CHAPTER VI
COLONIAL SYSTEM AND TRANSITION

The age of colonial rule in India has been a period of great transition. It has been the period in which she entered into modernity. The nation witnessed tremendous and far reaching changes during this period. Among other things the power centres in the society were greatly affected. There was a re-location of power in the society.\(^1\) In Kerala as in various other parts of India feudal families were greatly affected by the rules and regulations of the colonial power. The focus of this chapter is the economic, social and political changes undergone by the feudal families of the Kavalappara Nayars and Koodali, with the advent of colonialism.

During the period of British colonialism these families came under the hegemony of the colonial master. The term hegemony refers not merely to the establishment of supremacy over a people. Of course there are elements of supremacy in it. But what is meant by it is an internal upper hand consisting of an ideological influence and instigation from the colonial power.\(^2\) In the case of these feudal families both political supremacy and

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\(^1\) G. Aloysius, *Nationalism without a Nation in India*, Delhi, 1997, p.2.

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ideological influence and instigation from the part of the colonial power can be seen. The colonial system transformed many a medieval institution to which these families were closely associated into modernity. This is best evident from the abolition of many a right and privilege of these families and the retaining of their titular powers which came to be manifested through their ritual authority and power.

Writers like G. Arunima examine the impact of the British rule over the Nayar tarawads of Malabar during the early colonial period. The findings of Arunima have relevance to the Koodali tarawad and the Kavalappara family. During the first half of the 19th C there occurred certain changes that led to the transformation of matrilineal tarawads in Malabar. The Company identified a hierarchy of property right on land. Along with this they defined the tenurial positions. They redefined the household as a corporate one with inalienable rights on land. The senior most male member was chosen as the man responsible for managing its economy and making payments due to the government. All these effected changes in the structure of the tarawads.

There were differences in the nature of property ownership between northern Kerala and the interior areas of Southern Kerala. In the southern area more lands were brought under cultivation than Northern Kerala. In both

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4 *Ibid*, p.36.
of these areas there were the wet, dry and miscellaneous lands. But in the interior areas of South Malabar wetlands were more. By the mid 19th C most of the fertile areas of South Malabar were brought under cultivation but the North Malabar possessed extensive uncultivated lands and forests. This offered a good opportunity for agrarian expansion. So there was an expansion of cultivation into virgin lands by households and tenants. This also made the terms of contracts on land flexible. Owing to this there were fewer big janmi tarawads in the North than the South.⁵ There were big landlords among the Nayars like the Kavalappara Nayar. But the bulk of the big landlords were the Nambuthiri illams. The best example to such an illam was the Vanjeri illam at Trikkandiyur near Tirur in Malappuram district. The Trikkandiyur temple was the nerve centre of the landed property of this illam, which extended to more than a hundred villages. Families like Kavalappara and Vanjeri exercised autonomy in their respective areas. But most of the Nayars were economically depended on bigger Nambuthiri janmis and this created economic inequality also on the basis of caste. As noted above during the colonial period also the reclamation of land has been an ongoing practice in North Malabar and so the pre-dominant form of land tenure was the kuzhikanam a form of mortgage cum lease aimed at the reclamation of more lands. It is opined that “the colonial capitalism dissolved the pre-capitalist

economic and political structures in the colonies. In North Malabar the predominant form of land tenure was *kuzhikanam* and it was aimed at converting waste lands into agrarian tracts. Both in the South and the North these tenures evolved as a security for land given by the land owners to their creditors. The land given to the creditors got the characteristics of a lease. They paid a rent on it to the landowner. When the *janmi* wanted to terminate the tenure he was to give back the money borrowed with interest.

In 1856 the Sadar Court redefined the property relations in Malabar. This transformed the powers of Hindu *janmis*. The relationship of the *janmi* and the tenants had resulted in mutual dependence. But in 1840 there was an agrarian crisis. The Mappila cultivators of South Malabar were the group that was worst affected by this. When they were unable to pay their dues to the landlords they were evicted from the lands held by them. The *janmi* used the device of *melcharth* for evicting them. By *melcharth* the *janmi* assigned the land held by a tenant to another. Usually the assignment of land would be for twelve years. This made the desperate Muslim tenants rise against their landlords who were Hindus. Thus there occurred the Mappila riots which were the out come of agrarian discontent. Following these violent outbreaks

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7 For details see K.N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State-Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar 1836-1921*, Delhi, 1989, p.68.

8 For detailed discussion on Mappila riots, their causes and nature see, *ibid*, pp. 102–123.
the British appointed a Special Commission under T.L. Strange to enquire into the causes of the riots. But T.L. Strange misinterpreted the riots as mere religious out breaks actuated by fanaticism. The constraints of the landholding *tarawad* as an institution was subject to the Hindu law.\(^9\)

The report of T.L. Strange had far reaching consequences on the land owning *tarawads* in Malabar. As per the report of the members of the *tarawad* bound by certain religious rules which forbade them from forfeiting their landed property. The report also stressed the fact that only the *karanavar* had the right to represent the *tarawad* in a court of law.\(^10\) Thus the *tarawad* became "a corporate and indivisible landowning entity".\(^11\) This also resulted in certain changes in the relations of the members of the *tarawad*. It was at this time that the English East India Company abolished slavery. It also affected the powers of the *tarawad*. Up to this time the slaves mainly those belonging to the *Cheruma* and *Pulaya* castes were considered to be the property of the *tarawad*. The *tarawad* was expected to take care of the slaves owned by them, even though these slaves were treated with cruelty. So among these communities there was a sense of belonging to a particular *tarawad*. But once slavery was abolished the responsibility of the *tarawad* towards these slaves became least. At the same time these labourers had to do

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\(^10\) *Ibid*, p.56.

\(^11\) *Ibid*. 
the same menial jobs as they were doing before when they were the agrarian dependent of the janmi.\textsuperscript{12}

At the same time the tarawad was being recast as a relationship between the kin rather than the one connecting blood ties with that of non-familial dependence. In olden times there was an effective tie between the tarawad and its dependents. Now it came to be expressed more clearly in contractual terms. In this condition also the tarawad continued to exploit their older paternal ties.

The process of subinfeudation and sub contracting of land made the landlord-tenant relationship more complex. The lease holding tenants were the pattakkar. But pattakkar often didn't receive the land directly from the land owning tarawad. They could have it from a mortgager or from a non-cultivating sub tenant also.\textsuperscript{13} Till the advent of colonialism the pattam deed didn't stipulate the period for the holding. There was no particular condition for renewing the deed. Only the amount of paddy to be given as rent was specified. So it was like a permanent tenure. Evictions were rare. But by the mid 19\textsuperscript{th} C the Sadar Court introduced reforms in the conditions on which a tenant held the land. There developed a diversity of tenures.\textsuperscript{14} All these had a tremendous impact on the tarawad and society. The English East India

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, p. 56.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, p.41.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
Company reinterpreted social relations in a way that was advantageous to itself. Their aim was to integrate Malabar within the colonial dominion. The English East India Company made settlement of land in perpetuity with the households of the *janmis* on one hand and the settlements of revenue assessment with the *kanakkars* on the other. In order to effect this division there was a need of redefining the rights of the *janmis* and *kanakkar*. The British sought to achieve this in order to make the smooth functioning of the Colonial State feasible.\(^1\)

Before the Mysorean occupation of Malabar there was no definite state structure and revenue functionaries for Malabar as a whole. During the period of Tippu Sultan a revenue settlement was made in Malabar. According to this in the conquered areas, the Mysorean officers were appointed to manage the affairs. But it was a short lived one. Following the defeat of Tippu in the third Mysore war and the Treaty of Seringapattanam, Malabar came under English East India Company. During the period of Tippu Sultan many a feudal lord of Malabar had fled to Thiruvithamkur in order to escape from the onslaughts of the Mysorean rulers. But once the Mysorean menace was over they returned to Malabar.\(^2\) They again claimed their possessions in Malabar. By this time a large number of Mappilas, Nayar and Tiyyas had

\(^{1}\) *Ibid*, p. 44.

received land. With the return of the \textit{janmis} they had to relinquish them. This created a state of chaos. Now in 1792 the government of English East India Company appointed the Joint Commissioner to look into the state of affairs in Malabar. An important outcome of the visit of the Joint Commissioner was the revenue settlement in the Malabar. The permanent settlement of land was made with the \textit{janmis} of Malabar in 1805. This settlement was without a detailed survey of land rights or soil types. Absence of a definite revenue system and bureaucracy have been cited as an excuse for this by the British officials. But the British officials were prejudiced because of their hostility towards Tippu Sultan. They made it a point not to recognize the claim of Muslims on land. At the same time the Nayar and Nambuthiri \textit{janmis} were benefited from it. The government of English East India Company of course managed to maximise its share. It was both at the expense of the landlord and cultivator.\footnote{G. Arunima, \textit{op.cit.}, p.46.}

During the pre-British period Malabar was not at all a single political unit. There were many an independent chiefdoms. The basis of these divisions were the old \textit{nadu} divisions which came to be ruled by \textit{Svarupams}.\footnote{For details see M.R. Raghava Varier, "State as Svarupam: An Introductory Essay", R. Champakalekshmi, \textit{et.al} (ed.), \textit{State and Society in Pre-modern South India}, Thrissur, 2002, pp. 120-130.} \textit{Svarupams} were joint families having ruling powers, the ruler being the senior most man of all the branches of the family taken together. The
seniority was expressed through the term *kuru*. Thus the heir apparent to the throne was called *Randamkuru*, the next in seniority was called *Munnamkuru* and so on. When the King passed away the heir apparent would become the ruler. All others junior to him could also get one step of seniority. The seniority was called *muppu*. The important *Svarupams* of northern Kerala were the Arangattur Svarupam (that ruled over Valluvanadu), Tarur (that ruled over area of Palakkad), the Venganad Nambidies (that ruled over Kollamgode), the Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar, the Vattathu or Thanur, Parappanad, Kurumboranadu, Kadathanadu, Kottayam, Kurongothu, Randathara, Nileswaram, Kumbala.\(^{19}\) etc. Each had its own territories.

During the period of Mysorean invasion these chiefdoms either acknowledged the supremacy of Mysore or came into terms with the Mysorean rulers. By the treaty of Mangalore which concluded the second Mysore war the British gave up the claims on their territories in Malabar and declared the rulers of Kerala to be the friends and allies of Tippu Sultan.\(^{20}\) Even before this treaty Hyder Ali had appointed a governor, Harshad Begh Khan, in Malabar. Tippu's policies in Malabar were resented by local population and there broke out rebellions against him. Then the Sultan himself descended on Malabar at the head of a large army in 1788. He did not encounter serious oppositions. During his stay at Malabar, the Sultan

\(^{19}\) A. Sreedhara Menon, *op. cit.*, pp. 167-175.

managed to introduce a series of administrative reform. But they created resentment among the people and they rose in rebellion. The local rajas managed to get East India Company's protection against the Tippu Sultan. Tippu attacked Calicut, but Calicut was defended. Then, after leaving a force at Calicut, the Sultan proceeded northwards. The Sultan's advance created alarm among the people and the chieftains. Many a local chief took asylum the Tellichery factory. Many fled to Travancore. Tippu Sultan strongly protested against Company's act of giving protection to the local rulers. Then he turned against Cochin and Travancore. When the British declared war on Mysore and marched their army to Seringapattam, Tippu Sultan withdrew his forces from Kerala and left for Mysore. Following the retreat of Tippu the Mysorean authority over Kerala was destroyed. The Zamorin and Cochin Raja proclaimed themselves to be in favour of English East India Company. The fort of Palakkad surrendered to the English army. The fort of Cannanore also was captured by them and following a siege of Cannanore by the British army. The Bibi of Cannanore also surrendered to them. Tippu was defeated by the English in the third Mysore war. The war came to an end by the treaties of Seringapattam. According to the treaties of Seringapattam signed on the February 22nd and March 18th the Sultan ceded Malabar to the English East India Company. The ceded provinces did not include Wayanad. But it included Cochin state and Coorg. The English East India Company which

has been a trading concern got Malabar without any serious fighting. Now the East India Company had to shoulder the task of effecting an administrative set up in Malabar. But the English did not to take over the government of the conquered areas directly and immediately. So also Company was not ready to restore the exiled rulers of Malabar to their former territories after the expulsion of Tippu Sultan. They made an interim arrangement for the administration of Malabar and made provisional agreements with local rules for the collection of revenue. The Bombay government deputed General Abercromby to negotiate the agreement with local rulers. On the recommendation of Abercromby to commissioners negotiated settlements for the collection of revenue with the local powers. The chiefs were given the authority to collect taxes and they were to pay a fixed amount as tribute to the Company. At first the agreement was for one year. Later they were renewed for a period of five years each. The chiefs were brought under the control of East India Company. In 1792 the two Commissioners were joined and this Joint Commissioners entered into separate agreements with local rulers, settled the disputes of claims and defined their status in relation to the Company. In 1793 Malabar was divided into two administrative divisions – Northern division with its head quarters at Tellicherry and Southern with its head quarters at Cheruplasseri. Each division was made under the control of a superintendent. These superintendents were controlled by a supervisor and chief magistrate.
appointed for Malabar with his head quarters at Calicut. In 1796 the office of
the supervisor was merged in a commission sent to Malabar to enquire into
the charges raised against the supervisor James Stevens. In 1800 the area of
Malabar was transferred from Bombay presidency to Madras. Then this
commission was abolished and the entire Malabar was placed under a
Collector. Under the new system the Sub-Collector was called by the
general public as Thukdi Sayy.

Even though Tippu Sultan managed to introduce new administrative
structure in Malabar, he could not succeed in it. But the Mysorean rule
moved certain traditional elements in the social structure of Malabar like the
tax system. But the tarawads could maintain their socio-political function
inspite of long yeas of war and the allied problems. The local conceptions of
government and administration were kept in tact. But these were destined to
come in to clash with the British administrative system. The British were
disregarding the traditional social structure in Malabar. They considered it
obsolete. This attitude of the British was resented by both the ruling powers
and people of Malabar. As noted above the government of Bombay had set
up a commission in 1792 to assess the condition of Malabar before
introducing a new administrative set up. This commission included

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22 Ibid., pp. 257-258.
23 Margret Franz, From Contact to Conquest - Transition to British Rule in
Malabar, 1790 - 1805, Delhi, 2003, p. 98.
Alexander Dow and W. G. Farmer from the Bombay presidency and William Page and Charles Boddam from the Bengal presidency. They were to record the political situation and historical background of the region. The aim of the Commission was to establish a fully functioning administrative system in Malabar. The government had an intention to direct administration through well-ordered paths for the affairs of the province which they considered as anarchic. Alexander Dow has been a British military commander in Thalasseri since 1789. W.G. Farmer has been a resident of Fort Victoria and he had served the Bombay Presidency for about thirty years. The local chieftains were on the hope that they would regain their old position and land after the withdrawal of the Mysore Sultan. At the same time, the British wanted to have supremacy over Malabar. So General Abercromby was very tactful in settling the problems. Robert Abercromby (1740-1827) was the Supreme Commander of the British in Bombay and in this capacity he led troops from Bombay against Tippu Sultan. He did not want to offend the rajas outright and instructed the Commissioners to be cautious in their approach to the chieftains of Malabar. The treaties of 1792 had promised the rajas independence from Tippu but it did not state clearly the dependency of the Malabar rulers on the British. In this report, the commercial interest of English East India Company was clear. Independence from Tippu Sultan was given on certain conditions of giving pepper to the Company. But this provision was not put into practice strictly. So there after in all treaties it was
stipulated that the *rajas* should pay tributes to the British for their protection in natural produce like Pepper, Sandalwood and Cardamom.\(^{24}\)

But the soft approach to the chieftains was short lived. The East India Company began a policy of intervention in order to ensure its monopoly over pepper. Just like its policy towards the Bengal Zamindar the English East India Company was following policy of stripping them of their sovereignty and making them sign appropriate treaties on tax. All these ensured long term dependence of the chieftains on the English East India Company and regular tax collection from them.\(^{25}\) But the *rajas* insisted on having their sovereignty. But they were given the right to regulate internal affairs only and that too on the condition that the British were to collect taxes from their realms. The *rajas* were deprived of their traditional rights underlining their sovereignty. For example the *rajas* were forbidden from accepting gifts from the people on the occasion of *Onam* and *Vishu*.\(^{26}\) This has been a fundamental pillar of their legitimacy to rule. Certain *rajas* refused to forfeit for their right of collecting *Chunkam* (toll) to English East India Company. This has been a very important sovereign right of the rulers of Malabar. No doubt the *rajas* considered the English East India Company as an usurper. But ultimately all


\(^{26}\) *Ibid*, p. 21.
rajas had to succumb to the British authority in Malabar. It was in order to deal with the administration of justice in connection with the chieftains of Palakkad, Kongad, Mannur, Edathara and Kavalappara that the Company started a lower court at Palakkad. Of course there broke out rebellions against British authority as in the case of Pazhassi Raja. The new governmental organization on Malabar was announced officially 18th March 1792. W.G. Farmer was sworn in as supervisor and Junathan Duncan his post in the Joint Commission.

Apart from the retention of their names the British administrators did not take into consideration the administrative structure that was in vogue in Malabar. Under the East India Company the old units of desams were brought into larger units of amsams.

Logan compares amsams to parishes. He points out the amsams in the ten taluks of Malabar with their estimated areas and the population. For example the Chirakkal with an estimated area of 6,44,453 acres had 44 amsams and a population of 2,72,669. The average area of an amsam in Chirakkal was 14,646 acres and average population per amsam was 6197. Logan says that desam is not to be mistaken for a village. Desam has been

the territorial unit of the military organization and the territorial unit of the organization for civil administration was the *tara*.\textsuperscript{30} The *nudu* was a congeries of *taras*. The *desam* and *tara* were not conterminous. The *tara* organization was changed into *hobali* or subordinate district administration under the English East India Company. But as it was in adequate to serve the administrative purpose it was revised. In this place the *amsam* system was organized by the special commissioner H.S. Graeme in 1822-1823. The head of the *amsam* was the *adhikari*. The *adhikari* has been an influential *desavazhi* who came to be in charge of *amsams*. This was a new creation. It was an uncustomed role for the *desavazhi* as the *adhikari* to be placed as head man in civil matters over people that had not acknowledged his power previously. But Graeme was careful in the orders at the appointments to preserve the right of other *desavazhies* to the *sthanamana avakasam* (rights and privileges of officer) which had been formerly under them.\textsuperscript{31} According to Logan, Graeme made a great mistake in considering *desam* and *tara* as synonymous. In his scheme of *amsam* establishments Graeme ignored the real civil organization by the *karanavar* or the elders of the people. Each *asmam* had an accountant or writer styled as Menon, and two or more *kolkars* (Peon) apart from the *adhikari*. The *adhikari* and these two categories of staff

\textsuperscript{30} *Ibid*, p.87.

\textsuperscript{31} *Ibid*, p. 89.
were local representatives of the government. The primary function of the adhikari was to collect taxes for the British. They were the most important officers in the locality for carrying out the orders of the English East India Company. The amsam adhikaries were powerful men more feared than respected by the local people. The British were very particular in ensuring the loyalty and subordination of the adhikaries. Actually the adhikaries were middlemen in the communication between the British and the local population as the adhikaries were well acquainted with the land and its people. This helped the British to keep the cost of administration low.

Under the new administrative system introduced by the British there occurred changes and breaks in the traditional structure of society. One of these changes was the restructuring of the Nayar tarawads. The British could not recognise their major function within the society. They stripped the Nayars of their political freedom, decision making power in the society and made them into economic dependence. Thus the Nayars were denied of their traditional responsibilities of the management of the land and its people and their role in the local self government. They were actually mistrusting the organization of the Nayar tarawads. The women in the tarawads were the worst hit under the new system. Women were allowed to hold the post of karanavar only if a court acknowledged their right to such a post. More over

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32 Ibid, pp. 89-90.
33 Margret Franz, op. cit, p.102.
they were liable to be removed from the post of the *karanavar* by an action of the court of law. The *tarawads* were not destroyed in physical terms but they were broken as a political, social and ritual unit.34 These changes can be seen in the case of Kavalappara and Koodali *tarawads*.

The agreement between the English East India Company and the Kavalappra Nayar was signed between William Gamul Farmer and Major Dow on the part of the Company and Kavalappra Nayar on the part of the Kavalappra *tarawad*. According to the agreement the Kavalappara Nayar was placed in charge of the administration of regions under Kavalappara on behalf of the Company. This was in recognition of his assistance to the Company in the war against Tippu Sultan. The annual revenue that the Kavalappara Nayar was to collect was Rs. 18,285 (Rupees Eighteen thousand two hundred and Eighty five only). From this amount Rs. 2,285 (Two thousand Two hundred and Eighty Five only) was to be deducted as charges for collection. Rs. 1,000 (Rupees thousand only) was assigned to the Kavalappara Nayar for himself. The rest of the amount Rs. 15,000 (Rupees Fifteen thousand only) was to be paid to the British in instalments. It was from the first day of September 1792. The first instalment, Rs. 8000 (Rupees eight thousand only) was to be paid on the first of *Dhanu* (in December), the next instalment was Rs. 2,000 (Rupees Two thousand only) to be paid on 1st

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34 *Ibid*, pp. 103-104.
of Meenom (in March 1793). The last instalment was to be on Midhumam 1st (In June 1793). It was Rs. 5000 (Rupees five thousand only).\textsuperscript{35} In fact such payments reduced the family income.

In the agreement in connection between the Kavalappara Nayar and the Cochin Raja on one side and the Kavalappara Nayar and the English East India Company on the other it was made clear that the Raja of Cochin thereafter had no claim or pretension on the territory of Kavalappara Nayar. The Kavalappara Nayar agreed to abide by the decisions of the English East India Company in this matter.\textsuperscript{36} As such the Nayar was freed from the lordship of Cochin.

According to the agreement of 1792-93 there would be British inspectors to ascertain the exact amount levied as land revenue and customs duties from the realm of Kavalappara Nayar. If more was realised than the stipulated amount, the surplus would go to the Company. A detailed account was to be framed of the value of the regions conquered at the earliest and the Commissioners had the right to appoint inspectors for the same. The Kavalappara Nayar bound himself to agree to all such regulations and rights as should be framed for the collection of the revenue and the administration of justice by the Commissioners.\textsuperscript{37} The Kavalappara Nayar also agreed to abide

\textsuperscript{35} William Logan, \textit{A Collection of Treaties . . . . . \textit{op. cit.}, p. 155.

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Ibid}, p. 156.

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Ibid}, pp.219-20.
by the Company's decisions with regard to the actions for the better management of his region and improvement of the revenue. According to an agreement of June 1793 it was stipulated and agreed by the Commissioners on the one part and the Kavalappara Nayar on the other that the inspectors or collectors should be appointed on the part of the Company to carry on the collections jointly with the officers of the Kavalappara Nayar for one year.\footnote{Ibid.}

In the areas under Kavalappara Nayar as in various other parts of Malabar, there were a number of Chowkies for the collection of duties and tolls on merchandise. This discouraged trade and commerce. Thus both Kavalappara and the Company agreed that all such inland duties, tolls and customs and the centres of their receipts should be abolished from the date of the agreement between the two in June 1793. It was also agreed that in the place of such tolls and duties, duties were to be imposed only on exports by sea and land and on imports from the countries beyond the provinces Malabar that is from Cavai to Cochin. The connections with the regions beyond the Malabar province could be maintained by the Company's government only. The management of such powers was to remain with the Company.\footnote{Ibid, p. 220.} In short the Kavalappara Nayar was not to have direct relations with the regions beyond Malabar or chieftains.
The administration of justice in all parts of Malabar was to be according to the judicial regulations of the government of the English East India Company. Many a traditional custom in the transaction of land and things were abolished by the English East India Company and introduced new practices. For example the traditional custom at the time of selling a plot of land to another person was sanctified by the sprinkling or libation of water and showering of flowers.\(^\text{40}\) Instead of this the practice of registering the exchange of land in stamped papers came to vogue.\(^\text{41}\) The officers for that purpose would be appointed by the Company. The Kavalappara Nayar or his ministers or officers were not to collect any other tax than those included "under the head of *negudi* (*nikuti*, revenue assessment) with the customary tax for the charge of collection". The abolition of the collection of *Purushantharam* from the Mappilas by the Kavalappara Nayar was confirmed. So also the abolition of the offerings to the Kavalappara Nayar as a feudal lord on the occasions of *Onam* and *Vishu* were confirmed. The officers who used to assist the company's *Thahasildar* in the collection of revenues were not to be removed unless they were found guilty of speculation or other misbehaviour and of which sufficient proofs were given to the British authorities.

\(^\text{40}\) In Malayalam the phrase of *Poovum neerum iduka* has been used to denote this practice. *Poovu* means flower and *neeru* means water.

The rules and regulations of the agreement were for five years. During this period both parties were not to deviate from the provisions. It was from 970 to 974 Kollam Era. An important provision in the agreement was the provision for the abolition of the coinage of Malabar, gold *fanam*. The revenues were to be paid in terms of British rupees. Ten *Viray* or new gold *fanams* were to be equal to three rupees.42 Under the British rule the Kings and chieftains of India not only lost their defacto powers but even the powers restored to them. Colonialism must be seen as a hegemonic structure which articulated its impact and influence through many kinds of institutional and ideological forms.43

Under colonialism the kings and chieftains of India were "constructed as colonial objects and given special colonial scripts" maintained as part of a colonial system.44 According to Hira Singh the princess were not only deconstructed and reconstructed by the colonial state, but they were also shaping the structure and process of colonial state".45 There is an opinion that they were also shaping the structure and process of colonial state and that it was a process of give and take in which the colonial state and *rajas* were constantly engaged in constructing and deconstructing each other. But this

process was not on a basis of equality. The colonial state always had an upper hand. The landed aristocracy was constantly influenced by the colonial state and in a way the landed aristocracy in India was preserved by the colonial state as means to its hegemony.\textsuperscript{46} This is very much relevant in the case of landed aristocrats like the Kavalappara Nayars. In fact the structure of the Indian society has been shaped by the two hundred years of colonial rule and the contemporary Indian society cannot be understood without fully analysing the nature of colonial transformation.\textsuperscript{47}

The term hegemony refers not merely to the establishment of supremacy over a people. What is meant by it is an internal upper hand consisting of an ideological influence and instigation.\textsuperscript{48} One of the measures employed by the British to control local chieftains was the taking over of the administration of the property under each chieftain when the latter failed to govern it on when the heir to the property was a minor. It was also when the local chieftain fell in arrears of payment due to the British. The device used by the British to establish direct rule over the property of such chieftains was

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid, p.36.
\textsuperscript{47} Hamsa Alavi, \textit{Capitalism and Colonial Production}, London, Groom Helm, 1982, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{48} E.M.S. Nambuthiripad and P. Govinda Pillai, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 34.
the office of the Court of Wards. Ward means a minor for whose person or property or both there is a guardian. 49

The Court of Wards had certain similarities with the administration of estates or family property by the Receiver nowadays. The institution of Court of Wards has been a curious one. It functioned directly under the Board of Revenue in Calcutta. But in the districts it was under the control of the District Collector. During the period of colonialism Collector was the highest district official responsible for the collection of revenue and maintenance of law and order. 50 The office of the Court of Wards had its own office and bureaucracy to carry out the administration of the property under its control. Its duty was to collect rent from the tenants, manage the property and arrange for the education of the chieftain or the Zamindar. This was under the theoretical hope that the younger ones in the family would become able enough to take back their estates and manage them. 51 If the proprietor of certain estate had died leaving minor sons the government would take over its administration and rule it though the Court of Wards. Usually the Collector would send report regarding the management of the property of the Zamindar. If it was stated that there was mismanagement of property the Board of

Revenue had the power to disqualify proprietor. Then the proprietor would be known as ward.  

In the princely state of Rajasthan if a *thikanedar* (landlord) died and his successor was a minor the *thikana* or the land held by him would be taken under the direct management of the Court of Wards. Usually when the heir became major the property was handed over to him. The Court of Wards had its durbar and it was this durbar that had the right and obligation to act as the guardian of the minor *thikanedar*.

The property administered by the Court of Wards was called an 'estate'. In the beginning at the 20th century there were thirty nine estates under Court of Wards in the Madras presidency. Important among them were Bodogodo, Belgam, Pithapuram, Kalahasti, Palaiyampatti, Sivagiri, Sivasamudram, Rayakota. On the basis of revenue collection, these estates were classified into four. The estates like Saluru, Pithapuram, Karvetnagar etc. that had more than five lakhs of rupees as state demand were included in the first class. Estates with a revenue collection of over Rs. 50000 (Rupees fifty thousand only) were the second class. Kamaramangalam, Paliyampatti etc. belonged to this group. Those having more than Rs. 15,000 (Rupees Fifteen thousand only) as the demand of the state belonged to the third class. Belgam,

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52 Ibid.
54 Ibid, p. 81.
Serugada, Sivasamudram etc. were included in the third class. The fourth class was having less than 15,000 as the state demand. To this group belonged Palayavanam, Rayakota etc. In Kerala the two estates under the Court of Wards have been the Kavalappara and Punnathur Kovilakam. Punnathur is in the present district of Thrissur near Guruvayur, the great pilgrim centre of Kerala. During the pre-colonial period Punnathur was the feudatory of the Zamorin.

The Kavalappara family and its property came under the rule of the Court of Wards in 1872. This was as per the Madras Act V of 1804. The last of the Mooppil Nayar or the karana var of the family died on 20th July 1872. As the Kavalappara Nayar was following the marumakkathayam system of succession his nephew was to become the next karana var. But he had no nephew and his only niece was a six year old girl. By this time the Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar had fallen in debts also. This was mainly because of the huge expenditure incurred in the maintenance of the retainers amounting in 150. The estate had a debt of Rs. 70,000 (Rupees Seventy thousand only). Under these circumstances the government made provision

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55 Report on the Administration of the Estates under the Court of Wards in the Madras presidency for fasli 1311 (1901-1902), Madras, 1903.
56 Report on the Administration of the Estate under the Court of Wards in the Madras Presidency for fasli 1311 (1901-2), Madras, Govt. Press, 1903, p. 5.
for the effective administration of the estate by bringing it under the administration of the Court of Wards.\textsuperscript{58}

As noted above this time the British had restructured revenue administration in the provinces under their direct control. A survey of the land under Kavalappara was made and the land was classified. Altogether there was 15,493 acres of land. Of these 4503 acres were wet lands and 10990 acres uplands. Actual cultivation was in 7806 acres. Uplands included the 2 acres and 65 cents of land purchased for a garden land in front of the palace of the Mooppil Nayar. The entire estate was brought under the ryotwari system. As noted above the annual revenue assessment was Rs. 3491 (Rupees three thousand four hundred and ninety one) for the year. The demand of land rent including miscellaneous item was Rs. 63476 (Rupees Sixty three thousand four hundred and seventy six) in 1910.\textsuperscript{59} The renewal of the fees collected from the tenants resulted in an increase of land revenue. The British made every endeavour to collect the arrear of the payment without resorting to the assistance from the court of law.\textsuperscript{60}

The Court of Wards introduced scientific farming in the areas brought under its rule. A qualified farm superintendent was appointed for the estate. Improved methods of cultivation and manures and seeds were introduced. It

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid, p.xxxii.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
was intended to make the Kavalappara Estate a model in farming and the
government intended to make this known to the local people. In 1910 the
total production of paddy from the estate amounted to 3,000 *paras*. It was a
higher produce when compared with those of the neighbouring principalities.
It was because the Kavalappara estate used high quality seeds and manures
brought from Bengal.\textsuperscript{61}

The Court of Wards managed to raise income from various sources.
The Kavalappara Estate had markets at Vaniyamkulam and Alathur. The
Court of Wards invested Rs. 20,000 (Rupees Twenty thousand only) for the
improvement of the estate. Then the income from Vaniyamkulam increased
to Rs. 6000 (Rupees six thousand only) from Rs. 4089 (Rupees four thousand
eighty nine only). The Court of Wards spent Rs. 169212 (One lakh sixty nine
thousand two hundred and twelve) for the renovation of buildings etc. Money
incurred in other expenditure amounted to Rs. 1,82,504 (Rupees one lakh
Eighty two thousand five hundred and four only). The Court of Wards
considered the debts of Rs. 9938 (Rupees nine thousand nine hundred and
thirty eight only) of the family. This included the personal debts of the
Kavalappara Estate. The total *kanam* amount of the estate was Rs. 2,24,056
(Rupees two lakh twenty four thousand and fifty six only).\textsuperscript{62}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[61] Ibid.
\item[62] Ibid.
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The administration of the temples of Aryankavu, Trikkanyavu, Eruppa, Punnakkal kavu etc. under the Kavalappara family also was taken over by the Court of Wards. Improvements were effected in the lands held by these temples. The Court of Wards managed to improve the condition of the property of the estate. They started a dispensary at Vaniyamkulam which was later handed over to the Basel Mission. In 1909 a post office was started at Eruppa.\(^{63}\)

The Court of Wards was particular in celebrating the traditional ceremonies and respecting the traditional formalities in the area. *Cherumars* were employed in the farm of the estate. But it was not as *adiyans* or slaves but as free labourers. The system of granting holidays to them was introduced. These are evident from the proceedings of the Court of Wards.\(^{64}\) The proceedings also shows the enhancement of payment to menial servants in the paddy field and charitable acts like the *kanji* distribution to the poor.\(^{65}\)

The Court of Wards gave allowances to the members of the family and contributed to the maintenance of the husbands of the ladies of the family. There were differences of opinion between the members of the family and the Court of Wards.

\(^{63}\) *Ibid.*


\(^{65}\) *Ibid.*
The Court of Wards bestowed great attention to the education of the wards. They were given education in public school. The Madras government had a public school at Madras exclusively for the wards under their protection. This was the Newington School, Madras. Students from the feudal families of Bobbili, Venkitagiri, Kalahasti, Sivapuri etc. were brought to study in their school. Usually students were admitted to this school at the age of twelve. Before this they would be given tuition by a tutor. The coaching in this school was strictly on European model. The Court evaluated the progress reports of the Wards. In summer the Wards were sent to the hill stations.

The staff and students of Newington School used to go to holiday tours to various places. Once they visited Rangoon. In Rangoon and many other parts of Myanmar there were many a person belonging to Kavalappara and nearby places. Many of them had studied in the Kavalappara upper Primary School. When Appukuttan Unni Mooppil Nayar visited Rangoon along with the other students of Newington, the Kavalappara people at Rangoon arranged a big reception for him. But there was nobody to receive the other students with him who also were zamindars.66 This shows the high esteem with which the Kavalappara family was held by the people of Kavalappara.

Eventhough the Kavalappara family had lost their defacto authority for ruling their locality they continued to be rulers in the eyes of their subjects. This was mainly because of their ritual status connected with religion and society. The wards were allowed to go to their own family only with permission of district collector. In the beginning boys were taken to such schools. In the beginning of 20th century thirty wards from different estates were brought to study in the Newington School. They were under the care of the court's European tutor and an assistant tutor, Messers C. Morrison and C.H. Payne at Newington Madras respectively. Two sons of Kavalappara Nethiyar were sent to the Newington School. The eldest one was aged 14. The progress made by the Kavalappara ward is reported to have been satisfactory. During the period under study the following subjects were added to the curriculum of studies followed at Newington viz, practical surveying and plotting, agriculture, theoretical as well as practical, elementary botany, physical science etc. The wards received instructions in these subjects as suited to their age and abilities. The landed aristocracy in India was 'preserved' by the colonial state as means to its hegemony.

The physical development of the wards continued to receive special attention and the court received periodical reports on their physical condition. Gymnastics, bicycling, riding, tennis and cricket formed part of their daily curriculum and during the end of the year the senior wards also went through a course of musketry drill at Newington and firing exercises at the San Thome ranges. The usual visit was paid to Ootacamound during the summer. But work was regularly carried on during the two months spent on the hills. The attention of the court was drawn to the necessity for preserving among the wards a due respect for and observance of their family religious usages. Arrangements were made in the case of those wards, whose relative expressed a desire to that effect, for imparting instruction in the Hindu religion and philosophy and also for superintending the conduct at daily worship and the performance of religious ceremonies by them.⁷⁰ In the beginning only boy children were taken to Newington School. But the girl children were given tuition in different subjects like music, needle work etc., and the regular subjects at their home itself.⁷¹ Later girl children also came to be admitted.

The Court of Wards bestowed due attention of the public works department of the estate which included the repair of roads, building etc.⁷² The Court of Wards has been a device through which western culture was

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⁷⁰ Hira Singh, *op.cit.*, p. 36.
⁷¹ Proceedings of the Court of Wards, No.8, January, 1904.
first inflicted. This is seen from the series of measures for introducing western model amenities for the wards. As far as the Kavalappara family was concerned this included the construction of a Hill Bunglow with the tennis court, maintenance of horses and carriages, planting of flower gardens appointment of gardener etc. These are things associated with the English noble families.\footnote{Ibid.} These were conscious attempts on the part of the British to establish their cultural hegemony in the areas brought under their control. The British were trying to have a set of aristocrats who were following English practices in dress, food etc. and ultimately the British culture.\footnote{Ibid.}

The Court of Wards interfered in the personal matters of the family under their control. They interfered in the matter of marriages. They discouraged child marriages.\footnote{K.K.N. Kurup, (ed.), \textit{Kavalappara Papers, op. cit.}, p. xxxvi.} There was an order from the Court of Wards that the collectors were to see the marriage of minors were postponed to a reasonable period till they obtained physical and mental maturity for marriage. For example the marriage of the Kavalappara ward Parvathy Nethiyar was celebrated only in March 1886 when she attained majority.\footnote{Ibid.} Sometimes the court even selected bride and bridegrooms. Sometimes there were secret enquiry with regard to the fitness of the ward to marriage.\footnote{Ibid.} For
their expenditure the members of the wards family was to have permission from the Court of Wards. For example a member of the *thikanadar* family in Rajasthan who was under the Court of Wards asked for the permission to purchase jewellery for her daughters on the occasion of the marriage of her maternal uncle. The manager of the Court of Wards was of the opinion that there was enough jewellery in the personal collection of the Maji, her mother and they could be used by her on the occasion. So permission was not given. But the Maji purchased jewellery worth Rs.2500 (Rupees Twenty five thousand only) and demanded for the payment of the amount from the Court of Wards. Even though the amount was granted, it was with a warming that any expense incurred without the sanction of the Durbar would not be honoured.78

The establishment of British rule over Malabar considerably affected the Koodali *tarawad* also. The *tarawad* was a feudal lord and had all the powers and privileges in that position. He had a series of obligation also. But with the establishment of British rule this landlord also lost much of his powers. This was particularly in his powers as a *desavazhi* was acknowledged by Kottayam Raja and title of *Gurikkalachan* was granted by the Kottayam Raja. As a landlord he has been a special target of Tippu Sultan’s army. On the eve of the Mysorean attack the *karanavar* of the

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tarawad Raman Gurikkalachan forced his managed to shoot him and thus met with death. After the Mysorean invasion with the establishment of British rule there occurred many a change in the powers and status of Koodali family.

In 1793 the revenue collection of the kingdom of Kottayam of which Koodali was a part was entrusted with the Raja of Kurumbranadu by the Company\textsuperscript{79}. As noted above for administrative purpose the District of Malabar was divided into 429 amsams. Amsams were not villages, but groups of villages. Subordinate to the amsams was the desam. During the precolonial period desam has been a territorial unit of organisation for civil purposes. The kingdom of Kottayam included 28 amsams\textsuperscript{80}. The tara organisation established by the Mysore rulers was changed into hobali system or subordinate district establishments under the Company. The hobali was an enlarged form of taras. This hobali system was found inadequate and was abolished by the British in 1822. In its place the amsam system was organised by the Special Commissioner H.S. Graeme in 1822-23. Under this system many desams were rolled together into an amsam. During the precolonial period there were about two thousand desams in Malabar. These were now grouped into 429 amsams. Thus many a desavazhi lost his power. Selected desavazhis were made adhikaris of the amsams. Thus as noted above the adhikari became the desavazhi of all the desams in his amsam. But Graeme

\textsuperscript{79} Willam Logan, *A collection of Treaties.......*, No. XLII, *op.cit*, p.188-89

was tactful in preserving the right of the other *desavazhis* to the *stanamana avakasam* (rights and privileges of office) in their respective realms. But they had no defacto power. The creation of the *amsams* led to the disappearance of the *kuttams* or assemblies of *taras*.  

The *karanavar* of Koodali was appointed as an *adhikari* by the English East India Company. The *karanavar* Kelappan Nambiar Second (1832-1850 AD) obtained the *adhikariship* of Koodali *amsam* for the first time.  

*karanavar* Kunjamman Nambiar had helped the English in their fight against Tippu Sultan. He used to recruit *kolkars* or soldiers for the British from his tenants and because of all these the British were grateful to the *karanavar* of Koodali. Perhaps this sense of gratitude might have prompted them to confer the post of *adhikari* on the *karanavar* Kelappan Nambiar II who succeeded Kunjamman Nambiar. As Kelappan Nambiar had heavy responsibilities in the position of the *karanavar* and the *adhikari*, the provisional Collector Mr. Blemsan wanted him to nominate his successor for the *adhikariship* and Kelappan nominated his son Ponmaleri Koroth Chathu and not his Chathu to the post of *adhikari*. During the *karanavarship* of Kunhambu the *jama* of Koodali

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81 Ibid, p.89
83 *Kolkars* were native armed men recruited to the British army in Malabar. These *kolkars* figure prominently in the fight between the English East India Company and Pazhassi Raja.
Koodali *amsam* and those of Munderi and Maniyur *amsams* were transferred to the *karanavar* Kelappan\(^{85}\). Kunhambu managed to get the *patta* of Ayyallur and neighbouring *amsams*. The native people of Koodali, who were employed under the British, like other parts of the district were very influential. The support of these local officers has been a factor to be reckoned with in the dealings of the *karanavars*. This is very much relevant in the history of Kunhambu Nambiar who captured power from the boy *karanavar* Kunhi Kelappan\(^{86}\). It is seen that the *karanavars* when they ascend to the position of *karanavar* would relinquish the post of *adhikari* to their successors.

Up to this time as a landlord and trustee of the temple of Koodali, the *karanavar* had judicial powers in his realm. But with the establishment of British jurisprudence, the *karanavar* and his *tarawad* also came under it in the 19\(^{th}\) century. We see a series of litigations in the Jilla Court of Tellicherry by the members of the Koodali family. Like other feudal families Koodali also began to approach the British Courts for redressel of grievances. We have seen the prolonged disputes between the Kunhamman *karanavar* and Kelappan Nambiar II. All these show the loss of independence in many a matter that the *karanavar* enjoyed during the pre-colonial period.

\(^{85}\) Ibid, p.11

\(^{86}\) K.K.N. Kurup (ed.), *Koodali Granthavari*, *op.cit.*, pp. XVII - XVIII
The British were particular in respecting the powers and privileges of the *amsam adhikari* who has been their agent. This is seen in the favours showed by the British officers to Kunjambu Nambiar. Even though the British power was established in the area of Koodali, the *karanavar* was given freedom to have ritual authority, especially in connection with the temple of *Daivathar* and its festival. He continued to be titular sovereign, even though he lost his defacto power in the locality as a local chieftain. The *kalari* maintained formerly for training militia now came to be maintained only for ritual purpose. Instead of maintaining an army the Koodali *karanavar* used to recruit soldiers called *kolkars* from the able men in his dominion for the British. As noted above Kunjamman Nambiar used to supply the *kolkars.*

The waves of modernity that came along with the spread of English education also considerably influenced the members of Koodali family. Those members who got modern education were in the forefront of the movements for educational reforms, social reforms and the like in the area. This revealed in the establishment of the Elementary School at Koodali under the auspices of the *tarawad.* The *tarawad* whose main income was from the land began to turn to others fields of investment like banking. They also turned to the commercialization of agriculture in their land. Under the colonial rule the *karanavar* of Koodali also cut across the limits of his locality to which he was confined earlier to work at national level. We have seen how a Koodali *karanavar* reached the coveted position of a member in the Viceroy’s
Council. Certain *karanavars* and members were greatly influenced by the spirit of nationalism. They worked as the members of national associations. Some of them became dedicated social activists. These were in response to the challenges of colonialism. The legacy of the *tarawad* as a landlord and local ruler helped its member to become popular, social and political activists also.

The foregoing accounts show as to how the establishment of British authority over Malabar profoundly affected the Kavalappara and Koodali families. The changes were not only in the political field but on all aspects of the life and culture of the areas under their rule. As far as Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar was concerned he became a subordinate of the English East India Company which also meant that he was no longer as subordinate chieftain under the Cochin or the Zamorin. Kavalappara Nayar had the right to collect the taxes from his dominions for the British. From this collection he could take the allowances for collection and his maintenance. For him there was no more need for training a local militia and supply the same to his former overlords. The responsibility of protecting his dominance was placed under his master, the British. However he could have retainers as his body guards. The Mooppil Nayar was allowed to have his ritual powers. But he was no more allowed to have the gifts and other symbols of over lordship given to him by those was received lands from him. When the Mooppil Nayar fell in arrears of payment to the British his dominion was taken over by
his masters and placed under the Court of Wards. The dominions of Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar became the Kavalappara Estate under the Court of Wards which had profound impact on the nature of marumakkathayam property in the years to come. During the period of Court of Wards we see the rapid spread of European Culture in the family of Mooppil Nayar. The Koodali tarawad also was profoundly influenced by the establishment of colonialism. The karanavar became an amsam adhikari under the British. Adhikari has been an agent of an administrative unit in Malabar. But the karanavar lost his judicial powers as in the case of Kavalappara and other chieftains. All of them came under the British judicial system. The people of both Koodali and Kavalappara entered into a period of modernity in all walks of life. It was as a challenge to the forces of colonialism that nationalism developed in the areas under these chieftains. Knowingly or unknowingly Britain was becoming instrumental to social change in Kerala.