



## Land Tenure System in Malabar during the beginning of British Settlement

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The entire western coast of India was referred to as the Malabar Coast by ancient seafarers. According to Logan, Arab navigators and seafarers addressed this region by several names, such as Malibar, Manibar, Mulibar, Malabaria and Melibaria.<sup>1</sup> Al Beruni was the first to use the term Malabar.<sup>2</sup> For centuries, traders and travellers from the different parts of the world navigated through the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean and reached this coast for trading. The Indian Ocean doubtless dominates sea-face of Asia and hence, the history of maritime activities in Asia is largely related to the Indian Ocean.<sup>3</sup> The city of Calicut was known to the whole world from the middle of the fourteenth century, for its emporium trade.<sup>4</sup>

Malabar was part of the Chera Kingdom, which was the part of ancient kingdom of *Keralaputra*, with its headquarter at Mahodayapuram, believed to be the present Kodungallur. The last of the Chera king is supposed to have abandoned his throne during the twelfth century and after accepting Islam, he is supposed to have gone to Arabia. The whole of regions of Kerala was then loosely knit body of fiefdoms. The Malabar district was formed in 1792 by the British by the amalgamation of about 30 fiefdoms big and small in the northern part of Kerala.<sup>5</sup> These fiefdoms had earlier accepted the suzerainty of either King Zamorin or Kolathiri. The King Zamorin ruled from Calicut and the headquarter of King Kolathiri was Kannur.

Geographic boundaries of Malabar to the north were the district of South Canara, south the Native State of Cochin, In the east Coorg, Mysore, Nigiris and Coimbatore and the west, the Arabian Sea. The district can be seen vertically divided into three agro- climatic regions. The foothills of the Western Ghats form the Malanad,

<sup>1</sup> Logan, *Malabar Manual* Vol. 1, 1887 (2000), p. 1

<sup>2</sup> Arul S. Evangeline Arputha Priya, "Important Trade Centres in Malabar Coast Before the Arrival of the Portuguese", in *International Journal of Advances in Science, Engineering and Technology*, Vol.5. issue 3 July 2017., p.84.

<sup>3</sup> Ranabir Chakravarti, *Maritime Trade between Malabar and Aden: Gleanings from a Jewish Business Letter (1139)*, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol.55 (2006-2007), p. 251.

<sup>4</sup> K.S. Mathew, "Calicut, The International Emporium of Maritime Trade and the Portuguese During the Sixteenth Century," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol.67 (1994), p.13

<sup>5</sup> K.N. Ganesh, *Yesterdays of Kerala (Keralathinte Innalekal)* In Malayalam (Govt. of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram: Department of Cultural Relations, 1990), 136.

(hill country), the Edanad (the middle country) is a region sandwiched between the Malanad and the coast. There are extensive ravines, dense forests, and cultivable valleys, plains of paddy fields, rivers, backwaters and canals. There are 21 rivers, big and small that originate in Western Ghats and drain into the Arabian Sea. There are three rivers that are tributaries of river Kaveri that originate from the Western Ghats and flow all the way into the Bay of Bengal. The three rivers are the Kabini, Bhavani and Rampur. Malabar district received one of the highest levels of rainfall in the country. Malabar has two types of surface soil: Laterite soil in hilly areas and Alluvial soil in low lying areas.

### **Agrarian Economy of Malabar**

Since Malabar was under the colonial rule after conquering it from the Mysoreans in 1792, even though, a wide variety of crops were exported from Malabar to Europe for more than 2000 years, it remained an under-developed region as it was a place in which cultivation was snitchy and the market places were there.<sup>6</sup> He highlights six obstacles to economic growth in the region, viz. the stasis of the caste structure, the traditional occupational distribution of the elite, the absence of systematic government in the pre-British period, the pattern of land tenures, the structure of family property laws and the pattern of population growth during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>7</sup> He argued that business class including the elite was not focussed on in upbringing the stagnant economic system anchored on agriculture where as it might be the main feature to promote the social and cultural life of the people. However, his study has entirely deserted the impact of colonial policies.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century agriculture was the chief economic activity of the people and provided the means of livelihood to the entire population except a few who engaged in trade, commerce, cotton weaving, carpentry, smithy, fishing etc. On the basis of the available information, we estimate that the population engaged in non-agricultural activities hardly exceeded five percent of the total population in 1837.<sup>8</sup> The region produced a variety of agricultural products like paddy, coconut, betel nut, ginger, pepper, cardamom and horticultural produce like jack fruits, plantains, mangoes etc. Among these products, the important items exported were pepper, coconut, coconut products, betel nut, cardamom and timber during the first decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup> During the nineteenth century, the economy of Malabar district was primarily agrarian and paddy was the most important food crop. The fertile valleys of Malabar were well suited for the cultivation of

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<sup>6</sup> T.W. Shea, "Barriers to Economic. Development in Traditional Societies: Malabar, A case study," *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol.19, No.4, December 1959, p.1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>8</sup> *Statistics of Malabar 1873-74* P.23

<sup>9</sup> P. Clementson, *A Report on Revenue and other Matters connected with Malabar*, dt. 31<sup>st</sup> December 1938, Calicut, Collectorate Press, 1914, pp.22-23.

paddy. Paddy was raised in three crops in a year.<sup>10</sup> During the period from 1876 to 1878, Malabar witnessed a severe famine and the Government took relief measures by providing rice *kanji* in many places in the district to the starving people. It was estimated that more than 40,000 persons were provided with rice *kanji* during the year 1877.<sup>11</sup> Some prime areas like Palghat and Bettudnad (South Malabar) taluks, government provided irrigation facilities.<sup>12</sup>

The other food crops that were cultivated were ragi, millets and horse gram. A number of garden crops were produced in the district. These included fruit crops like mango and jack fruit and various types of tubers. The Wayanad region, which is part of Western Ghats, was the centre of production of cash crops like coffee, tea, pepper, ginger, cardamom and cloves. It was for the monopoly of pepper trade that rivalry took place among European powers from the fifteenth century. By the middle of the nineteenth century, a major change started taking place in the agricultural production pattern in the Wayanad hills. English companies like M/S Pierce Leslie and Co, Aspinwall and Co, William Goodacre, Stanes Maylor and Co, Alstons and Co and English and Scottish Company had started establishing tea, coffee and cardamom plantations here. Some of these companies had branches in Cochin, Alleppy (present Alapuzha) and Mangalore (now Mangaluru). Parts of the forest area in Wayanad were converted into plantations. Malabar is located roughly half way from Europe to China. Products from two opposite geographic regions - the Middle East as well as China were brought to Calicut for trading.<sup>13</sup> Different trading communities like Arabs, Bohra Muslims, Gujaratis and Gowda Sarswat Brahmins settled here and different languages were spoken. When Vasco de Gama landed at Calicut in 1498, there a few persons in Calicut, who knew the Catalanian language, and could, translate this language spoken by Gama. Trade in Malabar did not have significant linkages with hinterland. Some exceptions did exist. Malabar timber was in great demand for ship building. Teak wood from Nilambur was felled and flowed down the river Chaliyar to Beypore, a few miles from Calicut. From here, timber was exported. Timber was also used for the traditional ship building industry localised at Beypore. This place has been a centre of traditional ship building for more than 1000 years and wooden ships and country crafts up to 1000 dwt are still built here.<sup>14</sup>

## Land Revenue Policy

The objective of annexation of Malabar by the English East India Company (EIC) as a territory was extraction of the agrarian surplus through taxation. For this purpose, it became necessary to identify the owner of land. This was the problem the British faced whenever they annexed a new territory. Different systems of ownership

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<sup>10</sup> William Logan, *Malabar Manual* (Madras: Government Press, 1887), vol.2, p.35.

<sup>11</sup> C.A. Innes, *Malabar*, vol.1 (Madras: Govt. of Madras Press, 1951-reprint) p.281.

<sup>12</sup> Ward and Conner, *A Descriptive Member of Malabar, 1821* (Calicut: Collectorate Press, 1901) p.138.

<sup>13</sup> Clementson P, A Report on Revenue and other Matters connected with Malabar, *Op. Cit*, p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> Jayaprakash Raghaviah, *Faith and Industrial Reformation, Basel Mission in Malabar and South Canara* (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2018), p.78.

and possession existed in India. As a rule, there are three claimants for the agrarian surplus. These claimants are the state, the land owner and the tenant. The British had inherited the legacy of the Mughal Empire and therefore the attempts made by the British were basically altering the Mughal pattern of revenue administration for their benefit. Some of such changes made by the British resulted in disastrous consequences. Basically, three types of revenue administration had existed during the time of Mughals. These were the Zamindari<sup>15</sup>, the Mahalwari<sup>16</sup> and the Ryotwari<sup>17</sup>.

So potential an area has many weak links in its economy. The Malabar land tenure system and the laws of inheritance, unique and peculiar in construction, have been the cause of distribution of holdings by fragments, subject to conditions and contractual loopholes. These have given rise to continual bickering and litigation between tenants and landlords, and the system itself prevents agricultural operations on large-scale or on an economic-basis. The producer and agriculturist functioning in this uneconomic holding has no status and is always at the mercy of agents and middlemen as part of an organization in the assembling centres. The tenancy system has defined all well-meaning land reform legislation.<sup>18</sup>

The *Zamindari* system is also called as the Permanent Settlement. This system was initially introduced in Bengal and was extended to almost the whole of north India excepting Audh and Agra. Under the Mughal governance, the Zamindar was an intermediary through whom revenue was collected. He received a percentage of the revenue collected as his services charges. But under the British, the Zamindar became the owner from whom the revenue was collected. The owner was given powers to extract revenue due from each piece of land under them. Under the British rule, the zamindari became a marketable right. People with money could bid for it and often it was the rich traders who became zamindars. The EIC also had a political objective in implementing the Zamindari system. Through such a system, the then Governor General, Lord Cornwallis was attempting to enlist loyalty of a powerful group of people the Zamindars, whom they could look for support in times of political and social unrest. The Zamindari system on the other hand resulted in creating a group of parasitic landlords who squeezed the peasantry to the maximum. Thus, the Zamindari system was instrumental in increasing the immiseration of the peasantry.

The *Mahalwari* system of land revenue existed under the Mughals as well as the Marathas. According to this system, land holdings in a village or a group of villages, constituted a Mahal or an estate and was owned and operated by the entire people within the area. The assessment of land and settlement of revenue was fixed for the estate as a whole. The individual's share in the land revenue was determined in proportion to the land holding that he possessed. The person who was responsible for managing the collection of revenue was known as Patil, which was a position hereditarily given to them by the Mughal rulers. Under this system also, the

<sup>15</sup> Zamindari System was introduced by Cornwallis in 1793 through the Permanent Settlement Act. Through this Act Zamindars were given the right to collect the rent from the peasants.

<sup>16</sup> Mahalwari System was introduced in 1822 by Holt Mackenzie. Later the system was reformed during the period of William Bentick in 1833.

<sup>17</sup> Ryotwari System was introduced by Thomas Munro in 1820.

<sup>18</sup> Argus, "The Economy of Malabar", *The Economy Weekly*, September 22, 1951., p.923.

condition of actual cultivators became pathetic due to excess demand, arrears in revenue and mounting debt burden.

By its very concept, the *Ryotwari* system of revenue collection aimed at removing the intermediary between the state and the cultivator of land. It is a settlement between the State and the ryot (cultivator). The Ryotwari system was the first implemented in the erstwhile Barmahal district (present Salem district) and later extended by the EIC to the other districts of the Madras Presidency. In Malabar, initially the EIC attempted a system of settlement of revenue with local Rajas. According to this settlement, 80 per cent of the total revenue collected was to be given to the government and the remaining 20 percent to be retained by the local Rajas as permanent Malikhana or perpetual pension to be retained by them for the services rendered to the EIC. This could be successfully implemented only in a few cases. One case was that of King Zamorin who was based at Calicut. The ryotwari system became prevalent in due course in major part of today's Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, large areas of Madhya Pradesh and Assam and the princely states of Jaipur and Jodhpur in Rajasthan.

In the Madras Presidency, the ryotwari system was introduced by Governor Thomas Munro, who in his earlier stint as an official in the government of Madras Presidency had lived for some years in the Presidency and closely studied the land tenure patterns. Most of the officials who were involved with the implementation of the system were trained by Thomas Munro, during his earlier stint at the Presidency. After Munro left the scene, situation changed. One major change was that the rate of assessment of revenue was made inversely proportional to the size of holding. Thus ryots who had large tracts of land paid relatively lower tax than ryots with smaller tracts of land under their ownership. Another change related to the method of collection and recovery of dues. District Collectors were permitted to sell the defaulter's land without getting permission from the Board of Revenue or the court of judicature. Lastly, to prevent any untoward things to happen, including an injunction from the court of law, all defaulters could be imprisoned before being ousted from their lands.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Land Tenure System in Malabar**

Here, it may be appropriate to begin with an understanding of the land tenure system that existed in Malabar before the annexation of the region by the English EIC in 1792. In Malabar as well as in the rest of Kerala, ownership and possession of the land were separate. All land belonged to either the temples or to joint families of Nambuthiri Brahmans. According to historians, during the 100 years Chera - Chola wars, "there was turmoil and consequent insecurity for life and property. It became convenient for individual owners of land to write off their property in favour of temples."<sup>20</sup> All land in Kerala thus became gradually owned either by the temples or by the Nambuthiri Brahman joint families who were earlier trustees of the temples. There is an interesting history behind this.

<sup>19</sup> J. Dykes, *General Manual of Ryotwari Tenure* (Madras: Government of Madras, 1858) 147.

<sup>20</sup> T.C. Varghese, *Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1970) 231.



Migration of Nambuthiri Brahmins to Kerala and South Canara are supposed to have taken place during the period 3rd to 8th century.<sup>21</sup> It was the Nambuthiri brahmins who brought the Sanskritised Hindu religion to Malabar and South Canara. They established temples of which, they were the trustees. The land that was assigned to temples was called *Devaswam* (belonging to God). The tenants of these lands had to make certain obligatory payments to the temples, particularly during the festival seasons. The tenure under which the temples held these lands was known as *Janmom* and in its original form meant an interest in the soil. Gradually some lands became assigned to the temples were appropriated by the trustees called *Uralars* who were Nambuthiri Brahmins. This land was known as *Brahmaswam*. Thus, all lands in Kerala were either *Devaswam* or *Brahmaswam*.<sup>22</sup> The tenure of ownership of this land *Janmom* was a perpetual and inalienable ownership. At the same time the *Janmom* ownership was different from the absolute ownership of land. A *Janmi* could not sell his land. *Janmom* right could not be sold or purchased in the market. A *Janmi* could mortgage his land but that charge remained perpetually attached to the land and became passed on to the individuals to whom the *Janmi* preferred to give as lease or mortgage called *Kanom*.

In Malabar, generally the janmis did not directly cultivate his land.<sup>23</sup> He could not do it without crossing the polluting distances between them and the actual labourers who were from the Pulaya and Cheruma castes. Actual cultivation, directly or indirectly was undertaken by the holder of the right called *kanom* which could be described as a usufructory mortgage. Holder of *kanom* tenure deposited some money with the janmi for which he was paid an interest. Apart from this, the *Kanakkar* gave his *pattom* or a share of his crop at an agreed rate, after each harvest. The *kanakkars* either directly took up cultivation with the help of *agrestic slaves* if the size of the holding was small. If the holding was large, the land was sub-let to *Verumpattakkar*, who were tenants-at-will. Tax to the government was paid either by the janmi or by the *kanakkar* as per mutual agreement. This was done according to the customary practice known as *kana-janma maryada*.<sup>24</sup> There were no written contracts.

As per the existing custom, as long as the holders of *kanom* and *Verumpattom* tenure paid their dues, they could not be evicted from the soil. Therefore, security of tenure existed, providing a safety net for the holders of inferior tenancies. The position that each community occupied in the agrarian hierarchical order corresponded to its position in relation with land holding which was also connected to his position in the prevailing caste hierarchy. Schematically one could relate caste and agrarian hierarchy in the Malabar district at the advent of British in the following format.<sup>25</sup> This is only an abstraction of a more complex reality.

<sup>21</sup> A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Charithram* (Kottayam: DC Books, 2007) 200-201.

<sup>22</sup> P. Radhakrishnan, "Land Reforms in Theory and Practice: The Kerala Experience". *Economic and Political Weekly*. (December 1981). 16 (52): 131-133

<sup>23</sup> Heike Moser, Paul Younger, "Kerala Plurality and Consensus", in Peter Berger, Frank Heidemann, (eds.), *The Modern Anthropology of India: Ethnography, Themes and Theory* (England: Routledge, 2013) 172-176.

<sup>24</sup> Jaiprakash Raghaviah, *op.cit*, 87.

<sup>25</sup> Raman Mahadevan, "Industrial Entrepreneurship in Princely Travancore: 1930-47", in Sabyasachi Bhattacharya et al. (ed.), *The South Indian Economy: Agrarian Change, Industrial Structure and State Policy* (New Delhi: Sage Publishers, 1991) 341.

When it was evolved, the tenure *janmom* did not mean absolute ownership of land. At best it meant an interest in the soil. Very few *janmies* cultivated their own lands which was very vast. The actual cultivation was done by holders of *kanom* tenure. These *kanakkars* were usually Nayar *tharawadus* or their equivalent Nambiar *tharawadus* in north Malabar. The *kanakkars* also cultivated land directly only in very few cases. Actual cultivation was mostly undertaken by holders of *pattom* tenure. These sub-tenants or tenants-at-will were usually from the Thiyya, Muslim or Christian communities. Agricultural labourers were from the Pulaya and Paraya communities who were treated as part of the soil and hence bought and sold along with the land.<sup>26</sup>

The interpretation of the existing tenurial practice by the British administration substantially altered the balance of relationship between the holders of the three tenures mentioned here balance. The British administrators interpreted *Janmom* tenure as absolute ownership comparable to dominium in the Roman law. According to the Roman law, the term dominium involved multiple rights like the right to enjoy the fruits, right to sell, the right to gift, right to bequeath, right to alienate and even the right to renounce ownership. The tenure title *Janmom* did not include all the above rights. It could not be sold, for example. The British further interpreted *kanom* as usufructuary mortgage and *verum pattom* as tenancy-at-will.

The *Ryotwari* system of land revenue involved settlement of revenue with the ryot directly. The issue was in identifying the ryot from the plethora of holders of different land tenures. Here the EIC faced some difficulty. Finally, after much consideration, the government of Madras Presidency decided that the *janmi* was the 'owner' of the land. The possession of land was mostly in the hands of *kanakkar*. In its interpretation of the existing tenurial practice of land ownership in Malabar, the British conferred *Janmom* as the absolute ownership of land. The British government interpreted the tenure *kanom* as a perpetual lease and sometimes as a *usufructory* mortgage and *verumpattom* or *pattom* as tenancy-at-will.

Traditionally, there existed system of renewal of contract between the holders of *janmom* and *kanom* tenures. This was called by several names. For example, in some places, it was called as *policheshuthu*. This was traditionally required as some of the contracting parties might have expired over time and fresh contract would be necessary. There was no specific period of interval for conducting a *polichezhuthu*. By traditional custom, such a renewal of contract did not mean enhancement of *pattom* or rent by the *janmi*. By custom, a *kanakkaran* who paid his *pattom* would not be removed. The most crucial judgments regarding *polichezhuthu* was made by Justice Thomas Strange. He opined that *polichezhuthu* could be conducted after 12 years of lease. This decision was confirmed by the Sadre court in Madras in 1856. The judgment was silent about the terms of *polichezhuthu*, for example, whether the rent could be enhanced or not. With this judgment, the *janmies* gave up the pretention of protectors of the holders of lower tenancies. They started evicting the existing *kanakkars* and over leasing the land to a new new *kanakkaran* through a system of over lease called *melcharthu*. In effect, *melcharthu* was

<sup>26</sup> T.B. Premjith Kumar, *Keralathile Sthree Sakthekaranavum London Mishanari Prasathanavum* (ThiruvananthapuramK Raven Publications, 2001) p.23.

given to the person who offered highest *kanom* price.<sup>27</sup> Thus, a market for *kanom* tenure emerged. Some of the existing *kanakkars*, fearing eviction, started borrowing money from money lenders to retain their *kanom*. Those who succeeded in successfully competing for *kanom* made up their investment by squeezing money from *verum pattakars*. The traditional balance in the agrarian systems in Malabar was lost once for all, along with the security of tenure that it offered. Eviction suits started increasing in the court. Gradually, the district of Malabar became one of the most racks rented districts in the Madras Presidency.

Here, it may also be appropriate to discuss some aspects of the implementation of the ryotwari system of taxation in the Malabar district. The EIC officials had left out certain items that Mysore rulers included in the calculation of the net value on which the revenue was fixed. The excluded items comprised of bullock charges, and the cost of transportation of inputs and outputs in and out of the villages. They also included payments that ryots made to carpenters, blacksmiths and other rural artisans. According to Logan, when the Mysore rulers had estimated the net produce for assessment, as much as the 20 per cent of the gross output produced in each field remained within the village.<sup>28</sup> This 'farm retention' in kind was a major source of insurance against food deficiency in times of famine. This was not allowed under the regime of tax farming by the EIC.

Secondly, under the land revenue system implemented by the British administration, the land revenue was revised upwards every year by using tactics that did not require any official announcement. Very often, land under cultivation was over estimated. The Famine Code of 1883 as adopted by Madras Presidency had provisions to suspend revenue collection during times of bad harvest. The Famine Code further specified that prompt enquiries should be made and relief granted. This direction was rarely implemented.<sup>29</sup> It appears that in most cases cost of damage was higher than the value of remissions. When arrears payable to the Ryot was also added, the revenue demand became burdensome. Further, the British authorities demanded that the land revenue will have to be paid in cash at the end of every harvest. This was the time when the prices of agricultural commodities were low. Thus, the actual producer tended to lose.

Penalty was imposed on the Ryot for the uncultivated lands at the rate of 6 annas for an acre. The revenue authorities made several miscellaneous demands. These included fees collected for lands cultivated for which official *patta* (title) was not given, earnings made by cultivators through production or transactions in honey, wax, brick furnaces in the fields, cultivation of jungle lands and backyards of residences without permission, quit- rent on bungalows and gardens etc.<sup>30</sup> All these demands made on the *Janmies* or *kanakkars* as the case may be, was eventually passed on to the tenant- at - will who did the actual cultivation. The position of tenant was thus very often worse than that of agricultural labourer.

<sup>27</sup> K.K.N. Kurup, *William Logan: Malabarile Karshikabandhangalil Oru Pattanam* (Malayalam), (Kerala: State Institute of Languages, 1981), 139.

<sup>28</sup> Cited in M. Raghavan, *State Failure and Human Miseries. A Study with Special Focus on Famines in British Malabar* (New Delhi: Kalpaz, 2016) 219.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 232.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Warden, *Report on the Revenue System in Malabar* (Calicut: Collectorate Press, 1916) 4.



The situation was gradually becoming more and more volatile. From 1836 onwards there were peasant uprisings. These uprisings were more prominent in Ernad taluk where the tenants-at-will were mainly Muslims. From 1836 onwards there were as much as 35 uprisings mainly in Ernad taluk.<sup>31</sup> The British government initially considered these as purely law and order problems to be dealt with an iron hand. When there was no respite, the government deputed William Logan, the then Collector to study the causes of these riots from economic and other angles. Consequently, Logan was relieved from his duties. He travelled extensively through the district and spent time meeting people from different walks of life. He submitted a detailed report to the British government.

## Conclusion

The district of Malabar was geographically blessed with bountiful rainfall and favourable climatic conditions. The district, with Calicut as its main port had a history of trade. It had a cosmopolitan character. This trade however was not connected with the hinterland. The economy was a subsistence economy. After annexation of this district, the English EIC focused on tax farming, The re-interpretation of the existing land tenure system by the British while converting the district into a ryotwari settlement area as well as many other interventions made by the British, immiserated the actual cultivators of the soil. Malabar faced famines many times during the 19th and 20th centuries. The district had other structural barriers to economic development. These were the caste system and concentration of ownership of land in a few joint families. Thus, the Malabar district of nineteenth century presents a picture of contrasts - immense natural wealth posited against social and institutional barriers to development. All this happened in the background of British colonial policies, interest of which was to extract agrarian surplus to the maximum.

The Malabar land holder who was known as Janmi claimed his land as a hereditary possession and enjoyed absolute proprietary right. The forest and waste land comprised in his patta were not assessed by the colonial government is an interesting factor.

<sup>31</sup> K.K.N. Kurup, *Modern Kerala. Studies in Social and Agrarian Relations* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1988) 66.