CHAPTER 1

The Socio-Economic Milieu of Malabar

The resistance against a foreign intruder is natural in the history of any society. The reaction of the subjugated people is a natural response to the domination and exploitation of the economy and society by the conquerors. This can be observed in all the resistance movements all over the world. In the case of the Pazhassi rebellion, the Mappila revolts and Kurichya revolt, a similar situation can be observed. So to understand the origins and dynamics of these revolts, it is necessary to analyze the social and economic conditions prevailed in the Malabar society.

Kerala, popularly known as the “God’s Own Country”, is one of the distinctive regions in India, both physically as well as culturally. The region was isolated and kept aloof from the rest of India by the Western Ghats in the East. On the West, the long low lying coastline exposed Kerala to maritime influences from the earliest times to western and other regions of the world. The contacts with the Arab and the European world in search of pepper and spices from the interior of Kerala have materially affected its economy, society and culture. Malabar forming one of the major parts of Kerala also shares this unique character and features in every respect.

The climate and seasons in Kerala has a unique impact upon the vegetation and agriculture of the state. For example, in contrast to the rest of India, in Kerala, most of the paddy growing areas had to drain the water from the land rather than to bring it to the fields. The tropical climate and the abundance of rain enabled the
growth of spices like pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger and cashew nuts abundantly. These aromatic plants and spices attracted foreigners to Kerala. Of these commercial products, most important was pepper, often styled as the ‘money of Malabar’.¹ It was the demand for the pepper and other aromatic products of Malabar that brought the Arabs in the early centuries and later the Europeans like the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the English to its coast and gradually led to the European domination over the land and people of this country.

The characteristic feature of the pre-colonial socio-economic structure of Malabar, as elsewhere in Kerala, was not the “Asiatic mode of production”, but a modified form of feudalism, a unique one in India.² This unique economic structure of Malabar had a great influence upon the social and political organization and structure of Malabar society.

**Political Scenario of Malabar**

The political structure of Malabar, in the pre-colonial days, was unique and peculiar one when compared to the other regions of the country. It was feudal in character and there was no organized central Government in Malabar.³ The country, hence, was divided into a number of Nadus (districts). It was under a lesser Raja called Naduvazhi. Below the Naduvazhis there were the still lesser Rajas called Desavazhi who were the heads of Desams (hamlets). Below the Desavazhis there was another rank of officials called Mukhyastans (literally meaning important people or respectable). The majority of these Rajas and lesser

Rajas belonged to the Nair caste and they were also the landlords of the region and were known as *janmis*. The Rajas were also *janmis* and thus together with their fellow landowners constituted the ruling class in Malabar. The income of these Rajas did not come from the land revenue collections but from the rents levied on tenants, customs; revenue from imports and exports and transports. Also these minor Rajas were supposed to maintain a number of armed men depending upon their position and wealth and are expected to attend the king in the time of wars. Thus the political structure of Malabar, which was a militarist feudal state, rooted in private property in land and closely linked with the caste system of Hinduism.

It was militarist in the sense that each *Naduvazhi* had his own armed men and had vast territories of land which was given to the sub-tenants for cultivation. It was feudal because the entire land was owned and possessed by the *Naduvazhi* and he controlled the means of production where the tenants had no right over the land.

Thus, Malabar in the eighteenth century, was not a single political unit, but comprised of several small principalities and kingdoms. The most important political units of Malabar were, Chirakkal, Kannur, Kottayam, Kadthanadu, Kurumbranadu and Kozhikode. The district of Malabar was created by the East India Company, initially under the Bombay Presidency and in 1800 it was annexed to the Madras Presidency. For the convenience of administration, “the Malabar Province” was divided into two divisions under the control of a Superintendent for

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each division. The headquarters of the northern Superintendent was Thalassery
and the headquarters of Southern Superintendent was Cherpulassery. Above the
Superintendents, there was a Supervisor with Kozhikode as his headquarters.

Social Structure of Malabar

The social structure of Malabar in the pre-colonial period was strictly
organized on the basis of caste system. The castes were arranged in a hierarchical
order from the highest and most sacred to the lowest and least worthy. The
jatinirnayam attributed to Sree Sankaracharya mentions about 72 principal castes
in Kerala. It consisted of 8 sub-divisions of Brahmins, 2 Nanajatis, 12 Antharals,
18 Sudras, 6 Artis, 10 Pythiar, 8 Neechajatis and 8 Purajatis. In Malabar, there
existed the four occupational categories of the Hindu caste system. The primal race
distinction in Malabar can be traced in the broad division of Brahmin, Nair, Tiyya
(Ezhava), artisan and aboriginal tribes. At the top of the hierarchical system were
the Brahmins, who were described as Namboodiris in Malabar. Namboodiris, who
constituted the priestly community in Malabar, claimed their origin to the Aryans.
The sacred thread they wore demarcated them from other communities. They had
established a chain of thirty two settlements in Kerala by the end of the eighth
century and from then onwards there appears to have been a steady alienation of
land to individual Brahmins or their temples. They settled largely in the

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7 Margret Frenz, From Contact to Conquest: Transition to British Rule in Malabar, 1790-1805, Delhi, 2003, p. 100-102
Walluvanad, Ponnani, Arnad and Kozhikkode taluk of South Malabar and sparsely in the Kurumbranad, Kottayam and Chirakkal taluks of North Malabar. They were the dominant landholders in the district, who were the best commercially oriented and the most tradition bound by the caste system. They systematically avoided the social contact with all other castes, with the exception of the ruling Nairs. The matrilineal and primogenital customs followed by the Namboodiris precluded the fragmentation of their property. Apart from the Namboodiris, there were the two immigrant Brahmin castes – the Patters and the Embranthiris – who were also privileged as small *janmis* and as groups of high ritual ranking in the Malabar society.

Below the Namboodiri Brahmins, the Nairs formed bulk of non-polluting castes in Malabar. They constituted the warrior community in the Kerala society. The Nairs, in the wider sense constituted the higher caste, which are distinct now, and in the social structure of the caste scale, is traditionally a militia, and devoted them to agriculture at times of peace. Like the Namboodiris, the Nairs were also a part of the land owning class in Malabar and enjoyed high position and status in the society, as the militia of the Rajas and due to their social relationships with the Namboodiri community through *sambandham*. The Nair caste constituted several sub castes. The most interesting feature of the Nairs is their family structure. It was hypergamous, matrilineal and matrilocal and so loosely arranged as to raise

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doubts as to whether marriage existed at all in that community in Malabar. As in the case of the Namboodiris, the family organization of the Nairs were best suited to prevent the fragmentation of their land holdings. They were matrilineal and lived in the impartable joint family called tharavadu. The woman was given prominence among the Nairs and landed property was inherited through female lines. A woman was free enough to receive or reject a husband as she wished. The Nairs, ritually and economically dependent on the Namboodiris, as the significant section of the tenantry, were compromised into accepting terms that enforced sexual relation between these two castes. The various Nair castes were classified into two broad groups of high-caste Nairs or Nairs proper and low-caste Nairs.

Next to the Nairs were the Tiyyas, referred to as Ezhavas elsewhere in Kerala, formed single largest polluting caste in Malabar. The Tiyyas, due to their low ritual status in the society, they were faced with a number of social disabilities including untouchability and unapproachability. They were not permitted to enter or worship in the temples of Nairs or Brahmins. Hence they maintained several folk gods or goddesses in their own kavus or shrines of worship. The traditional occupation of the Tiyyas was toddy tapping. There were several Tiyya cultivators, who were extremely rich in contrast to the Ezhavas of Travancore and Cochin, who were mainly agricultural labourers and sometimes small cultivators. This

17 M. S. A. Rao, Social Movements and Social Transformation, Madras 1979, p-24.
perhaps explains why the Tiyyas of Malabar claimed a higher ritual ranking, seeking equality with the Nairs, by virtue of their landed wealth.

Apart from these their major groups, there were the Pulayas (Cherumas) and Parayas in the Malabar region. They were mostly agricultural labourers, who are not having any land at all. The Pulayas particularly a degraded caste seems to have been the same as that known in the nineteenth century as the Cherumas. The Pulayas were an exogamous community. They led a wretched life in acute poverty and slavery. They toiled day and night in the property of the landlords and these privileged castes exploited them. The Pulayas occupy a very low position in the social scale and their approach to persons of superior caste causes pollution. They were at the bottom of the ritual hierarchy and as agrestic serfs are at the bottom of the economic system as well. The Parayas are to still lower than the Pulayas in the social ladder. Their conditions were pathetic and were exchanged or sold like chattels. They were also agrestic slaves and were attached to the land of the janmi.

Besides these Hindu castes, there were also the Muslims, popularly known as the Mappilas. The Mappilas were the descendents of the Arab merchants from their union with the local Hindu women of this region. Their trading activities were concentrated in Kozhikode in South Malabar and Kannur in North Malabar. Conversion of the natives to Islam and inter-marriages led to the emergence of the Mappilas as a considerable group of Malabar Muslims. The Mappilas had a

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19 For a discussion on the Pulayas, see, K. Saradamoni, Emergence of a Slave Caste: Pulayas of Kerala, New Delhi, 1980.
friendly approach to the natives of Malabar as their real intention was trade and not conquest. It is said that they marry as many wives as they can support and keep as well many heathen concubines of low caste in Malabar. The Mappilas spoke Malayalam and dressed like the Nairs and had even partly adopted the system of matrilineal inheritance so common to that caste.

The Mappilas during the days of Zamorins played an important role in the political history of Malabar and they had in consequence obtained many valuable privileges from the ruler. They were rich and lived in a better condition and had control over the entire sea trade in Malabar before the arrival of Portuguese. When the Portuguese came, and ousted the Arabs from the Malabar Coast, they moved to the hinterlands of South Malabar and started agriculture and petty trade. The influence of these Mappilas was so powerful in the court of Zamorins that the Portuguese could not obtain any commercial footing in Kozhikode in the early period of their arrival.

By the fifteenth century, the Mappilas were settled in the port towns of Northern Kerala, especially in Kozhikode and other coastal trading towns under the territories of the Zamorins. The other important towns where they settled were Chaliyam, Parappanangadi, Tanur and Ponnani. The concentration of Muslim traders in these areas, led to the establishment of the basic settlement pattern in the Malabar region, and it led to the development of the Malayali Muslim population


22 Ibid.

23 Stephen Frederic Dale, Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier, pp. 33-36
in the later periods.\textsuperscript{24} Thus the areas between Kozhikkode and Ponnani, two major towns under the Zamorins, became the nerve centre of the Mappila activities in later days. Most of the Mappilas, along the Malabar Coast were either fishermen or traders, while in the interior many were tenants and agricultural labourers. The privileges and concessions enjoyed by the Muslim community in Malabar were denied to them during the days of the Company, which took them to rebel against them.

Apart from the communities, there were a good number of Chettis and Vanias in the Malabar region. Both of them were trading communities who engaged in trade and related activities in Malabar. The Chettis who were from the east coast, traded primarily on precious metals and jewels. The Vanias are from Gujarat and dealt with a variety of goods from different countries. It is interesting to note that both these communities tried to retain and maintain their regional, social and religious customs and traditions. These communities, even though, maintained their identity, customs and traditions, they became part and parcel of the Malabar society in course of time.

In the Malabar region there were a numerous of tribal communities, especially in the district of Wayanad. The most prominent among them are the Kurichyas, Kurumbas and Paniyas. The Kurichyas, traditionally hunters, were excellent with the bow and arrow lived in the territory of the Kottayam Raja. They occupy the highest status among the tribes of Wayanad. They are religious, truthful and simple and follow the \textit{marumakkathyam} (matrilineal) tradition. The convention upholds that the Kurichyas were brought to Wayanad by Raja of

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Ibid.} p. 27-28
Kottayam for fighting against the Vedar ruler of Malabar from Venad. The Raja of Kottayam acted as the appellate authority of this community. Since their caste men would not accept them back to their community, they settled in Wayanad and in the hilly regions of Kottayam.\(^{25}\) Brought to the country as soldiers, the Kurichyas had the temerity which they used against the British power in the rebellion of Pazhassi Raja and later against the English East India Company in 1812.

The Kurumbas, another tribal community in Malabar are bowmen and hunters, formed the army of Pazhassi Raja, along with the Kurichyas during the Pazhassi rebellion. The tradition says that they have their origin in the Puthadi amsam, where the shrine dedicated to their God Kiratan is seated.\(^{26}\) They preferred a roving life in the jungles to a sedentary one in, subjection on the plains, proves them to have been a superior race and indeed to the present day they very markedly retain this characteristic.\(^{27}\) They follow the patrilineal system and believed that they had the power of prophecy.

Paniyas, the dark skinned and curly haired tribe of a Negroid type, found in all parts of Wayanad, constituted another major tribe in Malabar. They were the most numerous jungle tribe of Malabar. Their main occupation was to work in the farms as farm labourers. The Paniyas had been bought and sold along with the land to which they were attached either as slaves or as labourers.\(^{28}\) They ate wild roots, fruits and meat in addition to the \textit{ragi} cultivated by them. It is believed that the


\(^{26}\) For a discussion see, C. Gopalan Nair, \textit{Wynad}, pp. 64.66. Also see Edger Thruston and K. Rangachari, \textit{Castes and Tribes}, pp. 155-177.


Paniyas were the most ancient inhabitants in Malabar and are fond of music, and used to sing while they were engaged in the work in the farms and fields.29

In short, due to the caste hierarchy, the higher castes became the dominant community in the society and possessed all important rights and privileges in the society and the caste chain of command. The society, thus, was established and functioned on the principles of social closure, what really mattered was not the numerical preponderance of any group as its status in the land system but by the corresponding status in caste system. The two dominant classes, namely the Namboodiris and Nairs, occupied most of the landed property, left the rest virtually without any ownership. The relationship between the agrarian structure of Malabar and the socio-political structure was extremely complex and intricate. The Namboodiris and Nairs, who stood at the apex of the social pyramid, possessed virtually all the land. Yet they could not themselves cultivate the land because of social and ideological sanctions against doing so. This led to the evolution of a multi-layered agrarian system which ensured that the land was cultivated without transgressing the caste rules.30

**Land Tenurial Structure in Malabar**

The most important feature of the Malabar society was its land tenurial structure, based on the caste hierarchy and the possession of land. This unique system of tenurial system cannot be found anywhere in the country except in Malabar. The traditional agrarian structure of Malabar society was based on a three-tier relationship between the *janmis* (landlords), *Kanakkars* or *Kanomdars*  

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And Verumpattadars (sub-tenants). Under this system most of the landed property was controlled by the Namboodiris and Nair chieftains. The caste based, Brahmins centered and upper-caste dominated, land system referred to as Kana-Janma-Maryada, as it would appear, emerged primarily due to specific social conventions existed in the pre-British Malabar. Baden Powell suggests that to an extent this typical system of land tenurial structure developed due to the peculiar physical features of the region. The topography of the country side with its extremely rugged terrain was unsuited for the introduction of large scale enterprises as the vast state maintained irrigation works. It is argued that the Aryanisation of the region, from the seventh century AD, led to the transfer of the entire land to the Brahmins. The war between the Cheras and Cholas enabled the Brahmins to snatch vest areas of land belonged to the other social groups and became the janmis of Malabar. The Namboodiris held the land in Malabar, claiming their right on the land, from the legendary hero, Parasurama. According to the age old legend Parasurama reclaimed Keralam and gave Keralabhumi as a gift to the Namboodiris with full proprietary right. The traditional land structure of Malabar included a number of land rights and privileges. A brief discussion of

34 For a discussion, see, Elamkulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai, Janmi Sampradayam Keralaethil, in Elamkulam Kunjanpillayude Thiranjedutha Kritikal part 1, Dr, N. Sam (Ed.) Publications Division, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005, pp.590-598.
these diverse aspects of the land tenurial system prevailed in Malabar is undertaken here to understand roots of the insurgencies occurred in this region.

**Janmam**

The origin of *janmam* right over land is still a matter of controversy.\(^{36}\) It is difficult to say how or when it emerged in the Malabar society. Whatever be the origin of the land tenurial structure in Malabar, the Namboodiris joined the rank of aristocracy in Malabar and came to be known as *janmi* or landlord from the very early days onwards. *Jenmam*, the highest rank in the land tenurial system in Malabar, popularly meant hereditary right or birth right, i.e. the right that the landlord occupies by descent from his predecessor who possessed the land. Since it was a hereditary one, the ownership of the land does not imply any services or dues to the overlord for holding the right. The *janmi* loses his right only if he transfers or sells his land and the new owner has to pay the dues or rent for he does not own the land as a birthright.\(^{37}\) The *janmi*, the *janmam* holder, was the absolute owner of his holding and therefore, free to take as big a share of the produce of the soil, as he could extract out of the classes beneath him.\(^{38}\)

The rights and prerogatives of the *janmis* were esteemed very high by the other classes in the society. He possessed the entire right of the soil and no earthly authority could deprive him of it.\(^{39}\) It may be because of the high socio-religious

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\(^{36}\) According to *Keralolpatti*, Parasurama created the land of *Keralabhumi* and gave it to the Brahmanas of the 64 Gramams. The gift of flower and water given to the 64 Gramams together with their enjoyment was called *Janmam*.


status they occupied in the caste based society. Most of the *janmam* holders never entered into cultivation as they regarded it as an inferior profession in the society and they were bound to look after the religious functions and duties in the society. So they mortgaged or even leased out their property in land - *janms* or *janmis* or *jelms*, to the cultivating farmers called *Kanomdars* or *Kanakkars*. Due to this the *Kanomdars* became the ostensible and immediate occupancy of the greatest part of the soil. Gradually, with the weakening of the powers of the chieftains of Malabar, particularly after the arrival of Portuguese to the Malabar Coast, led to the creation of numerous pseudo-*janms*, which enabled the Namboodiris, to emerge as a dominant group of *janmis* in the Malabar society.\(^{40}\) Thus in the three-tier-tenurial system, the *janmis* stood at the apex, having all the land under their custody, and not cultivating them due to the religious and caste sanctions prevailed in the society.

**Kanam**

Next to the *janmam* was *kanam*, literally meaning to supervise or to protect all the inhabitants of a particular *nudu*. The word *kanam* originates from the Dravidian word *kanuka* (to see or to be seen) and the root from which this verb is derived from the *kan* (the eyes). From this it is to be understood that *kanam* in its original sense seems to have denoted this function of the body politic. The *kanandars* or *kanakkars* were, thus, the overseers and supervisors of the land owned by the *janmis*. In most cases, these intermediary tenants were Nairs, who constituted the Kshatriya caste in Malabar. They were distributed over the length

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\(^{40}\) Government of Madras, Malabar Special Commission 1881-82, Malabar Land Tenures, Madras, 1882, Vol. 1, paragraphs, XII-XV.
and breadth of the land exercising their state functions of ‘the eye’, ‘the hand’ and ‘the order’, that is, to protect everything and to see everything running according to rules and customs of the land. As the intermediary between the \textit{janmi} and \textit{verumpattadar}, it was their duty to collect the share of the produce due to the \textit{janmi}\textsuperscript{41}. Since the Nair community constituted the militia class, it has to be assumed that the \textit{kanam} tenure may be only a supervisory right as:

..... its history shows clearly that the \textit{kanam} right was the right to supervise or to protect all the inhabitants of the particular \textit{nadu} (country) wherein the land lay, and to enjoy for his service the produce of the soil in amount to that enjoyed by the \textit{janmi}\textsuperscript{42}.

Depending upon the context on which the \textit{kanam} tenure was created, it had diverse forms. K.N. Panikkar argues that \textit{kanam} was a lease, which was misinterpreted by the British and altered it as a simple or usufructuary mortgage\textsuperscript{43}. So the \textit{kanam} was regarded as a terminable tenure and gave the opportunity for the original occupant to oust him and give to a new tenant. But G. Arunima holds that \textit{kanam} had the characteristics of all three types; simple mortgage, usufructuary mortgage and a lease; and its interpretation as a terminable tenure occurred as a result of its treatment as a redeemable lease in the 1850’s\textsuperscript{44}. This argument seems to be more acceptable as the \textit{kanam} tenure is considered.

\textsuperscript{41} William Logan, \textit{Malabar Manual}, Vol. 1, p. 604

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Malabar Special Commissioner’s Report}, dated 16 June 1882, by W. Logan, (M.S.), Para

\textsuperscript{43} K. N. Panikkar, “Land Control Ideology and Reform” p.37

\textsuperscript{44} G. Arunima, \textit{There Comes Papa}, p. 48.
The Kanamdar, thus, ruled as a middleman in the pyramid of the land tenurial structure of Malabar. He had to act as a link between the elite Namboodiri on the one hand and the cultivating class of Tiyyas on the other. The fact that most of the Kanomdars were Nairs may be due to the fact that they constituted the militia class and also due to the rigidity of the caste regulations, which prohibited the Namboodiris from actually cultivating the land.

**Verumpattam**

In the three-tier agrarian structure, the *verumpattadar* (verumpattakaran), formerly a tenant-at-will, liable to be evicted by his landlord or the intermediary, was the actual cultivator, under the *kanakkaran*. The *kanakkaran* is forced to confer the *kanam* right to anyone he liked. The *verumpattam* tenure is a simple lease. The tenants (*kudians*) deducted the quantity of seeds sown and an equal from the gross produce and gave the remainder to the *janmis*. Mostly, the Tiyyas and the Mappilas were the holders of this lease in Malabar. It is a renewable tenure for every year. In this category of lease, no specifications were made in the contract, as to the type of crops grown and so. Mostly, these leases, unlike the higher leases, were oral and no written documents were maintained either by the tenant or by the landlord. In certain cases, this lease may continue in force for years and the tenant is entitled to compensation for proper improvements carried out with the express or implied consent of the *janmi*. The *verumpattam* lease was of two kinds: cultivating *verumpattadar* and the customary

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45 M.S.A Rao, *Social Change in Malabar*, Bombay, 1957, pp. 32-34

46 Thomas W. Shea (Jr.), *The Land Tenure Structure of Malabar*, p.108
verumpattadar.\textsuperscript{47} The former contracted to cultivate the land either as a tenant-at-will or for a fixed period of time, while the latter was entitled by custom of the locality, where the land was located for a fixed period of years.

In short \textit{verumpattam} is a simple lease, which was meant for the cultivation only. The \textit{verumpattadar} had no right upon the land he tilled. But he had to give a due share of the produce to the other two classes. It was, usually, two-thirds of his production. In other words, it was on the labour of the sub-tenants that the society subsisted in the pre-colonial days in Malabar. It is a paradox that the one who did not own anything contributed everything for the subsistence of the whole society. But the existing socio-political structure and prevailing ideology inhibited the emergence of sharp and violent conflicts within the society.

\textbf{Kuzhikanam}

Though the \textit{janmam, kanam} and \textit{verumpattam} were the dominant land tenurial system existed in the pre-colonial Malabar society, there were also a number of other tenures prevailed in the Malabar society. \textit{Kuzhikanam} was an important tenure practiced in Malabar. It was a rent free lease given to a tenant for bringing waste land under cultivation. The holder of the tenure, \textit{kuzhikanakkaran}, enjoyed the entire produce of the newly reclaimed land for a certain period, usually for twelve years, after which the right could be either resumed or renewed by the landlord.\textsuperscript{48} At the end of this period he was paid customary rates for the improvement made by him and so it was an incentive for the expansion of cultivation particularly for the garden crops in the Malabar region. In the event of

\textsuperscript{47} S. Sunder Raja Iyengar, \textit{Land Tenures in the Madras Presidency}, Madras 1933, pp. 255-260

\textsuperscript{48} M.S.A. Rao, \textit{Social Change in Malabar}, p. 34
the tenant failed to reclaim the land and plant trees, besides fulfilling the conditions of the landlord he could be dispossessed by the landlord before the expiry of the period.49

**Kuttikanam**

*Kuttikanam* is a lease assigned by the landlord to the mortgagee to cut the trees in the private forest. The landlord will receive the fee for each slump or felled trees by the one who had taken the deed. In this the mortgagee is expected to pay the amount in advance to the landlord.

**Kudiyirippu**

*Kudiyirippu* is another land tenure system practiced in Malabar. It was the lease of house sites to tenants by the *janmis*. The *kudiyiruppu kar* have a permanent right to occupancy in *kudiyiruppu*. Their interest is heritable but not alienable and is liable to be evicted inter alia when the owner necessarily requires the land for building houses for himself or for his relatives.50

**Panayam**

The land was used as a source of various types of mortgages for money in Malabar. *Panayam* is a mortgage without possession. The land is pledged as security for repayment, with interest of certain sum advanced, but the lender has no right to interfere in the management of the land.51 In some *panyam* contract, it was specified that in the event of the failure of the borrower to meet the interest

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50 M. S. A. Rao, *Social Change in Malabar*, pp. 34-35

payments, the mortgagee was entitled to claim possession of the property. Usually, the long standing debts were converted into land mortgages with the interest realized as extra cess on the land. If the debt was not repaid, the land would be forfeited by the creditor.

**Otti**

*Otti*, was a quasi mortgage deed, prevalent in Malabar. It gave the mortgagee the full possession and the entire produce of the soil, the landlord retaining only the proprietary right and power of redemption. Here the mortgagee advanced the full value of the land to the landlord. No period of time was stipulated in this tenure. But the 12 year possession of the mortgagee could be forfeited, if the title of the *janmi* was denied. The *janmi* could pay off the mortgage amount at any time and redeem it. In this only the principal amount alone is repayable, as the mortgagee is recovering the interest of his money from the produce of the land.\(^{52}\)

**Minor Land Tenures**

Besides these, there was a conglomeration of minor tenurial rights centered on the main tenurial rights practiced in Malabar.\(^{53}\) The *kaivida otti* is a deed where the mortgage can never be dispossessed. The *nirmudal* is a deed by which the *janmi* borrowed another ten percent on the money already advanced for the *ottii*. The *janmam panayam* was a pledge of the *janmam* right. Under this deed a still further

\(^{52}\) *Ibid.* pp. CCX – CCXI.

advance was made on the sum borrowed, and that was the conveyance outright of the *janmam* right itself. *Ottikum purameyullakanam* was the deed by which the *janmi* and borrowed ten percent or more on the sum received for the *otti* right. *Kolluppanayam* is a tenure where the mortgagee has only the right to cultivate the land and had no ownership. If no period is specified, the landlord is at the liberty to pay off the mortgage whenever he pleases. *Kattakkanam* is the acknowledgement paid by a cultivator to a proprietor for the land he is allowed to cultivate. *Kudiyiruppu* is a land tax paid usually by a tenant to the proprietor for land taken for building alone.

The peculiarity of such a system of land relationship was that the power of *janmi* was hemmed in by custom and tradition. There existed a definite pattern of relations between the *janmi*, *kanomdar* and *verumpattadar*. This system gave vast powers to the landlords. It was because of the geo-economic and socio-political background prevailed in Kerala. The peculiar geographical features of Kerala; greater part of the land surface were covered by forests, and the coastal region had a tendency to become water logged and unsuitable for cultivation, prevented large scale expansion for the rulers and other customary landlords. Hence intense conflict broke out among the various *naduvazhis* or chiefs for establishing their rights over the available territory. Due to such a confronting situation in Malabar, the task of controlling lands, collection of dues, enforcing the custom and the maintaining of territorial authority was entrusted with the intermediary classes. Yet he could not interfere with the personal and domestic affairs of his

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55 For a discussion, see, K.N. Ganesh, “Ownership and Control of Land”, pp.291-323

subordinates. The only requirement was that they should adhere to the customs and regulations. In such a set up, though the tenants were very much under feudal dominion of the *janmi*, the economic exploitation was limited by custom. Thus the society was functioning on a customary economic relationship prior to the invasion of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan.

In other words, in Malabar, there existed a customary relationship between the landlord and the tenants, often called as *janmi-kudiyan* relationship. There existed a sort of mutual obligation between them. This system may be a parallel one to the *jajmani* system practiced in North India. It is a reciprocal arrangement for the production and distribution of the commodities. It is a system of mutual obligations and rights that governs the inter caste relationships at the village level. To be more precise, it is the relationship between the dominant landholding caste and a number of artisan, service and labouring castes who work for the well being of the society.

The *janman-kanam* relationship prevailed in Malabar was less dynamic. The local rulers of Malabar made no effort to intervene in the customary land rights to augment their income. In Malabar, the spread of *kuzhikanam* tenure was limited and it did not acquire the importance that it had in Travancore. It was because, in Malabar, the terrain with its hills, valleys and elevated regions prevented the large scale expansion of agriculture. Even by the end of the

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eighteenth century, more than two thirds of the land in North Malabar remained as forest areas where the cultivation was very less. The extension of cultivation was possible only in South Malabar, where kanam and kuzhikkanam holdings developed and it became the focus of contention among the various chiefs and rulers prior to the British occupation.

In short, this was the economic structure that existed in Malabar before the conquest of Hyder Ali in 1766. It was based on established traditions and laws, and the responsibilities of the lease holders were determined by the maryada, which varied from region to region usually. The economic authority of the land holding group also expressed itself in its political authority. So the janmakkarans and kanakkarans were often charged with public functions, like the post of naduvazhi or desavazhi, and thereby had the corresponding power in the polity. In this kana-jamma-maryada system that prevailed in Malabar, there was no land revenue collected from Malabar, as in the modern sense of paying land tax by all the inhabitants of a state. The people paid a fixed portion of their produce as their share to the naduvazhi. It was because of such a system that the land revenue system was an unknown thing in Malabar prior to the Mysorean invasions.

**Mysorean Interruption**

It was into such a socio-economic matrix of Malabar that the rulers of Mysore intruded, in 1766. The Mysorean invasions under Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan disrupted the sway of the customary relations and authority in Malabar.

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61 Margret Frenz, *From Contact to Conquest*, pp. 20-22.

The new rulers, Hyder Ali and his son and successor, Tipu Sultan, brought many innovations in Malabar. They revoked the customary economic relations and introduced a new revenue pattern in Malabar. It was in the sphere of economic policies and measures that Tipu Sultan’s role came to be unique among Indian rulers. He went for a substantive improvement of the land revenue system introduced by his father Hyder Ali. The new assessment did away with the customary payments and obligations and forced the janmis to pay the dues which were totally against the conventional concept of janmam itself. It recognized the rights of the cultivator over the land. Thus due to the intervention of Mysorean rulers in Malabar, the customary authority was on wave and the control of land passed into the hands of kanam and kuzhikanam holders, particularly in South Malabar. The position of the janmis became precarious due to the new assessment of revenue and they could survive only by seizing the real control over the land.

The occupation of Malabar by Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan resulted in fundamental changes in the administrative and revenue structure of Malabar. The most important change was the introduction of a centralized administrative system in the place of decentralized administrative system prevailed in Malabar. This shattered the existing social system in Malabar, based on customary relations and so was not readily acceptable to the people. He deprived the rights and privileges enjoyed by the desavazhis and naduvazhis and replaced them with a centralized

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64 A similar situation can be seen in Bengal in the flag end of the eighteenth century Bengal, where the agrarian economy was constituted by jotedars (peasant landlords) and Zamindars (who collected the revenue). The introduction of permanent settlement in 1793 enabled the Zamindars to regain their lost power and prestige. For a discussion see Ratnalekha Roy, Change in Bengal Agrarian Society C 1760-1850, Delhi, 1979.
government in Malabar. In 1773, Srinivasa Rao, the Governor of Mysore assumed direct control of the country and organized the first tax assessment in Malabar using *pattam* (lease) as the basis for the calculation of taxes. The very next year Hyder Ali appointed a new Governor for the assessment and collection of tax in Malabar region. The new Governor entered into treaties with each Rajas of Malabar and they agreed to pay tribute to Hyder Ali. Accordingly, a *jama* of rupees 50,000 per annum and a *nazarana* of rupees 2,00,000 from the Raja of Kadattanad, a *jama* of rupees 125,000 and a *nazarana* of rupees 268,000 was entrusted with the Raja of Chirakkal towards the Raja of Kottayam, who refused to comply with such a treaty, and declined to pay the amount as a tribute to the ruler of Mysore. These assessments of the revenue were based on general calculations which were unreal and imaginative.

In order to improve and formulate a more scientific and systematic revenue settlement in Malabar, Tipu Sultan despatched, Arshed Beg Khan as the general commandant and manager of all civil and revenue affairs in Malabar, after the peace treaty signed at Mangalore in 1784. As early as 959 M.E. (1783-1784) he proceeded to make a settlement in South Malabar. In South Malabar, he made the

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66 Margret Frenz, *From Contact to Conquest*, pp. 92-93.

67 *Jama* refers to collection or Capital


69 Report of a Joint Commissioners from Bengal and Bombay 1792-1794, (M. S.), Madras, 1862, Para, 22 (Here after Joint Commissioners’ Report.).

settlement with the cultivators by counting the various fruit bearing trees like coconut, jack tree, areca nut and pepper vines and separate on the wet lands bearing on the measure of seeds sown. But in North Malabar, he entered into a revenue agreement with various \textit{naduvazhis} and \textit{thampurans} (land lords) because most part of North Malabar is mountainous and hilly and so it is difficult to get a detailed account of the garden and wet lands. Moreover the North Malabar region was in a state of rebellion against the ruler of Mysore.\footnote{Margret Frenz, \textit{From Contact to Conquest}, pp. 78-80.} So the local chiefs were entrusted with the responsibility of collecting the revenue for the Mysorean overlords. But South Malabar being plain country, it was easy for the Mysorean administrators to get a detailed account of the land. Above all, with the conquest of Tipu, most of the \textit{naduvazhis} and \textit{desavazhis} of South Malabar had fled to Travancore.\footnote{A. Galletti and P. Groot, (Ed.), \textit{The Dutch in Malabar}, Madras, 1911, p. 243.} This compelled Tipu to make settlements with the \textit{verumpattadars}, the Tiyyas and Mappilas of South Malabar.\footnote{Francis Buchanan, \textit{A Journey from Madras Through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar}, Vol.3, London, 1807, pp. 420-426.}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Arshed Beg Khan’s settlement with the Southern states for the year 1783-1784 (959 M.E.)}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
   & \textbf{Hoon} & \textbf{Fanam} & \textbf{Kasu} \\
\hline
\textbf{1} & On plantations including coconut trees, jack fruit trees, pepper etc. & 86,815 & 2 & 8 \\
\hline
\textbf{2} & On rice or wet lands including the hills where cultivation is casual & 2,39,907 & 0 & 0 \\
\hline
\textbf{3} & On houses of Nairs, Mappilas etc. & 25,516 & 2 & 0 \\
\hline
\textbf{4} & On weavers, fishermen, toddy tappers, shop keepers etc. & 11,026 & 2 & 0 \\
\hline
\textbf{Total} & \textbf{3,63,264} & \textbf{6} & \textbf{8} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textit{1 Hoon = Rs. 3.50; 12 Fanan = Rupee 1; 80 Kasu = 1 Fanan}

A total picture of settlement of Arshad Beg Khan to the South Malabar can be seen from the table (2.1) above. The table shows the different rates and amount that Arshad Beg Khan charged upon from the people. For every fifty nine productive betel-nut trees, one had to pay one *Hoon* or one rupee per twenty trees. They charged one rupee for every seven coconut trees or one *Hoon* from the tillers. For the jack trees and pepper vines they had to pay one rupee, for every three and one half jack trees and every one and one-third pepper vines. For the wet lands, the assessment was based on the seeds sown. For every *parrah*\(^74\) of seeds sown, the cultivator had to pay one rupee.\(^75\)

In the Northern division of Malabar the settlement was made with each Raja. The amount fixed for the Raja of Chirrackal country was Rs. 1, 25,000. For Kottayam, including the district of Wayanad, the amount was Rs. 1, 00,000. The amount settled with Kurumbranad Raja was Rs. 50,000.\(^76\) The rulers of these countries found the assessment as an enormous one and so they paid personal visits to Tipu Sultan, while he was camping at Coorg in the end of the year 1785. Though they gained some concessions from Tipu Sultan, these rulers regarded the assessment as an unbearable and enormous one.\(^77\)

The prevalence of diverse local customs and institutions in Malabar forbade the Mysorean rulers to impose a unified taxation system in Malabar. The revenue assessment in North Malabar and South Malabar was based on different

\(^74\) *parrah* is a unit of measure used to measure paddy in Malabar. It is more or less equal to 10 kilograms. The basic assumption is that one *parrah* of seeds sown will produce an average of ten *parrahs* of cereals. It was based on this that the revenue of the wet land was calculated.

\(^75\) *Joint Commissioner’s Report*, Para, 41.


\(^77\) *Joint Commissioner’s Report*, Para, 43.
values. In the South Malabar the number of pepper vines served as the basis for taxation where as half of the pepper harvest was taken as the source for the collection of tax in North Malabar. For setting the tax for rice in the South it was depended upon the quantity of seed sowed, whereas in the North it was based on the actual harvest. The hilly and mountainous nature of North Malabar was an obstruction for the Mysorean rulers to make assessment with each tenant as in South Malabar.

The revenue assessment introduced by the rulers of Mysore was totally new and alien to the Malabar society. Though it was aimed at the progressive development in the agrarian sector and based more on modern lines, the people found it difficult to accept it. It had a number of defects. The administrators of Mysore had no knowledge of the land they were to assess and so naturally had to rely upon the information gathered from the locals. Naturally it ended in hasty and incorrect assessment. It never proceeded upon any definite plan or any fixed principles. It had a number of inequalities. There was no uniformity in the newly introduced settlement. For instance the proportion of pattam exacted on wet land was, as a rule, one half higher in North Malabar than that in South Malabar. In the assessment of garden lands, no identical method was employed in every nadu. In Chirrackal and Kottayam, half of the product was usually taken as pattam. In Kadattunad, contributions varying from five rupees to ten rupees were exacted upon each garden land. Along with this, many of the landlords influenced the

78 Joint Commissioner’s Report, Para 59. Usually one parrah of seed will yield ten parrahs of cereals per annum, of which five and half parrahs would be for the tenant, three parrahs for the Mysorean Government and one and half parrahs for the janmi.
79 C.A Innes, Malabar, p. 327.
80 Ibid.
officials and secured assessments below the actual level. Moreover, the officials engaged in the assessment were also corrupt, as Buchanan observed:

…… many landlords who chose to corrupt the officials of revenue had their lands valued at a low rate and the deficiency which was occasioned was made up by valuing high the lands of those who were poor or too proud to corrupt the assessors.81

The revenue assessment made by the rulers of Mysore affected adversely the economy of Malabar. There was stagnation in the cultivation of pepper in Malabar and it affected the volume of trade in the coastal towns. The very economic life of the people in the region was affected by the Mysorean occupation. It was the Nairs of Malabar who suffered the most under the Mysorean rule, as they had been impoverished and disarmed.82 Also due to the capricious assessments and irregular collections, a general turmoil began to develop in Malabar during the Mysorean occupation. It worked havoc on the administrative routine and thereby turned tax collection into a state sanctioned pillage.83 The immediate impact of this was a total change in the society which was functioning upon a customary framework. It totally turned upside down the customary relationship existed in Malabar and in many cases they rebelled against the rulers of Mysore.84 There had been a great deal of unrest and rebellions in Malabar, particularly in the South Malabar. Under the instigation and support of

83 Thomas W. Shea (Jr.) *The Land Tenure Structure of Malabar*, p. 140
84 Mohibul Hassan, *History of Tipu Sultan*, Calcutta, 1921, pp. 139-143.
the Zamuthiri of Kozhikkode, the Rajas and local chieftains supported the unrest against the Mysore rulers. In 961 ME (1785-1786) these dissensions culminated into a rebellion in South Kozhikkode under the leadership of a local chieftain.\textsuperscript{85} To suppress the rebellion, Tipu himself had to march to Malabar in 1788. His stay in Malabar led to forced conversions to Islam and the Southern Malabar plunged into deep unrest for the next two years.\textsuperscript{86} In North Malabar also, there was much turmoil and unrest against the Mysoreans. The Chirrakal Raja and the Raja of Kottayam put up their resistance against the Mysore rulers. In short, under the Mysorean regime, the whole district of Malabar suffered much distress due to the exorbitant collection of taxes and policies introduced by them. All these novel ventures introduced by the authorities of Mysore prompted the rulers, chieftains as well as the common people of Malabar to turn against the aggressors from Mysore.

**The English Roads to Malabar**

It was in such circumstances that prevailed in Malabar, the Third Anglo-Mysore war broke out between the English East India Company and Tipu Sultan. The war ended with the treaty of Seringapatam in 1792, by which, Tipu was forced to cede the whole of Malabar to the English East India Company. The annexation of Malabar afforded great pleasure to the Factors at Tellicherry. The then chief of Tellicherry Factory, Robert Taylor, found this as on occasion for providing the opportunity for

\textsuperscript{85} Joint Commissioner’s Report, Para, 38.

\textsuperscript{86} Margret Frenz, *From Contact to Conquest*, pp. 96-97.
The Governor of Bombay with this idea in his mind appointed the Joint Commissioners to study and make report about Malabar. They were asked to secure, under a regular administration of justice, all those advantages to the Company of the valuable productions of the country. They were instructed to enquire about the state of affairs prevalent in Malabar and to introduce a regular Government there.

But the Commissioners appointed for this task were incapable of performing it. They neither had any talent nor any experience. The goal of the Commissioners was to realize as much as possible of the land revenue, using their predecessor’s measure as a basis for collection. The Commissioners found that they could not themselves manage the revenue affairs in the countryside. So they restored the Rajas to collect the revenue from their respective nadus. In most cases the exploitative ideas of the Company predominated. They therefore did not introduce any new settlement in Malabar, for time being. Instead, they followed the jamabandi of the Mysorean rulers with all its imperfections in the initial stage. The Commissioners, after their visit to most of the regions in Malabar, realized that the revenue settlement introduced by Tipu Sultan should

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87 Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, Tellichery Factory Dairy and Consultations, 8 March 1793, No 1674, (M.S) p.12


89 Pamela Nightingale, Trade and Empire in Western India, 1784-1806, Cambridge, 1960, p.73.

not be retained as such that it placed heavy burden upon the farmers and the common man.\textsuperscript{91} In the line of the Mysorean settlement, the Company introduced an annual settlement in Malabar for the year 1793-1794. For the Southern states it was fixed at 507,481- 9- 06 Hoons.\textsuperscript{92} (1 Hoon = Rs.3.50). In the Northern states the Commissioners made separate settlement with each \textit{naduvazhi}. For Chirrackal it was tentatively fixed at Rs. 50,000, subject to increase which might be made as a result of the enquiry.\textsuperscript{93} The agreement for Kadattunad was fixed at Rs.30, 000 as in the same line of Chirrackal.\textsuperscript{94} Initially the agreement for Kottayam was agreed at Rs. 20,000. Later the Commissioners found it as a meager amount and so increased it to Rs. 55,000.\textsuperscript{95} This was opposed by Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja, the ruler of Kottayam, also known as Pazhassi Raja and he insisted upon an amount of Rs. 17,000 and the pepper produce of 106 \textit{kandis}. At length an agreement was reached between the Commissioners and Pazhassi Raja on Rs. 25,000 and the pepper produce of 500 \textit{kandis}.\textsuperscript{96}

In making such agreements, the Company also sought to acquire the monopoly of the trade in Malabar products. In the agreements with the Rajas, it insisted that the Government’s share of pepper should be delivered to the Company as part of their tribute, at a rate fixed by the East India Company.\textsuperscript{97}


\textsuperscript{92} Spencer and others, \textit{A Report on the Administration of Malabar}, (M. S.), Para, 129.

\textsuperscript{93} \textit{Ibid}. Para. 69.

\textsuperscript{94} \textit{Ibid}. Para, 70.

\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Joint Commissioner’s Report}, Para, 136

\textsuperscript{96} \textit{Ibid}. Para, 136. However the Joint Commissioners Report speaks of Rs. 20,000 \textit{kandy}. \textit{Kandy} is a unit of measurement for weight between 500 lb and 560 lb commonly used in Kerala.

\textsuperscript{97} \textit{Joint Commissioner’s Report}, Para, 83.
This was one of the tactical steps adopted by the Company to take control of the pepper trade in Malabar. The East India Company forced the Rajas of North Malabar to collect half of the harvest from pepper cultivation and sell it to the Company’s Supervisor at Thalassery for Rs.100 per *kandi*, which is approximately Rs. 70 less than of the free market. The Company had even enforced fines to those who sell pepper to other parties. Even then, the agreements did not make much success. So the Company employed local merchants accompanied by British officials to seize pepper from the Malabar region, which was more successful. Consequently, the monopoly of pepper trade was lifted by the Company. Even after the lifting of the monopoly of pepper trade, though it constituted the major export product of the Company from Malabar, the pepper policy of the British in Malabar was a failure. The failure may be attributed to the strong influence of the local Rajas on the farmers and their opposition to the monopolization of pepper and also due to private trade by the Company’s officials. So East India Company could not make the expected economic advantage from the conquest of Malabar in the initial stages of its occupation of Malabar. The Company, thus, by indirectly recognizing the political rights of the Rajas, it was slowly penetrating into Malabar economy and society for extracting the maximum profit from it.

The annual settlement made with Pazhassi Raja of Kottayam was unacceptable to the Raja. He opposed it due to its high fixation of rates and

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The lifting of pepper monopoly came into effect on 13th April 1793.

100 Pamela Nightingale, *Trade and Empire*, pp. 111-112

because of its defective nature. The very settlement itself sowed the seeds of discontent in him. It is because of his stubborn nature that the Company described him as the ‘most untreatable and unreasonable’ Raja of Malabar.\footnote{Joint Commissioner’s Report, Para, 136} The annual settlement introduced in Malabar had many defects. This settlement was formulated basically on the account obtained from Jinnea, a Malabar Brahmin. The information, thus, obtained had numerous inconsistencies and there was only partial truth in it. All the defects and drawbacks, the Mysorean settlement had, were continued by the British in their settlement. The investigation of H. S. Graeme, Commissioner of Malabar, in 1818-1822 found many discrepancies in this settlement introduced by the Joint Commissioners.\footnote{H. S. Graeme, \textit{A Report on the Revenue Administration Of Malabar}, 14\textsuperscript{th} January, 1822, Calicut, 1898, Paras 1143- 144.}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Table 2.2}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Table showing the discrepancy with regard to the seed sown}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
In South Malabar excluding Palaghat & No. of \textit{parrahs} of seed sown & Outran multiple & Gross produce \\
\hline
As per Jinnea’s * account & 7,04,645 & 10 & 70,46,450 \\
\hline
As per the \textit{Jamabandi} of 1800-1801 founded on Jinnea’s account & 7,82,194 & 10 & 78,21,940 \\
\hline
As per \textit{Janmi Paimash} account given by the people themselves in 1805-1806 & 18,65,040 & about 6 & 11,262,125 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}


* Jinnea was a Malabar Brahmin, who gave the Company the details of Arshed Beg Khan’s settlement in Malabar.
Table 2.3
Table showing the discrepancy with regard to the coconut trees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In South Malabar excluding Palaghat and Temmalapuram</th>
<th>No. of the production trees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As per Jennea’s account.</td>
<td>7,33,591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As per English survey between 1793-94 and 1800-1801</td>
<td>12,73,138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As per Macleod’s survey 1801-1802</td>
<td>14,53,816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As per the account which regulated the collections upto the end of 1804-1805</td>
<td>13,06,735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As per the Janmi Paimash account given by the people themselves in 1805-1806</td>
<td>20,33,905</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The rates fixed in this settlement were very heavy. The measure of seed sown and number of fruitful trees had to be understated to find an assessment bearable to the land. So Graeme in his report of 1823, pointed out that it was an erroneous settlement and that the principles of assessment indicated in the Joint Commissioners’ Report were unacceptable.\(^{104}\) The Rajas with whom the settlement was made found it difficult to accept it. Most of the Rajas failed to realize the huge revenue entrusted upon them. Out of the total revenue of Rs.14,00,000 due for the year ending September 1794, a balance of Rs. 6,00,000, remained uncollected.\(^{105}\) The Company itself felt the system as an inadequate one. The Commissioners of Malabar also found the revenue system as:

…… totally new, instead of receiver of tribute each Superintendent and Supervisor in his Revenue Division, are becoming collectors in the first instance, in some

\(^{104}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{105}\) *Ibid.*
district jointly with the Rajas, in others the Company collected wholly for themselves.106

The Company, therefore, annulled the annual settlements and began to execute the quinquennial agreements in Malabar from October 1794. Under this system each *nadu* was leased to a *naduvazhi* for a lump sum amount for a period of five or ten years. The aim of the Company was to gain more revenue from the region. Usually the right of revenue collection was given to the highest bidder. This was the first step towards the emergence of a strong land owning class in Malabar. By this agreement, the sole responsibility of collection was vested with the chiefs of Malabar. They only had to give the Company what was fixed in the agreement. But the chiefs began to gather as much as they could from the cultivators.

The quinquennial agreement was signed with Kurumbranad and Coorninad Rajas for a period of five years for an amount of 13,004 *Hoons*107 and 27,898 *Hoons* respectively.108 In the same way the Raja of Chirrakkal agreed to the amounts of Rs.1,05,000, Rs.1,10,000, Rs.1,15,000, Rs.1,20,000 and Rs.1,25,000 for the five years from 1794 to 1798 respectively.109

Similarly the quinquennial settlement was agreed upon for Kottayam also. But it was signed with the Raja of Kurumbranad instead of Kerala Varma in the year 1794. The amount fixed was Rs. 55,000, Rs.60,000, Rs.62,000, Rs.65,000

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107 1 *Hoon* = Rs 3.50.
and Rs. 68,000 for the years ensuing from 1794 to 1798.\textsuperscript{110} In executing such an agreement with the Kurumbranad Raja for the Kottayam Raja, the Company once again repeated the same old mistake originally committed by the Joint Commissioners. Here it is necessary to ask why the Company, made an agreement with the Kurumbranad Raja instead of Pazhassi Raja. What prompted the Company to entertain the Raja of Kurumbranad instead of Pazhassi Raja? When the Joint Commissioners instituted the annual settlement, Pazhassi Raja was opposing it due to the high assessment of the revenue from his domain. The Company’s objective in Malabar was to obtain the maximum revenue and that too without any effort and trouble. So when the Company introduced the new programme, it naturally opted for a higher income and it was offered by the Raja of Kurumbranad. Thus the major interest of the Company was to obtain the maximum amount from this country, without much effort and opposition.

The attempt of the Company to fix the revenue for a period of time and thereby ensuring a recurring income from the Province faced a hazardous situation and its subjects were put to miserable conditions.\textsuperscript{111} The motivating force behind this policy was the colonial ideas of exploitation and grabbing the maximum from the colonies. In most of the cases the revenue fixed was more or less the same as in the previous settlements. The assessment was enormous and it often reached fifty percent of the gross produce. The quinquennial settlement, invariably basing on its predecessors never met its demands. The arrears were

\textsuperscript{110} Malabar Collectorate Records, Kozkikkode Regional Archives (hereafter KRA), No.2532, \textit{Malabar Commissioners Letter regarding Quinquennial Settlement}, 7 October, 1797,(M.S.), pp. 107-109.

accumulating. It obliged the Government at different times to assume the collection of the revenue before the expiration of the leases. ¹¹²

The quinquennial system introduced in Malabar took away, virtually, all the rights and privileges from the local Rajas. The authority of the Malabar chieftains in executive, civil, criminal and financial spheres was completely extinguished by the superior authority of the East India Company. ¹¹³ They were left only with the right to collect the revenue. In other words, they became revenue farmers, as elsewhere in India. This attitude of the Company created considerable discontent in Malabar. The Company, therefore, found it difficult to realize any significant revenue from the Province. The Government in Bombay was concerned on the decline of the collection of revenue from Malabar. Thus the various settlements introduced by the Company in Malabar failed to realize the expected revenue. It compelled the Company to abrogate the five year lease and to assume the complete control of the district in 1800. ¹¹⁴ The Company found that previous settlements were unequal to the task of maximizing the revenue collections and large balances accrued. It may be, possibly because, it was based on an imperfect data, mostly by fabricated estimates, prepared by the interpreters, believed to be acting in conjunction with the servants of the Rajas and Nairs. ¹¹⁵ Thus, all the efforts, however systematic it was, failed to secure the expected revenue from the Province and it remained as a problematic one.


¹¹³ K. K.N. Kurup, _History of Tellicherry Factory_, Calicut, 1985, p. 125


It was in such situation, Major M. Macleod was appointed as the principal collector of the Province in 1802. He found that the revenue collections from his dominion were extremely poor, when compared to other territories of the Company in India. He found that the assessments were low, especially of the garden lands. He, therefore, thought of restructuring the existing revenue settlements in Malabar. A survey of the district was made within a short period of forty days. He found that many hill lands, where rice was cultivated remained unassessed. It is believed that the absence of detailed records of land holdings, or systematic body of village accounts, determining the rights of various groups would be difficult for the Company in Malabar. Major Macleod observed that the village accountants (menons) seemed inept at handling the accounts and those of Chirakkal, Kottayam and Randattara were by far ignorant of accounts.116 At the same time, people like William Thackeray, a revenue official of Malabar, contradicted such statements and opined that there existed “pure property” in Malabar, something that prevailed in England.117

However, Major Macleod went ahead with his assessment and he completed the task within a short period of forty days. He claimed a share of one-fifth of the gross produce from the hilly lands where rice was cultivated. He also demanded 35 to 40 per cent of the gross produce of the rice from the wet lands.118 This increase in the collection was made on an erroneous assessment of the farming production. He also estimated the average produce of one coconut tree as

116 Mr. Macleod, The Jamabundy Report of the Division of Coimbatore and the Province of Malabar, 18th June, 1802, Calicut, 1911, p. 3.


48 nuts, the areca nut tree as 200 nuts, jack trees as 12 fruits and the pepper vines of 7.5 pounds and demanded its due share to the Company. This assessment was not realistic and it was beyond the ability of the farmer to pay the tax. Such a settlement was reached upon because of the absence of a detailed survey of the soil types and the yield they produced. This made the financial condition of the people of Malabar more precarious and they found it difficult to make the revenue payments.

Along with this capricious assessment of tax, Major Macleod revised the rates of exchange in Malabar for the peasants paid the revenue in fanams and the Company kept its accounts in star pagodas and Rupees. The Company found it inconvenient and so issued a proclamation fixing the exchange rates of the twenty three current coins now issued and received in the public treasury as they are now rated and exchanged in the province of Coimbatore. The table so promulgated lowered the value of gold fanams from $3\frac{1}{2}$ to $47\frac{3}{32}$ per rupee and silver fanams from 5 to $5\frac{1}{2}$ per rupee or gold fanams from $12\frac{1}{4}$ to $14\frac{49}{64}$ per star pagoda and silver fanam from $17\frac{1}{2}$ to $19\frac{1}{4}$ per star pagoda. The revenue at this time was accounted in star pagodas, which were, not current in the province. The revenue was mainly collected in fanams, the commonest circulated and used coins by the people in the Province. In the bazaars, again, where the agriculturists sold their produce, the rupee was the general standard of exchange. The rates so promulgated therefore, in fact, raised the revenue on every individual throughout

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120 One star pagoda = 42 fanams or Rs.3.50, one rupee = 12 fanams
122 Ibid.
the country by 20 per cent in gold *fanams* and 10 per cent in silver *fanams*, while for their commodities in the markets, they could only get the old rates of $3\frac{1}{2}$ gold 5 silver *fanams* per rupee.\(^{123}\) This redefinition of the exchange rate in Malabar came into effect from 31\(^{st}\) August 1802.\(^{124}\) The introduction of the new table of exchange actually devalued the value of *fanam*. It adversely affected the cultivators who paid the revenue to the Government in *fanam*. The unfortunate cultivator, when he paid into the treasury, his assessments in *fanam*, found that a balance was still due from him owing to the new table of exchange. Thus the fabrication of accounts, over assessment of the produce and the rigid exaction with all inequalities were sufficient enough to create among the masses of the region a spirit of rebellion against the Company. Due to the inequality of the assessment and the defective nature of the settlement, the prevailing resistance mood among the people aggravated and Major Macleod resigned from his office of Collectorship.

Mr. Rickards, who succeeded Major Macleod annulled the revised assessment and restored the former rates of exchange.\(^{125}\) In order to remedy the extreme inequities of the assessment and to establish certain fixed norms on which to base a new assessment, he introduced new system of revenue collection in Malabar on 5\(^{th}\) May 1804.

By this new system, introduced by Mr. Rickards, the net produce from the wet land was fixed as

\(^{123}\) Ibid. pp. 534-535.


One – third of the gross produce to the cultivator

Two – fifths of the gross produce to the Government

Four – fifteenth of the gross produce to the janmi.

On garden lands the net produce was assigned as

One – third of the gross produce to the cultivator

One – third of the gross produce to the Government

One – third of the gross produce to janmi.

In regard to the miscellaneous lands (modam, punam and ellu) the sharing system generally adopted was

Three – fifths of the gross produce to the cultivator

One – fifth of the gross produce to the Government

One – fifth of the gross produce to the janmi.  

In making the assessment, Mr. Rickards was misled on the net produce and so the special Commissioner Graeme made an enquiry in 1818-1822 to revise the revenue establishment and to revise the garden assessments and the wet land assessments.  

Thus, the introduction of the new economic system in Malabar by the rulers of Mysore and the East India Company had its impact upon the traditional society.

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of Malabar. The land which was ‘owned’, ‘possessed’, or even ‘controlled’
became something very different by the advent of the English and they set out to
determine property rights in order to assess and collect revenue.\textsuperscript{128} The English
were very much concerned about property for they perceived it as the
fundamental means for ordering Indian agrarian society and also to establish
ideologically a coherent and functionally a systematic basis for the revenue
collection.\textsuperscript{129} The English had a very different view of proprietorship with that of
Malabar and they totally misunderstood it. The English, keeping in mind, their
idea of ownership of property, regarded the landlord or middleman as cultivators
of land and made the revenue settlement with them. They thus recognized their
revenue payers as the owners of land and left the cultivators at their tender
mercies. So they gave the absolute right of land to a class of people called
\textit{janmis}. Most of these \textit{janmis} who had been dispossessed by the Mappilas, were
reinstated without risking not only the Commissioners in some degree, but a
general resistance and open rebellion.\textsuperscript{130} The immediate effect of it was the
emergence of a powerful class of absentee landlordism known as \textit{janmis} in
Malabar. Thus the English failed to realize the true nature of the tenurial system
in Malabar as Logan observed:

\begin{quote}
‘The essential difference between \textit{Roman Dominus} and a \textit{Malayalee}
\textit{janmi} was unfortunately not perceived or not understood at the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{128} For a discussion see, Nicholas B. Dirks, “From Little King to Land Lord: Property Law and Gift
under Madras Permanent Settlement,” \textit{Comparative Studies in Society and History}, Vol. 28,
1986, pp. 307-333. Also see Burton Stein, \textit{Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India},
Delhi, 1980, and Walter S. Neale, “Land is Rule” in R. E. Frykenburg, (Ed.), \textit{Land Control and
Social Structure in Indian History}, Madison, 1969.

\textsuperscript{129} Nicholas B. Dirks, “From Little King to Land Lord”, pp. 307-333.

\textsuperscript{130} \textit{Joint Commissioner’s Report}, Para, 457.
commencement of the British administration. The janmi has by the action of the civil courts, been virtually converted into a Dominus and the result on the workers, the cultivators has been, and is very deplorable.  

The new land tenure policy pushed down the status of the Kanomdars and Verumpattadars to a mere tenant. The wrong interpretation assigned by the Company resulted in their insecurity of the tenure and reduced the share of the produce enjoyed by them. In the pre-colonial days they were considered as the cultivators-cum-proprietors. The colonial intrusion curtailed all their rights and pushed them to the status of tenants-at-will. Thus the British revenue settlements had foreclosed one obvious outlet for agrarian discontent in Malabar.

Malabar, in short had experienced a number of land revenue settlements beginning with the rulers of Mysore to the occupation of it by the English. In all these assessments, the revenue resources of the province were not properly examined or assessed and their intention was to collect the maximum from the people. It resulted in the underestimation and unequal assessment of the lands and the entire burden fell upon the tenants. The Rajas were not in a position to collect the revenue and meet the demand as the resources of the country had exhausted due to the continuous warfare taking place in the region. The outcome was that the arrears accumulated. Yet the Company believed that the Province was under assessed and it is potential enough to pay more.


Table 2.4

Land Revenue Collected in Malabar under the British Rule from 1801-1802 to 1852-1853

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Revenue Demand</th>
<th>Revenue Collected</th>
<th>Arrears/Surplus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1801-1802 to 1807-08</td>
<td>18,74,461</td>
<td>18,59,942</td>
<td>-14,519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1808-1809 to 1812-1813</td>
<td>17,11,958</td>
<td>17,18,782</td>
<td>+6,824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1813-1814 to 1817-1818</td>
<td>16,93,248</td>
<td>16,95,530</td>
<td>+2,282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1818-1819 to 1822-1823</td>
<td>16,91,155</td>
<td>17,45,587</td>
<td>+54,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1823-1824 to 1827-1828</td>
<td>16,23,628</td>
<td>15,93,379</td>
<td>-30,249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1828-1829 to 1832-1833</td>
<td>15,77,764</td>
<td>15,48,839</td>
<td>-28,925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1833-1834 to 1837-1838</td>
<td>16,10,460</td>
<td>16,13,060</td>
<td>+2,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838-1839 to 1842-1843</td>
<td>16,41,455</td>
<td>16,40,098</td>
<td>+1,358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1843-1844 to 1847-1848</td>
<td>16,45,418</td>
<td>16,40,992</td>
<td>+4,426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1848-1849 to 1852-1853</td>
<td>16,22,206</td>
<td>16,37,574</td>
<td>+15,368</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The above table shows the quinquennial average of land revenue collected during the first fifty years of British rule from Malabar. All the revenue assessments in Malabar, was based on the assessments and rates adopted by Arshed Beg Khan, which, as described earlier, was grossly overestimated the productive capacity of the land. Apart from the over assessment of the province, there existed an inequality in the assessment and disparity between the prevailing market prices and rates adopted by the Government for the valuation of the produce in monetary terms. This created great burden of taxes on the poor people than the better off sections of the society.

A.F. Huddleston, the Collector of Malabar believed that there was not even a single village in Malabar where a severe inequality of assessment existed. The

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133 K. N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State*, pp. 6-7

distresses of the people were further added due to the disparity of the Government rate and market price for conversion of produce in kind to cash for paying the taxes. The assessment of the land revenue was in kind, and the collection was made in cash. The rates were invariably higher than the prevailing prices. For instance, the inhabitants of Kadattunad in 1819 paid Rs. 40 for 1000 ‘edangazhi’ of paddy and Rs. 10 for 1000 coconuts while the market price was only Rs. 25 to 30 for 1000 edangazhi of paddy and Rs. 6 to 8 for 1000 coconuts. Thus the revenue demands from the people were unduly harsh and the officials tried to realize the maximum revenue from the people. This cannot be realized, often, without resorting to coercive methods and even without the sale of movable and immovable properties. Hence, the sale of property or its seizure for the realization of revenue was in increase in the province. In 1821, it was found that 1330 gardens and rice fields were sold for this purpose in the Kurumbranad country alone. All these led to the indebtedness of the tenants in Malabar. It became widespread and acute in the early part of the nineteenth century. Thus Thomas Warden observed that there are not ten out of one hundred families in the districts of Palaghat and Narnattum that are so happily circumstanced as not to be in debt to a Pattera. This was the situation prevailed throughout Malabar during the nineteenth century. This precarious economic conditions prevailed in Malabar

135 edangzhi is a unit of measurement used to measure rice and paddy in Malabar. Ten edangzhi Makes a parrah. One edangzhi is more or less equal to one kilogram.

136 TNA, No,2560, Board of Revenue, Miscellaneous, Vol.110 B, pp. 559-579.

137 H.S Graeme, A Report on the Revenue Administration of Malabar, 14 January, 1822, Paras, 903-905

adversely affected the peasants. More or less the peasants remained indebted perpetually thought their career.

Another major threat faced by the tenants was that of the eviction under the English East India Company’s regime. In the pre-colonial days, such a situation was not known at all. But under the English, guarded and protected under their legal system introduced by the Company’s Government, it became widespread throughout Malabar. The increase in the prices of the agricultural products and the periodical attempts made by the English to realize the actual rent as the basis on which assessment was made, led to the eviction of tenants in Malabar. The new political power had conferred on landlords, the right of absolute property in land; administrative practice had provided legal sanction for eviction; and economic changes had made eviction a profitable venture.139 The earliest available records relating to the eviction cases filed were available for the period 1842-1852, where we find an average of 1140 cases of eviction were filed.

Table 2.5
Eviction suits in Malabar 1842 - 1852

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenants</th>
<th>Average number annually</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindus against Muslims</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindus against Hindus</td>
<td>680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims against Hindus</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims against Muslims</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total per year</td>
<td>1,140</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KRA, No. 2636, Correspondence Regarding the Relations of Landlords and Tenants in Malabar, 1852-1856, Calicut, 1881, p.8

139 K. N. Panikkar, Against Lord and State, P. 40
The tendency of eviction of tenants was on increase in later periods also, the landlords utilized the judicial system in Malabar tactfully, so that the eviction of the peasants became easier. Even without the support of the legal system, the landlords dispossessed many peasants from their tenancy rights using coercive methods. Moreover, the poor tenants were incapable of affording the litigation and court procedures as they were very expensive and complicated. Therefore the actual numbers of the tenants evicted were not available and may go beyond the calculations of the records.

The English East India Company, when became the masters of the province attempted to monopolize the trade in the commodities of Malabar. The Company was very particular with the monopoly of trade in salt, tobacco, timber and spices which provided them a huge income.\(^{140}\) The monopoly of trade in these products naturally increased the prices of those goods and often led to the unemployment of a large number of people who were dealing with it. For example before the introduction of the monopoly of salt, salt manufacturing was quiet common in the region. Francis Buchanan had noticed that there were 26,504 *cannies* or plots used for manufacturing salt.\(^{141}\) If salt production was so extensive during those days, it was sufficient for the domestic consumption as well as for exporting and it was a common business among the people.


Table 2.6

Revenue from Salt and Tobacco Monopolies against the Land Revenue 1809-1853

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Salt</th>
<th>Tobacco</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Land Revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1809-1813</td>
<td>1,30,756</td>
<td>21,426</td>
<td>1,52,182</td>
<td>17,18,782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1814-1818</td>
<td>1,32,053</td>
<td>1,99,235</td>
<td>3,31,288</td>
<td>16,95,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1819-1823</td>
<td>1,84,517</td>
<td>2,21,267</td>
<td>3,04,784</td>
<td>17,45,587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1824-1828</td>
<td>1,81,212</td>
<td>3,41,449</td>
<td>5,22,661</td>
<td>15,93,379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1829-1833</td>
<td>2,44,363</td>
<td>4,14,125</td>
<td>6,58,488</td>
<td>15,48,839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1834-1838</td>
<td>2,96,1837</td>
<td>4,65,587</td>
<td>7,62,424</td>
<td>16,13,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839-1843</td>
<td>3,40,121</td>
<td>3,50,006</td>
<td>6,84,127</td>
<td>16,40,098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844-1848</td>
<td>3,42,680</td>
<td>5,59,423</td>
<td>8,78,103</td>
<td>16,40,992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849-1853</td>
<td>3,35,870</td>
<td>4,88,270</td>
<td>8,24,140</td>
<td>16,35,574</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: K.N. Panikkar, Against Lord and the State, p.16.

The monopolization of tobacco by the Company increased the prices of the product. Before 1806, the prices of tobacco were Rs. 60 per kandi and it went up to Rs. 229 in 1821 per kandi.\(^{142}\) Tobacco as Graeme described it was “scarcely a luxury, but a habit, a want equal to a second nature, particularly during the rainy season”. Its sale dwindled deeply, after the introduction of its monopoly as the main consumers of it were the peasants and labourers, who find it difficult to afford the enhanced price.\(^{143}\) The outcome was the decline in the revenue of the Government and it became a matter of concern for the East India Company as the revenue yielded from the monopoly of trade was so strong. This is evident from the table 2.6 given above.

The monopoly on timber was introduced due to the deficiency of timber in England and it was substituted by the teak wood of Malabar. It had affected the timber merchants and the workers associated with the felling of trees. The

\(^{142}\) H. S. Graeme, A Report on the Revenue Administration of Malabar, 14th January 1822, Calicut, 1898, Paras, 1323 - 1326

\(^{143}\) Ibid.
merchants and inhabitants of Calicut who were at dismay on account of the monopolization of the timber trade by the English, represented to the Company:

......... we had a hope of gaining a moderate livelihood for ourselves and families by the only privilege left of trading in timber and should this also put a stop to, nothing is left us to preserve our families, but ruin and distress must follow.144

Thus with the monopolization of products, many people were deprived of their occupation and livelihood in Malabar. It had acutely affected the Mappilas, who constituted the major trading community in Malabar. All these created a sense of resentment and rebellious mood among the common people of Malabar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Paddy per garee*</th>
<th>Gingelly per garee</th>
<th>Coconut per 1000</th>
<th>Pepper per candy</th>
<th>Coffee per candy</th>
<th>Green ginger per candy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1851-1852</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1857-1858</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858-1859</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* Garee is a unit of measure used in Malabar, equivalent to 120 parrahs.

During the colonial days, the prices of the agricultural products, the major source of income for the people, were not so prosperous. Before 1830’s the prices of the products were abnormally low. The changes in London market had its repercussions in the Malabar economy and prices fluctuated accordingly.145 After 1830 a pronounced increase of the agricultural products were visible as seen in the table 2.7.

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144 William Thackeray, A Report on the Revenue affairs of Malabar and Canara, Appendix, pp. 6-10

145 Pamela Nightingale, Trade and Empire, pp. 120-130
Similarly, prices of almost all agricultural products increased during this period and it had adversely affected the real farmers, the majority of the Malabar population, who, in fact did not have anything surplus to sell in the market. In reality, the picture was that he had to borrow from the market for the subsistence of himself and his family. The increase in prices naturally augmented the rent also. The hike in the price of agricultural products in the 1830s led to an economic boom in Malabar. Conrad Wood suggests that the increase in agricultural prices in the 1830s allowed the Hindu *janmis* in the South Malabar, for the first time, in nearly three decades, an opportunity to repay their *kanam* debts and reclaim their land. The hike in the price of agricultural products in the 1830s led to an economic boom in Malabar. Conrad Wood suggests that the increase in agricultural prices in the 1830s allowed the Hindu *janmis* in the South Malabar, for the first time, in nearly three decades, an opportunity to repay their *kanam* debts and reclaim their land. Therefore the increase in prices helped only the *janmis* and the intermediary *kanomdars*. The advantage of this price hike did not benefit the ordinary tenants. This naturally prompted the Mappilas of Malabar to rebel against the Company in the subsequent years.

The East India Company’s taxation system, apart from the levying of land tax and taxes on tobacco and salt, it embraced almost every necessities of daily life. It is found that about fifty different types of taxes were levied from the people. These included taxes on houses, shops, cattle, handlooms, ferries, fishing nets, knives, toddy and arrack. In fact the British left nothing out of the purview of taxation. The Company taxed heavily on the skilled labourers like carpenters, blacksmiths, toddy tappers and fishermen. The toddy tappers were required to take license and pay tax at the rate of one silver *fanam* per month or Rs. two and two-fifth per year in 1813. A direct tax was levied on fishing net and

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147 TNA, No.2214, *Board of Revenue Proceedings, 29 August, 1822*, Vol. 923, pp. 8250-8251

the hut of fishermen in the Malabar Coast. The ferry tax was introduced and it was collected even from the poor people. In 1841, A.W. Sullivan reported:

… The ferry tax in Malabar is in one respect more of obnoxious than that of the tobacco tax. All the classes are subject to the latter, but while the carriage and the palanquin of the wealthy are allowed to pass toll free, the poor woman whose livelihood depends upon the bundle of sticks, which she is carrying cannot pass until she had paid so hardly does this tax press upon the lower orders that their lives have been lost in attempts to swim the rivers for the purpose of avoiding it.\(^{149}\) The introduction of numerous other taxes to the common people of Malabar affected their daily life and it led to the outbreak of the Pazhassi rebellion, the Mappila uprisings and the revolt of the Kurichyas in the region.

Besides this, the Company also charged taxes for various implements such as handlooms, oil presses and fishnets. For a handloom a tax of 4 to 12 \textit{fanams} were levied. The Company charged 4 to 5 \textit{fanam} for the oil presses.\(^{150}\) It did not spare the shops and bazaars from the tax. Thus the colonial power was discouraging the skilled category of people instead of encouraging them in productive occupations through the wrong extractive policies of taxation. The ultimate outcome of this policy was that people were either prevented or discouraged from moving from agricultural to non-agricultural


occupations. These new taxes levied from the people affected their very existence under the Company’s government and led to the uprisings in Malabar.

In short the economic policy pursued by the English favoured only a few. The bulk of the population was left without anything. The agricultural labourers had to bear the landlord, the intermediary and the tenant cultivator on his shoulder. They lived and worked in conditions of extreme poverty and were entailed with the twin exactions of the lord and the state. The higher interests squeezed those in below in an effort to maintain their own economic position by pushing them down to the status of a tenant-at-will. Without a single piece of land, he had to bear the burden of all taxes with all its inequalities and defects.

The diverse social, economic and religious obligations, traditions and customs practiced in an agrarian-cum-tradition bound society added the burden of the people. Added to it, the majority of the people in the society were depending more and more on agriculture, pointing to the growing backwardness of an economy. Again the integration of large areas of land into commercial economy, with high degree of cash crops, led to the eviction or over lease of the tenants. It created an insecurity of their lives and the disruption of the economy. Moreover, the economic crises of the people in the early nineteenth century affected adversely the agricultural prices and trade. The features of this agricultural depression were slow trade, lack of expansion of the circulation medium and substitution of cash for kind in the payment of revenue. With all these conditions, the situations had become one of discontent, agitation and rebellion by the people of various walks of life in the Malabar region.

152 G. Arunima, There Comes Papa, pp. 57-58.
It is quiet natural that the peasants and other categories of people reacted against the domination of the English in Malabar. The material appropriation like grain, taxes or labour are a domain of public mastery and subordination as James C. Scott argued.\textsuperscript{153} Therefore the objective of appropriation is domination and it imposes indignities of one kind or the other upon the weak. It is these indignities served as the seedbed of anger and frustration and it naturally led to resistances in Malabar. But James C. Scott argued that these resistances need not simply originate from the material appropriation alone, but from the pattern of personal humiliations that characterize the exploitation.\textsuperscript{154} This extraction of grain, labour or taxes from a subordinate population has a generic quality everywhere in India, and in the case of Malabar, it was not different. Thus the material appropriation by the East India Company, the indignation and frustration of the people, generated out of the domination of the Company, overwhelmed in a mood of resistance. These spontaneously led to the outbreaks and rebellions as we find in the case Pazhassi Raja, or the tribal community of Kurichyas or the community of Mappilas in Malabar. Thus the practices of domination and exploitation by East India Company, generated insults and indignity to the people Malabar and they responded to it naturally. Thus a series of outbreaks occurred in Malabar starting in 1792, with the Pazhassi rebellion and this mood of resistance continued till the Great Revolt of 1857.


\textsuperscript{154} \textit{Ibid.} pp. 111-112.