroyed by the early Muslim raids. However the *linga* was saved and somewhat ignominiously, buried in a paddy field for safety. During the Vijaynagara period the temple was rebuilt by the conquering General and Governor Madhav Mantri in 1391. In addition, the Portuguese took away stones for use in their own buildings some of it going to Old Goa to become parts of the complex of churches and monasteries. The researcher also visited the present temple of Kaal Bhairav Saptakoteshwar at Bicholim and the Our Lady of Candelaria Chapel in Naroa and found visual similarities in all three domes i.e. of St. Sebastians Chapel in Arpora, Our Lady of Candelaria Chapel in Naroa and the present temple had similar dome.

This was significant for the researchers study to understand the religious syncretism which took place in Arpora after conversion. This aspect of syncretism shall be explained in greater details in the later part of the chapter.

There is a small chapel of St. Sebastian which is owned by the Pinto family who lives in a heritage house called the Grand Pinto Mansion, opposite the St. Sebastian's chapel. As told to the researcher by the Pinto family that the statue was installed in this chapel, since one of the ancestors of the house made a vow and put a wooden statue of the height of a child who was sick. But later, this statue is believed to have been robbed and then was replaced by another one.

This feast is a solemn one and a very important event in Arpora. To celebrate this feast, there are nine days of preparation from January 11 to 19, termed as novenas. The novenas are celebrated ward wise on all the nine days. But on the ninth day, i.e. the last day before the feast, vesper is celebrated by the Hindus of Arpora. This is followed by the litany which is offered by both the communities. After the Mass, a special invocation song, which is dedicated to St. Sebastian, is sung beseeching him to shower his blessings on the *Hadpadkaars* (residents of Arpora). There is a belief that the protective shield of St. Sebastian helps to ward off sicknesses and he cures diseases, as a result of which there is no medical doctor in this village except one homeopathic practitioner who is originally from that area. But there is a belief among the Christians as well as the Hindus of Arpora feel St. Sebastian is considered by them is *voizaancho voiz* (biggest doctor) and he cures all their sickness. *voiz ani chambar tigona* meaning a doctor or a leather worker from outside the village comes to set up base here, his practice will not survive for long, as was told to the researcher by one of the devotee who was present for the vesper ceremony in Arpora. Following their traditional deference, the Hindus leave their footwear outside the St. Sebastian's Chapel when they enter the chapel on the vesper day, a custom which is followed otherwise only in a Hindu temple in Goa and not usually observed in the Christian places of worship in Goa. Despite the long period of Portuguese colonization in Arpora, the Hindu festivals have retained their unique Goan character and are celebrated with deep fervour.

Later the Christians as well as the Hindus join for some snacks and refreshment outside the Chapel. The religious ceremonies (novenas) are followed by some musical programmes and fireworks, the expense for which is met by taking contributions of the local communities.

On the feast day, a special Mass is offered by the villagers, after that there is a *pursanv* (procession taken around the chapel) with the priest carrying the statue of St. Sebastian, with musicians playing the brass-band instruments like the trumpet and the drum. The practice of playing the drum was apparently continued by the neo-converts after the conversion to Christianity.

Author Maria Aurora Couto (2004) points out that the Church in Goa succeeded in bridging the differences between Christian practices and the Hindu socio-cultural practices which the converts still followed, when, “unable to control the converts” continued adherence to old customs and rituals which they practiced clandestinely, the Church authorities devised a shrewd rationale which would appeal to the populace: they replaced Hindu religious rites and symbols with Christian ones, substituted many festivals of the Hindu calendar with feasts of Christian saints and Catholic liturgical celebrations. A connection was established between life cycle events and rites performed in the church so the traditional social and religious needs were drawn into the ambit of the new religion (Couto 2004: 123).

This feast of St. Sebastian is unique across Goa in other ways too: all Hindu married daughters return to visit their maternal home for the feast and, secondly, the Hindus of Arpora prepare *sannas* (a traditional form of bread) for this feast which was usually prepared only by the Christians. The researcher had witnessed a similar event during the Siolim Zagor where the Hindus too prepared the *sannas* in Siolim for the zagor.

Besides this, a lot of Hindus from the neighboring villages flock to Arpora to sell fresh *sur* (toddy extracted from the coconut tree) early in the morning in front of the chapel the day before the feast. Hindus prepare *sannas* for the feast, as done by the Christian community in some, other Bardez villages. In other parts of Goa, the Hindu



substitute for *sannas* is the *idlis* – which adopt a similar preparation process, except in the place of using the toddy urid is used. Cosme (2009) in his book *Apostolic Christianity in Goa and in the West Coast* has associated the term *sanna* with *sadhana* which means union with god. Fr. H.O. Mascarenhas in this book says: ” In ancient times, in their temples in Goa, in order to signify the union of the devotee with god, a special white round preparation of rice and sur was baked and distributed. Union with God meant *Sadhana* in the Sanskrit language, and so the rice preparation is today known as ‘*Sanna*’; only the people of Konkan have the custom of preparing the *sanna* on festive occasions, which meant the devotees union with God, or being one with God i.e. ‘*sadhana*’. Would this be a reminiscence of the Eucharist preserved from ancient times, due to lack of priests in the Konkan? (Cosme2009: 68,69).

This feast is celebrated with great pomp and gaiety. It unites both the communities and builds up a bond of love, peace and above all a feeling of oneness among them.

Incidentally the second-last day of *Dhalo* celebration of the Hindu culmination takes place on the night of the feast of St. Sebastian.

**DHALO - A Folk Dance** - It is an important element of folklore as it has mythological importance. The *Dhalo* is performed only by the women of the community. The word *dhalo* stems from the word *dha lok* which means ten people. Besides, a particular community performs it. Most of the other village community members are not associated with it (Majik 2002: 54).

The *dhalo*, celebrated during the Hindu calendar month of Poushya, unites the saltmakers of Arpora. Since this unity includes the salt makers of Arpora this festival is discussed in this chapter.

The female winter folkdance festival is the “Dhalo” while the male-dominated spring festival is the “Shigmo” (Phaladesai 2004: 24). Dhalos are held to pray for divine intercession to extricate any evil, improve relations and have peace in the village. If Shigmo is a male festival, the Dhalo could be seen as an entirely female festival. Its influence and prevalence extends from Goa to the Konkan.

The Dhalo is a dance form performed by the Kunbis, Bhandari, Naik, Gabit and Gaudi communities. Legend has it that Radha used to sing love songs (*dhalos*) to Krishna. In the beginning, the Dhalos referred only to the love of Krishna and Radha. Later people gradually developed the songs and they started to sing praises to other gods too.

The *Dhalo* festival is celebrated in Arpora every year from January 16 to 21. One person who carries a coconut falls under a trance. Women dance the *fugddi* for five days in the temple.

The performance takes place at the *maand* (a sacred, open space), where the village folks gather to sing, dance or play music as part of ritualistic performance. Womenfolk dress up as bride and bridegroom on the last day of the dhalo, as the ritual demands. The Shigmo and *Dhalo* have few things in common, like the offering of a coconut or lighting the lamp and distribution of *prasad* (food offered to the gods).

On a moonlit winter night, all the women, bedecked with flowers, assemble and light an oil lamp in front of the temple. Sometimes, *Dhodd* meaning a medium sized water container made of copper or brass is also placed at the centre of the courtyard and worshipped. Women who make a vow come with the *dhodd* filled with water and pour it on the maand which is called as *maand xipap*. The widows also participate in the *Dhalos* but there is no distinction made between the widows and the married women during the *dhalo*.

For every other religious occasion, Hindu widows are kept aside but the widows in Arpora are allowed to participate in the dhalos.

Normally, in this dance, two rows of women face each other by prancing forward and backward while singing and narrating the stories of their life and the contemporary society.

At dawn, the woman who dresses as *Pingli* (the beggar), goes from house to house around the village, and collects alms. This is how *Dhalo* is celebrated in Arpora.

These festivals and feast could be seen as basically uniting the people of different communities. The venue where these are held becomes a meeting place for a number of people, especially women. Moreover, through these feasts and festivals, the unique traditions and customs are kept alive and passed on to the next generations.

**Shigmo Festival** - *Dhakto* Shigmo, says the Gazetteer, can mainly be considered as a festival of folk songs and folk dances. On the other hand, the *Vodlo* Shigmo is considered a festival performed in the village temple. It is celebrated in different temples on different dates, around the same period. There is *dhulvad*(*throwing colour on each other*). Celebrants also apply *rang*, meaning colour, to all those who participate in the *Romat*. On the first, the village deity is bathed and dressed in saffron robes. After the offering of food, the feast is held.

**The Romat** – a parade of young men dressed in traditional costumes carrying *Jhende* banners and umbrellas – is a part of this festival. It takes place on the second and third day of the festival. *Dol* and *tasha* are the drums, some huge in size, which people travel with, from door-to-door, dancing to its beat. Money is placed in the plate

carried by the performers, and a song called the *tali* is sung after this is done, wishing the donor well. On the last day of the festival, it is believed that a spirit enters these persons who dance, and this is known as the *gade padne*. *Mand Thevane* refers to a collective bath taken after the festival comes to an end.

Celebrants also play the *Dhol Tashe* i.e. musical instruments. The procession is accompanied by a series of dances, performed by the Bhandaris of Arpora. The banners are taken and tied in the *sim* i.e the border of the village. Those participating collect money from door to door. The ladies too join the *Romat* in a line.

**Palkhi:** Every year, depending on the Hindu calendar, sometime between the end of January and the end of February, the Bhandaris ceremonially fetch back the goddess Bhumika from Nanora - which is considered her *mahera* or maternal house – to Arpora. She is kept in the Hanuman temple at Arpora for five days.

The Devi, dressed in traditional costumes and jewellery, is taken around the entire village through all the temples in a floral decorated palakhi (*palanquin*). Local *bhajan* artists take pride in reciting bhajans (devotional songs). During the procession, there are halts at particular fixed places. Married women decked in nine-yard saris and jewellery perform *votti bharap* which comprises of five fruits, a coconut, the *khann* (blouse piece) and flowers. At all these halts there is a *karpuraarti* with recitation of Vaidic Ashtak and devotional music. After the completion of the round, when the palakhi enters the sabhamandap, an aarti is performed before the deity's statue and a "coconut *ovalanii* (expression of love and affection by waving tiputed lamps around somebodys face or an image of god) is made. *Devibhaktas* (devotees of the deity) enjoy special viewing (*darshan*) by moving below the *palakhi* seeking blessings and the palakhi enters the temple. After that, the priest takes the statues inside the

*garbagriha* (sacred interior of the temple) keeping some “flower prasad” for the *palkhi* bearers. When the statue is placed in the original position in *garbgriha*, the devotees who had been following the *palkhi* until then take their seats and the *aarti* begins. An auction is held of fruits that are received during the procession and the *prasad* is distributed to everyone. *Bhaktas* (devotees) will then join up in the *bhajan mandap* (main hall) for food and leave with a hope to attend next year’s palakhi. .

During this occasion, there are *nataks* (dramas) organised during these days in the Hanuman temple. On the fifth day, the deity is returned back to what is considered her maternal house in Nanora.

**Hanuman Jayanthi:** Hanuman Jayanthi is performed according to the tithi(lunar day) in the Hindu calendar by the Bhandaris. The actual programme begins in the Hanuman temple two days before the Hanuman *Jayanthi*. Devotees have recently done the *sthapna*, or the establishment of this temple.

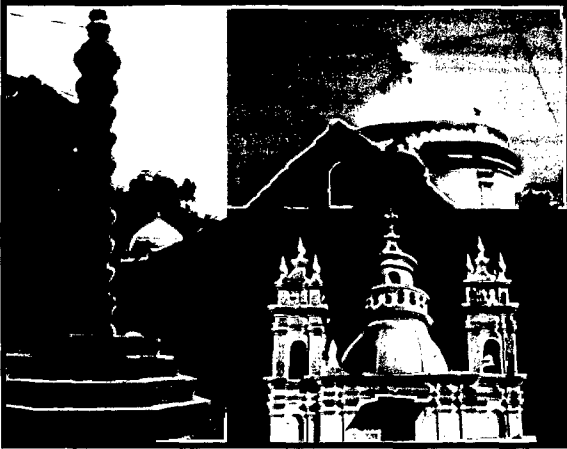
On the first day, devotees have the *Maharudra* followed by a vegetarian meal. On the second day, there is *Abhishekh* again followed by vegetarian food in the temple and, on the third and the final day, the devotees have the actual putting of the statue of lord Hanuman in the cradle. This begins early at 5 a.m., after which follows the *Jaap Karta* and saying of *mantraas* (religious chants). At around 6.30 am, the laying of the baby Hanuman in the cradle is undertaken. Womenfolk have to rock the cradle, an act which is called *zakho dita* for their wellbeing. The women have to wear the traditional nine-yard sari on this day and wear flowers and jewellery too.

**Ramanavmi:** On the festival of Ramanavmi, a coconut is treated as a substitute for the baby Lord Rama by the Bhandaris.

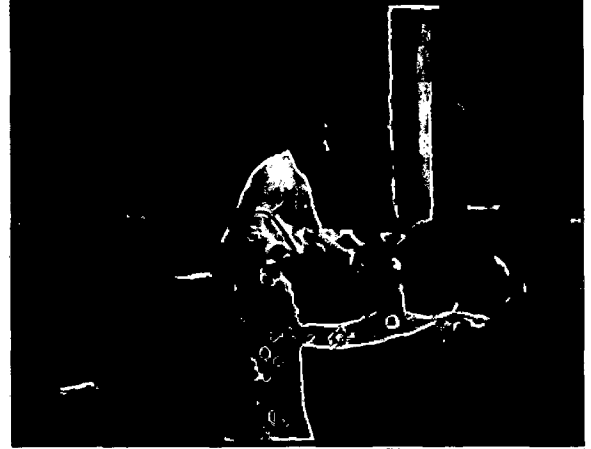
**Festival of Lord Chouranginath:** In Arpora there is a temple of Chouranginath. In the present day it has become a tourist spot, where thousands of tourists come to visit this temple. The festival of this temple is indeed a prominent one.

History basically says that the main idol of Chouranginath was taken to Nanora in Assonora some four hundred years ago, to avoid persecution by the Portuguese. Sankwadi at Baga is at the centre of the worship. This place is also home to the *chovtto* (a primitive form of the early panchayat or village council). The new temple of Chouranginath was built before fifty years ago, now in Arpora. Now it is the main temple for Nagoa, Arpora and Baga. Devotees bring in the devi's palkhi (palanquin of the deity) in the month of Magh.

A grand five-day celebration takes place in Arpora during this festival. During these days, Marathi dramas and other forms of entertainment draw people from different surrounding villages. Chouranginath's other palkhi (palanquin) is taken out on the Padvo day. A Satya Narayan pooja is conducted accompanied by another three nights of Marathi dramas and Divzan zatra.



The three domes: left, Saptakoteswar in Narao, top right, Our Lady of Candelaria in Narao, and St Sebastian's Chapel in Arpora bear a strange resemblance to each other. One elderly respondent says the similarity is because the three belonged to the Bhandari community



A Hindu woman sells toddy to the Bhandaris on the St Sebastian vespers days. On that day, the Hindu Bhandaris of the village prepare 'sannas', which are a traditional Christian form of kind of bread-making



The 'dhalo' is the festival for women at the Hanuman Temple at Sankwadi, in Arpora



Non-Catholic Bhandaris' caste worship at the St Sebastian chapel in Arpora



A man in a trance offers advice to women at the 'dhalo' festival



The palkhi (palanquin procession) moves into the village, after being brought in from Nanora village in Bardez. After which, it visits all the village temples

## Rituals Associated with Salt-Making

From historical records and ethnographic studies we find that all societies have some form of religion though specific beliefs and practices vary widely. Some groups attribute power to ghosts and ancestors, others to supernatural forces; some see gods as their benevolent and others see them as mischievous, hostile or indifferent. Some seek affirmation of their faith in solitude and wilderness; others erect pyramids, cathedrals or other monuments and maintain hierarchical priesthoods to communicate with the divine (Maruthi 2003: 101).

Rituals are very important in every society. Sociologists and anthropologists are interested in the study of the rituals and practices of various groups and communities. Rituals associated birth puberty, marriage and death is important in every community. On these occasions the family undergoes new experiences and hardships. The friends, kinsmen and other members of the community depend on the observance of these rituals. Arnald Van Ganep has regarded such rituals and practices as “Rites of passage” (Maruthi 2003: 108). In Arpora, the Bhandari community is very faithful to their religious rituals associated with salt making. At the beginning of the rainy season just before *Sravan* season, the Bhandaris gather near the *agor* (salt pans) and sacrifice two roosters in the *agor* as a ritual. They consider it as *agraacho maan*, or *dechaaracho maan* or the paying of respect to the saltpan.

This offering of the fowl was performed by both the communities’ i.e. the Hindus and Catholics. There is a fixed person in the village referred as *Ganvkar*, who is always the man to perform this sacrifice. This sacrifice is performed on Sunday or on a Wednesday. Since these two days were considered as days of the *Devchaar* (protector) by the Goan Hindus. He is appealed for the protection of the salt pans. The *ganvkar* makes a *sangnem* or “intercession”, wherein liquor, *beedi*, *agarbathi*, two



bread and two quarters of country liquor is offered in a *kotti* or coconut shell since liquor loses its effect in other containers except glass. *Soro*(liquor) and beedi are considered as *apavitr*(unholy) by the Hindus and are liked by the Devchaar.

The blood of the cock is let into the saltpan. But among the Catholics the blood of the fowl was let on the foot of the cross. Liquor offered is also consumed.

When the researcher had gone to interview the *ganvkar* of Arpora he refused to comment much on this aspect, since he said he was a reporter for one particular newspaper and felt it would not be fair on his part to narrate anything about that aspect. When the researcher asked a Catholic *bhatkar* of this village about this, he replied he voiced his disbelief in this, and sought to question the practices of the Hindu community in the salt pans in Arpora. One particular Gaudi respondent of Arpora said he stopped performing this sacrifice since the year 1986 and since then he offers mass at Pilar.

During the sacrifice, the *Ganvkar* recites all the names of the gods. Normally these gods are seen as the *Rakhondar* (protector) of that particular place. The *Devchar* (spirit) is considered to be the *Rakhondar* of the village. Once the cock is sacrificed, it is given to the *ganvkar*. It is believed that through this ritual, the villagers would get the necessary blessings and protection required to carry on the salt-farming work. The amount to be given to the *Ganvkar* is not fixed, but it depends on the salt makers to give. The *Ganvkar* has no right to demand a particular amount.

In the Catholic community makes a cross of two sticks in the salt pans if there is no cross in the salt pans, lights candles and recites the rosary. Similarly, a mixture of salt and jaggery is given to all present.

Before and at the end of the salt extracting season, the Hindus and the Catholic community gather near the Cross. They recite a rosary to offer their thanksgiving.

They put a garland for the God and offer a sacrifice of salt and jaggery salt is offered as a symbol of celebration and jaggery to sweeten the mouth bring good luck, *Foolaancho tooro nesaitat ani devak mitt ani god mhunn neivedh ditat.*

They also have recitation of the Rosary where the Litany is sung. After prayer, sweets, boiled grams are distributed by both the communities. Each salt maker contributes generously, according to his ability. Some offer a mass before the start of the season, perform a rosary and then distribute boiled grams and liquor. Some give donations to Don Bosco or other religious charities.

### **Caste System**

Landlords (Gauddis) of the Arpora saltpans also knew the art of salt-making, used to employ the Mithgaudas from Agarvaddo earlier to perform salt work. But later on, the Mithgaudas ceased to work in the saltpans in Arpora; as a result, the Bhandaris slowly learnt the art of salt making and started performing salt-related work. The Mithgaudas claim to belong to the Kshatriya caste and consider the Bhandaris low. However, the Bhandari also consider themselves higher than the Mithgaudas, in spite of belonging to the O.B.C. category and performing the salt work themselves. As an endogamous community, the Mithgaudas prohibit marriage with the Bhandari community.

### **Status of Women**

**Women's Education:** The Old Conquest areas of Goa have a relatively higher rate of literate women. Among the Old Conquest talukas, Bardez had the highest literacy rate among women, probably due to male migration brought the people into

greater contact with the outside world and gave the inhabitants a better standard of living.

Consequently, this encouraged many more parents to start sending their young daughters to school. The ability to read and write helped women to communicate their absent husbands, fathers and brothers who were away from home for a considerable time (Gracias 2007: 101,102).

New factors affecting dominance have emerged in the last eighty years or so. Western education, jobs in the administration and the urban sources of income are all significant in contributing to the prestige and power of the particular castes groups in the village (Srinivas 1987: 11).

The Bhandari respondents were generally not educated in Arpora with the exception of a few respondents who took to higher education. They felt that the Bhandaris need to go in for higher education since they feel that *Shikilean raste kallta ani shikshan konnachean vorunk zaina* meaning that if you are educated you are empowered and no one can snatch away ones education. They felt that even the girls in their community should take up education since they felt *Ginean mellta* meaning if they get educated they get better knowledge and they get upgraded. Younger generation had generally taken education till S.S.C.

Since the Gaudi respondents were landlords they had access to education; their parents and grandparents had got Portuguese education. Some of them could not recall their grandparent's education. Women did housework.

### **The Economic Organisation**

Salt making has been providing employment in such areas. This is a seasonal occupation, which offers work for six months. For Arpora, the salt season begins a

little later as compared to the two other villages under study. The season here is from January to June, while salt-makers adopt some other occupation for the remaining six months. Thus, they also get a break from doing the same monotonous type of work.

In the distant past, extracting of salt was indeed a lucrative job as the demand for this type of salt was very high. The salt industry in Goa was flourishing as the salt was exported to different parts of the world. The Bhandari community was into this occupation for more than 70 years. It was their livelihood and their source of income.

The younger generation of the salt makers in Arpora has taken loans and has bought tourist taxis, which they feel offer a much better source of earnings than working in salt pans. It is seen as a lucrative job as the income is comparatively higher. Some have purchased two wheelers to be rented out to the foreigners, others sell petrol to the foreign tourists, some have stalls which sell readymade garments. There are yet others who sell various items in the Saturday night markets which are held in Arpora.

As far as immovable assets go, there is a unique ownership pattern that exists in Arpora. One salt pan is owned by multiple owners. Besides this, the salt pans are leased by the landlords to one permanent tenant during the salt production season, and during the rainy season. They are leased by the Landlord to different tenants who undertake fishing during the rainy season.

The employer employee relation i.e. between the landlords and the Bhandaris was cordial as one respondent put *Aaddhi ami bhatkaraache utrar choltale*.

Naturally prepared salt costs far less compared to the processed iodized salt available in the market. This allows fishermen to store their excess fish in salt, when they have a huge catch. Fishermen cannot afford to use the higher-priced factory salt.

Two varieties of salt that are produced i.e. one variety which was reddish in

colour which is usually produced in the beginning of the season that was used as fertilizers for mango and coconut trees, and the other variety was used as a food item.

Landlords used to sit in the hut and mind the labourers, maintain the border of the *bandh* and take care of the fish so that outsiders do not fish in the salt pans and also cultivate the fields during the rains.

As noted earlier, the salt pans were sold about eight years ago to a person, for converting it into a restaurant. In the days of yore, the people shared and owned the salt pans in common. But now, after selling the salt pans, they got a very small share of salt pans for themselves.

### **Arpora Salt's Decline**

Out of 17 families which were till recently involved in salt making occupation of salt makers, only one family has continued with the occupation till date. Tourism's growth in the area, and the alternative economy it brings in, is one of the chief factors that have affected the salt makers.

Although tourism has brought in economic benefits to Goa, in Arpora it meant a slow decline of the salt making occupation. Salt pans in Arpora have attracted the real estate developers. Saltpans have been taken over by the real estate developers and many starred hotels have emerged in their place. Salt pan areas in Arpora have increasingly been used as recreation area of the starred hotels. One particular hotel has utilized the salt pan area for boating and for fishing for the hotel customers. One respondent from Arpora who is a permanent tenant and lost his land remarked, "*Ami Chikol Mostunk urle*" ("We remained downtrodden," literally, we're still stuck in our muck.)

One salt pan has been converted into a Saturday market site. A landlord from Anjuna sold it to a person and he converted the surrounding area into the Saturday

night market venue. Now it is known as Mackies Saturday Night Market. Only some salt pans have been used exclusively for pisciculture. According to one of the landlords, there could be a lot more resorts of water park in the place of the salt pans. Better employment opportunities and modern education has also contributed to the younger generation losing an interest in salt work. The older generation performed various tasks in the salt pans but the younger generation prefers to take up jobs outside the salt pans.

Another reason for the decline of Arpora's salt is the unusual – and probably unhelpful – pattern of ownership pattern that prevails there. There is a pattern of multiple ownership and multiple leasing of salt pans where the salt pans are owned by multiple landlords. In one particular case, a salt pan in Arpora was left without extraction of salt or fish in Arpora because the landlord sold the saltpan. There was a problem as far as the sale of saltpan has been concerned, because the same salt pans were used by two different tenants during two different times of the year. The saltpan was then sold to the tenants who previously used it for fishing. The persons using it for salt-farming were upset with the landlord and filed a legal suit against the other set of tenants who had bought the saltpan. Later, a permanent injunction was imposed on the use of these salt pans. This meant that they can be neither used by the tenants who farm salt or those who used it for fishing.

Another factor for the decline of salt here is that it is seasonal in nature; returns are earned only for six months. In a monetised economy – unlike in the past, where barter trade of sorts worked in Goa even a generation earlier – this makes the situation very tough. The remaining six months of the year sees the salt farmers idle as the landlords lease the same salt pan to another tenant during the rainy season.

Yet another reason is that traditional methods used in the salt pan earn only a meagre

amount of returns on the salt production. Salt makers in Goa in general and Arpora in particular, till date, have been using traditional methods which have been explained in greater details at the section where the stages of salt making are taken up.

Delayed beginning of the salt making season leads to reduced time availability for production of salt. Since the salt makers begin their work in the salt pans late, the salt producing time is also less as compared to the other villages. Salt production usually begins around the end of November or the beginning of December or even January. Salt work starts a little later in Arpora compared to the other two villages studied, because if the work begins in November month then during high tide the water gets collected in the fields and *khavte* (breaches) are formed in the salt pans, leading to delays in getting the work started. The work during the first three months is more tedious as it involves hard physical labour, as compared to the work which is involved during the actual salt production. The salt production season is also reduced in this village.

Salt pans are used for fishing during the monsoons and during the rest of the year it is utilized for salt production. If the salt makers continuously use the salt pans for pisciculture, then there is a lot of damage done to the salt pans as a result of which the salt makers are not in a position to use such salt pans for salt production again. One respondent said *zavallnin booraak zata, ho kiddo gaindov kaso taka naarge mhonttaa*. The *Naargo* worm formed in the salt pans creates a hole through the mud ridges making the entire salt pan unfit for salt production.

Some used the salt pans for pisciculture i.e. rearing of fish in the salt pans. At the beginning of the rainy season, the pans (*agor*) are filled with sea water, and small fishes like the *Gollxio* (local name), *vaggleo*, *kurleo* (crabs) and tiger prawns are reared in it. The eggs of the fish are brought from the government-run Benaulim hatchery by

availing of a subsidy, while some even bring in eggs from the Priya Hatchery located at Honnavar in coastal Karnataka. The entire expenditure incurred of buying and selling fish as well as the labour force involved would be estimated to cost around Rs 30-50,000 or above. Their profit from this operation can be rupees one lakh and above. But sometimes, due to some reasons, the fish do not breed well, resulting in a loss for the salt makers.

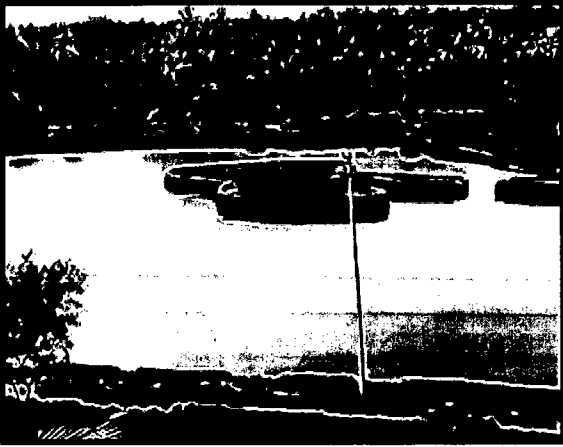
Water pumps used are hired by the salt makers. Rental charges are very high, which are fixed by the pump-lender. So these costs imply more investments and fewer outputs as compared to the time, money and the efforts that are put in the making of salt.

Another factor is the nature of jobs in the salt pans involve hard work. Besides this, working in the salt pans means staying without any off-days and leave since the jobs have to be performed every day. One has to labour for roughly seven hours a day, often in the hot sun, from 8 a.m. to 12 noon and from 3 to 6 p.m. Due to this too; most of the families who have had a choice about their occupation have given up this one. The younger generation of the Bhandari families is relatively more educated than the earlier one. Even their parents do not want them to work in the salt pans, saying that it is a tedious job.

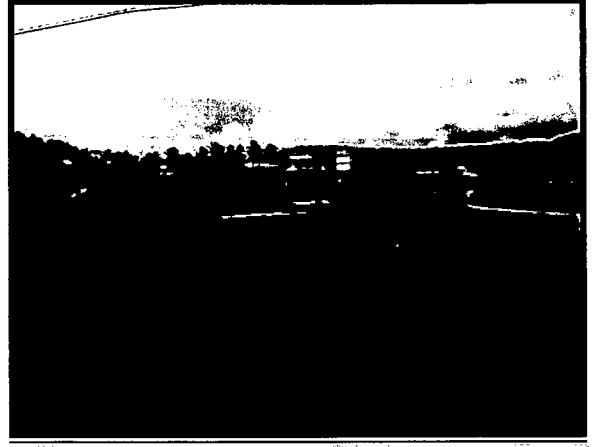
### **Shortage of Migrant Labourers**

To manage to bring in migrant labour means one needs to have a certain area of salt-pans, for such operations to become viable. There should be at least hundred *kunghes* saltpans to employ the migrant workers; otherwise it is not worth the trouble for the owners to employ migrant-workers on a limited number of salt pans. All the money that is generated from the salt pans would go to these labourers if the salt pan area is limited in size.





Former salt pans that have since been converted for tourist recreation purposes in Arpora, Bardez. Photo: G. Henn (Source: Ambio, a journal of Human Environment: <http://www.bioone.org/doi/abs/10.1579/0044-7447-31.4.295>)



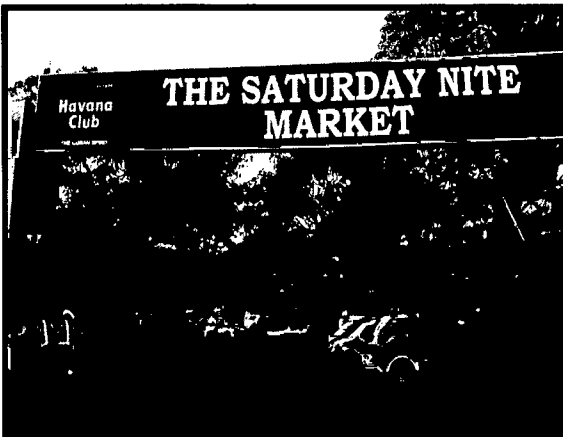
Present position of the salt pans in Arpora



Salt-pans taken over for landscaping, and leisure activities for tourists. Starred hotels are seen in the background



A Saturday night market, one of the two in the village, set up in a salt-pan area and its adjoining 'bundh'



Tourist centres that have come up in areas adjoining the salt-pans, shifting the economics of the locality drastically



An exotic bar by the poolside, of a hotel Marinha Dourada, renamed Agor

Need for labour from other states has become another concern for the Bhandari community. Hiring labourers from other states are often a tedious task. In order to get the labourers to work in the salt pans, the Bhandaris and the Gauddis have to pay them an advance. Sometimes it so happens that these labourers take the advance but don't show up. Also, workers from other states coming to work in the salt-pans, end up preferring to work in shacks or hotels which offer a higher earning potential. Resultantly, the salt-pans from Arpora have to hire locally-available daily wage labourers from Calangute, who are migrant workers but who charge a much higher casual day-rate of rupees two hundred a day.

One more factor is the increasing demands made on the landlords by the tenants. The *Bhatkars* have also given up their salt pans, as in recent years they have faced problems due to their tenants, as they find their demands difficult to fulfil.

Another factor is the emergence of multinational companies, who are believed to have decided to lobby against consuming organic salt. The central government introduced a ban on organic salt on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2006 which introduced the sale on the ban of non iodised salt in the country. This was introduced on the grounds of rising number of iodine deficiency disorder cases among the people of the country. Though the restriction on the sale of iodised salt was imposed on the entire nation. The decision had a drastic consequence and effect on the large number of salt makers throughout the country and the Mitagars of Goa. The central government imposed ban on the sale of non iodised salt in the market. All states imposed this ban except Kerala, Gujarat and some districts of Maharashtra. The state of Goa too fell under this imposition. This period of ban on the local salt for edible salt and government means to propagate the ill effects of organic salt through mass media led to a decline of local salt consumption in Goa. Many organizations and welfare groups came to the rescue

of the Mitagars in Goa and the central government had to lift the ban on local salt in Goa. *Tharaav ghetlo iodine naslele mitt vaprap nam teka lagoon ami dhandho soddlo, mitt barfhaak, khaavdik chalta, MNC valor mitaacho kami kelo.* So the state government issued a notice banning the use of salt on the grounds that research and surveys had shown that many people in Goa were getting prone to goitre. After an agitation, the government withdrew the notification and Goans are back to their beloved salt (Alvares 2002: 158). The impact of the ban cannot be gauged as primary data is unavailable. Data is to be collected by the Mumbai office (as Goa has no office despite being a salt producing state) but no records are available. Now salt is used in ice factories and other uses. There is a steady decline in the number of people in the occupation also due to the availability of iodized salt in the market. In Goa itself, once a prominent salt-exporting region, large number of people today use and consume factory-made iodized salt brought in from outside the state.

The salt production in Arpora is on a verge of slow death because a majority of the children of the salt makers have no interest in continuing this occupation as they are craving for white collar jobs. Even the salt makers don't want their children to work in the salt pans since the income earned is not worth the hard labour put into it, as noted earlier.

Today, as the salt-pans are increasingly given over to builders, some have stopped extracting salt from the salt pans. Even though there are very few salt pans which are operative in Arpora, fetching labour is very difficult. Even if labour is procured from out of the state, the latter tends to be lured away by other kinds of jobs, which are much more paid and not so tedious.

Besides, the waste water of the starred hotels is left into the salt pans, which causes a hindrance to those working in the pans. Stagnation of water has led to the

emergence of the mosquito menace. Some hotel owners also surreptitiously dump their garbage during the night time in the salt pans. The salt makers are also facing a problem of the *bundh* (traditional protective wall along the river), which has become very weak.

### **Changing Technology, Changing Economy and its Effect**

The economy has changed quite significantly over recent years. The landscape has been transformed with the emergence of starred hotels, some of which have been emerged in the place of the salt pans. The star hotels are constructed right next to the salt pans and one hotel has converted the salt pans as recreation places for the domestic and international tourists who visit the hotels.

Of all the villages studied, Arpora has seen the most drastic changes take place in its salt-pans, in part due to its proximity from the prime North Goa tourism belt.

The occupations of the people of Arpora (*Hadpadkaars*) are changing too. Traditional occupations are getting replaced by new kinds of employment. For instance, the majority of the Bhandaris are involved in the jobs related to the tourism sector. Many of them are employed in the hotels, some as tourist taxi drivers for the star hotels. Even if there is no driver in their house, some have purchased taxi and motorcycles which are being rented out to the hotels and to the foreigners. Some of them run shops in the Saturday Night Market which is one of the big events in the locality. Some of them also work outside the village in nearby places like Anjuna, Calangute and some work in cities as teachers, government servants and the like. Some have started small shops in front of their houses and also sell petrol to the foreign tourists who visit in large numbers during the fair-weather, non-monsoon tourist season. There are many new commercial units which have emerged in Arpora,

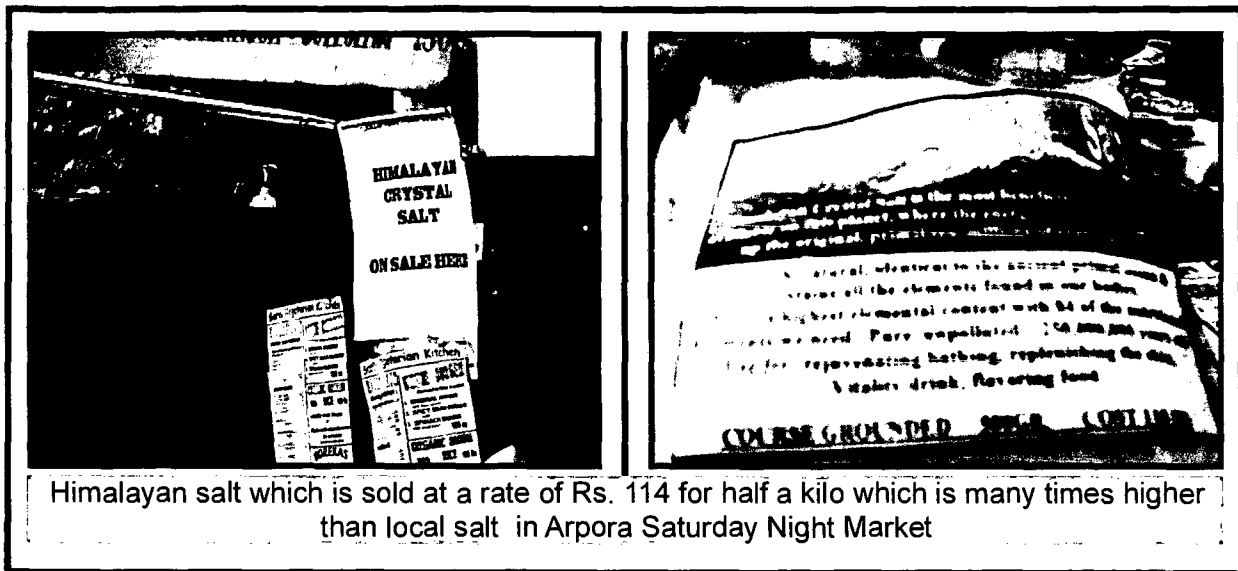
which cater to the needs of international as well as domestic tourists.

Similar, if not the same, process of salt extraction has been followed over the centuries. It is an art that has been passed on from one generation to another. This occupation of salt extraction went on growing and expanding into a huge industry during the time of British. It was during this time that the salt was in great demand.

There were 16 salt-making families who the researcher has referred to as the permanent tenants in the methodology chapter and ten original owners or *Bhatkars* in Arpora, out of which only five had continued with their traditional occupation of salt making when the researcher had registered for her Ph. D. in the year 2006. But by the time the study was nearing completion, in the year 2009 only one original owner worked on his own by employing the other labourers and has still continued in the salt making occupations.

Out of all the three villages that the researcher had taken up for the study, Arpora witnessed a different kind of a situation where in some of the Catholic *bhatkars* (landlords) were actually themselves involved in the salt production which was not the case with the other villages under study.

In Hindu mythology, Goa is called the land of the gods and goddesses. There are hundreds of gods and goddesses bearing diverse names, beliefs, rituals and traditions. Most of these have remained unchanged over the years, while others have adapted to the changing times and circumstances. A legacy of the Portuguese culture is today so imbibed in the lives of people of Arpora that it's difficult to imagine Goa without its Portuguese connection. The result of four and half centuries of rule is today a Goa having a unique, rich syncretism of both western and eastern culture. This unique blend apparent everywhere, from dress and architecture to food and music, is the hallmark of the people of Arpora.



### Social Problems

Arpora in the last few decades has seen rapid changes towards development chiefly because of the growth of mass tourism in the area. Everybody is busy with something or the other. Many people have started working in the Star Hotels doing all kinds of jobs. Some others are engaged in selling different things to the tourists like selling of hand made products, food, handicrafts and fuel for vehicles. A few have set up small shacks and restaurants in the village. Others have rented their houses to foreign tourists. Families have also bought taxis to cater to the needs of the Star Hotels. Quite a few houses in the village have at least a minimum of two tourist taxis. They also have two wheelers to be rent out to the foreign and the domestic tourists. There are others who put up their stalls during the Saturday Night Markets which are major events in Arpora.

In the bargain, together with the growing affluence, there are many problems that have emerged. For instance, problems like alcoholism, increased domestic violence, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS and sexual promiscuity, and child-sex-abuse have

come in addition to the traditional problems such as alcoholism, poverty, illiteracy, health issues and other related problems of the tourism industry. On the other hand there are problems of illegal constructions to cater to the tourists, destruction of the saltpans and constructing of the Star Hotels in its place, clogging of rain water, problem of sewerage and garbage problems. Waste is disposed in the salt pans. This garbage which is left in the salt pans creates a lot of nuisance and health problems for the salt workers.

Another major problem that Arpora faces during the tourist season is that of traffic congestion, which is more severe because of the two Saturday Night Markets held in the village, as a result of which the village roads have become accident prone. Local people rent out space near the houses for pay-parking. This has created a lot of problem in the village. Sometimes the road is converted into one way traffic, which also poses a problem to the local people. Arpora, a serene village of cultivators of paddy and salt is now transformed into a busy tourist township.

# **CHAPTER VII**

**THE MITAGARS OF GOA:**

**SOME ISSUES IN**

**CHANGE AND**

**CONTINUITY**



## CHAPTER VII

### THE MITAGARS OF GOA:

#### SOME ISSUES IN CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

##### **Introduction**

In this chapter, certain transition-related issues pertaining to all three villages are discussed. An attempt is made to understand the transition that the mitagars have been experiencing since 1992 till date, and the role of the State in implementing policies that impact the salt makers

The findings point out that although the traditional occupation of salt making remains the same for the Mitagars, there are regional variations with respect to the caste, status of women and ownership pattern. The traditional occupation of the salt makers has undergone changes depending on the village and the local circumstances.

In Agarvaddo, for instance, the salt-makers have traditionally remained loyal to the work of salt making though they have still not become the owners of the land. In Arpora, the people involved in this occupation have ceased to pursue the jobs in the salt pans due to various factors mentioned in earlier chapters. In Batim, the Agris have ceased to perform the jobs in the salt pans and instead employ migrant workers from Kamataka.

In this chapter, common feature – like the main economic activity – are discussed. This is being done in order to show the regional variations in the castes which share the same occupation, and to highlight the interactions of Mithgaudas, Gauddis, Agris, Bhandaris and Agers within themselves and with other sections of society.

The chapter also addresses the status of women in all the three groups comparatively.

In order to examine the social changes taking place among the mitagars, the study has adopted a comparative framework. On the one hand, we find that some salt makers still engaged in their traditional occupation are those who have inherited the work from their forefathers. On the other hand, the children of salt makers who been educated have switched to new occupations. For instance, through education, other means of economic betterment, and job reservations, the Agers (who are scheduled castes) have achieved a new socio-economic status which delinks them from their traditional set up.

### **Significant Issues Emerging From Fieldwork**

One of the emerging facts of significance in this study is that, while the mitagars under study share the same occupation, yet differences are visible as far as their religion, caste, ownership patterns, alternate means of livelihood patterns and rituals are concerned as noted in table 7.1.

**Table 7.1:**

**Occupational Features of Mitagars of Three Villages**

<b>Village</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Caste</b>	<b>Labour</b>
Agarvaddo	Hindus	Mithgaudas	Self-operated
Batim	Christians	Agris	Labour-operated
Arpora	Christians, Hindus	Gauddi, Bhandaris	Labour-operated/self-operated

The changing economics of salt-farming in Goa, its sharply-declining fortunes as compared to the role it played across history, and also the varied pressures on the salt-farms in different areas of Goa are other important emerging issues.

### **Ownership Issues and Operation**

Myth merges with lore and oral history when it comes to explaining the ownership patterns in the three villages under study. This makes it difficult to extricate fact from belief. For instance, one belief says that the original owners of Agarvaddo served the military of Adil Shah as a result of which large tracks of land were given to them in Agarvaddo.

Incidentally, some salt pans in Agarvaddo are currently owned by the local temple, and this ownership is reflected in their name, as they are called as *Devllacho agar*, which comes in for a periodic *leilany* or auction. These pans are let out on tender every two years.

In Arpora, the oral history says a few salt pans belonged to the Gauddis and some other to the Hindu landlords, who resided in Arpora in the past. Later they were taken control of by the Gauddis who were the landowners and are believed to have held influential posts in the Portuguese administration. They held posts of *escrivaos* (local clerks, who maintained crucial registers and documents) and collected the *predial* (land-tax or liability to be paid to government) during the Portuguese rule.

For some reason, Arpora also saw a unique ownership pattern wherein every salt pan was owned by multiple owners. This feature is not noticed by the researcher in any other salt pans in Goa. Many owners, Hindus and Christians, jointly own the salt pans in Arpora. Even a tamarind tree in Arpora is jointly owned by as many as

sixteen landlords wherein equal shares are made for all, including one share for the plucker.

In Arpora, the Gauddis and the Bhandaris performed the salt work. Since this village initially employed the Mithgaudas from Pernem slowly the Mithgaudas stopped coming to Arpora as a result of which the Bhandari caste of Arpora, over the years, has learnt the art of salt making. In Arpora, some Gauddi landlords who had bigger salt pans employed daily wage migrant workers from Calangute.

Migrations out of Arpora led to further changes in the operations at the salt pans. Some landlords who settled abroad donated the land to a Priest of the church, who in turn was instructed to conduct masses out of the earnings generated from the salt pans. Some sold off their small shares to others. The Mithgaudas of Agarvaddo used to offer their services to the people of Arpora. But gradually the Mithgaudas of Agarvaddo, from across the taluka boundaries, stopped coming to Arpora to work in the salt pans as a result of which the Bhandaris learnt the art of salt making. Some of the Gauddis who were landlords also performed the jobs in the salt pans. The only salt pan which is today functioning in Arpora is owned by the Gauddi landlord.

In Batim, the salt pans were owned by the landlords from Gaunkar vaddo who belonged to the Chardo caste. Some of the Hindu landlords who own the salt pans in Batim reside outside the village. Some of the salt pans are also owned by the church and some by the Comunidade.

In Agarvaddo, salt pans were owned by the temple and in Batim there are salt pans which are owned by the church. Some annual fees are paid to the church in Batim by those operating the salt pans. Some of the salt pans in Batim were also owned by the comunidade, but the tenants of the same have not paid their dues to

the comunidade for several years, probably due to the tenancy laws in force in Goa since the 1960s, which change the situation on the tenancy front.

In Agarvaddo, the people involved in the salt production were Hindus by religion and belonged to the Mithgaudas caste; actual owners were only Hindus who were Gaud Saraswat Brahmins. Here, the landlords do not reside in the village in Agarvaddo but reside in the adjacent village called Parcem, also in Pernem taluka. Some of the salt pans are owned by the temple.

In Batim, the people involved in the salt production were all Catholics who were of the Sudra caste group and are referred to as Agris, whereas the landlords were both Christians as well as Hindus. They live in various villages of Tiswadi and Bardez talukas. Some of them reside in Batim village.

According to the oral history in Batim, the Mithgaudas performed the jobs in the salt pans for hundreds of years. It is not known how and when the Mithgaudas disappeared in Batim. It is also not known from where the Agris originated before they settled in Salcette, and Tisvadi. In Batim, the Agris do not work in the salt pans since they are economically better off and can afford to employ migrant laborers.

In Agarvaddo, the members of the household work in the salt pans. It is a family occupation wherein the sons, unmarried daughters, daughter-in-laws and even the grandchildren work in the salt pans. Migrant workers from outside Goa are not employed in the salt pans here, though a lot of migrants do live in this village. Sometimes the Mithgaudas take the help of the Dalits in the fields and in the salt pans which the researcher observed during the course of the fieldwork. Bhandaris here cannot employ migrant workers due to the smaller size of their salt-pans. To make it economically viable to employ migrant workers, the salt-pan should be of at least a

hundred *kunghes* (The rectangular plots fenced in by little embankments or bunds for crystallization to hold saline water saturated with salt crystals) in size.

*Salt production and the original owners:* From the above, it is clear that changes have taken place in various aspects of the social world of the Mitagars. Mitagars comprised of different categories: some were landlords like the Gauddis of Arpora, who also worked in the salt pans.

Landlords of Agarvaddo and Batim however did not work in the salt pans. In Agarvaddo, all involved in the salt production were Hindus by religion and belong to the Mithgauda caste and the original owners were the Goud Saraswat Brahmins, whereas the permanent tenants belong to the Mithgaudas caste. The Bhandaris were the ones who had acquired the skill from their Mithgauda counterparts from Agarvaddo.

In Batim, the situation is different. Most of the salt pans were owned by the landlords from the Gaunkar ward but the Agris are now the owners (locally referred to as the *patraos*). Since they are better off, they now employ the migrant workers from Karnataka.

*Sale and storage of salt:* At the beginning of the salt season, salt was of light weight than during the season time when the crystals become heavier due to humidity. The rates of salt differed in all three villages. In Agarvaddo the rate of the salt was the highest as compared to the two other villages. In the Mapusa market, the rate for Agarvaddo salt was the highest since it contained less silt. But the salt makers of Arpora said that the salt produced in Arpora was reddish in colour wherein the salinity was more of Arpora salt.

If the rate of salt in Batim salt pans was rupees twenty a tin, the rate of the same tin of salt when sold in the villages also remained the same although there was

cost of transport and more labour and time factor involved while selling the salt in the villages. The reasons were that salt that was sold in the villages the tin which was used for the sale of salt had dent which took less salt in each tin. Secondly as one of the respondents commented that '*Tim advim ravon lath otoita*' meaning they bend and fill the salt resulting in filling only half the tin.

In earlier times, the oral history suggests, the people of Batim used to leave their house early in the morning at 3.30 am. They left their homes before dawn since there was no transport system. The whole ward used to come together when they wanted to take rice or salt for sale to nearby villages like Dongri (Mandur), Neura, Agacaim with the help of *chudio vat disna zalear* (coconut leaves are tied together with the help of coconut leaves and lit with fire to use it like a torch in the dark). They would keep extra *chudio* with them (*chudio dobraadh asthaale*). Later the salt was transported in what is referred to as a *tammdo truck* (red, or larger, truck). The driver would stay in their house in the night so that they could set out early in the morning the next day. Sometimes the divers played truant. After selling the salt in distant villages of Salcette, around Cuncolim and in Canacona, they would return back from there at twelve in the midnight. But nowadays there is not much problem since people now own their own transport like the pickups to transport and sell the salt.

Agarvaddo salt was mostly sold by local canoes in different places in Maharashtra. But now due to the lack of roads in the salt pans salt is brought on bicycles and kept on the road. Some people come personally on the salt pans to buy the salt.

In Arpora, salt was sold in bullock carts to different places in North Goa like Siolim, Nanora, Uspaa, Assonora, Sal, Caisua (Chapora) and the like. Sometimes the people used to come in their bullock carts from far off places and reach by midnight .

or 2 a.m. They would come with a *lampiao* or a lantern since there was no electricity. They would fill the bullock carts in the night and leave by six in the morning. But now, due to the easy availability of a network of roads in Goa, people buy the salt directly from the salt pans which reduces the cost of labour and transportation to the salt workers in Arpora. One respondent said that ever since stories about the iodization of salt has emerged *amche mitt nothaar kelem* meaning our salt was considered as degraded by the government and the multinational companies which have affected the salt making in Arpora. *Mitaacho kalank kelo* (salt from the salt pans was discouraged for human use). Earlier, the major use of salt pans was for salt production as a result the salt was also sold to freezing and ice-factories *Padheraache fornaak* (baker's oven), *bordhik ani barfaak* (ice factory) *ani khaavdik chalta kampanin valor kami kelo* (the multinational companies brought down the value of local salt).

Usually the sale of the salt is done by the females of the village. If asked why, they say, "*daadliancho haath vhadlo*" (literally, "men have larger hands", which means, a greater amount of salt is given away while selling by men). There are middlemen too from other villages who come with a pick up van.

Earlier the salt was transported either in small boats (*vadien*) or by a *bail ghaaddo* (*ghaddiakar*) i.e. a man driving the bullock cart (see photo). He would take the salt from the village to distant villages which did not produce salt. But now the salt is transported from the salt pans to the road by motorbike, or mostly on cycle, since the salt pans are not connected by roads and then it is later transported on the pickup.

*Storage:* Salt was stored with *Korodd* (hay) from the hill (*dhongor*) in olden days in Batim. Hay (*thonn*) was covered on the huge heaps of salt during the rainy



season, but then it was not available on the hill. So the Agris tried another option of hay made of *Bimutt* grass which consists of a plant called the *bimutt* in Konkani which is available in *kharem shetaani* where they grow *Korgutt*. *Ami gorjek hem thonn dhampleelem pun hem kordaa poros ekdom borem ravlem* actually we used this *Bimutt* grass as since there was no other option for us but this turned out to be more effective and available in plenty than the grass from the hill. Nowadays salt is stored near the salt pans on a place called *bandh*.

During the rainy season, water slides on the roof and keeps the salt dry although some amount does get wasted with the moisture. Each heap contains roughly about 800-900 sacks. But in Agarvaddo permanent structures are built in the *bandhs* called *mangar* (see photo) and in Arpora these are called as *khop*. The *khop* is made of coconut leaves whereas the *manger* is built with roof tiles. In Batim, the landlords do not permit the salt makers to build these storage facilities.

### **Caste and Continuity**

Caste is a complex reality in the lives of the Mitagars of the three studied villages of Goa.

Mithgaudas claim to be higher than the Bhandaris and the Bhandari say the Mithgaudas do not belong to their *jat* but are '*Gauddes*'. They pointedly requested the researcher not to include them with the Mithgaudas, suggesting that their caste was higher.

To complicate the situation further, the Mithgaudas claim superiority of status over the Bhandaris. There is some confusion over who is 'superior',. Everyone, however, is agreed that the two are of unequal status and that they cannot intermarry.

Few years back, the Bhandaris would get married to the Mithgaudas, but the Mithgaudas would not get married to the Bhandaris. The Mithgaudas kept rigidly apart and would not take food, nor would share any ritual. There is a fixed group of people with whom one can marry but in fact it is impossible to specify precisely who they are.

The researcher, however, witnessed a night festival in Agarvaddo where the Bhandaris and the Mithgaudas worshipped in common. This God Nagnath was shifted by the Bhandaris of Arpora to Agarvaddo during the time of conversion and constructed the temple. When the researcher was one day standing outside the temple, a group of men came outside the temple and told her: "While writing your study, please do not write that the Bhandaris are higher than the Mithgaudas, since we were higher than the Bhandaris." In the empirical level this fight for superior status continues.

Nowadays all the Gauddis from Arpora, with the exception of one Gauddi family who is still in occupation till date, feel that the occupation of salt making is somewhat degrading and is best avoided if possible. This was revealed during the field work wherein they said they even sold the saltpans. Most of the Gauddis when interviewed would not even mention which caste they belonged to. They would get annoyed if any enquiries regarding the caste were made. But the Gauddi family which currently runs salt-pans mentioned to the researcher the caste to which they belonged to. The salt makers in one caste hierarchy are not similar to the salt makers in another even though these two groups may not actually maintain any relations with each other, or perform the same ritual functions in their respective communities.

In this study, the salt-making groups following the established conventions use proper names which designate a caste group. Some caste groups claimed to belong to

a higher position in the caste hierarchy, but took on occupations ascribed to persons lower down in the caste hierarchy.

For example, the Mithgaudas claim to be Kshatriyas, but take on a 'lower' occupational role. The Bhandaris of Arpora are not originally salt makers but toddy tappers, and considered to be the Other Backward Class. Not long ago, members of this community were dependent on their income from salt making. But with the development of saltpans getting converted to hotels has made the salt making occupation redundant in Arpora. Srinivas (1991:14) has focused on how the caste involved in different occupations of the same and neighboring villages that are bound to each other with economic ties. Srinivas says "economic ties bind the castes living in a village, or a group of neighboring villages. Generally, the peasant castes are numerically preponderant in villages and they need the carpenter, blacksmith and leather work castes to perform agricultural work. Servicing castes such as priest (Brahmin as well as non-Brahmin), barber and washermen castes, meet the needs of everyone except Harijans. The artisan's castes produce goods, which are wanted by everyone. Most Indian villages do not have a few of the essential castes and depend on neighboring villages for certain services, skills and goods. Hence we find that jajmani relations between Yajamans and Kamins are extended beyond village boundaries." In the present study of the salt makers same kind of economic relationship existed among the Mitagars.

There are other shades of distinction regarding castes. The Bhandaris in Arpora consider the Mithgaudas from Agarvaddo to be inferior. They refer to them as *kusaakaars*, or those who are ready to fight. But the Mithgaudas considered themselves to be superior to the Bhandaris. The Bhandaris referred to the salt makers

of Agarvaddo in a derogatory sense as Gauddas. Here the Gaudda means the *Dhettle Gauda*.

The Bhandaris appear more liberal than the Mithgaudas. For example, in the temple at Agarvaddo, the Mithgaudas would not allow the Dalits to enter the temple, even if the latter was in a trance (*bhaar*) or considered to be in a state of possession. Likewise, the Mithgaudas would not accept food or water from the Bhandaris, nor would take their sons and daughters in marriage.

The Mithgaudas are unwilling to accept the sons or daughters of the Bhandaris in marriage, but the Bhandaris were open to accepting a Mithgauda in a matrimonial alliance. The researcher witnessed a festival at Agarvaddo wherein both the castes that is Bhandaris and Mithgaudas were involved in this common festival.

### **Issues of Continuity and Change in the Lives of the Mitagars**

*Cultural synthesis.* Cultural synthesis in the face of colonial subjugation exposes not only the capacity of the colonized to adapt to oppression, but also underlies the complexity of the cultural integration that has taken place (Kamat1999:66). Many of the socio religious customs and the practices in the salt pans exhibit a syncretic form. The various practices that were performed in the salt pans by the Mithgaudas of Pernem have been followed in the convert society though with slight modifications.

For instance, the Mithgaudas kill a cock in the salt pans. The same idea was followed by the convert society i.e. the Agris of Batim, where they would kill a pig. But some salt pans were forbidden to kill a pig so they had to slay a goat. With the coming of the Ager, who are Hindus, the ritual of cutting a pig again changed and the Ager follow a custom of killing a cock in the salt pans.

In Agarvaddo, for the village zatra, the Dalits beat the drum early in the morning to inform the people about the zatra. With conversion, the Agris created their own culture and continued old practices followed before the time of conversion. When the feast begins early in the morning, the *alvorad* (musicians) move around the village playing music to announce the feast day. Some marriage customs of Hindu salt makers like the Bhandaris and the Mithgaudas – for instance, the *Paanch dis* – are followed by them. Only the Agris follow the *Paanch okhta*; meaning the day after the marriage the bridegroom goes to the brides house and stays for a day and has to complete five meals before she returns to the groom's house.

*Resistance through syncretism and collaboration.* The Goan diaspora culture is characterized by a periodic return to the roots, to their God's in Goa (rooted in the concept of "*devak aylla*", or referring to someone having come to seek the blessings of God). The Gods, it is said, did not protect the Goans; rather the people saved their deities by shifting the idols to safer locales across the rivers. Incidentally, the transportation of the deity on logs of woods fastened together or on canoes tied up in a similar fashion (known as *sangodd*) is even today commemorated by the Hindus and Catholics alike, with the latter too associating with the celebration of *sangodd*. (Kamat1999:65). In the mixed village like Arpora, the people belief of St. Sebastian is manifested in the belief by the Bhandaris of him being a convert from Hinduism – although St. Sebastian was a third century Christian martyr said to have been killed during the Roman emperor Diocletian's persecution. The Agris of Batim although having been converted probably around four centuries ago still visit their Hindu Goddess in Pilgao before the start of the salt season.

**Segregation in Religious Places:** In the convert society too, the Agris had separate benches to sit in the church to show their inferiority. This trend is changing slowly though in Batim. The Mithgaudas in Agarvaddo do not allow the Mahars (Dalits) to enter into the temple. But the educated Dalits too do not enter the temple at Agarvaddo – although they are exposed to tourism, use the internet to seek information and see the world through television and cable.

*Salt making as status distinguisher in Goa.* Status refers to the position occupied by a person, family or kinship group in a social system relative to others, such as teacher or priest. This determines rights, duties and other behaviors including the nature and extent of the relationships with persons of other statuses. Social status has a hierarchal distribution, in which a few persons occupy the highest positions.

Social status is determined by education, income, possessions and the social valuation of occupation and of other activities in society. Attempts are made to achieve high status by some persons who concentrate their resources upon the purchase of certain visible items of the style of life of a higher group: these are popularly called status symbols. Although social status can be considered as a continuous variable, there is a tendency for the population to group itself into fairly distinct clusters around incomes corresponding to broad occupational groups (Duncan 1979: 193).

Occupational population (like those people engaged in a particular occupation at a particular time e.g. Mitagars show dramatic differences in composition when viewed in terms of age, sex, race and other characteristics. Some of these differences are attributable to the nature of work but more of them can be traced to the social history of individual occupations (Gupta 1991: 39).

Evidence suggests that the occupational status of the salt makers and fishermen (Kharvi) in Goa is low as compared to the other occupations; they are subject to various types of discriminations.

With the advancement in technology and refinement of division of labour, the functions become more specialized and productive tasks come more and more to depend on one another. These developments have two major effects on occupations

- Occupations become more numerous. New occupations develop and existing ones are sub-divided.
- The rate of change within occupations, i.e. the transformation of occupational tasks, the training required for them, and the conditions under which they are performed greatly accelerates (Caplow 1975: 111).

Salt too contributes to the determination of the status of the community in Goa.

In India one of the most striking features of the caste system as it actually exists is the lack of clarity in hierarchy, especially in the middle regions. Each caste tries to prove that it is equal to a superior 'caste' and 'superior' to its 'equals' and arguments are advanced to prove superiority. The vegetarian castes occupy the higher position in the hierarchy and approximation to vegetarianism is adduced as evidence of high status. The drinking of liquor, eating of a domestic pig which is a scavenger, and of the sacred cow, all these tend to lower the ritual rank of a caste. Similarly, the practice of a degrading occupation such as butchery, or a defiling occupation such as hair-cutting, or making leather sandals, salt making etc. tend to lower the ritual rank of a caste. There is a hierarchy in diet and occupation, though this varies somewhat from region to region. The caste from which a man accepts cooked food and drinking

water are either equal or superior, while the caste from which he does not are inferior (Gupta 1991: 31).

Generally, a caste or a group is assigned with a hereditary occupation. Thus, a *Brahmin* thought that it was correct for him to be a priest while the *Chamar* regarded it as his duty to cure hides and prepare shoes. This was only generally true, for there were groups of occupations like trading, agriculture, laboring in the field and doing military service which were looked upon as anybody's and most castes were supposed to be eligible for any of them. Among the artisans occupation which were more or less of the same status, were open to the members of these castes without incidental degradation (Gupta 1991: 44-45). In the same way, the *Agris* and the *Mith Gaudas* occupation is a hereditary occupation and no other caste is eligible to perform the same since this kind of activity requires a lot of skill to extract salt.

There are minute rules as to what sort of food or drink can be accepted by a person and from what castes. But there is very great diversity in this matter. The practices in the matter of food and social intercourse divide India into two broad belts. In Hindustan proper, caste can be divided into five groups: first, the twice born caste; second those castes at whose hands the twice-born can take *pukka* food; third, those castes at whose hands the twice-born cannot accept any kind of food but may take water; fourth, caste that are not untouchable, yet are such that water from them cannot be used by the twice-born; last come all those castes whose touch defiles not only the twice born but any orthodox Hindu. All food is divided into two classes *kachcha* and *pukka*, the former being any food in the cooking of which water has been used, and the latter all food cooked in ghee without the addition of water.

In spite of the rigid restrictions that prevailed in the caste system in relation to food, it is surprising to note that the salt produced by the lowest castes was consumed



by the higher caste or the twice born caste from time immemorial till date. Of course, this is a matter of convention.

In Goa, the people associated with the salt work usually occupy lower position in the social hierarchy. For example, the *Kharvis* or the fishermen (the word *Kharvi* is derived from 'khar' or something which is salty a corrugation of the Sanskrit word 'khar' meaning 'Kshar' (salt) (Mangalekar 2006: 128) .The *Kharvis* are considered to be low in status in Goa. Similarly, the people involved in salt extraction are also treated as low in society. Thus, salt making is one important factor which determines the status of an individual in Goa.

A stigma is attached to the *kharvis* (fisherfolk), *Agris*, *Agers*, *Gauddis* and the *Mithgaudas*. There is a rigid oversimplified, often exaggerated belief that is applied to the salt makers and to each individual within it. The belief that these people are 'unclean' is a stereotype. As argued by Gupta (1991: 41) it is important to distinguish between a stereotype and a generalization. A generalization is a descriptive statement that applies to the *Mitagars* as a whole. Stereotypes are important because they form the basis for prejudice, which in turn is used to justify discrimination. The *Mitagars* are 'unclean' and their presence defiles the high caste peoples' house is a stereotype which is a negative one.

It can be concluded that, on the basis of the perception that people have about the mitagars who are treated low can be on the basis of income, caste, occupation, dress, geographical location, language etc. The salt workers of Batim are often referred by the higher caste people of the village as 'sokoile' (low). The villages considered them as of low status since salt making occupation is held degrading, may be because of the manual work which they have to perform which requires a lot of skill and hard work, secondly the dress that is worn by them in the process of salt

making has to be ordinary as they have to submerge themselves in the (*chikol*) and thirdly due to the position in the caste hierarchy which places them in the lowest rungs of the society. The typical language dialect that is spoken by the salt makers differentiates them from the other communities which also set them aside from the rest of the villages.

Dress, food habits and customs regarding marriages, funerals etc, vary from caste to caste. In every caste there are different sub-castes. The *Agris* felt that it is necessary to do away with the discrimination on account of religion and come together with a sense of fellow feeling. The *Agris* have gradually adapted themselves to the secular concept of the new regime and a distinct secular outlook is slowly but definitely developing in their midst. In the church, earlier there were seats demarcated for the higher castes and the lower castes. There was separate dress (*opmurs*) that was worn especially during the feast procession and at the time of funerals. The color of this dress was different for the higher caste and the *Agris*. The colour of this dress used by the *Agris* was white and red and for the higher caste it was only white. *Agris* have slowly given up wearing of this dress and as a result this trend is gradually disappearing. Thus, the *Mitagars* have been witnessing major changes in almost all spheres of their life.

### **Occupation, Gender and Social Change**

*Alternative means of livelihood patterns.* That the lives and lifestyles of the salt-makers is under pressure is clear from the various issues emerging from the study. The source of pressure might be different, and so are the alternatives sought to gain new livelihoods.

In Agarvaddo, due to the breach in the crucial river embankments, many traditional mitagars had lost their traditional occupation of salt making as a result of which they had switched on too new sources of livelihood. Most of them had started their own petty enterprises like small shops, restaurants and, whenever possible, took to white collar jobs.

In Arpora, starred hotels have come up near the erstwhile salt pans. The salt pans have been utilized for recreation purposes as a result of which most of the displaced persons from salt making Bhandari families had taken up various kinds of jobs in the hotels. Some of them had purchased taxis which were being used in the hotels and others have started their own business to cater to the needs of the domestic as well as the international tourists who visit Arpora. Tourism played an important role in displacing the mitagars of this village. In short tourism has created alternative jobs and improved the standard of living in Arpora.

In Batim, the situation is quite different. Most of the salt pans were unaffected. Batim was one of the salt producing villages where all the salt-pans were intact and none of them were being destroyed either due to natural forces or man-made factors. In the wake of tenancy reforms being implemented in Goa in the 1960s and 1970s, the tenants had emerged to become the owners of the land. As a result of which, they employed migrant workers. Most of the traditional mitagars had taken white collar jobs. Some had moved abroad.

During the off-season i.e. during the monsoons the salt pans were used for fishing. Pisciculture is practised by placing thorn twigs (*kantte ghalun*) when the salt pans are submerged with water in the months from June to October. Various types of fish available are *kalandur*, *shevtto*, *forgoso*, *agi*, *korkoro*, *tonak*, *lep* and *kurli*.

In Agarvaddo village fishing could be undertaken by anyone, even by a person from outside the village. When enquired why it is so, the Mithgaudas said if they exclude outsiders from fishing then the original owners will realize that they get some profit out of pisciculture and would start demanding more money in the form of rent. One of the respondents, when asked about the same said *Ami mashe kadlear charge diunk zai*, meaning, if we fish only then ourselves will have to pay fees to the landlord so, it is better to allow everybody to fish in the salt pans.

In Batim the permanent tenants operated on the salt pans as well as caught fish during the monsoons; great care was taken and saw that no outsider would take fish from their salt pans. During the fishing season, the permanent tenants resided in small huts in the salt pans and do not allow any outsider to fish in their territory. They spent considerable resources on breeding fish and prawns in the salt pans in the monsoons. So Batim was the only village among the three villages where the fishing and the salt making were pursued by the same set of permanent tenants.

In Arpora, fishing and salt-farming are done by two separate sets of tenants. This has given rise to a lot of problems for the original owners while trying to sell off their lands. As a result, one salt pan was lying idle for the past two years due to a litigation involving two different tenants. The landlords sold the salt pans to the tenants who undertook fishing for several years; the permanent tenant who performed salt work was not informed at all. As a result of all this the matter was taken up in the court and the case is going on. Contesting tenants had their own claims, when the researcher visited their homes. If the salt pans are used for pisciculture for a long time then *Naarge merrank booraak karta* (Some kind of worms harm the bunds permanently). Secondly, it was contended, if the adjacent salt pans are used for

pisciculture during the salt farming season it affects the salt pans which are used for salt.

*Gender division of labour in the salt production processes:* Traditionally, women have been denied access to education and have the larger share of household work compared to men. This is true of all social classes. The labour burden is even heavier for women in agriculture as they help their male family members in agricultural operations and other activities (Gune 1979:32) and at the same time carry out most of the domestic responsibilities as well.

Gender division of labour exists even among the mitagars of Goa. The women do help the men in the salt making operations but there are certain tasks that are performed exclusively by the men. Such as, digging in the salt pans, pulling the salt crystals with a long shovel, preparing the mud ridges (*mero*) etc. There are also certain tasks related to the production of salt that are the exclusive responsibilities of the women, such as, removing the shells and small stones from the salt beds and carrying the salt baskets from the salt pans to the bunds.

Among the salt makers who have migrated to Goa (Batim) from Karnataka, however, such tasks are interchangeable between men and women. Tasks meant for the men may be performed by women and tasks meant for the women are also shared by the Ager men in the salt pans. As a result the payment also comes in pairs. There is no discrimination made between men and women among the Ager. They are paid equally.

There is a paucity of analytical ethnographic literature on the life and problems of these women. In this section we focus on women involved in salt making in Goa. A distinction is made between the position of the local salt making women and the migrant women.

Education of women is one of the crucial factors defining the status of women in that society. The Mithgauda girls have yet to take up higher education. Some girls have slowly started taking higher education. In terms of political participation the Mithgauda women have not made any progress at all. Even if it is a reserved seat for the Mithgauda women in the Panchayat elections, they do not participate in politics. The Ager women appear more politically motivated advanced than the Mithgauda women. They do contest for the village panchayat elections. Some have even become panchayat sarpanchas.

The Mithgauda of Agarvaddo: The Mithgaudas form an endogamous group divided into several exogamous clans. Each group worshiped its own deity. In all the salt making villages, adult marriage was prevalent. Marriage was settled by negotiation only. Inter caste marriages between these salt making communities operating in Goa do not take place. Among the Mithgaudas, the girls were not sent for education beyond the higher secondary level. They had not ventured into politics. They feel it is 'man's' job since the men in Agarvaddo believe that *Him meeting-gek gheli zalear gharant konn randtolo* ("If they went for political meetings who would do the cooking at home?")

But on the social side, the Mithgauda women had changed. They plucked coconuts which was a job once performed only by the men. The women also wore gumboots to squash the cashew apples. Traditionally, this work – though laborious – was the domain of menfolk.

The Agri Women of Goa: The *Agri* women of Batim are Christians and belonged to the Shudra caste. Their customs were also changed after conversion. They used to wear saris and bangles but nowadays they wore Western dresses. They were referred to as "*sokoile*", meaning they were considered as low members of society

since salt making occupation was considered thus by the rest of the society. Marriage used to take place within close cousins and next door neighbours. But now-a-days girls had started moving out of the village in marriage; although they got married within the same caste.

Ager women of Karnataka: The *Ager* women Of Bankikodla, Gokarna and Karwar belonged to the Ager caste. They are migrants from Karnataka who come to Goa to work in (mixed or gender) pairs and are paid their wages collectively as a pair. Ager women, in spite of belonging to scheduled caste, have a positive response to the development programmes. They respond positively to contesting for elections, jobs and going for higher education to distant towns. They lived for six months in the salt pans in Batim and return for six months to Karnataka. Their children who are less than 12 years of age also lived in salt pans and were enrolled in schools, but missed school for half year. Other girls who lived in the respective villages and did not come to Goa attended school up to secondary level. Poverty is their main constraint.

The *Ager* women were respected within their community and took part in social, political, religious and economic activity equally with men. They earned equal wages as that of their male counterparts in the salt making work. Financial management in the household was controlled by the men in consultation with the women. The *Ager* girls who were above the age of twelve and those of their counterparts who worked in salt pans in their hometown were enrolled as students and received higher education and were in preparation for the achievement of better socio-economic status.

Property normally went to sons only, according to their community rule. Married daughters said that they cannot claim any share in their father's property. Whatever the father wants to give his daughter, he would give at the time of marriage. In case of an unmarried daughter, the brother shouldered all the responsibility. But among the Ager, girls have now started taking up higher education and have started venturing in politics. They have become sarpanchas and various political offices in Karnataka are given to them.



# **CHAPTER VIII**

## **SUMMARY**

## **AND CONCLUSION**

## CHAPTER VIII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Salt is the most indispensable commodity for humans. Even extreme ascetics do not reject gift of salt (Mhamai 2000: 11). This chapter includes a summary of the analysis of the various Mitagars of Goa which are presented in the substantive chapters from three to seven. It also includes some important conclusions and suggestions made by the researcher.

India has attained a unique position in the world in the production of salt. Being a developing country, India not only stands third in the entire world in salt production but it is also one of the important countries in Asia and Far East producing salt mainly by solar evaporation method. The extensive coastline along the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal facilitate an ideal climate and topography for the solar evaporation of salt in India. The traditional method of solar salt extraction has attracted a large number of labour forces in India. These laborers are commonly known as salt pan workers (Souza 2005: 132).

Apart from the decline of traditional sectors like salt, the territory of Goa has experienced overall socio-economic development for over two decades since the end of Portuguese colonial rule. Such a development was undoubtedly added to the economic prosperity of Goa's population in no small measure. However its lopsided character has led to regional disparities. While the coastal talukas of Tisvadi, Bardez, Mormugao and Salcette have been the largest beneficiaries of economic development, the interior or remote talukas such as Sattari, Sanguem, Quepem and Canacona situated in the foothills range of the Sahaydhris have been comparatively at a lower level of development (Angle 1983: 3).

Goa's salt industry, which had been the major exporter of salt to the rest of India and even foreign countries, is declining today and could go into extinction unless the Government takes it upon itself and does something to alleviate the problems faced by the handful of existing salt manufacturers. It was difficult for the researcher to get information on the salt makers of Goa since not many studies have been done on the salt makers of Goa due to this the nuances of the community cannot be captured and has to be done with bits and pieces of secondary work.

Records from earlier decades show that Goa's salt pans were located in 21 villages in four coastal talukas or sub-districts. However, the salt-industry in Goa declined after Liberation (the end of Portuguese rule in 1961), due to a number of factors. These include the breaching of *bunds* (embankments that have protected the fields from being inundated with undesirable brackish water), the growth of export-oriented pisciculture, land-reclamation, real-estate developments, labour shortage and water pollution caused due to the growth of industries in some salt-farming areas.

As a result, the number of villages producing salt has declined; so has the number of salt pans. Resultantly, salt-production fell drastically in Goa. This fall in the number of salt pans and salt-production led to a steady decline of salt-makers in Goa, whom the researcher conceptualises as 'mitagars'.

The negative impacts notwithstanding, the *mitagars* of villages such as Agarvaddo in Pernem; Nerul, Arpora, and Calangute in Bardez; Santacruz, Goa Velha, Mercedes and Batim in Tisvadi, and Cavellosim in Salcette have been striving hard to keep their industry alive. Needless to say, organic salt-production is environmentally clean, non-polluting, low-capital, labour intensive, and an employment-generating rural economic activity which needs to be encouraged.

Goa, with its long coast line and many creeks with large flat fields adjacent to them, its warm climate and perennial soft breezes, and its favorable soil conditions and relative humidity, makes it an ideal place for a large scale salt industry. Goa is in every respect advantageously situated for salt production and, if developed, this industry will meet the requirements of all the adjoining areas besides facilitating the setting up of salt-based chemical industries. For that, it has to draw attention plans to reclaim at least some salt pans. It should with the co-operation of departments concerned, undertake immediate desilting and dredging operations in the surrounding areas of the pans to clear the clogged network of feeder canals, commission a study on pollution, besides providing technical help to salt pan owners to pump out water from flooded pans.

The primary purpose of the present study was to appraise the position of Mitagars in Goa. Therefore, the study was based on the fieldwork in the salt producing villages of Goa. The aim was to discern the forces of change in different salt making villages.

The findings of the study indicate that there are no records maintained by government authorities in Goa about the estimates of the present day salt production in Goa. Hence, the contribution of the Goan salt industry cannot be ascertained with precision. The issue regarding the changing life situations of Mitagars and saltpans have not been taken up in The Goa Assembly although salt was a prominent industry once upon a time.

Most importantly, the Government must formulate a State Salt Policy in line with the National Salt Policy before this industry of the spice of life reaches a point of no return.

The salt makers of Goa differ from other occupational communities because of certain peculiarities and the mode of production. The Bhandaris who are the salt makers of Arpora are not salt-makers by caste but by choice. Persons irrespective of their caste in Goa, pursue salt-making as their occupation.

In Goa, salt makers have not adapted to modern techniques of salt production as compared to salt-makers of other states in India. Local officials and experts should be appointed to educate the Mitagars on improved techniques of salt production.

The first major change was the Portuguese intervention which had been a consequence of forced Christianization of people of the island of Goa in which some rituals have disappeared and new ones have emerged in its place.

In Goa, the tenants have become the owners (*patraos*) of the salt-pans, and more and more people are buying the salt pans for various other purposes like fishing and using them for various commercial purposes. Previously, young women from salt-producing families used to get married in the village itself since they were needed in the salt work, but since these jobs are done by the migrant workers, the girls now have started moving out of the village via marriage, although they get married within the same caste, but often to a slightly higher caste.

Overall, this shows that though certain social aspects of the salt making community are changing, the techniques of salt production have remained the same. This shows that from the social side the society is shifting from a feudal colonial to a capitalistic type of society, but on the technical side it is yet to progress. So there is lapse between the technical and the social.

Goa's salt pans and the salt industry are shrinking, resulting in the further dwindling in the number of salt makers in Goa. Today only a few salt makers exist in Goa. Majority of the younger generation is interested in occupational mobility. The

youngsters are now seeking white collar jobs. Children of salt pan owners are also not interested in continuing their family occupation since the jobs in the salt pans are more laborious and backbreaking and seasonal in nature, besides offering a lower social status.

Salt pan owners and manufacturers need to be familiarized with new methods. The unemployed youth could be made aware of these opportunities by setting up demonstration camps. This would go a long way in breathing new life into this industry.

The change in the traditional occupation of salt farming in Goa is due to several factors, the main among them are (1) The lack of migrant workers who have slowly stopped coming to Goa (2) The breaking of the embankments and the sluice gates and the resulting neglect by the government (3) The switch over of the salt pans to real estate and (4) Tourism.

The salt making community of Goa is a very important community since this industry will be a boon to the people of Goa and it will provide profitable employment to a good section of its population. It will also be a boon to the people of India for it will tap a very rich and unlimited source of raw materials which will provide them with much needed chemicals and raw materials required for their industries and will earn a lot of foreign exchange.

The Goan society provides, in the Indian setting, a unique case to illustrate change which a society exhibits when brought in contact with foreign culture. Although the Goan society experienced qualitative transformation during the Portuguese rule, it did not basically replace the traditional society, nor did it transform itself into a full fledged modern society. It manifested a peculiar blend of modern and traditional systems. The community of Mitagars in Goa exhibits this blend. The

methods used in salt farming are traditional; the marketing procedures are in between traditional and modern.

The unique characteristic of this industry is the advantage of more employment opportunity in less investment and the disadvantage is the distance between the production and consumption centers. Hence, the transportation cost is much more than the salt price in most of the cases. Being a cheap commodity, salt is transported only by rail and roadways are more suitable for transportation rather than sea and airways. But in Goa it is usually transported on head or on bicycles or by road. The salt pans in Goa are not connected with railways and ports and they are almost depending upon roadways which are more costly than rail. It may be noted that practically it is impossible to bring railway line in each and every saltpan.

Due to the nature of work, these salt pans are located in remote corners where there are no transportation, communication, educational and medical facilities and no other basic amenities like housing, potable drinking water, electricity, shipping etc. Further qualified and efficient people are hesitating to come and work in this atmosphere of low technology, lesser recognition in their experience and it is laborious work.

Salt makers sell their salt for the whole year while the production is seasonal. As a result in places like Arpora there is a shift in the economic activities wherein people have switched on to newer means of livelihood that is they prefer to take up small jobs in the hotels or the majority of them work as taxi drivers since this kind of employment provide them wages which can sustain them for the whole year.

Till now, no tax is being levied on salt to respect the feelings of Mahatma Gandhi who fought against the British rulers for levying of tax on salt. At this juncture, it is necessary to clarify that the Mahatma wanted only tax-free salt for

edible purpose and not for Industrial purpose. Actually, Government is losing substantial revenue by salt from excise duty without classifying the usage of the salt since the licenses are issued only for the manufacture of salt irrespective of the quality and usage.

This study was an attempt to study the continuity and change among the salt makers of Goa. It sought to throw light on the social aspects of the people involved in the salt industry.

In the course of the study the researcher had noticed that the Mitagar community needs certain interventions to improve their lives. Some of them are mentioned below

1. Present methods of salt manufacture are too crude and traditional methods are inefficient means of production. So modern techniques used in other States like Gujarat, Bombay etc., should be employed.
2. Salt being manufactured by poor farmers and land owners. Loan facilities may be extended before the manufacturing season.
3. Following new Governmental agencies may be established to help mitagars in solving their problems.
  - a. Training officers should be appointed to educate producers on improved techniques of production.
  - b. Provide finance and subsidies to salt manufacturers
  - c. Set up an agency for marketing/co-operatives wherein a competitive price is available.



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# APPENDIX

## GLOSSARY

**Table 1:**  
**Terms associated with the Mitagars of Goa**

Term	Definition
Aachar	Superstition
Aandho ani kallso	Large utensils of copper
Aarti	Lamp lit to honour a deity
Abhishekh	Oblation in the form of sprinkling of water on a deity
Add-nanv	Surname
Advim	Bent
Agarbathi	Incense sticks
Agers	Migrant
Aggi	Tiger prawn
Agraacho maan, or devchaaracho maan	Paying of respect to the saltpan
Alvorad	Musicians
Ami maas uddoile Kristanv	We are converts who turned Christian as our wells were polluted with flesh and blood of animal's meat
Amkam bhailim chedvam nooch	Girls from outside the village are not meant for us
Annas	One-sixteenth of a rupee in the earlier days
Apavitr	Unholy
Atam te achaar mandnai	They do not follow those outdated superstitions now
Azilo	Home for the indigents
Baag	Garden
Bai	For female bosses, ladies

Term	Definition
Bandh	Embankment, dyke
Barfaak	For the ice
Beedis	Indian cigarettes made of tobacco wrapped in leaf
Besanv	Blessings
Bhaile	Outsiders
Bhajan	Devotional songs
Bhajan mandap	Main hall
Bhaktas	Devotees
Bhandar	Treasury
Bhande	A peculiar shaped vessel used by the toddy tappers
Bhatji	Temple priest
Bhatkars	Landlords
Bhatle	Converted
Bhikrem jevonn	Special meal for the poor, the Beggars Meal
Bhonnde	Immature, unripe or useless coconuts
Bhuts	Spirits and ghosts of the family dead
Bimutt	Wild grass used to cover in the salt pans
Bingtakar	Peanut Vendors
Bol-Doce	Local sweets
Boshi	Plate
Bundh	Traditional protective wall along the river
Chanak	Perch
Chiiti vachop	Reading of the banns,
Chikol	Marshy-soil
Chikoll ghuddaithale	Smashing of the muck
Chinel	Portuguese meant slippers

Term	Definition
Chonem	Grams
Chovkonnam	Square blocks
Chovtto	A primitive form of the early panchayat or village council
Chuddo	Bangle wearing ceremony
Chudio	Bunch of cocunu rib- leaves which is lit and used as a torch
Chuttechem kondul	Small vessel is made out of coconut leaves
Confrarias	Institutions for social welfare set up by the Portuguese, such as the confraternities
Dallichem godxem	Sweet made of daal
Darshan	Special viewing
Denem	Trousseau
Devak aylla	Came to the feet of God
Devchaar	Protector, the local spirit, either benevolent or malevolent
Devibhaktas	Devotees of the deity
Dha lok	Ten people
Dhalo	A kind of traditional dance
Dharm saambhallun dovrunk zai	We need to protect our religion
Dhavam	One dhavam equals two khungo, meaning saltpan
Dhettle	Knot tied by women to their sarees on their shoulder( hence the name Dhetllim name of a Gauda community)
Dhobis	Traditional laundrymen
Dhodd	A medium sized water container made of copper or brass
Dhol Tashe	Musical instruments
Dhulvad	Throwing colour on each other
Diwan	Residence cum office of a revenue officer

Term	Definition
Doce	Sweet
Dol and tashe	The drums, some huge in size
Dolleam add moson padd	Behind one's back may anything happen
Doodhi	Pumpkin
Dukra maas	Pork
Escrivaos	Clerks of the Comunidade
Fhau	Beaten pounded rice
Fhoem odtalle	Pulling the salt crystals with an instrument
Foolaancho tooro nesaitat	Decorated bunch of flowers
Fornaak	For the furnace of the bread maker
Fugddi	A kind of traditional dance
Ganthon	Fish or meat pieces tied to a string
Gade pad	A spirit that enters these persons who dance
Ganti or Maanai	Migrant community is often referred to as maanai laborers
Gaoponn	Debate on village affairs by elders
Garbagriha	Sacred interior of the temple
Gaunkaria or comunidade	Village welfare Committee
Gaunkars	Members and shareholders of the comunidade
Ghanti	Those From Across the Hills
Gharchea Bhattant	Household property
Ghor zaadlem	Cleaned the house mhoje mai, mhoje mai, atam kor zaiem tem Mother mine, now do what you want
Ghuddo	Clog made out of clay soil and hay
Ginean mellta	Get better knowledge
Goan-Bhaylo	Goan versus migrant
Godshe	Traditional sweets
Gollxio	Local fish name

Term	Definition
Gram Dev	Village god
Gram Devi	Traditional village deity
Gumott	A percussion musical instrument made of an earthen drum covered at one end by the skin of a monitor lizard with the other end open.
Hadpaddem or Hadd-Phoddem or Vhodd-Phoddem	Open spaces of fields
Hadpadkaars	Residents of Arpora
Halad lavap	Turmeric paste is applied
Hospicio Real	Royal Hospital
Jaap Karta/Zakho dita	Womenfolk have to rock the cradle, for their wellbeing
Jati	Subcaste
Jayanthi	Birth anniversary
Kalank	Devaluation
Karkoon	Secretary
Karpuraarti	With recitation of Vaidic Ashtak and devotional music
Kashti	Modest loin cloth
Khann	Blouse piece
Khavdik	For the fodder
Koilacho	Broken earthen pot
Korkoro	Target fish
Korrood	Hay
Kotti	Coconut shell
Kudtar Moryo Kaso	A small ward
Kuldev	Family deity
Kumkum	Vermillion powder
Kunghe	Part of field, section of salt farm
Kurkut	Niche

Term	Definition
Kurleo	Crabs
Kusaache bhath	Orchard of spiked paddy
Ladinh	Litany
Lampiao	Lamp, light
Latthaak cheppaam galtale	They would dent the tin
Leit-motif	Frequently repeated theme in a musical or literary composition
Lep	Flat fish
Linga	The Phallus
Lokond	Iron
Louvado Seja o Santismmo Sacramento	Praise be to Blessed Sacrament
Maadachim poim	Coconut sheath
Maadi	Beetle nut tree
Maand	A sacred, open space
Maand xipap	Irrigating the space in front of the temple
Maddcape	Coconut cutters
Madrin and padrin	Godmother and godfather
Maharudra	Ritual to eulogize lord Shiva
Mahera	Maternal house
Mahi	Sanskrit word meaning land or ground
Mamager	At the bride's maternal uncle's house.
Mand Thevane	A collective bath taken after the festival comes to an end
Mandharak	Sanskrit word, for distiller liquor tapping and selling was the special work of the Bhandaris
Mangalsutra	String of black beads with a gold one in the centre tied by the bridegroom around his brides neck at their wedding
Mangar	Hut to store salt

Term	Definition
Mantras	Religious chants
Mattou	Large tent or temporary pandal to accommodate the guests
Mattovkar	One who sets up the pavillion
Mhoolcho	Original
Mitagars	Salt pans
Mittkars	Salt makers
Modvaoche Bhatt	Washer men's washing place
Moger	Dalit caste in Karnataka
Mudhi	Ring
Muhurt	Auspicious day
Naal Fottai	Wherein coconuts are hit
Naal, pod	Coconut, rice
Naargo	Worm which harms the bundhs permanently
Natak	Drama
Neera	Cashew apple juice
Neiem	Harvest festival
Nesounn	Brides clothes to be worn for the nuptials
Neveidh	Oblation
Nizaache	Dominant owners, Authentic, inherent, one's own genuine
Noman	Benediction
Oklelo saddo	A special red-and-white colored flowery dress of the bride
Opa musa	Dress of the Confraad a cape used by members of the confraria for ceremonial occasions
Ovalani	Expression of love and affection by waving tiputed lamps around somebody's face or an image of god



Term	Definition
Paan supari	Buffet at the dinner of the wedding
Paanch Dis	Five days
Paanch okhtaa	Five meals
Padricho Agor soglleam lokank sustence kortalo	Most of the salt makers were thriving on Padricho agor.
Paili	Approximately ten and half kilograms
Pallkhi	Palanquin, Palanquin procession
Panch okhtaa	Five consumable items
Patгаа	Turban worn by Ager on their head
Patholli	Special local sweet
Patrao	Male bosses
Pett	Wooden suitcase
Pettenth khuxi te ghalop	Place what one wishes into the suitcase
Pingli	Beggar
Poicappe	Cutters of seed in the floescence of coconut
Poim-Kape	Toddy-tapper
Pontti	Lamp
Portounem	The Return
Pradakshana	Circumambulation
Prasad	Food offered to the gods
Pravaas korunk vaat naasli baamboochi shidi ghali	There was no way to cross the flowing rivulet, a squarish raft of bamboo was made to cross the river
Predhiaal	Rent for land use
President	One who celebrates the village feast
Pursanv	Procession taken around the chapel
Raas	Big heap
Rakhondar	Protector

Term	Definition
Razvaak bandun igorjent hadtallo	Tie them to a rope and forcibly get them to church
Regidors	The Portuguese equivalent of the village Patel
Reinderos	An Indo-Portuguese word that comes from the word render or toddy-tapper.
Rendaak Arrament ghetaale	Taking on fruit-bearing trees on hire
Render	Toddy tapers
Resper	Nuptials ceremony
Rivaaz	Tradition
Romat	A parade of young men dressed in traditional costumes carrying Jhende banners and umbrellas
Ross	Coconut-milk
Ruma	Portuguese 'ruma' means pomegranate
Saddo	A special red-and-white colored flowery dress
Saibin Mai	Virgin Mary the of the Goan Catholics
Sakarpudo	Engagement ceremony
Sangnem	Intercession
Sangodd	Canoes joined together with with planks on which an idol can perambulate or river as a part of temple festival
Sangtta	Catfish
Sankov	Small bridge
Sanna	A traditional form of bread
Santa Casa de Misericordia	The Holy House of Mercy
Santissima Trinite	Holy Trinity in Portuguese
Sat Purush Nekkad Vaani	Hindu God
Shakti-pitha	Seat of power
Shewtto	Grey mullet

Term	Definition
Shigmo	Holi festival
Sim	The border of the village
Siment	Boundary
Sokoile	Those from beneath
Sorro	Liquor
Sotti Naal ani kellim bandun hankeam ditai	A bundle of cocunut and bananas are given to the newly married bride under her armpit
Sovoskai Bhat	Land of peace
Sravan season	Hindu month of Shravan
St. Cruz	Holy Cross
Sthapna	Establishment of the temple
Sungott	Prawn
Sur	Fermented coconut juice, toddy extracted from the coconut tree
Tadi	Toddy
Tallo suttona	Not able to sing.
Tamdi Maatih	Red mud
Tari pailean vorun dovortale	They collect and store it across the river
Tavern	Country liquor shops
Teka bhattoilo ani Sanse Bostiao kelo Sath Purush	The God of Hindus was converted to a Christian god.
Teli	Locally known as the oil extractors saukar or landlord
Tendlim	Local vegetables
Thovlli	Small earthen vessel used for cooking curries
Tiatr	Konkani drama
Tisvaddecheo Igorzo	Churches of Tisvadi
Tum mhojem	You're mine
Ulhem Bhat Ulolem bhatt	Remaining piece of land.

Term	Definition
Undde	Local bread made by the poder or baker
Urrak or fenny	Local brew
Vadde or wards	Village hamlets
Vaggleo	Kind of prawns
Vangors	Clan groups
Vaniachi bhatti-Diwan ghar	Office of the Secretary
Varna	Hierarchical stratification
Vhoddien	Canoe
Visarjan	Ritual immersion bathing
Voile	Those from out there
Voiz ani chambar tigona	A doctor or a leather worker from outside the village comes to set up base here his practice will not survive for long
Voizaancho voiz	A very adapt doctor
Vojem	An offering of fruit and traditional sweet
Votti bharap	Offering made by a married women to another married woman or a Goddess in the form of rice, coconut, vermilion, turmeric powder and a piece of cloth
Xith-koddhi	Literally rice-and-curry
Zag	Wake
Zaina patranv	They cannot afford to pay
Zatras	Hindu Festivals
Zogddem Bhatt	Fighters' ward
Zoglem	Blade used on the plough
Zolmi	Local religious community head
Zonn	The annual share they received on grounds of being male members of the village communities, or comunidade. An annual dividend from the comunidade
Zothis	Special marriage songs

**Table II:**  
**Words associated with Salt Pans, Design & Management**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Function</b>
Agor	A low-lying submerged field or the whole salt pan	To extract salt during summer & fish during rainy season
Antni	Third bed where the water is let in	Limited water which is required is taken into the salt pan
Bhauri	Whirlpool, to whirl or to revolve rapidly	-
Bhom	A hole breach in the protective bund	To drain out water from agor
Bimutt	Name of a particular halophytic plant	To use it in place of hay
Caw, Cal, Tatt	First bed where the water is let in	Filtration and dilution of raw saline water
Chickal	Muck, mud	For strengthening the protective bunds for preparing bricks as fertilizer in coconut orchards
Danto	A, plank with wooden teeth to mix the mud, muck	The muck is raked up to increase the surface area of crystallizing pans
Daw	Narrow inlet for the water entering from second bed to third bed	To circulate the saturated brine in the crystallizers of the salt pan
Ell, Almus	Vessel consists of liquor, ganthonn, Pann, liggaratte, banana	Kept under a scared tree
Ferry	A small boat	To go across the river
Fhodowp	The hard crystal the muck is disturbed the muck	Denoted a climatic phenomenon which disturbs the production process
Fhoem	A small triangular wooden plank called shovel	To level the plan and draw the salt crystals in one corner
Fhor	First stage wherein the bunds are being leveled	Pre-production stage necessary for strengthening the bunds
Fhor	A tool used in the first stage to level the bunds	Necessary for strengthening the bunds

Term	Meaning	Function
Fhorem	Spade with flat rectangular blade on long handle	Tool for digging
Gudd'do	A valve, stopper made out of hay and muck or mud	To obstruct the flow of the water
Guddavp	Smash and mix	The muck is mixed up
Gumot	Musical instrument consists of earthen pot and leather	Used to play on the feast day
Iran	Does not dissolve	So that the salt crystals may be formed
Kantalli	A small (usually circular) fishing net	Fishing in shallow waters
Kontr	When the wind blows in the opposite direction	Disturbs the production process, denoted wind, water, circulation direction
Korop	Hard crystals disturbance in the Salt pans	Distributes the production process
Kungi	Rectangular plots fenced in by little embankment or bunds for crystallization	To hold saline water saturated with salt crystals
Kunwanwo	Mudballs extracted from bottom of salt pans	Used as fertilizers
Latt	The vessel used earlier to drain water from the Agor	Drain out water from the Agor
Mer	A narrow bund (a square shaped boundary for fencing rectangular plots	Usually not more than 0.5m High and 0.2 - 0.3m wide, used for supervision and maintenance
Moko	A small inlet from the third bed into the salt pans	Used for the production of salt
Mus	The main inlet for water from the rivulet to the salt pans	Control of in-take of saline water from the creek or estuary
Nistavp	Remove the excessive moisture from salt (hygroscopic)	For long term storage of salt by reducing hygroscopy
Nivddo	A plank with slightly smaller teeth	To level the pan which now consists of soft muck
Pahllo	A bamboo basket	For transporting salt

Term	Meaning	Function
Pazorta	Leakage in the bundh	Water just enters forcefully into the salt pans where the bundh collapses
Poddshing	Second bed where the water is let in	Saline water is heated, this bed making it saturated with salt crystals
Poim	Saline rivulet or estuarine backwaters	To take water for the Salt
Ponoi	A pipe made out of cotton tree (Bombax ceiba) or coconut tree (Cocos nucifera)	Water is let in from the rivulet to the second bed
Ponvta, Sodor Pazor	Leakage in the salt pans	A sign of soil erosion and consequent leakage of the brine
Posheta	Smoothen the bund surface	This action is necessary for reducing soil erosion
Punzo	A small heap of freshly produced salt on the salt pans itself	To gather the salt crystals at one place
Ras	A big heap of salt on the plain, strip of land above the pans	To arrange the salt systematically
Rod	Complete cycle of water circulation	Where the water is let in and stored
Sai	A thin layer of salt crystals formed on the saturated brine	The salt crystals are extracted from this layer
Shewo	A mat of blue-green Algae	If it enters the salt-pan, the salt gets dirty
Suj	A film of algal growth which makes the salt-pans dirty	It spoils the salt
Sut	The old bunds are broken, dug and filled with mud half a meter both above and below the ground	Bunds are renovated and strengthened
Tapounni	Applies to podshing (second bed) to warm the bed	Saturate the brine for raising the salt content
Thonn	Hay	To thatch, cover the conical heaps of stored salt
Uspovp	To extract salt from the crystallizers for storage	-
Vaingonn	Winter crop (of paddy)	Denotes in shallow waters

Term	Meaning	Function
Woi	-	Line where the salt is collected in small heaps on the pans
Xiddache Vaddem	Canoe with a sail	Used previously for the transportation of salt
Xiryem	Small thorny twigs	As biological fencing in flooded pans to prohibit unauthorized fishing during monsoon
Zonn	Inalienable share of commune member	-



## CHAPTER V

### THE AGRIS OF BATIM

#### The Village

#### The Geographical Location

Batim is a village that lies off the highway linking state-capital Panaji with South Goa (Margao and beyond, and to Vasco). The village lies between two other villages of central coastal Goa, namely Goa Velha and Curca. The boundaries of Batim are the Siridao River on the west, village Gancim (Ganzvim) on the north east, Neura-O-Pequeno (Neura) on the south east and Goa Velha on the south.

#### Etymology of Batim

Bhati, a Konkani term, refers to a furnace. In another context, the same term refers to the place where traditional alcohol (*feni, urrack*) is processed in Goa. Salt-producing villages of Goa have a hamlet or a vaddo which is referred to as Bhati - for example in the village Nerul (which has the ward called Bhatier, close to salt-pans) and Arpora. This term could originate from the reservoirs that go alongside the salt-pans. These are also known as the heaters or the *Tapovanim*, and get used in salt-producing villages to heat the saline water while extracting the salt out of the brine or salt-saturated water.

Another possible meaning of a 'Bhati' is the place where the rainwater runoff from various places meets. In Portuguese, the word has got rendered as Batim (with the final 'm' almost silent in pronunciation).

In the museum of the Asiatic Society at Mumbai, three copper plates bear inscriptions in the Sanskrit and Nagari script, referring to the donation made before