Chapter 1

Political Economy of Southern Tamil Country during the Eighteenth Century

Tamil Country is located in the southern most part of present day India. The Southern Tamil Country was ruled by the Madurai Nayaks since the establishment of the regime in the sixteenth century. The Nayak rule, in fact, was seen as the transition of the country from the status of a dependent territory to that of an independent one in the seventeenth century. Given the political situation of the region and kingdoms that ruled and invaded the Southern Tamil Country, the present work divides them into four groups: the central powers, little kingdoms, invaders and Europeans. The Southern Tamil Country was subjected to two Central powers in the eighteenth century. Vijayanagar Empire was the earlier one, subordinates of which were the Nayaks. The Mughal Empire was the later one whose subordinates were the Nizam of Hyderabad and the subedars of the latter were the Nawabs of Arcot. The Marathas, the rulers of Mysore and the Raja of Travancore were the invaders. Along the coastal side Europeans like, Portuguese, Dutch, Danes, English and French were initially traders who became rulers later. The Palaiyakkarar chiefs of Ramnad, Sivagangai, Pudukottai, Nerkattansevval and Panjalankurichi were chieftains and their chieftaincies are labeled here as little kingdoms. All of them were trying to get legitimacy of ruling the region and maintain their social and political status for gaining the economic resources of this region. There was a contest to acquire the revenue of the Southern Tamil Country and the contestants included including central powers, local powers, invaders and Europeans who were in conflict always.
The present chapter narrates the political economy of the Southern Tamil Country during the eighteenth century. This chapter is divided into five parts. The first part draws the attention to the Nayaks followed by the Palaiyakkarars, subordinates of the former and holders of Palayam lands. The Nawab has been given focus in the second part. The role and policy of the Europeans particularly the Company (the English EIC) has been concentrated in the third part. Little kingdoms which played an important role in the eighteenth century have been given space in the fourth part and the chapter ends with some attention on rulers who invaded the Southern Tamil Country.

The background

As the chapter is concerned with the political economy of Southern Tamil Country during the eighteenth century, it is important to look at the political background of the region since the fourteenth century. Basically the fourteenth century is seen as the beginning of anarchy and disorder of difficult proportions which disturbed South India. The Political authority of the Pandyas and the Cholas almost disappeared in the end of the century. There was a Muhamadan invasion in the same century and with the consequent establishment of Muhamadan kings at Tiruchirappalli and Madurai, the Native ruler disappeared for the next 40 years. In the fifteenth century, Vijayanagar established its power in the south.1 The Pandya princes continued to rule in the Tirunelveli region as tributaries till the dynasty finally died out early in the sixteenth century.2 By the middle of the sixteenth century, the Nayak dynasty had been established at Madurai, as the vassals of the Vijayanagar Empire.

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In the 1730s, the Mughals entered the contest in a bid to get control of the region as the Nayak rule came to an end. On the arrival of the Mughals, and their successors, the political situation became complicated. Many Palayams, the local political units and some of the states were in the status of independence. Among them three were important. First was Vijayakumaran, the adopted son of Rani Meenakshi and the last Nayak who claimed power over Tiruchirappalli, Madurai and Tirunelveli. Khan Sahib, an adventurer who ruled the Madurai region from 1761 to 1764 was the second one. And the third was the Palaiyakkarars such as rulers of Nerkattansevval, Ettaiyapuram, Sivagiri and Panjalankurichi, Maravans of Ramnad and Sivagangai and Kallans of Pudukottai. In 1746 the European rivals, the English EIC and the French EIC, entered into a struggle for supremacy in the subcontinent even though their main concern was trade. The former finally succeeded and obtained the hegemony over India in the beginning of the nineteenth century.

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3 The Tiruchirappalli region is known for its historical importance. The fort of Tiruchirappalli was the capital of the Nayaks in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. There are two important well known temples one at Srirangam and another at Jambukeswaram. Frequent invasions made by the rulers of Mysore, Tanjore, and Deccan states like Bijapur and Golconda, Marathas, Mughals and Europeans interrupted its progress.

4 Madurai was the capital of the Nayaks for more than two centuries. The fort at Madurai was a check post to the invaders from north. The region is isolated from the northern regions and kingdoms in view of the existence of hills covered with thorny bushes. Most probably the original inhabitants of the region were Kallans (a marauding tribe). The region served as a safe place for the rebel powers in the eighteenth century.

5 Tirunelveli was the capital town of the later Pandyas (Tenkasi Pandyas). There was a big and strong fort at Palayamkottai in that region. Tuticorin a pearl fishery and centre of trade, situated on the east coast, was under the possession of the Dutch. There were 32 Palaiyakkarars in number in the region particularly in the eighteenth century. Approximately 30,000 brave but undisciplined men served in their camps.


7 K. Rajayyan, History of Madurai 1736 - 1801, Madras, 1974, pp.1-5

Part – I

1. Central Powers

1.1. The Nayaks

The Nayak rule got importance in the southern region between the best days of Vijayanagar and the emergence and extension of the Mughal power. The Nayak dynasty got its appearance in the Southern region gradually. Viswanatha Nayak was appointed as Governor of Madurai and initiated the Nayak rule. The territory is bounded from Cape Comorin in the south to Valikondapuram in the north and Coimbatore, Erode and Western Ghats in the west, Rameshwaram and the Sea (Bay of Bengal) in the east. Madurai was the headquarters of the kingdom. The Madurai region, a land which was mostly covered with forests, endangered the safety and welfare of the people. Viswanatha demolished the old Pandya fortification and constructed an extensive double walled fortress with 72 bastions each one of which was left under the responsibility of a military chief called Poligar or Palaiyakkarar. As mentioned Madurai was the early capital, when power of the Nayaks was expanded, the capital was shifted to Tiruchirappalli and Tirunelveli became southern provincial capital. Viswanatha’s successors claimed independence from Vijayanagar and lasted till 1736. The greatest of the Nayaks was Tirumalai Nayak who ruled the kingdom of Madurai from 1623-1659 A.D. During Tirumalai Nayak’s reign, Nayak kingdom declared its independence from the central power, Vijayanagar Empire.

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12 David Ludden, Peasant History in South India, Madras, 1989.p.69
13 K. Rajaram, History of Thirumalai Nayak, Madurai, 1982.pp.103-104
Queen Mangammal was the ruler of Madurai in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Her grand son Vijayaranga Chokkanatha was succeeded by his wife Meenakshi who ruled from 1732 to 1736 as the former died in 1732 without male issue. She adopted Vijayakumara, the son of Bangaru Tirumalai, who was a member of another branch of the royal family issuing from Kumaramuthu, the younger brother of Tirumalai Nayak. She was supported by her brother, Venkata Perumal Nayak. In 1736, Chanda Sahib accepted Meenakshi’s terms and took an oath by the Koran to safeguard her kingdom. She believed his promise and gave over to him the administration of the territories in her possession. He slowly strengthened his position in Tiruchirappalli then the capital of Madurai Nayaks.

Chanda Sahib after the victory over Dindigul region strengthened his power in south and cheated Meenakshi against his promise, in 1736. Thus by using treachery and deceit Chanda Sahib became the master of the kingdom of Madurai. The ruler of Madurai, Meenakshi committed suicide by taking poison. The Nayak administration was not over centralised, it was decentralised and the power was distributed among the feudal chieftains, called the Palaiyakkarars who supplied the troops at the time of war and collected the revenue and control justice over the village communities. The Nayak rule served as the background of some of the major developments including land revenue administration in the later years.

As everyone knows, in an agrarian society, the main income of any government is its land revenue. Regarding the revenue administration land in the Tamil region was

14 The Annual letters for 1708 is signed on 20th July 1709; J. Castets, S.J., Sidelights on South Indian History: from the letters and Records of Contemporary Jesuit Missionaries 1542 – 1756, St. Joseph’s L.S. Press, Trichy, in Madurai Province Jesuit Archives, Sacred Heart College, Shenbaganur, Kodaikanal.p.126
15 The Annual letters is signed 1st 1739
16 The Annual letters for 1732 is signed on 12th August 1735
divided into two parts during the eighteenth century. They were *Palayam* lands and *Circar*\(^{18}\) lands. The *Palayam* lands were under the control of the *Palaiyakkarars* who could collect the revenue from the inhabitants of the villages. The *Circar* is a common name for all the rulers such as Nayaks, Nawabs and the Company whose lands were under the control of *renters* who were appointed and were given the duty of collecting *peshcush*\(^{19}\) on behalf of the government from their territories. As an assigned duty, the *Palaiyakkarars* also were asked to render the revenues to the *renters*.\(^{20}\)

Tamil land was divided into five types in ancient days. They were *Kurinji, Mullai, Marutham, Neithal* and *Palai*. According to the land qualities, the people who lived in the land got the character of the nature of that particular land.\(^{21}\) (see map 2) The land of Southern Tamil Country was open and fertile and some areas were under dry zone categories. Consequently, here in the area of study, the land was catagarised into two. They were wet lands and dry lands. The wet lands were usually classified into four categories based upon productivity. They were *karisel* or black cotton ground, free from stones and sand. Secondly *shevul* or land was with mixture of red soil, stones and sand. Thirdly *pottul* or ground was a mixture of black and white earth, with stones. Fourthly *veppul* or land was a mixture of brown earth, clay and sand. Productivity was decided on the basis of soil conditions.\(^{22}\) The cultivators produced cotton, *kambu* and *cholam*, *ragi*, pulses, on the black soil horse-gram, varagu and *samai* on the red soil, palmyra trees.

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\(^{18}\) *Circar*, a term which was used to denote the government.

\(^{19}\) A term which denoted tribute was used by the Company.


Map 2: Physical map of South India
were the chief dry crops. In wet lands rice, sugarcane, plantain, tobacco, betel, oil seeds (seasmine, castor, coriander) and all types of vegetables were cultivated.23

1.2. Circar (Nayak) Lands

The land which was administered by the central government was called Circar lands. The native governments which ruled this region early managed their revenues and assessed the lands under their direct superintendence.24 Only little is known about the revenue history of the Nayak rule. It is said that, besides the land tax, there were several smaller imposts on the soil like plough tax which required owners of the land to furnish the Nayak. The ferry tax which was for upkeeping of the public ferries on the rivers, the kavali vari or tax for providing crop watchers and the teruliyam or car service which required each village for providing a fixed quota of men to drag the great temple car. All kinds of art and profession were taxed also (weavers, oil mill, retail shop, artificer, indigo vat, collector of wild honey, maker and seller of clarified butter, owner of carriage bullocks) even stones in the beds of rivers used by washermen to beat clothes on held a small tax and in the towns, tax included octroi duties on grain and other commodities brought through the gates and finally land customs.25

1.3. Collection of Revenue under Nayaks

The land revenue collection under the Vijayanagar kings was one half of the gross produce of all cultivated lands. One third was the usual proportion taken from the dry lands. The ruler of Vijayanagar divided the southern region into Madurai, Senji (Ginji) and Tanjore Nayakdom who were given the responsibility to pay annually from

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six to ten million francs. But they were irregular in sending the revenue amounts. The
Nayaks of Madurai, successor of the former used to follow the same policy of land
revenue collection.26 Often they delayed, sometimes even they refuse to pay at all and
then the king of Vijayanagar sent one of his generals with 1,00,000 men to collect the
arrears with interest. The same method was adopted by the Nayaks to collect the
revenue from the Palaiyakkarars the subordinates of the former. When these things
happened, the common people were stressed to pay for the fault of their masters. The
whole country and the inhabitants were pillaged or massacred.27

The Nayaks collected their dues in turn from the practically independent
Palaiyakkarars against whose oppressive exactions the cultivators had no remedy. They
employed renters, who were left to extract money from the ryots by the readiest means
available. Administration of the Nayak rulers gave way for colonies of Brahmins from
the north. The indigenous cultivators were affected more and their ownership of the
latter land was refused. The Brahmins became owners of much of the best land and they
were influential, intelligent and cultivated sections of Hindu society.28 Through various
taxes and policies of the Nayaks, the treasury was maintained with the balanced money.
The numerous forts like, fort at Tiruchirappalli, Madurai, Palayamkottai and the palaces
at Tiruchirappalli, Ramnad and Madurai are the good examples for the surplus wealth of
the native rulers. Nayak rulers followed smooth light policy on collection of revenue
while comparing with Nawabs.29

26 W. Francis, Madura Gazetteer, New Delhi, 2000.p.180
27 W. Francis, Madura Gazetteer, New Delhi, 2000.p.179
1.4. The Palayam lands

The Nayaks administered their dominions through the agency of Palaiyakkarars, chiefs of great and small portions, who were charged with the collection of the revenue, the maintenance of order within their borders and certain military duties. They collected and infinity of tolls on trade of every kind and levied a land tax on each village as a whole and got in amount on a theoretical division of the produce between the cultivator and the government.\(^{30}\)

The lands under the management of the Palaiyakkarars were called Palayam lands. The local administration of the region was under Palaiyakkarars control from their origin to 1801. However the Palaiyakkarars took the real power when the Nayak rule came to an end in 1736.\(^{31}\) The Palayam was a small piece of territory consisting of a few villages which were granted to a chieftain or Palaiyakkarar who had to render justice to the people and the tribute to pay to the sovereign.\(^{32}\) The Palaiyakkarars derived their resources from the cultivator, perhaps most of the revenue from land. They levied also land duties, taxes on ploughs looms, shops, labours and above all they were armed with a rabble of desperate marauders to enforce obedience. Apart from that, the Palaiyakkarars did the duty of stalam kaval\(^{33}\) and collected fees for the duty from the people. Apart from this they continued a police system called desha kaval for which

\(^{30}\) Guide to records of Tinnevelly 1796 – 1835, p.1-3
\(^{32}\) The inscriptive sources indicate that a date somewhere about 1535 can be the initiation of the Palayam system. There were number of Palayams which existed in the eighteenth century. The Palaiyakkarars, holder of the Palayams, were initiated by Visvanatha Nayak of Madurai, obtained their possession from the former ruling houses or by their military might or in recognition of distinguished service rendered to their sovereigns. R. Sathiyanatha Iyer, History of the Nayaks of Madura, Madras, 1991.p.61
\(^{33}\) S.R. Lushington, Report regarding the Tinnevelly Poligars and Sequestered Pollams (1799-1800),pp.1-7
they extorted payment. In fact they reduced the power of the renters.\textsuperscript{34} Payments were made through their caste head man.\textsuperscript{35}

The Nayak rulers permitted the \emph{Palaiyakkarars} to possess their rights over the \emph{Palayams} and to collect taxes and to maintain troops. They were ordered to pay one third of the revenue to the central authority. Remaining one third of the revenue was taken their private expense. All Maravans, Tottiys and Kallans states were referred to as \emph{Palayams} and enjoyed that of these military chieftains in the late eighteenth century. Maravan settled in uninhabited area until 1300 A.D. in red soil tract whereas Tottiyans settled in uninhabited area left by Maravan black soil tract.\textsuperscript{36} The \emph{Palaiyakkarars} held possession of an extent of territory, headed the administration, maintained the establishment of army, police and revenue. His primary duty was to extend military protection to the people living under his jurisdiction and safeguard the possession of their properties.

The territorial extent of the \emph{Palayams} was not uniform. Ramnad, Sivangangai and Pudukottai were the largest, and Ettaiyapuram, Panjalankurichi, Sivagiri and Chokkampatti were medium sized while Mannarkottai, Sennalkudi, Kollankondan, Urkad, Kadalkudi, Kolvarpatti, Maniachi and Ezhayirampannai were the smallest among the seventy two \emph{Palayams} of Southern Tamil Country. Each \emph{Palayam} consisted of villages, personal lands of the chieftain, public lands and temple lands.\textsuperscript{37} About 1730s the power of southern region was really divided between a number of independent \emph{Palaiyakkarars}, who had forts in the hills or dense jungle with which the region was

\textsuperscript{34} The Nawab complained that the \emph{Palaiyakkarars} did not respect his renter. H.R. Pate, \emph{Tinnevelly District Gazetteer}, Tirunelveli, (1916, 1917), 1993 pp. 271-272
\textsuperscript{35} David Ludden, \emph{Peasant History in South India}, Madras, 1989 p.234
\textsuperscript{36} David Ludden, \emph{Peasant History in South India}, Madras, 1989 pp.48-52
\textsuperscript{37} In the English records, the \emph{Palaiyakkarars} of Tamil Country were referred to as the ‘southern \emph{Palaiyakkarars}’ who were concentrated in Tirunelveli, Ramanathapuram, Madurai, Dindigul and Tiruchirappalli districts. R. Caldwell, \emph{History of Tinnevelly}, Tinnevelly, 1881, p.104
covered. Some of them, collectors of revenue, contrived to get away from the immediate control of the Nawab and gradually established themselves as independent.38 (see appendix 2)

Part – II

2. Nawab of Arcot (Carnatic)

After succeeding the Nayaks, in 1736 for the remainder of the eighteenth century, the southern region was under the control of the Nawabs of Arcot (Carnatic later) whose term of sovereignty exhibits the administrations of the land tax at its very most. Since the Mughal Empire was declined after the death of Aurangazeb, the great Mughal emperor in 1707, the kingdom was split into pieces; several independent states emerged in India in general and in South India in particular.39 The second big empire of that period was Maratha kingdom which carved out its independence in the western side. Nawab of Awadh and Bengal became independent in the eastern region. In south the Nizam founded an independent state of Hyderabad; the Wodaiyar Raja extended his sway over Mysore. The Nawab of Arcot declared, consolidated his control over the Carnatic payenghat, known as the ‘Carnatic’ in subsequent times. The Southern Tamil Country came under the southernmost part of the Carnatic.40

The name, ‘Carnatic’ is a misnomer. Karnataka was, and is applied to the land of the Kannadigas. During the seventeenth century, when Bijapur and Golconda conquered the Vijayanagar Empire, they divided the remained parts among themselves and Bijapuri Karnataka and Hyderabadi Karnataka came into use. Each of these regions was divided

38 S.R. Lushington, Report regarding the Tinnevelly Poligars and Sequestered Pollams (1799-1800), pp.1-3
40 S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar, (ed.), ‘Sources of the History of the Nawwabs of the Carnatic’, Vol. IV, Translated from Tuzuki Walajahi by Burhan Ibn Hassan, University of Madras, Madras, 1944
into ‘balaghat’ meaning territory above the Ghats and ‘payenghat’ meaning coastal plain below to the Ghats. The Company restricted the term to the second as ‘Carnatic’. The territories of the Nawabs of the Carnatic extended from the Palnad, (in Andhra Pradesh) to Kanniymakamari (in Tamil Country).  

The Carnatic of the eighteenth century extended along the east coast from Guntur in the north to Kannyakumari in the South. The geographically the area was divided into three regions. They are northern Carnatic ruled by Mughals, central Carnatic ruled by Maratha and southern Carnatic ruled by the Hindu rulers like, Nayaks and their subordinates, Palaiyakkarars in the seventeenth century. The river Gundlakamma separated the Carnatic from the Northern Circars in the dominion of the Nizam. The river south Pennar divides Central Carnatic from the northern division and the rivers Vellar and Kollidam separates the Southern Carnatic from the Central division. The present chapter concentrates on the Southern Carnatic as mentioned early as Southern Tamil Country. Since the late seventeenth century, the subordinates of Mughal occupied the northern and central Carnatic; they were then called together the Arcot subedari. In 1736, the Mughals captured Tiruchirappalli, the capital of the then Nayaks of Madurai. As a result, the southern Carnatic or Madurai region was referred to as the Tiruchirappalli Subedari.

The history of the Nawabs of the Carnatic begins, while the forces of Aurangzeb, Mughal Emperor, captured the Ginji fort around 1698. The rule of the Nawabs extended

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42 S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar, (ed.), ‘Sources of the History of the Nawwabs of the Carnatic’, Vol. IV, Translated from Tuzuki Walajahi by Burhan Ibn Hassan, University of Madras, Madras, 1944
43 T. Chandrasekaran, Carnatakaka Rajakkal Swisthara Charithiram, Madras, 1952.p.1
44 S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar, (ed.), ‘Sources of the History of the Nawwabs of the Carnatic’, Vol. IV, Translated from Tuzuki Walajahi by Burhan Ibn Hasan, University of Madras, Madras, 1944
till the end of the eighteenth century and brought to an end in beginning of the nineteenth century by the Company. Ginji was made as the capital of the Mughals and Nawabs in particular, while it was captured in 1698. But the capital was shifted from Ginji to Arcot in 1716. Burhan Ibn Hasan Handi, The author of *Tuzuk-i-Walajahi* which is a Persian work of value for the history of the Nawabs of Carnatic explains in detail about the Nawabs. He says that Arcot is situated on the bank of Arani River and it was made as camping ground for the army of Islam and for raising the standards of the victorious forces. Tents or thatched houses in course of time changed into tiled ones. After it became capital, gradually it developed into a big town.

2.1. Navayats to Wallajah

Zulfiqar Khan a general of Aurangazeb was the first man hold the post of viceroy or *subedar* or Administrator of the southern region. The first two, Zulfiqar Khan and his successor Daud Khan were administrators rather than the Nawabs in the sense of rulers. Sadatullah Khan is regarded as the first Nawab a nephew of Zulfiqar Khan and a son of Daud Khan came to power and he was succeeded by a young grandson. They all belonged to Navayats. There was fight for power and authority. Anwaruddin, a Wallajah who murdered the young ruler became *subedar* of Arcot. The successors of Anwaruddin were Muhammad Ali and Omdat ul Umrah worthy to mention. Azim ud Dawla the last Nawab from whom the power and authority were undertaken by the

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45 After Sadatullah Khan suppressed the revolt of Tej Singh, Ginji was unhealthy. Daud Khan, immediate successor of former changed the capital to Arcot.

46 Burhan adds that the name is “from the language of the Hindus. So long as the army lived in tents and did not attempt to change the nature of the forest, there was no definite name except the name of ‘the camp of Dhul Fagar Khan’. When buildings were erected and several roads were opened, the Hindus called it ‘Arcot’ because of the combination of river and forest”. The Name Arcot derived from the word *arakkada* surrounded by paddy fields. *Arkkad* means ‘forest of Ar’, ar or atti being a Cola emblem (according to K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, once it was a capital of the Colas). Later it became seat of the Nawab of the Carnatic. S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar, (ed.), ‘Sources of the History of the Nawwabs of the Carnatic’, Vol. IV, Translated from *Tuzuki Walajahi* by Burhan Ibn Hasan, University of Madras, Madras, 1944
Company in 1801 was made puppet ruler. The rest (after 1801) were made as prince with pension till the independence of India.\footnote{N.S. Ramasamy, \textit{Political History of Carnatic under the Nawabs}, New Delhi, 1984, pp.1-3}

Chanda Sahib, who was then an uncle of the Nawab of Arcot, put an end to the Nayak dynasty in 1736. But there was problem for legitimacy within the Muhamadans who were divided into two. They were Navayat and Wallajah.\footnote{The first one was ‘Children of the Soil’ or had long been domiciled. The second and third were the ‘Mughals’. Turanians hailed from central Asia and were called Sunni. Nizam ul Mulk was a leader of this group. The Iranians, who were Shia, were, as their name indicates from Iran. Their leaders were Azad Khan and Zulfiqar Khan. The two groups joined together to oust the Hindusthanis later days. N.S. Ramasamy, \textit{Political History of Carnatic under the Nawabs}, New Delhi, 1984, pp.14-15} About 1744, southern region became nominally subject to the Nawab of Arcot. During the second Carnatic war 1749-1753 the Navayats came to an end and the Wallajah established their sway over Tamil Country in consequence of their victory over the war. In 1748, Anwar-ud-din, the founder of the Wallajah dynasty of Arcot, was killed in the Battle of Ambur by Chanda Sahib who belonged to the Navayats.\footnote{C.V. Aitchison, \textit{A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads}, Part 1, Calcutta, 1864, p.2} However the former’s son, Mohammad Ali escaped to the strong fort of Tiruchirappalli. In the war, Chanda Sahib was supported by the French and Muhammad Ali was espoused by the English. The war ended with favour to Chanda Sahib who regained his liberty and was acknowledged as the Nawab of Arcot.\footnote{The Annual letters for 1745-49 is signed 21st September 1750; T. Chandrasekaran, \textit{Caranataka Rajakkal Swisthara Charithiram}, Madras, 1952, p. vi}

Mohammed Ali is an only Nawab to mentions a figure of note. He was the Nawab of the Carnatic from 1749 to 1795 A.D.\footnote{S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar, (ed.), \textit{Sources of the History of the Nawwabs of the Carnatic}, Vol. IV, Translated from \textit{Sawanihat-i-Mumtaz}, by Muhammad Karim, Part IV, Chapter 2, University of Madras, Madras, 1944, p.4} Eminent personalities in the English side like Stringer Lawrence and Robert Clive played a major role to place Mohammed Ali in the Nawabship. Consequently the later years turned back to Mohammad Ali who
successfully defeated Chanda Sahib and his allies embarked upon military operations against the Palaiyakkarars.

Muhammad Ali wanted to construct an independent dynastic state in the Carnatic Payenghat from the river Krishna to Cape Comorin. He tried for that in 1750s to 1770s to place his state on a sound financial footing, to have Wallajah rule accepted as legitimate, and to ensure the independent Wallajah succession. He concentrated on administration which was reconstructed and he appointed new officials and subordinates were conquered and the latter were forced to pay revenue.\textsuperscript{52}

\subsection*{2.2. Administration of the Nawab}

“The construction of an effective administration proved a more difficult task than the conquest of territory.”

The Nawab of Carnatic exercised direct or indirect authority upon the entire country. The governor as the Nawab’s deputy headed the administration of the province, the faujdar as the representative of the Nawab in the district, administered criminal justice and gave military protection. The amuldar administered revenue and settled civil cases. However both of the authorities were combined in a single person later on. The princely states like Tanjore and tribal territories like Melur were assisted by a council of advisers\textsuperscript{53} who were called as sirkeel in Tanjore, diwan in Ramnad, karyakarta in Pudukkottai and pradhani in Panjalankurichi. Representatives were called vakeels differently called tahsildar, taluqdar, killedar and subedar were stationed at the Nawab’s court. The public servants who came lowest in the administrative establishment were the kanakkupillais (accountants), sibbendies (revenue peons), darogphas (superintendents),

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\textsuperscript{53} Military Country Correspondence, 17 July 1791, Vol.42, p.55
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During the course of their administration and state formation, the Nawabs had to face many difficulties. The rebel Palaiyakkars is one among them. A succession of governors or managers was deputed to administrate the revenues. Among them 15 were Muhamadan, 9 Hindus, 2 officers of the Company between the years 1739 to 1800. Some important details of the revenue administration of the Nawab of Arcot in this southern region were explained as Nayaks divided; the lands were divided into two major divisions, dry lands and wetlands.

2.3. Land divisions for purposes of revenue assessment

Wet land was divided into two. They were panmata, or betel growing land and ordinary wet land. The first one was assessed in accordance with the estimated produce. The revenue varied from 20 per cent of the gross produce to as much as 40 per cent. The second one was assessed and it was capable of growing sugarcane, turmeric and similar valuable crops, two crops of paddy, or one crop of paddy. Regarding with the payment one half of the reminder balance was spent for cultivation expanses and in the second one, from the gross produce of 12 ½ per cent. Swatantrams was made before the hypothetical division between government and the ryot was made. Apart from four above mentioned kinds of dry and wet lands. There were also nanjai taram punjai and pilluvari land.

Wet lands were the object of chief interest of the government. As mentioned early from the year 1736 to 1800 the lands were divided into two i.e. Circar lands and

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54 David Ludden, Peasant History in South India, Madras, 1989, p.83
55 Mr. Hurdis, Collector of Madurai was only partially successful in the collection of revenue for several years. He made memorable survey and settlement in the region. The lands of the region were primarily classified as being either (a) dry land (un-irrigated) (b) wet (regularly irrigated). (Excluding poramboke that is areas such as tank beds, the sites of forts so on which could never be cultivated) W. Francis, Madura Gazetteer, New Delhi, 2000, p.188; V.S. Padmanatha Ayyar, A Short Account of Tinnevelly District, Tinnevelly, 1933, p.4
56 W. Francis, Madura Gazetteer, New Delhi, 2000, p.189
Palayam lands. The wet lands had been to divide the produce between the Circar and the cultivators. The Nawab maintained a complex organization for the administration of revenue in order to bring about a rigorous collection of revenue. The amuldars, the principal administrator of revenue were appointed in Circar territories. However, Mohammad Ali humiliated by his military expenses and demands of the Company, assigned large areas to the renters for fixed sums and also gave lands to private individuals which ultimately led to a diversity of methods in the collection of revenue.\textsuperscript{57} The amuldars forced the landholders to pay the tax at a higher rate as requirement of the time while the renters called upon the revenue officials to assess the lands over and above the rent. It clearly revealed a conspicuous absence of the farsightedness or humanitarianism of these officials. The exactions of the renters who collected this share were not, however, the only burdens which the cultivators had to bear.\textsuperscript{58}

Dry land was again sub divided into two they were baghayat or garden and ordinary dry land. On the first one, the revenue was fixed one third of the estimated gross produce after a certain deduction has been made for the cost of manuring. In the second the assessment was usually two fifths of the estimated gross produce. Dry land contributed a very small proportion of the revenue. The right of collection of revenue was given to the ryots of the village for a lump sum called kattukuthagai.\textsuperscript{59} The Nawabs paid comparatively little attention to the revenue on dry lands. The government was continually inventing new taxes to wring more money from the ryot. The rulers, the more ingenious, by shortening the measuring rod, increased the area for which the ryot was liable. The ryot was forced to pay or compel for buying backs the Circar share of

\textsuperscript{58} T. Chandrasekaran, \textit{Carnataka Rajakkal Swisthara Charithiram}, Madras, 1952.p.157
\textsuperscript{59} A report dated 24\textsuperscript{th} September 1807 by Mr. Hodgson, printed with the fifth report of the select committee, p.678
his produce at fancy prices. The *renters* were left to make profits if they could by grinding the faces of ryots.  

The value of the Nawab’s government can be measured through the state revenue collections. The potential gross revenue of the Carnatic was approximately Pags. 3 million per annum, and although this yield seems never to have been achieved, collections came consistently close to this figure by the late 1760s and continued high throughout the period to Hyder Ali’s invasion in 1780. In Tirunelveli, both assessment rates and the percentage of years in which the assessed revenues were actually collected rose during this period, so that state revenues increased from about Pags. 460,000 in the 1750s to about Pags. 650,000 in the 1770s.

### 2.4. Share of the revenue

The *renter* allowed the farmer to take the one-half of the produce of his crop for the maintenance of his family and the re-cultivation of the land. The rest of the revenue was paid to the *Circar*. Grain rents prevailed up to 1770. The wet lands which were river fed rice lands had to pay from 7 to 8 *Kotahs* per *Kotah* (acre 1.62). They collected Rs. 4-8-0 in tank irrigated lands from 1748 to 1758 and Rs. 8-2-0 from that date up to 1810. From 1770 to 1780, the Nawab government took 60 per cent of the gross outturn of the wet land; and from 1780 to the end of the century 50 per cent. After deducting before the division some small cultivation expenses, besides ready money

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60 Burdon of ryots  
cesses of varying amounts. This division of the crops was called the *amani* system. In dry lands, the Nawab’s government rented the dry lands to inhabitants or to renters by villages and the highest sum that was collected as revenue varied from 16 to 30 lakhs of rupees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Year (A.D.)</th>
<th>Land Revenue (Rupees)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1745</td>
<td>24,33,842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1755</td>
<td>17,85,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1765</td>
<td>30,68,237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1775</td>
<td>20,46,036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1785</td>
<td>20,48,286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1795</td>
<td>19,38,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1800-1805</td>
<td>19,24,430</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above mentioned table shows the condition of the Tirunelveli region alone in the Southern Tamil Country. The two *Palaiyams*, Nerkattansevval and Panjalankurichi, taken for the present study, fall in this region. There was a fluctuation in the payment of revenue. Sometimes the payment was withheld due to the weakness of the central government.

There were some difficulties in the running of revenue administration such as instability of taxes, absence of an established standard in the assessment of dry grain fields and complicated details of ready money collections. The peasants indulged in evasive tactics against the encroaching evils. The ryots fled to the *Palayams* since the exactions were more sever in *Circar* territories. Mohammed Ali, Nawab of Arcot

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annexed Ariyalur and Wodayar Palayam and levied taxes which were four times of what the Palaiyakkarars collected. The economy of Ramnad which was prosperous initially, shattered during the period of the Nawab. Thus the conditions of the peasants of the Palaiyakkarar country were economically better than that of Circar country.

2.5. Tribute Varies

As said early the collection of tribute was major source of a government. But, the tribute varied almost every year in view of demand of the Nawab. There was frequent revolts since the tribute reached the highest pitch sometimes. In addition amuldars, the officers of the Nawab extracted whatever they could from the chiefs by diverse means-force, kindling external conflicts, false promises and mock assignments of land.\(^{69}\) The civil officers of the Nawab were corrupted and took advantage of the internal disputes and interfered in Palaiyakkarar affairs. Since the latter got the spirit of independence and turbulence, they led themselves into conflict with the Nawab.\(^{70}\)

Virtually the Nawab of Arcot imposed upon the country their military system but they did not introduce reforms of any radical magnitude either in the judicial system or in the local government. They did not possess the efficiency and benevolence of the earlier regimes due to the absence of any definite principle and humanitarianism. The administration of the land centred on a princely order of complex gradation. At the apex of the political system there stood, the sovereign, the Nawab of Carnatic exercising direct or indirect authority upon the entire country. The auxiliary powers exercised internal authority over their respective territories. The Raja of Tanjore enjoyed the highest status

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\(^{69}\) *Military Consultations*, 30\(^{th}\) October 1792, Vol. 168, pp.5465-66

\(^{70}\) The rule of the Nawab was known for his incompetent administration, characterized by irregularities. The absence of strict officers, definition of authority, division or separation of powers and irregular inspection, served as the sources of evil in the administration. Despotism was in the entire political set up which led to dissatisfaction.
among the subordinate princes on account of his economic and military resources. Other little kings Ramnad, Sivagangai, Pudukottai and Travancore came next in importance. Nerkattansevval and Panjalankurichi occupied a place lowest in the princely set up.

In the eighteenth century all the successor, warrior, and newly emerged states were trying for the state formation with the help of military and fiscal innovations. For example Burton Stein described Mysore kingdom as ‘an embryonic military fiscal state’ in the late eighteenth century and C.A. Bayly uses the idea to clarify the nature of western imperialist expansion in India.\textsuperscript{71} The element of continuity between the pre colonial and the colonial state, results in \textit{military fiscalism} being applied somewhat indiscriminately to diverse contexts.\textsuperscript{72}

2.6. Resistance of the Southern \textit{Palaiyakkarars}

The Nawab’s state-building efforts nevertheless ultimately failed. The southern \textit{Palaiyakkarars}, resisted co-operation into the administration: throughout this period, collection agents continually needed the large garrisons of the Company and Nawab’s troops stationed at Madurai, Palayamkottai, and Tiruchirappalli to enforce their demands.\textsuperscript{73} The \textit{Palaiyakkarars} were never well integrated into the provincial administrative structure as local revenue agents because the Nawab looked constantly to maximize his collections from them and eliminate all their pretensions to independence.

\textsuperscript{71} C.A. Bayly, \textit{Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the age of British Expansion 1770 \textendash;1870}, New Delhi, 2002. pp 1-5
\textsuperscript{72} Tirthankar Roy, \textit{Rethinking the origins of British India: State formation and Military \textendash; Fiscal undertakings in an eighteenth century world region}, London, June 2010. p.8
\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Letters to the Board}, 1790 \textendash; 96, Vol. 1108, 28\textsuperscript{th} September 1790, pp.93-100
He seems not to have adhered to any fixed tribute agreements, but rather to have exacted what he could by show or use of force.\textsuperscript{74}

2.7. The renters

In 1755, Colonel Heron rented Madurai and Tirunelveli to Mahphuz Khan for fifteen lakhs or rupees and to Khan Sahib for five lakhs in 1758.\textsuperscript{75} In 1772 Hyder Ali, Sultan of Mysore backed the Dindigul province to his brother in law Mir Sahib and Tippu Sultan, son of Hyder Ali leased it to Saiyyed Sahib the Nephew of Mir Sahib in 1784.\textsuperscript{76} These renters were usually tyrants of the worst description. Colonel Fullarton wrote that the object of each of them. The whole country was in disorder. The Kallans had quarreled with the Madurai renter and were committing every kind of excess. The Palaiyakkarars took this confusion as advantage to withhold payment of their dues and the renter followed their example.\textsuperscript{77} In September 1793 the Board of Revenue Directors of the collector to improve the class of renters to lease villages to the headman instead of the strangers, but the headman were especially exposed to the attack of the Kallans, centre of this caste in the Tirumangalam situated in south of Madurai.

2.8. Nawab’s Debts

Aurangzeb, the Mughal emperor left behind the Tamil Country as unfinished conquest, had never been administratively or politically integrated into the Empire. This

\textsuperscript{74} Jim Phillips, A Successor to the Mughals: the Nawab of the Carnatic and the East India Company, 1763-1785” Vol. 7, No. 3 (Aug., 1785) p.373
\textsuperscript{75} W. Francis, Madura Gazetteer, New Delhi, 2000.p.181
\textsuperscript{76} In fact, most of the area in the Tamil region as well as in the Madras Presidency had the same pattern of the land revenue up to the time when the English EIC obtained final possession of the region in 1801.
\textsuperscript{77} W. Francis, Madura Gazetteer, New Delhi, 2000.p.184
was one of the important reasons for the Nawab’s failure. An archival record explains as follows: “the assignments of the payment of the Nawab’s debt continue as before. Bills for 3,44,625 rupees out of the 4 lakhs due from the Arcot country, have been received… the Tinnevelly renter has advanced 4,20,000 rupees for the expenses of Yusuf Khan’s and Caillaud’s troops and remitted 2 lakhs to Madras and Trichinopoly by bill, out of the 11 lakhs altogether due for this year. The ravages of Mahfuz Khan and the Poligars must have occasioned great losses. The renter has been directed to furnish a statement of his receipts and expenses. The Nawab remains at Arcot. The disturbances in Nellore and Tinnevelly show that his government is not firmly established; and the French will molest his dominions as much as those of the English.”

To construct a standard state, about 20 years, Nawab involved in war activities, and he had to face internal disturbances from the rulers of Maravan states like Ramnad, Sivagangai and Pudukottai state, Raja of Tanjore, Mysore Sultan, the French, and the little kingdoms managing all of which regained a huge amount of money. Muhammad Ali the Nawab of Arcot shifted his residing palace from Arcot to Madras wanted to be with his ally the Company. He lived a luxurious life. To manage his expense he borrowed money from the Company and its servants who were friend of the Nawab. Although the Company got many beneficiaries, they did not forget to collect the interest for that money. In 1758 – 59 and in 1761 along with the Company the Nawab declared war with French on Pondicherry fort and war expenses depicted in Nawab’s account.

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80 N. Ramasamy, *Political History of Carnatic under the Nawabs*, New Delhi, 1984,pp.237-238
81 The Nawabs of Carnatic, to make the way clear for the territorial extension of the Company, defeated Pulithevan, Khan Sahib, Muthuramalinga Sethupathy, Kattabomman, Oomaithurai, Marudhu Brothers etc. in Southern Tamil Country.
82 S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar, (ed.), *Sources of the History of the Nawwabs of the Carnatic*, Vol. IV, Translated from *Sawanihat-i-Mumtaz* by Muhammad Karim, University of Madras, Madras, 1944,p.xii
Further the reasons for the Nawab’s debt were poor administration, officials’ selfishness and failure in the revenue collections. Due to continuous revolt by the little kings of Tamil Country, the Company servants and bankers changed their mind and diplomatically supported the Company. The Company made an agreement with the Nawab in 1781, by which it tried to get revenue directly from the \textit{Palaiyakkarars}\textsuperscript{83}. Gradually Nawab was made responsible for huge arrears. To collect the interests from the Nawab, the Company made many agreements in 1781, 1785, 1787, 1790, and 1792. By these agreements they got the right of revenue collection in Southern \textit{Palayams}, and gradually became the indirect ruler of the region.\textsuperscript{84}

\textbf{Part – III}

3. Europeans

The Portuguese were early modern European merchants to establish a settlement in India and occupied Goa and Cochin on the west coast at the beginning of the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{85} They were followed by the Dutch who arrived in India and established their factory in the first decade of the seventeenth century. The Dutch got possession of Tuticorin (east coast of Tirunelveli region) in 1658.\textsuperscript{86} They procured Nagapattinam on the 30\textsuperscript{th} December 1676.\textsuperscript{87} The Danes had their trading factory at Tranquebar, (Tarankampadi in Tamil) in the district of Tanjore in the Carnatic \textit{payanghat}. The latter’s behavior was always peaceful.

\textsuperscript{84} Muhammad Ali died in 1795 and was succeeded by his son Umdat ul Umara. The Company took the legitimacy of whole Carnatic in 1801 when the then Nawab died. S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar, (ed.), \textit{Sources of the History of the Nawwabs of the Carnatic, Vol. IV, Translated from Sawanihat-i-Mumtaz} by Muhammad Karim, University of Madras, Madras, 1944.p.xiii
\textsuperscript{87} S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar, (ed.), \textit{Sources of the History of the Nawwabs of the Carnatic, Vol. IV, Translated from Tuzuk-I-Walajahi} by Burhan Ibn Hassan, University of Madras, Madras, 1944.p.94
The French East India Company, another European Company came to India in 1667 and its earliest possession in the east was Madagaskar. In 1672 it purchased the site of Pondicherry where they built their trade factory in the Carnatic payanghat. It was in this town that they prospered during the days of the Nizam of the Navayat. By a series of presents and gifts they bound themselves in strong union with the nobles of the Navayat and established their friendship.\(^{88}\) The relations between the English and French in India were undisturbed until the Austrian war of succession in the middle of the eighteenth century. The wars that broke out between them were called Carnatic wars which, in end, gave way to the English East India Company to spread its supremacy in the Southern India.\(^{89}\)

3.1. English East India Company

It is clear that the word Company means in the English language a group, like the plural form in Persian which includes any number from two onwards, viz., tens, hundreds, thousands, and lakhs.\(^ {90}\) The English East India Company (the Company) commenced its commercial career as a trading corporation on 31st December 1600 and developed into a paramount political power in India till 1858.\(^ {91}\) (see map 3)

3.2. Military Fiscalism of the Company

There was only one model of successful military fiscalism in eighteenth century India and it was represented by the Company. The Company adopted a manner in which

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\(^{88}\) S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar, (ed.), *Sources of the History of the Nawwabs of the Carnatic*, Vol. IV, Translated from *Tuzuk-I-Walajahi* by Burhan Ibn Hassan, University of Madras, Madras, 1944.p.96

\(^{89}\) J. Talboys Wheelar, *India under the British Rule from the Foundation of the East India Company*, Delhi, 1886.pp.32-34

\(^{90}\) S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar, (ed.), *Sources of the History of the Nawwabs of the Carnatic*, Vol. IV, Translated from *Tuzuk-I-Walajahi* by Burhan Ibn Hasan, University of Madras, Madras, 1944.p.97

Map 3: India in 1700

economic power was deployed to enhance military power. Tirthankar Roy said “…the ‘despotism’ of the east functioned as ‘a revenue pump’ in the best of times, deteriorating into a chaotic ‘fluctuations without development’ in the eighteenth century”. The phrase, *military fiscalism* coined by Martin Wolfe in the context of Renaissance France, is frequently used to suggest a co-evolution of fiscal capacity and military capacity. According to Tirthankar Roy, a scenario where the proportion of state expenditure on army is relatively high and the state expands the scale of revenues, to be the mark of sustainable expansion of fiscal capacity driven by military goals. The Company could not finance wars from its income. So it decided to get way to increase the revenue to maintain the army and profit to the Company. The Company had the proportion of regular soldier significantly higher in the Company army. The emergence of new military strong regimes gave rise to two parallel modes of governance. They are ‘statism’ means attempts to control military and land revenue administration jointly and ‘militarism’ meaning the superimposition of a centralized military outpost over a decentralized land revenue administration.

With the idea of *military Fiscalism* the Company was expecting an opportunity from the local rulers of South India. It utilized such opportunity which was created by the Nawab Muhammad Ali at the time of war for legitimacy in the Arcot. As a result

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95 All major rival states in the eighteenth century competed for money in the same money market. The European states had been moving towards sovereign control of the fiscal and the military apparatus, away from dependence on mercenaries, creditors, and contractors in the eighteenth century. Tirthankar Roy, *Rethinking the origins of British India: State formation and Military – Fiscal undertakings in an eighteenth century world region*, London, June 2010.p.19

Carnatic wars were broke out. In this war the Company had to meet its rivalry the French. Geography, Commercialization, Bankers of the Indian soil favored the Company to become a sovereign power in India in the later part of the eighteenth century. 97

3.3. Demilitarization

In 1639 the company bought a land called Madraspattanam present day Chennai and built a fort named St. George fort. 98 The Company in its course action, it adopted a tool called demilitarization, when it decided to participate in the political power. After getting fireman by the Nawab in 1752 it started to make its foot on the political scene of the South India. The Company gradually annexed the territories like Port Novo, Devakottai, Thiruvanthipuram, Nagur, Coorg in Mysore kingdom, Tanjore and finally on July 31, 1801 whole Carnatic included the present Nellore, North Arcot (apart from Cungundy and Punganore), South Arcot (apart from previous grants), Tiruchirappalli, Madurai (apart from Dindigul and Palani) and Tirunelveli. 99

The earliest political connection of the Company with Tamil Country arose in 1748 by their espousing the cause of Muhammad Ali against the French and Chanda Sahib who was a rival claimant for the throne of the Nawab of the Carnatic, to which Tirunelveli and Madurai then belonged. Lieutenant Innis, the first Englishman in Tirunelveli, was sent to see the situation of the Tirunelveli region. 100 The East India Company asked the Nawab of Arcot to compensate the war expenses it had incurred in the Carnatic. As the Nawab was not able to pay the amount, he complied with the

97 J. Talboys Wheelar, India under the British Rule from the Foundation of the East India Company, Delhi, 1886 pp.7-34
98 Secretariat building of the present Tamil Nadu State
100 R. Caldwell, A History of Tinnevelly, New Delhi, 1982, p.144
request to make over the revenues of Tiruchirappalli and Tirunelveli. Expeditions in which the Company troops and sepoys took part led into Tirunelveli in 1755 by Colonel Heron and in 1783 by Colonel Fullerton. But, when the Company started streamlining the administration of the newly acquired areas and exercising control over them, the traditional territorial chiefs called Palaiyakkarars resisted such attempts. 101 Throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century the Company carried on a desultory warfare with the Palaiyakkarars on behalf of the Nawab of the Carnatic in Southern region. 102

3.4. The Assignment of 1781

On the 2nd December, 1781 an agreement was made between the Company and the Nawab of Carnatic to the effect that the revenues of the Carnatic should be assigned by the Nawab to the English government during the continuance of the Second Mysore war, one-sixth of the revenue being paid to the Nawab for his private expenses. A committee of Assigned Revenue was constituted at Madras, and functionaries styled Superintendents of Assigned Revenue were appointed in various important centres by the English government, Tirunelveli being one of them. 103 In the revenue administration the earliest interference of the officers of the Company occurred in 1781, while a treaty was signed between the Nawab and the Company. The revenues were assigned to the Company. ‘Receivers of Assigned Revenue” was appointed in the headquarters of the district then. The renters of the Nawab continued till 1782. They became nominally subordinate to the Receivers. Irwin, the receiver, in 1782, took the full control of the revenues of the region. 104

101 K. Rajayyan, South Indian Rebellion: The First war of Independence, Madurai, 1974, pp.1-5
103 R. Caldwell, A History of Tinnevelly, New Delhi, 1982, p.167
3.5. The Treaty of 1787

A treaty was made on the 24th February 1787, which fixed the amount of the annual payment that was to be made. The Company had to supply the troops to the Nawab for “the security and collection of his revenue, the support of his authority and the good order and government of his dominions, whenever he represented to government the necessity of such a force and the objects to be obtained thereby.”\(^{105}\) (see appendix 4)

3.6. Assumption of 1790

Negotiations with the Nawab for the assumption of the revenues of the Carnatic and the control of their expenditure had failed. The Madras government took the management of the country into their own hands, without a treaty, by a proclamation on the 7th of August, 1790. A Board of Assumed Revenue, virtually a department of the Board of Revenue, was constituted in Madras. The preceding period from 1781 to 1790 was called the Period of the Assignment whereas the period from 1790 to 1792 was called the period of the Assumption.\(^{106}\) In 1790 and 1791 under ‘Assumption’ Benjamin Torin as “collector of Tinnevelly and the dependent Palaiyakkarars” occupied a similar position.\(^{107}\) In early times, the renter treated the cultivators cruelly of the time of revenue collection. Anyhow the tyranny of the renter came to an end by the changes that took because of the officers of the Company.

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3.7. The Treaty of 1792

On 12\textsuperscript{th} of July 1792, another treaty was concluded with the Nawab which provided that the whole country should be garrisoned by the Company troops, for the expenses of which the Nawab should make an adequate contribution. In the event of war the Company was to take the entire management of the affairs of the country into its own hands, but in times of peace all that it was to be permitted to do for the good government of the country was to collect the pesheush or tribute of the Palaiyakkarars in the Nawab’s name.\textsuperscript{108} As per the terms of the treaty it was impossible to apply any effectual remedy to the general evil, so long as a divided authority over the Palaiyakkarar countries was permitted to exist.\textsuperscript{109} Anyhow when the Nawab and the Company took over the charge in Tiruchirappalli and Tirunelveli areas, Palaiyakkarars, subordinates of the Nayaks involved in resistance against Nawab and the Company due to the non-payment of tribute. In 1790 the Madura Country became a part of the Company’s government while the latter assumed its revenues from the Nawab by proclamation and McLeod was appointed as collector of it. Receiving the rent from the man to whom the land has been leased was his responsibilities. Early in 1791, the renter appears to have been guilty of tyrannical and extortionate of Kallans to commit a series of outrages. (see appendix 5)

In October 1795 the collector of Dindigul complained that the outrages were committed by Kallans, turbulent individuals belonged to the Madurai country. They urged that the faujdar of the Nawab of Arcot, who was in charge of that tract, ought to be required to keep them in order. He said that the road from Dindigul to Kambam was altogether unsafe, and that it was necessary to station troops along it in the Kambam

\textsuperscript{108} Letters to the Board, 1790-1796, Vol. 1108, 28\textsuperscript{th} September 1790.pp.123-131
\textsuperscript{109} Letters to the Board, 1790-1796, Vol. 1108, 28\textsuperscript{th} September 1790.pp.123-131
valley. After 1800, the control of the southern region came under the Company. Major Macaulay was commanding in Palayamkottai and S.R. Lushington was appointed as the collector of the Tirunelveli region. The country was swarming with *dubashes* and *kanakkupillais*, gangs of “badge-peons” and guards of sepoys; and numbers of defaulters had been thrown into prison by these tyrants. The Company took over the charge of administration over the southern region was then under the administration of the *amildar* of the Nawab of Arcot, was formally ceded by treaty by the Nawab to the Company which commenced operations with the measurement of all the lands both wet and dry and an attempt at classification of the dry lands into four. In the wet villages, the *Amani* system was continued government share was 50 per cent with usual fees.

3.8. The *Amani* system

Between 1793 and 1799 and from the assumption of the district up to 1856, the *amani* system was persisted. An attempt was made by the government centralised in the headquarters of the district to administer a system of crop, sharing on the wet lands of each village. The agents of government, for this purpose, were appointed. They were called *sibbendy peons* who spent most of the year in the village on watching and measuring the crops. There were two main *paddy* crops, the *pisanam* crop which ripened in February or March and the *kar* crop in August. In both, at first, payment was made government share in kind. But government soon began to collect the *pisanam* contribution in money while retaining that on the *kar* crop in kind.

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113 Further, the Company introduced the lease system in 1808 and the Olungu settlement in 1821.
3.9. *Pagoda* (coins)

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the coin which was used in south India was called *Pagoda* (a unit of currency) for trade and other transactions.\(^{114}\) The English coin was called *star pagoda*.\(^{115}\) The following table of Francis Buchanan gives the idea of coins used in that period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carnata Name (Carnatic)</th>
<th>English Name</th>
<th>Grain weight</th>
<th>Value in Dudus According to Government Regulations</th>
<th>Value in Dudus According to Market Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Gold) Company <em>Varaha</em></td>
<td>Star Pagoda</td>
<td>52 ¾</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Silver) Company <em>Rupee</em></td>
<td>Company Rupee</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Copper) Dudu</td>
<td>Dub</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1 Dudu = 10 Cash
8 Dudu = 1 Fanam
36 Fanam = 1 Pagoda (1688-1802)\(^{116}\)
42 fanams = 1 Star pagoda

From the above table and information one can understand that 177 grains were equal to 1 *dudu*. The *fanam* a small silver coin was in use until 1815. However the Star *pagoda* had a more value.

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After 1825 this pagoda coin disappeared from use.

Part – IV

4. Little kingdoms

4.1. Ramnad

The auxiliary powers became independent while the Nayak, the central power declined in the first half of the eighteenth century. Ramnad, Sivagangai, Pudukottai, Nerkattansevval and Panjalankurichi which are few among them are called little kingdoms. Two large Palayams in the southern region, Ramnad and Sivagangai have a subordinate history of their own. Ramnad was also called Sethunadu ruled by the Sethupathi. The new independent state of Ramnad lies between the boarders of Tanjore in the North, Vaipar in the South, Gulf of Mannar in the east and Madurai in the west. The state included Devakottai, Mannarkoil and Tiruvarur the last was under the Maratha rulers of Thanjavur in subsequent times. The land was under Sethupathy for more than few centuries the inhabitant of this state was Maravan. The town of Ramnad was the capital of Sethupathi and it was large and well-fortified. The country lying between the mountains and the sea can boast of nothing in the shape of a forest or wood. Large plantations of Palmyra and coconut trees flourish along the sea coasts, and near the bank or rivers. The coast line of Ramnad is the home of the Maravans, who are supposed to be of aboriginal descent. Their chief, who is known as Sethupathy, is the hereditary guardian of the temple of Rameshwaram. It is believed that an office which

117 Ramanathapuram or Ramnad, together with Sivagangai, was included with Tirunelveli for the purposes of government under the same head (from the introduction of English control), in the person of a Superintendent of Assigned Revenue in 1781. Ramnad occupied the place of honour in the new arrangement. The Zillah of Ramnad, which included the Zamindari of Sivagangai and Zamindaries of Tirunelveli, and the districts of Dindigul and Madurai, with their dependent Palayams and those of Manaparai, formed one Collectorate under the charge of Mr. G. Parish. R. Caldwell, A History of Tinnevelly, New Delhi, 1982.p.231

118 Lennart Bes, ‘The Setupatis, the Dutch, and Other Bandits in Eighteenth Century Ramnad (South India)’, in Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, Vol. 44, No. 4, 2001, pp.540-574

he claims to have received from the god Rama. It would be seen that he always owed loyalty to the Pandya during medieval times.\textsuperscript{120}

Since a monarch of a Nayak line appointed the Sethupathy to be the first of his 72 *Palaiyakkarars*, the ascertained history of the family begins in 1605. Raghunatha Sethupathy popularly known as Kilavan Sethupathy who was greatest among all started to revolt against the Nayak of Madurai declared his independence in 1702. For the administrative commerce the state of Ramnad was divided into three which were given to the relatives of Kilavan Sethupathy who remained at the home state of Ramnad. He appointed Periya Wodaya Tevar, with 300 armed men and Sivagangai was made as capital of the latter. The third part was given to Raghunatha Raya Tondaiman, brother of Kilavan Sethupathi’s lover, a girl of a Kallans tribe whom the Sethupathy married. That part was Pudukottai.\textsuperscript{121}

4.2. Sivagangai

Sivagangai was a more recent kingdom, founded in 1730 by Sasivarna Tevar, a powerful chief who had taken two fifths of Ramnad as a reward for substantially aiding the winner of a royal succession dispute.\textsuperscript{122} The area which under Sasivarna Tevar became a state called Sivagangai and was inhabited by the Maravans.\textsuperscript{123} The Raja of the state of Sivagangai ruled from the capital Sivagangai sometimes at Siruvayal. It maintained an army with 12,000 fighting men. Kalaiyar Koil was a great source of woods in those days. Kallan clans in Sivagangai and Ahammadiyans clans in both

\textsuperscript{120} K. Rajayyan, *History of Madurai 1736 - 1801*, Madurai, 1974, p.29
\textsuperscript{121} Lennert Bes, ‘The Setuupatis, the Dutch, and Other Bandits in Eighteenth Century Ramnad (South India)’, in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 44, No. 4, 2001, pp.540-574
\textsuperscript{123} The major part was called greater Maravas (Ramnad) and the small minor part was called lesser Maravas (Sivagangai)
Sivagangai and Ramnad were other warrior castes which were prominent in the politics of Maravan country. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Ramnad had succeeded in establishing independent ruling status from its tributary over lord, the Nayak lineage of the kingdom of Madurai. The Sethupathy had earned, through military assistance to this greater overlord, the titles and insignia of an autonomous royal rule. The Chieftains of Ramnad and Sivagangai were described as the adopted sons of the rulers of Madurai while the other chieftains were called Palaiyakkarar servants.

4.3. Pudukottai

The Pudukottai State, along with the neighbour estates of Melur and Natham, inhabited by the Kallans tribes, collectively are to be called Kallarnadu. The territory was overgrown with thorny bushes, hills and ravines. There were near about 40,000 Tribal constantly under arms in the eighteenth century. Tondaimans of Pudukkottai became prominent on account of their service to the Nayaks. In an innovative and elaborate analysis that combines archival research and ethnological fieldwork, Nicholas B. Dirks has traced the rise of the Tondaimans from petty chiefs with the reputation for banditry to little kings. Because of timely military service, in 1801 the Company acknowledged them as an internally autonomous princely state. Eventually Pudukkottai became a theatre state as the hegemonic Company colonial officials directed rituals and bestowed honours in a play devoid of actual participation by the subordinate Pudukkottai prince.

4.4. Nerkattansevval

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126 N. Ramusack Barbara, *The Indian Princes and Their States*, New York, 2005, p. 32
Nerkattansevval was the head quarter of Nerkattansevval Palayam a small Palayam situated in the western side of the Tinnevelly region in the Sankarankoil taluk and 10 km away from Sankarankoil towards west and 25 km away from Tenkasi towards north. Palaiyakkarar of this Palayam was Pulithevan a brave man and diplomat. The Palayam was famous for banana, sugarcane, turmeric, ginger, coconut tree, and jack tree. Historians have used the name of the places interchangeably. This place was good for paddy cultivation because of this reason it was called Nerkattansevval (nel=paddy). This is a place where plenty of paddies were cultivated. Pulithevan never paid single paise or single paddy as tribute or tax to anybody even to the Nawab and the Company. Because of his refusal this place was called Nelkattansevval.\textsuperscript{127} In Mackenzie’s Collections this place was written as Avudaiyapuram not Nerkattansevval.\textsuperscript{128} This Palayam has played a significant role in the agitation against the Nawab and the Company while the Nawab tried to bring the Palayam under the dynastic rule. Being one of successor chieftains of the Nayaks, the Palayam decided to declare its independence under Pulithevan while the Nayak power was waned in the 1730s.\textsuperscript{129}

4.5. Panjalankurichi

Panjalankurichi, situated near the present taluk town of Ottapidaram, was a head quarter of the Palaiyakkarar, Kattabomman. The Palayam was called by this name. Panjala means anything pertaining to Panjala, - the country of Draupadi the wife of the five Pandava brothers. The name must have been given to the place by some person interested in the stories of the Mahabharata. The second portion of the name is one of the Tamil words denoting a village. It especially denotes a village in a forest or amongst

\textsuperscript{127} Now it is called Nerkattumsevval.
\textsuperscript{128} Palayapattukalin Vamsamvazhi, Part I, GOML, Madras, 1981.p.39
\textsuperscript{129} More details about this Palayam are given narrated in chapter 3.
the hills. The rule of first Palaiyakkarar of Panjalankurichi began in 1709 A.D. The fourth Palaiyakkarar of this Palayam was Kattabomman popularly known as Veerapandya Kattabomman. Kattabomman and his brother Oomaithurai figure as central characters in the archival records and people’s memories due to the war held between the Company and them. This Palayam existed for 92 years till the annexation of this Palayam along with the territory of the Carnatic in 1801 A.D.

4.6. Khan Sahib’s rule

There was an exemption in the chronology of Southern Tamil Country from 1760 to 1764, during Khan Sahib’s rule or management. Muhammad Yusuf Khan was popularly known as Khan Sahib in the Oral sources and also called Marudhanayakam by the Tamil folk. He was appointed a governor of Madurai in 1761. In 1764, he was defeated and hanged at Madurai by the joint forces of the Company and the Nawab, while he started to rule independently the Southern region given to him. As governor of the southern region he paid a nominal rent to his masters and ruled the provinces as an independent ruler by granting jagirs. He increased his resources, army and war materials. He gained the support of the people by granting favours to temples and dargahs which made the Company and the Nawab really became jealous. (see appendix 3) His reputation and prosperity had increased in the 1760s. Khan Sahib was a faithful servant both to the Nawab and the Company. By this time, Khan Sahib had become a very prominent personality of the South and was self-conscious of his own

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131 More details of this Palayam have been narrated in the chapter 3.
132 Hereinafter the name ‘Muhammad Yusuf Khan’ will be referred as ‘Khan Sahib’, the name was given by the folk.
133 N. Rasaiah, Marudhanayakam, Rajapalayam, 2007.pp.124-130
136 Military Country Correspondence, 14th May, 1756.p.59
strength and status. He was aware of the fact that the Nawab was weak in his power. Not only that the new officials of the Company at Madras were the great supporters of Mohammad Ali, the Nawab of Carnatic. In beginning of the 1760s Khan Sahib made himself as dictator of southern region and ultimately used the power given by the Company. The Company considered Khan Sahib more liable than an asset to the former since he decided to rule his territory independently.  

**Part – V**

5. Invaders

Unstable kingdoms in Tamil Country paved the way for the collapse of the established law and order, gave constant threat of foreign invasions too in end of the seventeenth century. During the next two decades, the country became an easy prey to each successive band of invaders such as subordinates of Mughal i.e. Hyderabad Nizam and Nawab of Arcot, Mysore king, Marathas, Bijapur and Golconda, Raja of Travancore and Europeans. Among the invaders Raja of Travancore is considered here briefly.

5.1. Raja of Travancore

In the mid-eighteenth century Martanda Varma created Travancore, and an elaborate foundation myth is held to account for several distinctive cultural features in this state. Martanda Varma (r. 1729-58) became the raja of Venad in 1729. Prepared

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139 According to the legends God Parasurama was exiled from India, and Varuna, god of the sea, allowed the homeless god to throw his axe and reclaim the land from the sea that his axe covered. It went from Cape Comorin at the tip of the Indian subcontinent to Cochin and covered a narrow strip of land 70 to 80 miles wide that arose between the Arabian Sea the Western Ghats. Parasurama created the Nambudiris, Brahmans who were given ownership of the land and distinctive customs so that they would not migrate
to ignore traditional modes of warfare and governance, he sought to create a new type of centralised state. By 1758 Travancore included around 7000 square miles of territory. Under Maharaja Rama Varma (1758-98) it became the focus of unwanted attention from Mysore. He was eminently successful in reducing the principalities that were larger or smaller under his power, and form the close of his reign may be dated the entire extinction of the authority of the petty chieftains in Travancore. In the war in Madurai and Tirunelveli in 1756, the Travancore army though not in actual alliance with the Company, was involved in the political contest tried and to capture the southernmost tip of the territories.

The Raja was in favour of the Company against the Muhamadans and Palaiyakkarars who entered the Raja’s territory for the purpose of plunder through the Ariyankavu and Aramboly passes. The Raja often involved in the political situations of the Palaiyakkarars and their rivalries particularly with Pulithevan and Kattabomman. Apart from this during the wars with Hyder Ali and his son, Tippu Sultan, the Company invariably found this Raja a steadfast ally. In 1795 the Travancore ruler expediently concluded a treaty of subsidiary alliance with the Company to secure additional protection from Tippu Sultan’s aggrandizing embrace. By 1800 Travancore had to accept its first Company resident and reconfirmed its commitment to the Company with another treaty in 1805.140

140 N. Ramusack Barbara, The Indian Princes and Their States, New York, 2005, p.33
Overview

The Southern Tamil Country was partly fertile and partly dry. Cultivation flourished and the revenue of the country was worthy. Lands were controlled directly by the Crown in other term called Circar and others were under the control of the lesser royal authorities or Palaiyakkarars or Poligars or Warrior chiefs or little kings whose domains are called little kingdoms or territorial segments of the Nayak domain. Territorial segments linked hierarchically by caste status and military rank. The little kingdoms maintained their own army. It relied in turn on payments of tribute form royal subjects, especially peasants and traders who, being protected by the rulers (like Nayaks army and later by Palaiyakkarars) generated increasing stores of wealth to support the little kingdoms. The Nayaks appointed renters who collected the revenue directly from certain areas and extracted, sometimes the government tribute from the Palaiyakkarars. But the latter would yield little except under threat of military coercion. On the other hand, they emerged from their own jurisdiction into the Circar villages and usurped from them immense revenues. In this situation Nayaks were succeeded by the Nawab of Arcot in 1730s.

The imposition of central government authority in the south was made potentially more difficult. In 1749 Muhammad Ali as Nawab of Arcot came to power. Through the first two decades of Nawab’s rule, the southern domains occupied most of his attention. Tiruchirappalli, Madurai, and Tirunelveli could between them provide 30-35 per cent of the probable gross Carnatic revenue of 3 million per annum. The Madurai and Tirunelveli regions had been ruled briefly, 1744-49, by the Carnatic Nawabs, and during the Anglo-French wars had provided a base for the Navayats and numerous

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141 Taylor, Oriental Historical Manuscripts, 2.p.215
Palaiyakkars. From the mid to late 1750s, Muhammad Ali campaigned vigorously with the Company’s assistance to establish his authority in the south. Apart from the struggle with the southern-based Navayats, revolt of Pulithevan in 1750s, Khan Sahib’s rebellion in 1760s, the independence of the Maravans State of Ramnad and Sivagangai in 1770s and the constant campaigns against the other Palaiyakkars in Tirunelveli made Muhammad Ali’s dream of dynastic rule and state formation an elusive goal. The Nawab had been unable to make a regular revenue assessment of the region, and instead exacted a smaller annual tribute payment. There was excessive demand for revenue to run the government. The Nawab fell into the state’s financial difficulties, because this state was not annexed with the Mughal Empire properly, although it was one of the subordinate vassal states of the successor states of Mughal, Hyderabad.\textsuperscript{143}

Muhammad Ali, the Nawab considered the Palaiyakkars as an employee under the grant of his Circar. He claimed tribute and ordered them to render military service. But most of the Palaiyakkars were not ready to pay tribute to the Nawab. There was resistance to the Nawab while he removed them from their offices if they failed to pay. Always there was conflict between renters of Circar lands and Palaiyakkars of Palayam lands.\textsuperscript{144} He expected and received presents from the chiefs of Palayams, while he provided them the titles and during celebrations.\textsuperscript{145} By which the Palaiyakkars made their status high as rajas. As a result they were not ready to obey the words of the central powers.

In another aspect, the Carnatic was laid at the feet of the Company, while the great rivalry the French commanders became incompetent. There was a gradual growth of the Company and became stronger than the power of the Nawab who became weaker.

\textsuperscript{144} Military Country Correspondence, June 1756,p.54
\textsuperscript{145} Military Country Correspondence, 10 May 1795, Vol.34,p.232
The Company got strongly involved in the political affairs of the Southern Tamil Country with the policy of *military fiscalism*. The situation in the Carnatic favoured it. As a result of the three Carnatic wars (1746-1763) and four Mysore wars (1767-1799) the English became the dominant power in South India. In 1792 the Company was given the whole revenue rights of the Southern Carnatic region by the Nawab. The Company waged a series of wars against the *Palaiyakkarars* on default of payment or for defense of its authority which created an animosity towards the Company. The inhabitants were ill-treated and the chieftains were forced to supply provisions to the forces, give presents to the officials and attend on the revenue servants of the Company.

There was a famine in 1756 in Southern Country. Further in years 1799 and 1800 severe famine occurred. These natural disasters changed the routine life of the chiefs and peasants. Consequently the non-payment of the *Palaiyakkarars* paved way for contradiction and conflicts while the central power demanded revenue. Besides the principal objection of all the warfare had been revenue. The *Palaiyakkarars* who were unable to pay the huge arrears of tribute occasionally rebelled and joined hands with the enemies of the Nawab like Haider Ali and Tipu. On the demand of revenue the Nawab and the Company tried to destroy the traditional system and rule of *Palayams*, the holders of which the *Palaiyakkarars* (petty kings or local chiefs or little kings) wanted to maintain their social and ritual status in their domain and fought to declare their

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146 J. Talboys Wheelar, *India under the British Rule from the Foundation of the East India Company*, Delhi, 1886, pp.32-34
147 *Military Consultations*, 2 August 1792, vol. 165, p.385
148 *Political Consultations*, 22 December 1801, Vol. 5, p.1638
149 The Annual letter for 1756 is signed 7th July 1757
150 Burton Setin, ‘Integration of the Agrarian System of South India’, p.197, in Robert Eric Frykenberg, (ed.,) *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History*, New Delhi, 1979
independence. Here there is a need to understand what the Palayam is? How did it get its origin in the Tamil Country? What was its possession and what are the duties and rights of Palaiyakkarars, the holder of Palayam? To get answer for these questions just get into the next chapter.