

CHAPTER - III

SUB-REGIONAL INTERMEDIARIES:

THE POST-VIJAYANAGARA PHASE

From the fifteenth century onwards, medieval south Indian society presented a picture of social order in ferment. Far from accepting the theoretical notion of 'my station and its duties' (Bradley 1876), the Sudra castes who described themselves as Sat-Sudras, sought to propel themselves into the higher echelons of society which commanded ritual superiority. When these less privileged social groups tried to crowd themselves into the limited space offered by ritual and social privileges, the resultant pulls and pressures were reflected in the contemporary late medieval society. This situation of social flux continued into the seventeenth century when the last king of Vijayanagara, **Sriranga III** (1642-49) belonging to Aravidu dynasty held no greater title than that of the king of Vellore (Ramaswamy 1985: 416).

The present chapter which actually forms the focus of this study is an attempt at understanding the dynamics of the Post-Vijayanagara state formation of south India with special relevance to the Bellary region. Obviously, the region deserves this special attention as it once formed the core of the Vijayanagara state with its imperial legacy; and which took its symbolic 'rise and fall' on the banks of the river Tungabhadra dredging through this upland semi-arid terrain. And most significantly, the shadows of which having persisted even after its virtual decline through the late medieval centuries is probably the reason why a study such as this becomes prominent. Further, in order to be more objective means of studying the processes of political change (being its main concern) the discussion needs to be placed against the constituent socio-economic, and wider cultural context of the region. That the region offers an excellent landscape for such an exercise in several respects is only evident through its distinctive geographical features.

As already pointed out elsewhere in the earlier chapters, for the analysis of a specific region, however, the model must be modified to fit within its distinct historical, ecological and social context. Historically, Bellary is one of the driest regions in south India, falling under the category of "dry eco types" (Robert 1982 : 18). And as a typical

representative of the dry ecotype, (Appendix-3) Bellary possessed traditionally "flat or loose" social structure. This less rigid and defined social and economic structure, as may be found in the following pages, gave way to the rise of several forest and pastoral people (for whom Bellary offers a natural habitat) to pre-eminence in the power structure of the region ever since medieval times; it was of course, with the royal initiative corresponding to the regional specificity's.

Interestingly, the dominant economic strategy of a over-whelming population of Bellary still remains sheep/goat pasoralism, and/or cattle herding. In addition to **pastoralism**, this zone supports agro-pastoral dry farming villages. It further indicates that the pastoral agriculturists of Bellary (**Kuruba/Kuruva**) appear to have played a substantial role in the region from the medieval Vijayanagara times. So also is the case with yet another ethnic group - the Boyas or Bedars, the traditional hunter gatherers who live in symbiotic association with the village communities. Let us then dwell at length on the ethnographic dimension of Bellary for a clearer exposition of this problem, since these traditional ethnics who inhabit this zone provide variable repeses in a wider context of the emerging complexity of social environment. The role of active individuals (lineage ancestors) among these ethnics in the process of culture change (especially in the realm of ideology and power) due to recursive relationship with **the state** can be acknowledged from their ethnohistoric accounts (Murty 1992 : 326-329).

The Boya or Bedar hunter gatherers of Bellary have a symbiotic association with the agro-pastoral communities, and in the lowlands they have become marginal enclaves of the village economy due to cultural contact. The ecosystems of these hunter gatherers though they are no longer pristine, their subsistence strategies do include exploitation of small game, birds, insects and a variety of wild plant foods; seasonal fishing in streams, lakes and ponds, and honey collection are also important strategies. They have extraordinary knowledge of biological environment and their exploitative technology consists of a variety of contrivances such as nets, spring traps, gravity traps, and noose traps. The bow and arrow is an important tool for the Boyas (as in the case of the Chenchus). The meat procurement strategies also include chasing and stalking the game and opportunistic scavenging. Fire aided hunting and ambushing big game (**antelope, deer, wild boar, etc**) at fords and water holes were also the strategies of the past for the hunter-gatherers (Murty

1992 : 326) These were basically kinship - oriented societies, where there were close family ties, forming a clan. And the head of the clan was naturally an elderly person who had authority over the whole of the clan. The worship of mother-goddess or village deity in the most turbulent form of shakti who sought ready sacrifices at festivals was most common.

There was, further, yet another dimension - the reclamation of forests (*aranya*) for village settlement (*grama*), and the expansion of agrarian order. In most cases, such newly established *gramas* in south India, more often than not had a component of priestly class (Brahmans), brought in from north India (Murty 1992 : 332).

Herman Kulke has pointed out that the rajas of medieval period needed land for the gradual extension of the peasant agriculture, which was also able to yield sufficient surplus crop for the maintenance of the increasing court, for instance, the members of the royal family, Brahmins, officials and soldiers (Kulke 1978 :128). Therefore, the assimilation of tribal people into their fold became a necessity for them. In Burton Stein's view, "the reduction of forest and the expansion of regularly cultivated land was a continuous process. This may be regarded as the ecological concomitant of the social displacement and assimilation of tribal people. As in any developing, tropical, agrarian systems, the clearing of forests was one of the standard methods for expansion; this kind of change in environment, may, therefore, be considered a regularized process in which the tempo of expansion is a factor of vital importance" (Stein 1979: 179).

Deforestation and articulation of the tribal frontiers with the Kings's domain was an ongoing process from early historic times. To give some examples, Maurya Sarma (ca. 345-370 AD), a king of the Kadamba family, claims in an inscription that he had defeated the "frontier guards of the Pallava dynasty and occupied the inaccessible forests stretching to the gates of Sriparvata i.e. Srisailam on the Nallamala hills (Minakshi 1938 : 18). Trilochana Pallava (ca 5090 AD), a Pallava king who held sway over parts of the Eastern Ghats claimed in an inscription that he had destroyed the forests and wild country and established *agrahara* {*Brahman*) settlements numbering 700 to the east of Sriparvata (Krishna Rao 1973 : 61-62). The Pallava kings, for that matter, bore the epithet *Kaduvetti*, which means the "destroyer of the forests". Such examples suggest that the forested

zones were being constituted as settlement frontiers within the state's domain. **This** process continued till the pre-colonial period with incessant battles between the regional powers for the expansion and/or retention of the boundaries.

The state (the successive states to be more appropriate) for the maintenance of the integrity of the frontier civilisations in the forested zone adapted a policy of incorporating the forest ethics both politically and ritually (Murty 1992 : 332).

The Boyas figure much more prominently in the inscriptions than their Chencu counterparts in the 'Telugu region because of their strategic position in the lowland zones. There are two main divisions among the Boyas called *uruboya* (village Boya) and *mys-aboya* (Boyas of the grassland), and each is divided into a number of exogamous septs, a long list of which is given by Thurston (Thurston 1909: 180-209). This turbulent ethnic group finds mention in the inscriptions from 6th - 7th century onwards and late medieval inscriptions (ca. 14th century AD) refer to their country as *boyaviharadesa* (the country where Boyas roam) and *boyavidu* (the land of the Boyas). The reference to twelve Boya *Kottams* (fortresses) and Boya chieftains as *dora* (lord) and *simhasanaboya* in the 9th century AD records suggests that powerful Boya strongholds existed in this region (Hanumantha Rao 1983-1984:77-91; Prasad 1978:322-343). The Eastern Chalukyas, who founded their new kingdom in Vengi (the Krishna-Godavari doab) at the beginning of the 7th century AD waged wars against the *Boya Kottams* to extend their sway southwards. To consolidate their authority and to win the support of Boyas, the Eastern Chalukyas employed them as officials. An inscription of the great Chola king, Rajendra Chola (ca. 11th century AD), mentions a Boya chief as a lord of 480 villages. Boyas were sought after especially by the late medieval rulers, both Hindu and Mohammedan, for their fighting prowess. A work with the title *Rajavahanavijaya*, attributed to the Vijayanagara King Krishnadevaiaya (who ruled from ca. 1509-1529 AD) describes how the Boyas in his army were marching with bows in their hands and quills on their backs like black tigers. Some lineages of these Boya *ilitia*, who wielded great influence over their tribesmen, and who were highly paid officials (they were given rent free agricultural lands and other kinds of allowances), called *poligars*, began to emerge as local potentates from the 16th onwards with the downfall of the Vijayanagara empire. The British found them to be a formidable force and Thomas Munro (1802) in his letter to the Board of

Revenue speaks of the bravery and turbulent nature of the Boya poligars. However, the ritual sovereignty enjoyed by the erstwhile Boya poligari families persists even to this day in their descendents in parts of the Bellary region.

The historical information about these ethnics in epigraphs, sculptures and more so in the medieval literature, is a valuable source for the explanation of the social, ritual, and symbolic domains of the hunter-gatherer cultural systems. To begin with, in the medieval religious literature which is in Sanskritized Telugu, these ethnics were referred to variously as *vanacharulu* (those who move in the forests, who dwell in the forests) *kiratas, ni shad, pulind, andh, bhilla sabara* etc. In fact, these terms were used in the medieval literature as synonyms for the forest people, though references to specific ethnic names such as Chunchu (i.e., Chenchu), Boya and Yerukula figure from the 6th century onwards. They were described as out-languish, live by hunting and forging in the forests, and that the state has to integrate these forest peoples into the king's realm. What is important in the trajectory of the hunter-gatherer cultural system is the role played by the state as a crucial variable. Suffice it would to note here that the **intra-regional** powers (especially from the early medieval period, say 4th century AD onwards) with internecine wars to expand and safeguard their frontiers made all efforts to integrate these forest ethnics into the "state's realm" for political expediency (Murty 1992 : 331-332).

Coming to the pastoral Kurubas (*also called Kuruva/and/oGolla in the adjoining Telangana - Rayalaseema plateau*), who inhabit the lowland country, they either herd exclusively cattle, or a mixed herd of sheep and goats, (which is the case with **some** groups of Gollas). After the Boyas and Bedars the most numerous ethnic group in Bellary are the Kurubas. The eastern upland country of Karnataka and the contiguous portions of the adjoining Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh states, have been the domain of pastoralists. The pastoralism of Kurubas falls in the category of herdsman husbandry (Bose 1975 : 1-15; Khazanov 1984 : 68). Like the other pastoral castes of India (such as the Ahirs, Gowla, Gonda, Yadava (jadev), Gavli, Gowli, Kolari, Dhangar etc.) the Kurubas and Gollas live in permanent dwelling places in villages and are involved in agriculture in a supplementary capacity (Mahapatra 1975 : 209-19). All these groups, we shall, following Khazanov, characterize as sedentary and semi-sedentary pastoralists (Khazanov 1984). In most cases, it is observed that, like the hunter gatherers, **the** pastoral

Kurubas also have a symbiotic relationship with the peasant communities, and practice dry farming (millets and pulses are among the most commonly grown). They often pen their sheep herds in the fields (the droppings are used as manure) before the sowing season for which they get their returns in cash or kind. It is not uncommon for a Kuruba to describe the size of his herd in terms of the acres they cover (as for instance, a herd of four acres). In those families which have taken to agriculture, the youngest of the male members often tends the sheep/ goats in their transhumant range. On the other hand, in those families which mainly depend on sheep/goat herding, both the elder and younger males move with the flock and a pack of dogs to guard the sheep from predators (Murty 1993 : 33-34).

What is more important for our discussion in this exercise is the kind of interaction between the sheep/goat pastoralists and the state. The Kuruba social organization fits into the segmentary lineage system described by Sahlins: it consists of primary (or minimal) segments with an agnatic genealogy (Sahlins 1961 : 322-43). Primary segments whose focal line ancestors are siblings form a territorial entity, and the geographical position of territories follows the genealogical division into lineages. Each lineage has a god, the deified ancestor. The gods of the respective lineage's though they may have different names, have the same iconographical features and all the lineage gods are identified with the apical ancestor, Birappa.

The centrality of the oral traditions of this community construes the temporal perspective of the institutions embodying Birappa at the apex of the sheep/goat pastoral economic and political structure. Kurubas generally do not ride horses or ponies as they are the vehicle of their god Birappa, who seems to be a form of Virabhadra. The Kurubas and/or Kurubas of Karnataka-Andhra are distinguished into two groups, namely, *unnikankanam* kurubas (those wearing a wool wrist band) and *hattikankanam* kurubas, those wearing a cotton wrist band. They are believed to have been born to the first and second wives of Elanagireddi, respectively. These two groups, with the prefixes *unni-* and *hatti-*, betray syntagmatic linkages with the forest and village life. For, Elanagireddi marries his first wife in the forest and ties a woolen wrist band (no cotton being available, whereas in the case of the second wife he ties a cotton wrist band in the marriage ceremony. The *unnikankanam* kurubas are primarily transhumant sheep herders, moving in forest pastu-

res, while the *hattikankanam kurubas* depend on agriculture and cattle husbandry like the Vokkaligas and Gavadas of Karnataka, or the Kapus (Reddis) of Andhra (Murty 1993).

According to the Lingayat oral traditions, the Kurubas are the illegitimate children born to their god in the forest. It is perhaps the reason why the Kurubas have their strong leanings towards the Lingayat faith, or Virasaivism. Almost everywhere *jangamas* are called in as priests and allegiance to the Lingayat *maths* is acknowledged, and in places (Kamalapuram, for instance) the ceremonies at weddings and funerals have been greatly modified in the direction of the Lingayat pattern. The Mylar Lingappa cult in Hadagalli is the place of worship for the pastoral Kuruba population in Bellary (Francis 1916).

The institutional analysis of the Kuruba and Golla culture systems helps us draw generalizations concerning the evolution of their political economy. As referred to earlier, their social organization falls in the category of the segmentary lineage model. There are numerous episodes in the oral epics of both Birappa and Mallanna (the Golla pastoral god) which explicate the historical connections, especially, the consistent conflict between the sheep/goat pastoralists (i.e. chiefdoms) and the state. They are warrior gods, who move on a horse back with a sword and shield, and are always ready for a raid. Ancestors of lineage groups at various levels of segmentation are deified and are venerated as incarnations of Siva. Even some of the Kuruba lineage ancestors are rajas (kings) as in some parts of Bellary and the neighboring Anantapur district. They are bestowed with royal insignia, the most common and important being palanquin, umbrella and fly whisk. And the deified ancestor of each lineage is equated with either Birappa or Mallanna, as the case may be. The solidarity and cohesion of these segmented lineage's are renewed through annual or cyclical congregations at the cult centers which dot this pastoral landscape. The ritual performances at these centers provide sources to decode the cultural content, ideology and power in the past cultural systems of these pastoral communities (Murty 1993 : 35-37).

Certain lineage's of both the Kurubas and Gollas, who established their power as poligars in the Vijayanagara empire like the hunter-gatherer Boyas, carved out their little kingdoms after the overthrow of the Vijayanagara rule. These poligars, to begin with, were the holders of army camps and collectors of revenue which they had passed on to

their overlords. In a sense, they were the supralocal **intermediaries** between the villages under their control and the state, and acted as "boundary role players" (Cohen 1974 : 265). During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there were no less than eighty pillagers (majority of them being of pastoral Kuruba/Golla origin), who were the virtual rulers (some of them were despots) of the Cuddapah, Kurnool, Anantapur and Chittoor districts, besides Bellary. further, these late medieval and early colonial Kurubas and Gollas who emerged as powerful pillagers legitimised **themselves** by claiming their descent from the *puranic* Yadava clan of *candravamsa* (Murty 1993 : 41).

Therefore, what appears striking here is that the historically documented **sources** in the region under discussion allow explanation with a greater degree of authenticity of the capacity of hunter-gatherer and pastoral cultures in sustaining their systems under conditions of changing physical and social environment. The corpus of historical traditions of the hunter-gatherers which figures from the 6th century AD, and more elaborately in the medieval literature (ca. 13th century onwards), reveal, in so far as subsistence behaviour is concerned, uniform patterns.

What is further significant in the history of both hunter gatherer and pastoral stocks is the development of institutional arrangement under the impact of external stimuli, the latter being the state. The state in its endeavour to maintain its frontier civilization, and expansion of agrarian order, developed integrative mechanisms to articulate the hunter-gatherer and pastoral cultures with itself. The crucial impact of the state is not merely on the physical and social environment but more so on the relations of production. The state began to allocate services and as a sequel, there emerged a pattern of resource exploitation, mobilization and distribution. These forest ethnics and pastoralists exploited these external factors and evolved viable forms of political and social organization within their systems in which key individuals of influential lineages were the decision makers. These key individuals who enjoyed authority and rose in hierarchy acted as regulatory mechanisms of the settlements under their jurisdiction.

These dominant individuals among both the hunter-gatherers and pastoralists (Appendix - 4) began their careers as police, military and revenue officials, and held sway over the settlements under their control as poligars, and finally became local potentates

with the decline of the Vijayanagara power (16th century AD). The British had to wage wars with these poligars to subdue them, and the exploits of these are preserved in folk narratives.

As against this broad ethnohistoric framework, let us consider the twilight zone of post-Vijayanagara state formation in one such a continuum from late medieval to early modern decades in the political evolution of Bellary. It is now widely conceded that strong local associations such as the natter peasant assembly flourished in the wet zone of the Tamil country until the mid-Vijayanagara period. Elsewhere in south India, the situation was strikingly different. In the dryer expanses of Tamil Nadu, and in most of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, where the bulk of the terrain is upland plateau, political authority was exercised by individuals who occupied an intermediary position between the king at the top of the hierarchy and the villagers at the bottom (Talbot 1994 : 261). Were such men bureaucratic agents of a centralised administration, the vassal lords in a feudal structure or chiefs who represented communal groups such as tribes and castes (Heitzman 1987: 35-61; Kulke 1982 : 237-54; Subrahmanyam 1986 : 357-77). Because of disagreements over the nature of the state structure, we lack even a common terminology to use in referring to these intermediaries.

A better grasp of intermediary political figures is clearly essential in order to advance our understanding of medieval state systems. Without more detailed information on the social backgrounds of these individuals, it will not be possible to refine current classifications of political systems.

In the case of Bellary it is evident from the above discussions that these political intermediaries belonged to the traditional ethnics who inhabited this region - the pastoral Kurubas or the hunter-gatherer Boya/Bedar stocks. And we also studied how the conditions of external stimuli, the geopolitical and ecological factors, were responsible for their rise in the authority structure. But what is interesting to note here is the way this intermediary ruling class defied the royal authority after the disintegration of Vijayanagara (Venkataratnam 1972 : 1). What are the conditions that possibly allowed the change of polity at the helm, and which kind of socio-cultural transformation that may have been taking place within the system?

Evidently, the Golconda kings who followed were not able to establish a political ascendancy in any way comparable to that of Vijayanagara dynasty. It hence led to the virtual disintegration of royal authority. It should be remembered here that the city of Vijayanagara was sacked at the hands of the allied forces of Bijapur, Ahmednagar, Golconda and Bidar in the battle of Talikota (or Rakkasitangadi) in the year AD 1565, during Aliya Rama Raya's reign (1542-1565). It was a catastrophe which changed the entire course of history. This empire lasted, however, for another century under the Aravidu dynasty, the fourth and its last dynasty, but its foundations had been deeply shaken, and it could not rise to the former zenith of glory (Venkataratnam 1972 : 1-6). The Muslim dominion which followed was weak, and the unstable political conditions consequent to the decline of Vijayanagara kingship facilitated the rise of numerous sub-regional strongholds held by these poligars, each one in his own right, forming a core of partrimonial regimes in the Vijayanagara heartland. This includes the present day Rayalaseema comprising the districts of Anantapur, Kurnool and Cuddapah besides Bellary. The prototypes of these little kingdoms may be found in the enterprising Nayaka kingdoms of Senji, Madurai and Tanjavur, as well as Kallar/Maravar politics of Pudukkottai and Ramnad in the interior Tamil region. This clearly shows a gradual shift in the relations of power from one of subordination to semi-independent status in the intermediary zone of authority. As indicated earlier, the poligars were the supralocal intermediaries predominantly drawn from the traditional hunter-gatherer and peasant warrior communities, who were subordinate to their overlords during the Vijayanagara period. In other words, these poligars, to start with, were the holders of army camps and collectors of revenue which they passed on to their overlords. They were the intermediaries between the villages under their control and the state, and acted as "boundary role players". But in the Post Vijayanagara phase, the situation was peculiarly different. These numerous poligars had begun to emerge as powerful potentates from the sixteenth century onwards, consolidating their local dominance out of the fluid circumstances arising from the decline of Vijayanagara suzerainty. However, such of these subregional strongholds so evolved were not altogether independent either. In most circumstances, they appear to have maintained their strongholds by contributing a regular peshcush or tribute to the new stream of Bahmani rulers, apart from the Mysorean warlords, Hyder Ali and his son, Tipu

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lords in strict sense. They did not buy or sell land, nor did they dispose of it by gift. It was an inam resumable at will. Moreover, knowledge of the private landed property in the 'Ceded Districts' seems to have been always little known except as inam from the sovereign. It is evident from the form and tenor of all grants of lands in the Ceded Districts that there never existed a landlord, the kings being the real owners of land. All grants of whatever kind were resumable at pleasure, and as all persons holding them were every moment liable to be deprived of their estates, there was no real landlord but the king (Dua 1972 : 469-471).

His rents were collected immediately from the cultivators by the *Patels* or headmen of each village, by whom they were paid to the *Tchsildars* or Collectors of Districts. Moreover, they did not regard the cultivators as their serfs. The primary duty of a jagirdar was to render military service to the sovereign, while the poligar paid rent for the estate he possessed. The concentration of these two important duties, together with the right arising therefrom, accounted for the vast influence of the poligars. There are numerous inscriptions to tell us that (certain powerful lineages of) the forest dwellers were bureaucratized each village had a complement of watchmen for the protection of persons and property, and policing the village seems to have been an ancient institution (Mahalingam 1967 : 246). These watchmen were remunerated for their services by the assignment of land and the proceeds of a special cess called *padikaval kuli*. During the Vijayanagara rule (ca 1600 - 1700), a person enjoyed *padikaval* rights over a *nadu* (a large administrative division) and he engaged a complement of watchmen called *talaiyaris* whom he paid in kind and cash, besides granting land free of rent, and held them responsible for the safety and property within their jurisdiction. The appellation *taliari* which is in vogue with some Chenchu headmen to this day, who performed police duties (reporting crime, catching robbers and punishing murderers) during the British period, indicates the survival of this official rank held by some hunter-gatherer groups from the historic period. From such families of Chenchu *taliaris* who gained both social ranking and economic power apparently emerged powerful Chenchu chieftains about whom the Chenchu oral traditions and the late medieval literature, speaks (the latter mentions *chenchu redu; redu-king*) (Murty 1992 : 332). These Chenchu *taliaris* are particularly famed in the contiguous portions of Bellary

It is a matter of surprise as to how, a few months after his arrival, Munro was able to collect so much detailed information. A report of Thomas Munro, written in 1802, contains the history of eighty poligars as might be noticed a little later. Out of these eighty, the account of forty nine poligars belongs to the Cuddapah district, while the remaining 31 to the districts of Bellary and Kurnool (Gribble 1875 : 133). Though these were usually nominally subject to the Adil Shah of Bijapur for about a century, each of them assumed almost independent or semi-independent powers over their respective territories by strengthening their local base. And it is observed that locally, their power was absolute and they used it mercilessly, so that the common people were everywhere ground into dust (IGI Vol.111, 1907). It should be remembered here that simultaneous with the emergence of regional powers, the Shiaite Muslims established (AD 1347) the Bahmani empire at Gulbarga, which soon broke into five independent kingdoms-Bijapur, Bidar, Berar, Ahmadnagar and Golconda (Serwarni 1973). These five kingdoms by exploiting the mutual rivalries among the native powers, extended their sway upto Raichur in the Krishna valley. By the 15th century A.D the Rayas of Vijayanagara succeeded to emerge as a strong political force and act as a bulwork of Muslim power in the south. However, the Muslim kings of the Deccan, who had combined against Vijayanagara, fell out among themselves because of their mutual jealousies and did not follow up their victory to conquer the south. In 1568, the king of Bijapur took Adoni from a dependent of Vijayanagara who had established himself there, but for the most part Bellary region fell by degrees into the hands of a number of local potentates.

Matters continued thus until the Marathas appeared upon the scene. In 1677 Sivaji, the Maratha chief, took most of the possessions held by Bijapur in the Carnatic and in the next year visited Bellary region. He besieged the fort of Bellary and took it. Shortly, afterwards one of his generals reduced to submission a number of poligars in the neighbourhood who had for sometime refused to pay tribute to Bijapur. In 1680, this tract was formally ceded to him by the sultan of Bijapur, and all the poligars paid him the usual tribute called the *chant*. In 1687, emperor Aurangzeb of Delhi advanced to reduce Bijapur and Golconda to submission and he recovered the region and added it to the Mughal subah of Bijapur. The poligars, however, remained in the old position of semi-independence (Francis 1916 : 133-138).

In 723 Asaf Jah, the emperor's governor at Hyderabad, though nominally subject to Delhi, made himself independent. But his power over Bellary, which had never been absolute, remained only partial, for though he claimed sovereign rights over the region, the Marathas continued to collect tribute from its poligars. About 1713, Siddoji Ghorpade, a Maratha general, had seized the valley of Sandur by force from one of these chiefs (Ghorpade 1992: 1-10).

Meanwhile the kingdom of Mysore had been rising into prominence and in 1761, the famous Hyder Ali usurped its throne, and thereupon began to encroach upon the possessions of his neighbours. After several conquests in Mysore, he moved through Bellary and received the submission of the poligars, chief among whom were those of Rayadurg and Harapanahalli. In 1768, he again marched through the region to recruit his finances. The poligar of Bellary (who was a dependent of Basalat Jung, brother of Subedar of the Deccan and Jagirdar of Adoni) refused to make him any contribution and Hyder accordingly attempted to take his fort. But he was beaten off with a great loss. In 1775, however, this poligar refused to pay tribute to Basalat Jung and was besieged by him and his French general Lally. He thereupon sent to Hyder, for help. Hyder arrived by forced marches, fell upon the besieging army and routed it, and then turned upon the poligar and demanded the instant surrender of the fort. The poligar was helpless and yielded. Hyder extracted a lakh of pagodas from Basalat Jung, and all the poligars of the region, including those of Rayadurga and Harapanahalli were forced to acknowledge his supremacy and to pay a contribution towards the cost of the campaign.

In 1780 Hyder's son Tipu attacked Adoni and at length captured it and destroyed its fortifications. The same year he returned to Mysore by a route lying about midway between Rayadurga and Harapanahalli, and while professing friendship between poligars of these two places treacherously sent out two brigades to capture their forts and at the same moment seized upon the poligars themselves, who were in his camp. They were cast into prison and their towns were looted. These two poligars had always been among the staunchest supporters of Tipu and his father and the manner in which he thus requested them is among the most indefensible of all his actions (Kelsall 1872:144-148).

In 1790 Lord Cornwallis, the Governor-General of India, entered into an alliance with the Marathas and the Nizam to reduce Tipu to order, and it was agreed that whatever territories should be acquired by them from Tipu should be equally divided between them. Certain specified poligars, among whom were the chiefs of Bellary, Rayadurga and Harpanahalli, were however to be left in possession of their segments. Tipu was reduced to submission in 1792 and by the treaty of that year he ceded half of his territories to the allies. Sandur was allotted to the Marathas and a part of the Bellary region to the Nizam. The poligars still, however, as before retained their virtual authority over their territories, the Nizam's administrative machinery being unable to control them.

In 1799 war was again declared against Mysore by the three allies, Srirangapatnam was captured and, Tipu was killed. In the partition treaty of that year the Marathas were allotted, among other tracts, Harpanahalli and the Six taluks attached to it, while the rest of the region went to the Nizam. But owing to some differences, the Peshwa refused to accept the share given to him, and in accordance with one of the articles of the treaty, it was divided between the Nizam and the English. The Nizam received Harapanahalli (Kelsall 1872 : 158-174).

In 1800 the Nizam agreed to cede to the English all the territories acquired by him by these two treaties of 1792 and 1799 in return for a subsidiary force to be stationed in his dominions. Some of these were north of the Tungabhadra, and they were exchanged for the taluk of Adoni in order that the river might be the boundary between the two territories. Bellary thus passed to the British. The districts which were handed over by this treaty (Bellary, Anantapur, Cuddapah and part of Kurnool) are still known as the "Ceded Districts". The following discussion deals in detail with each of the poligari strongholds located in the Bellary region.

So as to make it a viable unit of study it should be, however, mentioned here that the Bellary region as conceived in the present thesis is a much larger entity than what it appears as the present day Bellary district. Therefore, the cluster of poligari conglomerates located in the Bellary region are essentially those mentioned in the Old Bellary Records, being Thomas Munro's early reports. Contemporary inscriptions and later accounts collected by the British administrators, including Colin Mackenzie, in the core of the old

Vijayanagara kingdom provide valuable evidence on the political authority of chiefs, most of whom were called poligars¹ by the British. The heyday of these chiefs was **the** second half of the sixteenth century, but most seem to have come into existence during **the** early sixteenth century as a result of Krishnadevaraya's policies for diminishing **older** chieftain families, and to ritually incorporate them **into** the **power** structure (Stein 1989).

Thomas Munro, the famous first Collector of the region, regarded these chiefs as **the** major centres of resistance to British rule, and he justified their removal on **the** grounds of their historical political authority. In Munro's time, 2,000 villages were held by eighty poligari families of different statutes. This was not a small region, nor were its resources meagre. The heartland extended over 30,000 square miles, from the Kannada speaking modern Bellary district to **the** Telugu speaking districts of Kurnool and Cuddapah. This was approximately **the same** territory administered by Thomas Munro between 1800 and 1808 as Collector of the 'Ceded Districts' of the Madras Presidency. The population of the sixteenth century may not have been very different from that two centuries later, that is about two million in this region. The highest and perhaps the oldest of such local magnates are found in modern Bellary district. The following discussion briefly narrates the numerous poligars located in **the** Bellary region until they **were** finally subdued by Thomas Munro during the initial years of his tenure. It also gives a detailed account of the underlying principles of the poligars¹ politics in relation to the various overlords of the interregnum.

Tirumala Raja of Anegondi

According to Thomas Munro's memorandum of poligars submitted to the Board of Revenue in the year 1802, one was the chief of Anegondi, (of the present Chitradurga district) calling himself Tirumala Raja. Claiming descent from a Vijayanagara ruling family, this chief held 114 villages in 1800. After the conquest of Vijayanagara by **the** Muslim rulers of the Deccan, the nominal Rajas were allowed to retain Anegondi and some other tracts amounting to the kamil rent of cantary pagodas 1,78,725-9-51. They held this territory in **jagir**, free of all rent, for several generations. The time when peshcush was first imposed is not ascertained. It appears, however, to have been previous to 1794; for **the** Maratha chiefs, arriving in that year with an army at Vijayanagara to pay their devotions at **Humpi**, the Rajah instead of waiting upon them, absconded - for which reason they deprived him of some small territories and still made him pay, it is said, his old peshcush of cantary pagodas 7,000. In 1775, Hyder Ali raised the peshcush to 12,000 pagodas and also stipulated that the Rajah should serve when called upon

with 1,000 soldiers and 100 cavalry at his own expense except batta or allowance which was to be paid by the central power. In 1786, Tipu Sultan entered Anegondi, expelled the Raja, burned his palace with all his records and annexed the district to the sovereign lands. The Raja, on the commencement of the confederate war in 1790 against Tipu Sultan, again seized the district, but was driven out in 1792 by Kamaluddin Khan. He made himself master over it again in 1799 and did not submit till he was compelled by the approach of the army. The Diwan of Mysore took the management of the country from him and gave him a monthly allowance of Rs. 2,000 which was reduced to 1,500 rupees when Anegondi was given over to the Nizam of Hyderabad. This poligar appears to have been a man of very mean capacity little removed from idiotism, his son was so ill-treated by him, that thinking his life is in danger he fled for refuge to one of the Maratha chiefs by whom he was supported (Munro Reports 1802).

The Poligars of Harapanahalli:

Harpanahalli was the seat of one of the most powerful of the old Poligars of the district and has a long history. The first of its chiefs was a Beda named Dadayya who belonged to Khananahalli, now a hamlet of Madlagiri, seven miles north-west of Harapanahalli. After the overthrow of the Vijayanagar dynasty at the battle of Tallikota in 1565, Dadayya collected some followers and made himself a master of Bagali and Nilagunda and the country attached to them. He seemed to have had matrimonial relations with Jakkanna Nayak, the Poligar of Chitradurga and thus established his suzerainty over the region, even gaining certain portion of the Chitradurga country, the prominent of which being the hill fort of Uchchangidurgam.

About this time he founded Harapanahalli and called it after Siva (the name is properly Harapanahalli or Siva's town) who had helped him to prosperity.

He cannot be said to have been an independent ruler, as, in common with most of the petty chiefs who came into being all the time, he was forced to submit to the sultan of Bijapur, pay him tribute, and render him military service. On the decline of the power of Bijapur, Dadappa's successors extended their possessions until these included the whole of the country afterwards comprised under the name of Harapanahalli.

This consisted of 460 villages, which brought in a revenue of over Rs. 8 lakhs. In 1680, on the confirmation of the Maratha conquests in the south by Bijapur, the then Poligar acknowledged the Maratha supremacy and paid the customary tribute.

Somasckhara Nayak (1742-1766) was the most prominent of all the Poligars of Harpanahalli. Unlike his predecessors and the founder of the family, **Dadayya**, he turned hostile to the **Chitradurga Poligar**. In 1748, with the Poligar of Rayadurg, he joined the forces of **the** Poligar of **Bednur** in an allack against **Chitradurg**. At the battle of Mayakonda (in the present **Chitradurg** district) he engaged in single combat with the **Chitradurg** Poligar and slew **him** (Rice's Mysore ii, 503). **Hyder Ali** inarched against him in 1762, a the Poligar seems to have submitted to **Hyder's** authority and even to have been much of service to him later. His name is still remembered througout the western taluks and during his time Harpanahalli reached the height of its prosperity. **Munro** states that he is said to have paid a **peshcush** of 12,000 paggdas to the **Nizam**, 6000 pagadas to **Morai Rao** of Gooty and some two or three lakhs of Rupees to **the** **Pesha**. He ruled for about 24 years until 1766 when he died without issue. He was succeeded by a **collateral** named **Basappa Nayak**, who was converted to the **Lingayat** faith later.

In 1755, after taking the fort at Bellary, **Haider** marched against Harpanahalli for the second time, **compelled** the Poligar to acknowledged his authority and exacted from him a tribute of over two lakhs of rupees. In 1787 **Tipu** treacherously seized **Basappa Nayak**. This went on crushing of a chief who had always been loyal to his house was an act which **even** **Tipu's** most active apologists could never adequately justify.

Somasekhara Nayak II was the last of the Harpanahalli Poligars. In 1792, at the close of the Second Mysore war, Harpanahalli came under the **Maratha** suzerainty.

On the fall of **Srirangapatnam** and the death of **Tipu** in 1799, **General Harris**, the **Commander-in-Chief** marched towards **tilts** part of the country, which had not yet acknowledged the **British** supremacy. The **Divan**, who was the real master of the country (**Somasekhara** being only sixteen years of age) made overtures to him and went with **Somasekhara** to his camp at **Harihar**, where an agreement was conducted by which a **Jagir** of **Rs.60,000** in the district of **Bellary** was granted to the Poligar and his principal servants on condition that they quietly disbanded their troops and resided in **Mysore**. (**Munro's** letter of March 29th 1806 to Govt).

The old fort still stands in Harpanahalli, though in ruins. It differs from most of the well-known strongholds in the district in being built on the low-ground instead of on a hill and it depended chiefly for its strength on the two tanks which flank the whole of two of its sides. It had a double line of fortifications built on the usual plan with circular stone bastions connected by ciruclar curtains and faced by a ditch and rough glances. A few families still live within it, and in

two temples inside **it-one** dedicated to Hanuman and the other a Jain shrine, where workship is still carried on.

He descended from a distant female branch of the family and was adopted by his predecessor who has no children. He also had left no issue and though some pretenders had appeared, there was in fact no heir in existence. His widow who was forced to abscond under the Mysore power had since returned. She had an adopted son, but as he is no relation of the ancient line, he can have no claim to inherit any allowance that may be granted to her during life (Munro Reports 1802).

The Poligars of Jaramali

Another poligari stronghold in the Vijayanagara heartland was that of the **jaramali** poligar, nine miles in a direct line south-west of kudligi.

Village and hill nine miles in a direct line south-west of Kudligi. The hill is 2,742 feet above the sea and some 800 feet above the surrounding country, and is a most conspicuous landmark for miles around. The fort on the top of it, now in ruins, was formerly the residence of a well known Poligar who owned much of the country around, including **Sandur**. This was later taken from him by Siddoji Rao Ghorapde in 1728.

The founder of the family was one **Pennappa** Nayak. For his services in seizing rebellious chiefs he was rewarded by Achuta **dcvaraya** of Vijayanagar with a **personcl jahir**, and an estate on the condition of his providing military support whenever needed. After the fall of Vijayanagar, the Bijapur kings resumed much of this country and required the Poiigar to pay a peshcush and to provide military service to continue his chieftainship.

In 1742 the chiefs of Chitradurg and Harpanahalli stripped the Pohgar of all possessions except a few villages around the fort, and ten years later, the formr of them reduced the Poiigar to a position of entire dependency.

Around 1767, the fort came under the direct control of Hyder Ali which was retained by his son Tipu till the peace of Seringapatnam in 1792.

When Jaramali was made over to the Nizam by the Partition treaty of 1799 the poiigar allowed to rent the places around it at their full value. But he fell into arrears with his payments

and when Bellary was ceded to the Company in 1800 he took refuge in Mysore lest he should be apprehended and forced to pay (Munro Reports 1802).

The Poligars of Bellary:

The first of the poligars of Bellary was apparently a Kuruba named Baludn Hanumappa Nayaka. Accounts differ as to his origin but sources prove that he held office under the Vijayanagara kings as a "supra-local intermediary chiefs in control of the estates of the estates of Bellary, Kurugodu and Tekkalkota and even after the collapse of Vijayanagara he continued his regime subject to the Bijapur Sultan, who succeeded the Vijayanagara kings. His superior military strength was reflected in the huge fort he had raised on the Race Hill, (as it is called) in Bellary. He was succeeded by three lineal descendants - Hire Malatappa, Siddappa and Hire Ramappa - who ruled until AD 1631.

Thereafter the Muslims appear to have been the real masters of the place for about sixty years until AD 1692. It was during this time the Maratha Chief Sivaji became master of the fort for a short time.

from then onwards the accounts of the Place are clearer. About 1692, the poligars again obtained authority over the fort and continued till 1724. Again at this time the suzerainty of the place changed hands and came under the Asf Jahis. The last poligar of this place was Doddappa Nayak. He held the Place from 1769-1774 in spite of the opposition from the faction of a rival.

In 1775, however, he refused to pay his tribute to Basalat Jung, declaring that he had transferred his allegiance to Hyder Ali. Basalat Jung sent Bojeraj, his minister and M. Lally, the French Officer who was then in his service to invade Bellary. Doddappa fled to Hyder for help. Hyder was at Seringapatnam and instantly set out. Doddappa fled and Hyder took hold of the territory which he had won (Munro Reports 1802).

The Ghorpades of Sandur:

Sandur has an interesting history. After the destruction of the Vijayanagara the Poligar of Jarmali in Kudligi talook, made himself master of Sandur about 1700, but about 1728, he was turned out by a Maratha named Siddoji Rao of the Ghorpade family. This Ghorpade family claimed to be connected with the well known Bhonsles of Satara, from whom the famous Maratha Chief Sivaji descended. Siddoji Rao was the ancestor of the Rajas of Sandur until

April, 1949, when its administration was transferred to **dominion government**. For several reasons the **Ghorpades** of **Sandur** could be distinguished from that of the poligars of this **region** as their land revenue administration and soio cultural background was very close to those of **the** Maratha Chiefs. Moreover they always proved loyal to **the** British unlike the poligars who became a formidable force until they were totally subdued by Sir Thomas Munro.

The poligars of Kottakonda

Permappa Nair, the ancestor was talari of the village of Gongondalah in Canoul. On the fall of the Vijayanagara Government, he collected 500 men and went to **Golconda** where he was employed for many years, and afterwards obtained the **kaweli of the districts** of Adoni, Canoul, Gudwal, Raichur and Moodgul and served with 500 men. The rate of kaweli was one percent on the Sirkar revenue and one crore of grain from each village. One of his descendants, Mudappa Nair, served under Aurangzeb and procured from him a confirmation of the kaweli, and the districts of **Kotcondah** and **Kapitral** estimated at **kamel** cantary pagodas 15,443 for a rent of cantary pagodas 13,325 and the service of 500 men. Asoph Jah continued **the** districts to the Poligar on the same terms as before. A partition at this time took place between two branches of the family, the one getting **Kotcondah** and the other **Kapitral**. In 1770, **Bussalet Jung** being unable to enforce the paymct of their peshcush called on Hyder, who reduced their forts and delivered them to him. **The** Polligars escaped but the two brothers Madappa and Permappa of **Kotcondah** waited on Hyder in 1773 who gave them some **enams** in Gooty where Mudappa died. Permappa accompanied him to the Carnatic and was appointed one of **the killandars** of Arct, in which situation he died. His mother who had remained in Adoni obtained in 1777 from **Bussalet Jung** the Sirkar village of **Hulgherah** in jageer. It was taken from her in 1788 when **Mahabut Jung** gave her **Kocondah** in rent for cantary pagodas 13,000. On her **death, the** following year, the widows of her two sons Madappa and Permappa rented it till 1796, when it as placed under the Sirkar Amildars and **Hulguerah** was given to the widows for their maintenance. Its **Kamel** rent is cantary pagoda 365. Its present rent is country pagodas 536, but I have resumed it and **the** widows now receive a pension from **the** rent of cantary pagodas 600. They have also enams producing about cantary pagodas 78 more (Munro reports 1802).

The intermediary zone of authority is largely hazy in many medieval states and as such is one of the least understood areas of power. Hence it becomes particularly necessary to assess their role in the authority structure for an explication of the nature of the state. The policy of Krishnadevaraya (1509-29) of checking the nayakas and other

chiefly powers by appointing Brahmin commanders, or/dannaiks (corrupt form of dandanayaka is seen by N. Venkataramanayya as an attempt to impose a structure of authority from above (N.Venkataramanayya 1935:70-171). Stein argues that this new intermediary ruling stratum, namely the poligars, are seen as emerging from below, of course, with a royal initiative corresponding to the regional specificities. The Amuktamalyada, attributed to Krishnadevaraya as a work containing his political maxims does prescribe measures such as recruitment of martial, forest tribes in the army and royal promotion of commerce and control of forts. However, Stein is over-anxious to show that at the height of Vijayanagara centralism, i.e., in the sixteenth century, these chiefs were independent; prebendalism being of a weak form in Karnataka and the Tamil region. The 'fundamental political and economic divisions of peninsular polity' according to Stein were the cause of the Raya's failure in his attempts at centralisation. The reversal of Krishnadeva Raya's policy by Rama Raya, who appointed close kinsmen as commanders, in the latter part of the sixteenth century is hence seen as a return to kin-based distribution of power and resources and the emergence of patrimonialism—a family business on a large scale—which ultimately led to the decline of the imperial power (Champakalakshmi 1992 : 153). The term 'patrimonial' refers to those rights which are ownable and heritable, and prebendal to rescindable or delegated rights (Frank Perlin 1985 : 415- 480).

Even in the case of lordships and chiefships there is no single homogenous category. Different levels of chiefs did exist as implied by the terms used for these chiefs - such as *nayakas*, *palaiyakkarars* and *kavaligars* - feature which did not emerge suddenly under Vijayanagara, but had its prototypes earlier, except for the *amaranayakas* and *poligars*. The *Padikaval* (rights of lordship in return for protection in a certain area) rights in the Ramnad and Pudukkottai region create yet another level of chiefs from among the localities (Champakalakshmi 1992 : 154).

Apart from chiefships of the nayaka type, the sectarian leaders *mathadhipatis* and *pithadhipatis* - who developed impressive administrative infrastructures in temple and *matha* organisation which institution is in addition supported by landed inams, played intermediary activities in the relations between the kings and major temples as in the case of Ujjini in the Kudligi taluk of Bellary. It should be seen here that the Post-Vijayanagara phase had witnessed a tremendous impart of non-Brahman sectarian

cults of the medieval Bhakti movement, and sectarian organisations like the *mathas* whose heads enjoyed paraphernalia similar to royalty and the quality of administration available even to moderate chiefs. These, in fact, are better understood not as a replica of the imperial or central organisation, and represent diverse structure of authority. Particularly, in Bellary, Virasaivism started in 12th century AD by Basaveswara in South Kanara district, who is described as an axe to the root of the caste system (R.N. Nandi 1975 : 32) left its indelible marks during sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The followers of this faith are known as the Lingayats. Members of the Lingayat sect are ubiquitous and powerful; and they have their own spiritual gurus, called the *jangamas*. Their temples, in striking contrast to most of the other Hindu shrines, are well kept; they are, as a body, wealthy and enterprising; and though there is no open antagonism between them and the Brahmans, and they follow gurus of their own (Francis 1916 : 158-167).

The two chief Lingayat sacred books are the *Basavapurana* (apparently finished during the 14th century), and the *Channa Basava Parana* (written in the 16th century) which describe the lives and doings of Saint *Basaveswara*. Their creed also aimed at breaking down all the restrictions which Brahminism had set up. Caste distinctions were to be swept away; according to them Siva was the one true god; the wearing of his emblem the *lingam* (hence the name Lingayat) rendered all men equal; men were holy, not by birth alone, but in proportion as they were worthy followers of the faith; sacrifices, penances, pilgrimages and fasts were unnecessary; women were equal to men and were to be treated accordingly. The faith purported to be the primitive Hindu faith cleared of later excrescences and the Lingayats claimed to be the puritans of the Hindus. Unlike the Brahmanical castes, the Lingayats buried their dead, practised widow remarriage, and did not observe any rules regarding ceremonial pollution. The main followers of Basaveswara were the Banajiga and other trading groups, tanners, tailors, weavers and untouchables. R.N. Nandi gives a fairly comprehensive idea of the social base of the Lingayat movement. Although Virasaiva movement began as a protest against orthodox Brahmanism, it soon began to develop social exclusiveness based on the privilege of birth and cleanliness of occupation, much along the lines of Brahmanical orthodoxy. In fact, even the concept of physical pollution was revived. Thus the untouchables among the Lingayats could neither invest themselves with the sacred *lingam* nor perform the eight

sacraments (Ramaswamy 1985: 42-443). The government also gave up notions of caste negation and reverted to efforts at caste exaltation. However, many poligars also seem to have come under the impact of this faith, as for instance, Dadappa Nayaka, the Boya poligar of Harapanahalli. It has been argued by Arjun Appadorai that the extension of patronage to popular sectarian leaders and the leading artisan groups was a part of the strategy adopted by the Vijayanagara kings to strengthen their rule at the grassroots level (Appadurai 1977 : 47-73). Burton Stein in his '*Social Mobility and Medieval South Indian Sects*' further goes on to say that the sectarian leaders acted as a vital link between the Vijayanagara and the local elements (Stein 1967). The same phenomenon is evidently true of the Post-Vijayanagara phase too, when several of these religious setups had continued to act, as major centres of power to qualify an assumption that the late medieval state was essentially multcentred, characterised by divergent elements of power based on patrimonial legacy and prebendal rights and properties. Through patrimonial legacy the peasant warrior families, often referred to as the Sat-Sudra in the epigraphs, amassed considerable properties and control over the local resources (Stein 1985:50). They actively participated in the state expansion strategies and acquired the newly found villages through the prebendal rights bestowed on them by the kings for which they lent their allegiance. The kings, for the sustenance of their settlement frontiers, relied on the holders of the patrimonial rights. The mutual alliances and the internicine conflicts, the prime features of the medieval polity, caused no political power to sustain constant boundaries for more than a century (Murty 1993 : 6-7).

As mentioned elsewhere, land control and water resource management have become the prerogative (from ca. 500 AD onwards) of the medieval state in this region. Taluva kings of the first half of the sixteenth century drew upon a large agricultural zone in the midst of whose dominantly dry cropped fields were small regions of high agriculture based on tank irrigation. In this region there are zones of best cotton soils in the peninsula, and as well as some of the largest pasturages that supported the herding of both cattle and sheep. Thus, cotton and woollen goods were exported in large numbers from the region as well as bullocks. Scattered over this dry upland tract of the kingdom there are many pockets of high cultivation and population based on the development of tank irrigation by chiefs such as Saluva Narasimha. He not only increased irrigation in the Chandragiri area, his base,

but also encouraged temple authorities at the nearby temples of Tirupati and Kalahasti to invest money endowments to improve tanks and irrigation canals in hundreds of nearby temple villages. This practice was imitated by other magnates, among the most important of whom were the eighty or so within the Vijayanagara heartland itself during the Post-Vijayanagara phase. This, in turn, gave fillip to trade and market economy. Added to this, were the jagirdari and amildari revenue systems introduced by the newly incumbent Muslim rulers, which also accelerated this process. These should be seen here as being parallel to the poligari system in the arena of local dominance.

As already mentioned, the religious institutions, likewise, played a predominant role in the statecraft and land control. Religious institutions such as the *pithas* and *Mathas* of Saivite, Vaishnavite, and Smartha systems, promoted devotionism or Bhakti cults (R.N.Nandi 1973). The cult centres, through their sectarian ideologies, integrated various tribes and castes, and being as they were strategically set up in the dense forests atop the hills, and closely to the passes of Western Ghats, they also aided in the maintenance of trade routes and frontiers (Murty 1993:8).

Growth of sectarianism, and incorporation of several tribes and castes, resulted in caste proliferation, leading to caste complexity in social formation. The Brahmans, well versed in the Vedic literature, were replaced by the Agamic scholars at various religious centres. This shift was crucial in the sense that the lands which were hitherto made to the Brahmans as agraharas and *brahmapuris* became fewer, and their place was taken by the Pithas and Mathas. In this new mechanism of surplus appropriation, *mathadhipatis* and *pithadhipatis* became willing collectorates and sustainers of kingly authority (Murty 1993 : 9).

This situation appears to have continued into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, during which the central authority was not all too powerful with a constant shift from one dynasty to another at the apex. And when the royal authority weakened, especially at the time of change of the dynastic rule, the dominant lineages of the peasant warrior groups annexed their prebendal rights to their patrimonial legacies and defied the royal authority. The multi-centred power structure was controlled by the state by adopting two strategies: (a) land reclamation and founding of new villages

and (b) royalisation of cult centres. The multi-centred power structure, comprised the peasant - warrior communities, the non-Brahmanical sectarian leaders, heads of the mercantile guilds, and the indigenous forest peoples.

Further more, Bellary represents a typical picture of physically dry, yet politically fertile landscape. Warfare tested and fortified the military capabilities of the numerous military chiefs of the south. It is the same use with the poligari institution. Fighters seized or were granted income from villages as a means of maintaining the petty armed forces used in the wars of greater lords. Otherwise, local cultivating and trading groups seeking some protection from the violence of the times paid for the protection of the poligars in many places, including the far south, as implied by the term *padikaval* used in Ramnad and pudukkottai, almost reminiscent of the modern day hooligans. No chieftains could remain aloof from nearby warfare, which was bound to lead to a reshuffling of local power that left the strong stronger and pushed the weaker into yet greater vulnerability and submission. Scattered contests for local dominance changed balances between local lordships and the communal bases of their rule on the one hand and between these local lords and the kings of Vijayanagara or their successors on the other. This also suggests that the patrimonial legacies of the poligars had been clubbed to their prebended rights (for extending military and political services); a feature truly typical of the precolonial south.

It is held by some historians that the policy of land reclamation and founding of new villages resulted in the displacement of tribal organised pastoral and hunting peoples by the caste organised village-based agrarian societies (Stein, 1979 :185). The situation seems to be of a different nature in the region under discussion. The newly founded villages both along the foothills and the hilly forested zones acted as centres of articulation of the forested zones with the states, and in making the forest peoples the subjects of the royal power. They were linked to the cult centres, either of Saivism, or Vaisnavism, and this process can be termed as royalisation of cult centres.

Thus, with the colonisation of the forested and pastoral landscapes by the state, the forest peoples (hunter-gatherers like the Chenchu, Boya, Yerukula) and the pastoralists (Golla/Kuruba) became important in the political, economic and social

milieu on the one hand, and in the organisation of settlement frontiers on the other. This created new relations of power, giving rise to institutions such as Kavaligars and Poligars (Reddy, 1986). Kaifiats attest to the fact that Kavaligars were appointed to safeguard the villages, pilgrims, and trade routes in the hilly and forested country.

The term '*kavel*' is derived from Tamil, which is an equivalent of *kaveli* in Telugu. It simply means 'guard' or 'watch'. The term '*gar*' is a Tamil word, an equivalent of *gadu* in Telugu. It means 'person' or 'man'. Therefore, *Kavalgar* (Tamil) or *Kavaligadu* (Telugu) means 'watchman' or simply 'guard' (McClean 1885). The kavaligar system or the native police institution, which was in vogue during the late medieval and post-Vijayanagara periods, was prevalent not only in the Ceded Districts but also in the Tamil soils, wherever the Vijayanagara rule was extended. The offices of great and petty Kavaligars were frequently blended in the same person and therefore there was very little of subordination of rank among the Kavaligars of Rayas of Vijayanagara, it can be surmised that the appointment of Kavalgars was usually granted as a reward for distinguished services. However, no distinction was made between head and petty Kavaligars with respect to office, but there was differentiations with regard to emoluments, between the two. In one of the sunnads the following account is given: petty kavaligar having saved the life of Aliya Ramaraya, was made muni or head kavaligar of a number of districts yielding a revenue of pagodas 17,900. Another sunnad mentioned that a person by name Yerram Naidu on account of same service which he had performed, obtained the *Kavalimerah* of several districts. It is evident from both that the appointments were newly made as a gesture of reward (CDR Vol.651 P.240). The Kavali right of Timma Naidu is granted in perpetuity yet, after twenty eight years a great part of his district was given away to Yerram Naidu. The families of both Kavaligars were totally unconnected with each other, and the descendants of both continue to this day a small portion of their ancient inams. It is therefore, clear from the above sunnads that the office of Kavaligar never was extensively established but was occasionally abolished in one place and created in another according to the need. However, it became permanent only when the weakness of the state enabled the Kavaligar to maintain himself by force of arms (Munro's Report 12th August 1801 : Vol.62 - PP.36-44)

A Boya by name Gujjula Paramappa Naidu, was appointed as a Kavaligar of Adoni, Gutti, and Kurnool areas. In the same way the villages which were founded along the hills and forested lowland country were organised into patterns; these were given to the forest peoples, pastoralists, and the dominant peasants with hereditary rights. The prominent among those who were holding palemms (as poligars were Boyas, Gollas, Kapus and Reddis. The Boyas to begin with were drawn into the temple services as cattle keepers and some dominant lineages from among them (as for instance, Komppula and Ayya) rose to the position of feudal lords as *mahamandaleswaras*. The poligars of Golla origin legitimised themselves as yadavas, like those of Kunkanur, Dundikonda and Maddikera (Kunkanur Kaifiyat MMS : Vol.123, No.928; Dundikonda Kaifiyat, MMS, Vol. 14, No. 149; Maddikera Kaifiyat MMS : Vol.16, NO. 855). These poligars began to emerge as powerful potentates from the 16th century AD onwards (with the decline of the Vijayanagara power. The British found, especially the Boya poligars, to be a formidable force, and Thomas Munro (1802) in his letter to the Board of Revenue speaks of their bravery and turbulent nature.

As regards the agrarian political economy of the pre-colonial Bellary, land being the major source of revenue and income to the state, the ancient and medieval states attached a good deal of importance to the countryside. To sustain in power, the rulers relied heavily on the agrarian society for resource mobilisation. The relationship between the State and the cultivators was as important as the relationship within the society to understand the agrarian relations. The traditions and notions regarding land tenures of rural society influence the principle of assessment and the nature of administrative machinery to be set up to collect revenues by the central power. In other words the rights of land, the principle of assessment and the administrative machinery to collect land revenue were the three important aspects governing the relationship between the state and the agrarian society (P.T. George 1970 : 1).

Of the three aspects, the "rights of land" or the question of proprietor of the soil was fundamental and remained most complicated throughout the pre-British period. The British administrators further complicated the problem by imposing their ideas of "private property in land" which became the root cause for the origin of the three major forms of land tenurial system (i.e., Zamindari, ryotwari and *mahalwari*) in the British

period. In the pre-British period, broadly speaking, there were two notions regarding the proprietorship of the land. The first one was that the village community was the **owner** of the soil wherein communal ownership was the basic **principle** in holding land; and the other, that the state or the sovereign was the owner of the soil, in which the principle of alienation or the right to resume was given emphasis to substantiate the king's position as the proprietor of the soil. Both the notions were popularised by the administrators of the Company rule. In fact, the reports of the Company administration made scholars like Marx and Engels believe strongly in the existence of the kind of communal ownership of land in the form of village community that prevailed in Asiatic Societies. Munro also seems to take into his consideration that kind of structural relationship downwards from the constituent village assemblies; and the various overlords from above while dealing with the problem of poligars.

The nature and the condition of village economies in India in pre-colonial general and the Ceded Districts in particular made the British administrators as well as the Western scholars to depict the village communities as closed and **self-sufficient** peasant economies. Hence, for a better understanding of the concept of village community as the proprietor of the soil, one has to look into the basic conditions of the villages, in the Bellary region.

The village was the basic unit of the rural society (Appadorai Vol. I, 1936 : 71). The village was an aggregate of cultivated holdings with or without some waste land, belonging to, or attached to it. And usually it had a central site for the dwelling houses congregated together (Baden-Powell 1978: 66). In the fifth Report, the following description of a village is found : "a village, geographically considered, is a tract of country comprising some hundred or thousand acres of arable and waste land (Fifth Report, Vol. II, P.167). Politically viewed, it resembled a corporation or a township having within itself municipal officers and corporate artificers (Sarada Raju 1941; Mark Wilks 1810). The size of the village varied according to ecological and demographical factors (Fifth Report Vol II PP. 167,728). It has been already pointed out that two kinds of cultures appear to have co-existed in the Bellary region i.e., 'tribal' and 'peasant village' cultures. The tribal culture gave rise to **semi-nomadic** and primitive agricultural villages where people lived in fixed abodes only for a short period of time,

n few months to n few years, based on soil exhaustion, scope of **game** in the forests and availability of forest produce such as vegetables, roots, honey etc. The type of dwellings in these villages was usually made of bamboo shelters; like tiny huts with sloping roofs and looked alike without much distinction in **size** or decoration (Karve 1978 : Spate 1954). The locations of these villages were mostly in forest regions and hilly tracts, thus resulting in the forms of neither the 'nucleated' nor the 'linear' but the 'isolated' villages.

The plains gave rise to settled-peasant villages where the people lived for generations, even for centuries (Fifth Report Vol. II, P.728). The shapes of dwellings in the villages were in the linear cluster, with horizontal roofs (Spate 1954 : 254). It is pointed out that, flat roofed store houses were constructed in the Bellary region, using the locally available rocks and slabs, so as to protect the dwellers from the severe heat of the sun (Subrahmanyam 1938:168-75). Many houses had flat mud-roofs supported by beams. The size and location of the houses to a great extent are based on the occupational, social and economic positions of the people (Mahalingam 1951: 3). The **landlords/ rich** peasants, the dominant of whom belonged to Kapu or Reddy caste in the Ceded Districts lived in the heart of the village with big and well built stone houses. Their house roofs were always covered either with stones or slabs. This type of construction required hired and skilled labourers and masons, apart from the material for the house construction, which was also expensive. Therefore only the rich could afford them. They were very spacious, with provision for cattle-sheds within the houses. The **ther** ryots lived in houses of average size which were flat mud-roofed. In the village each caste lived together as a cluster. The houses of the village artisans were easily distinguished, because their dwelling and work-spots were one and the same. For example the smiths of the black smiths (Kammara) were in their houses. The shepherds (**Gollas**) kept their sheep in their houses. A bit away from the higher caste quarters, two clusters of houses, known as the *malapalli* and the *madigapeta* respectively, were a general feature of the villages. These were the dwellings of the untouchables, equivalent to Pariahs of Tamil Nadu, who performed menial labour for the villages. Their huts were usually with slopy thatched roofs, obviously reflecting their low standard of life (Spate 1954 : 179).

In the Bellary region, the pattern of settled-peasant villages was the 'nucleated villages', where the houses were clearly marked out from the surrounding cultivated fields. Irawati Karve points out that in the Maharashtra village, unlike the Ceded Districts' village, though the habitation area was well marked, the boundaries of the village together with its fields were never perceived. The fields owned by one village merged into those owned by another except where a hillock or a stream or a highway formed the boundary (Karve 1978 : 186). The nucleated villages numbering three or four to six or seven were generally situated within the radius of fifteen to twenty kilometres having an average of two kilometres distance between the two villages in Ceded Districts. Though the village was a nucleated cluster in form, each was clearly demarcated along with their cultivable, non-cultivable and cultivable-waste fields. The boundaries of the villages were demarcated by the erection of stone slabs. Most of them contained carved female figurines, supposed to be *pidari* or *ellai-amman*, the boundary deity of the village. The tradition was that the village deity protected the villagers by preventing the evil-doers, enemies, diseases and other such trouble making elements entering the village. They even performed puja or worship to the deity on periodically selected days (Mahalingam 1951: 3; Appadorai 1936 : 79). Apart from the village boundary deity-stone slabs, various indicators were used to convey the boundaries of the village. Appadorai in his work mentioned atleast eleven types of boundary indicators (Appadorai 1936 :94-95). The traditional boundaries were generally respected and followed by the villages for avoiding of grabbing of waste land of one village by the neighbouring village since the waste land was always, as a rule, placed on the frontiers of the village. Munro observed this fact in his tours. His waste was not just fallow land which meant to recultivate, but *anadibanjar* (PBR, 24 Aug. 1807). The reason for this was that in the medieval period land was abundant. To quote Irfan Habib, "the readiness with which the authorities recognised the peasants, rights of occupancy and the anxiety they showed to prevent him from leaving the land were both natural in an age where land was abundant and peasants scarce (Habib 1963 : 23). The population increase, of course, was a feature of the medieval period which was indicated by the policy of land reclamation for the sake of bringing new lands under the plough through the means of deforestation and also by the extension of cultivation over the less fertile lands. There were many *kyfiats* collected by Colin Mackenzie which show that the policy of deforestation in the Bellary

region was followed by the Kakatiyas and the Vijayanagra rulers. Mackenzie collected a number of epigraphs relating to various aspects of villages in the Ceded Districts. The origin of some of the villages was described. It appears that most of the villages of the region were once covered with the forests. Individuals cleared the forests and farmed the villages which were named after them. Naidupalli, Gangareddipalli etc; which were named after their founders (MMS; Microfilm Roll no. 7-9 APS A).

The nucleated village generally had two kinds of roads: (a) the roads connecting different villages meant for inter-village communications; (b) internal streets or narrow alleys connecting housing areas. But in the pre-British period, the roads were in a very bad condition and were unfit for wheeled traffic. They cannot be equated with any present day roads but they were mere tracks (Venkatarangaiya 1965: 53). The deplorable condition of the communication network was well brought out by the first Report of the Public Works Commissioner of Madras. The nature of roads left the villagers with no other option but to use bullocks as their principal means of transportation and these roads were rather tracts frequently intercepted by channels and hillocks, causing severe strain on the bullocks (Raman Rao 1958 : 47; Spate 1954 : 200). The bullocks were used for transportation of grain and other food and war material to the battle fields (Sarada Raju 1941; PBR 8 June 1802, Vol.630). Hyder Ali of Mysore, took a keen interest in raising the breed of tough fast-trotting bullocks for use in his mobile warfare. The same policy was continued by his son, Tipu Sultan (Walt Vol.V, 1890:666-67).

The tracks were also used for trading purposes. Bullocks were chiefly employed to carry the articles. During the Vijayanagara period, articles were carried over long distances by carts and pack-animals (Sewell 1970: 254). According to Mahalingam, it appears that the carts were not used on a large scale in some parts of the empire, probably owing to the bad conditions of the roads (Mahalingam 1951: 53). This imposed a limit on the exchange relations of the countryside and the urban centres. Most of the products consumed within the villages did not take the form of commodity. The exchange relations within the nucleated village were confined to 'country fairs' or *santa* where articles of different villages were sold once at periodical intervals (either weekly or bi-weekly) (Mahalingam 1951: 54). According to A.V.Raman Rao, in the early stages of commerce, in order to enable the meeting of the seller and the buyer, it became essential to establish

fixed timings for their coming together" (Raman Rao 1958:39). This led to the establishment of weekly village fairs where food grains, vegetables, fish, cutlery, textiles, silks, shawls, carpets, steel, -brassware, chintzes, knives, glassware and other articles used to be offered for sale and livestock like sheep and cattle were also sold in the *santa*. These fairs were also held during religious festivals and at religious centres, and during religious festivals called *thirthams* on the banks of rivers. Usually petty traders were involved in the exchange relations. In the off-season, the peasants themselves, or some-times one of the family members carted their products to *Santa*. The komati and the Baliya castes played an important role in conveying the products from village to urban centres especially, to those of political importance (Satyanaryana 1983 : 399-400). The nomadic Banjara and the Lambadi tribes were known for their inland-transportation business. These tribes used to have a *naik* to regulate their itinerary and bargains. They enjoyed exceptional privileges like immunity from attack at times of war, exemptions from duties on their goods and guarantee of protection from the state (Raman Rao 1958 : 39-40). The pastoral and artisan castes such as the *Kurubas* and *Kammars*, participated in trade in a supplementary capacity in the *santa* by bringing their own manufactured goods for sale. Desai has pointed out the general conditions of the Pre-British villages in India (Desai 1978). For centuries, the mind of the overwhelming portion of the Indian people has been distributed in numerous and autarchic village centres, each village being a closed system, with very little social, economic or intellectual exchange with the outside world, did not grow. The almost complete absence of any appreciably developed economic exchange between the village and the outside world as well as the very weak means of transport (which did not grow beyond the bullock-cart), isolated village population, reducing it to a single small unit, mainly living its life exclusively in the village. A country fair or a marriage was the only occasion when the villagers left their village for a very brief period (Desai 1982:18). Hence, the nature of villages itself hampered the development of communications. To quote Karl Marx, "the village isolation produced the absence of roads in India and the absence of roads perpetuated the village isolation" (Karl Marx 1977 : 496). Thus, the above general conditions gave the village a character of communal and closed peasant economy. The village organization pattern of production and distribution of yield from the land was looked after by the 'village community'. The Indian village community had evoked profound interest among the scholars belonging to

various disciplines. One group of thinkers portrayed a golden age picture of the village community. Another group criticised vehemently the static, narrow and **extremely self-centered** life that was the hallmark of the village community.

The East India Company officers were struck by the unique organisation of the village community in the first half of the nineteenth century. Munro, Metcalf and Elphinstone noticed the salient features of this institution; their reports formed the basis for the exhaustive description of this institution in the British Parliamentary papers. The Madras Presidency officials were the first to notice the prevalence of village community. Later in A.D. 1819, Holt Mackenzie reported the existence of the village community in the northern India while in service as the Secretary to the Board of Commissioners in the Conquered and the Ceded Provinces. Elphinstone of Bombay Presidency, noted the village community's existence in the Deccan in his report written in A.D. 1819 and it was further confirmed by the Administration Report of Captain Robertson from Poona in A.D. 1821. Again in A.D. 1830, Sir Charles Metcalf, a member of the Governor - General's council gave the details on village community in Northern India. Later on in A.D. 1852 the First Punjab Administration Report also confirmed the existence of village community in that province. This clearly indicates that the village community was a general feature spread throughout India; except in the south western extreme of the sub-continent i.e., below the river bed of Krishna or the present day state of Kerala (CDR 2 Oct. 1801, vol. 629; Mukherjee 1958). Baden-Powell also showed the absence of republican village communities in South Canara, Malabar and the Northern Circar and argued that non-republican types were of Dravidian origin (Baden-Powell 1972:366-67).

Various reports of the British administrators described the Village Communities as "Corporate Bodies" or self-contained "Little Republics", functioning with their own organisation whose members hailed from the same village within the framework of caste system and were unaffected by the political changes that took place from time to time. It may be recalled here that "Little Republics" was the word first used by Charles Metcalf in his famous report on the village community (Mukherjee 1958 : 140-174).

The Company officials' reports and other scholarly writings such as Mark Wilk's *Historical sketches of South India* (1810), James Mill's *History of British India* (1806-18), John Campbell's *Modern India* (1852), Volumes of Parliamentary Debates and Reports especially those preceding the Charter Act of A.D. 1853, William Jones' translation of *Manusmriti*, Francois Bernier's Travel Accounts during the time of Aurangzeb enabled Marx to reach his conclusions on the Indian village community (See Marx and Engels 1978; Gunavardana 1975). Other writers of the nineteenth century who also contributed to the notion of village community were Sir Henry Maine, Lee Vinky, and Pollen. From these writings one can summarize the characteristics of an idyllic village community (Henry Maine 1895; Fukazawa 1984). The village community had communal ownership of land; it was the unitary place for agriculture and manufacture which resulted in socio-economic independence or self-sufficiency, and it enjoyed politico-cultural autonomy which anchored stability and continuity to the Village Community.

The idyllic depiction of the village community was not accepted by one group of thinkers. They even went to the extent of criticising it as a myth and non-existent in reality. The foremost critic on the subject was Baden-Powell. His criticism was based on the existence of ryotwari tenures (individual proprietorship over land), which proved an antithesis of communal ownership of land. And, therefore, he held that the village community in India was not an established general order in the countryside (Baden-Powell 1896: 8). A.S. Altekar, who worked on the village communities in western India, criticised the stable and unchanging character attributed to the village community. He argued that the teachings of history disproved the nature of stability and perpetuity attributed to the village community and they were, in his opinion, neither "republics" nor "democratic" institutions (Altekar 1926). W.H. Wiser, a social anthropologist, made a substantial criticism about the nature of self-sufficiency of the village community. He found, to his own surprise, a village in northern India having the system of jajmani relations, did not confine to that village alone but spread to neighbouring villages too (Wiser 1936). The leading sociologists, M.N. Srinivas and A.M. Shah, after conducting many village surveys, have come to the conclusion that the self-sufficiency of the village community was a myth. They showed that not all villages had all the different castes necessary to secure economic and social independence. Only in large areas which

included many villages, was division of labour amongst different castes possible and did materialize (Srinivas and Shah 1960 : 1373-78). Burton Stein also pointed out the same wherein he stressed the "larger area" than village for a study of south Indian socio-economic relations of a Peasant State (Stein 1980 : 101-111). Noboru Karashima confirmed the same fact by analysing some of the inscriptions of Tanjavur and Gangaikonda Cholapuram temples. According to Karashima, "villages were not primary units where social reproduction of the people was maintained and to which villagers social activities were confined. Instead, social reproduction must have been made possible only in an area larger than a village (Karashima 1984 : 42-55). Irfan Habib did not contribute to the classical view of the village community. He even emphasized the view that communal property did not exist in the medieval Indian Villages. "When village community is used - it does not mean that there was a village commune that owned the land on behalf of all its members ... The Peasant's right to the land was always his individual right. There were some spheres outside that of production where the peasants of a village, usually belonging to the same fraternity often acted collectively and the village community is our name for the corporate body which they formed for such collective action" (Habib 1963 : 123-124) In his recent work, he further substantiated the same opinion on the basis of Baden Powell's view that villages were treated by the Governments as revenue units for assessment and collection of land revenue and; not as an autonomous socio-economic units (See Rayachanduri and Irfan Habib 1984 : 254).

It appears that the geographical conditions also contributed to a certain extent for the evolution of the village communities in the Bellary region. The communal ownership of land, which was a basic character of the village community, was largely confined to drought-prone and famine-stricken areas in the upland dry districts of Rayalaseema. Hence, it would not be illogical to argue that the collective resistance was put forth by the agriculturalists of the region to safeguard themselves from natural calamities and also from the ever demanding state for land revenues. Moreover with the water sources limited and the irrigational facilities being scanty and costly, the agriculturalists formed into guilds and held lands in common. This led Karl A. Wittfogel to formulate an hydraulic society in his work, Oriental Despotism (Wittfogel 1954).

Very interesting records of the first half of the thirteenth century were found in the present Anantapur district, which probably belong to Yadava Singana's rule. These records were engraved on the slabs which also bear the symbol of plough (*meli*) together with other figurines of bull, serpent, drums and *purnakumbham* (Indian archeology 1954-55, p.25). This was a solitary and unique record of this time which revealed the existence of agriculturists' guild in the district. Similar guilds were reported to have been in vogue in the reign of the Chalukyas of Kalyani (A.D 973 - A.D. 1183) in the Eastern Deccan. At least three important agricultural guilds have been mentioned in the epigraphs of the period i.e. *okkalu*, *chitrameli* and *galega*. All these guilds held land in common (ML Vol. XVI, pp 190-191; SH Vol 11 no. 129; AGAS vol. IX, p.29).

According to Dharma Kumar the communal system of land holding was a special feature in south India (Dharma Kumar ed. 1984 : 210). Thomas Munro on his survey tours noticed the existence of *visabadi gramas* in the Cuddapah district. The *visabadi grama* had a co-sharing' system similar to mirasi village of Chingleput district in Tamilnadu. According to Sunderaraja Iyengar, the *visabadi* system was applied in the Ceded Districts and Telengana to a coparcenary village, of which the lands or profits were allotted by sixteenths and fractions of sixteenths among the hereditary proprietors (Sunderaraja Iyengar 1921 : 55). The Board of Revenue described the *visabadi* system as follows. Under this system, a fixed sum of money was assessed on the whole village for one or more years. A certain number of the most respectable ryots became answerable to the amount, each being responsible for his own separate portion thereof, and all for each other and the lands were divided by lot as in the *samudayam* village of the Tamil country, the portion of land to be occupied by each being determined by the proportion of the rent for which he became responsible. Thus, if ten ryots obtained their village for three years at a *visabadi* rent of one hundred *pagodas*, the first becoming responsible for twenty, the second for forty and the other eight for five *pagodas* each, the lands of the village would be divided into ten equal shares. The first would be entitled to two of these, the second to four and each of the others to half a share; and from this division of the lands into shares the settlement took its name of *visabadi* namely, a settlement by shares in ready money (PBR 5 J AM. 1807). The Fifth Report, based on the evidence of Thomas Munro, who was then the principal Collector of the

Ceded Districts, described the *visabadi* villages as follows, In all villages the ryots were in the habit of meeting and debating upon the subject of rent; but there were many villages in which they settle among themselves the exact proportion of the whole rent that each individual was to pay. These were called *visabadi* (or *veesapadi*) which meant a sixteenth part. The rent to be paid from the land was divided into sixteen shares. When the season of cultivation drew near, all the ryots of the *visabadi* village assembled to regulate their several rents for the year. The Pagoda was the place usually chosen for this purpose from the idea that its sanctity would render their engagements with each other more binding. They ascertained the amount of the agricultural stock of each individual, and of the whole body, the quantity of land to the culture of which it was adequate, and they divided it accordingly giving to each man the portion for which he had the means of cultivating and fixing his share of the rent, whether his share was one or two sixteenths. He paid this proportion, whether the whole rent of the village was higher or lower than the previous year (Letter from the Principal Collector of the Ceded Districts 30 Nov. 1806, Fifth Report Vol II p.351). Thus, a *visabadi grama* was basically a revenue unit wherein the revenue was fixed for the village as a whole, but cultivation was carried on separately by each proprietor undertaking to pay a fixed share of the assessment. T.V. Mahalingam showed three types of joint land tenures prevalent in south India: they were (1) the members of the village who cultivated land in common and shared the profits among themselves in proportion to the number of shares (*vrittis*) each possessed, (2) a particular portion of the village was enjoyed individually by the share-holders for cultivation purposes, the rest being held by them jointly as under the first group; and (3) land had been divided into different grades in accordance with their fertility and every individual member of the joint community was given a portion of each of the three classes of lands for a definite period, and after the expiry of that period land was redistributed among the members (Mahalingam 1955 : 37).

The concept of communal ownership and the periodic distribution of land was basically a relic of tribal system (Chattopadhyaya 1979 : 156-157). The custom was absorbed by the village communities and this concept defined their very existence. In other words, this became the focal feature of village communities in the East and the West (Henry Maine 1895 : 107-109). Irfan Habib viewed that this was not true with the

case of northern India during the Mughal times. To quote Habib, "when village community is used, it does not mean that there was a village commune that owned the land on behalf of all its members. No evidence exists for communal ownership of land or even a periodic distribution and redistribution of land among peasants" (Habib 1963 : 123). M.P.R.Reddy suggested that this was not the case with the south Indian agrarian system. His opinion, based on Munro's Minutes, showed the existence of the above concept in *visabadi gramas* of the Ceded Districts and also in the south coastal Andhra (MPR. Reddy 1978 : 73). Sundararaja Iyengar too pointed out the same by attributing it to a customary practice for the south Indian peasantry. Wherever the *visabadi* system prevailed, it was customary for the residents of the village to periodically exchange (once in four or six years) all their lands so as to secure an equal division of the soil, good and bad. Where it was for a year, the ryots generally retained the same lands but the assessment on them was raised every year, the revision being made by the tenants themselves, and to ensure its impartiality the peculiar practice of challenging was introduced, whereby any ryot who considered that his own holding was over-assessed and that of his neighbours under-assessed, demanded that the latter should be made over to him at an increased rate which he named. If the ryot in possession consented to pay the enhanced rate, he retained the land, and in that case a proportionate reduction was made in the assessment of land held by the complaining party. If the ryot in possession refused to agree to the enhanced demand, he was compelled to give up the land to the complaining party who took it at the higher rate (Sundararaja Iyengar 1921: 56). This system was democratic in nature and Saradaraju described it as a 'challenging system' (Sarada Raju 1941 : 30).

Similarly, *gonchipatta* or joint patta holding were accepted by the company administrators. There were two kinds of *gonchi patta* holders. One kind was of a low-income and economically weak group. They held small plots of lands. The Company officials, for easy administrative business, combined them as fields (comprising forty acres each) and issued a common patta known as *yescalpatta* (PBR 30 Sep. 1804, Vol. 995). Other *gonchi* holders were of substantial or leading ryots. They belonged to the *patel*, the *kaniam* and other influential Reddy families classes. Their primary motive was to evade house tax, wealth tax etc. through the *gonchi patta* facility (Stein 1977: 73). In

fact the joint-ownership of land in the ceded districts was nominal and was created for administrative purposes. Barrington Moore argued that the village community was considered as the basic 'economic unit' for collection of revenues by the state (Moore 1967 : 338- 345) . In the *visabadi gramas* it was the rural elite which dominated and made decisions for the village. The *panchayat*, a vital organ of the village, was nothing but an instrument in the hands of the rural elite. The influential ryot families were the members of the panchayat who regulated and executed the revenue policies (of central and local powers) in the village. In the same way, the village community in the ceded districts did not prevail in its idyllic form, but existed nominally and only to serve certain economic and administrative purposes. Under the *visabadi* system and *gonchipatta* holding, "the share of the produce" rather than a particular "plot of land" was commonly considered as the private property of the members(or families) of the village.

In the political realm also, these village communities (eg. *Sabha, Ur, Periyandu* etc.) dominated mostly by *sat-sudra* families of peasant warrior groups, wielded considerable power over the villages and attracted the attention of royal personages (Stein 1979 : 175-126). The power of the village bodies became a force to reckon with the state. To get these village bodies into the fold of the state, some influential lineages from among them were bureaucratized as revenue and military officials; these were instrumental for the protection/expansion of the settlement boundaries, establishment of new agrarian settlement, and water resource management by way of large scale tank irrigation.

It is a common belief that private property in land did not emerge in India until the introduction of the land revenue settlements(especially the ryotwari system) by the East India Company administrators. At least two points of view emerged on the question of proprietor of the soil in India. One group as already discussed, treated the village community as the proprietor of soil and this contributed to the theory of joint ownership of the land; another group, rested the proprietorship of land in the hands of the king or sovereign (or state). The second view began to dominate and influence the British authorities in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The European travellers and the British administrators held the view that the king was the sole and only proprietor of all the land. The idea of the king granting lands to tenants who became territorially powerful and eventually supported the royal power was basically a European concept. This was closely associated with the concept of European Feudalism. With this background the British administrators tried to understand the Indian political and social life (Embree 1979 : 38-49). Irfan Habib suggested that this wrong notion was perhaps derived from equating the Mughal *jagirdars* to the European landlords, since the *jagirs* were transferable at the emperor's will. The Europeans therefore, concluded that there was no private property in land in India. Another reason for the mistake might have arisen from the understanding and the interpretation of Asia's past, which in their view, was of an 'oriental despotism', and therefore, the Sovereign (King) invariably became the owner of the land. James Grant, in his Political Survey of the Northern Circars, came to the conclusion that, "one of the first, most essential and best ascertained principles of eastern legislation" was that "the property right of the soil is constitutional and solely vested in the sovereign" (Fifth Report Vol. III : 14). Francois Bernier (A.D.1620-88) the French traveller who visited the Mughal court stated that the great Mughal was the proprietor of every acre of land in the Kingdom. His main thesis was that the Mughal empire and the other oriental states were decaying because there was no private property in the soil (Constable 1904 : 204-232). Karl Marx, having read Bernier, came under his influence and wrote in A.D.1853, "Bernier rightly considers that the basic form of all phenomena in the East—he refers to Turkey, Persia, Hindustan is to be found in the fact that no private property in land existed. This is the real key even to the oriental heaven" (Marx to Engels 2 June 1853 : 75-76). Later on, he changed his views. All other European travellers like Thomas Roe, Niccolo Manucci, Abbe Dubbois and Xavier held the same view (Embree 1979: 43). The Utilitarian theorists such as James Mill advocated the same in his work *History of British India* (London, 1824) According to Mill, "the property of the soil resided in the sovereign; for if it did not reside in him, it will be impossible to show to whom it belonged" (Mill 1824, Vol I : 265). Munro, who was the principal collector of the Ceded Districts, observed that in British India the King was the owner of land (CDR 2 Oct. 1801, Vol 629 : 261). Eric Stokes held the opinion that the English Utilitarians, especially, Mill, believed that the right of ownership of land belonged to sovereign and therefore "it is

the Company's right to be the owner of land for it is the sovereign of India and the land settlement should not renounce the rights traditionally held by the Indian rulers" (Stokes 1982 : 90). Ainslie & Embree suggested that the Utilitarian idea of State or royal ownership appealed to them because of tendencies within their general philosophical system (Embree 1979 ; 43) Nuniz, the Portuguese traveller who visited the Vijayanagara during the sixteenth century stated that the King was the owner of the soil. According to him all land belonged to the King and from his hand the captains held it. They made it over to husbandmen who paid one-tenth to their Lord; and they had no land of their own for the kingdom belonged entirely to the King (Sewell 1900 : 280-281).

This kind of misunderstanding arose partially from the misunderstanding of the Hindu *dharmasastras* and partly from their own perception of the land tenure (Jones 1985: 264-260). The claim that the king was the owner of the soil was not made by any Indian authority before the eighteenth century where as it was the usual statement on the lips of the European observers from the sixteenth century onwards. The Hindu law gave only the duty of 'protection' not the right of 'proprietorship' to the kings. In the *dharmasastra* the king was described as "lord paramount of the soil" and "the regent of the water and the lord of the firmament" (Sundararaja Iyengar 1921:9). Wilson rightly observed the limitation of these titles of the sovereign. According to Wilson, "He (the king) is not the lord of the 'soil', he is the lord of the earth, of the whole earth of kingdom, not of any parcel or allotment of it; he may punish a cultivator for neglect, in order to protect his acknowledged share of the crop; and when he gives away land and villages, he gives away the share of revenue. No one would ever think of following such a donation by actual occupancy; he would be resisted if he did. The truth is that the rights of the king are a theory and abstraction; poetically and politically speaking he is the lord, the master, the protector of the earth (*Prithvipati, bhumiswara, bhumipa*) just as he is the lord, the master, the protector of men (*narapati, nareswaranripa*). Such is the purport of the common title of a King; but he is no more the actual proprietor of the soil than he is of his subject; they need not have his permission to buy it or sell it or to give it away, and would be much surprised and grieved if the king or his officials were to buy or sell or give away the ground which they cultivated" (Fifth Report Vol. II : 495) Burton Stein also strengthened the view that the sovereign's right to rule over the

people and territory was of ritual nature in South India (Stein 1980 : 367), Karl Marx, who in his early writings, was influenced by Bernier's statement of Sovereign's right over soil, later abandoned the view and wrote, "the land however, in India did not belong to the Government, the greater proportion of it being as much private property as in England, many of the natives holding their estates by titles six or seven hundred years old" (See Habib 1983: 103).

If the king was not the owner of the soil, then who should be called the proprietor of the land? This was the primary concern of the British authorities to decide upon, for, firstly they needed revenues to promote their trading activity. Secondly, they needed a so called legal right to extract it from the proprietor of the soil. "The idea of ownership as understood either in the Roman inheritance or in the British formulation was lacking in India" (Embree 1979 : 45). According to the Roman lawyers the power of alienating land was the criteria of property. In other words, right to sale identified the property and in Mahalingam's opinion this was an important feature (Mahalingam 1951 : p 80). In England, a proprietor of land who formed it out to another was generally supposed to have received as rents, a value equal to about one third of the gross produce. This proportion varied from one country to another according to the circumstances, but whatever it was, the portion of it which remained after the payment of the demands of the public may safely be described as the proprietor's share of the produce of his own land. Whenever one can find this share and the persons entitled to it, he may be, without the risk of error, considered as the proprietor.

The Hindu and the Mohammedan law accepted the principle of the "first occupant as the proprietor of the soil." In course of time the same principle was also approved by the British Judicial system (Sundararaja Iyengar 1921: 3-5) . In the pre-British times there were a number of evidences to show that the land was purchased, sold, and mortgaged by certain individuals, and families, to kings, nobles and to the temples. The terms '*astabhoga*' and '*ekabhoga*' denote the existence of private property in land and the law of inheritance was well laid out in the pre-British period (Mahalingam 1951 : 84).

Thus the private property in land did exist in India, but the claim of 'family' property was not commonly and customarily accepted. In the case of collective farming

(or in *visabadi gamas*) the "share of the produce" rather than a definite plot of land that was accepted as the property right of the family. Teodar Shanin, rightly pointed out that "property in land, in a wide sense may have the form of, on the one hand, the peasant family holding defined by custom, on the other hand, of politically formalized legal ownership. In peasant households, land appears as the object of traditionally defined and stable holdings and does not necessarily constitute the object of legal ownership" (Shanin 1979 : 241; see also Shanin 1966 : 5-27).

In the pre-British times there were three categories of villages prevalent in the Ceded Districts. The first category consisted of those villages which were held directly by the State (or Central power) wherein the State collected the revenues directly by employing its own administrative machinery. They were generally known as *bhandaravada gramas* or *kara* villages. The Mohammedan rulers called them as *khalsa* or *khas* lands (or villages), which simply meant 'crown lands' (Venkataramanayya 1935 : 134). The second type of villages were known as *amara* villages. They were held by the officials of the State or feudatories who were bestowed with these villages for their military services rendered to the State. In the Vijayanagara empire nearly three fourths of the territory was constituted under this tenure. The areas which were situated around the forts of Adoni, Cheyyetiduram, Gooty, Gandikota, Chandragiri, Gurramkonda, Maddur, Penukonda, Nandyal and others were held by *amaranayakas*. These areas were not hereditary and the emperor confiscated their holdings at any time. These feudatories also leased out their lands to revenue farmers or *guttadars*, but most of the land which was under their jurisdiction was held by the villagers themselves. Therefore, "they claimed no property right in the soil, not did they regard the cultivators as their serfs" (Satyanarayana 1983 : 304). The third type of villages were those held by groups of people or institutions like the temples, paying nothing or a nominal amount as revenue to the State. They were called *brahmadeyas* or *devadana* lands (Mahalingam 1931 : 36). These villages were hereditary. They had to pay *jodi* or low quit rent to the State treasury.

These three broad categories of village were made on the basis of land tenurial system and the nature of land revenue collections that were present in the villages. Generally speaking except in the first form of villages referred to other two were

predominantly held under the service tenure basis, and the mode of collection was chiefly done by an intermediary agency.

Two types of land revenue system were followed in these villages. They were the *amani* and the *appanam* systems (See Wilson's Glossary 1855). Both these systems were prominent in the Ceded Districts. In the *amani* system collection of revenue was done directly by the Government through its village servants without the interference of middlemen such as *zamindars*. The revenues were collected either by taking a share of the produce or by the collection of money rents. Taking a share in the produce was known as *asara* or *waram*. This system was loosely called *ammi* and it was a form of ryotwari system. In both cases settlement was made by the State directly with the ryot; but in the *ammi* system, share was taken from the gross produce whereas in the ryotwari system it was done from the net produce. The *appanam* system was predominant in Bellary, Cuddapah and Kurnool districts. Under this system the cultivator who were responsible for land revenue payment were allowed to hold which ought to pay the land revenue were highly assessed and hence they were given other lands on favourable terms or rent-free (Wilson's Glossary: 1855). The Reddies and the karnams who held the office of the potail and accountant respectively, were responsible for land revenue collections in the Ceded Districts. Therefore, they were given inam lands under this system. The *appanam* system was similar to 'Village Lease System' wherein the renters, usually the Reddies or *karnams* or such influential persons of the village, were responsible for land revenue collections and if the ryots relinquished their lands, the revenue Collectors were bound to provide for their cultivation and were not allowed to reduce own holdings by relinquishment.

The system of granting lands and villages to the individuals and institutions was followed by the Hindu and Muslim rulers alike. It was a system through which the rulers recognised socially and economically privileged persons and institutions and in turn, the latter supported their benefactors. In fact it was a survival strategy that was followed by the 'Central' and 'local' powers. The *mam* (or land grant) system helped the rulers to collect the land revenues smoothly by making an alliance with the rural elite groups. It also helped in founding new villages which ultimately paved the way for extension of cultivation, thus acquired additional revenues to the 'Central' and 'local' powers.

The Service tenures may be classified into five categories:

- a) Grants for public service
- b) Grants for particular service
- c) Grants for village officers
- d) Grants for religious service
- e) Grants for private and personal service.

Among the grants for public service, *dasabandam inams* were very important and they come under the Socio-economic privileged holdings. Regarding the grants for particular service, the foremost were *pallikatu* and *adaiyoli manyams*, given for clearing jungles and bringing the land under cultivation (Sundaraja Iyengar 1921 : 121). Number of other inams were given for particular services such as *eruvaka* (for first ploughing of land), *idiga* (for planting trees), *moti* (For encouraging the ryots to settle in a new place) etc. Whereas the karnam inams and the Reddi manyams were of the most important among the grants given to village officers. Religious grants are divided into three types (a) *devadan* or *devadayam inams* (given to temples, mosques dargahs (fakir tombs) takiyas (fakir residents); (b) *brahmadeyamams* (given to Brahmins for socio-religious purposes; *adhyam deya inams*; (c) *mathapura inams* (for educational institutions, *Chat rams* or choultries etc.) Similarly, grants for private personal services were of socio-political holdings. Among them amarams and *kattubadi* inams were the most prominent. Besides those a number of other inams for services such as supplying perfumes for the poligar, for holding palaquines, for supplying gum-powder, medications etc. for the poligar were given inams (Sundararaja Iyengar, 1921 : 132-138). However, the above classification was done by the writers of the first half of the twentieth century. This classification was based just on factual evidence and displayed lack of critical and analytical approach. However, the presentday historians have divided the inams (or simply land grants) into four categories based on the 'functional' principle. They are as follows: (Frykenberg, 1979 : 40-45)

- a. Socio-Religious Holdings
- b. Socio-Service Holdings
- c. Socio-Economic Holdings and
- d. Socio-Political Holdings

Among the four, the third and the fourth categories were of much importance to the rural society. Of the Socio-Religious Holdings, *dasabandam inams* were prominent. A tropical country like India, scanty rain fall and lack of perennial river systems in the

Rayalaseem area demanded a constant construction and maintenance of water-works. The maintenance of irrigation systems became a primary condition and duty of the State. In the words of Frykenberg, "regular revenues called for regular water supplies, regular water supplies called for regular expenditure for development and maintenance. Expenditure subtracted from revenues, especially if institutionalised permanently through hereditary grants of land, were a convenient way of removing burdens of administration from a central government and throwing them upon a local government" (Frykenberg 1979 : p45). This led to *dasabandam inam* tenures. The *dasabandam* tenure in the kannada districts, was known as *katta-kodige* (PBR 12 July 1819, Vol. 826). In the Telugu country, the Kakatiyas introduced this system. According to *dasabandam* tenure, an inam or copyhold was granted to a person for repairing, maintaining and constructing a tank on condition of paying in money or kind one tenth of its produce to the king. Elsewhere it has been already stated that the Kakatiya rulers followed the policy of extension extension of cultivation through temple construction and tank irrigation. The same system was further strengthened by the Vijayanagara rulers. The construction of irrigation systems, such as tanks, channels and wells, even got the religious sanction. The popular belief was that the construction of irrigation works secured them a place in heaven (Satyanarayana 1983 : 338). There was a slight modification in the *dasabandam* tenure of the Vijayanagara period. More terms were brought into the contract of *inam*. Those persons who were entrusted with (sometimes the persons themselves came forward voluntarily for the cause of) the work of construction and maintenance, should execute the work at their own cost, sometimes receiving money in advance. But generally the work was based on the contract basis, the terms of which were specified in the form of an agreement. According to this arrangement the person or persons would execute the work in return for the assignment of a plot of land which was to be irrigated by the water drawn from the tank or well; the plot of land was to be tax-free, with hereditary rights of ownership. Such a plot of land was called the *dasabandam* or *kattungodagi* land and sometimes a whole village, or even two or more were granted for the purpose (SII Vol. IX, 597; SII Vol. IX, 472).

The *dasabandam* inams were given for three purposes: (1) for maintenance of the tanks which cultivate the Government lands; (2) for levelling lands and rendering them fit for

wet cultivation, and (3) for bringing dry-waste land under cultivation. In the first two cases wet lands were granted and in the third as a general rule, dry lands were granted as *dasabandam* inam tenure. The *dasabandam* were of two kinds, *khandam* and *Shamilat dasabandams*. The *khandam dasabandam* was basically a land grant and *Shamilat dasabandam* was the assignment of a certain porportion of the cultivation each year free of assignment. The *dasabandam* system of contract was prevalent in all the districts of Rayalaseema. In the Cuddapah district a number of inscriptions are found pertaining to *dasabandam* inam tenures right from the fourteenth century. In Rayachoti taluk of the Cuddapah district alone 5,700 wells were found and half of them were under *dasabandam* inam tenure. The mahajans of a village in the Bellary district were granted an *agrahara* for having constructed a tank and the land under the tank was made free from all taxes (SII Vol. IX, 440). In the Anantapur district, one *Rayaparaja* made a gift of land and a channel to three Brahmins on conditions that they would convert the valley adjoining the field into a tank and call it *Narasambudhi* after the name of the king *Narasingaraya* (SII Vol. IX, 472). A tank in a village situated in the Anantapur district breached at three places, two persons repaired the breaches at their own cost, for which they were granted a plot of *kattungodogi* land by the agent of *Venkatadrinayaka* (SII Vol. IX, 597). An inscription from *Ahobilam* registered the grant of *dasabandam* land in a village in the kurnool district to a *mahaman* *daleswara* by the trustee of the temple, who was agent of another *mahamandaleswara* having constructed the tank *Konasamudra* (SII Vol. IX, 199). Three records from the *Madakasira* taluk of the local chiefs of Anantapur district registered gifts of land *kattungodogi* by the local chiefs to certain guards for having repaired the tanks at their own expense (ARE 1917 Nos. 32,49 and 50).

The tank irrigation being the major contributor for the agricultural development, there were many edicts issued by the rulers to their subordinates and to the villagers to maintain the tanks in proper condition. A number of inscriptions related to the *meras*, that is, quantities of grain to be contributed by the village (one *kuncham* on each *putti*) for the upkeep of the tanks. An edict executed in 1538 stated, "we have ordered that the tank *meras* of the various villages collected in the prescribed manner should be spent for the maintenance of the tanks of the respective villages. Therefore, whether the village under *sandhata* and *amardar* or *lessee*, or whoever be the ruler, the grain collected as

tank *meras* must be spent on the tanks. If, not doing work to the tanks and channels with the grain realised as tank *meras*, any subject, or if any *Kapu* or *karnam* obstructs, or if an one removes this inscription, he will be considered to have been born to the *vetti* of this village and to have given his wife the *vetti* of this village" NDI Vol. II, Nellore). This revealed the fact that right from the rulers to the peasants, everyone was interested in construction and maintenance of irrigation systems to promote agriculture, which was the main occupation of the majority of the population and therefore *dasabandam* inam tenure became a prominent and integral part of the pre-British rural scene.

There were other kinds of grants made for socio-economic services (Sundararaja Iyengar 1921: 140-141). They were, the *allot*, a grant for the service of collecting ryots for the performance of customary labour, the *annaikkaram inam*, for the service of preserving *anicuts* and keeping of cattle from destroying the reeds that grew there. The *bandela inam* was for inferior servants who prevented cattle from straying into the fields and destroying the crops. The *nirumunakainam* was for diving into water and opening and shutting the sluice of a tank. The *nanal inam* was for planting reeds for protecting the *anicuts* and irrigation channels. The *sagubadi* was a land grant for head ryots with a view to encouraging their cultivation of lands owned by the state. All the above grants show the importance given to agriculture in a tropical country. Moreover, the dryness of the Ceded Districts caused the emergence of too many grants for the maintenance and construction of irrigation systems. Even the company administrators recognised the importance of these tenures and allowed them to continue. But they tried to put an end to the 'socio-political holdings', which resulted in antagonism between the socio-political *inam* holders (especially the poligars and the kattubodi peons), and the Company rule.

The size of the *inams* were so large that the Company officials often mentioned them in their reports and they appeared in every annual revenue settlement as separate entities. According to Campbell, in the Ceded Districts, "The alienations were so extensive that the lands liable to the payment of the Government revenue were little more than half (PBR 8 Mar 1824 Vol. 997; 205). The rough calculations made by Munro on *inam* lands indicate that inam lands constituted one-sixth of the total area under cultivation and such lands were worth somewhere between one-fourth and one-third of the estimated total revenue resources of the Ceded Districts. This amounted roughly to

11,85,195-20-09 *Pagodas* out of 39,54-417-23-70 *Pagodas* (PBR 4 Sep. 1807 Vol. 451: 7063). One of the reasons for the prevalence of extensive land grant system was the lack of a centralised and established money economy. The Districts (having been portioned out among the poligars and other revenue officials under various Rajas or Sultans of Mysore, Golconda and the Marathas) failed to have a centralised monetary system. In the Cuddapah district alone, Munro, in his report on Mint and Currency, noted seven different kinds of Rupees and fourteen types of pagodas then in circulation (PBR 3 Aug. 1812, Vol. 578 : 8713-8733; See also Ambirajan, 1978 : 232). Many of the poligars minted their own money.

During the Vijayanagara period there was a definite increase in the use of money. One of the administrative reforms of Harihara II, was with regard to the currency system. He issued an order that taxes must be paid in money instead of kind (Sturrock 1894: Vol. 1 : 95). This made the use of money an important and necessary means of exchange and led to the minting of coins of different denominations (E.I. Vol. III : 125; E.I. Vol. VIII : 58). The foreign Travelers' Accounting and the inscriptions show the circulation of a large number of coins of different denominations that were prevalent in the Vijayanagara period. Though there was an increase in the usage of coins, the department of mint was not centralised and properly organised. Abdur Razak and Barbosa observed in their tours, the existence of a number of mints in various towns in the kingdom (Elliot ed. 1867-77, vol. IV : 10) The private individuals were granted the right to issue coins and the right to own private mints. *Lakkanna Dandanayaka*, a Viceroy under Devaraya II, issued coins in his own name. The *nakaraparivaras* were also empowered to issue coins. Such local currencies appear to have been in use only in the localities concerned and hence gave some difficulty to the people. Caesar Fredrick who had bitter experience of this system remarked about it; "When we come into a new governor's territory (of Vijayanagara), as every day we did, although they were all tributaries to the king of Biznagar [sic], yet everyone of them stamped a small copper coin [sic] of copper so that the money we took this day would not serve the next day" (Purchas 1965, Vol. X : 99). The increase in the number and variety of small denominations like the *panam* and the *tore*, suggest the expansion of market relations and the commodity production. But this was very limited and by and large, the land revenue was still collected in kind. The

scarcity of the various metals (silver and gold) was one of the reasons for this. When the British introduced money payment for land revenue in the ryotwari tenure, the ryots felt difficulty in acquiring the coins.

The principle of assessment was another important aspect in the land revenue administration. In the pre-British times due to lack of uniform and centralized monetary system, the land revenue was collected mostly in kind. It was known as **warum** or asara system. The term *Warum* implies a share of the produce, or the rate by which the division of it was made between the cultivator and the state, whereas *asara* would mean revenues paid in kind. In this, the land revenue was paid in kind on the "sharing" basis. The percentage of share was fixed as land revenue and under this agreement the Government usually sought to receive its due on the actual fields under cultivation. In case of money payment, the money value was computed only after the state's fixed percentage of grain had been set aside.

There was not much information available on the land revenue settlements in the pre-British times. Colin Mackenzie collected a statement from a *karnam* in 1810 in the Kurnool district. In that, measurement of land and amount paid as rent was described. It was the only statement (Chetty, 1886 : 43-44). Immediately after assuming the charge as principal collector, Munro made an impressionistic survey of the available old records of the native governments and expressed his views on the revenues of the Ceded Districts on August 12, 1801. Due to incomplete information that he possessed and also as he was new to the districts, he himself expressed his inability to inform the Board completely about the matter. Also there was no native Government records to establish the land revenue settlements and the amount collected by the native governments as far back as tradition would carry. The above information, however, is not to be depended upon. The land appears at all times, Munro wrote, to have been considered the property of the sovereign who divided the produce with the cultivator in equal proportions, but committed the circular share for a money payment at a price unfavourable to the cultivator (CDR 2 Oct. Vol. 629, : 261-270). The *kamil* (assessment in Rayadurg and Harpanahalli of the Western Ceded Districts, which were reduced by the Bijapur kings, appears to have been settled without any survey. But in Gurrankonda, Cuddapah and other Eastern districts, it was found upon an actual survey based on the principle of an equal division

of the crops, that the Government share was committed for a money rent by taking the estimated gross produce of different sorts of dry and wet land and converting it at the average price of the preceding ten years. The ryots share after the deductions (i.e. for land revenue, charities, famines and for *karnam's* charges etc.) amounted to less than half. The Mohammedan rule, according to Munro, was more ruinous to the region; the *amildars* and other revenue collectors with their fraudulent accounts extracted more revenue from the ryots than what they were supposed to extract (CDR 2 Oct. 1801, Vol. 629 : 264). The poligars and their military peons on the other hand ruined the country by plundering. In other words, the State machinery which was in operation to collect the land revenues was faulty and therefore, Munro strongly advocated the removal of the intermediary agency in the land revenue administration. The intermediary agency was represented in the form of the poligar, the *kavilagar* and the *amildari systems* in the Bellary region.

The Third important aspect in the land revenue administration was administrative machinery which was adopted to collect the revenues by the 'central' and 'local' powers. It actually reflected the relationship between the State and the agrarian society. The administrative machinery either could be an imposed one on the rural structures, or the local 'local powers' being powerful, forced the Central Government to accept their position in the ruling as collectors of revenue. In the dry-tracts of Rayalaseema both both types were present. The "power of middle-order" i.e. Nawabs of Cuddapah, Kurnool, Gooty and the *jagirdars* of Banaganapalle and Adoni etc. belonged to the first category. Their centres of power being in the townships, they largely depended upon the *amildars* to collect the revenues from the villages. As seen earlier, the poligars in their days of origin (i.e. during Vijayanagara period) were in the same strata. Most of them were implanted by their overlords on the villages to collect the revenues; but in course of time the poligars became the local elite groups. The *patels* and other rich peasants also acquired the poligarships in some places. The second category, i.e. the local elite who forced the Central power to accept them in the revenue administration, comprised the landed peasantry or *patels* and *karnams*. They being so powerful and dominant in the villages, the central power and its agents could not but accept them into their administrative machinery. In order to satisfy these rural elite or local powers, the

central POWERS worked out a system of land grants (otherwise called *inams*) for the socio-political services rendered by them to the royal authority.

Among the service tenures mentioned in this chapter, the **Socio-Political Holdings** were of vital importance for the survival of the Central Power. The prominence and the numerical strength of this type of holdings, gave feudal character to the Medieval South India. The Medieval Andhra Polity from Kakatiyas to the Vijayanagara was dominated by the warrior class. Iturton Stein named this type of polity as 'tributary' overlordship (Stein 1979: 189). The tributary overlordship indicted the pyramidal power structure, wherein 'Lord-Vassal'¹ relationship became the character of the polity. In India, unlike in Europe, the caste-based society being a peculiarity, added a new dimension to this relationship (Moore 1967 : 304-325). Stein preferred this term to 'feudal' for various reasons. He gives at least three reasons for not using the term 'feudal': (a) the 'fief' as a constituted political sub-region of a private military authority was largely absent in the medieval south; (b) Lord-Vassal relationship of feudal Europe and Japan was missing from the medieval south; and (c) there was lack of sufficient evidence to support the development of a feudal politico-administrative structure in early medieval south India (Stein 1980 : 366-385, R.N. Nandi 1984 : 33). 'The tributary overlordship was a highly localized one, unlike in Europe, and therefore, affected the hierarchy of the pyramidal power structure.

The absence of a perpetual bureaucracy which always reflected the Central Government's authority, the lack of strong personal loyalties which could overlook caste and other interests, and the non-existence of an universal and centralized institution such as European church which acted as an integrating force and which contributed to the stability and perpetuity of the European feudal polity, caused the medieval south Indian tributary overlordship to remain purely a local or regional phenomenon (Stein 1979: 1859-190). The local or regional warriors having considerable influence and authority over their regions forced their overlords to recognize their power in their localities. All the local chiefs helped the central or royal power in performing military, financial and police duties for which they acquired lands, sometimes villages, as grants in lieu of their services. This system gradually resulted in parcellisation of sovereignty and loss of control over the local

chiefs by the central authority (I.D.Kosambi coined the term "feudalism from below" to denote the similar kind of power structure (Kosambi 1975 : 353-405).

The grants which were made to individuals for **politicomilitary** services in the South can be traced from the fifth century A.D. onwards on the basis of **inscriptions** of early Pallavas. The system of military grants and over-lord and vassal relationship matured and was completed in the tenth-thirteenth centuries in Andhra. The **Kaakatiyas** of Warangal once the feudatories of Kalyani Chalukyas usurped power and began to **rule** Andhradesa from the early years of the 12th century. Rudramamba or Rudramadevi (A.D. 1202 - 1289) introduced the new system of military and fiscal administration known as **nayamkara** system. According to **nayamkara** system the king assigned villages to the **nayakas** in lieu of salaries for military services. Prataparudra, the grand son of Rudramadevi (A.D. 1289 -1323) further strengthened the system by organising it well, and also entrusted the **nayamkaras** with the revenue powers. The similar system of military organisation was later adopted and modified by the Vijayanagara rulers as **amaranayamkara** system. In **amaram** system the **nayakar** became more independent and had a formal ties with the Central Government. The term **amaranayamkara** meant an office (**kara**) possessed by a military chief (**nayaka**) in command (**amara**) of a body of troops. According to Nilakanta Sastri and T.V.Mahalingam, the **amaranayamkara** system was a system "from above, where the king divided the country into provinces and districts and granted each to a noble men or terms of military services. he king also transferred to the **nayakas** the rights over the soil in return for military and financial contribution. "The **nayamkara**", wrote Mahalingam, "was therefore an office and nothing more". Burton Stein and a few others differed with K.A.N.Sastri and T.V. Mahalingam. Though they accepted the importance of **nayakas**¹ role in rendering military services in 'War-State' of Vijayanagara, for them **amaranayamkara** system meant "a change in the local leadership".

They were linked to the **nayaka** rulers by ritual sovereignty. Like the **amaranayamka** they rendered military service to kings, like the revenue farmers they paid rent on their estates. Thus, the **poligar** combined in himself the functions of the **amaranayaka** and the revenue farmers. The concentration of these **two** powers in the same groups accounted for the extraordinary power wielded by the **poligars**. As the

'poligarships' became more common and wielded more power and independence in exercising their functions, the aspirants for poligarships grew in number and added to the already prevailing confusion in demarcation of their jurisdiction. The Britishers were interested in collecting the revenues from all sources to the maximum extent possible. We shall see this in detail in the next chapter. As soon as they possessed these vast tracts, they made a detailed survey of land and other sources of revenue. Thomas Munro's intention was to locate the proprietor of the soil, so that he could collect the land revenue directly from him. In other words he was interested in following the ryotwari system of land tenure which was adopted in Baramahal by Col. Read and where Col. Munro worked prior to his appointment as principal Collector of the Ceded Districts. In the process of his land survey and preliminary tours he found an intermediary group which was basically parasitic in nature that stood between the State and the actual cultivator and were enjoying the status of petty chieftains or Rajas. Munro after his preliminary survey wrote "on enquiring into the causes of the decline of the revenue of the Ceded Districts, the readmission of poligars appeared to be one of the principal" (OBR Vol. 62 : 2). Among the poligars who were unevenly distributed, there were various ways of acquiring the poligarship. Based on the roots of the poligarship, the poligars can be divided into five types. The first category those of the poligars who received their villages at first as *inam* as a personal allowance for the support of their rank. The best example of this was the poligar of Owke in the Kurnool district. The poligar Ramakrishna Raja's predecessors were servants of the Vijayanagara rulers who bestowed on him a *jagir* in AD 1450 (DBR Vol. 62: 47); The Second type of poligars were more turbulent and powerful than all others and attained the poligarship through usurpation and self proclamation. The poligari family of Rayadurga descended from the *delvoy* of Vijayanagara, which on the dissolution the royal authority seized penukonda and Condrippy, but penukonda was later taken away by the Vijayanagara *ruls* and, instead were give seventy five villages in Rayadurga. Similarly the poligar Basavappa Nayaka of Harpanahalli whose ancestor was Dadappa, the *taliari* of two villages in Harpanahalli, with the disintegration of Vijayanagara empire collected a few followers and seized a part of the neighbouring territory, and after the decline of Bijapur rule, extended the territory from 37 villages to 460 villages (OBR Vol. 62 : 36-44). The third *poligars* who received their villages at the usual rent, partly as a *personal jagir* and partly for the

military service. The Chitvi poligari family derived their descent from Timmaraja of Multi in Gurrarakonda, who served under Isol Raja with 2000 peons and 300 horses. He rented the *paraganas* of Sidhout, Chinnur, Badvel and Porumemilla. His descendants, for services rendered to the Isol Raja were raised to the command of 5000 peons and 700 horses and were allowed to collect rent from more *paraganas*. They paid their establishment of troops from the revenues and remitted the balances to the sovereign. They thus established themselves as poligars (OBR Vol.62: 46). The fourth category of poligars comprised those who were commoners or a body of peons who paid in money and not by the *jagir*. After being absolved from military services, they became the renters of the districts and finally by holding these districts for a number of years, during the times of confusion, they declared themselves as the poligars and the term of *peshcush* (tribute) was substituted for that of rent by their overlords. The poligar of *Nossum* in Kurnool and the poligar of Mallayal in the Cuddapah district were the best examples of this category. Ancestors of both the poligars served under Vijayanagara kings as military chiefs. Taking advantage of the decline of Vijayanagara power, they gradually became the renters of the territories and later became independent and received the recognition as poligars by paying tribute to the Nawabs of Hyderabad (OBR Vol. 62: 44-55). The final category consisted of those who were merely renters assessed at the full *kamil*, but by taking advantage of the negligence or weakness of the central power, they rose to the rank of the poligars. As for instance, the kallibunda poligar in the Cuddapah district was merely a renter under the Golconda Nawabs. After the fall of Golconda Nawabs's of Cuddapah became more independent. In those times of turbulence and turmoil the renter of Kallibanda ascertained independence and declared himself as the poligar (OBR Vol. 62-53). Thus, the five categories of the poligars numbering eighty in total, were ruling over the Bellary region at the time of the advent of the British. Among the five categories, the second and the fourth were more powerful and militant ones. The poligars of Rayadurg Harpanahalli and Gurrarakonda were basically military chiefs and usurped power by taking advantage of the weakness of their overlords. These provinces were situated in tracts of black cotton soil and were surrounded by the mountain ranges and jungles. All these areas were well situated for tank irrigation because the black cotton soil was more fertile than any other soil in the ceded districts. This generated more revenues from the land. The jungles and hills have a natural

protection from the attacks of overlords. Hence they became independent very soon after the fall of Vijayanagara imperial rule.

According to Munro, in Gurramkonda every head of a village became a poligar and though his income was not perhaps above two or three hundred *pagodas*. He was regularly installed with all the form of the prince of an extensive territory and had his nominal officers of state subsisting on small portions of land. The poligar antapah of the Bellary district was subjugated and his property seized by the British. At that time, he was said to be owning huge amount of jewellery and coins of silver and gold. He appears to have appropriated, like many other poligars, many lands on his personal account as *inams* (PBR 10 Aug, 1807 : 5980-91; Fifth Report Vol. III: 99). Their struggles against the sovereign power produced frequent civil wars throughout the eighteenth century. There were two main motives for their constant rebellion; the one 'self-preservation' and the other expansion of their *pollams*, or estates (Fifth Report Vol, III :89). The weakness of the central power, the bad faith on their governments, and the arbitrary and treacherous conduct of their officers drove the poligars to seek their safety in resistance. This resulted in the growth of the poligar militia. A large number of military peons were maintained by the chiefs and petty poligars also maintained small bands of military men. There were three kinds of military peons under the poligar contract who were generally called the *kattubodi* peons which meant simply 'contract peons'. The first category consisted of those paid entirely in money and who had no other means of living and they were least numerous, the second consisted of those who enjoyed service lands, but who were, otherwise traditional farmers rented their lands and regarded the *inams* as only a secondary; the third received the service tenure but had no lands of their own therefore confined themselves to the cultivation of their *inams*. Each description received a *batta* or payment when called out beyond the limits of their villages. The second and third category of peons were numerous in every poligar militia. Since they all held and cultivated land under the poligar contract they could be classified as 'peasant peons' or 'peasant-warriors'.

The usual allowance of land to a common peon in the dry zone of upland Rayalaseema appears to have been an *field* valued at six *pagodas* as annual rent and to

the head man who had parlies of ten, fifty or hundred, as it might happen, a piece of land from nine to twenty four *pagodas* rent (Fifth Report Vol .III :90). It also appears that prior to the conquest of Hyder Ali, the poligars in generar kept about six *kattubadi* peons for every hundred star *pagodas* of gross rent in their respective districts. But every peon had relatives who were able to bear arms, and he was required to bring them into the field in cases of emergency. The poligar, when attacked, was, usually by this means,able to assemble a force equal to double the number of his fixed establishment of the *kattubodi* peons. Therefore, by this calculational a poligar holding a district yielding a gross rental of *star pagodas* ten thousand maintained six hundred peons and at times of emergency he would double that number, when the poligars recovered their districts they filled up the deficiency partly with their own ryots and partly with peons collected from other provinces who were paid in money (OUR, Vol. 62:11).

By nature the poligars' militia was not a homogenous unit. Among the three categories of peons mentioned already none were good in warfare. They all used low grade arms and armaments. The paid peons who held no service tenures, were to a certain extent skilled and professional in their warfare, but since they were paid peons, they lack loyalties to the poligar. If their poligar was losing the battle or if the other poligars promise to pay more wages they did not mind switching their loyalties. Their interests were only upto the subsistence level. The other two categories of peons were 'peasant-warriors'. Their ties with the land (their cultivating fields) were more stronger than to the poligar under whom they held land as service tenure. They served the poligar as long as he safeguarded their service tenures. But the phobia of loosing their service tenures under a new poligar also made them protect their own poligar. The poligars, on the other hand, to protect themselves from being uprooted from their position, struggled to satisfy the interests of the *kattubodi* peons by way of making allowances and giving more lands under the service tenures. They even jointly plundered the neighbouring villages or waged wars and extracted booty which was eventually taken away by the poligar and a small share was distributed to the *kattubodi* peons as bonus. This lead to the frequent civil wars within the poligars.

The poligar villages were divided into two, the one *mujera* which meant, inferior villages, and the other *moza*, superior villages based on the size and revenue generating capabilities of the villages. As for instance, Ranganagarapalm pai Nayaka, the poligar in the Cuddapah district, initially received *mujera* or inferior villages for 29 *cont. pagodas*. Later under Aurangzeb, the family received *moza* or superior villages for 210 *Cont. pagodas*. This was an example for the increase of status and power of the same poligar, but under different regimes (GBR Vol.62:58). The power and position of the poligars was generally based on the holding of these villages. The more number of *moza* villages he held, the more powerful and prominent did he become. The poligars used to make annual settlement with the ryots, the poligar Hundi Anantapur Siddappa Nayaka's ancestor was a Diwan under the Vijayanagara rulers and became a powerful poligar. Tipu Sultan had taken the poligar to Srirangapatnam as prisoner, who was later on released. After his coming back to Anantapur, he still retained the status of the poligar and made annual settlements with the ryots. This was an example to show the poligars direct relations with the ryots as renters of the region (OBR Vol. 62 : 43). Many poligars themselves rented the villages and lands privately to the individuals. And this became a common feature in the poligar system through which they derived an income which remained unaccountable, hence untaxable (or rentable). By this process the poligars strengthened their private exchequers. Those poligars who had direct heritage with the kings of Vijayanagara or at least those who had served under the vijayanagara fillets as commanders-in-charge etc, Under the influence of their overlords and who had to impress their overlords by exhibiting their revenue and administrative skills, tried to generate more revenues by providing irrigation facilities such as construction of tanks in their villages (Gribble 1875 : 89). But many poligars who acquired the poligarships later or whose successors had little interest in developing their irrigation facilities due to lack of time, and resources (because of loans etc.) laid their villages waste (uncultivated). Munro's statistics showed that at least fifty percent of the poligar villages were kept as waste or uncultivated and yielding no income to the state. It is interesting to note here that many poligars left half of their villages waste. One of the poligars, out of 50 villages left 28 villages waste; another out of 7 left 3 villages waste. This suggests two things. Either the poligars poligars themselves registered half of their villages uncultivated to evade the payment of rent or, their oppressive measures

of collection of land revenue left the ryots with no other option, but to evacuate the village and to migrate the neighbouring villages. In either cases, the central power was at a loss (OBR Vol. 62, *Passim*). Therefore at times of distress and in need of revenue they resorted to plundering the neighbouring villages or to levy indiscriminate revenue assessments and collections from the ryots, which, according to the revenue administrators of the British, ruined the country (OBR Vol. 62 : 2).

On par with the polligar system, another system known as the *kavaligar* system prevailed in the ceded districts. Both the systems were intermingled and closely interconnected. The *Kavelgars* literally meant 'guards'. Their primary duties were to ensure safe journey to merchants who were passing through their villages for which they received remuneration. The *kavali* was divided into the *mummi kavali* and the *nyal kavali*. The *mummi kavali* was a certain allowance on the circar revenue both from the land and customs, not less than five percent and more than ten percent was enjoyed by the greater poligars. The proportion which fell on the land usually collected in one *kisi* at the harvest season. The *nyal kavali* was held by the inferior poligars. It was an allowance of one crore of grain on each crore of grain sown, and one half to one *aparinjee fanam* on each plough. The money was usually collected in one kist in November or December and the grain when it was harvested. The collections were made by the poligar peons, two or three of whom resided constantly in each village for this purpose. The *kavaligars* had also an *inam* in every village of one *vees* of dry land and one crore of wet land and on the customs, he received what was called *moolves* or one sixth of an *apparanycefanam* per gonny. He usually exacted nearly double this rate and robbed the merchant who refused to comply with his demands.

The *nyal kavaligar* every where augmented privately his *inam* lands and the *mummi kavaligar* who had originally none, soon found the means to procure more than the other. He forced the inhabitants to transfer to him gardens and other well cultivated spots without any compensation by confining them till they subscribed bonds which he had ordered to be prepared (Reddy 1986 :112-113).

The poligars often combined the *kavaligar* office, though a separate one with the poligar office and held them together/There were instances, where the *kavaligar*

became rich by misusing his office and acciured the poligarship by dethroning the poligar who was in power, or by declaring independence in his jurisdiction, became a petty poligar and paid a tribute to the superior poligar. To illustrat this tendency in **them the** poligars Kummarapur Gurappa Nayaka, Shittiwariipalem Baswappa Nayaka, Yerrawariipalem Timmappa Nayaka, Yellamundali Mallappa Nayaka and Modicheruvu Chinneppa Nayaka - were some of the best examples (OBR Vol. 62 : 57-59). There were also examples of certain poligars who lost their poligarship but retained their *kavaligar* office and continue in their villages as the *kavaligars*. The system of *kavali* made the kavaligar or the poligar to acquire more stolen property and oppose the Government by engaging their army (peons). They all maintained horsemen to collect the customs from the merchants and from the inhabitants. Often these servants and the *talairs* (village watchmen) collected customs without the knowledge of their *kavaligars* and poligars. The poligars and the *kavaligars* themselves collected the customs and fees illegally. If the party refused to pay the amount demanded by them, they resorted to robbcry. The merchants and inhabitants were afraid that they would not get back their stolen property because the poligars also held the police duties. And unless they pay enormous amount of money to them they would not get their property back. According to Munro, the system of *kavali* made the *kavaligar* and the poligar to turn up into thugs and bandits (OBR Vol. 62 : 26).

It should also be observed here that the structural relationship between **the** two groups of the rural elite [i.e. the poligars and the *kavaligars* on one side, the *patels* and the *karnams* on the other side] was predominantly based on 'conflict'. The *patels* and the *karnams* were basically traditional village officers who were authorised to collect the revenues and to regulate the land revenue administration in their respective villages either by the village *panchayats* or by the central or royal power. The poligars on the other hand being military oriented, gave support to the medieval 'War-State' of Vijayanagara, and thus secured the position of 'renter cum revenue Collector, in the provinces (Satyanarayana 1986 : 307). In due course, they became prominent in the power structure and restored to illegal extraction of revenues. This led them into conflict with the *patel* and the *karnams*. The *kavaligars* and the poligars regularly sent their peons to every village with an order to the *patel* and the *karnam* to pay the amount. If

the latter tried to gain time, the former sent some more of their servants to commit thells in the village and if this had no desired effect, they frequently abducted the *patel* and *karnam*, beat them and kept them in confinement till they paid up what was due and also used to impose heavy fines. They also compelled the *karnams* by threats to make over to them large tracts of circar land and to enter them in thier accounts as waste. Some of the poligars even took active part in boundary disputes and property litigations. They either reported themselves to the spot with a body of armed followers who were paid by the village people during their stay or they deputed a vakil with a party to see to it that the decision would not be contrary to their opinion. The right of settling the land disputes traditionally was in the hands of panchayat or village assembly under the headship of the *patels* and the *karnams* which often resulted in confrontation and conflict with the poligars. The alliance between these the two groups of the rural elite arose out of fear and compulsion. The poligar and the *kavaligar* system faced with an opposition and resulted in the *pate l-karnam* alliance with the amildars and the tahsildars, the revenue Collectors of the Government (Reddy 1986 : 115).

Further the Nawabs of Carnatic practised the amildari system, in those lands where the poligar authority was not present and the same system existed in the Ceded Districts too. The sultans of Mysore, Hyder Ali and Tipu popularised the system in their country and in the territories which were annexed by them (BRP from Munro to Read 14 Feb 1796). According to this system, extensive tracts of lands, often wide provinces were framed out for a certain number of years to individuals who sub-rented them by villages to the *patois* to collect revenues from the cultivators as they pleased. As long as the king (royal or central power) was supplied by his amildar as much money as he wanted, he seldom enquired into the means that were used to obtain it, or cared by what breaches of duty and irregular practices, they enriched themselves. As they in general, purchased their posts by giving bribes to some one at the seat of the Government, and as their continuance in office was uncertain and precarious, they did not leave any opportunity to make illicit gains (Fifth Report Vol. III : 56-60).

The amildars derived their revenues either from the public revenue or from a private assessment. The amildars usually wished that rent should be low, because the lower they were the higher he would be able to gain the incomes through illicit private

assessments. In this case he would escape from being discovered. The patels and the karnams also supported this illicit private assessment arrangement of the amildars, for various reasons. Firstly, the amount of illicit private assessment would always be less than the amount they had to pay as rent; secondly, the antagonism with the amildars would give them the opportunity of evading payments by way of keeping them as outstanding balances; thirdly, if they allowed the amildar to follow illegal means to gain incomes, the amildars in return would not have any moral stand to question the misappropriation and miscalculations of the land revenue collections done by the patels and the karnams. Moreover the rich ryots of the village also dared not to complain against their patel or karnam for they were the most influential persons in and out side the village and the patels and the karnams promised to get low rents and favourable assessments at the time of leases to their villages (mostly the rich ryots benefited out this).