INTRODUCTION

The history of Travancore had mingled with a series of political forces and historical developments at work from the unmemorable 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. 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 neighboring Pandya State had substantially influenced their historical process.

People, races and cultural groups of this area are mixed with nature in character. The most generally accepted theory is that the original inhabitants were the earliest Dravidian settlers like Pulayas, Kuravar, Parayar, Kadar and Vedar. Subsequently other Dravidian settlers established their colonies. Later the Aryans came and settled in Travancore. Their connection with Nair ladies created a blending of Aryan and Dravidian race. Around the Ninth Century A.D. the Arabs also came and colonized in the coastal belt. Thus the racial compositions of Travancore had the mixing of Dravidian, Aryan and Arabs.
Rivers of this area are mostly non-perennial and short. Paralayar rises on the mountains north of Mahendragiri hills in Thovala taluk. Passing through a wild tract, it enters the plains at Tiruvattar and flows in a south western direction. After a course of 23 miles from its source, it is joined by another river Kothayar near Tiruvattar. The two rivers unite to form the Kuzhithurayar which is also known as Tambraparni. The combined river then flows through the hilly tracts of Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks and reaches the Tengapattanam.

During the colonial time Travancore was an important princely state of British India located at the southern most part of the Indian peninsula. It has known by several names like Venad, Vanchi-desam and Tiruadi-desam. Because of the corrupt usage of English version Tiruvithamkur was converted as Travancore. Its natural resources of agricultural products such as pepper, tobacco, textiles, teakwood, cardamom, ginger, cinnamon, arecanut, cassia, coconut, turmeric, sandalwood, rubber, honey, wax, rare diamonds, jewels, ivory, palmyra productions got the attentions of the Europeans merchants. It remained an emporium of world trade and commerce. Among the Europeans the English East India Company firmly established their trade and power in Travancore. Generally in India the state made a claim to revenue from land from very early times as the price of protection given to the subjects from foreign invasions as well as internal troubles. The sixth part of the production of the soils had ever considered as the legitimate rights of the king. However, the theory of land tenure in Malabar was distinguished from that which regulated the holding of land in other parts of the Madras Presidency. In Malabar the whole land was considered as to belong to some individual or corporation other than the government.
Basically Travancorean is an agricultural country. Here, therefore, the peasant should be the first and final entity of the administrator’s regard acquires special significance. The term ‘land-tenure’ is conveying the meaning as acknowledging a person’s various rights over use of a land. The conditions of land tenure and the nature of the demands made on the produce of husbandry by the state and the landlord class shape the outlook of the cultivating classes and determine the scope of their enterprise. Fixed tenure became important one for long time progress of a state. The lands were classified into two major categories as Pandaravaka land and Jenmom land. The laws relating to land tenures in Travancore bear the marks of certain theories advanced by writers, judges and administrators who unconsciously impressed into their service the rules which regulate the relationship between rulers and ruled. Jenmom in Malabar came to mean exclusive right of land and the Jenmis in Travancore were exempted from payment of taxation of lands.

The various agrarian reforms took place under the 32 years of regime of Maha Raja Moolam Tirunal. In 1772-73 the first settlement (Kettezhuthu) was made and Travancore had regained all the lands included within its present limits. The settlement believed to be comprised of all cultivable lands and laid no pretension to any accuracy of record of what was heard. The adjustments of the assessments were being made generally by a personal conference with the ryots and on their declarations. In 1802-03 the next settlement was held, it was known as Kandezhuthu, record of what was seen. It was different from the previous settlement from the assessments were fixed. This settlement comprised all the cultivated lands, wet as well as garden and dry, with the exception, however, of Inam lands, the unalienated lands of Nambutiri Jenmies and Devaswoms, the Kandukrishi lands, the villages belonging to the Edapali Chief, the freeholds of certain other chiefs and Devaswoms
and Sripadam lands. In 1817-18 the next settlement came to be passed which entirely delineated to regulate the garden and dry lands. In 1836-37 followed by other settlement which was also confined to lands of the same description, the assessment was based on no uniform principle and consisted of numerous and varying rates for each kind of tree in each taluk. Though the tree-tax was generally declared payable in money, there were several important exceptions in the case of the coconut and areca trees, for which the taxes known as Tengupattam and Pakkupattam were fixed in kind, at so many nuts per tree, while in some case a percentage of coconut trees were set part for the supply of oil. Several articles such as rice, betel, supari, pepper and saffron and innumerable rates of exchanges were introduced for the articles thus taxed.

The agrarian system of Travancore is generally marked by unequal distribution of land and its productive utilization, crop pattern, income and other. The ever increasing population puts pressure to transform agricultural land into industrial units, roads and new settlements. As a result the food supporting system has been diminishing at a fast rate. Continuous rise in the value of different essential commodities coupled with decline in money value led to hindrance of development of small and marginal farmers.

**Review of Literature**

Travancore, P. Gopinadhan Pillai’s Role of Left Movement in Agrarian Relations in Kerala, M.V. Abraham’s Concise History of Travancore, D. Daniel’s Struggle for Responsible Government in Travancore, I.H. Hacker’s A Hundred Years in Travancore, B. Maria John’s Linguistic Reorganization of Madras Presidency, S. Ramanatha Iyer’s A Brief Sketch of Travancore, B. Sobanan’s Dewan Velu Thampi and the British, A. Sreedhara Menon’s A Survey of Kerala History are pioneering works on Agrarian Changes in Travancore. But a comprehensive account of Agrarian Changes in Travancore is yet to be attempted. This study seeks to meet this need in historical research.

**Objective and Hypotheses**

The objective of the study is to evaluate the essential features brought out in the declaration, statutes and acts in the history of land tenure in Travancore. While making investigation, the hypotheses to be tested are:

- The history of Travancore as a princely state is a unique one.
- Travancore had exclusive system of fixed land tenures.
- The ministry of Travancore government well managed the land revenue administration.
- In various regimes of kings and queens of Travancore to reform the landholdings of their country had made several declarations and enacted several statues and acts.
- Peculiar land holding pattern of Jenmi and Kudiyan existed in Travancore and to regulate the system they had several enactments.
Data

The present study is both analytical and interpretative. An attempt is also made to give a narrative and descriptive account of Agrarian Changes in Travancore. The Administrative Reports of Travancore, Board of Revenue Proceedings, Standing Orders, Declarations, Travancore Government’s Annual reports, statutes, acts, enquiry committees’ reports, Private Reports and The Travancore State Land Revenue Manuals, gazettes has been comprised the primary sources and articles in contemporary journals and the books appended to bibliography form the secondary sources of the study.

Chapterisation

The thesis is classified into five chapters excluding the introduction and conclusion. The first chapter makes an attempt to analyze the early political history of Princely State of Travancore. The ancient kings of Travancore such as Ays, Cheras, Cholas, and Pandyas and their influences are narrated. Stages of land reforms, redemption of rural indebtedness and abolition of oppressive taxes are also discussed. Since land is the production base, the critical examination of land system is important. The impact of British Colonial policy is critically testified. The nature of land rights and its impact on agricultural production have also discussed. On in this chapter the Geographical position, mountains, sea, river, back-water, climate, fauna and flora with occupations of native peoples of Travancore are also narrated in this chapter.

The Second Chapter is a discussion about the prevalent land tenurial system in Travancore in the nineteenth century, which led to serious constraint to the progress of agriculture of Travancore. Travancore was also famous for large numbers of complicated land tenures. The essential conspicuous feature of the Travancore land
revenue system was traceable from its early political history from the *Janmom* tenure. The *Janmie* system in Travancore developed into a primitive style of European feudalism. In Travancore the system augmented the anarchic and unsettled state of land tenurial affairs in existed as like the early European feudal society. This led to abnormal accumulation of land and wealth in their hands.

The Third Chapter explains complicated relationship between the landlord and the tenants and elaborately discusses the land reforms introduced in Travancore. Among the Indian States, the Princely State Travancore played a vital role in the front ahead of others in land reforms largely influenced by the political climate. Traditionally the *Janmies* were armed with inconsistent eviction rights because tenancy subsisted on their will. The act declared that, ‘in all suits of this nature (for eviction) decided, filed or which may hereafter be preferred, the courts maintain the established usage in the country, viz., that the tenant should pay the *janmie* his usual ordinary and extraordinary dues and that the *janmie* receive the same let the tenant remain in property.’ the first remarkable instance in which the State came forward with a regulation directly aimed at combating capricious eviction rules. The High Court was directed to regulate unreasonable eviction of tenants by the *Janmies*. It was instructed that the court should not allow any suit of eviction of substantial tenants without prima facie charges against them. This embarrassed situation provoked the British Resident to intervene to protect the rights of the tenants are discussed.

The Fourth Chapter contrasts the land revenue policy of the British with the policy enunciated by Travancore. In the settlement of 1886 the total revenue fixed in Travancore was less than Rs.9 lakhs as against Rs.19 lakhs imposed by the British. The possible defects of the earliest settlements needed rectification and so the government introduced new settlements as required by the situation. The system of
assessment prior to 1809 was that the Proverticar assessed the revenue along with three or four arbitrators. Newly brought the land under cultivation was favorably assessed. The assessment of wet land was also modified in 1886. The assessment in kind was resolved to be abolished from the settlement of 1886 and money payment was substituted for it. The assessment of rent on went lands ran short of certain abnormalities and unevenness. Assessment on dry lands was also higher and it was largely due to the failure of agricultural income tax. As a rule gardens were chargeable either with tree tax, or ground tax. However, taxes on yielding trees and the land in which they were cultivated were assessed separately. Though the rate of assessment was fixed during settlements, extra sum was often collected. Dry crops occasionally grown on wet lands were assessed with a uniform rate of half of the paddy tax are delineated.

The Fifth chapter discusses the issues of Jenmi and Kudiyan system. The traditional origin of the ownership in land in Travancore, was reclaimed from the sea by Parasurama and made over in the free gift to the Brahman settlers brought by him from the other coast. Another theory is that the Brahmans as the most influential settlers asserted a superior right which was acquiesced in by the whole population. The Hindu idea of acquisition of title by occupation was an ancient one. There is yet another theory. In ancient times all the lands of the state were, owned by Nagas or Nayars chieftains when sovereignty was in the state of a tribal commune. The Nayars and others were ready to acknowledge the Namputhiris as their landlords and hold lands from them as tenants. Thus the ancient Jenmom right came to be acquired by the Namputhiris, Pottis and other chieftains. The system did not lose long. The Nayars chieftains gradually became subordinate to the growing colony of Brahman settlers whose estates had become more extensive. Many theories advanced to explain the
origin of Jenmom. The organization of the country for social and political purposes was of the pure Hindu type. The Jennikaram possesses the entire rights in the soil. Jenmom, the word derived from Sanskrit and signifying birth-right, that of the subject races belonging to the non Brahmanical race being also distinguished at later times by the word kudiv Jenmom signifying the birth right of kudi or subjects. In the conclusion, the findings of each chapter are summarized.