

<http://montesquieu.ens-lyon.fr/spip.php?article2832>



# XVI.5 The reason for a law of Malabar

- The Spirit of Law - Book XVI. How the laws of domestic slavery relate to the nature of the climate -

Date de mise en ligne : jeudi 6 septembre 2018

---

Copyright © Montesquieu - Tous droits réservés

---

## XVI.5 The reason for a law of Malabar

---

On the Malabar coast, in the caste of Nairs, men can have but one wife, and a woman on the contrary can have multiple husbands. [1] I think we can discover the origin of this custom. The Nairs are the caste of nobles, who are the soldiers of all these nations. In Europe, soldiers are prevented from marrying ; in Malabar, where the climate is more demanding, they have been content to make marriage as unproblematic as possible : they have given a woman to several men, which equivalently reduces the attachment for a family and household cares, and leaves these men their military spirit.

---

[1] *Voyage de François Pyrard*, ch. xxvii. *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, third and tenth compendia on the Malleami on the Malabar Coast ; that is regarded as an abuse of the military profession, and as Pyrard says, a woman of the brahmin caste would never marry more than one husband.