

CHAPTER V

POLIGARI RESISTANCE AND STRUGGLE

The victory of the British in the acquisitions and consolidation of their power in Madras strengthened their political power. However, they anticipated some disturbances from the local powers in the time to come. While the Company was seeking the establishment of its direct rule over the country it found itself confronted with a formidable challenge. The rigorous measures adopted by the Company to enforce its authority emitted the poligars. The chieftains, from humble beginnings, emerged into a power to be reckoned with during the eighteenth century. Taking advantage of the political turmoils, they acquired territories, maintained their own armed establishment, developed an administrative system and extended their patronage to religion and art. On the other side, with the establishment of their political ascendancy in South India, the British found the existence of a parallel authority as a potential threat to their interest. The Company's administration had to deal with the auxiliary powers of poligars in the southern region. Large tracts of territory in Manaparai, Kallarnadu, Dindigul and Tirunelveli remained under their control. They paid tribute to the central authority, yet depending upon the circumstances at times guided by their grievances; they defied the central administration refused payment of tribute. The Company found it essential to suppress the poligars for the consolidation of its power in the southern provinces. The poligars were holders of estates called *pollams* or *palayams* which literally meant an armed camp. It was an estate granted by a sovereign to a chieftain, for the

performance of military duties to the central authority. Besides rendering military services, a poligar had to pay an annual tribute. In return for these, the poligar was entitled to collect taxes from the inhabitants of his estate and to exercise civil and criminal jurisdiction. A large part of the Carnatic, south of the Kaveri remained under the sway of the poligars. The most prominent of the *pollams* were Sivagiri, Nelkatanseval and Panchalamkurichi in Tirunelveli and Ramnad and Sivaganga in Madurai. In addition to the usual tribute, the chieftains were required to make frequent contributions and presents to the Company. The revenue servants forced them to send eggs, poultry and goats to their houses. The chieftains, on the other-hand, had by tradition cherished a spirit of independence. With their own armed establishments and forts, they resented encroachments upon their rights. The poligars of Madurai were instrumental in establishing administrative reforms by building irrigation projects, forts and religious institutions. Many were hanged and some banished forever to Andaman Islands by the British. Veerapandya Kattabomman, Dheeran Chinnamalai and Marudu brothers were some of the most notable poligars who rose up in revolt against the British rule in South India. With a view to suppressing the poligars, the Company either under the authority of the Nawab or of its own sent frequent expeditions. Poligar war refers to the wars fought between the poligars of former Madurai kingdom in Tamilnadu and the English East India Company forces between March 1799 to May 1802. The British finally won after carrying out long and difficult protracted jungle campaigns against the poligar armies and finally defeated them. Many lives were lost on both sides. The victory over poligars made large parts of territories of Madras coming under British control enabling them to get a strong hold in India. Accordingly the British suppressed them and transformed them into zamindars and land lords. This marked the eclipse of the poligar system.

Struggle between Company and Poligars

Between 1799 and 1802 formed one of anti-British outbreaks in the region of Madurai, the growing unrest in Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli culminated in the poligari uprising of 1799. The stormy political atmosphere and the in efficiency of Nawab's administration contributed to the growth of the influence of the poligars. Nawab granted lands and other concessions to the poligars in return for their assistance. The inhabitants paid taxes to the poligars for protection, usually in proportion to the increase of their duties and of their resources.¹ The existence of military establishments under the control of the poligars and the propensity that they had displayed in employing them for coercion of the inhabitants and in mutual rivalries presented difficulties to the central authority. The poligars found themselves subjected to frequent humiliation.² The poligars, imbued by tradition and a spirit of liberation had left no stone unturned in curbing the British influence. The degradation suffered at the hands of the British and coercion by the Nawab would have awakened the poligars to the new danger threatening them. These drove them to a state of conflict and led to form confederacies against the invading British forces. As the Company appeared much responsible for this situation the poligars cherished a feeling of bitterness against the Company authority.

A combination of circumstances led the Company into a confrontation with poligars.³ Despite the starvation and mass-exodus, the evil force combined together in oppressing the people. The renters and the assignees increased the prices of articles by common agreement.⁴ Extortion

¹ Madras Council, 28 Nov.1800, Revenue Consultations, (hereinafter referred to as R.C.), Vol.106, p.3199.

² Ibid., 6 May 1800, Military Consultations, (hereinafter referred to as M.C.), Vol.268, pp.2690-2691.

³ Board of Revenue, 14 Dec.1728, letter to Madras Council, R.C., Vol.91, p.4396.

⁴ Madras Council, 31 Oct.1800, Secret Consultations, (hereinafter referred to as S.C.), Vol.11, pp.757-758.

and plunder made the adventure of a merchant enterprising. The stagnation of the petty traffic caused by the withdrawal of carriage-bullocks to be employed with the forces sent against Mysore prevented the importation of grain from northern territories.⁵ William Collins Jackson, the Company's Collector at Ramanathapuram, on the other hand, imposed an arbitrary embargo on the importation of grain through the sea with an intention of providing every artificial attraction to the hoarded grain of the Company. In consequence, the price of grain shot high and the inhabitants found it impossible to obtain any relief. When the Madras Council heard about it, it lifted the embargo; but it was too late.⁶ Jackson's unwise policy no doubt discredited the British administration. As a result, the poligars found it difficult to remit the kist to the Company. The British were not prepared to accept delay or failure on the part of the poligars in regard to remittance.

The discontented people decided to liberate the land from the British domination and to restore the old royal institutions to their former glory. By achieving this, they expected to find the possibility of living in constant happiness without tears. They declared that

If now the people in different countries would rise up and resist, the Europeans will sink and perish. As the people of the different countries are submissive, they desire them to do whatever they like.⁷

The rebellious leaders thus placed their reliance upon force and united action for the attainment of their objective. However, it was the poligars who took the initiative in forming a confederacy of the rebel-chiefs against the Company. Among them the prominent were the chiefs of Panjalamkurichi,

⁵ Ibid, 6 Aug.1799, M.C., Vol.256, p.4788.

⁶ Ibid., 15 Oct.1798, Revenue Despatches to England, (hereinafter referred to as P.D.T.E.), Vol.6, pp.323-324.

⁷ Ibid., 9 June 1801, M.C., Vol.284, p.4296.

Sivaganga and Virupakshi.⁸ This confederacy of the rebels, as the Madras Council rightly asserted, “threatened the most injurious consequences to the tranquillity and security of the Company’s Empire”.⁹

In Tirunelveli, the eastern region of Madurai there existed a number of palayams, usually held by the Telugu poligars. Descendants of the ruling class of the Nayaks, they were turbulent by nature and insubordinate by disposition. Among these chieftains the most formidable was Kattabomman of Panjalamkurichi. He defaulted payment of tribute to the Company and the arrears amounted to 3,310 pagodas.¹⁰ Jackson, the Collector wrote letters in a language of reprehension and sent his servants to the poligar; yet, these had no desired effect. Thereupon he sought the authority of the Board of Revenue for punishing him in an exemplary manner. But the Board of Revenue did not consider it sagacious to sanction the use of force against Kattabomman, as military preparations against the Mysore were begun and the Madras Council decided to withdraw the forces from the southern provinces. Besides, as Panjalamkurichi was situated in sunken plains and cotton ground, it was difficult for the attacking party to get over it in wet weather. Even if the fort was occupied, there was the possibility that Kattabomman, after effecting his escape, would join the camp of fellow poligars and wage an interminable predatory warfare.¹¹ Added to these considerations, it was the desire of the Government to win over the confidence of the poligars through a lenient policy.

However, when the forces of the southern districts were employed against Mysore, Kattabomman organised a league of the poligars of Tirunelveli and Ramnad. These members including the poligars of Nagalapuram, Mannarkottai, Powalli, Kolarpatti, Kadalkudi, Kulattoor and

⁸ Ibid., 15 Oct.1801, Military Despatches to England, (hereinafter referred to as M.D.T.E.), Vol.31, p.157.

⁹ Ibid., 23 Mar.1802, M.D.T.E., Vol.32, p.383.

¹⁰ Ibid., Oct.1798, R.C., Vol.89, pp.3378-3379.

¹¹ Ibid., 12 Oct.1798, R.C., Vol.88, p.3206.

Chennulgudi had already formed themselves into a combination due to the efforts of Marudu of Sivaganga and Melappan of Ramanathapuram and for asserting their right to collect taxes from certain villages in the Company's territory.¹² What Kattabomman proceeded to do was to join this league, and to assume its leadership by virtue of the influence he commanded and resources that he had possessed. Further, he established an alliance with the Kallar Tribes and kindled a commotion in Saptore. He also established close relations with the disaffected chieftains of Ramnad, Sivaganga and Dindigul.¹³ The next attempt of Kattabomman was to take possession of the Fort of Sivagiri. It was situated at a strategic place on the eastern slopes of the Western Ghats and was easy for offensive as well as defensive operations. Veerapandyan sent his forces to assist the rebel son of the poligar of Sivagiri against his father and thereby to establish a hold on that estate. But Sivagiri was a tributary to the Company and hence the Madras Council decided to suppress the rebel powers.¹⁴ Kattabomman sent Pandia Pillai, brother of Sivasubramania Pillai to Madras to gather and transmit intelligence about the British military movements and placed guards at different places to watch the movements of the Europeans and their agents.¹⁵ By the middle of 1799 the Company defeated Tipu Sultan and hence it was found possible to take prompt steps against the rebels. Lord Mornington, the Governor General, was at Madras and he sent troops from Tanjore, Tiruchirappalli and Madurai to Tirunelveli. The Ramnad battalion and Tranvancore forces also joined the army.¹⁶ Lord Mornington entrusted the command of these forces with Major Bannerman. He granted extensive powers to him with a view to enabling him to deal with any exigency.¹⁷

¹² Ibid., 13 June 1799, R.C., Vol.229, p.4891.

¹³ Ibid., 6 Dec.1799, R.C., Vol.99, p.3321.

¹⁴ Ibid., Sept.1799, R.C., Vol.97, p.2420.

¹⁵ Ibid., 24 Sept.1798, R.C., Vol.88, p.2716.

¹⁶ Ibid., 28 May 1799, M.C., Vol.253, p.3031.

¹⁷ Ibid., 20 Aug.1799, S.C., Vol.8, p.1260.

However, it was an insult offered by Collector Jackson to Kattabomman of Panjalamkurichi that precipitated the poligar struggle of 1799, perhaps prematurely.

Kattabomman's Conflict with Company

Guided by Veerapandiya Kattabomman¹⁸ of Panjalamkurichi organised the poligars of Tirunelveli against the British. In May 1799 Lord Wellesley issued from Madras for the advance of forces from Tiruchirappalli, Tanjore and Madurai to Tirunelveli. The troops of the servile Rajah of Travancore joined the enemy.¹⁹ Major Bannerman, armed with extensive powers for effectively dealing with the poligars, assumed the command of the expedition. Advancing through Ramanathapuram, the army encamped at Tirunelveli. In April 1799 Kattabomman refused the payment of tribute and he made an incursion into the Company's territory of Ramanathapuram.²⁰ Alarmed at these proceedings, Stephen Rumbold Lushington, Collector of Tirunelveli, summoned the poligar to his presence; but the latter flatly refused.²¹ The associates of Kattabomman too withheld payments to the Company, made incursions to Ramanathapuram and captured the circar villages.²² These hostile activities invited prompt response. Major Bannerman commenced his military operation with the suppression of the rebels of Ramnad. Bennerman, stuck up the heads of the executed insurgents in the villages of Ramnad, as he felt it necessary to terrorize their compatriots.

¹⁸ Veerapandia Kattabomman also known as Kattabomman or Katta Bommu was an Indian poligar chieftain from Panjalamkurichi who was one of the earliest to oppose the Company rule. He was born in the Telugu Kattabomman clan of warrior chieftains to Agaveera Kattabomman and Arumugathammalon 3 January 1761. He had two younger brothers Dabwai Kumarasami and Duraisingam. He was fondly called *karuthaih* (the black prince) Duraisingam was nicknamed Oomathurai meaning the mute prince.

¹⁹ Madras Council, 28 May 1799, M.C., Vol.253, p.3031.

²⁰ Ibid., Aug.1799, R.C., Vol.96, pp.1569-1570.

²¹ Ibid., Sept.1799, R.C., Vol.97, p.2419.

²² Ibid., 8 Nov.1799, R.C., Vol.98, p.2771.

Thus the English removed the source of grievance to Kattabomman. The verdict of the committee seemed as not unfair and the attitude of the Madras Government appeared not unconciliatory. Marudu Pandyan of Sivaganga in close association with Gopala Nayak of Dindigul and Yadul Nayak of Anamalai was during this period engaged in the organisation of a South Indian Confederacy of rebels against the British with the declared objective of liberating the country from the control of the low wretches as he depicted the English in his Tiruchirappalli Proclamation.²³ The rebel missions that he sent to the southern regions visited Panjalamkurichi. In view of the identity of interests this led to the establishment of close association between Kattabomman and Marudu Pandyan. Since then, Veerapandyan held frequent consultations with Marudu. On 1 June 1799 he, attended by 500 men, reached Palamaneri with the intention of proceeding to Sivaganga.²⁴ But Collector Lushington, considering it as a step taken in contempt of British authority, conveyed his serious apprehension. Therefore the poligar waited at Palamaneri for the arrival of the emissaries of Marudu. On 5 June a party reached the camp and the two groups held deliberations. Subsequently joined by 500 armed men of Sivaganga, Kattabomman returned to Panjalamkurichi.²⁵ This meeting indicates the importance that the rebel leaders give to mutual consultations.

The son of the poligar of Sivagiri and his advisor Mappila Vennian visited Panjalamkurichi and held consultations in August 1799. Kattabomman decided to establish his influence in Sivagiri with the aid of the son of the poligar, as the ruling chief refused to join the alliance of rebels. Added to this, as Panjalamkurichi, being situated in an open plain, appeared vulnerable to the hostile forces, the possession of an unassailable stronghold was considered an absolute necessity. The strategic location of

²³ Ibid., 16 June 1801, Revenue Sundries, (hereinafter referred to as R.S.), Vol.26, p.452.

²⁴ Board of Revenue, 10 June 1799, R.C., Vol.229, pp.4853-4854.

²⁵ Ibid., pp.4889-4891.

the fort of Sivagiri at the foot of the Western Ghats was eminently suited both for offensive and defensive operations in the event of any emergency.

Major Gramme, Company's army asserted that Kattabomman's

design in marching peons against Sivagiri is to get possession either by force or treachery that fort and a narrow pass which leads to it, difficult of passage, where he hopes to stand his ground against the force which he fears naturally suggest to him to be sent to punish.²⁶

Thus in a bold attempt to strengthen his position an armed column consisting of the followers of Veerapandyan, the son of the poligar of Sivagiri and other allied chiefs, led by Delawa Kumaraswami Nayak, and moved to the west. As the poligar of Sivagiri was a tributary to the Company, the Madras Council considered this expedition as a challenge to its own authority and ordered the army to march to Tirenvelveli.²⁷

After this victory, Bannerman turned against the rebel poligars of Tirunelveli on 1 September 1799, he issued an ultimatum to Kattabomman directing him to attend on him at Palayamkottai on the 4th.²⁸ On receipt of the summons, Veerapandyan professed submission and pleaded that as the date specified was unlucky, he could not obey the order.²⁹ As the reply was evasive, Bannerman led his forces to Panjalamkurichi. Meanwhile, he received reinforcements from Kayattar and Kovilpatti. All the forces were assembled at Panjalamkurichi which was an irregular parallelogram, two sides of which were about 500 feet long and other two sides 300 feet. The wall was constructed entirely of mud and hence it was not so easy for demolition with the cannons. The fort had small square bastions and short

²⁶ Board of Revenue, 21 Aug.1799, R.C., Vol.231, pp.6903-6904.

²⁷ Madras Council, Sept.1799, R.C., Vol.97, pp.2419-2420.

²⁸ Ibid., Sept.1799, R.C., Vol.98 A, p.2705.

²⁹ Ibid., 8 Nov.1799, R.C., Vol.98, p.2704.

curtains.³⁰ The approach of the British troops was so unexpectedly sudden that the poligar found it impossible to assemble all his troops for the defence of the fort. Upon the arrival of the forces, they cut off the communications of the fort.³¹ A large body of peons rallied from the villages for the defence of the threatened citadel; but were repulsed and driven back with heavy loss. Ramalinga Mudaliar, whom Bannerman deputed to the fort with a message asking for surrender which Kattabomman rejected-gathered the secrets about the vulnerable points in the defences. On the basis of this report, which clearly suggested that Kattabomman anticipated no hostile move, Bannerman decided the strategy of operations.³² He allotted flank companies with a six pounder to blow open the south gate and posted the field pieces to cover the storming party and combined detachment of the Company, Ettayapuram and Travancore to attack the north face of the fort.³³ As the signal came, the six pounder began to break the gate. The troops seemed to advance with other and resolution. But the rebels retaliated with determination and threw the attacking columns into disorder. A second attempt was made, but again was repulsed. The rebels under the leadership of Oomathurai, the brother of Kattabomman, put up a stout resistance and frustrated the repeated efforts of Bannerman.³⁴ In a bid to retrieve the termished prestige, the Company ordered for the arrival of more troops from Palayamkottai. As the broken wall appeared vulnerable, the garrison evacuated and the parties took their course towards Kadalkudi. In a clash at Kolarpatti, the fugitives suffered heavy assaults and Sivasubramania Pillai was taken prisoner. The Company forces followed up their victory with the reduction of Nagalapuram and other strongholds of the defiant chiefs to

³⁰ James Welsh, *Military Reminiscences*, Vol.1, London, 1830, pp.61-62.

³¹ Madras Council, 5 Sept.1799, R.C., Vol.98, pp.2710-2711.

³² *Ibid.*, 22 Nov.1799, R.C., Vol.98, pp.2779-2782.

³³ *Ibid.*, 8 Nov. 1799, R.C., Vol.98, pp.2706-2709.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5 Sept.1799, R.C., Vol.187, p.2707.

submission.³⁵ The troops employed by Vijay Raghunatha Tondaiman, Rajah of Pudukkottai, captured Kattabomman from the jungles of Kalapore and handed him over to the Company.³⁶ Upon the fall of the poligar into the hands of the Company his followers fled to Sivaganga and from there to the hills of Dindigul for taking service with Gopala Nayak and other rebel leaders.

However, as the fort appeared indefensible and as the siege continued, the rebels evacuated their stronghold. On 7 September morning the vakeels of Kattabomman waited upon Bannerman with a proposition that he might be permitted to proceed to Fort St. George with his retinue. The purpose of this proposal was not known; perhaps he to surrender directly to Edward Clive. After much discussion on the subject, Bannerman communicated his resolution that if the poligar surrendered himself, he would permit him to proceed to Madras. But Kattabomman declared that it was no assurance against arrest and imprisonment. Hence he broke off the conference and directed his course to Kadalkudi.³⁷ In a battle at Kolarpetti, the Company with the help of the troops of Ettayapuram destroyed many of the rebels. On 9 September the forces occupied Nagalapuram, as the result of which the rebel poligars surrendered one after the other. The forces marched to Kayattar through Koilpatti, with a view to overwarming the other poligars. Several poligars surrendered and pledged their loyalty to the Company. Nevertheless, these operations helped the restoration of the order. On 13 September Bannerman executed two of the rebel leaders, Soundara Pandyan at Gopalapuram and Thanapathi Pillai at Nagalapuram.³⁸ Kattabomman who escaped to the jungles of Kalpore was also caught. On 16 October, Veerapandyan was tried before an assembly of poligars,

³⁵ Madras Council, 8 Nov.1799, R.C., Vol.98, pp.2718-2724.

³⁶ Board of Revenue, 24 Sept.1799, letter to Madras Council, R.C., Vol.235, pp.8069-8070.

³⁷ Madras Council, 8 Nov.1799, R.C., Vol.98A, p.2713.

³⁸ Ibid., p.2742.

summoned at Kayattar. In an assertive tone and with a contempt for death he admitted the charges levelled against him. He declared that he sent his armed men against Sivagiri and that he engaged the British troops in battle at Panjalamkurichi. There upon Bannerman announced death penalty for Veerapandyan. On 17 October, Kattabomman was hanged to death at a conspicuous spot near the old fort of Kayattar.³⁹

These measures of the Company produced the most extensive changes in the affairs of the country. Considering the frequent but futile attempts made so long to reduce the poligars to submission and to subdue their spirit of independence, they appeared a success.⁴⁰ The southern poligars were a race of rude warriors, habituated to arms and independence. But they found that their chieftains were either executed or condemned to imprisonment. The people were disarmed and their forts were razed to the ground. As a result it appeared that the Company established its firm control over the land.

Reorganisation of Resistance and Struggle

After the suppression of the eastern poligars of Tirunelveli the British administration took a series of measures, calculated to curb the influence of all the auxiliary powers. The relatives of Kattabomman including Oomathurai were imprisoned at Palayamkottai. The chieftains of Nagalapuram, Ezhayirampannai, Kolarpatti and Kulattoor were also placed in confinement at different places. The poligar of Kadalgudi was at large.⁴¹ The punishment of the rebel poligars was matched by the favours extended to the allied chieftains of Arangulam or Sivajnanapuram belonging to Panjalamkurichi was given as reward to the chief of Ettayapuram in consideration of the valuable services he had rendered.⁴² Maniachi and

³⁹ Rajayyan, K., *Rise and Fall of the Poligars of Tamilnadu*, Madras, 1974, pp.99-100.

⁴⁰ Madras Council, 31 Aug.1801, R.D.T.E., Vol.2, p.247.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 8 Nov.1799, R.C., Vol.98, pp.2799-2801.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 9 Nov.1799, R.C., Vol.98, pp.2948-2949.

Mailmandai poligars, the other allies of the Company, also received strips of territory from Panjalamkurichi and Kulattoor.⁴³ Governor Clive presented a horse and ornamental attire to the Tondaiman of Pudukkottai in appreciation of the assistance he extended. Determined to punish the rebel poligars and to deter other chieftains from organising resistance, the Company decided to assume the direct administration of the districts of Kattabomman and his allies. Accordingly Panjalamkurichi, Yezhayirampannai, Nagalapuram, Kolarpatti, Kadalgudi and Kulattoor were sequestered.⁴⁴ The Company also assumed the military and watching duties so long performed by the poligars in different areas and the collection of *deshakaval* together with other established fees.⁴⁵ All the chieftains were required to dismantle their forts and to disband their armed establishments. The inhabitants were subjected to serious restrictions. They were prohibited from carrying fire arms on pain of death and forced to surrender them without being compensated. The patels of the villages were held responsible against the manufacture of deadly weapons. Armies were posted at centres of disaffection and investigations were ordered into the economic resources of the *palayams* with a view to enhance the assessment.⁴⁶ These radical reforms produced the most extensive changes in the affairs of the poligar country. The British administration without taking any effective steps against these evils for affording protection to the inhabitants deprived them of their right of self-defence. Such a crude policy evolved without due consideration of conditions of the country and enforced with vindictiveness against a high spirited people reacted violently. No wonder the short duration of calm was over taken by a violent storm and Oomathurai, a deaf and dumb man, emerged as the leader of the great struggle against the Company.

⁴³ Ibid., 24 July 1801, R.C., Vol.110, pp.1379-1380.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 6 Nov.1799, R.C., Vol.98, p.2766.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 9 Nov.1800, R.C., Vol.98, p.2941.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 8 Nov.1799, R.C., Vol.99, p.2864.

In 1800 South India witnessed anti-British activity on an unprecedented scale. Greatly concerned at the extension of imperialism, liquidation of states and exploitation inherent in the alien administration, several leaders of prominence, particularly Marudu Pandyan of Sivaganga, Gopala Nayak of Dindigul, Kerala Varma of Malabar and Krishnappa Nayak and Dhoondaji Waug of Mysore through correspondence as well as missions organised themselves into a confederacy. They held a conspiracy at Virupakshi in Dindigul and rose in arms with an abortive assault on Coimbatore on 3 June 1800. The insurrection spread and outbreaks occurred in Ramanathapuram and Madurai. Before long the broken ranks of the poligars joined and swelled the rebel ranks. The rebellion became general and it spread to Tirunelveli with the escape of Oomathurai.⁴⁷ The escape of the rebel prisoners from Palayamkottai on 2 February 1801 marked the renewal of the conflict. The relatives of Kattabomman, seventeen in number, condemned for perpetual imprisonment, were confined in a small enclosure of the fort of Palayamkottai and kept in iron, rigidly guarded.⁴⁸ The prisoners were in captivity for about fifteen months, in course of which three of them died. During this period, the rest of them escaped. Among them were Sevatiah and Oomathurai the brothers of Kattabomman.⁴⁹ Oomathurai entered into a secret correspondence with the rebels of Panjalamkurichi.

After the failure of an attempt made by Marudu Pandyan to work out the release of prisoners, Oomathurai entered into a correspondence with the inhabitants of Panjalamkurichi. Potti Pakada, a servant employed for the collection of firewood for the prisoners, carried their letters written on palmyr leaves to the rebels, who met him in the nearby jungles. Through the exchange of letters the strategy was worked out. At the appointed hour soon

⁴⁷ Rajayyan, K., *op.cit.*, p.103.

⁴⁸ Madras Council, 10 Apr.1801, M.C., Vol.281, p.2179.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 10 Feb.1801, M.C., Vol.279, p.732.

after sun set on 2 February 1801, the prisoners, on receiving the signal from Oomathurai and assisted by the parties, sprung forward. They disarmed the sentinels, overpowered the guard and got safely off. The quickness of the assault and the war cry raised by them took the troops by complete surprise. Joined by more columns of armed men on their way, the fugitives, moved rapidly to the Walnad Hills near Panjalamkurichi and proclaimed Sevathiah as the poligar. On receiving summons, the inhabitants rallied to their leaders, reconstructed the demolished forts and established themselves in strength.

While the rebels were gaining victories in various quarters, fresh troops of the Company poured into the far south. A formidable phalanx attacked the British camp at Pasuvantanai; but after losing ninety six armed men, made its retreat. The British forces led by Macaulay, launched an attack on Panjalamkurichi on 31 March 1801. With intrepid firmness the insurgents engaged the assailants in a fierce encounter. All the Company troops who pressed their way to the walls were picked or shot dead. Successive attempts made to surmount the resistance, ended in failure.⁵⁰ Greatly concerned at this humiliation, the Company assembled a grand army at Kovilpatti and directed Adjutant General Agnew to take the command of the operations. A practicable breach on the walls of Panjalamkurich having been effected, hostile columns, supported by field pieces, advanced in strength. The British troops emerged triumphant. Shortly after this decisive hour, the rebels numbering about 3,000 assembled on the eastern side of the fort, ran rapidly in eastern and northern dismayed. They left 1050 of their compatriots dead. Agnew executed the imprisoned rebels near the fallen citadel. After this discomfiture, the insurgents evacuated all their strongholds in Tirunelveli; most of them fled to the north while the rest

⁵⁰ Ibid., 2 May 1801, Secret Despatches to England, (hereinafter referred to as S.D.T.E.), Vol.2, p.81.

escaped to the hills of the west.⁵¹ As a result of this decisive victory the Company re-established its authority in South India.

The broken ranks of the rebels escaped northward to Sivaganga. The Marudu brothers, Chinna Marudu and Peria Marudu, who exercised considerable influence as ministers of this *palayam*, joined the rebellion. The Kaliarkoil temple situated in the jungles of Sivaganga became the rallying point of the insurgents. From the sheltered posts in the jungles, they laid waste the neighbouring districts.⁵² In May 1801 the rebellion spread to the Northern provinces. Uniting themselves with every disaffected chief and drawing together all the inhabitants of their districts, Marudu Pandyan and his allies assembled powerful forces. The rebels occupied the fort of Tirupattore, invaded Nattam and stormed the forts of Tirmuelur and Melur.⁵³ They took possession of the arms and ammunition, which were deposited and got themselves well-armed. With the spread of uprising, Bomma Nayak, poligar of Verapur, also joined the rebels of Sivaganga. On 16 July the insurgents, particularly those of Panjalankurichi and Kadalkudi, occupied the country around Palamaneri and took possession of Tiruchuzhi. Mellappan and Puttur, the rebel chiefs, led the insurgents to the southern region of Ramnad and occupied the northern territories of Ramnad.⁵⁴ Oomathurai commanded his followers to Palayanad in Madurai and captured it. The kallar tribes occupied the western part of Madurai district. In June 1801 the insurrection spread to the Kaveri basin. The armed columns of Sivaganga and Ramanathapuram under the command of Shevatta Tambi, the son of Marudu Pandyan, marched to Tanjore.⁵⁵ With the peasants voluntarily rallying to their ranks, they occupied Pattaukottai and established their posts at Arantangi and Adiarkudi. They remained in force in the

⁵¹ Ibid., 9 June 1801, M.C., Vol.284, pp.4040-4041.

⁵² Ibid., 12 June 1801, M.C., Vol.284, p.4340.

⁵³ Ibid., 1 July 1801, M.C., Vol.284, p.3870.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 21 June 1801, M.C., Vol.285, p.4603.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 4 June 1801, M.C., Vol.286, pp.5352-5353.

territory till the British operations from other quarters drove them to the defensive.

The quick spread of the revolt over an extensive region took the English by surprise. All the rebels made a common cause against the English. Their unity of purpose rendered their resistance determined. Aimed at the harassment of the enemy, the insurgents cut off communications, destroyed forts, took shelter in thick jungles and depended on guerrilla tactics. By their rapid and irregular movements they laid waste the entire country; but eluded the pursuit of regular troops with ease. The Company forces could neither obtain provisions nor establish their posts in security. In consequence they found themselves constantly exposed to the assault by the rebels.⁵⁶ The spread of the rebellion to Ramnad and Sivaganga created new problems to the Company's administration. Nevertheless it acted firmly. Agnew in consequence of his success in capturing a number of rebel strongholds checked the rising tempo of rebellion in Ramanathapuram and relieved Madurai city from threat of assault. He advanced through Tirupachetty, Manamadurai and Partibanur, reached Paramagudi on 8 June. They cut a party to pieces at Tirupachetty and pressed vigorously on Company lines; but withdrew after a clash in which seventy of them died. While Agnew was marching from Manamadurai, strong parties of rebels lined up behind high banks, water courses and jungles on the opposite side of a creek on 10 June. Major Shepherd was sent against the rebels; but was forced to retreat. The rebels followed both sides suffered considerable loss. Though they were constantly harassed, the forces arrived at Ramnad on 14 June.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, Col. Innes advancing from Dindigul began his operations from the north. He attacked Piranmalai, a strong fort held by the rebels, but was repulsed on 18 June. Retreating from Piranmalai to Natham,

⁵⁶ Ibid., 2 June 1801, M.C., Vol.284, p.4341.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 21 June 1801, M.C., Vol.285, p.4550.

he marched to Manapacherry; but was forced to return to Natham.⁵⁸ Thereupon Agnew marched from Tirupatore for the rescue of Innes and forced the rebels to withdraw.

Leaving Ramanathapuram, Agnew reached Madurai. After suppressing the rebels of Dindigul, Innes advanced to wars in Madurai. Retreating to Natham, he marched to Manapacherry on 4 July. But the columns led by Marudu brothers pressed vigorously on his troops, again forcing his retreat to Natham. Subsequently taking the route through Piranmalai, Innes arrived at Sattur Sankarankottai on 25 July. While he was marching to Tirupatore through a thick wood, the rebels again attacked him using rockets, but were rescued by Agnew on 26 July.⁵⁹ The combined forces of Agnew, Innes and the Tondaiman of Pudukkottai occupied Siruvayal, the rebel stronghold on 30 July. From Siruvayal Agnew began an offensive against the insurgents of Kalayarcoil. Driven to desperation, the rebels fought for every inch of land. Though the English succeeded in beating off the crowds every hour, they found themselves completely and constantly surrounded by hordes. As no alternative presented itself, Agnew retreated to Siruwayal and abandoned his project of advancing to Kalayarkoil from that direction.⁶⁰ However, the enemy gained more victories in Ramanathapuram and Tanjore. Captain Blackburne, with the aid of the Rajah of Tanjore, reoccupied the southern bank of the Kaveri. In the midnight of 30 September Innes sent one detachment to Kalayarkoil and another to Sivaganga while Blackburne and Macaulay led their forces simultaneously against Kalayarkoil. As the British forces moved from various directions, the insurgents were taken by surprise. In a decisive battle many of the rebels fell while others fled. Colonel Spry who took possession of the pagoda of Kalayarkoil, a handsome building surrounded by a stone

⁵⁸ Ibid., 4 Aug.1801, M.C., Vol.286, p.5348.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.5369.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 20 Oct.1801, M.C., Vol.288, p.6838.

wall, eighteen feet in height. The fall of Kalayrkoil marked the end of the rebellion in Sivaganga.⁶¹ Soon after the decisive event, a body of rebels led by Shevatiah, Oomathurai and Muthuvel Nayak marched in a northern direction to the hills of Palani while the Marudu brothers took shelter in the jungles of Singampunari.

On the arrival of the fugitives, the poligars and villagers of Palani rose in arms. The rebels led by Gopala Nayak carried the hills of Virupaksi and re-established their power. Within a short period, they reconstructed barriers and embarked upon depredations into the Company's territories.⁶² They attacked the troops stationed at Chetrapatty and forced them to retreat to Iagoody. A force under the command of Jonnes marched against the rebels; but it was also forced to retreat.⁶³ On the flight of the patriots the inhabitants of Dindigul rallied in strength. Within three days more than 4000 people joined Oomathurai and Sevatiah. They reoccupied the hills of Virupakshi, descended upon the valley of Dindigul and repulsed an attack by a detachment, commanded by Jones. As despatch seemed essential for curbing the growing influence of the rebels, Innes at the command of a well-equipped detachment, rushed to Dindigul. Fighting was resumed on 12 October. Oomathurai, the rebel head sought to intercept the progress of British forces at Virupakshi and subsequently at Chetrapatty; but again suffered reversses. The Company's detachment followed their victories by a close pursuit of the rebels. Advancing through a thick wood Innes occupied Cowdelli and the Corman Delli Barriers drove the rebels in various directions.⁶⁴ Hard pressed, Oomathurai again led his armed group to the valley of Dindigul. The Company now reacted with vigour. In a running battle, which kept the insurgents constantly on foot without food, water and

⁶¹ Ibid., pp.6864-6867.

⁶² Ibid., 27 Oct.1801, M.C., Vol.288, p.7112.

⁶³ Ibid., 1 Dec.1801, M.C., Vol.289, p.7715.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 22 Dec.1801, M.C., Vol.290, p.8080.

rest across a distance of fifty one miles from Dindigul to Vettalagundu for three days together. The exhausted rebels were finally overwhelmed.⁶⁵ Marudu Pandyan, the popular leader of the rebels, together with his gallant brother Vella Marudu, were executed on the ruins of the fort of Tirupatore on 24 October 1801.⁶⁶ Among the multitude who faced the same fate were Shevatta Tambi and Sivagnanam, the sons of Marudu Pandyan, Karutha Tambi and Molly Kutty Tambi, the sons of Vella Marudu, Muthuswamy, the young son of Shevatta Tambi and Muthu Karuppa Tevar styled the Raja of Ramanathapuram. Oomathurai and Sevatiah were taken to Panjalankurichi and beheaded on 16 November. Seventy three of the principal rebels were condemned for perpetual banishment. Among them were Vengum Periya Wodaya Tevar of Sivaganga, Bomma Nayak of Panjalankurichi and Duraiswamy, the son of Marudu Pandyan.⁶⁷ Duraiswamy, who was so far, at large, was taken prisoner from a village near Madurai.⁶⁸ Shevatiah and Oomathurai were executed at Panjalankurichi and the Marudus at Tirupatore. Muthu Vella Nayak also graced gallows.⁶⁹ Duraiswamy, a handsome youth evoked the compassion of Agnew and Governor Clive. Hence his life was spared; but in February 1802 he together with other rebels of note was banished to the Prince of Wales Island, Penang.⁷⁰ On 11 February 1802 the prisoners on board Admiral Nelson, sailed from Tutukudi. The voyage, long and tedious, lasted for seventy six days kept under strict restraint and hand cuffed with iron in pairs, the prisoners suffered miserably. In the course of the voyage two died of sickness and one was drowned. The rest of the prisoners, seventy in number, reached Perang on 26 April 1802. Soon after their arrival at the destination, one

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.8081.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 20 Oct.1802, M.D.T.E., Vol.33, p.668.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 20 Feb.1802, M.C., Vol.293, p.1318.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 1 Dec.1801., M.C., Vol.289, p.7720.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 22 Dec.1801, M.C. Vol.290, p.8064.

⁷⁰ Rajayyan, K., *South Indian Rebellion*, Mysore, 1971, p.217.

third of them fled in different directions. But their agency preyed upon them so much that twenty one of them died within five months of banishment.⁷¹ Nothing is known about the rest. The suppression of the rebels and execution of their leaders failed the attempts made by the chieftains to assert their influence. The Company found itself free to bring the country under its effective control.

Suppression of the Poligars

After the suppression of the uprising, Colonel Agnew issued a proclamation which prohibited keeping weapons as an offence. It again stated that a cash award was to be given to those who surrendered their weapons like pikes, gingal, pistol and matchlock to the Government.⁷² To prevent the poligar insurrection to future, the Government ordered to bring out all the concealed weapons and arms of the poligars and demolish all the forts.⁷³ The proclamation of Agnew was published in all parts of Madurai District. Consequently inhabitants surrendered all their offensive weapons to the Government. In this way they disarmed the inhabitants and ensured peace and harmony. It also strengthened the administration by preventing the problem of concealment of weapons in case of an armed rebellion.⁷⁴ The suppression of the poligar rebellion and South India Rebellion resulted in the liquidation of the influence of the chieftains.

The auxiliary powers were prevented from offering any further serious resistance in defence of their order. The sovereign rights of the Nawab came in the way so long to the implementation of the reforms, but this obstacle too was overcome. The Carnatic Treaty signed on 31 July 1801 ended the Nawab's rule and started the Company administration. Enabled by these changes in its favour, the Company carried into effect the much

⁷¹ James Welsh., *op.cit.*, p.201.

⁷² Madras Council, 1 Dec.1801, Madurai Collectorat Records, (hereinafter referred to as M.C.R.), Vol.1181, pp.455-456.

⁷³ Board of Revenue, 4 Jan.1802, letter to Madras Council, M.C.R., Vol.1139, pp.61-62.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 2 Jan.1802, letter to Madras Council, M.C.R., Vol.1184, pp.1-2.

contemplated political settlement of the poligar country.⁷⁵ Though the English suppressed it by a policy of blood and iron, they did not content themselves with mere suppression. On the other hand, after the conclusion of the Carnatic Treaty of 1801, they proceeded to rectify defects in the administration which contributed to the outbreaks. Edward Clive, Governor of Madras issued a proclamation outlining the different features of the reforms. It granted a general amnesty to all the surviving chieftains, who extended their support to the rebellion and promised to honour the rights of property life, usages and customs of the inhabitants.⁷⁶ He announced his intention of reorganising the administration of the country on a permanent basis; giving due respect to the traditions of the inhabitants. The Governor declared his decision that a permanent assessment of revenue would be instituted on principles of zamindari tenure so as to give hereditary rights to the poligars. He explained that the permanent assessment would secure to the chieftains possession of their land under the operation of limited and definite laws, which would restrain the servants of the Company from unnecessary interference.⁷⁷ By this proclamation, Lord Clive sought to conciliate the poligars and the people. Thus the decision to do away with the poligari system was coupled with an attempt to conciliate the wounded feelings of the poligars.

At the same time administration adopted measures for disarming the inhabitants. It directed the people to surrender their fire arms. However, it allowed each chieftain to retain a certain number of peons carrying pikes in order to enable him to maintain those ceremonies of State to which he had been accustomed. Besides, compensation was given for the surrender of fire arms. The forts of the poligars were destroyed and periodical inspection of

⁷⁵ Madras Council, 3 Aug.1801, S.D.T.E., Vol.2,p.92.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 17 Dec.1802, M.D.T.E., Vol.31, p.272.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 1 Dec.1801, M.C., Vol.289, p.7663.

the *pollams* was instituted so as to prevent reconstruction.⁷⁸ These measures could be carried into effect without any constitutional hurdle as the Nawab's authority was already dismantled.

The struggle was attended with bitter ferocity and immense slaughter. The rebels paid more dearly than the English did, as they were neither disciplined nor adequately armed. Though the rebels had a well concerted plan of action, it did not work up to expectations. In the beginning the rebellion broke out in Tirunelveli, Madurai and Tanjore. Hence the Company found it as an impossible task to crush the rebellion. The proclamations of the rebels indicate that they believed in a mass movement against the Company. They appealed to all major castes-the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaisyas, the Sudras and the Muslims to unite together and free country from European rule.⁷⁹ Further, the people of different castes, Maravas, Nadars, Totiens, Kallars, Paravas, Gounders and Muslims joined the rebellion respective of their linguistic or racial considerations. The Company records of the period refer to the inhabitants of different territories flocking to the rebel ranks quite voluntarily. In addition to these, the *kuravai* which was the war cry of the rebels and the *killah*, a leaf pierced with the nail when sent to the villages, served the purpose of summons to bring the inhabitants to the battlefield.⁸⁰ Still defeat came because of the military strength of the Company, the support of its allied powers and inferior equipments.

After the suppression of the poligar rebellion, the Company took effective measures for the consolidation of its authority. Edward Clive, the Governor of Madras, confiscated the *palayams* of the rebels and established his direct administration. He deprived the poligars of their police and military functions and forced them to destroy all their posts and forts. In

⁷⁸ Ibid., 29 May 1802, M.D.T.E., Vol.32, p.454.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 1801, Revenue Sundries, (hereinafter referred to as R.S), Vol.26, p.447.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 22 Dec.1801, M.C., Vol.290, p.8178.

consequence they were made mere zamindars. The inhabitants were on pain of death forced to surrender their fire arms, with no compensation; being made and prevented from manufacturing deadly weapons. By these radical measures, the English abolished the poligari system. After a long period of existence it faced with a violent end.⁸¹ After their victory over the peninsular confederacy, organised by the rebels the Company proceeded with the consolidation of their authority over the Madras districts. With this end in view, they reformed the land revenue administration, reorganised the judicial system and promoted communications. The construction of roads through the woods and provision for quick communication of intelligence were calculated to deny to the rebels the advantages that they derived from jungle warfare and to strengthen the Company's influence. After the restoration of order, the Company sought to reorganise and improve the administration.

Poligari Converted Zamindaries

The end of the suppression of the rebellion the savage and violent character of the poligari system was given up and the peaceful and beneficial condition of the zamindaries under the new revenue settlement on the basis of zamindari system came into being. That manner the struggle between the poligars and the ruling powers came to an end.⁸² The poligars had special influence and authority in their *palayams*. The Company found it convenient to entrust the collection of revenue to them. They realised that the deprivation of their power and interest led to severe and unpleasant consequences. The Government proceeded to implement some measures to reform the existing trends in collecting the revenue. The poligars had an upper hand in the southern, western and northern parts of Madras. The polligars belonged in the Madras territories in the southern region of

⁸¹ Ibid., 9 Nov.1800, R.C., Vol.9, p.2941.

⁸² Radhakrishna Aiyar, S., *A General History of the Pudukkottai State*, Vol.II, Pudukkottai, 1916, p.315-316.

poligars were concentrated in Tirunelveli, Ramanathapuram, Dindigul, Tiruchirappalli and Madurai.

Edward Clive, who issued a proclamation in 1801 announced the decision of the Company to abolish the poligari system and to introduce the zamindari system in its place. The proclamation was applicable to the poligars of Tirunelveli, Madurai, Sivaganga and Dindigul declaring its intention to disarm the country and abolish the military service. It also announced its intention to establish a permanent assessment in respect of their *palayams* upon the principle of zamindari tenure.⁸³ The *palayams* of Ramagiri, Ramanathapuram and Saptore were restored to the former ruling families on the basis of zamindari tenure. Panjalamkurichi and other *palayams* remained under the direct control of the Company administration. As Panjalamkurichi appeared as a blot on the military prestige of the English, its name was expunged from all public records. The fort was for the second time demolished and the entire site was ploughed as to leave no vestige of it.⁸⁴ During this period, the Company sequestered the *palayams* of Dhili, Mangalam, Periapatti, Jallipatti, Tondamttur and Somanduri are, all in Dindigul and Coimbatore region.⁸⁵ The loyal poligars too were promised augmented security, favour and wealth. The Tondaiman of Pudukkottai was granted possession of Kilanelli from Tanjore.⁸⁶ This proclamation was followed by the assessment of land in the *palayams* and the amount fixed by the government was considered as the permanent *peschush* payable to the government. The military service was given up and money payment was encouraged. Their armed peons were converted into revenue servants. These welcome measures marked a beginning of the economic reconstruction for which the country stood in dire need.

⁸³ Ibid., 9 May 1803, Revenue Despatches to England, (hereinafter referred to as R.D.T.E.), Vol.7, p.528.

⁸⁴ Board of Revenue, 2 July 1801, proceedings, R.C., Vol.289, p.7707.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 10 Oct.1801, R.C., Vol.3, p.94.

⁸⁶ Madras Council, 5 July 1803, P.C., Vol.10, pp.833-834.

The detailed investigations were instituted into the economic resources of the various *palayams* during 1801 and 1802. The implementation of the zamindari system was completed and the poligars were transformed into a class of zamindars in May 1802.⁸⁷ In their changed character, the chieftains were required to disband their armed establishments and to pay enhanced amount to the government under a permanent assessment. The magistrates were placed in charge of the *kaval* system. However, the chieftains were permitted to retain a fixed number of peons carrying pikes so as to enable them to maintain those ceremonies of State, to which they had been accustomed for long.⁸⁸ The jungles in the poligar territories were cleared in order to deny advantages to the lingering rebel bands to regroup and resume the fighting. For the easy movement of troops, woods were cleared and roads were opened. Military roads were constructed to the strategic areas and postal communication was established by employing messengers all along the way from Palayamkottai to Sankaranainarkoil and from Kalaiyarkoil to Tirupatore and Piranmalai.⁸⁹ It was felt that bush fighting brought the irregular native troops on an equal footing with the best European forces. More troops were stationed in the centres of disaffection so as to overawe the inhabitants. These military measures were calculated to promote the consolidation of the Company administration.⁹⁰ The poligars system that flourished for two and half centuries came to a violent end in the midst of the suppression of their struggle for survival and implementation of the zamindari settlement.

The poligars went down fighting against alien imperialism. Ultimately a combination of adverse developments rendered their fall inevitable. The Company's ascendancy eclipsed the European and Mysore

⁸⁷ Ibid., 9 May 1852, R.D.T.E., Vol.7, p.528.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 10 Nov.1801, M.D.T.E., Vol.32, pp.454-456.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 10 Nov.1801, M.C., Vol.289, p.7371.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 24 Aug.1802, R.C., Vol.118, p.2887.

powers and the poligars could gain no assistance from any quarter. If the existence of the poligari system presented certain difficulties to the working of the central government, it equally so presented certain opportunities to the country. The leaders were executed or condemned to ignominious imprisonment and villagers were deprived of the means of repelling the predatory incursion, commanding this period. The repressive policy in consequence prepared the minds of the people for a more determined struggle. The *palayams* were thrown open to the ravages of the gangs of robbers who generally infested the hilly regions. The people were deprived of the means of repelling the predatory of the means of repelling enemies in the circar territories and of resisting the arbitrary demands of the parties claiming the authority of the Nawab, though these demands were generally supported by the force of arms. Yet as England, the chieftains served as an effective barrier to autocracy and tyranny. The inhabitants in general found it beyond their reach to gain positions in the central administration as it was treated as a preserve of the ruling group. On the other, hand the poligars as well as the village communities employed people in large number and extended to them a wide variety of opportunities for getting themselves trained in administration, as the Greek city states did. In the meantime, the vast economic resources possessed by the poligars offered possibility of the country making rapid economic progress in line with the principles of free enterprise. The martial talents and resources of their rude warriors, had they been property canalised, would have shielded the independence of the country too. But the poligari system did not develop to its logical extent as the English nobility did. This was because the Company's imperialism distorted its working and prevented its progress. The British administration without taking any effective steps against these evils for affording protection to the inhabitants deprived them of their right of self-defence. Such a crude policy evolved without due consolidation of conditions of the country and

enforced with vindictiveness against a high spirited people reacted violently. No wonder the short duration of calm was over taken by a violent storm and Oomathurai, a deaf and dumb man, emerged as the leader of the great struggle. The British finally won after a long expensive campaign that took more than a year. The poligar forces based at Panjalamkurichi Fort was ploughed up and sowed with salt and castor oil so that it should never again be inhabited. The Company forces quickly overpowered the remaining insurgents. The suppression of the poligar uprising resulted in the liquidation of the influence of the chieftains. Under terms of the Carnatic treaty of 1801, the Company assumed direct control over Madras. The Company mobilised its strength to suppress all rebellious activities and a large number of them were subjected to capital punishment. It led to the establishment of internal order and peace. The English East India Company assumed full sovereignty over the territories in 1800-1802. The position of the Company was solid and there was a conducive atmosphere for a settlement. They moved towards the introduction of permanent settlement which converted the poligars into zamindars and entered into an agreement with them which led to the stabilisation of the government. In consequence the Company itself was powerful and was striding forward to becoming the sovereign power. Following, this proceeded with framing the administrative policy giving more importance to revenue to re-organise the system of revenue administration as soon as they established their rule with a view to realising the revenue without much difficulties. They contemplated to replace the existing method of revenue assessment and collection with the new one which was experimented in Bengal. As there existed different modes of revenue assessments, it decided to introduce the Bengal pattern of permanent settlement on zamindari tenure. In this process, the governmental lands were parcelled out and sold to the highest bidders.

CHAPTER VI

INTRODUCTION OF ZAMINDARI SYSTEM

The period between 1802 and 1807 can be called the period of the Permanent Zamindari Settlement. Together with Nawabs and poligars engaged the serious attention of the Company. The Company assumed full sovereignty over the territories in 1801 and pursued a policy of maximising the revenue collection. As there existed different modes of revenue assessment, it decided to introduce the Bengal pattern of permanent settlement of zamindari tenure. They had converted the existing poligars into peaceful landholders under the zamindari system and asked them to pay a fixed amount to the government. This victory of the English in the acquisition and consolidation of their power in the Tamil Country strengthened their stronghold. However, they anticipated some disturbances from the local powers in the time to come. Consequently it was felt that their ascendancy through the administration of their men would facilitate their prosperity further. The Company made Bengal as the capital of British territories; Madras began to adopt Bengal system of revenue collection. The zamindari system in the form of permanent settlement introduced in certain parts of Madras in the beginning of the nineteenth century was so closely modelled on a similar Bengal Settlement introduced by Lord Cornwallis. The system brought many profits to the Company. These matters and political profits incited it to extend this revenue system in select areas of the Madras on the basis of the recommendations of the Special Commission, instituted for the same purpose. The regions which experienced the