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Agrarian Policies in the Tribal Areas of Madras Presidency During the Pre- Survey and Settlement Period, 1792-1872

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I

INTRODUCTION

The economic condition of the Indian sub-continent was marked by self-subsistence not only in the realm of agriculture but also in terms of a variety of traditional industries that prevailed during the pre-colonial period (Buchanan, 1807; Martin, 1838; Dutt, 1989; Raghavaiyangar, 1893). However, it deteriorated during the colonial period (Tomlinson 1993; Bhatt, 1963; Dutt, 1989; Raghavaiyangar, 1893; Atchi Reddy *et al.*, 1988; Charlesworth, 1982; Mukherjee, 1962; Habib, 1975; Guha, 1992; Morris, 1966; Chandra, 1968). According to Stein, "... the crucial transitional criteria have to do with the distress of most of the peasantry arising from famines and the decline of prices between 1800 and 1850. Several famines occurred in 1799-1800, 1804-07, 1811-12, 1824 and 1833-34. In the next two decades the most serious agrarian problem was a secular decline in commodity prices" (Stein, 1969; Kumar, 1983). In other words, "agriculture throughout the Madras Presidency suffered stagnation and impoverishment in the first half of the nineteenth century" (Bhatia, 1965). This was due to the over assessment, over collection and poor communication with the markets and lack of support to irrigation (Stein, 1969). A vast majority of the people in the Indian sub-continent had struggled to maintain their subsistence during the nineteenth century. According to Hunter "the greater proportion of the population was without daily sufficiency in food" (Stein, 1990). The impact of British rule on Madras Presidency during the second half of the nineteenth century reviewed by Raghavaiyangar (1893) states: "The great majority of the population is very poor there has certainly been improvement in the material condition ... of the upper strata of society, and a reduction in the percentage which the lowest grades bear to the total population". Substantiating this further, Dharma Kumar says the proportion of the agricultural labourers to the total working force and total agricultural working force had increased during 1871-1901 (Kumar, 1965). Atchi Reddy (1986) observed that the economic conditions of the labour class had deteriorated in terms of wage rate during the early nineteenth century.

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The early colonial agrarian policy only envisaged expanding commercialisation of agriculture with links to the world trade (Stein, 1990). Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the colonial government followed the same policy (Ambirajan, 1978). According to the Famine Commissioner, the same colonial agrarian policy followed for the length of the period was unsystematic and totally ignorant of the Indian conditions (Manak, 1979). Until the late nineteenth century, the colonial agrarian policy gave emphasis only for the export of commodities to Britain besides the amassment of the land revenue. Neglect of farmers' welfare during the colonial regime was appalling and the ryots were forced to pay more land revenue regardless of their conditions and natural calamities (Kumar, 1965; Stein, 1990; Charlesworth, 1982; Kumar, 1983; Bhatia, 1965; Sarada Raju, 1941; Guha, 1992; Habib, 1975; Washbrook, 1981; Bagchi, 1985; Washbrook, 1988; Hardiman, 1992). Those who protested against the high rate of land revenue, viz., *Mittadars* and farmers were imprisoned for a long period (Saravanan, 1994). Farmers were even tortured for non-payment of land revenue in the different parts of Madras Presidency (Government of Madras). Given this scenario, the paper attempts to analyse the colonial agrarian policies and its disastrous consequences on the traditional tribal system and their economy in the Madras Presidency during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly the pre-survey and settlement period, in the historical perspective (1792-1872).

The article consists of seven sections. The second section focuses on the pre-colonial agrarian situation in the hills. Section III elucidates Read's survey and settlement (1792-1800) in the different hills. The fourth section deals with the permanent settlement of the hills (1800-1819). The different types of land settlements in the different hills (1820-1872) are discussed in Section V. The sixth section analyses the decline of tribal economy in terms of change in the occupational status and the last section ends with the concluding observations.

II

AGRARIAN ECONOMY DURING THE PRE-COLONIAL ERA

At the time of colonial intervention in the Salem and Baramahal regions, more than 63 per cent of the total geographical area was under the cultivable and uncultivable waste. Of the total geographical area, about 22 per cent belonged to the hill areas (Table 1). Of the total number of habitations, seven percent belonged to the hill villages and about five percent of the population lived in the hill areas. It clearly indicates that a large area of land existed as common property lands in Salem and Baramahal regions. Though more than one-fifth of the regions belonged to the hill areas, only less than five per cent of the people inhabited the hill regions. It indicates that not only the population density in the hills was lower than that of the plains, and it also varied from 1 to 33 in the different hills at the close of the eighteenth century.

TABLE I. DETAILS OF LAND UTILISATION, HILL AREAS, HILL VILLAGES AND POPULATION, 1793

Details (1)	Area (in acres) (2)	Per cent (3)
Land details		
Arable land	11,27,716	27.55
Fallow land	3,59,279	8.78
Cultivable waste	15,59,612	38.11
Uncultivable waste	10,46,366	25.56
Total geographical area	40,92,973	100.00
Plain and hill areas		
Plains	32,00,296	78.19
Hills	8,92,677	21.81
Total	40,92,973	100.00
Plain and hill villages		
Plains	5,606	92.80
Hills	435	7.20
Total	6,041	100.00
Plain and hill areas of population		
Plains	5,72,287	95.38
Hills	27,713	4.62
Total	6,00,000	100.00

Source: Board of Revenue (hereafter BOR), Vol.151-A, 1791-94, pp. 41-42.

For administrative purposes, the hills were divided into *Jagirs/Nadus*, which consisted of many villages or hamlets. Each *nadu* had a four-tier administrative set-up: *Pattakaran* or headman, *Maniakaran*, *Ur-Kavundan* or *Moopan* and *Kangani*. The *Pattakaran*, chieftain of each *nadu*, exercised diverse functions, both religious as well as judicial according to local laws and enjoyed the revenue of the estate after giving a portion to the local deity. Depending upon his own demand from the land, he decided the amount of tax to be collected from the tribals. The rate of tax was not always permanent as the assessment was adjusted according to the prevailing situation (Aiyappan, 1948). The *Maniakaran* assisted the *Pattakaran* in these works (BOR, Vol.1769, 1841). The *Ur-Kavundan* administered the tribals directly with the help of the *Kanganies*, who also functioned like the police. The main duties of the *Kangani* were guarding houses and crops, assisting in revenue collection, keeping an eye on strangers and thieves and recovery of the stolen property.

In the traditional tribal system, revenue was collected for the maintenance of temples and organising festivals. Tax was collected annually from married couples apart from a certain amount paid at the time of wedding. The Baramahal Records [hereafter BR) (Section VII: 134) state: 'Annually from each married couple one Sultan fanam was collected to the guru or patriarch. At a wedding two Sultan fanams to the temple at Trinomalai' (Tiruvannamalai). The tribals did not pay any tax to the rulers of the plains. But, in the later period, the powerful plain rulers who extended their suzerainty over the hills forced them to pay taxes. The village middlemen/headmen who collected taxes inherited the tax collecting rights over the period, irrespective of whoever ruled the plains.

In the pre-colonial period, the hills were rented out to the highest-bidders who never surveyed the land before the assessment (Board Proceedings (hereafter BP) No.212, 8 Jun.1906:3). The earlier rulers too did not have a direct relationship either with the tribals or with the headman facilitating exploitation by middlemen in the name of revenue collection. Land revenue in the hills during the pre-colonial period was not collected either on the basis of the extent and quality of land or crops and availability of water. Instead it was fixed on the basis of the number of implements - ploughs and hoes - used for cultivation.

III

COLONIAL AGRARIAN POLICY: 1792-1802/03

Colonial rule was established in the Salem and Baramahal region since 17th March 1792 with Colonel Alexander Read as the Collector. Colonel Alexander Read wanted to bring revenue collection (from the farmers) under the direct control of the government dispensing with the village headmen (BOR, Vol.69, 1793). To realise the above objective, the government ordered a detailed agricultural survey in 1793. Till the completion of the survey, revenue was collected through the village headmen who were instructed by the government not to collect more than the fixed assessment (Bradsha, 1893). When the survey was completed in 1797-98, Read introduced the direct method of land revenue collection, in other words, the Ryotwary system. Read's *ryotwary* settlement was implemented in the Kolli hills along with the plain villages while all other hills continued with the practice of settling with the headman. The survey settlement of Attur-Kolli hills had created several problems and the tribals were forced to revolt against the settlement in 1796 (Saravanan, 1999a). Every village in Kolli hills, in fact, every hamlet was surveyed and the land revenue was fixed. The total arable land in the Attur-Kolli hills was 2,733.6 acres and the total revenue demand was 850-43-35 *Star Pagodas*¹ or about 2,978 Company Rupees (BOR, Vol.69, 1793). The average land-rent per acre was only 0-14-1 *Star Pagodas* or 1-4-3 Company Rupees. The total arable area with a small extent of fallow land in the Namakkal-Kolli hills was 6,804.13 acres, and the total revenue demand was 2,696-15-49 *Star Pagodas* or about Rs.9,436 (BOR, Vol.69, 1793). The average land-rent per acre was 0-17-71 *Star Pagodas* or Rs.1-6-5. Prior to the permanent settlement, land-rent of *punjai* (dry) land in the plains was 0-21-59 *Star Pagodas* for the central division and 0-25-48 *Star Pagodas* for southern division (BOR, Vol.629, 1814). Land-rent in the hills was therefore lower than elsewhere in the region since the beginning of the colonial rule.

During Read's settlement, land revenue in the different hills was hiked annually from 1792-93 to 1796-97 (Table 2). Though the tribal lands were not surveyed and settled individually, the headmen were forced to pay a higher amount every year since 1792-93. In 1796-97, land revenue for the hills was fixed permanently with the headmen and it continued till the permanent settlement (1802-03). After the failure of

Read's settlement (1797-98), the highest amount of revenue demand between 1792-93 and 1797-98 was fixed permanently and it continued till 1802-03. Due to Read's *ryotwary* system, the farmers had suffered heavily because of the high assessments and decline in agricultural output (Mukherjee, 1962). In the decade between 1792-93 and 1802-03 the colonial administration had not considered the actual conditions of the farmers but was interested in extracting more revenue from the tribals.

TABLE 2. REVENUE COLLECTION IN DIFFERENT HILLS: 1792-98 (STAR PAGODAS)

Year/Hills (1)	1792-93 (2)	1793-94 (3)	1794-95 (4)	1795-96 (5)	1796-97 (6)	1797-98 (7)
Attur-Kolli hills	833 12 43	952 36 23	988 37 30	988 37 30	1057 7 35	1107 40 73
Namakkal-Kolli hills	1829 42 36	1829 12 9	1830 2 4	2030 7 30	2375 33 7	2627 00 19
Pachamalai	238 4 63	266 32 27	287 37 73	280 37 73	352 38 24	351 16 50
Shervaroy hills	1080 37 6	1180 21 5	1180 21 5	1265 - 5	1265 - 3	1265 - 73

Sources: *Permanent Settlement Records, Salem, 1800; Proceedings of the Special Commission, 1802, 1251-55; Proceedings of the Special Commission, 1802; BOR, Vol.2051, 1846.*

IV

COLONIAL AGRARIAN POLICY: 1802/03-1818/19

Despite the failure of Read's *ryotwary* settlement and decline of land revenue, the colonial government expected constant revenue sources to meet its warfare in south India (Rothermund, 1988). Based on the Bengal Presidency model, the permanent settlement was introduced in Madras Presidency in 1802-03. Under this, the Salem and Baramahal region was divided into several *Muttahs* and the *Muttahdars* were given the legal rights to collect the rent (Tomlinson, 1993). Under the permanent settlement, this region was divided into a number of *Muttahs* each consisting of a cluster of villages. At the time of permanent settlement, there were nine taluks divided into 205 *Muttahs*. Of the *Muttahs*, nine belongs to the hills. According to the Collector, the permanent settlement of the hills was '... nothing more than the amount they produced the year previous to the introduction of the permanent settlement' (BOR, vol.606, 1813). As the land revenue in the hills were hiked every year since the beginning of the colonial period (1792-93), the highest amount was fixed as permanent assessment and the same was made applicable for the hills.

The original *Muttahs* were sub-divided and annexed with the new ones over the period and the process was solely driven by non-payment by the *Muttahdars*. In 1813, the numbers of *Muttahs* were increased to 291. The hill *Muttahs* were, however, not disturbed, because they had "... always been regular in their payments. My [Collector] experience in these districts would not justify me [Collector] in recommending any deviation from the mode hitherto observed" (Salem Collectorate Records (hereafter SCR), Vol.3156:63). In the hills, as evidenced by the Collector, the high amount of land-rent was paid without any arrears. This meant that the

headmen of the hills had adopted coercive methods, creating all sorts of inconvenience to the tribals, to collect the targeted amount.

Even after the introduction of the permanent settlement, the revenue demand was not completely realised as the outstanding balance kept on increasing every year. It was high in the plains during 1808/09-1810/11 because of the farmers' resistance (SCR, Vol.3163). Though there were only nine hill *Muttahs*, the outstanding was high when compared to the total balance that was due from the remaining plain *Muttahs*. From 1802-03 to 1809-10, about one-eighth or 12.13 per cent of the total balance per annum was from the nine hill *Muttahs*. This rate had gone up between 1810-11 and 1817-18 with the average being about 58.55 per cent of the total balance (Table 3). The overall balance in the hill *Muttahs* from 1802-03 to 1817-18 was 32.96 per cent per annum. Of this, the possibility for recovery was present for 14 per cent while the remaining stood beyond the recovery. The hill villages had a large amount of outstanding balance during the 16 years (1802-03-1818-19) of permanent settlement. The main reason for this was that the revenue demand fixed under permanent settlement of 1802 was unreasonably high as it was the culmination of the annual increase from 1792.

TABLE 3. BALANCE OF LAND REVENUE: 1802/03-1818/19

Year (1)	Total Balance (2)	Hills (3)	Plains		Percentage of col.3 to 2 (5)
			(4)	(5)	
1802-03	5,109 14 9	519 11 3	4,590	3 6	10.16
1803-04	8,284 12 5	734 6 3	7,550	6 2	8.86
1804-05	15,684 13 3	435 7 5	15,249	5 10	2.77
1805-06	1,293 5 8	516 12 1	776	9 7	39.91
1806-07	8,895 1 4	560 9 11	8,334	7 5	6.29
1807-08	3,927 11 -	612 10 -	3,315	1 -	15.58
1808-09	32,465 9 7	1,872 2 2	30,593	7 5	5.77
1809-10	68,318 15 6	5,250 1 1	63,068	14 5	7.68
1810-11	48,131 11 1	12,525 13 5	35,605	13 8	26.02
1811-12	23,972 6 5	11,739 7 8	12,232	14 9	48.16
1812-13	11,227 5 6	10,010 14 5	1,216	7 1	89.16
1813-14	10,106 2 7	10,106 2 7	0		100
1814-15	12,715 11 3	11,916 13 11	798	13 4	93.72
1815-16	20,640 10 6	12,175 11 6	8,464	15 -	58.99
1816-17	19,121 - 7	12,199 - 8	6,921	15 11	63.79
1817-18	32,566 2 2	15,092 9 6	17,473	8 8	46.34
Total	3,22,461 5 7	1,06,268 5 10	2,16,192	15 9	32.96

Source: Board of Revenue, 14 December 1820, Vol. 873, p.10661, TNSA.

The amount fixed for the hills at the time of permanent settlement was Rs.35,858-0-6. The balance for the hill *Muttahs* was an insignificant amount, as it was about 3.66 per cent per annum between 1802-03 and 1809-10, and about 12.13

per cent during 1810-11 and 1817-18 (Table 3). However, as a proportion of the total demand, it remained a major one for the whole region. The balance in hills had increased from 1810-11 to 1817-18 with an average of 33.38 per cent to the total demand from the hills. This was 58.55 per cent of the total balance in the district. The average balance from the hills to the total demand between 1802-03 and 1817-18 was only 18.52 per cent and it formed 32.96 per cent to the total balance of the district (Table 4). It meant that a large amount of the outstanding balance during the period of permanent settlement was mainly from the hills. One reason could be that the amount fixed at the time of permanent settlement was too high while the other is that the headmen might not have remitted the collections to the government. The Collector's reports showed no outstanding arrears from the hills during the period prior to the permanent settlement. The *Maniakaran* (headman) who actually collected the revenue from the hill inhabitants might have kept it with himself as his *mamool* (SCR, Vol.3169, 1816).

TABLE 4. REVENUE DEMAND, COLLECTION AND BALANCE IN HILLS: 1802/03-1817/18

					(Madras Rs.)	
Year (1)	Demand (2)	Collection (3)		Balance (4)	Per cent of balance to total demand (5)	
1802-3	35858	35,338	5 3	519 11 3	1.45	
1803-4	35858	35,123	10 3	734 6 3	2.05	
1804-5	35858	35,425	9 1	435 7 5	1.21	
1805-6	35858	35,341	4 5	516 12 1	1.44	
1806-7	35858	35,297	6 7	560 9 11	1.56	
1807-8	35858	35,246	6 6	612 10 -	1.71	
1808-9	35858	33,985	14 4	1,872 2 2	5.22	
1809-10	35858	30,607	15 1	5,250 1 1	14.64	
1810-11	35858	23,333	3 1	12,525 13 5	34.93	
1811-12	35858	24,478	8 10	11,739 7 8	32.74	
1812-13	35858	25,847	2 1	10,010 14 5	27.92	
1813-14	35858	25,751	13 11	10,106 2 7	28.18	
1814-15	35858	23,941	2 7	11,916 13 11	33.23	
1815-16	35858	23,682	5 0	12,175 11 6	33.95	
1816-17	35858	23,658	15 10	12,199 - 8	34.02	
1817-18	35858	20,765	7 0	15,092 9 6	42.80	
Total		4,67,460	2 2	1,06,268 5 10	18.52	

Source: BOR, Vol. 873, 1820, p.10661.

The colonial government also attempted to extract the permanent settlement amount irrespective of the prevailing situation. For example, if the price during the decade starting with 1801-02, as a base was 100, the average annual prices during the

succeeding decade had declined to 88.5 for 1811-12 to 1820-21 (Habib, 1975). Consequently, the burden on the cultivators had increased and the farmers were either forced to borrow or dispose of their land to clear the revenue arrears (Charlesworth, 1982). Despite drought and deprivation, the higher revenue demand, had exploited the farmers particularly from the hilly tract.

V

COLONIAL AGRARIAN POLICY: 1818/19-1871/72

The difficulties encountered in the permanent settlement forced the colonial government to adopt a new strategy for revenue collection: entering into a contract with the erstwhile middlemen or leading cultivator of the villages. The initial lease period of three or five years was then extended to ten years, and finally it became a permanent one (Kumar, 1983). The revenue fixed was too high even under this system. As a consequence, the arrears continued to pile up during this brief spell in spite of the best efforts of the leaseholders (Kumar, 1983). Hence, in 1822, the government decided to reintroduce the *ryotwari* system after the expiry of the leases (Kumar, 1983). Accordingly, the defaulting villages were brought directly under the government management, and this system had continued till the first survey and settlement (1871-72).

In view of the huge arrears, the annual revenue settlement system was reintroduced in the hills from 1818-19. Under this, *muchilika* (agreements) were exchanged between the government and the village headmen. Though the revenue demand from the hills was initially fixed according to the conditions of the year, from 1818-19 onwards, it was hiked annually till 1853-54. In contrast, the average prices of the staple foodgrains in this region had declined drastically during this period (Papers relating to Survey and Settlement 1879). Even then the actual collection from the hills during the period from 1818-19 to 1853-54 was never equal to the amount realised at the time of permanent settlement. Fixation of higher revenue demand was one of the major reasons for the huge outstanding balance. It was so not only in the hills but also in the districts in general.

In 1832-35, when a famine struck in Salem and Baramahal region, a vast section of ryots as well as others were reduced to sustain themselves by gathering roots and herbs in the jungles, even from the pernicious species. As a result, many were reported to have died. In addition to periodical disturbances, cholera was quite prevalent in different parts of the region, claiming high mortality rate (BOR, Vol.1445, 1835). Land-rent remission was granted every year, but no separate account is available for the hills. In this region, the Brahmins generally continued to enjoy the privileges of remission and assessment (Mukherjee and Frykenberg, 1969). The marginal fluctuations in the land revenue demand in the hills could be attributed to migration and unfavourable climatic conditions. Due to over assessment in utter disregard of monsoon failure between 1831-32 and 1854-55, a large number of

farmers in this region had deserted their lands and migrated to other places, mostly to neighbouring districts, while a few had even gone abroad as indentured labourers. However, the rate of migration in the hills remained very low for the same period (Saravanan, 1998).

Compared to the span of permanent settlement, the balance was less after the annual settlement between 1818-19 and 1837-38 (BOR, Vol.1208, 1829; BOR, Vol.1689, 1839). Only an insignificant amount was outstanding from the hills coming under the management of village headmen since 1820. For this reason, the hills were brought under the *amani* management in different periods between 1829-30 and 1853-54. In due course parts of the Attur-Kolli hills in 1828-29; Aranuthumalai in 1836-37; Namakkal-Kolli hills in 1840-41; Shervaroy hills in 1842-43; and the remaining portion of the Attur-Kolli hills in 1853-54 were taken over by the government and brought under the *amani* management system.

Under this system, the number of ploughs and hoes employed by each individual per year were entered into the accounts with their names (BOR, no.212, 1906). Land revenue was determined on the basis of the number of ploughs and hoes owned by each individual at the rate of 12 acres per plough and 3½ acres per hoe. About 125 different rates for ploughs and 22 for hoes prevailed in the different hills of the region (BOR, No.212, 1906). Actually the tribals occupied a large extent of the land. The average rate of assessment based on actual area under cultivation would, however, be only two to three *annas* per acre (BOR, no.212,1906). Until the annual settlement, the government had followed the same method of revenue collection. After that, the method of land revenue settlement differed in each hill.

Shervaroy Hills

The government had exchanged *muchilika's* with the headmen of different *nadus* of Shervaroy hills for the collection of land revenue in 1822-23. Each *nadu* was leased out to more than one person and the headman of each *nadu* had agreed to pay the fixed amount regularly (BOR, Vol.1769, 1841). The annual revenue settlement made in the hills was about 38.63 per cent less than the amount fixed during the permanent settlement (BOR, Vol. 1769, 1841). About Rs.4,831-12-0 was found to be the balance in the annual settlements between 1822-23 and 1839-40, which was 8.4 per cent of the total amount. There were no dues between 1833-34 and 1839-40. Land-rent remission was granted to the Shervaroy hills between 1822-23 and 1834-35 with an average remission of Rs.301-0-2. The remissions were mainly availed by the British coffee planters and other non-tribals. Between 1822-23 and 1834-35, the total demand outstanding per annum comes to 32.62 per cent and this was mainly due from the British coffee planters. About Rs.1,913 10 – (51.77 per cent) was to be paid by M.D. Cockburn, a former Collector of Salem (1820-1829) and Rs.122-8-0 by the others. The tribals owed only Rs. 122-13-0 (BOR, Vol.1769, 1841). The British settlers did not pay the land-rent to the tribal headman. Instead of taking action

against the British defaulters, the colonial administration forced the tribal chiefs to be prompt in revenue payments. Ultimately, the headmen were stripped off their traditional and hereditary rights by the colonial government (Saravanan, 2004). Finally, the hills were brought under the direct management of the government.

The headmen collected revenue from the tribals at different rates. In 1841-42, the rate of assessment varied from Rs.2 to 10 ½ per plough and Rs. ¼ to 3 per hoe. The extent of land estimation also varied from 1¼ acres to 12 acres per plough and the assessment also ranged from 9 *annas* to 2½ rupees per acre (BOR, Vol.1902, 1844). Even under the direct management, there was no uniform collection for the different villages. It goes on to prove that the sole intention of the colonial government was to amass as much revenue as possible from the tribals. Till the survey and settlement in 1904-05, the same method of revenue collection was followed. In the Shervaroy hills, the colonial government followed a dual land revenue policy. On the one hand, revenue was fixed at the rate of one rupee per acre for the coffee planters, and on the other, it forced the tribals to pay more. The British planters, besides aggressively encroaching the tribals' lands as well as their common property resources, also created several hardships to the tribals. In furtherance of their interest, the planters ensured the debilitation of the tribals' administrative, judicial and cultural institutions during the early nineteenth century (Saravanan 1999b; 1999c; 2001; 2004).

Kolli Hills

In Moonoor and Anjoor villages of the Attur-Kolli hills, revenue was settled annually from 1818-19 barring an insignificant amount of dues in some years. However, in 1829-30, Anjoor hills was brought under the direct management of the government despite there being no revenue balance. Till 1823-24, the headman of Moonoor hills settled the revenue annually. However, in 1824-25, a part of the hill was brought under the *amani* management and the remaining was settled permanently with these headmen and this continued till 1853-54. The tribals disliked the system of lease, even though the government had reduced the amount from Rs.813-6-6 in 1820-21 to Rs.700 in 1852-53. Over assessment had forced the tribals to protest against the renting system. This was because the leaseholders levied more than what was due and the revenue payable in 8 *kists* was collected in 4 *kists*, resulting in greater hardships to the farmers (BOR, Vol.2447, 1854). Moreover, rent was collected irrespective of whether the land was cultivated or not (BOR, Vol.2447, 1854). As a result, '... some Malaiyals of the above [Moonoor] hills absconded' (BOR, Vol.2507, 1856). Consequently, the remaining portion of the Moonoor hills was brought under the direct management of the government.

From 1819-20 onwards, the revenue demand of Namakkal-Kolli hills was fixed annually. The average amount collected there from 1819-20 to 1827-28 was Rs.7,347 about 26 per cent less when compared to the permanent settlement amount of Rs.9,264-8-0 (BOR, Vol.1389, 1833). To avoid fluctuations in the annual revenue

settlement the government leased out the hills from 1828-29 to 1832-33 for an annual sum of Rs. 9,066 (BOR, Vol. 1389, 1833). On the expiry of the first five-years of the lease period in 1832-33, the government renewed it for the next five-years upto 1837-38 at the rate of Rs. 9,340-9-3 (BOR, Vol.1429, 1834). The leased amount of Rs.9,340-9-3 was not realised every year and the outstanding arrears stood at Rs.359-14-13 in 1835-36; Rs.639-7-0 in 1836/37 and Rs.519-9-5 in 1837-38 (BOR, vol.1689, 1839). Due to the arrears in the second five-years, the government leased out annually for Rs.8,341-14-8 in 1838-39; Rs.8,051 in 1839-40 and Rs.6,875-6-10 in 1841/42 (BOR, vol.1841, 1843). The revenue decreased from 1838/39 consequent to the successive bad years and desertion of several ryots (BOR, vol.1722, 1840). Unmindful of this, the renters collected more revenue from the ryots. It was stated that, '... the ryots on account of the short period of rent were harassed by those holding the same' (BOR, Vol.1841, 1843). Considering these facts, the hills were brought under the *amani* management in 1842-43.

Pachamalai

From 1819-20 onwards the annual revenue settlement of Pachamalai was more rational in the sense that it took local circumstances into consideration. Consequently, the revenue arrears turned out to be negligible (BOR, Vol.2447, 1854). However, the government, charging the headmen with collecting large amounts from the tribals, brought these hills under its direct management in 1829/30. The rates levied were 12 *annas* per *kuli* of hoed land and Rs.1-4-0 for ploughed land (Richards, 1918). The same system continued till the survey settlement in 1904-05.

Kalrayan Hills

The Kalrayan hill tribes did not pay any (land) revenue during the pre-colonial period but they paid certain fee to their chiefs. This was '... for maintenance of a proper state and dignity and from a portion of these fees he (jagirdar) was bound to keep up the ceremonies of the temples, sacred to the Tirular deities' (Report on Board Petition 1871). They did not pay any tax either to the Hindu or Muslim rulers or to the colonial government (Richards, 1918) and they had been left entirely to themselves (G.O.no.1028, Revenue, 1871). The government collected the lease amount from the leaseholders, which had the exclusive rights to purchase goods and articles from the Kalrayan hills (BR, Section VII).

The colonial administration had made several attempts to bring hills under its direct management, not to protect the tribals but to prevent illicit felling from the forests. However, evidences show that the *Jagirdars* were unwilling to surrender their rights. The Collector's letter to the Secretary to the BOR (12 March 1873) stated that '... from enquires made, from time to time, during the last two years, I am quite sure the Jagirdar is not willing to rent his estate to government, all endeavors made both

by myself and my predecessor to communicate with the Jagirdar having failed'. The *Jagirdars* wanted to retain their rights with themselves and were adverse to lease out the hills to the government. However, in 1867, the government tried to obtain permanent leases of the Kalrayan hills to secure unity of forest management. The Periya-Kalrayan *Jagirdar* agreed to the rent proposed by the government, which was Rs.1,500 per annum, under certain conditions (BP No.3517, 1874). Finally, it was brought under government control in 1869 (BP, No.2942, 1869). The *Jagirdar* of Chinna-Kalrayan who was reluctant to accept the permanent lease proposed by the government evaded meeting the officers for a long time (BP, nos.172-74, 1872). But he was arrested on a magisterial warrant and forced to execute the lease under custody (BP, No. 1015, 1877). But, these hills were under the control of the government only for a short period.

Incidence of Land Rent

The average land-rent in the year prior to the survey and settlement of 1871-72 in the Salem and Baramahal region was Rs.1-10-15 per acre in general; Rs. 1-4-7 ½ for dry lands and Rs.6-0-1 for wetlands (Twelve pies equal to one anna, 16 annas or 192 pies). After the settlement, it was reduced to Rs.1-7-9 ½ per acre; Rs.1-2-3 for dry lands and Rs. 5-8-11 for wetlands (Letter from the Director of Revenue Settlement to BOR, 1874). Land-rent per acre in the hills was less than elsewhere in the region both before and after the settlement. However, it varied from hill to hill. For dry land, it was lower than that prevailing in the district in general. Though this was lower than elsewhere in the year preceding the settlement, it was certainly higher after the settlement. Land revenue incidence before the settlement, which was Rs.5-8-1½ per cultivator in general has increased to Rs.5-11-5 ½ afterwards. It goes without saying that the tax burden on cultivators had gone up after the survey settlement in the region, including the hills except the Shervaroy. The burden of land revenue per cultivator, which was high in the large hills, was, however, minimal in the small hills.

VI

DECLINE OF TRIBAL ECONOMY

As mentioned in the beginning, the tribals in Salem and Baramahal regions were dependent on agriculture and forest collection. In 1838, occupational classification data brought them under the category of 'cultivators' (BOR, Vol.1537, 1836). However, after the colonial intervention the non-tribals entered and settled down in the different hills but alienated the tribal lands. According to the 1871 Census, non-tribal settlers largely confined to the Shervaroy hills, Namakkal-Kolli hills, Attur-Kolli hills and Kalrayan hills and their percentage to the total population were respectively 21.30, 10.37, 9.14 and 4.5 (Saravanan, 2001). Interestingly, about 100 persons including children belonged to the European stock among the settlers in the

Shervaroy hills around 1870s (Shortt, 1870). In addition to non-tribal settlement, introduction of plantations changed the issue of land alienation into an explosive one. In the Shervaroy hills alone, about 9,210 acres was under coffee plantation in the 1870s. The economic status of more than one-fourth of the total workforce had declined to that of labourers/plantation labourers during the pre-survey and settlement period (Table 5).

TABLE 5. OCCUPATIONAL STATUS OF THE TRIBALS IN DIFFERENT HILLS IN 1870S

Name of the hills (1)	Total population (2)	Total workers (3)	Per cent of col (3) to col (2) (4)	Cultivators (5)	Per cent of col (5) to col (3) (6)	Labourers (7)	Per cent of col (7) to col (3) (8)
Shervaroy hills	10745	3016	28.07	1860	61.67	857	28.42
Attur-Kolli hills	5533	2231	40.32	2113	94.71	71	3.18
Namakal-Kolli hills	9296	3658	39.35	2664	72.83	929	25.40
Pachamalai	2166	795	36.70	753	94.72	27	3.40
Kalroyan hills	6626	2321	35.03	1695	73.03	619	26.67

Source: Census of India 1871, Census Statement of Population 1871, Salem District, Madras.

VII

CONCLUSION

The analysis of colonial agrarian policies, particularly land revenue policies with reference to south India, especially its unexplored areas, shows that the colonial government had not accorded due importance to the tribal traditional system. Its sole concern was extraction of more revenue. Moreover, the changes effected intermittently on the agrarian policies were aimed at bringing more and more landmass into its territorial authority. In continuation of this project, it had brought the tribal areas under its control by means, which often lacked legitimacy. Its gradual intrusion into the tribal areas ultimately culminated in the British establishing their control as early as in the beginning of nineteenth century.

The colonial government had increased the revenue demand every year during the last decade of the eighteenth century and made it as a permanent settlement for the first quarter of the nineteenth century, which was an indirect attempt to take over the tribal areas. During the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the colonial intrusion took a belligerent turn. Five major developments took place during then. (i) The different hills were brought under the direct management and the tribal's traditional system was completely dismantled and it eventually faded away. (ii) Besides official patronage and encouragement, the British were offered several privileges to establish the plantation, especially coffee. In this process, vast tracts of tribal lands as well as forest lands were alienated, accentuating the disintegration of

the traditional tribal socio-economic, cultural and administrative institutions. (iii) In the absence of the tribals having any property right over the forest, the colonial administration extended its control over the forest resources to boost its commercial pursuits. (iv) The tribals' claim and assertion over their traditional rights on forest, foot-path, headmanship, guruship, other common property rights etc., were always questioned and trampled upon by the colonial administration. The poor tribals were not able to produce written documents to prove their case when the administration demanded evidence. (v) Imposing of restrictions of forest use disregarding the interests of the hill inhabitants. Precisely, the colonial government policies were aimed at garnering more revenue from the tribals at the cost of the tribal traditional system in the hill areas of Madras Presidency.

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NOTE

1. One Star Pagoda is equal to forty-five *fanams* or 3600 *cash*. One Star Pagoda is equal to three and half Company Rupees.

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