Chapter - 6
FROM SOVEREIGNTY TO LANDLORDISM

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By the treaty of Srerangapatam in 1792, Tipu ceded the Malabar Province to the English East India Company. The northern divisions of the province were Chirakkal proper, Kottayam, Kadathanadu, Cannanore and the petty principalities of Iruvazhinadu, Kurungoth and Randathara. Wynad was not included in the ceded territories and it remained under Tipu’s domination. The immediate mission of the company was to devise plans for bringing tranquillity in the region by adopting British system of governance. The company authorities were divided as to the schemes to be adopted and the question that confused many of them was whether the Malabar rajas were to be converted as petty landlords like the Bengal Zamindars or to be considered independent rajas in their respective territories.

The English East India Company acquired Diwani (land revenue administration) of the three provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1765. The ensuing years saw different experiments in streamlining the civil and revenue administrative mechanism. Warren Hastings’s land revenue settlements were futile and Lord Cornwallis was appointed as the Governor General and the Commander-in-Chief of Indian possessions of the company in 1786 with a mission to devise an “an efficient administrative machinery, […]” and for “realising a regular surplus of revenue sufficient to purchase the Company’s annual investment of India piece-goods and China tea”.¹ When Malabar was ceded to the company, Cornwallis with his notion of the Bengal Zamindars vis-à-vis their English counterparts, was biased in considering the rajas of Malabar as the proprietors of land. Cornwallis was categorical in assuming that, “the Raja’s on that (Malabar)

coast are not independent but now become our subjects, and if we can put them in some degree on the footing of the Bengal Zamindars, and prevent their oppressing the people under them, the commerce of that country in pepper, spices, etc., may become extremely advantageous to the company”.2

But it was a clear reversal of the principles of Cowsls issued to the rajas of Malabar before the commencement of the third Anglo-Mysorean war. Tipu’s defeat in the war was facilitated because of the active support offered by the native rajas. They had been assured independence ‘under the protection of the company’ 3 on the condition of them ‘paying a very moderate tribute.4 But now the protection offered to them was reinterpreted as an opportunity to live under the security of the company.5

Legitimisation of Political Sovereignty

Cornwallis instructed General Abercromby, Governor of Bombay to enquire into the present condition of the country and to device a suitable system for the future government of province.6 Consequently General Abercromby arrived at Cannanore and appointed William Gamul Farmer and Alexander Dow as the members of the Malabar commission.7 Thus, the province of Malabar was put under the exclusive control of the civil servants of the Bombay Presidency and the period between April and

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2 Quoted in Pamela Nightingale, Trade and Empire in Western India (London, 1970), p. 69
3 Diary and Consultations of the Tellicherry Factory, (hereafter D&C), dated 9 May 1790, (Miscellaneous-Political), sl. no. 1518, Tamilnadu Archives, (hereafter T.N.A)
4 D&C, dated 18 August 1790, Ibid., p.191, T.N.A
5 A Report of the Joint Commission from Bengal and Bombay appointed to Inspect into the state and Condition of the Province of Malabar in 1792-93 (Madras, 1861), vol. II, (hereafter JCR-2) para. 81
6 Minutes of the Governor General on the General and Supplementary Reports on the Joint Commissioners of Malabar, 1792-93, p.4, T.N.A
7 Ibid.
December 1792 witnessed the setting up of a system of governance in the Province of Malabar, quite independent of Bengal. The members of the Bombay Commission neither had the attitude nor the experience for the post. They had their private motives and under their rule the roots of imperialism began to appear for the first time in Malabar.8

Cornwallis wanted the Commissioners to come to an agreement with the native chiefs for the revenue to be paid for the ensuing year and to enforce a monopoly of the pepper trade both in Malabar and Travancore. The Commissioners had to consider solutions for establishing new administrative and judicial machinery in place of the old system of Nayar states and the later system of Mysorean administration.9 At their first official meeting at Tellicherry on 22 April, Farmer and Dow expressed their opposition to the policy of adopting British administrative system and considering the rajas of Malabar vis-à-vis with the Bengal Zamindars. The Province of Malabar had no form of modern government; the feudal system was broken and no other system was known to the native rajas. The Mysorean invaders ignored the sanctity of the long-established matrilineal system of inheritance among the Nayars. The traditional system of land relations was based primarily on two categories of rights, the Janmam and Kanam. During the course of Tipu’s religious persecution, many of the Hindu chieftains and landlords of Malabar were forced to take refuge in Travancore. When the Mysorean rulers introduced a new system of revenue administration, the Brahmin and Nayar Jenmis kept aloof from the Mohammedan Cutcheries (revenue offices) and Tipu’s officials were

8 Nightingale, n.2, p. 73
9 D&C, dated 21 April 1792, (MSS), sl. no. 1520, pp.81-83, T.N.A
obliged to arrange land revenue settlements with the Moplah cultivators.\(^{10}\) When the Mysorean forces retreated, the rajas and Nayars returned to their old territories and attempted to recoup their old status and prerogatives. It was doubtful whether they would sincerely co-operate with the Commissioners with reliable information regarding the revenue potential of their principalities. Tipu had left behind no machinery of government, reliable records or trained officials that the company could use in its own administration.\(^{11}\) The Malabar province as a whole was plunged into a state of anarchy and bringing tranquillity in the region was the main priority for the Commissioners. Cornwallis was aware of the commotion in the province when he stated:

> The Malabar coast has been in a state of great distraction and confusion since the time that Tippoo’s troops and officers of this Government were driven out of it, the two great and inimical classes of the people, the Nayars and the Moplas being almost at open war with each other, and great dissensions about boundaries and revived old claims prevailing amongst the Nayar Rajahs themselves […]. \(^{12}\)

Moreover, the Commissioners could not totally ignore the Cowls granted to the native rajas by the company, though it did not clearly explain the terms of their dependence to the company. The Bombay Commissioners met at Tellicherry on 22 April 1792 and came to the conclusion that the

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10 Report of the Joint Commission from Bengal and Bombay appointed to Inspect into the state and Condition of the Province of Malabar in 1792-93 (Madras, 1861), vol. I, p. 174, T.N.A
11 Nightingale, n. 2, pp. 74-75
administration of the province should be left to the native rajas for some time to come and they could be used as an effective panacea against all sorts of internal ills. They opined that:

If the power of the Raja is destroyed the interior protection and defence of the inhabitants is at an end. […] the legal powers’ of the British Government are so much too weak that our Police is a Mockery and neither Person or Property is safe even in Bombay whilst at Poonah by the terrors of instant and certain Punishment no disturbance is heard. Where there is no principle in the human mind but fear we know that amongst the most subjected People the terror of a Despotick [sic] Government is requisite […]. [In Malabar] the despotick Powers of the Rajah and the prompt and unimpeded exercise of them are and for a long time will be alone efficient for the due protection of life and property.¹³

Therefore, the Bombay Commissioners suggested maintaining the power of the rajas and leaving the administration of the country in their hands subject to the control of the supreme government of the company. They thought that it would be the only feasible means for establishing order and prosperity in the province.¹⁴ They feared that without the loyalty and friendship of the rajas the province would be plunged again into the chaos and rebellion, which had defeated Tipu. They even went on to say that the

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¹³ Minutes of Farmer and Dow, dated 28 April 1792, quoted in Nightingale, n. 2, p. 76
¹⁴ N. Rajendran, Establishment of British Power in Malabar 1664 to 1799, Trivandrum, 1979, p. 241
rajas would rule the province far more efficiently than the English could even hope to do for some time to come as the company was temporarily short of trained administrators and was inadequately informed about the province.  

Cornwallis’s plan of making a temporary settlement with the rajas lends itself to these views. At the same time, this measure cannot be supposed as an exertion from the part of the company to make the rajas of Malabar totally independent and nor was it possible for them to make such an allowance for long. However, Abercromby did not want to offend the unruly rajas of Malabar outright and he instructed the Commissioners to be cautious in their approach. In his instruction to the Commissioners he made it clear that

[…] still however it will be necessary to use a mild language with the chiefs, and claim a Tribute for protection as implied in the treaties; nor can they with propriety insist on a literal construction of them, as they must be conscious they have not adhered to the most essential article the exclusive trade of the country; […] that the Tributes or a part of them should be paid in Pepper, Sandalwood, and Cardamums [...].

Nevertheless, the Bombay Commissioners were preconceived to adopt a policy suitable to their own private trade interests. Hence, a withdrawal of company’s plans to monopolise pepper trade was proposed. They feared that Cornwallis’ idea of introducing Bengal system of administration in Malabar would end the opportunities of their private

15 Nightingale, n. 2. p. 75
16 JCR- 2, para. 81
trade. Moreover, there would be a possibility of declaring pepper trade a state monopoly like opium in Bengal.\textsuperscript{17} Murdock Brown, an independent merchant, had close association with William Gamul Farmer and according to Pamela Nightingle, “there seems little doubt that the policy which Farmer put forward for the administration of Malabar was based on Brown’s ideas, and that it was designed to leave the rajas in effective control of the province and to encourage the Company to drop their plan of a pepper monopoly”.\textsuperscript{18}

Bombay Commissioners started their negotiations with the northern rajas of Chirakkal, Kottayam and Kadathanadu. The general terms offered to them provided for the exercise of authority by the rulers under the protection of the company, the trade of pepper through the merchants appointed by the company and the payment of regular tribute to be settled when the return from the land could be properly estimated.\textsuperscript{19} The northern rajas did not immediately consent to these terms during their first discussions with the Commissioners. Kadathanadu Raja was the first to be receded from his ‘lofty pretensions’\textsuperscript{20} and signed an agreement with the company on 25\textsuperscript{th} April 1792. Identical agreements were entered into with the rajas of Kottayam and Chirakkal on the same day itself.\textsuperscript{21}

As per the first clause of the agreement the rajas were given charge of their respective kingdoms, “subject only to the control of the Company”, in case of oppression of the inhabitants. The company had the right to maintain a Resident or Diwan in their capital to enquire into any complaints

\textsuperscript{17} Nightingale, n. 2, p. 81
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p.79
\textsuperscript{20} JCR-2, para. 83.
of oppression and report them to the Chief of Tellicherry for taking necessary remedial measures. Two persons from the part of the company and two each on the part of the rajas were to make valuation of the revenues of each district. The amount of revenue to be paid by each subject to the government should be settled individually as soon as possible so that, “no oppression may take place by demanding more” by the respective rajas and a copy of such settlements had to be lodged at Tellicherry. After making estimate of the quantity of pepper produced, “according to the appearance of the crop” in October, the government share had to be delivered to the company in part of tribute at a price fixed in December next. The remaining quantity of pepper with the producers had to be delivered exclusively to the merchants appointed by the company and necessary protection for them should be given by the rajas with the aid of the company. The eighth clause of the treaty made it clear that “[…] the present arrangement is not meant to be perpetual; it is meant as a trial how far the authority of the Raja can subsist consistently with the good and security of the subjects and is not to continue in force unless approved by the Honourable General Abercromby on his return to the Coast”. The sovereign powers of the rajas of Kadathanadu, Chirakkal and Kottayam over their ancestral possession had been duly handed over to the company and the presence of a Diwan or Resident in the respective territorial headquarters was nothing but an extension of political sovereignty of the company over rajas.

Iruvazhinadu territory was put under the direct management of the English company and the revenue assessment prevailed in Tellicherry was

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22 William Logan, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and other papers of Importance: Relating to British Affairs in Malabar*, (New Delhi, Asian Educational Services, 1989), rpt. 1, II/IV, pp.147-8

23 JCR-2, para. 84.
made applicable to it. The same administrative arrangement was extended to the district of Randathara. This was necessary for checking the illicit trade in pepper by the French merchants at Mahe. Direct administration of this district was justified on the ground that it had been already mortgaged by the Raja of Chirakkal for the huge amount indebted to the company.24

However, Kerala Varma, a junior prince of the Kottayam royal family refused to submit before the English company. He was subsequently known in company records as Pazhassi Raja and had been more persistent in his opposition to Tipu than any other native rajas of the Malabar Coast. He allied with the company forces in retreating Tipu and while doing so he hoped that a British victory would reinstate the old state affairs in Malabar and as soon as he saw that this was not to be and the company’s aim was to convert the rajas of Malabar to landlords, he raised a fierce banner of protest.25 Wynad had not been included among the territories ceded by Tipu in 1792 and it remained under Mysorean suzerainty. It soon became the bone of contention between the company and Pazhassi Raja as the region had for centuries belonged to Kottayam26 and was the most reliable source of income for royal house as it provided pepper and other spices in abundance.

Beebe of Cannanore was the next native power to be brought under control. She was unlike the other Malabar chiefs as the company’s rights of sovereignty over her possession had been acquired by conquests rather than alliance. Moreover she had been conducting independent commercial activities with Arabia. In addition, she was prosperous owing to the control over the produces of the Laccadive (Lakshwadweep) Islands. The Bombay

24 Ibid., para. 261.
26 JCR-2, para. 280.
Commissioners ordered her to furnish a statement of the produce and value of her country preparatory to a settlement.\textsuperscript{27}

The Commissioners turned attention towards the five chieftainships north of river Kavayi who were under the suzerainty of the Kolathiri prior to the Mysorean invasion. These lesser rajas were not included in the treaty concluded between the English company and Tipu in 1792, hence individual agreements became necessary. The Nileswaram Raja had already obtained permission from Tipu to retain his country. He was friendly with the English and was granted Cowl by the factors in 1790. General Abercromby, Governor of Bombay, met the Raja of Kumbla at Cannanore and permitted him to reside at Tellicherry and to receive a monthly pension of Rs. 200 for the maintenance of himself and his family.\textsuperscript{28} The Raja of Vitul Hegra (Beigada) was absent during Abercromby’s visit at Cannanore and was unable to present his representation in person. He then represented for indulgence at par with the Raja of Kumbla to the Robert Taylor, the Chief of Tellicherry and he was also given “the same footing as the Combla Raja” from May 1792.\textsuperscript{29} The rajas of Bungor and Chowtwaara were not friendly towards the company during the early years of third Anglo-Mysore war and were not given any indulgence and they had to return to their country, and were, it is said, imprisoned by Tipu.\textsuperscript{30}

After making temporary administrative and commercial arrangements in the north, the Bombay Commissioners proceeded to the south with similar intentions. William Farmer returned to the north after some time and was

\textsuperscript{28}Logan, n.22, II/III, pp. 146-7
\textsuperscript{29}Diary of the Tellicherry Factors, dated 4th June 1792 quoted in Logan, n.22, II/IX, pp. 151-2
\textsuperscript{30}Logan, n.27, p. 539
joined by William Page, the third member of the Bombay Commission. However, the Commissioners found that neither the private trade interests of the company officials nor the company’s exchequer benefited from the present arrangements. As noted elsewhere, Kolathunadu political structure was subjected to several subordinate levels of power spectrum. In addition to the Raja of Chirakkal, the rulers of Kadathanadu, Kottayam and Cannanore had become prominent in northern Malabar. The Commissioners decided to settle revenue arrangements with these principal powers and allowed them to continue as agents of the company. However, the rajas by virtue of their judicial powers and respectable position in Malabar society had exercised substantial control over the pepper supplies. When they were reinstated in their respective spheres they were in a position to procure large quantities of pepper in payment of rent. The Moplah merchants who were not under the direct control of the rajas held the pepper trade under tight control. The European merchants at Mahe, particularly Murdock Brown offered high prices for pepper. Farmer and Dow became careful about ‘his machinations and false assertions’ and were even compelled to change their opinions about Brown as well as the administrative system to be introduced in Malabar. By September, the Commissioners proposed a new policy of effective intervention in the administration of Malabar for enforcing monopoly of all pepper grown in the province.

**Subjugation of the native Political Agents**

The Commissioners had to resolve the real status of the lesser rajas, as the parcellization of authority in the region would be harmful to the revenue and stability of the country. The class of lesser rajas who were called *naduvazhis* and *desavazhis* belonged mostly to the Nayar

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31 Nightingale, n. 2, p. 82
community. This class were accustomed to the ancient system of fragmented authority in Malabar. They had a share on the *pattoom* (the authorities’ share of the produce) from their respective spheres of influence but never shared the same with the higher authorities in the feudal hierarchy. The ruling dynasties like, Kolathiri or Zamorin, etc. were suzerains over these lesser rajas or petty chieftains but without any fiscal authority. The subdivisions of the authority of government were intricate and probably unparalleled in the history of any country in the world. Many of these petty chieftains possessed independent financial and judicial powers in their respective spheres of influence and they as a class were totally exempted from paying any tributes to rajas above them. The Commissioners came to the conclusion that “[…] the continuance of such a system would only tend to create confusion in the revenue and disturbances in the country”. Hence they decided to disallow all those claims of the lesser rajas to be exempted from taxation and to treat them “in the same manner as any other person holding landed property”.

Their intention was to make definite arrangements with the northern rajas of Chirakkal, Kadathanadu and Kottayam. The lengthy agreement signed with Revi Varma Raja of Chirakkal on 12 October 1792 categorically declares the English company as the rightful sovereigns of the taluks of Chirakkal, Puttom Randathara, Cawai, and Murraye “in virtue of the cessions of Tippoo Sultan”. Revi Varma was permitted to be “in charge” of the said districts with the eloquent omission of Randathara. The Raja was to collect the pepper produced in the country on behalf of the company and the revenue for the next one year was fixed at “the sum of

32 Graeme’s Report, Malabar Collectorate Records, (M.C.R.)vol. 4037, p. 11, T.N.A
33 Revenue Department Diary, vol. 11, (not dated) October 1792, Bombar Archives, (hereafter B.A)
Bombay Rupees fifty thousand” to be paid in two instalments.\(^\text{34}\) Porlathiri Goda Varma Raja of Kadathanadu signed an agreement with the Commissioners on 23 October 1792. He was permitted to be “in charge” of the districts of Kootupoor, Bargarrah and Kawil. He was also made the official collector of pepper in these districts and had to pay Rs. 30,000 as revenue for the next year in two instalments.\(^\text{35}\) Kerala Varma (Pazhassi Raja) signed a similar agreement on 29th October 1792. He was the only Raja who ruled his ancestral possession even under the perils of Mysorean war and the Commissioners permitted him to continue “in charge” of the four districts, “Caderur, Paichey, Cuttiady and Tamberacherry. His revenue obligation was fixed at “the sum of Bombay Rs. Twenty thousand” in two instalments.\(^\text{36}\) The Raja of Kottayam assured the Commissioners that his pepper supply to the company “should not fall short of 500 candies”. Interestingly he was characterised as the most, “untreatable and unreasonable” among all the northern rajas of Malabar.\(^\text{37}\)

In all these agreements there were certain similar stipulations that guaranteed the company’s sovereignty and monopoly on pepper trade. The fifth clause in the agreements prohibited the custom of the rajas demanding one-half of the pepper produced by the cultivators as the state share. This measure was justified as for encouraging the people to plant more vines and to increase pepper cultivation. The said rajas to collect all the pepper produced in their respective territory to be delivered to the company at the rate of Rs. 100 per Tellicherry candy. The sixth clause prohibited the custom of Nayar chiefs holding land without paying revenue in lieu of

\(^{34}\) Logan, n.22, II/XVIII, pp. 166-7  
\(^{35}\) Ibid, II/XIX, pp. 168-9  
\(^{36}\) Ibid, II/XX, pp. 169-70  
\(^{37}\) JCR-2, para. 133-6.
military services. Hyder and Tipu abolished this practice and revenue was collected from every person. The company didn’t want the military services of the Nayars since; they were having their own troops. So the rajas were not to restore the ancient custom of granting revenue-free lands to Nayars. Similarly, the seventh clause prohibited all revenue-free land grants given in favour of the temples and Brahmins. Administration of justice and framing of rules for collecting the revenue were temporarily bestowed with the respective rajas. The eighth clause made it clear that the present system would be altered soon by the introduction of Bengal model with the arrival of two Commissioners from that presidency. The ninth clause declared that the appointment of ministers and officials should be done only with the consent of the company.38

The Bombay Commissioners entered into initial agreements with the rajas of Malabar for one year. The indigenous political agents were converted skilfully as revenue collectors. This period was significantly important in moulding the pattern of subsequent administrative apparatus. All the rajas of Malabar were painstakingly compelled to conceive the sovereignty of the English company. Nevertheless no attempt was made to interfere in the internal matters of administration of the province, which were left in the hands of the rajas. However, the higher authorities of the company in Bengal had the feeling that the subordination of the native rajas to the ultimate sovereignty of the company could be made effective only through the implementation of Bengal model of administration in Malabar.

38 Logan, n.22, II/XIII, pp. 157-8
Lord Cornwallis ratified the measures taken by the Bombay Commissioners for monopolising the pepper trade in Malabar. He despatched two members-Jonathan Duncan and Charles Boddam-from Bengal Council to cooperate with the Bombay Commissioners for associating the supreme government of the company with the Bombay government in the enquiry and settlement of Malabar affairs. The instructions given to the Bengal commissioners was to estimate “the amount of Revenue which these several [ceded] districts are capable of paying” and “to determine in a satisfactory manner on the number and constitution of the several Courts of Justice that will be necessary to ensure to the utmost possible degree (as far as the state of society there will permit) the dispensation of equal Justice to all classes of the society […].” As far as possible the revenue collection was to be received “in the natural pepper produce, taken at a fair market valuation instead of money payments, leaving whatever proportion cannot be secured in this way to be purchased by the Company’s commercial Agents on the spot” according to the regulations of the Bengal commercial department.39

Bengal Commissioners arrived in Malabar in December 1792. Jonathan Duncan had already proved his competency in revenue administration while serving in Benares and his selection to the Commission was intended to establish the Governor General’s intention of introducing Bengal system of government in Malabar. The company’s intention to take over the direct administration of Malabar had manifested

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39 Quoted in Logan, n. 27, pp. 543-6
itself into direct action with the arrival of the Bengal Commissioners. At the same time, it was their intention to safeguard steady supply of pepper exclusively in favour the English company by means of claiming sovereign authority over the Malabar country.

The price of pepper was “more than Ordinarily high” in England and the company was not in a position to collect sufficient quantity of the same from the ceded territories of Malabar. The high price offered at Mahe tempted the producers as well as the private merchants to betray the English company. The Joint Commissioners found it impossible to collect exact figures of pepper productivity, as it was deliberately hidden by the producers. Hence, one of the first measures taken by the Joint Commissioners (20th December 1792) was to permit trade in all articles of merchandize except pepper, which was held as a monopoly, “till further orders”. This measure was taken as “the best means of increasing the trade and promoting the prosperity of the inhabitants of the several districts” of Malabar.

**Destruction of Feudal Privileges**

On the New Year Day of 1793, the Commissioners, issued a Proclamation by which the native rajas were deprived of their judicial powers. Separate Courts of Enquiry and Justice were instituted to be presided over by the Commissioners themselves in rotation. The Court of Enquiry was “for minute enquiry and report” on all subjects of revenue and litigated landed claims between the rajas and other principal landholders to

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41 Nightingale, n. 2, p. 89
42 Logan, n.22, II/XXIII, pp.171-2
the Commissioners. The Court of Justice was to take all other subjects of claim and litigation not relating to the revenue or landed property between the rajas.\textsuperscript{43} The Commissioners decided to take away the privilege of Criminal justice enjoyed by the native rajas and accorded themselves as the appellate authority. The rajas henceforth could not sentence any death or retributive punishments without the consent of the Commissioners.\textsuperscript{44}

The Commissioners came to note that the rajas and principal landowners enjoyed certain feudal privileges, which squeezed the revenue potential of the actual cultivators. By the ancient customs of the land, the Brahmins were exempted from paying any revenue to the state in lieu of their priestly services. The Nayars paid no tribute for the land held by them being obliged to assist the rajas in wars. The rajas took presents from their subjects on the festive occasions like \textit{Onam} and \textit{Vishu}. Tipu during the course of his revenue reforms abolished all such feudal practices and taxed the entire land without considering the customs of the region. The English company authorised the native rajas to collect revenue on the basis of written agreements. They accordingly started to collect not only the revenue framed by Tipu but also made the claims of abolished customs. In the circular letters addressed separately to all principal rajas of Malabar, the Commissioners ordered them not to exact any presents “from the subjects of the Company on their several feasts and family ceremonies” under the claim of ancient customs and the practice of collecting “a proportion of the effects of dead people”. The Commission felt that such practices were oppressive and the inhabitants “cannot afford to pay the revenue”. The

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, II/XXIV, p.172
\textsuperscript{44} Diary of the Joint Commissioners, dated 19 January 1793, (MSS), sl. no. 1666, p. 157, T.N.A
hereditary revenue officials like, Protikars and Karriakars were also prohibited “from exacting presents from the people under any pretence”.

The rajas were unable to deliver their pepper to the company within the stipulated time frame. The smuggling of pepper to Mahe was rampant since it fetched a price of Rs. 60 to 70 more than at Tellicherry. The Commissioners warned that all who had sent their pepper to Mahe instead of to the company would not be under company’s protection and would be treated as unworthy of the company’s confidence. They declared a reward of one-half of the smuggled pepper for those giving information about it and assured that the name of such informers would not be disclosed. Since all these measures were not capable of stemming the smuggling, the Commissioners proposed the scheme of active interference in the administration of the province.

General Abercromby, the Governor of Bombay on the first anniversary of the treaty of Srerangapatam (18th March 1793) made an official declaration of the temporary government for the ceded country in Malabar in a formal ceremony at Calicut attended by an invited gathering. The Governor later proclaimed the plans formulated for the future administration of the newly styled ‘Province of Malabar’ through his circular to all the rajas and the principal landlords. Accordingly, William Gomull Farmer was made the ‘Supervisor and Chief Magistrate of the Province of Malabar’ with Calicut as the seat of his office. The Supervisor then made Revenue, Phouzdari (foujdari) and Sadar Adalat oaths.

45 Logan, n.22, II/XXV, p.173
46 Nightingale, n. 2, p. 87
47 Ibid, p. 89
48 Logan, n.22, II/XXVII, pp. 174-5
ceremoniously. The whole of Malabar country from Cochin to the Cavay was divided into two divisions, northern and southern, under two separate Superintendents who were to be checked and controlled by the Suprvisor.

The headquarters of the Northern Superintendent was fixed at Tellicherry and the districts of Chirakkal, Cannanore, Kottayam, Iruvazhinadu, Kadathanadu, Kurumbranad and Coorg were included within its jurisdiction. The Southern Superintendent was stationed at Cherpullassery. James Stevens was made the first Southern Superintendent and there is no mention in the official records about his counterpart in the northern division. However on 19th September 1793 Edward Galley was mentioned in the records as the northern Superintendent. The military force stationed on the coast was under the command of the Suprvisor and the only mint for the whole country was also placed under him. The Superintendents were to exercise both financial and political powers, subject only to the general supervision of the Suprvisor. The commercial residents were in charge of administering company’s commercial interests. All interior custom duties were to be abolished in the province and the import and export duties were to be collected by the customs officers appointed by the government.

The Commissioners were busy with the mission of altering the existing system of indigenous politics to cope with the colonial administrative structure created at the apex. They had to bring the lesser

49 Logan, n.27, pp. 548-51
50 Logan, n.22, II/XXXII, pp. 178-80
51 JCR-2, para. 212
52 Ibid, para. 214
53 Logan, n.27, p.552
rajas, who had not been brought under the company’s authority so far, into submission. At the same time new agreements had to be made with the principal rajas not only for improving revenue collection and trade on pepper from their respective territories but also for incorporating them with the new administrative structure.

The Joint Commission continued their efforts to arrive at definite revenue settlements with the Raja of Coorg and Beebe of Cannanore. The former helped the company against Tipu ‘heartily’ and supplied the Bombay army with ‘a quantity of grain and cattle’, without which the company troops ‘would have been greatly distressed’. The Raja upon negotiation agreed to pay to the company eight thousand Hoons per annum, corresponding to 24,000 of the Bombay rupees. No revenue settlement had been settled so far with the Beebe of Cannanore owing to the alleged mortgage of the Laccadive Islands to Chovakkara Musa and the land taken by the Chirakkal Raja. On 11 April 1793, the Commissioners entered into an agreement with the Beebe by which she admitted to pay the sum of Rs. 28,680-12-3, in three instalments, which were the arrears of revenue for the years 1791 and 1792. In a second agreement signed on 13 April, the Beebe was made more subservient. She admitted that she was reaping an annual profit of Rs. 20,000 from the Laccadive Island and agreed to pay the half of it to the company and ‘the half of whatever further income or profit from the said’ Island. She also agreed to admit a gentleman to sequester, if

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54 Jonathan Duncan was the President and Alexander Dow, William Page, Charles Boddam were the members of the Joint Commission
55 Logan, n.22, II/XXXIII, pp. 180-81
56 JCR-2, para. 236-7
57 Logan, n.22, II/XXXIV, p.181
need be, of the whole of the produce of the Islands and of the Islands themselves.\textsuperscript{58}

**Monopolising the pepper trade**

While negotiating with the rajas of Malabar over revenue settlement, the company had to shoulder its sovereign responsibility of strengthening the natives with due revenue paying capacity. The company had already declared free trade in all articles of merchandize except pepper on 20\textsuperscript{th} December 1792.\textsuperscript{59} But these measures were not effective and some changes in the principles of pepper trade had become necessary.\textsuperscript{60} Lord Cornwallis was aware of it and he condemned the policy of offering low prices for pepper by the company, which in his opinion benefited only the private merchants at Mahe. His advice was to revert to the long-established custom of taking half the produce in revenue and allowing the people to sell the rest at higher prices so as to equip them with more revenue paying potential. Therefore, the Commissioners had every reason to change their policy of pepper monopoly, especially when the smuggled pepper fetched Rs 200 a candy at Mahe.\textsuperscript{61}

On 15\textsuperscript{th} April 1793, the Joint Commissioners issued a Proclamation by which the pepper monopoly was abolished in the Province of Malabar, except Cochin and that one-half of the produce need to be given to the company by right of its sovereignty.\textsuperscript{62} However, the decision of the Commissioners was not acceptable to the Supervisor at Calicut. His

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., p.182  
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., II/XXIII, pp.171-2  
\textsuperscript{60} Francis Buchannan, *A Journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar*, (New Delhi, Asian Education Services, 1988), vol.2, rpt., p. 534  
\textsuperscript{61} Nightingale, n. 2, pp. 90-91  
\textsuperscript{62} Logan, n.22, II/XXXVI, p.182
objection was on the clause of collecting one-half as state share and he issued another Proclamation, on 21st April, in the southern districts accepting free trade of pepper without any land duties or impediment. The differences of opinion between the two were resolved by stipulating that the commissioners’ Proclamation should be in force in northern districts while the Supervisor’s proclamation should be followed in southern districts.

Randathara was a pepper rich territory and its control was important to the commercial interests of the company as well as to the private trade motives of its servants. The Commissioners entered into an agreement with the Achanmars on 26th April 1793. The revenue of their estates was fixed at the same rates as have prevailed since 1741 when it was first mortgaged; hence their garden lands were taxed at 20 per cent and rice lands at 15 per cent. Their temple lands of Chala Moyla and their own houses were exempted from taxation. At the same time they were forced to relinquish all their customary claims on revenue, presents, fines, mulets and succession duties from the inhabitants of the territory. They also renounced all administrative, governmental and judicial duties and rights over cultivated or wastelands.

Equally important was the district of Iruvazhinadu not only because of its pepper potential but also due to its proximity to Tellicherry and Mahe. The Commissioners had apprehensions about restoring the six Nambiar in their ancestral possessions. The territory was in disturbed condition because of the mutual animosities and jealousies among the Nambiar themselves. They collected several feudal dues from the people beneath them. On 14th

63 Ibid., II/XXXVII, p.183
64 Ibid., II/XXXIX, pp.184-5
65 JCR-2, para. 267
May 1793, the Commissioners made an agreement with the Nambiars by which they were authorised to collect the land revenue fixed by the government from the landholders on behalf of the company but without any oppression or over-estimation. At the same time, they had to protect the landholders and to stop the exaction of all kinds of customary feudal dues like succession duties, presents, fines and mulcts. The Nambiars admitted their ‘mutual animosities’ and agreed to conclude with Galley, the Northern Superintendent, a detailed settlement on revenue due from their own Janmam holdings66 which they did in September at Tellicherry. Accordingly they signed detailed settlements with the Northern Superintendent on 14th September 1793. They were granted with ‘an allowance of 10 per cent on the Government’s moiety, of revenue arising from the landed property in the district’, with a view to the happiness and prosperity of the contracting Chiefs. The Nambiars had to acknowledge the company as the sovereign power in the district and their re-instatement to former possession and the right to revenue collection were made on the condition of perpetual fidelity and allegiance to the company. Further they agreed to contribute necessary assistance required both in men and money ‘for the purpose of laying a new and correct valuation on the lands of the district’.67

Revenue Administration

The Commissioners next turned their attention to the task of arranging fresh agreements with the principal rajas. It was a herculean task, since new claimants of authority appeared before the Commission from their exile in Travancore. The indigenous politics once again entered into a pool of conflicting interests and court intrigues. For instance, the

66 Aitchison, n. 21, vol. 5, p. 387
67 Logan, n.22, II/LXIII, II/LXIV, pp.203-6, pp. 206-7
Kurumbranadu Raja was the senior member among the royal family of Kottayam and he left the country for Travancore during 1788-89 in the pretext of Tipu’s invasion after handing over the administrative responsibilities of his ancestral territory to a junior prince of the family Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja. The Commissioners made preliminary agreements on land revenue collection of Kottayam with Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja. Revenue exactions from Kottayam were meagre and the Commissioners hoped to try alternate experiments. On 18th May 1793, the Kurumbranadu Raja was made responsible for revenue collection not only in the district of Kurumbranadu but also in Parappanad and Kottayam during 1793-94 and he was permitted to appoint an assistant to help him in revenue collection. This agreement annoyed the junior Raja of Pazhassi and deepened his animosity against the company, which paved the way for a series of subsequent rebellions.

In Chirakkal, a young prince claimed authority by virtue of the fact that he had never left the territory even under the Mysorean threat. His claims were set-aside in favour of whom the settlement was first made. The young prince was allowed to approach the Adalat Court for settling the issue of his claims. In addition to such claims by men of ruling families, there were other instances of private claims in Chirakkal. Marco Antonio Rodrigues, a descendant of Pedro Rodrigues who was the former Linguists of the Tellicherry factory, claimed the Kallai region in Chirakkal under a deed of conveyance to his grandfather by the Chirakkal Raja in 1758 and

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69. Logan, n.22, II/XLII, pp.188-9
70 Logan, n.27, p. 556.
71 Logan, n.22, I/LXXI, p. 60
which the present Raja had quietly recouped. The company confiscated the
territory while the matter was pending final decision of the Governor-
General. Another claimant to some parts Chirakkal territory was Hyat
Sahib, a Hindu convert to Islam and later on a close associate of Hyder.
The Commissioners pronounced his claim invalid over the villages of
Chalat, Talapil and Kunattur in Chirakkal.  

The Commissioners made specific arrangements for the collection
of revenue from the ceded province by appointing Inspectors or Collectors
to act jointly with the officials of the native rajas. All inland duties, tolls,
customs and transport duties were abolished in Malabar and the native rajas
were prohibited from maintaining commercial contacts with foreign
countries without the mediation of the English company. The rajas of
Kadathanadu (on 19th June, 1793), Kurumbranadu (on 24th June) and
Chirakkal (on 5th July) entered into written agreements with the
Commissioners in this regard. The agreements made with the northern rajas
were forwarded to the Supravisor for his ratification. A host of subordinate
officials like Tahasildars, Parabuttis and Menons were appointed in all the
above territories. Adhikaris were appointed, as the head of the
administrative divisions called amsams and their primary responsibility was

72 Hyat Sahib held various responsible positions like Faujdar and Governor of Bednure
during Hyder’s time. In 1783 he rebelled against Tipu and took refuge in the
Tellicherry settlement. He obtained from Chirakkal Raja a grant of three villages -
Chalat, Talapil and Kunattur- in 1783. Logan opines that Hyat Sahib obtained such a
grant on the pretence of using his influence with the English to procure the
restoration of the Raja to his country. Tipu’s vengeance against him might have
appeared in the form of granting the same villages in favour of Beebe of Cannanore
at the time of her daughter’s marriage to Tipu’s son. The Commissioners rejected
Hyat’s claim in 1793 and his appeal to the Supreme government in 1795 also
brought the same fate. (vide Logan, n.22, I/XCI, f.n., pp.81-2)
73 Ibid, II/XLV, pp.192-3
74 Ibid, II/XLVI, pp.194-5
75 Ibid, II/LV, pp.197-8
to collect taxes on behalf of the company. The *adhikaris* were selected from among the affluent land owning Nayar families and the prestige and status of the houses to which they belonged legitimised their new authority, as the agents of the company, in their respective spheres of influence.  

*Canongoes* were appointed as an exclusive group of officials to ensure “such a control over the collections as would enable the Company’s servants to ascertain at the end of the year the nature and constituent parts and amount of the public revenue.” Instructions were given to take utmost care while selecting them so as not to give preference to any particular religious group.

In the meantime, the French Revolution and its brutal aftermath of the Reign of Terror had changed the power equations in European politics. On 1st February 1793, the French Republic declared war against England and Holland and its inevitable repercussions in India resulted in the progressive capturing of French settlements. On 10 July, Mahe was surrendered before Colonel Hartley and as per the articles of Capitulation, L’ Archer, Commandant of the Mahe fort, agreed to deliver up the fort and its dependencies on 16 July. William Gomul Farmer, the Supervisor of Malabar Province, became convinced of the commercial and strategic importance of Mahe settlement. In his letter to Lord Cornwallis, he highlighted “the perpetual bar which Mahe will be to any arrangement. We may think fit to make for securing to the Company the greatest share of the Pepper trade on this Coast, besides the part it played as a market for slaves

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77 Quoted in Logan, n.27, p. 555
78 JCR-2, para.316 & 456
79 Logan, n.22, II/LVII, p. 199
and its possible use by the French as an offensive base in war-time”. He
was also confident of using it as a commercial depot with the river
facilitating import of goods from Kurungoth, Iruvazhinadu, Kadathanadu
and Kottayam. Also, fine warehouses lined the water’s edge. His
suggestion was to make it as commercial headquarters of the company and
to leave Tellicherry as the seat of government.80

Thus, by August 1793, the English company scaled unchallenged
commercial and political positions in Malabar. The company now claimed
four-fifths of the revenue for its own use and this was to be collected by its
own officials. The company demanded half of the pepper produce of the
northern districts and the rajas had to make do with the one-fifth remainder.
The native rajas were permitted to enjoy only restricted authority in
executive, judicial and financial spheres. With the fall of Mahe, the English
company was the only large-scale buyer of pepper in Malabar.

In general, the company recruited their employees from among the
debris of the crumbling feudal classes to create a pro-imperialist indigenous
class as the bulwark between the rulers and the ruled. It was a practical
measure since the erstwhile desavazhis and naduvazhis were well versed in
the indigenous structures and patterns of administration. Their services
would be of greater use for the new sovereigns and helpful in cutting down
administrative expenses. This kind of empowerment of the local vested
classes for merchant capitalist designs was visible ever since the early days
of the English company on the coast. The same technique was extended to
other fields also during the period under survey. The judicial reforms
introduced in the ceded territories of Malabar should be analysed in this
particular context.

80. Nightingale, n. 2, pp. 91-92
A new judicial system-almost independent from local customs and laws-on the basis of codified law was necessary for the smooth functioning of revenue collection and profitable commercial activities. The general framework of the new system had already been established through the regulations of 1793. In due course of time seven local courts, under native judges (derogas), supported by local policemen and court administrators, were established in Malabar. The Derogas were subordinated to the Superintendents and the latter in their capacity as the Provincial Judges could exact mochulkas or penal obligations from all native officers ‘for good behaviour and integrity’, when employed in judicial responsibilities. The subordinate courts were not permitted to hear cases concerning revenues and such cases could be heard, tried and determined by the Superintendents in their revenue Cutcheries.

On 11th October 1793, the Malabar Commission dissolved itself and the members handed over a most elaborate and valuable report on the province of Malabar to the Governor-General. The Commission was successful in their own way in settling the affairs of the ceded territories. The services rendered by them were laudable despite some ill-consequences owing to their ignorance about the indigenous systems and their own private commercial interests guided by such influential persons like Murdock Brown. The liquidation of various feudal claims of the principal rajas and lesser rajas and their conversion as mere revenue collectors on behalf of the company was not totally successful. In spite of

81. The seven local courts were established at Cannanore, Quilandy, Tirurangadi, Ponnam, Palghat, Tanur and Chetuwai.
82 JCR-2, paras. 374,382,384,385
84 Ibid, p. 11
the fall of Mahe, pepper trade did not improved considerably. The judicial machinery introduced to replace the old system was disgusting in many respects. The primary motive behind the establishment of new judicial system without any regard to the traditional institutions of the land was to strengthen the local magnates with inalienable rights on property to guarantee steady extraction of revenue. The Commissioners took little pain in investigating the true status of Jenmakaran (Jenmis) in Malabar context. Rather they interpreted the status of Jenmakaran at par with the Roman dominus and Jannam as the dominium. In European context, the dominus owned the land as the lord of the soil. In Malabar, the Jenmakaran owned not the land but a right or an authority called Jannam within a certain defined area, and was entitled as such to a well-defined share of produce-the pattam or ancient land revenue assessment- of the land lying within that area”. In other words the Jannam rights depended on the sthanamanangal (rights and positions) of the Jenmakaran by virtue of his spiritual, political and ritual functions, and hence a definite position in the redistributive system of resources.

The Joint Commission in their voluminous report recommended replacing of the Tellicherry Factory by a commercial residency in the model of the one that functioned at Calicut. Their recommendation was on the basis of increasing expenditure of the factory over the years since 1790. Tellicherry factory as the nerve centre of British affairs in Malabar was an obsolete concept now since Calicut was the new administrative

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86 Logan, n.27, p. 558
headquarters and Tellicherry housed the office of the Northern Superintendent.87

On the basis of the conclusions made by the Commissioners William Gamul Farmer made the Janmam Rights Proclamation in October 1793. All the Jelmnkaars (Jenmis) who retuned to Malabar by the year 1791 were permitted to possess their Janmam rights. They could collect pattam from the Kanamkkars either according to the ancient system or otherwise as may be agreeable to both parties. In return the Jenmis had to pay to the company the revenue as settled by Arshed Beg Khan during Mysorean period. Whereas those Jenmis who were not in possession of their Janmam rights due to the conflicts with the Kanamkkars, “may then sue in the Adawlet Cutcherry and obtain repossession of their jelms (Janmam rights), when the time they leased them for expires or taking from the Kanamkkkaars the pattoom agreed for settlement with the Circar for negudi (revenue)” 88 The janmi proclamation was made after discussions with the Zamorin, as the conflicts between the Hindu Jenmis and Muslim Kanamkkars were intense in South Malabar and had a religious tinge. As far as the Northern Malabar was concerned many of the Hindu families there achieved prominence during the course of 1792 to 1805 as a direct impact of the legitimisation granted to their position by the proclamation.89

The political, revenue and judicial settlements were neither favourable for strengthening the colonial interests of the company nor for the political designs of the native rajas or for the economic stability of the Jenmis. The rajas were discontent over the denial of judicial powers,

87 JCR-2, para. 509
88 Logan, n.22, II/LXVIII, pp. 209-10
89 Kalliat, Vengayil, Kodothu and Kuttamath families are to mention a few in this regard, vide Kurup, n. 76, p. 7 & 14
stemming of income sources like customary claims on revenue, tax on trades and royal prerogatives in addition to the complaints on the exorbitant revenue demands. The new revenue system on the basis of Tipu’s jumabundy left the rajas with a meagre share of one-fifth of the revenue collected from their respective territories.\(^90\) In November 1793, the rajas of Kadathanadu and Kottayam expressed their inability to cooperate with the settlement. In their representation to the Supravisor, they insisted that the company should demand only one-half of the pattoom or rent which the janmamkars received from their cultivators and not the one-half of the total produce. The rajas preferred themselves to be tax collectors in return of paying tributes to the company. Farmer set out on a tour to the northern division along with Murdock Brown and negotiated terms for some changes in the revenue settlement.\(^91\) Following negotiations with the Raja of Kadathanadu, Farmer made concessions by which the company’s share was fixed at 6/10 of the pattoom received from the cultivators. The expenses for appointing native officials for revenue collection had to be met from the remaining part of the pattoom and the Raja was entitled to enjoy one-fifth.\(^92\) Similar agreement was accorded with Ravi Varma Raja of Chirakkal at Baliapatam on 7\(^{th}\) January 1794.\(^93\)

The Commissioners’ decision to permit the Raja of Kurumbranadu to collect revenue from Kottayam annoyed the Pazhassi Raja and he challenged the company by prohibiting collection of revenue from Kottayam and even threatened to cut down all the pepper vines if the company didn’t make reforms favourable to him. On 20\(^{th}\) December 1793

\(^{90}\) JCR-2, para. 73
\(^{91}\) Nightingale, n. 2, p. 107
\(^{92}\) Logan, n.22, II/LXXIII, pp.213-15
\(^{93}\) Ibid, II/LXXVI, pp. 216-17
Farmer entered into an agreement with the Pazhassi Raja by which he was permitted to collect one-half of the pattoom or rent from the taluks of Cadoor (Katirur), Punchy (Pazhassi), Cattiari (Kuttiyadi), and Tambercherry (Tamarasseri). In another agreement with Pazhassi Raja, Farmer agreed not to collect the assessment on temple lands, one-fifth of the revenues for maintenance of the Raja and another one-fifth for the support of the temples, in consideration of the assistance given by the Raja against Tipu and his long friendship with the company.

**Rajas as Landlords**

The Bengal Commissioners submitted a supplementary report, on unsettled issues in Malabar, to the Governor General on 2 February 1794. Sir John Shore, the Governor-General in his minutes on the reports of the Malabar Commissioners ratified the revenue settlements made by the Commissioners with the rajas of Malabar. The company’s revenue officials were withdrawn and the native rajas and chieftains were authorised to make their own arrangement for revenue collection on the basis of stipulated juma. He accepted the recommendation made by the Commissioners for abolishing the Tellicherry factory. The factory was officially abolished on 27 July 1794 and in its place a temporary Commercial Residency was established at Mahe under the chiefship of Robert Taylor. James Stevens succeeded Farmer as the Supravis or and he found fault with the concessions given to the northern rajas by his predecessor, which were not useful either to reinforce company’s political authority or to enhance the

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94 Ibid., n.22, II/LXXIV, p. 215
95 Ibid, II/LXXV, p. 216
96 JCR-2, para. 1-51
97 Sir John Shore’s Minutes on the Malabar Commissioners’ Reports, dated 24 February 1794 (MSS), paras, 116-8, National Archives (hereafter NA)
98 Logan, n. 27, p. 564
revenue returns. In fact, it paved the way for increasing the spirit of independence among the northern rajas. “The untimely and abject compliances on this occasion encouraged future resistance and diminished the respect for the company’s Government. Their authority was nowhere asserted with vigour and was in most places exposed to contempt or neglect”.

Stevens’ complaint was that the company was not receiving its rightful share of pepper from the northern division and declared “his intention of proceeding there with an armed force sufficient to impose the company’s will on the rajas and to enforce the same financial and judicial regulations there as were imposed in the southern districts”. His lengthy communications with the Bengal government in this regard turned out to be fruitful and they decided that the said agreements made by Farmer with the northern rajas “as containing concessions improper and impolitic as well as opposed to the regulations framed by the Governor-General on the Joint Commissioner’s report” and were rescinded. The Supervisor was directed to enter into fresh quinquennial agreements with the rajas and chiefs of Malabar.

The primary intention behind such a move was to control the rajas from imposing any additional extraction from the peasantry. Therefore after estimating the gross revenue of each instance an amount of 10 per cent was allowed as charges of collection, 20 per cent as allowances for the Raja or chief and 3.5 per cent for temple lands. Porlathiri Kotha Varma, the Raja of Kadathanadu was the first to be brought under the quinquennial agreements. He agreed to clear the balance of revenue (Viray Hoons 5,036-6-5) due for

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99 Captain Walker’s report on Malabar, 24 August 1799, quoted in Nightingale, n. 2, p. 108, f.n
100 Nightingale, n. 2, p. 111
101 Logan, n.22, p. 217, ft. n.
the year 969 M.E (A.D 1793-94) before March 1795. During the period of joint collection by the officers of the company and Raja, permanent registers of land revenue had been prepared and on the basis of the same, a quinquennial agreement commencing from the year 970 to 974 M.E (A.D.1794 to 1798) was settled on 1st March 1795. Subsequently similar agreements were settled with the Raja of Chirakkal and the Nambiar of Iruvazhinadu. The claims of Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja over Kottayam district were altogether ignored and the settlement of that territory was executed with the Raja of Kurumbranadu.

These agreements had far reaching effects on the indigenous political structure. The rajas of Malabar were demoted to the status of the agents of an imperialist power with the responsibility to collect revenue from their respective spheres influence on behalf of the latter. This became more evident when they were stripped off the traditional feudal privileges and judicial powers. However, it soon proved impossible to treat the rajas of Malabar as some kind of Bengali Zamindars, for most of the former were unable to realize the amount demanded from them. Their failure to do so was owing to the incompatibility of the native political structure in a colonial statehood. The revenue assessment stipulated was exorbitant in nature and the rajas had little experience in revenue collection.

For instance, Chirakkal Raja’s accumulated dues of the first term between 1794-95 shot up to a figure of Rs. 45,000 by the end of the year 1795 and that of the Raja of Kadathanadu to Rs. 30,300. Jonathan

102 Ibid., II/LXXVIII, p.230
103 Ibid, II/LXXXIX, Ibid.
104 Atchison, n. 21, pp. 370, 398.
105 Logan, n.22, II/LXCI, pp. 231-2
106 Ibid., II/C, II/CI, p. 246
Duncan, now as the Governor of Bombay, insisted that the rajas should pay interest on all arrears in the proportion of 12 per cent per annum for the first eight days after the expiration of the Kist, 24 per cent for the next twenty days and 36 per cent for the next thirty days.\textsuperscript{107}

The restrictions imposed upon the rajas and the absence of any effective authority over the landholders further weakened the scope of them becoming successful revenue collectors. The rajas were used to perform certain ritual functions, which stabilised their position in the peculiar feudalistic pattern of political overlordship. They were accustomed with the ancient customs and practices and were unable to conceive subjugation under an alien colonial power. In 1795, the Raja of Chirakkal decided to perform the coronation ceremony \textit{(Ariyittu Vazhcha)} of the Kolathiri. The Kolathiri designate had to approach and pray before the Goddess of Maday temple for favour and grace before performing the formal function. Without performing \textit{Ariyittu Vazhcha} the senior member of the family could not be the Kolathiri nor could he visit the temple.\textsuperscript{108} A.W. Handley, the Supravisor refused to permit the said ceremony as he took it as a deliberate attempt from the part of the Raja of Chirakkal to challenge the sovereignty of the company and to assume former independence. The letter sent by the Raja in this connection to Handley was addressed to ‘Kottah Muppan of Tellicherry and the Supravisor warned the Raja not to use such insulting title anymore as the company was the real and paramount power in Malabar.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid, II/CVI - CX, pp. 249-50
\textsuperscript{108} MCR, vol. 2104, p. 5, T.N.A
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid
There were several instances in which the company had to be a mediator in the dispute between the landholders and the Raja of Chirakkal over land revenue and its mode of collection. The Chulali Nambiar was a petty chieftain having ancestral linkage with the legendary Cheraman Perumal. Chirakkal Raja had reasons to be ill at ease with this chieftain, as he had supported the claim of a rival prince of the Kolathiri family. Raja demanded Rs. 16,000 as revenue of the Chulali territory which was excessive. Christopher Peile, the Northern Superintendent was the mediator between the two and, on 27 October 1795, reconciliation was made and the Raja was forced to accept Rs. 11,000 as the real share of Chulali region.

All the efforts hitherto taken for active interference in Malabar affairs by the company did not produced the desired results. As far as the quinquennial agreements for revenue collection was concerned, the Chirakkal and Kottayam territories had large amounts of defaults. Moreover, the Zamorin levelled serious charges of bribery against the Supravisor James Stevens. The Court of Directors, with serious apprehensions, ordered to form a committee to enquire into such developments. Thus Jonathan Duncan created the Second Malabar Commission on 18th May 1796 to execute the authority of the Supravisor. Thomas Wilkinson, (commercial resident at Mahe) was made the president of the Commission along with Alexander Dow (the former Bombay Commissioner), Augustus William Handley (the Malabar Supravisor) and Robert Rickards (Private Secretary of Duncan, the Bombay Governor) as members. They were instructed to perform collectively the duty of the

110 Chulali Nambiars claimed their ancestry from a Nayar wife of Cheraman Perumal. They were one of the chief feudatories of the Kolathiri and controlled the trade route between Coorg and the Kolathunadu through Sreekandapuram, vide Logan, n.27, pp. 272-3.

111 Ibid, pp. 573-4
Supervisor. The establishment of a typical colonial pattern of administration was structured under their leadership during the course of the next five years until the abolition of the Commission on 30th September 1801. They had private commercial interests on the coast which had its repercussions both in company’s circles and in indigenous politics.

The membership of the Commission changed frequently. However the commercial interests of the Bombay merchants always stood at the apex even when new administrative arrangements were offered and implemented by the Commission. Some of them had a preconceived notion on the functioning of the government in Malabar under the native chiefs. They condemned it as arbitrary and as being difficult to control. They preferred to follow a ‘forward’ policy of removing the native chiefs by force from their administrative and judicial functions and replacing them with English officials and institutions. It was the imperialism of the private merchant, through a policy of free trade, destroying the privileged commercial position enjoyed by the native chiefs. On the other hand, Jonathan Duncan and other exponents of the imperialism of the company advocated a policy of ‘moderation’ and opposed the use of force. In their opinion the practical step “for the Company to buy pepper directly from the cultivators at a rate higher than they would receive from the rajas or merchants, but at a price much lower than the Company had to pay to the contractors.” This school opted for permitting the native chiefs to retain their power and institutions for some more time and insisted in prohibiting

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113 Bombay Revenue Proceedings, Vol. 19, dated 30 June 1796, pp. 568-9, Bombay Archives
the privileges of private trade by the company servants and instituting exclusive trade monopoly in favour of the company.\footnote{Nightingale, n. 2, pp. 117-22}

The two schools-forward and moderate-decided the future course of political developments in Malabar at different points of time. When the forward school had an upper hand in decision-making it opted to suppress the native struggles. The policy of pacification towards the native chiefs gained currency when moderate administrators dominated Malabar affairs. This became particularly evident with the arrival of a Committee of the Government in Malabar, comprising of the Bombay Governor and Commander-in-Chief (Jonathan Duncan and Lieutenant-General James Stuart respectively) by the middle of April 1797 “for the purpose of accomplishing certain objects materially affecting the public welfare”.\footnote{Logan, n.2, I/CXXXIV, p. 272.}

The immediate reason for such a move was to arrest the growing influence of Tipu in Malabar affairs with the help of the Pazhassi Raja.\footnote{C.A. Innes, Malabar Gazetteer, (Thiruvananthapuam, The Kerala State Gazetteers, 1997), rpnt., vol.1, p. 74}

The modifications made in the colonial structure had to benefit the private mercantile interests of the company servants and the monopolistic interests of the company. The extension of imperialistic ideals over different rajas and chieftains in north Malabar politics has to be analysed separately. Beebe of Cannanore had some bitterness with the Chirakkal Raja over the territories-Canatoor and Canotchalle- granted to her by Tipu Sultan. This claim was finally settled against Beebe and she was forced to accept the said territories as company’s property. In an agreement signed on 28\textsuperscript{th} October 1796, she accepted to be treated as an ordinary \textit{Jenmakaran} without any sort of suzerainty and to pay the company Rs. 15,000 per
annum as the *juma* on the houses and property. She consented to give up all her pretensions to the one-fifth share of the revenue collection from Cannanore and Laccadive Islands.\(^{117}\) She was deprived off the sovereign rights and had become an ordinary landowner and merchant without any political privileges.

Ravi Varma Raja of Chirakkal was in a vulnerable position because of the triumphant strides of the imperialist designs of the company and the encroachments made into his authority by his own vassals. The company exploit every available opportunity to remind him of his subordinate status. For instance in August 1796 Christopher Peile, the Northern Superintendent, enquired about the hearsay that some of the Raja’s men confiscated a vessel belonging to a merchant and demanded payment of import duties. Peile made it clear that collection of import duty is the prerogative of the (company) government and nobody will be allowed to usurp the “rights of the Honourable Company”.\(^{118}\) In his reply the Chirakkal Raja was highly apologetic and assured that such an incident will not happen in his realm in future.\(^{119}\) Some of the vassals of the Raja also became defiant to his authority. Four Nambiar and three Nayars approached the Raja when he was reinstated in Chirakkal by the company and prayed for them being appointed as *parbuttis*. All of them belonged to affluent families and were capable of raising 200 to 300 men on demand. They were obedient until the settlement of *jumabundy* in 1792-93 and there after showed reluctance to settle the *jumabundy* accounts with the Raja.

\(^{117}\text{Aitchison, n. 21, vol. 5, p. 395}\)
\(^{118}\text{Scaria Zacharia (gen. ed.), *Talasseri Rekhakal* (mal.), Tuebingen University Library Malayalam Manuscript Series (TULMMS), vol. 5, (hereafter T.R), (Changanacherry, 1996), 93 C&D, p. 46}\)
\(^{119}\text{Ibid., 99 C&D, p. 50}\)
Ravi Varma explained all these developments to Peile as an excuse for the default in settling *juma* with the company.\footnote{Ibid., 103 C&D, pp. 52-53. Karakkattidam Chandu Nambiar, Padinaridam Chindan Nambiar, Kolakkilidam Kelappa Nambiar and Ambu Nambiar, kalliat Nambiar, Vengayil Chandu, Nidumpoyil Kunjan were the vassals mentioned in this document.}

The settlement of disputes between the Chulali Nambiar and the Raja over the collection of land revenue was addressed earlier. In 1797, three landholders of Chulali sent a complaint to the Commissioners that they were assessed and taxed heavily by the Raja’s officials. The Commissioners ordered the Northern Superintendent to visit the spot and make an amicable settlement. Accordingly, the Northern Superintendent defined the exact portion of the produce to be spared by the inhabitants as revenue and payable to the Raja. “In order to prevent any future complaints and ensure the careful observance of the terms arrived at between the Raja and the inhabitants, he appointed Baboo Row, a company’s Cannangoe [….] with the consent of the Raja”.\footnote{MCR, vol. 2135, para. 14, State Archives, Trivandrum, (hereafter S.A)} This is an indication of establishing direct linkage with the landholders by usurping the remaining signs of sovereignty enjoyed by the Raja.

By the end of 1797, Chirakkal witnessed a severe confrontation between the two branches of the royal house. Ravi Varma of the Chirakkal house was appointed as the new king of Chirakkal with “authority to manage and superintend the affairs of that district for and on behalf of the Honourable Company”.\footnote{Logan, n.22, II/CLXXXX, pp. 307-8} Kavinisseri branch, with the support of Kolathiri Raja opposed the succession and the company sent a deputation comprising the official linguist of the company, M.A Rodrigues and Chovakkaran
Makki\textsuperscript{123} to Chirakkal. The differences were patched up by permitting Ravi Varma to continue and Colonel Dow was made responsible for judicial and magisterial powers of the district. But the peace was short-lived. In April 1798, a second prince of the Chenga house of the Kolathiri family along with some followers set up his claims to the management of Chirakkal district and created disturbances in the country. On 16\textsuperscript{th} April Colonel Dow ordered them to surrender before him within two days. Later on the ultimatum was extended up to 9th May 1798. On 14\textsuperscript{th} May, the prince of Chenga was declared as a rebel against the company’s authority and a reward of 20,000 \textit{fanams} was promised to any person who shall seize and deliver the prince to Colonel Dow. The said prince lost his life soon after the proclamation in an attempt to storm the temple of Puttur guarded by the Chirakkal Raja’s Nayars.\textsuperscript{124}

Thus the indigenous politics once again plunged into intrigues and conflicts. Many new claimants of authority sprung up and started to question the legitimacy of the ruling Raja of Chirakkal with the help of some prominent members of the landowning class.\textsuperscript{125} Collection of revenue from the petty chieftains or the lesser rajas of the territory was a formidable task. As a result of the \textit{janmi} proclamation, the rajas and lesser rajas alike became landowners in Malabar contrary to the established pattern of customary land relations in the region. The lesser rajas, accustomed to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{123} Chovakkaran Makki (Valia Makki Kakka) was highly influential and wealthy native merchant in Malabar like his predecessor Chovakkaran Moosa. Vide Sasikumar C Thalasseri, ‘The Keyis of North Malabar’, in \textit{Kerala Calling}, May 2006, p. 36
\item \textsuperscript{124} Logan, n.22, II/CLXXV, p. 303, II/CLXXX, pp. 307-8
\item \textsuperscript{125} The rival prince of the Chenga Kovilagum (He was also known as Ravi Varma) had the support of a group of landowners, viz. Chimmincherry Chandu, Potera Cummen, Caruvacherry Cannin, Vengail Namby, Madanapally Krishna Embran, Pakat Embran and Totatt Emran, Vide Diary of the Second Malabar Commission, dated 9th May 1798, in Logan, n.22, II/CLXXIX, p. 306
\end{itemize}
independence, shook their swords or barred their defensible houses when the tax-gatherer came and large balances of course resulted. The new revenue assessment and inalienable Janmam rights enhanced the position of intermediaries in agriculture, and this further accelerated the process of the disintegration of Chirakkal royal house. For instance, two Nayars of Takoengonah in Chuzhali territory refused to pay the amount of revenue demanded by the Raja’s officials (Parbutty) and they assembled all the inhabitants under protection of a local magnate, Kelappan Nambiar, against the Raja.

In short, Raja of Chirakkal soon became indebted to the company for a large balance on the expiration of the quinquennial lease in 1799. The estimated revenue from the territory of Chirakkal for five years commencing from 1795 to 1799 was Rs. 5, 70, 000. The amount was irrational particularly because Chirakkal Raja had already been deprived of his resourceful territories like Randathara and Iruvazhinadu. James Stevens, the Northern Superintendent issued a proclamation on 18th October 1799, which read

“The lease of the Cherical district for five years having now expired whereas the revenue to the Honourable Company has been very irregularly paid, and a large balance still remains due on account of the year 974 [1799], many complaints also having come of the oppressions on the Coodians, the Commissioners for conducting the office of the Supravisor have directed the Northern Superintendent to

126 Logan, n.27, pp. 570-1
127 MCR, vol. 2135, para. 6, S.A
128 Logan, n.22, II/LXCH, p. 234
take the collection into company’s own management. Notice is therefore hereby given that the collections will now be made by the Company’s officers and that no revenue is to be paid, but to persons authorised to collect it from the Company’s Cirpar and all persons are requested obey the orders [……].

In Kadathanadu, Udaya Varma Raja, who had been punctual in paying off the revenue, was allowed to continue in charge of revenue collection from his territory for a period of one year in December 1799 and extended the same for one more year in November 1800. This special privilege offered to Kadathanadu was in prevalence up to the middle of 1802 and henceforth it also was subjected to direct administrative control of the company. However in Kurungoth territory, two Nayars, Kurungoth Nayar and Poyapuratta Nayar, were permitted to be tax collectors on behalf of the company for the term of ten years ending in 1807.

As noted earlier, Kottayam had two claimants of authority, viz., the rajas of Kurumbranadu and Pazhassi. On 13th March 1795, the quinquennial settlement of the Kottayam was made with the Raja of Kurumbranadu and the claim of Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja was bluntly snubbed. The relations between Pazhassi Raja and the company had become further strained and a period of collaboration and conflict prevailed ever since in accordance with the domination of the forward and moderate

129. Ibid., II/CCIII, p. 329
130. Ibid, II/CCVII, p. 331
131. Ibid, II/CCXXIII, pp. 341-2
132. Logan, n.27, p.592 f.n.
133. Logan, n.22, II/CLIV, II/CLV, pp. 283-5
schools of colonial administrators. Tipu Sultan sustained his hostile attitude towards the company from his strongholds in the Eastern coast. He established contact with an erstwhile enemy on the Malabar Coast, Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja. The company authorities had concrete evidences about the alliance and assurance of ammunition and men in case of emergency by Tipu in favour of Pazhassi Raja. 134 Pazhassi Raja with the support of Tipu defeated the British regiment and from March 9th to 11th 1797 the rebels were in a position to control the whole of Wynad. 135 The company viewed this success of the rebels as a great threat to their position. Pazhassi Raja had support of the people of Wynad and his alliance with Tipu was a perpetual danger. The rebels organised their armed struggles by exploiting the advantageous of the mountainous terrain of the Ghats. All these circumstances forced the Commissioners to enter into an agreement with Pazhassi Raja. Accordingly on 12th October 1797 the company restored all the treasure and other valuables taken away by them from the Raja when the Pazhassi fort was captured in 1796136 and granted an annual pension of 8000 rupees and a pardon for all that had been done towards the company. 137

Kurumbranadu Raja had relinquished his quinquennial lease in Kottayam April 1797 as he failed to collect tax from that district. The Committee of the Government (Jonathan Duncan and Lieutenant-General James Stuart) readily accepted the resignation and the Northern Superintendent was instructed to carry on the charge of revenue collection

134  M.C.R, Letter dated 26th December 1797, vol. 1787, S.A
135  Rajayyan, n.68, p. 552
136  Logan, n.22, II/CL, p. 281
137  Ibid., II/CLI, II/CLII, pp. 281-2
with the help of European and native officials. However, Pazhassi Raja had prevented the inhabitants of Kottayam from paying taxes on houses as well as pepper to the company officials.

Lord Mornington, the new Governor-General of India, was determined to overthrow Tipu at any cost. The fourth Anglo-Mysorean war ended in English victory and in the death of Tipu. According to the provisions of the peace treaty of Srerangapatam on 4th May 1799, Wynad came under the occupation of the English company. The administration of Wynad became a major hurdle and Pazhassi Raja was adamant on his claim. He made elaborate preparations for direct action by arranging a military comprised of Nayars, Mappilas and the disbanded troops of Tipu.

Malabar under Madras Presidency

The Malabar province was placed under the administrative responsibility of the “Governor in Council of fort St. George” (of the Madras presidency) from 1st May 1800. However the Bombay government was permitted to control the company’s commercial concerns on the coast. The Court of Directors of the English East India Company preferred the direct administration of Malabar to the indirect rule through the rajas and chieftains by 1800. Such a change was opted owing to several reasons. The company was a private organisation of the English mercantile bourgeoisie and their primary motive was to position themselves as the true beneficiaries of the profitable eastern trade. In materialising it the company had to overcome some crucial constraints, the several claimants to the

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138 Ibid., II/CXXXVII, II/CXXXVIII, pp. 273-4
139 M.C.R, Letters dated 21st August 1798, 1st March 1799, vols. 1715,1716, S.A
140 Logan, n.22, II/CXCIII, pp. 319-22
141 Rajayyan, n.68, p. 552, f.n
142 Logan, n.22, II/CCXIII, p. 335
native political structure, the presence of indigenous merchant community and the private trade interests of its own servants. The company was successful in settling the disputes between different claimants of authority and also in patching up the quarrels between the Raja and petty chieftains in Chirakkal by acting as mediators.

As far as the company power structure was concerned there were two different interests, trade interest of the company and that of its own servants. The service and cooperation of the indigenous merchant community became crucial in accentuating successful commercial intercourse in Malabar since they alone had direct relations with the pepper growers in the interior. This has been the case ever since the establishment of a factory at Tellicherry by the English East India Company.\textsuperscript{143} Most of these indigenous merchant groups were Muslims with the exception of a few Hindu \textit{Chettis} from across the neighbouring Tamil region. Malabar was brought under direct administration of the company at a time when the private mercantile interests of the company servants were decisive in determining the future course of political actions. The interposition of company’s authority to enforce law and order and the functioning of smooth mercantile activities could be done with the support of the Mappila merchants and other European private merchants like Murdock Brown rather than the archaic agents of indigenous politics.

\textsuperscript{143} Chatto Chitty was the most influential merchant during the first half of the eighteenth century with whom the English company concluded treaties for the purchase of pepper. In the second half of the eighteenth century Chovakkaran Musa became the chief merchant and during Mysorean interlude several local merchants (like Musa Baile Babajee, Bedocandy Ahmed, Banabeli Abdul) fled to Tellicherry Fort from the hinterland. They stayed at Tellicherry till the end of the third Anglo-Mysorean war during 1790-92. vide, Bonaventure Swai, East India Company and Moplah merchants of Tellicherry 1694-1800, Social Scientist, Vol. 8, No. 1, (August 1979)
The northern rulers were not successful as effective revenue collectors or as suppliers of pepper and other valuable produce to the company’s merchants. During the crucial phase of colonial expansion in Malabar, the indigenous administrative agents were at first converted to mere revenue collectors and at a later phase direct administration of the company was established over the ceded province. In 1800-01 the rajas and chieftains were offered compensation in the form of malikhana in return of their cessation of sovereignty. Henceforth they were treated at par with ordinary landholders with the legal obligation to pay taxes for their individual possessions. Thus the transformation of the erstwhile rulers and chieftains of the indigenous political system to mere revenue collectors in the early stages and as pensioned off power groups later was necessitated by the compulsion of the merchant capitalist interests of the company as well as its servants.

**Last Phases of Resistance**

However, the clash of interests between the Raja of Kurumbranadu and Kottayam remained unsettled. P pazhassi Raja’s revolt against the company entered into a crucial phase. He had the support of the nobles and common people of Kottayam and Wynad. A petition submitted to Peile by the members of some prominent families of Kottayam deserves special mention in rationalising the sympathy and regard of the people in favour of Pazhassi Raja. The petitioners mention about the treachery committed by

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144 Nightingale, n. 2, p. 124

145 Accordingly, Chirakkal (Kolathiri) family got Rupees 22,127-1-5, Kadathanadu family 26,441-0-0, Kottayam 5900-0-0 (by the middle of 1802), Iruvazhinadu family 6,695-14-6 and Kurungoth family 1,427-12-9 as Malikhana. William Logan, Malabar, (Asian Education Services, New Delhi, 1989), vol.2, Appendix XX, pp. cclvii-ix, see also Innes, n. 116, pp.423,452,460-1. See a detailed list as Appendix. 5

146 Panicker, n.19, p. 409
Pazhavettill Chandu and the Raja of Kurumbranadu towards their beloved lord. Chandu was the Tahasildar of Pazhassi and sided with the company for his parochial ends. The petitioners pray for settling all the disputes between their lord and the company and to give them peace and security.\textsuperscript{147}

Colonel Wellesley was in charge of the Wynad expedition and his tactics became successful in capturing the Peria pass in January 1801 and “by the month of May ‘every post of any importance in Wynad was in the hands of the British’”.\textsuperscript{148} Pazhassi Raja was now a wanderer in the jungles and taking advantage of the situation the Commissioners made a proclamation on 4 August 1801 which guaranteed pardon and restoration of property to all rebels except Pazhassi Raja and six of his associates.\textsuperscript{149} The military actions and the said proclamation were futile in bringing tranquillity in the area.

The unruly state of affairs forced the higher authorities at Fort St. George to think in terms of altering the administrative and revenue systems in Malabar. On 5\textsuperscript{th} September 1801 Major William Macleod was appointed as the new Principal Collector and “Messrs. Strachey, Hodgson and Keate to be the subordinate Collectors in the Province of Malabar”. Macleod was in “charge of the revenues, and of the civil Government”.\textsuperscript{150} Major Macleod became the Principal Collector of the Malabar Province at a time when the native rajas were demoted to the status of mere landlords. The company undermined their importance and Macleod even blamed the subjection of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[$148$] Logan, n.27, p. 598
\item[$149$] The six associates were the Kannavath Nambiar, Chathappan Nambiar, Edachenna Kungan, Chingot Chattu, Pulliyan Shanalu and Punattil Nambiar. vide Logan, n.22, II/CCXXIX, pp. 343-4
\item[$150$] Ibid., II/CCXXX, pp. 345-6
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
the people of Malabar to their rajas as one of the causes of the precarious situation. He went on to say that, since the invasion of Hyder Ali the people of Kottayam, Wynad and Chirakkal suffered a lot “and their misfortunes may be partly attributed to the errors of Government and to the infatuated submission to the will of their Chiefs, for which people governed by a feudal system, have ever been conspicuous” 151

The prolonged struggles against Pazhassi Raja and the mounting military expenses had prompted Macleod to take measures for improving revenue collection. On 31 August 1802 he declared a new exchange rate of the star pagoda and rupee coins prevalent in Malabar. 152 The new rates raised the revenue liability of every individual by 20 per cent in gold fanams and 10 per cent in silver, while for their commodities in the markets they could only get the old rates of 3.5 gold and 5 silver fanams per rupee. 153 His reform in pymash (revenue survey) was aimed to improve the revenue collection and he deputed the parbutties (amsam or village officers) to conduct a survey on the district within forty days. The short span of time given and the dishonest and notoriously corrupt character of many of the officers deputed for the purpose resulted in producing fabricated accounts and over-assessment often imposed on wrong persons. A general insurrection was the immediate result of the hasty steps taken by Macleod and in the beginning of 1803 the Province rose en masse and Macleod resigned his post and Robert Rickards, the Principal Judge of the Court of Adalat was taken charge of the Principal Collector. 154

151 Margret Frenz, From Contact to Conquest: Transition to British Rule in Malabar, 1790-1805, (Delhi, 2003), p. 108
152 Logan, n.22, II/CCXXXVI, p. 350
153 Logan, n.27, p. 601
154 Innes, n. 116, pp. 328-9
The clash of interests between the Bombay and Madras servants was a matter of hot discussion in the higher circles of the company. The Madras Governor Clive had apprehension about the turn of events and proposed the programme of Malabar administration exclusively under the control of the Madras Presidency. Rickards, the new Principal Collector, took immediate measures to bring tranquility in Malabar. His Proclamation of 11 March 1803 guaranteed revenue collection on the basis of the *pymash* in force during 1800-01 and to accept the revenue payments in current coins at exchange rates practiced prior to 31 August 1802. These measures did not produce any desired results. Insurrections brought out in Wynad had its extension to a number of regions in Chirakkal like, Koothuparamba, Randathara, Cannanore and Katirur. By this time the Kurichya tribes of Wynad joined hands with Pazhassi force in their struggles against the English company. Rickards might have viewed the real cause behind the general insurrection in defective mode of revenue assessment. He appointed Murdock Brown to make a new survey or *Pymash* at Randathara which was under the direct control of the company. His intention was to extent this new principles and rates all over Malabar with the approbation of the Board of Revenue. Accordingly on 29th June 1803 Rickards entered into agreements with “the Rajahs, Nambooris, Mookistens and Principal Landholders” of Malabar for incorporating them with the new

155 Letter Clive to Governor General Wellesly, dated March 25 1803, Foreign Department, Political Consultations, Secret Consultations, vol. 10, TNA
156 Logan, n.22, II/CCXL, pp. 353-4
157 Correspondence Relating to the Pazhassi Raja’s Rebellion, dated June 5, 1803, pp. 141-2, T.N.A
158 Logan, n.22, II/CCXLI, pp. 354-5. Rickards specified six-tenth of the gross produce as government’s share from rice lands and one-third of the gross produce from various trees on a differentiated commutation rates. Accordingly for Coconut 30 Reas or about 7 nuts and for Betelnuts, 9 Reas or about 36 nuts per trees to be taken as one-third of the gross produce.
Pymash. On rice lands the quantity of seed and the same quantity for expenses of cultivation were deducted from the gross produce. A one-third of the remains were allotted to the kudiyen (actual cultivator) as koroo labour. The residue was pattom was to be divided between the company and the landlord on the proportion of six-tenths and four-tenths, respectively. As far as garden lands were concerned, from the gross produce, one-third was to be given to the Kudian and the reminder to be divided equally between the company and the landlord.159

All these measures initiated by Rickards were predetermined to create a group of collaborators from among the indigenous political agents and principal landlords of Malabar. His strategy was successful in South Malabar and strengthened the cause of landlordism at the expense of spoiling the age-old tradition of sharing the produce of the land between the kudiyen and Janmi on the basis of customs and conventions. Consequently the new group of collaborators kept aloof from revolts against the company and the peasantry and other humble groups of population were betrayed. In North Malabar the Chulali Kelappan Nambar was the only landlord who became a signatory to the aforesaid agreement and he was rather forced to sign it as he was under the company’s surveillance at Calicut.160 The North Malabar rajas and landlords were disinclined to associate with the company and this can be explained from various grounds. As far as the rajas were concerned they were already deprived of their sovereign powers over their ancestral territories and proved their incompetence as the revenue collectors. Many of them including some principal landlords sided with Pazhassi rebellions which invited severe punishments in the form of

159 Ibid., II/CCXLIII, pp. 356-7
160 Ibid, f.n
confiscation of property etc. As a result the insurrections in North Malabar went hand in hand with the Pazhassi rebellions.

Pazhassi Raja’s rebellion and the support he received from the erstwhile rajas, landlords, and common people and hill tribes pointed to the general antagonism against the new mechanisms of land revenue collection initiated by the company.\textsuperscript{161} It should be noted that he was ready to compromise had the company respected his claim over Kottayam. However his intention was not to safeguard his own position but to provide good to his people. In this context he was unlike other native rulers of Malabar and keen in safeguarding the welfare of his subjects even during the perilous days of Mysorean disaster or in other words upholding the ideals and values of the \textit{rajadharma}. He prevented the inhabitants of Kottayam from paying off their revenue as well as supplying the surplus produce to the company’s merchants. He justified his action, in a letter sent to his uncle, the Raja of Kurubranadu, by stating that his intention in prohibiting revenue collection was to make the English company conscious of their violation of truth and justice and not for usurping power in Kottayam.\textsuperscript{162} His struggles, which lasted until his death, on 30 November 1805, proved his consistency in performing the duties of a king (\textit{rajadharma}) in the form of persistent conflicts against a colonial agency.

The suppression of Pazhassi rebellion was the end of an era and no other erstwhile political agents of the north Malabar were dare enough to question the might of the company and resistance was not reported from any one of them. However the Kurichya and Kurumbars of Wynad, who

\textsuperscript{161} K.K.N Kurup, \textit{Pazhassi Samarangal} (mal.), (Trivandrum, 1980), p.135
\textsuperscript{162} P.R., 45 A & B, pp. 32-33
were the close associates of Pazhassi Raja in his struggles against the English, rose in revolt against the company administration in 1812.

Thomas Warden was appointed as the Principal Collector in succession to Rickards in 1804. He was delegated by the government to revise the revenue assessment in Malabar. He collected a detailed account of property ownership from the landholders and prepared a statement which was called the *Janmi pymash*. Then surveying the entire wet lands with the help of surveyors from Coimbatore, prepared a land revenue assessment schedule during 1806-10 which came to be called as *Hinduvi or alavu pymash*.\(^{163}\) The new revenue assessment put the people in total devastation as the revenue payment of each individual was raised at ones about ten percent. The hill-tribes of Wynad were the most affected owing to severe restrictions imposed upon them in connection with the revenue collection. The revenue collectors were corrupt and oppressive and they often put heavy claims on the produce by exploiting the illiteracy of the people.\(^ {164}\) Moreover revenue was demanded in cash and the inhabitants of Wynad experienced difficulty in disposing of their produce profitably in market.\(^ {165}\) All these grievances coupled with the inimical impacts of state monopoly on tobacco, country liquor and salt deepened the animosity of the hill tribes towards alien administrators. The Kurichiyas and Kurumbas had a great deal of self respect about their caste and customs. When the revenue officials and the Englishmen started to employ a good number of them as servants and policemen, “they were deprived of their caste by cutting off their lock of hair and by making them eat prohibited food and

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163 Innes, n. 116, p. 331
165 Board of Revenue Consultations, vol. 568, pp.3807-13, T.N.A
otherwise disguising and polluting them”.166 The revolt was started on 25th March 1812 and the English barracks in Sutan Batherry and Mananthavady were besieged by the rebels. Within few days the rebellion became widespread and all strategic points and passes leading to Wynad came under the command of the rebels. Many of the Kurichya and Kurumba kolkars (hired policemen) joined the rebels. The insurrection came to an end by 8 May 1812. Though the rebellion was a short-lived one, it “it helped to open the Company Government’s eyes to the bad effects of the extortionate revenue policy followed by them”.167

The Kurichya rebellion of 1812 assumes importance as the last one of the organised struggles in north Malabar against colonial hegemony.168 The grievances of the Kurichiyas and Kurumbas were more economic than political and their struggles can be equated with classic peasant revolts.169 The new revenue assessment and mode of collection infuriated them to take arms against the “Watta Topykar”170 (the Europeans) in an uncompromising manner. They were not the agents of indigenous political order but typical aborigines of Wynad.

It is necessary to cartograph the stages of political processes in accentuating colonial take over in north Malabar. We have already examined the feudal character of state in Kolathunadu. It remained without any noticeable structural change during eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. There were some futile attempts from the Kolathiris and Prince Regents to strengthen themselves economically, militarily and politically

166 Quoted in Ravindran, n. 164, p. 163
167 Ibid., pp. 168-175
169 Ravindran, n.164, p.176
170 Ibid, p. 168
with the help of the alien powers on the coast. This led to the shattering of
the very feudal basis of the indigenous power structure whereby the vassal
chieftains declared their independence and relieved themselves from the
feudal obligations with the *de facto* and *de jure* sovereigns of Kolathunadu.
The empowerment ventures were not capable of developing a state with a
sovereign head even with the semblance of power to mobilise resources
and to initiate redistribution process at the behest of the state. Nor were
they invested with the power to patronise a native bourgeoisie who would
have supported the former in such ventures. On the other hand the private
merchants of the company and the Mappila and *Chetti* merchants had the
exclusive control of the trade on spices and forest goods at the expense of
the state.

By way of contrast, in Travancore Marthanda Varma (1729-1758)
had succeed in demolishing the shaky structure of the feudal system and
introducing a centralised administration. The native military was
remodelled along European standards with the help of the Dutch captain
D’lanoy. Similarly an efficient bureaucracy consisting chiefly of Tamil
Brahmins was put in place. These have eventually led to the strengthening
monarchy in Travancore.\textsuperscript{171} The ruler was able to declare state monopoly in
trade on such articles like pepper, tobacco, cassia and areca. With the help
of able bureaucrats like Mallan Sankaran and Ramayyan Dalawa, the
revenue administration was revamped and rationalised. Further, lands under
the control of the madampis—the petty chieftains—were confiscated and
converted into *Pandaravaka* (land under the state). However lands
belonging to the temples and Brahmins were retained under the control of

\textsuperscript{171} P. Shungoonny Menon, *Tiruvitamcore Charitrang* (mal.), trans. edn 3, (State Institute
of Languages, Trivandrum, 1988), pp. 104, 154-7
the Brahmins. This enabled the creation of a group of collaborators from within the affluent sections of the society.\textsuperscript{172} Marhtada Varma was strongly supported by a powerful group of peasants, like the Karakkar of Thiruvananthapuram and the Nattars of Nanchinadu, in destroying the feudal elements and empowering himself as the legitimate sovereign.\textsuperscript{173} It is the replay of a similar sequence in the case of the state of Cochin under Rama Varma alias Saktan Tampuran (1790-1805). The latter had even gone a step further by stripping the Brahmin clergy of their fiscal immunities which they have been enjoying hitherto. He equipped the country with a powerful indigenous merchant class of Syrian Christians who were offered lands in various important towns like Trichur, Chalakkudy, Kunnamkulam, Irinjalakkuda, etc.\textsuperscript{174}

The relative absence of a powerful peasant community engaging in the production of commodities other than spices can be cited as another weakness of Kolathunadu region. The region depended on imported rice and other essential commodities from Canara at least for a considerable volume of its total demands, as is evidenced from the eagerness often shown by the Tellicherry factors in arranging agreements with the Canarese and the Mysoreans for the supply of unobstructed supply of rice from Canara region. This was due to several reasons. As noted elsewhere the acute shortage of arable terrace lands coupled with the high saline nature of the river streams made natural disadvantageous to the development of agriculture. The feudal elites were indifferent to cultivation and the low caste people were tied to land without any incentives or motivation to

\textsuperscript{172} K. Sivasankaran Nair, \textit{Venadinte Parinamam} (mal.), (Kottayam, 2005), pp. 227-8
\textsuperscript{173} K.N. Ganesh, \textit{Keralathinte Innelekal} (mal.), (Trivandrum, 1997), p. 153
\textsuperscript{174} Menon, n. 168, p. 304
improve agriculture even in limited areas available.\footnote{Thomas W. Shea, Jr., ‘Barriers to Economic Development in Traditional Societies; Malabar, A Case Study’ in The Journal of Economic History, vol. 19, No. 4, (December, 1959, online version, www.jstor.org), p. 509} No initiatives were taken by the rajas of Kolathunadu in promoting agrarian production and it also continued as part of the old order.

The foregone survey reveals some vital points in accentuating colonial rule in North Malabar. The commercial privileges of the Bombay Presidency were on cross roads when the Pazhassi revolts entered into upsetting proportions. However, the company was in a position to settle the political affairs in favour of them with cautious steps and planned designs. The merchant capitalistic interests of the company favoured increased returns from their Malabar possessions. When the native rajas were proved incompetent in acting as effective revenue collectors, they were ousted and pensioned off by giving \textit{malikhana}. In short the obsolete ideology on state and its machinery and the economic deficiency of the political agents of Kolathunadu resulted in the latter became incapable of defying colonial intrusion effectively.