

## RYOTWARI SYSTEMS IN RAYALASEEMA

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### **Abstract:**

Munro introduced Ryotwari settlement in 1801 in Cuddapah , Kurnool, Anantapur and Chittoor districts. This system was adopted in all non-permanently settled villages. Land survey was conducted in Rayalaseema districts. A standard measure was used by the surveyors-A Chain of 33 feet- 40 square chains making an acre. This historical which in later years under went several changes remained a safe guide in most village disputes.

**Keywords:** Ryotwari settlements, Land Survey, Tuckavi, Assessment, Karanam , Tahsildar

Munro introduced the detailed ‘**Kulwar**’ or **ryotwari** settlement in Fasali 1211 (1801-1802) in Cuddapah, Kurnool, Anantapur districts<sup>1</sup>. This system was also introduced in Chittoor district. The ryotwari settlement was effected individually with the cultivators. The village headman was held responsible for defaulting or absconding ryots<sup>2</sup>. This system was eventually adopted in all non –permanently settled villages<sup>3</sup>.

During the quinquennium following 1802, Munro conducted a survey of Rayalaseema districts. This historic survey, or the ‘**Paimaish**’<sup>4</sup>, which in later years underwent several changes, remained ‘a safe guide in most village disputes’<sup>5</sup>. The pattern of the settlement was such that the whole of the cultivated area of the district was surveyed, a number given to each field, the name of the holder registered and the assessment fixed. All land was measured with the exception of hills and rocks. The cultivable fields were distinguished by their names and also by a number assigned to each. A standard measure was used by the surveyors - a chain of 33 feet - 40 square chains making an acre. The lands, both wet and dry, which had been by custom divided into the first, second and third sorts, according to their produce, were subdivided, wet into five or six and dry into eight or ten by the assessors with the help of the Patel, the Karnam and the cultivators. The location of the land and the fertility of its soil determined its class. “The business was begun by fixing the sum which was to be the total revenue of the district. This was usually effected by the collector in a few days by comparing the collections under the Native princes, under the Company’s Government from its

commencement, the estimates of the ordinary and head assessors and the opinions of the most intelligent natives and after a due consideration of the whole, adopting such a sum as it was thought would be the fair assessment of the district in its present state or what the inhabitants in similar circumstances under a Native Government would have regarded at somewhat below the usual standard<sup>6</sup>. Then followed the village-wise distribution of the sum allotted for the division. The inequities, if any, in such allocations among villages were sought to be remedied by a process of investigation, initiated through the ryots of neighbouring villages. The rents of lands, rated according to their quality, were then registered and were either confirmed or modified at the end of the year. Extra remissions granted to one set of villages were deducted from another, more favourably situated<sup>7</sup>.

The result of this survey, on its completion in 1806-07, was to declare the extent of land actually in cultivation in the Ceded Districts to be 3,203,850 acres, while that of land fit for cultivation was estimated to be 12,066,923 acres. The assessment fixed 'upon the cultivated area in 1807 was Pagodas 18,52955, and the total assessment of the arable area was fixed at Pagodas 39,54,417<sup>8</sup>.

Excluding the revenue of Cumbum, Markapur and Koilkuntla taluks which, on an average, yielded 4½ lakhs of rupees, the assessment for the Cuddapah district (including Kadiri, Madanapalle and Vayalpad taluks) stood at Rs. 12 lakhs in 1800-01 and at Rs. 17 lakhs in 1806-07<sup>9</sup>.

The inequity in the assessments based on Munro's survey was essentially due to the fact that the total demand was first fixed for the district and then distributed among the villages. The adjustment of individual demands so as to sustain the charge on the village involved relief to some and exaction from others. Likewise, the inter-village adjustments ordered by Munro, through the agency of the neighboring villagers themselves, resulted in mutual bitterness and acrimony. Added to this there was a bewildering variety of rates\*\* of assessment imposed on different soils which had no close relation to their productivity. Apart from the chief consideration of revenue, extraneous factors such as the ryot's nativity and caste and his economic means seemed to have also crept into the scheme of settlement and collection. The concessions proposed by Munro prior to his departure in 1807 by way of a general reduction of assessment by 25 per cent with an additional 8 per cent cut on lands under small tanks were found unacceptable to Government<sup>10</sup>.

The cultivation of 1801-1802 could commence, **tuckavi**, or advance to the cultivators, had to be made. In a circular, dated 16<sup>th</sup> June 1801, Munro lays down the rules to be followed in making these advances; and, though this system is no longer in force, it is worthwhile to glance at it: he says, “I have resolved to adopt four percent of the gross settlement of the current year as the standard for granting **tuckavi**. By the gross settlement I mean the sum total of land rent before deducting the collections under the Nizam’s government. No district is, in any instance, to receive a greater proportion than four per cent., though some may receive less when it does not appear that the ryots stand in need of so much.” The distribution of the advances was to be left to the Amildar or Tahsildar, and the purposes for which advances were to be given were “various, the purchase, of seed, of the implements of husbandry, of bullocks, for the repair of old or digging of new wells, and not unfrequently for the subsistence of the ryot till his grain is ready for cutting. The Amildar must proportion his advances according to the particular wants of the ryots, giving t one man 2, to another 20, and to a third 50 rupees, but never exceeding this last sum without an express order..... To obviate any doubts that might arise regarding the sum to be advanced, I shall specify the total for each division, leaving it to you to regulate the proportion to your different districts.”

	<b>Star Pagodas.</b>
Harpanhully	6,000
Adoni	3,200
Cuddapah	4,000
Cumbum	3,000

These rules for granting advance reveal such an intense state of poverty amongst the cultivating class that it seems very hard to believe that the high rates adopted by Munro were those calculated to raise it to a state of prosperity. Munro’s constant complaint is that the land has no selling price, and that the ryots are in the habit of changing their villages and migrating to other districts, and there can be nothing more conclusive of the state of the Cuddapah country than this. But in those days immediate revenue was required, and if Munro had gone gradually to work, he would no doubt soon have been replaced by some one more

energetic or more productive. Even to this day the rates in some parts of the main division are very high, and there are many instances in which land has no saleable price. In the subdivision matters, until very recently, were even worse, and in almost every village were lands assessed as high as twenty-five, thirty, and thirty-five rupees per acre. This, however, has now been changed, and in the settlement of 1872-73 all rates above Rupees 12 per acre were reduced to that sum.

The relief afforded by this measure is very considerable, and it will doubtless prove in the end remunerative to Government, for there are thousands of acres of cultivable land lying waste, because the ryots are too poor to spend the necessary money in preparing them for cultivation, as indeed might be expected from a system of rates which left the ryot so poor that the Government had to give him an advance to keep him alive whilst his grain was growing. The only wonder is that these exorbitantly high rates were ever paid, but a Solution of this may perhaps be found in the large mount of land given away on free tenure for **inams**, personal and service<sup>11</sup>.

Each succeeding year of Munro's administration saw a steady rise in the revenue throughout the whole of the Ceded Districts. The accounts of this district for this period include the taluqs of Cumbum, Markapoor, and Koilkuntla, which now form a portion of the Kurnool district; but excluding these (and on striking an average Munro found that they yielded 4½ lakhs of rupees) the figures stand thus for the district as it now exists:-

<b>Years</b>	<b>Rs.</b>
1800-1801	12,00,000
1801-1802	17,00,000
1802-1803	18,00,000
1803-1804	17,00,000
1804-1805	20,50,000
1805-1806	23,00,000
1806-1807	17,00,000

The fall in the revenue for the year 1803-04 is owing to the bad season. This was a year of scarcity almost amounting to famine, and the distress was aggravated owing to it, following on two other bad seasons (1801-1802 and 1802-1803)<sup>12</sup>.

The assessment of the year 1803 was more felt than one 25 per cent. Higher would be in an ordinary season. Had the country been longer under the Company's rule, and had the inhabitants been accustomed to a fixed rent, from which they knew any abatement would be temporary, Munro would have recommended a reduction of a lakh and a half of pagodas (circa Rupees 4,25,000) in the present settlement. But unfortunately their own habit of opposition to every further demand of what may have once been remitted, renders it imprudent to indulge them to the extent that might be required by their circumstances. The settlement, therefore, in most of the districts is higher than that of last year"<sup>13</sup>.

The above would seem harsh, especially when it is remembered that the rates of rent were enormously high, so much so that, though reduced when the settlement was concluded in 1807, they were afterwards in 1821, by one stroke of the pen, reduced 25 per cent and 33 per cent. When this, therefore, was the custom of the country to which the cultivators "cheerfully submitted," it is no longer a matter of surprise that the district was thinly populated (as we find Munro frequently complaining), that the ryots were continually emigrating, that the land had no saleable interest, and that it was necessary to give advances to the ryots "for their subsistence whilst the grain was growing".

The following season (1804) was a great contrast to those which had preceded it. The monsoon broke with the greatest fury, and an enormous number of tanks were swept away. The country had hitherto suffered from want of water, and it now suffered nearly as much from an over-supply. In a report to the Board, Munro calculates that 1,000 tanks and 800 channels had been breached, and estimates the costs of repairs to be at least seven lakhs of rupees. Without waiting for the sanction of Government, Munro, on his own responsibility, ordered his subordinates to spend an almost unlimited amount. His orders were at once carried out, and the repairs were so speedily effected that the following season was a remarkably good one, and showed an increase on the preceding one of three and a half lakhs of rupees (in this district). The next was also a good season, and a further increase of two and a half lakhs is shown. It was in this year that Munro, in writing to the Board, stated that "the settlement was nearly as high as it need be, and it is not likely that for some years it can receive any material augmentation"<sup>14</sup>.

The ryotwari system was also introduced in Kurnool district by Munro in 1211 Fasili (AD 1801-1802). The total demand was first fixed for the district and then distributed among the villages<sup>15</sup>.

Munro also introduced the detailed ‘Kulwar’ or ryotwari settlement in Anantapur district<sup>16</sup>.

The survey envisaged the ascertainment of the “actual extent of land cultivated, the different descriptions of it, both with reference to the tenures under which it was held, and the kind of produce which it yielded, what quantity a given portion of seed would yield of a particular produce, and what was the extent of land either uncultivated or waste.”<sup>17</sup> It was commenced in 1802 and completed in 1805. The classification of lands which began in 1804 was completed by 1806. The survey recorded the extent of each field with its boundaries and its number, the name of its holder and the assessment fixed.

All land of whatever kind, except hills and beds of rivers, was measured and the fields were registered by their names as well as numbers. Cultivated land was distinguished from waste, wet and garden from dry and Government from inam. The lands, both wet and dry, which had been customarily divided into first, second and third sorts according to their productivity, were sub-divided, wet into five or six and dry into eight or ten classes, by the assessors who visited the fields with the village officers and the cultivators. A table specifying the different classes of soil and the rate of assessment suitable for each class was supplied to those engaged on classification and assessment. The lands of each village were divided into as many classes as were found necessary with a maximum limit of 10 classes for dry land, 8 for wet and 6 for garden land<sup>18</sup>.

**Munro,s money rates**

The table of money rates at first drawn up—taking the Kanthiraya pagoda and fanam as worth Rs. 2-14- 8 and Re. 0-4-8 respectively — was as under<sup>2</sup>:—

Number of rates	Dry land			Wet land			Garden land		
	19			12			20		
	Rs.	A.	P.	Rs.	A.	P.	Rs.	A.	P.
Highest rate	2	14	8	17	8	0	29	2	8

Lowest rate	0	2	4	1	7	4	1	7	4
Difference between each rate and the next	0	2	4	1	7	4	1	7	4

It was ruled that in no one village should there be more than ten rates for dry land, six for garden and eight for wet land. The money rates in force at present may be added for comparison:-

Number of rates	Dry land			Wet land		
	9			16		
	Rs.	A.	P.	Rs.	A.	P.
Highest rate	2	8	0	9	0	0
Lowest rate	0	2	0	1	0	0

Munro’s dry rates were thus higher than those now imposed and his wet rates very much higher ; and in the actual introduction of his settlement, as will be seen immediately, they were often enhanced greatly above the level to which in theory he professed to restrict them. The settlement was begun in 1804 and completed in 1806. The survey and settlement together cost, for the whole of the Ceded districts, 83,000 star pagodas or nearly three lakhs of rupees<sup>19</sup>.

**The method of fixing assessment**

The method of assessment was best described by Munro himself - “The business was begun by fixing the sum which was to be the total revenue of the ‘district’ (i.e., taluk). This was usually effected by the Collector in a few days by comparing the collections under the native rulers, under the Company’s Government from its commencement, the estimates of the ordinary and head assessors and the opinions of the most intelligent natives, and after a due



consideration of the whole adopting such a sum, as it was thought would be the fair assessment of the district (taluk) in its present state or what the inhabitants in similar circumstances under a native Government would have regarded at somewhat below the usual standard. It next remained to determine what share of the sum was to be imposed on each village and this was effected by causing lands of such villages as objected to, their assessment to be examined by other villages and each claim was admitted or modified according to the terms agreed upon between both parties. The village total thus determined was then distributed among the ryots in accordance with the classification of the fields they held.”<sup>20</sup> The rents of lands, rated according to their quality, were then registered and were either confirmed or modified at the end of the year. The poorest lands were assessed very lightly and the rates on the best soils were kept very high in order to make up the total due from the village.

### **Ryotwari settlements from 1802-03 to 1808-09**

For the next seven years (Fasalis 1212 to 1218, 1802-03 to 1808-09) the settlements continued to be conducted on the **ryotwari** principles thus inaugurated. Though 1801 and 1802 had been unfavorable seasons and 1803 was worse, and in 1804 a scarcity was followed by a disastrous flood, the area under cultivation and the revenue both continued to increase, and in 1805-06 the land revenue of the whole of the Ceded districts amounted to over 20 lakhs of Kanthiraya pagodas, or more than the high standard Munro had set himself to reach. The land revenue of Bellary and Anantapur together was in that year Rs. 25,29,000, or only Rs. 57,000 less than the similar revenue realised by Government from the two districts in 1874-75, the year before the great famine, when the area under cultivation was at its maximum and of course enormously larger than it had been in Munro’s time<sup>21</sup>.

The Ryotwari system was also introduced in Chittoor district. The rates varied according to the tribe or caste of the ryots. The Muslims and the Brahmins coming in for preferential treatment. A general survey and a classification of all lands was also made in A.D 1806. All these did not help in arriving at an equitable distribution of the incidence of land revenue. Some of the wet rates were oppressively high, particularly in Chittoor taluk with some lands assessed at nearly Rs.39 an acre. These evils hastened the introduction of the Permanent Settlement in 1218 F. (A.D. 1808-09) which had been earlier introduced in Bengal in A.D. 1793<sup>22</sup>. However, it cannot be asserted that the ryotwari settlement gave adequate protection to the Ryots against corrupt and arbitrary proceedings. A moderate assessment



depended much upon the ability of the Ryots to purchase the favour of the public officials, particularly the corrupt Karanam and the Tahasildar<sup>23</sup>.

The administrators displayed a tendency to collect as much as possible from the helpless cultivators, whether the season was good or bad and whether cultivated the entire field or not. As a result the Ryots were subjected to oppression, torture and forced labour and deprived of their possessions<sup>24</sup>.

Further, the system greatly contributed to agricultural indebtedness. The peasants needed money to purchase seeds to cultivate the fields and to pay the taxes. The period from 1810 to 1830 was marked by severe depression. The prices of agricultural products declined sharply but no remissions could be obtained<sup>25</sup>.

#### References :

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- <sup>1</sup> C.F. Brackenbury, Madras District Gazetteers, Cuddapah District, New Delhi, 2000.p.149.
  - <sup>2</sup> H. Rajendra Prasad, (Ed.), Andhra Pradesh District Gazetteers, A Manual of the District of Cuddapah in the Presidency of Madras (Originally published in 1875), Hyderabad, 1992, p.153.
  - <sup>3</sup> Court of Directors, Revenue Dispatches to Madras, 12-04-1815, Paras, 50-126
  - <sup>4</sup> This survey was made with a chain of 33 ft. long. The unit of area called Kunta measured on pole each in length and width. It was 33x33 sq. ft. or 121 sq. yards and 40 such units or kuntas made an acre.
  - <sup>5</sup> Gribble, Gribble, Manual of the District of Cuddapah in the Madras Presidency, Madras, 1875, p. 122.
  - <sup>6</sup> Dr. B.S. Baliga, Studies in Madras Administration, Vol.II, Madras, 1960, p.139.
  - <sup>7</sup> Bh. Sivasankaranarayana, (Ed.), Andhra Pradesh District Gazetteers, Cuddapah (Revised Edition), Hyderabad, 1967, pp.495-96.
  - <sup>8</sup> H. Rajendra Prasad, (Ed), n. 2, p.155.
  - <sup>9</sup> Bh. Sivasankaranarayana, (Ed.), n. 7, p.496.
  - <sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 496
  - <sup>11</sup> H. Rajendra Prasad, (Ed.), n.2, pp.153-154.
  - <sup>12</sup> Ibid, pp.155-156.
  - <sup>13</sup> The actual increase in the whole of the Ceded Districts was 26,558 pagodas, or about 82,232 rupees. The increase, therefore, in the Bellary and Cumbum portions must have been considerable, since in this district there was an actual decrease of about one lakh. The italics are again my own.
  - <sup>14</sup> H. Rajendra Prasad, (Ed.), n.2, pp.157-158.
  - <sup>15</sup> M.V. Raja Gopal (Ed.), A.P. District Gazetteers, Kurnool District, Hyderabad, pp.154-155.
  - <sup>16</sup> Bh. Sivasankaranarayana, n.7, p.509.
  - <sup>17</sup> John Kelsall, Manual of the Bellary District, Madras, 1872, p.146.
  - <sup>18</sup> Bh. Sivasankaranarayana, n.7, p.510.
  - <sup>19</sup> S. Venkataramaiah, (Ed.), A.P. District Gazetteers, p.137-138.
  - <sup>20</sup> Report from the Principal Collector of the Ceded Districts to the Board of Revenue dated 26th July, 1807 (page 117, Selection of Papers from the Records at the East Indian House Vol.1).
  - <sup>21</sup> Ibid, p.139., see also Paragraph 11 of B.P. No.50. Revenue Settlement dated

27th February 1890.

<sup>22</sup> N. Ramesan, (Ed.), A.P. District Gazetteers, Hyderabad, 1979, p.125.

<sup>23</sup> Mukherjee Nilamani, The Ryotwari System in Madras, Calcutta, 1962, p. 470

<sup>24</sup> Board of Revenue Consultations, 1818, Vol 241, pp. 4703-4706

<sup>25</sup> Madurai District records, Vol. 533, pp. 162-164