Discussions of tenurial arrangements have dominated most of the earlier studies on colonial Indian agrarian history. These studies tended to over emphasize the tenurial changes effected by colonial rule as the prime mover of agrarian change. To criticize the exaggerated significance attributed to the tenurial system is not to deny the importance of land tenures as a constituent of the agrarian economy. A given tenurial arrangement is only one partial juridical expression of the actual relations of agricultural production. An analytical distinction between juridical categories and economic classification thus becomes necessary.¹ It is to highlight this disjunction, that a separation in terms of "land tenures" and "agrarian relations" has been introduced in the title of this chapter. Further, land

¹ For problems created by an overemphasis on tenurial form in agrarian history the context of Bengal, see Sugata Bose, op.cit., pp. 4-5.
tenures as well as agrarian relations are in turn closely interrelated and shaped by the other constituents of the agrarian economy. Crop regimes which determine the particularities of the production process is an important aspect to which insufficient attention has been paid in most of the secondary literature on Malabar's agrarian history.

Relating intra-district variations in cropping patterns to agrarian and tenurial relations we argue for the existence of distinct (despite some geographical overlapping) agro-economic zones. We then examine how selected State policies and price changes were mediated through the refracting prism of agricultural production regimes and class relations to differently affect different classes and regions. The response of the various classes to larger changes in the two agro-economic zones with their associated configurations of class power varied significantly.

Section I disaggregates the plain taluks of the district into garden and wet paddy zones which were marked by significant differences in tenurial forms and class configurations. is a brief note on the sources and a historiographical review of State intervention in colonial Malabar's agrarian relations. Section II describes the changed economic conditions at the end of the first half of 19th century, the changing power of the dominant landed
groups and the consequent increase in agrarian tensions. Section III deals with the State response to threats of dire impending agrarian discord. Section IV is a detailed examination of the first two pieces of agrarian legislation and its working.

SECTION I Garden and wet paddy dominated agro-economic zones

Most of the northern taluks were dominated by garden crop cultivation and the southern taluks were primarily engaged in paddy production. Both in administrative as well as popular terms of reference the taluks of Chirakkal, Kottayam and Krumbranad formed north or Vadakke Malabar, while the remaining plain taluks formed south or Thekke Malabar. The southern taluk of Palghat was the largest producer of wet paddy. There are however some exceptions to our north-south divide. The northernmost taluk of Chirakkal had more lands under paddy than garden crops. The central taluk of Calicut, though administratively and traditionally part of south Malabar, had more garden cultivation.

The tenurial arrangement in north and south Malabar differed in two major respects from the South. The kanam amount was nominal in the South whereas in the garden cropped North it was a substantial amount. Consequently the rent or michavaram was higher in areas of wet cultivation while the kanam was higher in the garden cropped areas. This points to the lower economic
strength of the janmi vis-a-vis the kanamdar in the North.\textsuperscript{2}

Further, the kuzhikanam tenure which guaranteed the cultivator some fixity of tenure and lower rent was absent in the South. This tenure was designed to give incentives to the cultivator to reclaim uncultivated lands.

Associated with this tenurial pattern we find a greater concentration of land holdings in the South.

Table 5. 1 Gini Coefficients of number of pattas and revenue paid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dominant Crop</th>
<th>Taluk</th>
<th>1910-11</th>
<th>1920-21</th>
<th>1929-30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>Kottayam</td>
<td>0.611</td>
<td>0.588</td>
<td>0.557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crops</td>
<td>Kurumbranad</td>
<td>0.699</td>
<td>0.716</td>
<td>0.672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Calicut</td>
<td>0.686</td>
<td>0.627</td>
<td>0.655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet Paddy</td>
<td>Chirakkal</td>
<td>0.706</td>
<td>0.673</td>
<td>0.699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ernad</td>
<td>0.775</td>
<td>0.776</td>
<td>0.779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wallavanad</td>
<td>0.780</td>
<td>0.771</td>
<td>0.806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Palghat</td>
<td>0.877</td>
<td>0.880</td>
<td>0.864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ponnani</td>
<td>0.757</td>
<td>0.743</td>
<td>0.718</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: computed from SAMP of relevant years

The report submitted by William Logan in his capacity as Special Commissioner provides us with valuable data on taluk-wise and crop-wise social distribution of land.

Table 5.2 Tenurial Distribution in North and South Malabar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>North Malabar</th>
<th>South Malabar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of intermediaries per janmi</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>53.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lands leased to intermediaries as a percentage of total land owned by janmis</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lands leased to actual cultivators as a percentage of total land owned by janmis</td>
<td>85.9</td>
<td>58.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of lands retained by janmis as a percentage of total lands owned by them</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The southern taluks had a greater number of intermediaries between the janmi and the actual cultivators. The janmis in the North also retained less land under their direct control than their counterparts in the South. Similarly the length of possession of land by the actual cultivators was longer in the North than in the South.

Table 5.3 Length of Occupation of Actual Cultivators (percentage of total)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Occupation</th>
<th>Wet Land</th>
<th>Garden Land</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immemorial</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 30 years but not immemorial</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 30 years</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 12 years</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on the *Report of the Special Commissioner*, vol.2, 219
These tenurial differences between North and South Malabar were correlated with greater caste rigidity, ritual distance between castes and a larger proportion of labourers in the South compared to the North. ³

These two production regimes, with their different class configurations constituted the prism through which State intervention in terms of tenurial reforms, the increase in agricultural prices impacted on Malabar’s agrarian economy.

Section II Economic Changes, Dominant Landed Groups and Agrarian Tensions

Malabar’s recovery from the 1830s depression and the subsequent secular rise in agricultural product prices contributed significantly in translating the juridical tenurial rearrangements made at the beginning of the century into a changed configuration of agrarian class power.

The rising agricultural prices provided a strong economic incentive to the janmis to increase their share of the produce at the cost of the tenants. Though the janmi was legally declared

³. See chapter 6 for a more detailed discussion of conditions of work in North and South Malabar.
the absolute owner of his holdings as early as 1805 this did not lead to any immediate reordering of agrarian class forces for two main reasons. First, the janmis had to wait till the twelve year lease periods with their tenants expired before they could exercise their newly acquired power of distraint. Second, the increased real burden of revenue caused by very low prices at the beginning of the nineteenth century and the lack of demand for agricultural land as evidenced by the depressed state of the land market also discouraged the janmis from making an immediate attempt to exercise their newfound legal powers.

The rise in prices had another important effect on the agrarian class structure - it was the practice in Malabar to levy revenue on a portion of the net produce. The tax on this proportion of the net produce was then converted into cash on the basis of official "commutation rates" which were calculated on the basis of the average market price of that crop in the last five or ten years. An increase in price therefore meant a lightening of the real tax burden on the revenue paying classes. The upward trend in prices also facilitated the easy collection of land revenues. This is suggested by the decrease in the annual figures for arrears. The share of land revenue in the total revenue of the district also started decreasing, but this may not have had any significant ameliorative impact on the revenue.
figures because in spite of a decrease in relative terms the absolute magnitude of the land tax did not register any fall.

While the price rise made agriculture a profitable venture, repeated enquiries into "actual rents" brought the various contesting agrarian groups face to face, exacerbating the latent tensions in the Malabar countryside. The relatively easy collection of land revenue may have possibly contributed to the reluctance of the Government to enquire more vigorously into the extent of individual holdings, "actual rents" and the possibility of making revisions in the rates of assessment. This work was entrusted to the village desadhikaris although they were notorious for falsifying deeds and supplying fabricated accounts.4

Table 5.4 Rice Price and Land Revenue Demand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>AV RPR</th>
<th>AV LRDEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1809/13</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1819-23</td>
<td>176.65</td>
<td>98.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1828-32</td>
<td>145.28</td>
<td>92.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849-52</td>
<td>168.27</td>
<td>94.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861-65</td>
<td>432.30</td>
<td>107.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870-74</td>
<td>388.12</td>
<td>108.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884-89</td>
<td>377.11</td>
<td>107.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base 1809-13 average= 100


4. Innes, op. cit., p.327
This conjuncture of rising prices, the legal redistribution of property rights and the existing hierarchy of land and social controlling rights in Malabar led to a situation where the rent revenue gap greatly widened. A widening of the rent-revenue difference meant that the socially and economically powerful groups in the countryside greatly benefited from the new economic political situation at the cost of the weaker rent paying tenants and sub-tenants. This situation comes close to the phenomenon described by Hayami and Ruttan for nineteenth century Thailand where increased rice prices brought about by the expansion of foreign trade led to a transformation of property rights.\(^5\) While these writers explain the resultant institutional change in terms of a sustained change in price, we see in the Malabar the changes that resulted were crucially based upon the antecedent and prevailing political and economic power of the *janimis* and the smaller peasants. Though we do not have data on the changes in the absolute level of surplus appropriation in the form of rent during this period, information is available on the number of judicial suits where a rent increase was decreed. Between 1842 and 1852 the annual average number of suits for eviction was estimated at 1140 out of which evictions were decreed in 355

\(^{5}\) Hayami and Ruttan, *op.cit.*
cases. Table 5.5 suggests marked increase in litigation connected with land control and rising distrains and rent enhancements.

Table 5.5 Statistics of Eviction Suits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Average number of eviction suits per year</th>
<th>Average number persons against eviction was decreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1862-66</td>
<td>2039</td>
<td>1891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867-71</td>
<td>2547</td>
<td>3483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872-76</td>
<td>3974</td>
<td>6286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877-80</td>
<td>4983</td>
<td>8355</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: RMSC, i, paras 146-47.

The available rent rolls for this period provide a valuable source for studying the distribution of agricultural holdings which is amenable to statistical analysis. Unfortunately this data has either been ignored by historians of Malabar or has not been rigorously analyzed.

An analysis of rent roll data shows a marked increase in the inequality of distribution of pattas and assessment between 1849 and 1866. The rent roll data, however, cannot be used mechanically and uncritically for the whole period of British

6. R.M.S.C., Appendix ii, para 259
rule as a source for generating indices of inequality. The particularities of the revenue collection system introduced marked biases on the rent rolls. In the pre-janmam registration period in the years before 1888 revenue was frequently paid by the tenants themselves. This resulted in the issue of a large number of *pattas* to people who did not have ownership rights in the land. In the post-1888 period when *janmis* were required to pay the revenue there was a drastic shrinking of the number of *pattas* which led to an artificial lowering of estimated inequality indices because of a change in revenue collecting methods rather than any real structural shift towards equality.

The rent rolls come in the form of grouped data. This grouping of data or revenue class intervals has a potential for suppressing intra-group inequalities which do not get reflected in the aggregate inequality index.

Further, one must guard against equating revenue paying classes with tenurial groups. In Malabar even the largest *janmis* owned small *kanam pattas*. Colonial officials in Malabar embarrassed by the large proportion of *pattadars* in the less than Rs.10 revenue paying category tried to argue that this was an artificial exaggeration caused by "the non-exemption of house-sites from assessment accounts for the bulk of the *pattas* paying
1 rupee and less." This argument does not seem to hold good. In the years before 1861 a separate house tax was levied and this did not form part of land revenue. We see that the lowest revenue paying class contained more than 70 per cent of all the pattadars.

Table 5.6 INEQUALITY INDEX (Gini Coefficient) of Distribution of Land Revenue Assessment between Revenue Classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gini Coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>0.4902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1852-53</td>
<td>0.7066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856-57</td>
<td>0.7207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>0.6678</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


While on the one hand we find increasing inequality in the distribution of holdings and a significant increase in dwarf holdings, on the other hand certain apparently small but significant tendencies appear to be at work. Table 5.7 gives the caste-wise distribution of janmis in 1803 and 1887.

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7. See G.O. No.245, 15 March, 1905, Revenue.
Table 5.7 Caste-wise break up of janmis in Malabar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>1803 No.</th>
<th>%age</th>
<th>1887 No.</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nambudiri</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35.92</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>24.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper/Intermediary castes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.67</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>7.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nayars</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>44.66</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>45.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapillas</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.79</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>10.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiyas</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>12.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The above table suggests a decrease in the land control of the traditional land controlling upper castes, a small gain by the Nayars (traditionally associated with the kanam tenure) and a significant entry of cultivating groups such as the Mapillas and Tiyas into the janmi tenurial category. These trends point to a subtle but significant shift in the composition of Malabar's land controlling rural elite. However, even if we assume that the above table based on point estimates and differing samples is correct, it would be erroneous to assume on its basis a general increase in the land control of the lower castes. What we could possibly infer from it is the ability of the most prosperous

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members of the traditional non-janmi castes to acquire janmam tenure during the nineteenth century.

As prices and productivity increased throughout the late nineteenth century up to the second decade of the twentieth century all classes tried to maximize their share in the increased returns leading to a sharpening of conflict. The janmis resorted to evictions and later melcharths or overleases in the 1890s and early twentieth century to replace a tenant with another willing to pay a higher rent.10 The number of registered melcharths increased from 2816 in 1906 to 3407 in 1911.11 The melcharth appears to have become the preferred mechanism of removing a tenant especially after the Government introduced curbs on eviction.

The patta statistics also suggest that (despite some recent claims to the contrary) that the Malabar agrarian economy was not dominated by small peasant production.12 Malabar’s landholding

10. See K.N. Panikkar, Against lord and state, op.cit., pp.43-44 for a detailed discussion of melcharths.


12. cf. Dilip Menon, Caste, nationalism and communism in south India: Malabar 1900-1948, Cambridge, 1994. According to Menon, Malabar was part of a larger south Indian economy based on "independent market-oriented small farmers rather than of agrarian dependents under the sway of rural magnates." (p.22)
structure, in contrast to the 'dry' districts of the Presidency was characterized by the continued dominance of large landholders. Small pattas under Rs10, medium pattas between Rs 10 and Rs 50 and large pattas of over Rs 100 accounted for roughly 15, 21 and 24 percent of the cultivated area in 1904-05.13

Despite the continued dominance of large holdings, from the 1920s we find a trend towards easier access to land as suggested by the population to patta ratios.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population To Patta Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>09.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rent Rolls and Census

Small farm proliferation and some disengagement of large holders especially from wet cultivation is evident in the course of the 20th century.

13. See rent roll of government land for fasli 1315 in SAMP, 1904-05, Appendix II.
Table 5.9 Distribution of holdings by patta classes
(Percentage of total cultivated acreage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1904-05 Dry</th>
<th>1904-05 Wet</th>
<th>1929-30 Dry</th>
<th>1929-30 Wet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under Rs 10</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>7.89</td>
<td>19.47</td>
<td>10.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs 10-50</td>
<td>20.97</td>
<td>21.52</td>
<td>20.44</td>
<td>21.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Rs 50</td>
<td>59.14</td>
<td>70.59</td>
<td>60.09</td>
<td>68.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


We find that as in Washbrook's study of Bellary, small farm proliferation occurred not during the boom years of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century but after agricultural prices started falling in the '20s. This is suggested by tables 5.8 and 5.9. Further, the sharp increase in land revenue demand at the time of the Resettlement further lowered the already falling returns from agriculture.

The various strategies employed by the janmis to corner the maximim benefit from increasing agricultural returns did not go unchallenged. Uprisings by Mapilla peasants and resort to litigation were resorted to to check janmi attempts at eviction.

Section III State Response to Threats of Agrarian Unrest

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century witnessed recurrent Mapilla violence. British officials vigorously debated
on the nature of Mapilla "outrages", attributing varying significance to agrarian discontent, poverty and fanaticism. However, Government reports on the condition of Malabar written in the late 1830s and the 1840s neither mention agrarian discontent nor try to relate it with the violent Mapilla outrages.

14 During this time it appears that transformations in the structure of agrarian relations had not yet become easily visible to the contemporary government official. A series of Mapilla outrages finally forced the administration in 1852 to institute an enquiry headed by Mr. Strange, a Judge of the Sadar Adalat into the causes for and solutions to this violence.

15 Strange, unfortunately saw no connection between Mapilla violence and their agrarian marginalization and attributed the outrages to Mapilla fanaticism. Arguing that the Mapilla "outrages" had made the state of the Hindus "most lamentable" and had weakened the "prestige of Government", Strange recommended a policy of severe repression against the Mapillas. Consequently the Government passed Acts XXIII and XXIV of 1854 and raised a special police

14. Representative reports are those of Clementson, op. cit., and Sullivan, op. cit.

15. File of Correspondence Relating to The Relations of Landlord and Tenant in Malabar 1852-56, Madras, 1881

force to combat Mapilla violence. Act XXIII empowered the administration to impose penal fines on amsoms where "outrages" took place and Act XXIV banned the possession of the so called Mapilla war knife.

The futility of repression as a solution to what was essentially a symptom of severe agrarian class oppression soon became evident when the District Magistrate of Malabar Mr Conolly was killed by some escaped Mapilla convicts in August 1855. The outbreaks continued and in 1880 for the first time it occurred at Melattur in North Malabar, an area which had never witnessed such violence. The same year the Government received an anonymous petition purporting to have been sent by "certain Mussalmans, Nayars, Tiyyans and men of other castes inhabiting Malabar." The petition warned the Government "that as a terrible outbreak is going to occur immediately in Malabar, urgent orders are requested to be issued with a view to prevent any lawlessness." The petitioners enumerated in detail the various means by which the peasants were exploited by the Nambudiri janmis and the temples.

Alarmed by the spread of the Mapilla "outrages" to North Malabar, the failure of repressive measures and by this latest ominous warning of large scale agrarian unrest the Government decided to refer the petition to Wigram, the District Judge of
South Malabar and Logan, the District Magistrate. Both of them opined that while there was no immediate threat of an uprising, agrarian discontent was undoubtedly the root cause of these outbreaks. The former Collector of Malabar Mr MacGregor to whom these views were referred to agreed with them - "First, as to the essential nature of Malabar Mapilla outrages, I am perfectly satisfied that they are agrarian. Fanaticism is merely the instrument through which the terrorism of the landed classes is aimed at." 17

In response to these views the Government appointed William Logan, the Collector of Malabar as Commissioner to enquire into land tenures, tenancy rights, landlord exploitation and the problem of acquiring land for mosques and graves by the Mapillas. Logan was also charged with recommending remedies to correct the present agrarian malaise.

Logan’s Report is a very rich on the agrarian situation in Malabar, containing information on a vast range of related subjects such as eviction, indebtedness, money lending, landlord-tenant relations and their relation with the cropping pattern. 18


18. Malabar Special Commission (1881-1882), *Malabar Land Tenures*, 3 volumes, Madras, 1882
After examining 14034 "pieces" (by a "piece" Logan probably meant a separate block of land) of land and the existing conditions of production on them, Logan reached the conclusion that though the kanamdars may have had lost out substantially to the janmi because of a misrepresentation of his status in precolonial Malabar by the British administration, the person who needed State protection most was the actual cultivator. In reaching this conclusion Logan appears to have grasped the essential difference between the tenurial hierarchy and the economic stratification of the peasantry. It is unfortunate that neither the colonial administrators nor subsequent historians of Malabar's agrarian relations understood the significance of Logan's conclusions of 1880.

Towards this end Logan proposed the curtailment of the landlord's right of distraint and that the tenant be given the full value of his improvements at current prices on the expiry of his tenure. To check depeasantization and fragmentation and provide security for small cultivators, Logan prepared a statutory tenure for small holders whereby cultivators operating holdings less than 25 acres (or 5 acres of garden land) would be given permanent occupancy at a rental of not more than two thirds of the gross produce without the right to mortgage and sublet, but with the right to sell and transfer. The other proposal
included the creation of a class of small gardeners, the setting up of an experimental garden, a rule compelling the landlord to give rent receipts, the creation of a body of "responsible practitioners" to settle matters out of court and finally a survey and subsequent preparation of a Land Register. Marumakkatayam was sought to be so amended that all adults could dispose of their property at will.

Not satisfied with the draft Tenancy Bill which was formulated under the Presidentship of Sir Madhava Rao, Logan submitted an alternative scheme criticizing the draft Bill with some suggestions. His first criticism was that mere limitation of rent would be useless without any clause to ensure the fixity of tenure. This failed to prevent treating of the tenant as a mere tenant at-will and the pre-payment of rent. The proposed encouragement for the formation of small gardens, according to him, would not be possible unless the tenure of the tenant is protected.

Logan’s Alternative Scheme envisaged that the occupancy right would accrue in the following order:

"(1) to every occupancy-tenant, created by sections 6 - 14 of the draft Bill;

(2) to the tenant, who holds the patta for the land, except when he holds for an occupancy-tenant;
(3) to the *janmi* in the absence of the above two classes."

In January 1884 a Special Commission was appointed to look into the whole question of tenures and suggest to the Government the lines on which legislative action was to be taken after Logan’s Report was circulated during 1883. In July 1884, the Commission submitted two of the four acts- a draft "Malabar Marriage and Succession Act" for Hindus, following the Marumakkatayam Law and a draft "Places of Public Worship Act" dealing with numbers 7 and 8 of Logan’s proposals. These were favourably received by the High Court.

The two other draft Acts were "The Stay of Execution Act" and "The Malabar Tenancy Act". The former was proposed as an interim measure, to maintain the existing relations between landlords and tenants pending the revision of the law regarding this by the Legislature. It suggested the staying of evictions of tenants by *janmis* for the period of the Act as long as all rent arrears were paid to the Court and securities of future payments given.

The latter did not incorporate all of Logan’s proposals but agreed with him on the point that the British had misinterpreted the Kanamdar’s rights assigned to the kudiyan or occupant, the hereditary right of the ryot who first clears the land, and the
rights of the ruler to a claim on a share of the produce to the janmi.

The High Court, however, rejected both these draft Bills. Sir Charles Turner, the then Judge of the High Court wrote a long minute in this relation. While sympathizing with Logan's concern for the actual cultivator and the need for some legislation to protect this class, he was of the opinion that the draft Bill still left them unprotected and would only serve to increase the number of intermediaries. He also opposed the Bill on the grounds that it was not expedient with rights which had been in force for more than a century.

Subsequent to the rejection of the draft Tenancy Bill by the High Court, a Committee was formed under the presidency of Mr. Master to again review the whole matter, because some of the High Court Judges had felt that the interests of the Janmis had not been given enough consideration. The Committee submitted its report in March 1886 and unanimously proposed the need for legislation to secure compensation of the full value of improvements made by the tenants on the latter's eviction.


20. ibid.

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bill embodying these proposals was then submitted to the Government. The chief aim of the bill was to ensure that every tenant is given the right to compensation for the value of improvements and a prohibition on the right to contract out of the provisions of the bill. This bill was passed into law as Act I of 1887.

However, the question of a legislation to restrain eviction did not materialize due to disagreement between the members of the Committee. A Bill which sought to provide occupancy rights to tenants who held land for sixty years could not be passed because the members of the Committee were equally divided over it. Another bill seeking to invest the Courts with the right to arbitrate in eviction cases was also rejected. A draft Bill containing provisions with regard to notices, payment of rent into Courts, along with other measures, designed to prevent indiscriminate evictions was forwarded to the Government but was also rejected.

In 1893, the Government ordered the Collector to send a report on the working of Act I of 1887. The Collector, Mr. Bradley, reported that the Act had failed to check evictions, which continued to increase or the practice of giving melcharths, thus not providing any additional security to the tenants. He proposed a legislation banning melcharths and amending certain
portions of the Act.

Section IV  Detailed Examination of Malabar Compensation for Tenants’ Improvement Act and the Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930

In this section we focus on the provisions, the implementation and the effectivity of the first two State sponsored agrarian reforms in the various agro-economic zones of Malabar. The first attempt at state intervention in agrarian relations in Malabar by the British after their initial tenurial redefinitions was the Malabar Compensation for Tenants’ Improvement Act of 1887 (hereafter referred to as MCTIA of 1887 or Act I of 1887). This act was aimed to secure to tenants the full market value of the improvements made by them from the landlords at the time of eviction, and to check increasing evictions.

The Act was promulgated as a sop to the strong demand both by the kanamdars as well as the district and Imperial officials for a full fledged tenancy reform. However, even this piecemeal reform became heavily biased in favour of the janmis. The argument given was that no improvement could be made without land; land being the sole property of the janmi, he was entitled to a share of the increased produce which resulted from the
improvement. The compensation was calculated according to the following formula:

\[ \text{Compensation} = (y - x)^{3/4} + x \]

where \( x \) is the actual cost of improvement, and \( y \) is the value of the annuity.

Thus the compensation that the tenant was entitled to was 75 per cent of the value of the annuity and 25 per cent of the cost of improvement. This meant that the tenant was denied even the full capitalized value of the net income arising out of the improvement in all cases where the actual cost of improvement is less than the annuity.\(^{21}\)

Apart from this pro-janmi tilt in the normative part of the Act, a number of loop holes in its actual working came to be highlighted when the Government ordered an enquiry into the working of the MCTIA in 1893. The enquiry was headed by the Collector of Malabar Mr Bradley. Bradley, in his report, severely criticized Act I of 1887 on account of the provisions and clauses of the Act as well as its loopholes which severely limited its effective implementation.\(^{22}\)

The Act as already mentioned fell short of providing the

\[ \text{--------------------} \]


22. P.B.O.R. (L.R.) dated 11.5.1894, Mis. No. 2588
full market value of the improvements made by the tenant. The janmis were found to be resorting to various means of evading the payment of the required compensation. For instance, they first raised the rent very high and then introduced a clause in the renewal of leases whereby part of it was remitted for the improvements which were to be carried out by the tenant. The short term benefit, stability of tenure and the power of the janmi to evict combined to make the tenants consent to these terms. Another method of evasion was to permit the tenant to exceed the stipulated period of occupation and then get him to execute a lease which mentioned all or most of the improvements made by the tenant as having been done by the landlord. 23

The judiciary did not favourably accept the spirit of the Act which was to secure the tenant the full market value of the improvements on eviction. The Commissioners who were appointed by the Courts to value the improvements were extremely corrupt. "They changed the compensation according to the gratification received. For instance, in one particular case the first Commissioner valued the improvements at Rs.2,900/-, the second at Rs.800/- and the third at Rs.700/-." 24 The extent as well as the

23. ibid.

24. K.N. Panikkar, "Peasant Revolts", p.613
value of the improvements varied with the bribes that were given.

These loopholes in Act I of 1887 prevented it from checking evictions or securing the full compensation to the tenants. The number of evictions in the district as a whole increased by 9.30 per cent between 1890 and 1892 while the total amount paid as compensation decreased by 6.65 per cent in the same period. These district level aggregates however mask the differential effectivity of the Act in North and South Malabar. While the total number of evictions in North Malabar increased only by 6.53 per cent, in the South it went up by 10.46 per cent. Further, whereas the percentage of the number of evictions in which no compensation was paid actually registered a decrease (-5.88 per cent) in the North, it went up by 0.51 per cent in the South. The average number of evictions in which no compensation was paid decreased in the North (-14.70 per cent) while it increased (+10.87 per cent) in the South. A similar pattern is seen in the total amount of compensation paid which increased in the North (+28.30 per cent) while it declined in the South (-16.80 per cent). 25

Another interesting feature which the statistics point to is that areas, in which a larger number of evictions took place,

25. See Leg.Dept.Prgs. dated 24.4.1899 Appendix B No.53
were found to be the highest payers of compensation (in absolute terms)! Palghat is a good instance of this pattern. A possible explanation for this pattern may be that the few tenants who did manage to get compensation were the more substantial ones whom jammis could not easily suppress.26

Bradley concluded his report of 1894 on the working of the MCTIA of 1887 by stating "...the avowed object of the Act--namely to check evictions--has not been attained."27 Regarding the amount of compensation paid he reported the general feeling that while it was more favourable to the tenant than the pre-existing customary rates it was still inadequate. The lack of data on the amount of compensation paid in the pre-1887 period prevented any substantive evaluation of the effect of Act I of 1887 on the compensation paid after the Act was passed.28

Bradley also observed that "considering that less than seven years have elapsed since the passing of the Act, and the ordinary period of the kanam lease is twelve years, the full effect of this Act has not yet been reached, because there has as yet, been

26. ibid.
28. G.O. No. 2374, Judicial, 1.10.1894

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no occasion for eviction in respect of 5/12 of the leases subsisting before the Act was passed."

Bradley concluded by observing that the Act would not be effective at all by the end of the century and that the janmis would soon devise ways of circumventing the restrictions put on them. His position was that only by prohibiting melcharths and by securing the kanamdar freedom from eviction, could any improvement in landlord-tenant relation in Malabar be made. He also proposed the repeal of Section I(C) of the 1887 Act which was clearly biased in favour of the janmis.

The Madras Government attributed the partial failure of the Act to the inadequate compensation awarded by the Courts and the loopholes in the working of the Act. It suggested legislative measures to make certain amendments in the Act, to fix an upper limit on the renewal fees and in the context of the coming settlements, means to prevent the janmis from passing on the burden of the new assessment on to the tenants.

Ralph Benson accordingly prepared a draft Bill repealing and re-enacting Act I of 1887. His successor Ross was then asked to prepare a comprehensive Tenancy Bill, but Ross died before he could complete his task. Benson's draft Bill was then padded into

29. *ibid.*
Act I of 1900.

The Imperial Government, before passing of Act I was of the opinion that while they approved "generally" of the proposed amendment to the Compensation Act, "neither this measure nor the introduction of any Act on the lines of the Eviction Bill of 1887 can be of any material value by themselves; that more comprehensive legislation on the pattern of the North Indian Acts is clearly wanted; and that this measure should be in our opinion be taken up without delay, both because of its connection with the Settlement and because of the numerous reports and committees of the last fifteen years have supplied all necessary information."\textsuperscript{30}

The revised Act of 1900 in no way gave any greater protection to the tenants and the full market value of improvements was also not paid. The judges of the High Court felt that such a measure would work against the janmi's right to private property. The legislation came under sharp criticism both from the tenants and the janmis. In 1905 the Madras Government replied to the Government of India that it was better not to proceed with any fresh legislation for Malabar till the Madras

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\textsuperscript{30} Legislative Dept. Pgs.A dated December 1898, K.W. Nos. 1-8A.
Establishment Bill was passed.

In 1911 the enquiry into the working of the MCTIA of 1900 by the Collector once again opened the larger issue of the need for a comprehensive tenancy legislation. According to the Collector, Mr Innes, the Act was effective only in the garden dominated North Malabar although there were complaints against valuation. The paddy cultivating tenants of South Malabar continued to be over exploited. Innes appealed for a comprehensive Tenancy Bill.

At this point we interrupt the narrative of the official intervention in the agrarian economy and evaluate the impact of the MCTIA of 1887 and 1900 on Malabar's agrarian relations.

The above figures show the greater effectivity of the MCTIA in North Malabar compared to the Southern taluks. This differential impact of the MCTIA can possibly be related to the specific nature of the agricultural production processes in garden cultivation and in wet paddy cultivation, and also to the extant class/caste configurations in these two agro-economic zones.

In garden cropped areas "improvements" which mainly consisted of the planting of trees had to be carried on continuously. Consequently, the tenants involved in garden agriculture could easily claim compensation for "improvements" that the landlords could not deny. In wet paddy agriculture which was perennial,
very little changes could be made to the paddy fields and this virtually prevented these tenants from making claims for compensation.

Apart from this technical factor which militated against the effectiveness of the MCTIA in the South, the inequality in the distribution of land, and the ritual and economic distance between the landlords and the mass of tenants were also much more pronounced in wet paddy agriculture. Charles Innes in 1916 found the rent on wet cultivation to be on the average ten times the assessment on single crop lands and twelve times on double cropped lands. Though the government assessment was supposed to be two fifths of the Net Produce this was never implemented. Even if a very low assessment of one-tenth is assumed this would mean that the rent burden consumed virtually the entire net produce. Innes' successor Evans in his comments on the former's report concluded that the rents averaged between 75 and 80 per cent of the Net Produce. He estimated that intermediaries appropriated 50 to 70 percent of this with only 15 to 20 per cent accruing to the landlord except in cases where there were no intermediaries


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between the landlord and the producer. 33

**The Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930**

The next phase of tenancy reform, especially in the post Mappilla Revolt period was carried out under strong kanamdar pressure. The movement for agrarian reform was spearheaded by the Western educated and relatively well off kanamdaars. The tenancy question became a major demand in all varieties of political activity after 1900. In 1922 the Malabar Kudiyan Sangham (hereafter MKS) was formed to articulate the tenants' demands. They focussed public opinion on their demands by writing in news papers, organizing meetings and securing the patronage of important political figures.

In 1921 Krishnan Nair who represented the tenants introduced a Malabar Tenancy Bill in the Legislative Council. In view of the forthcoming elections of 1923 he revised the bill to include more rights for the verumpattom tenants. In the 1923 elections the MKS won only one seat of the five contested, but this was mainly due to janmi repression.

Krishnan Nair's Bill was finally passed by the Legislative

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Council in September 1926 but the Governor withheld his assent. This resulted in large scale protests under the auspices of the MKS all over Malabar. A Mappilla tenant leader warned the Government of another impending peasant revolt if no action was taken.

Under increasing kanamdar pressure the Government was forced to institute a committee to look into the tenant's grievances under the Presidentship of Diwan Bahadur T. Raghaviah Pantulu. Only after a sustained MKS campaign was a tenants' representative put on the Committee. In 1928 the Congress also gave its support to the MKS on the Bill. Finally in October 1929 the Madras Legislative Council passed the Bill and in December 1930 the Viceroy gave his assent, bringing into force the Malabar Tenancy Act XIV of 1930.

The Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930 virtually conceded all the demands of the kanamdars. It significantly curbed the power of the janmis to oppress this tenurial section. In the 54 clauses of the Act the Kanam tenant was finally protected from janmi extortion in the form of exorbitant renewal fees, rack rents and arbitrary evictions.

However, the Act did not benefit the poorer verumpattom tenants who were in most cases the actual cultivators of the soil. The interests of this section of the peasantry was taken up
in the post-1930 period under left wing leadership, providing immediate prolegomena to the wide ranging radical reforms in independent Kerala.

The interesting point that emerges is not the fact that the colonial State under various kinds of pressure implemented minimal agrarian reforms to maintain "Law and Order" in the countryside and to accommodate the demands of the rural elite. The interrelation between the various contemporary and historical constituents of the Malabar agrarian structure in shaping the movement for tenancy reform and the differential effectivity of the legislated reforms provides a window into the interactive operation of temporarily varying determinants of the agrarian economy.

Graph 5.1 below indicates a major change in the distribution of agrarian classes between 1911 and 1951. The number of "Cultivating Landowners" sharply increased at the cost of "Tenants" and "Rent Receivers". "Agricultural Labour" showed a small increase. This phenomenon may be explained as a cumulative result of land reforms, the partitioning of Nayar taravads, increased tenant resistance to landlord rackrenting and the move away from the agricultural sector into services by many of the erstwhile rent receivers.

Earlier in this chapter we had referred to the price rise as
Graph 5.1 Non Agricultural Occupations

% variation, 1911-51

- Cult Landowners
- Tenants
- Agr Lab.
- Rent Receivers
an important factor in increasing agricultural profits and consequently the share of the landlord in the surplus product. In this context the medium of rent payment was of crucial significance in deciding the relative gains by the rent receiver and the actual rent paying cultivator in a period of rising prices. In areas where the major component of rent was paid in kind the rent receiver stood to gain much more than in places where money rent was more prevalent. The pattom or rent statements of the Zamorin and other large jammis indicate that wet paddy cultivators paid almost the entire rent in kind while in garden lands cash rents were the norm. Consequently it can be inferred that the gain to the landlord in the garden cropped Northern taluks was much less than to his wet paddy Southern counterparts.

The intense and prolonged debate on the question of landlord-tenant relations in Malabar since the late nineteenth century resulted in an extensive corpus of published official and private material on questions of land rights, landlord-tenant relations and the role of State intervention in this area. The

34. See pattam statements of certain large landlords in B.O.R., L.R& A, dated 1.9.1894. See also Regression 7 below.

35. Correspondence regarding the relations of landlord and tenants in Malabar, 1852-56, Calicut, 1881.
political and social immediacy and significance of the land question in Malabar, since the late nineteenth century attracted a number of political activists to write on this theme.\textsuperscript{36} The easy availability of source material and the centrality of the land question in the context of the Mapilla uprisings, the Nayar led legislative battle for increased rights to the Kanamdar, family restructuring and the subsequent peasant movement under left leadership have forced a number of later historians to study the district's agrarian relations even though their primary concern was not an enquiry into the agrarian economy of the region.\textsuperscript{37}


The extant studies on this aspect of agrarian history have emphasised mainly the exploitation of the peasantry by the colonial state through high taxes and pro-landlord policies and peasants' oppression by the janmis and later the kanamdars using both legal and extra-legal methods. Although a recent work on the relationship of the Malabar peasant with the State and the landlord does make a cursory note of conditions of production, there is an absence of any serious attempt at relating variations in agricultural practices, land use, prices and productivity to developments in the sphere of agrarian relations and tenures. 38

To discover possible trends in the fragmentation of holdings, inequality in land ownership and rent and revenue burden we have made extensive use of the statistical data on these variables in the village settlement and resettlement registers and the private records of villages (cherical) under the direct control of the native princes. The cherical registers of the Nilambur Raja and the Zamorin have been used in this connection.

Works relating to British land or agrarian policies in Malabar assert that revenue maximization and the maintenance of

38. See K.N. Panikkar, Against Lord and State, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1992
pax Britannica were the twin determinants of colonial policy. Colonial rule is said to have deliberately sided with the dominant groups in the countryside to secure faithful collaborators. A survey of British land policies between 1800 and the 1940s when studied in the context of changing agrarian relations while vindicating the above views also suggests that the dynamics of colonial land legislation and policy making was a much more complex phenomenon. Our interest in colonial policy formulation is mainly because of the insights that it offers into the mechanics, direction and focus of State intervention in the agrarian society. To circumscribe analysis to policy determinants prevents any possible exploration of the actual articulation of State intervention in the Malabar countryside. Such an exercise not only permits a better understanding of the pressures on and methods of colonial policy formulation but also throws significant light on colonial government.

Section V  Quantitative Analysis of Interrelationship between land use, tenures, rent and revenue

In this section we shall analyse data on land use, revenue assessment and inequality in holdings from Settlement registers for a randomly selected sample of revenue villages from some of
the representative taluks to examine the impact of cropping regimes on agrarian relations and tenurial forms.

The proportion of wet land and garden land to the total area, the per acre revenue demand and an inequality index were computed from the raw Settlement Register data. Multiple regressions were then run on inequality in patta distribution by revenue demand with land use and revenue burden as the independent variables to check whether contemporary observations on the relationship between wet paddy cultivation and increased inequality in landholdings and revenue burden are borne out by statistical analysis. The data set consist of 46 desams or revenue villages from the taluks of Chirakkal, Kottayam, Kurumbranad, Calicut, Ponnani and Palghat. Regressions were first run for the entire data and then separately for the taluks of Kottayam and Palghat. The choice of these two taluks were dictated by the fact that the first was a predominantly garden cropped Northern taluk whereas Palghat was the most extensive wet paddy cultivating taluk.

Table 5.9 Gini Coefficients of Taluk Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taluk</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calicut</td>
<td>0.6208750</td>
<td>0.1300510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurumbranad</td>
<td>0.5755556</td>
<td>0.1877699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kottayam</td>
<td>0.6115833</td>
<td>0.1401210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palghat</td>
<td>0.8013750</td>
<td>0.1354125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Settlement Registers

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In spite of the smallness of the sample and the random selection procedure the Gini coefficients calculated from the talukwise samples are fairly representative of the aggregate taluk landholding distribution pattern. While the North-South differences are faithfully mirrored in the sample, the skewedness in land distribution in Kurumbranad persistently trended higher than the other Northern taluks according to aggregate taluk data.

An inverse relationship is seen between the proportion of garden land to the total area of the desam and the inequality index and a positive causal association between the proportion of wet land to the total area of the desam and the inequality index. The low R-squared value of the regression appears to be due to specification error, namely the omission of an important explanatory variable, the burden of rent, for which data is not available.

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39. See Table 5.1 for district level indices of inequality in land distribution.

40. Regression 1
SMPL range: 1-46 N: 43
Gini = WTOT*0.206[2.676*] + GTOT* -0.027[-0.341]
+C*0.614[0.735]
R-squared 0.155 Adjusted R-squared 0.113
* denotes significant at t0.05
Another regression was run on the number of labourers per acre (LA1) with land use variables as the independent variables. The results suggest a positive significant relationship between the intensity of labour use on the one hand and wet cultivation and the population density on the other. The results corroborate the hypothesis that an increase in the proportion of wet paddy cultivation led to greater use of agricultural labour. It also accounts for the higher concentration of agricultural labour in the wet paddy dominated taluks of Palghat and Wallavanad compared to the predominantly garden cropped taluks.

The Settlement Registers, however, do not contain any information on the crucial rent variable. Survey data collected during 1947 as part of an investigation on land tenures has been used here to test for the causal significance of land use on the

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41. REGRESSION 2
LS // Dependent Variable is LA1
Taluk Kottayam and Palghat N: 19
LA1 = WTOT * 0.081[1.486*] + GTOT * 0.016[0.206] + ASS1 * -0.051[-1.300*] + PD * 0.038[1.137] + C * 0.276[2.040] + AR(1) * 0.812[5.363]
R-squared 0.716 Adjusted R-squared 0.607
* denotes significant at t0.10
WTOT, GTOT, ASS1, PD and AR(1) refer to total wet paddy acreage, garden acreage, land revenue assessment, population density and a first order autoregressive term.

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level of rent and the interrelations between the various kinds of tenurial obligations.\textsuperscript{42} As first step to check whether the data supported the view that the level of rent varied directly with wet paddy cultivation and inversely with garden cropping the proportion of wet and garden land to the total area were regressed on the total \textit{michiavaram} or rent. The \textit{michiavaram} or rent consists of a cash and a kind component. The kind component has been converted into a cash equivalent at 1941 prices for purposes of standardization. An increase in wet cultivation led to a rise in the level of rent, garden cultivation depressed it.

Regression 3 once again confirms the earlier observation that garden cultivation increased the use of cash as medium of remuneration whereas wet areas largely resorted to kind payments.\textsuperscript{43}

\begin{verbatim}

43. Regression 3
LS // Dependent Variable is MICHC
Number of observations: 29
MICHC=WTOT*-36.027[-2.170*]+GTOT*44.280[2.238*]
 C*34.145 [2.470]+ AR(1)*0.4415[2.424]
 R-squared 0.547630 Adjusted R-squared 0.493345
* denotes significant at t0.05
\end{verbatim}
The above results from the statistical analysis of Settlement Registers and survey data unambiguously reveals the causal connection between cropping regimes on the one hand and the skewedness of land distribution and variations in the existence form of surplus appropriation. The low R-squared values of most of the regression equations in spite of the statistical significance of individual regressors point to the fact that most of our equations contain a substantial degree of unexplained variance. In the Indian context apart from the production process an important variable which contributed to inequality was the caste hierarchy. In Malabar we see that the caste hierarchy varied significantly between the garden cropped North and the wet paddy cultivating south. The caste was less rigid in the North compared to the South. This may have been due the reduced need as well as inability of the land controlling groups in the North to maintain as pronounced a ritual distance with the inferior castes. The lower labour inputs into garden production, the absence of marked peaks in the demand for labour coupled with the janmi's weaker economic hold over his under-tenants may have combined to making the North relatively less inequitable than the South.

Antecedent caste/class correlations, the nature of the dominant production process, the existing tenurial hierarchies
and larger changes in market conditions thus combined to produce a situation where responses to immediate stimuli, whether legislative or economic, were substantially conditioned by past structures and relations of production.

The period immediately preceding the 1930 Act clearly shows these various forces at work. It has already been seen how in the garden dominated North the janmi-kanamdar relation was politically, socially and economically less unequal when compared to the South. In this context when agricultural product prices increased sharply in the period between the War and Depression all tenurial classes would have tried to increase their land resources.

Table 5.10 below suggests that in the wet paddy dominated taluks the extent of land cultivated by the janmis increased at a much faster rate than that of the kanamdars (including sub-kanam- dars) as opposed to the garden cropped taluks. In Palghat, which was characterized by the maximum level of inequality during the entire colonial period, kanamdar cultivated lands actually registered a decrease while that of the janmis increased greatly.
### Table 5.10 CHANGES IN LANDHOLDING OF DIFFERENT TENURIAL GROUPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taluk</th>
<th>Dominant crop</th>
<th>% age Change in extent of land cultivated by</th>
<th>Janmis</th>
<th>Kanamdars</th>
<th>Kuzhi-kanamdars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kottayam</td>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>+ 6.02</td>
<td>+ 11.21</td>
<td>+ 13.96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurum-branad</td>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>+ 1.61</td>
<td>+ 5.25</td>
<td>+ 5.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palghat</td>
<td>Paddy</td>
<td>+14.21</td>
<td>- 2.41</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallavanad</td>
<td>Paddy</td>
<td>+11.88</td>
<td>+ 8.55</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chirakkal</td>
<td>Paddy</td>
<td>+17.08</td>
<td>+ 3.58</td>
<td>- 7.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


A random selection of plots from the *cheral thirats* or registers of lands under the direct ownership of the Zamorin and the Nilambur Raja suggest that in the majority of the plots the increase in rent demand occurred during the period of the post First World War price increase. (See Graphs 5.2 a and b)

The period till the setting in of the Depression also shows an increasing number of applications under the Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930, the majority of them being under Section 22 dealing with the "Tenant's right to apply to court for execution of renewal deed". The volume of litigation was much greater in North
Graph 5.2a Nilambur Jama
In Kind and at Current Prices

Source: Nilambur Kovilagam Records

Graph 5.2b Jama Karumarakatu
Jama in Kind & at Current Prices

Source: Nilambur Kovilagam Records
Malabar than in the South. Thus we see clear evidence of a battle between different agrarian groups over the now increased returns from agriculture.

The litigation which mainly involved janmi-kanamdar problems declined all over Malabar from 1933 onwards when the Depression began to take effect. The higher number of litigations in North Malabar may be due to the kanamdars in the North being less servile and therefore more vocal than their counter parts in the South. The results of the litigations interestingly show a large number of cases being disposed of in favour of the defendant in the North and for the plaintiff in the South. Who benefited most from the increased returns was not decided so much by the exogenous forces of the market, but by the antecedent strength of the different agrarian groups. From the 1930s onwards one finds a district wide increase in the kanamdars' influence both in politics as well as in their control over the material resources.

These manifestations of the difference in the relative power of the landlords and the tenants in the North and the South is largely explainable in terms of the prevailing tenurial practices and the dominant crop regimes on which these systems were premised. The tenurial arrangements in North Malabar differed in

two major respects from that in the South. The kanam amount in the South was invariably nominal and consequently the kanam was in the nature of a lease, unlike in North Malabar where kanam amounts were substantial, mostly mortgages for securing amounts advanced as loans, essentially mortgages with possession. This points to the lower economic strength of the janmis in the North. North Malabar unlike the South had a much larger number of self-cultivating farmers. While the janmi considered it an honour to have a number of kanam tenants under him, in the North it was only as a last resort that a janmi leased out his lands on kanam. Further the kuzhikanam tenure which guaranteed the cultivator some fixity of tenure and lower rent obligations was absent in the paddy growing South. The lower rent burden and the greater fixity of tenure were probably designed as an incentive to undertake the heavy initial investments which had a long gestation period.

45. "What is called a kanam in South Malabar is a tenure, but kanam as tenure is unknown in North Malabar. Kanam in North Malabar is nothing but mortgage. In South Malabar, generally the tenants approach the janmis for renewal or for lease of a kanam, but in North Malabar the janmi when he is need of money goes in search of a moneyed man to borrow money on the security of his property." Malabar Tenancy Committee, Report, 1947, p.24

46. ibid.
During the years of steeply increasing prices in the immediately pre and post War periods we find that while the cultivated area expanded rapidly, capital inputs into agriculture declined both in absolute and relative terms. The steep climb in prices from 1910-11 stopped in 1919 to begin a period of marked decline reaching its nadir in 1933-34.

For the district as a whole between 1891-92 and 1936 the inequality in the social distribution of landed property stagnated at a high level. The MCTIA of 1887 and or 1900 do not seem to have ameliorated or even arrested the increasing inequality index between 1891-92 and 1920-21. The magnitude of this increase was lower in the garden cropped North than in the paddy producing Southern taluks. The reasons for the differential nature of this change have been discussed above.

Let us assume that the peasants in the lowest revenue paying bracket (under Rs.10/-) roughly approximated to the actual cultivators and verumpattomdars. The estimated Gini coefficient between 1890/91 and 1920/21, after excluding the under Rs. 10 revenue payers shows a marked decrease in the garden cropped taluks while increasing in the paddy areas. If our use of the under Rs. 10 revenue class as a proxy for the tenurial categories below the kanamdar is even approximate then it would mean that the latter made considerable gains in land control during this
period in the garden lands. This is also corroborated by qualitative evidence as well as the statistical data on the working of the MCTIA of 1887 discussed earlier. These gains made by intermediate class of revenue payers is very significant as it suggests their ability to advance in a period of marked product price increase which had heightened the competition for acquiring more land.

The Depression hit the Malabar cultivator, especially the wet paddy farmer hard. The fall in rice prices was greater compared with that of garden produce. The drastically lowered returns from agriculture manifested itself in a liquidation of capital stock. While the returns to the wet paddy and garden cultivator registered decreases of 59 per cent and 49 per cent respectively between 1925 and 1935, wages are estimated to have fallen by 50 per cent. When the price fall of the order of 100 per cent is compared with the wage decrease it appears that the agricultural labour suffered relatively less than the landowning farmers. The continued expansion of the Net Cropped Area during the entire inter war period suggests that there was a sustained demand for agricultural labour during this period. The Resettlement of the district in 1930 and the consequent increase in the revenue

47. See Chapter 3.
burden coupled with the depressed state of the economy to further worsen the plight of the small cultivator.

The changes in agrarian relations in the one and a half centuries beginning in 1800 was marked by distinct phases. The early years of Company rule experienced a general depression. The recovery from the depression in the 1850s was accompanied by extreme janmi exploitation and pockets of militant peasant resistance. Heightened agrarian tensions forced the State to intervene to check the janmis. The result was the passing of some minimalist legislation, and the consequent rise of the well to do kanamdars. Kanamdars could take advantage of protective legislation in areas where janmi power was relatively weaker. These were generally in the garden dominated Northern taluks. The Depression was marked by some disengagement of large holders from wet cultivation, easier access to land and the entry of militant organized peasant resistance to landlordism. Combined with this the breakup of large Nayar taravads also contributed to the decline of landlordism, though not to very significant extent in the Malabar region. This period also witnessed a significant movement of population away from the agrarian sector.48 It needs to be pointed out here that although janmis were more powerful in

48. See Chapter 4 for sectoral changes in Malabar’s population.
the South, this did not prevent them from making productive investments in land. Palghat taluk is a case in point. Landlordism, *per se* was not an obstacle to increasing agricultural investment. Similarly, an increase in self cultivating farmers, did not ensure increase in agricultural investments or productivity.