CONCLUSION

The agrarian history of Travancore had entwined with strings of political forces and historical developments at work from the remote past, this territorial division had submerged under the political suzerainty of the ancient Chera Empire, The Chera Empire did not have a politically integrated structure, but comprised of different chieftaincies and petty principalities. The central power could not effectively impose its supremacy, as most part the little kingdoms paid poor adherence to its authority. In South Travancore too, there existed tiny states which had appended nominal allegiance to the central Chera power. The earliest known kingdoms which had enjoyed some political identity were Nanjilnadu, Kurunadu and Padappanadu. Out of these three, Nanjilnadu and Kurunadu emerged out as dominant political units by the close of the first century A.D. While in Nanjilnadu the Ay kingdom flourished, in Kurunadu, the kingdom of Venad exercised prominent authority. Both these countries, had very different history, affected by the vicissitudes of time and fortune. The political atmosphere of neighbouring Pandya State had substantially influenced their historical process.

The Dutch who were on the West Coast began to render assistance to the rebellious vassals and feudatories. Their ambitions programme of controlling the sea-borne trade in the West Coast naturally dragged them into the vortex of confrontation with Travancore. The rise and consolidation of the State of Travancore acted as an obstacle to their imperialistic tendencies. This had developed in them antagonistic attitudes and they decided to settle the issue once and for all. The Dutch forces got reinforcement from their bases in Ceylon. Under the command of Eusthacius Dehannoy, they advanced upon Eraniel and from there to Kalkulam, the
capital. Plundering the conquered country on the way, they, advanced to lead the army and in the fierce battle that ensued in 1741 A.D. the Dutch forces were crushed and Captain Dehannoy was taken as a prisoner. By successive campaigns in the north, Marthanda Varma consolidated a vast-territory and for- administrative convenience he shifted his capital from Kalkulam (Padmanabhapuram) to Trivandrum around 1749 A.D.

The nature of government in Travancore as prevailed in the other parts of India was monarchy based on the traditional Hindu Law of Inheritance. The kings enjoyed absolute power, whenever the monarchy was strong. The landed aristocracy assumed preponderant authority because of its nearness to the ruling families and their involvement in administration. Hence the concept of state as the wholesome authority was very often disputed. The land owning class emerged as the virtual ruler in Travancore during the troubled centuries that ensued after the Chera-Chola War. In their endeavour to re-establish their sovereignty, the rulers found themselves pitched constantly into war with this privileged aristocracy and the revenue bureaucracy only to lose. Their rapacity for power continued to dominate and reflect in the social system as well as, almost uninhibited. The government became a puppet in the hands of the landed gentry and temple authorities. No wonder, the Government of Travancore was characterised as the aristocracy, run by them only to subserve their own vested interests.

From the analysis of previous chapters, it is clear that the revenue administration of Travancore was distinct by itself despite its systematic unity and her functional dissimilarities. The land tenurial system it devised was devoid of any set worth or standard and in its operation. It arose out of the different multiplicity
and contradiction. It arose out of the different stages of cultivation which was further accentuated when feudal practices with different tenurial forms were appended with the State. The repeated incursions and the consequent rise and decline of the royal house also usurpations, mostly political in character, contributed to the increasing number of land tenures. It was also substantially influenced by feudalistic forces that were at work during this time. The tenurial pattern characterized by complexity and complication made the relation the most unhealthy and unsuitable. Because of the non-fixity of the tenures, the tenants were exposed to systematic and perennial exploitation. The cultivating classes and the poor peasants were subjected to a series of feudal obligations, other than customary dues and fines. It made them economically depressed and politically oppressed by the long run. They were socially discriminated and segregated from the rest of the society.

The rise of feudalism as a vital socio-economic institution, polarized the power structure of the society. Since land was the biggest employer and the most visible form of wealth, those who had retained control over it engrossed decisive dominance in the society. Land control offered them economic, social, political and ritual pre-eminence. On the contrary, those who lost title over land were virtually debased to economic subordination.

Agriculture was largely subsistence and the forces of production did not mark appreciable growth. Land was not so fertile, natural factors not always conducive, capital being poor and languishing that the organisational pattern affected adversely prospects of progressive farming. Only the labour force was available in plenty due to the variety of socio-economic factors. Since land was inelastic in nature, there was tight competition for land rights in any form and it further strengthened the
feudal forces. It made class interest virtually subservient to the economic interests of the peasantry.

The defective system of survey had its own telling impact on the revenue settlements. In practice Pandaravaha lands were subjected to periodical settlements at which the government demand was raised. The earliest known settlement was made by Mallan Senbagaraman in 1739. Due to some obvious defects of the settlement a survey of new settlement was ordered in 1751 and was completed in 1754. It led to the framing of the first trustworthy ayacut accounts. To overcome the inherent anomalies and to face the worst economic crisis, the third revenue settlement was conducted in 1773. The total disarrangement caused by the Mysore invasion invited the new settlement supervised by Kumaran Senbagaraman. Another settlement was made in 1886 for the purpose of assessing garden lands and trees.

The land tenure system which prevailed in Travancore in the nineteenth century acted as a serious constraint to the progress of agriculture. The term ‘tenure’ is feudal in origin and essentially refers to the nature of holding land for cultivation by a person in subordination to another. The different stages in the process of production were represented by multiplicity of tenures. Travancore was peculiar for the large number of complicated land tenures. The earliest form of land tenures were Uranmai and Karanmai. It seems that Uranmai was under village control and Karanmai under State management. The tenurial pattern that existed in Travancore in the nineteenth century can be broadly dichotomized into janmon and pandaravaha or sirkar.

The system of revenue assessment was highly irrational lacking the sense of wisdom. It seems that there was no land tax in early Kerala and levy of general land
tax on limited scale was ordered from 1762. Generally land tax in the north was fairly moderate, while in South Travancore it was prohibitively higher. In Nanjilnadu it was the highest at all times. The system of assessment was not based on any regular survey mode by trained the trustworthy officials. It was often 'a record of what was heard and seen'.

The uneven nature of the State demand and the rate of commutation were another source of oppression, fraud and evasion. If a substantial bribe was offered to the proverthicar dry lands were assessed as wet and wet lands as garden lands. The assessment of garden lands and trees was much uneven. Trees and lands were charged separately. Non-payment of arrears and revenue debts was met with crude and barbarous punishments.

The land revenue structure in Travancore was multiple, peculiar and the most complicated. It arose out of the different stages in the process of cultivation. The earliest form of tenures as stated before was Uranmai and Karanmai. The repeated incursions, rise and decline of royal houses and usurpations contributed to increasing number of tenures. Retention of different tenures from the conquered territories added more. In short, the development of tenurial system was to a greater extent determined by the political forces and historical events. All tenures subsisted only for a maximum of twelve years. Every transactions, appointments, contracts and tenures had to be renewed at the end of twelve years. For the purpose of analysis the tenurial structure that was in vogue in Travancore can be classified into two major divisions – janmom and pandaravaha.

Though all tenures subsisted for twelve years, they ceased to exist the moment it passed on to alien hands on consideration, not other than money. When an
alienation did take place, the land became liable to pay a light tax called *Rajabhogam*. It amounted $1/6$ or $1/8$ in the garden lands and in case of paddy lands to nearly the same proportions of grain rent, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{10}$, or $\frac{1}{10}$ of the quantity of seed required. The full grain rent would be represented by an average of three times the quantity of seed. Thus, if the *Kundapanttom* of the alienated garden was *fanams* 100, the *Rajabhogam*. Tax *orkarum*) would be nearly $16 \frac{1}{2}$ or $12 \frac{3}{4}$ *fanams*. In the case of paddy lands, if the land was one *parah* *khandum*, that is a block of land which requires one *parah* of seed, the full grain rent would be three *parahs*. The light tax chargeable would be only $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{10}$, $\frac{1}{10}$ of one *parah*.

*A janmie* as a rule never alienated absolutely (ultipare) except to other *janmies* whether Brahmins or *Devaswoms* (pagodas). The *Madambimars* in common parlance were also called *janmies*. Though strictly speaking they were not *janmies* as their lands were Saigenesis, subject to the *Rajabhogam*. Whether in their own hands or alienated to others. They were generally Nairs or others but not Brahmins. They seldom alienated their land by absolute sale. If they did, the tenure was extinguished as with *janmom* lands. Then the land was transferred to *Sirkar*. The purchase money, less a fine of 25 per cent was given and credit for and interest on the 75 per cent was allowed. The remainder of interest would be added to the existing *Rajabhogam Karom*. It was much short of full *pattom* or rent of the land. At every alienation, however, this fine of 25 per cent was levied. Sometimes the purchase money entirely disappeared and interest added to *Rajabhogam*. In continued unabated; absorbed all the rental value and even exceeded it.

The government was considerate in granting remissions as a matter of concession to the peasantry. There were two types of remission viz., seasonal and
non-seasonal. Failure of crops, failure of cultivation and wet lands cultivated with dry crops due to water scarcity were considered for granting seasonal remission. On special recommendations and individual cases, non-seasonal remissions were sanctioned. Usually remissions served as the major source of corrupted and fraud.

The mode of revenue collection in Travancore was the worst of all evils which demoralized the bureaucracy, defined state authority and reduced the tenants to the obsessive state of property. A hierarchy of revenue officials from the proverthicar to Valiyasarvathikariyakkar was subordinate to the Dewan. The revenue officials were armed with fiscal, magisterial, judicial and military powers. On the whole they remained incompetent lacking proper training and the sense of justice. The revenue bureaucracy while assessing the revenue, over assessed the lands and the extra collections went directly into their pockets. No pattah for the lands and receipts for the tax paid were given land transfers were seldom recorded which in turn led to disputes and litigations. The accounts maintained by the accountants (Pillays) were conflicting and large amounts were recorded arrears, even though they were paid. In most cases peasants had to pay rent for the same piece of land three or four times. Those who offered a big bribe escaped scotch free while the poor ones were booked. Remissions were kept secret and the entire amount was collected and swallowed by them.

The peasants remained always under chronic debt. Their output was squandered by the State, the landed aristocracy and the revenue bureaucracy. Under such a condition they could not have the required input for cultivation. So they were forced to hang on the money lenders who collected exorbitant interest, often crossing the fifty per cent mark. Since the government assistance was remarkable
poor, they were left with no other option except to budge to the mercy of the creditors. When the chances of repayment became bleak, they were compelled to transfer their lands to the lenders.

There was no prolific effort on the part of the government to relieve the peasantry from this extra burden of exploitation. No doubt, the government was quit aware of these developments and few steps were taken to improve their condition. It was the paramount need of the hour that the state should act as the chief lender to the peasants at nominal inter rates. As a result, the government provided agricultural loan for making improvements in cultivation. But it failed to produce the anticipated results because of the evils of corruption and nepotism.

Against this deplorable background there were occasional and isolated protests without desirable success. The demoralized nature of the tenants was one of the potent obstacles for united action. In the existing despotic government set up, any liberal movement aimed at concessions was viewed with serious concern. The power and authority of the landlords, their dominance over the administration and their association with bureaucracy, offered them additional impetus to obstruct the attempts of the tenants to protest. The existence of heavy competition for land and the problem of unemployment and underemployment and the right of feudal Lords to evict their tenants acted as serious constraints for spontaneous protest movements. Further, the stout opposition raised by the intermediaries either slowed down or postponed the process of tenurial reforms.

In Travancore the complicated relationship between the landlord and the tenant highlighted the need for the introduction of radical agrarian reforms. It was customary in those days to subject the tenants to arbitrary eviction. Though most of
them had been in defacto possession of the lands for considerably long periods, they
did not have the proprietary right over them. They became impoverished due to a
variety of composite factors and were forced to live a hand to mouth subsistence.
The solution seemed to be in abolishing tenancy at will and conferring ownership
rights on them. Hence a series of land reforms aimed at redressing the grievances of
the tenants were introduced in all the areas of Travancore from the nineteenth
century. These reforms had as their immediate objectives such as prevention of
arbitrary evictions, proper fixation of tenure, conferment of proprietary rights on
certain classes of tenants, fixation of fair rent, payment of compensation for
improvements etc. Among the Indian States, Travancore forged ahead of others in
land reforms largely influenced by the political climate. It was also subsequently
induced by spiritual factor. In 1801, British Residency was established in
Travancore and in 1805 the first Protestant Church was founded at Mylaudy by Rev.
Ringletaube. The articulation between political and religious forces created a
favourable trend for agrarian and social reforms. No doubt, the missionary initiative
and induce for some of these reforms were motivated for conversion. Utilitarian
philosophy also touched fringe of the problem. Was claimed that unless the State
provided adequate protection cultivator, there was no security to the ryots and the
can use untold miseries to the country. Under this situation, of Munroe with the
approval of the Rani Parvathi Bai issued a bunch of Proclamations granting rights
and concessions to the cultivators and commoners. With it, the reform movement in
Travancore caught on.

Since the imposition of British supremacy on the Travancore State, things
began to move swiftly. Their sympathy for social justice accentuated by religious
considerations induced the sovereigns to initiate the process of tenurial reforms. As early as 1829, a Royal Edict regulating capricious eviction was passed. But the Act proved deficient because the implementing agencies such as the bureaucracy and judges drawn from the landed aristocracy subverted the Act. The Royal proclamation of 1865 surrendered sirkar's rights over many categories of pattom tenures. Ryots holding these lands became owners, with the right to inherit, sale or transfer as long as they paid rent. This Act fairly improved the condition of the pattomdars (share croppers) but had serious omissions in its execution due the considerable missing links and lack of organized effort on the part of the tenants. The Janmie-kudiyan Act of 1896 brought fixity of kanapattom tenure, checked capricious evictions and restricted exorbitant rent revision and renewal fee. The Act also made it clear that the tenants should pay their rent and other customary dues regularly. But the tenants did not benefit much because the executing agencies subverted the act for their own pecuniary interests.

No wonder the peasants continued to submerge under social and economic evils which persisted over a long time. However, it seems that generally they remained submissive to authority, but for sporadic and occasional outbursts. This servile attitude of the peasantry night had been because they believed that the complaints could do no salvation. Usually complaints in any form were seriously viewed and often met with physical assault, fine and imprisonment. They were disarranged thoroughly and demoralized completely due to poverty. Since they were illiterates, they were ignorant of their rights and claims, leaving more scope for easy and perennial exploitation. Their economic dependency, limited the chances of organizing radical mass-movements. Again, the arbitrary powers enjoyed by the
bureaucracy and the State, hindered any attempt on the part of the tenants to revolt. This had been aggravated by the undemocratic political set up.

The State was well aware of the projecting problems that the tenants had to face. Now and then, the government proclaimed liberal concessions to monitor the growing sense of reforms. The orders of the Maharaja in 1887 instructed revenue officers that they should hear the complaints of ryots on certain days. Subsequently, another order was issued to put a halt to the practice of proverthicars compelling the ryots to pay more paddy than was due. But the disinclined attitude of the revenue bureaucracy recruited mainly from the vested interest groups, paid little response. They believed that total implementation of liberal reforms would jeopardize their dominant status and interests. They feared that if the tenants became proprietors their economic control over them could not be sustained further. It would create outrageous repercussions in the social system; altering the caste relations and un-shielding their privileged status and power.

The landed aristocracy fought tooth and nail against any liberal treatment of the tenants by the government. They did not hesitate to defend their village even at the point of revolt against the sovereign. The hypnotic influence possessed by the janmies over the ruling families hardened the prospects of reform. On the whole, the agrarian reforms initiated by the Travancore sovereigns could not achieve the desired fruit, because of opposition raised from different quarters of vested interest.

A Commission was appointed by the government and as a result of the Commission is labours, the Jenmi and Kudiyan Act was passed in 1896, incorporating in detail all the provisions enunciated in the Royal Proclamation of 1867. At the time of the promulgation of the Jenmi Proclamation, the government
had in mind another measure to facilitate the speedy recovery of arrears due to the *jenmies* which never materialized. The *Jenmies* difficulties coupled with the *kudiyans* grievances an account of the unprincipled levying of renewal of fees, prompted the State to appoint a Commission in 1885 to examine the relations between the *jenmies* and *kudiyans*. The Commission submitted its report in 1833 and the State passed on the basis of the recommendations of the report, a new Act in 1896.

The most important feature of the Act was that it conferred the right of the permanent occupancy of *kanom* tenants of *janman* lands. It forbid the eviction of *kudiyan* by *jenmies*, save for the few acts of omission on the part of the *kudiyans*, such as non-payment of the rent for twelve years consequently, neglect or refusal to pay renewal fees as provided in the Act, and persistent willful denial of the *jenmies* title on land, etc. Arrears of the rent and other dues payable by the tenant were made for recovery of the dues through *jenmies* filing suits at the civil courts for the same. The *Jenmies* were given the right to enhance the rent at the time of the periodical renewal of the *kanapattom*, either by increasing the gross rental of the land or by reducing the interest allowed on the *kanom* money advanced or through both, whereas the *kudiyans* had the option to get the rent reduced only through a reduction in the gross rental of land. The Act specified mentioned that it would not apply to *kanom* documents executed after the *Jenmi* proclamation of 1867.

The Act was made applicable to the lands covered by the last four revenue categories adopted in the Revenue Settlement namely *Ooranma devasom*, *Brahmaswom, Madampi* and *Karamozhivu*. Although the maximum rate of *janmipattom*, i.e. gross rental from which the interest due on *kanam* money was reduced to
obtain the michavaram (net rent), to be paid to the jenmi was fixed as one-fourth of the gross produce, no easy method was provided to ascertain the same. The method suggested was the relatively cumbersome one of filing suites in the Civil Courts, with respect to the amount of the renewal of the kanapattom lease no regulations was attempted in the Act. Over and above these limitations, the jenmi possessed the right to increase the michavaram on every renewal of the kanom lease.

In order to improve the situation the state intervened and issued another Amendment Act by a Proclamation in 1932. Consequently, a Committee was appointed by the Government of Travancore to enquire into and report on the working of the "Jenmi and Kudiyan Act of 1896". Moreover, the committee made it clear that "the Kudiyan is not in law a tenant, but is an owner in possession, subject to certain obligations imposed by law and to that extent, the Jenmi must be deemed to have parted with his proprietary rights in favour of the kudiyan for valuable considerations." In pursuance of the legislative view taken by the Committee, it recommended confessing absolute proprietary right on the kudiyan, under the sole obligation of yearly payment of Jenmies dues, hereafter to be known as jenmikaran, this was to be arrived at the apportionment of renewal fees and the commutation of customary dues and michavaram (net return) into money payable in annual instalments.

By way of conclusion it can be said that the revenue administration which prevailed in Travancore in the 18th and 19th century was in no way different from the Indian situation. Revenue and tenurial reforms could not achieve much headway and if at all there was any real benefit out of such reforms, the beneficiaries were often the landed aristocracy and big farmers. Any legislation was passed for the
benefit of the tenant, farmers it was seldom or rather poorly enforced. Protests on the part of the peasants failed because of their permanent dependency on the land owners. Lack of organized protest and paucity of institutional assistance acted as constraints for the salvation of this section of the society. Since the land based power, status and influence were polarized on a particular group of the society, socio-economic inequalities persisted. This clearly indicates that as long as the uneven distribution of land and related resources continue, there is hardly any scope for the depressed poor to escape from the evils of social poverty and perennial exploitation.