

# GAZETTEER OF INDIA



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ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

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## CHAPTER—XI

### REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

#### I. Land revenue administration

##### *Early Period :*

The earliest evidence of land administration in this part of the land is available from the Bahur plates belonging to the IX century which record the gift of three villages near Pondicherry for a *Vidyastana*.<sup>1</sup> According to the report submitted by the headman of the *nadu*, the boundaries of the land granted (to the Bahur College) were as follows: Of the two villages of Vilangattangaduvanur and Settupakkam, the eastern boundary is to the west of the boundary of a forest and of the boundary of Nenmalipakkam; the southern boundary is to the north of the boundary of Nenmalipakkam of the boundary of Nelvayipakkam, and of the boundary of Urathur; the western boundary is to the east of the boundary of Mambakkam and of sixty rice fields which form a Brahmedeya, near Vilangattangaduvanur; and the northern boundary is to the south of Vagur.<sup>2</sup>

The Bahur plates also provide us interesting details of boundaries, Natural objects having permanent locations such as rivers, mountains and rocks, canals, big trees, etc. were marked as boundaries in those days. The common fencing in the days of the Pallavas was stones and milk bush. *Kallum kalliyum natti* is a statement found in many of the inscriptions. All the villages and lands within the kingdom seem to have been surveyed and detailed records of the land rights, including schedules of tax-free lands were maintained by the village and district officers, and any alteration or transference of ownership was duly noted in the registers.<sup>3</sup>

It will be gathered from these records that the village and the central government of this period took the greatest pain in maintaining a detailed record of all the available and waste lands, lakes, tanks, wells and rivers, rocks and even trees for purposes of not only grants of land to temples and Brahmanas, but also for revenue purposes.<sup>4</sup>

The Kasakkudi (in Karaikal) plates refer to *nilakkalattar adhikarar* and *Vayil kelpar*, who are said to be officials responsible for fixing the boundaries of cultivable fields - a kind of survey officers who had to be present when the transference of ownership took place or more simply *kalam* may mean departments and *nilakkalattar* officers of the land department.<sup>5</sup>

There were different kinds of tenures viz. *payalnilam*, where the produce was shared equally by the landlord and the tenant, *adinilam* a proportion of whose produce was due to the king; and *karainilam* which was subject to periodical redistribution among tenants.<sup>6</sup>

Under the Cholas, however, the system underwent some changes. We are told that lands and homes provided the primary subjects of taxation. Lands were classified into different grades, as many as twelve or more grades (*taram*). There were also unclassified lands known as *taramili*. That revenue from agricultural lands was periodically reassessed and the classification of lands revised from time to time in accordance with changes in cropping, fertility and so on is amply borne out by the inscriptions.<sup>7</sup> Prof. Nilakanta Sastri refers to a record\* of the reign of Rajadhiraja - I from Thirubuvanai (near Pondicherry) according to which "the annual share of the landlord on 72 *yelis* of land was 12,000 *kalam*s of paddy, giving an average of 166 and  $\frac{2}{3}$  *kalam*s per *veli*; and that after remitting this amount of paddy, the tenants cultivating these lands were to be held liable only for *eri-ayam*, *padi-kaval-kuli*, free labour (*amanji*) on the bank and not for any other customary dues (*marijadi*) of the *pidagai* (section of the village) such as *vellam irai*, *ulavirai*, *al-and-amanji*.<sup>8</sup>

Not much useful information is available about the system of revenue administration under the Vijayanagar rulers.

#### *Mughal period :*

The king was the sole proprietor of all lands and he granted it to anybody according to his will and pleasure, either freely or for a small fee. The country was divided into *subahs* which again were sub-divided into *sarkars* each of which in turn comprised a number of *parganahs*,<sup>9</sup> Each *parganah* was a union of several villages placed under the control of an *amaldar* assisted by a large subordinate staff. It is not known how far the system introduced by Muslim rulers was prevalent in this territory. However, from the Diary of Ananda Rangapillai, it could be made out that the practice of dividing the country into *parganahs* and appointing *amaldars* was in vogue here.

\* Annual Report of Epigraphy (176 of 1919).

*French period :*

We have little information about the land revenue administration during the whole of XVIIIth century. What little information we have tends to suggest that the French merely followed the system which prevailed under the Nawab's rule with little or no alteration.

Even though the French established their *loge* in Pondicherry as early as 1673, they came to be firmly established here only from 1699, when the territory was restored to them by the Dutch. The French had then purchased from the Dutch all rights of sovereignty over the town of Pondicherry and its immediate surroundings. According to Paul Kaepelin, the Dutch, during their six-year occupation, had already given a start to financial organisation which François Martin adopted in 1699.<sup>10</sup> But the details of the system are unfortunately not available. The old principle that all lands belonged only to the King was maintained by the French Company. As Falgayrac says : "there was no individual ownership. France became, in the place of Indian kings, the sole proprietor of all lands."<sup>11</sup> Hence, the Company was always free to take away any land required for safeguarding its interest.

Lands at that time were either farmed out to renters who, in turn, gave them to other sub-renters or leased out direct to the ryots themselves.<sup>12</sup>

Lands were farmed out normally for a period of five years. This was so because prospects of farming were not always the same. Loss sustained in a lean period could be made good when harvests were good.<sup>13</sup>

The renters also leased out the lands to ryots under *adamanom*.\* The *adamanom* was of two sorts : *varam* and *tirvai*. Under *tirvai* the land was granted to the ryots on a fixed rent. Under *varam* the produce was shared between the farmers and the ryots. In both the cases, however, deductions amounting to about 10 per cent were made from the crop towards payment for village servants, artisans, temples, etc. before the ryot was allowed to remove any portion of the harvest.

Normally the choice was left to the ryot who preferred always the *adamanom tirvai*, because, in the case of *tirvai* he was master of his land more than in the case of *varam* where he was only the slave of the farmer.

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\* An agreement or contract subscribed between the ryot and the renter (farmer).

The land was classified either as paddy (wet) land or small grain (dry) land. The dry land was usually assigned on a fixed rent (*tirvai*) while the wet land was either rented or cultivated according to the crop-sharing system.

In the case of lands having irrigation facilities, *varam* gave more to farmers than to cultivators who used to receive only  $1/3$  of the crop, and sometimes from  $2/5$  to  $9/20$  of the crop, according to the nature of the land. In the case of lands irrigated with some difficulty, *varam* gave equal share. In these two cases, the cultivator who had the choice preferred always *adamanom* on *tirvai*. The reason for this was that the cultivator was free after the amount of *tirvai* was once fixed and he was not too much worried about the payment, because he was sure that his land could produce without much difficulty in two crops more than what he had to pay to the farmer. Moreover, there were lands of three crops also. The accounts were usually settled in two crops under *tirvai*. In the first *samba* crop which was always an abundant one, the cultivator paid  $2/3$  of his *tirvai* and in the second *kar* crop which was neither so good nor so abundant, he paid the balance. And if the land was ready for a third crop, the entire benefit from this went to the cultivator.

As already referred to, *adamanom* was generally subscribed for five years. If for any reason the cultivator could not have fifteen crops in all these five years, he would have at least fourteen and, therefore, there might not be any chance for a conflict between him and the farmer; but at the end of the fifth year which fell normally in the month of June, the cultivator was bound to complete the harvest and to leave the land free for the next lease. If however, at this time eight or ten days more were required for the paddy to become ripe, the cultivator could obtain an extension of time by giving some gifts to the farmer; but if more time was necessary, the crop went into the new accounts of the farmer.

In respect of the lands subjected to scarcity of water, where the water had to be baled out with *picottah*, *varam* gave more to the cultivator than to the farmer. The latter got only  $9/20$  or  $2/5$  or even less of the harvest. In such cases, the cultivator preferred the lands for *adamanom* on *varam*. Under *tirvai*, he would run the risk of giving to the farmer more than the land could give him.<sup>14</sup>



The assignment of lands on *adamanom* was announced to the people by beat of tom-tom and it was effected by giving *cowles*\* containing the rates for lands.<sup>15</sup> The deeds pertaining to *adamanoms* were registered with the local notary called **Tabellion**. The quantum of share indicated in one deed was the basis to fix the share for the subsequent *adamanom*. Hence, a ryot was often tempted to indicate in the deed the quantity of his share a little less than the quantity actually paid by him. He would persuade, in this connection, the existing farmer by giving some gifts to him. Even though such manipulations could be detected at a later stage, the new farmer could not evict forcibly a ryot from his land in order to give it to another one. According to the established custom followed from time immemorial, land had to be passed on from father to son in every family, though it did not belong to them.<sup>16</sup>

Land revenue was collected by the *amaldars* posted in each *pargana*h or group of villages. They were assisted by one or two peons appointed by the government. They were bound to give the renter and the farmer accounts in respect of each year and each village. The collected amount should normally be remitted to the government before the time limit fixed for the purpose. However, permission was granted to the *amaldar* to remit the arrears after the due date provided they gave *nazars* (gift) to the Governors and lessees.<sup>17</sup> *Nattars* or heads of the villages helped the *amaldars* in performing their duties.

To mark the starting of the collection of land revenue, the practice of tying *toranams* and hoisting flags in each village seems to have been followed in those days. The *amaldars* or the *nattars* themselves did the needful and passed on to the farmer the accounts of expenditure incurred in this connection.

While collecting their share, the farmers levied also some other petty taxes, namely *resum* (customary perquisites) and *sadalwar* (contingencies) at the rate of ten per cent of the total amount, the salaries of the *sibandhis* (employees), etc. Sometimes a certain amount had to be collected towards meeting the expenditure incurred on the European soldiers and coolies admitted in the hospital.<sup>18</sup>

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\* A *cowle* is an agreement to hand over land without payment for a certain period or on payment for a certain period of a diminished assessment gradually rising to full assessment—Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, i.e. soon after the French took over the establishments from the British (1816), the French brought forward some legislation, not only to regulate the system of farming out lands, but also to improve the different cultivations. Thus, for the first time an **Ordonnance Royal** was issued on 25 October 1826.<sup>19</sup> Under this ordinance, lands were to be perpetually farmed out to Europeans or their descendants enjoying all the rights of a French citizen on condition that the land should be brought under cultivation within a fixed time. The farmers had to pay a security equal to two years lease amount and were allowed to rent out their lands to others.

The average of the last fifteen years harvest was fixed as the price of the farm which was to be paid every year in the **Domaine** in two equal instalments, i.e. on 1 March and then on 1 July. At the end of fifteen years in the case of wet lands, and six years in the case of *porombokes* the ownership was to be transferred to the farmers who thereafter could sell, transfer, hypothecate and give up their lands, wholly or partly.

The farmer, with the help of the *écrivain*\* had to draw up every year in the month of July and in respect of each ryot, a contract called *patta* stating the extent of lands to be cultivated by him, the taxes due on such lands, the share due to the ryot (*varam*) and the terms of payment. The *pattas* were to be drawn in duplicate, signed by the lessor, the *écrivain* and the cultivator and registered in the **Bureau du Domaine**.

The **ordonnance** further prescribed that the farmer should give every year to the cultivators interest-free advance called *varakam* which was to be not less than one-fifth of his share of the cost of cultivation. Similarly, if in any year the harvest was less than the average of three preceding years, the farmer was bound to give a remission to the ryot. Reciprocally, if the ryot failed to remit his dues, the farmer had the right to attach and confiscate the harvest with the help of the *écrivain* and the *taléaris* (peons) in the presence of four notables.

After sometime it was found that the above **ordonnance** was not adequate to set right matters regarding the ownership of lands which was till then decided according to the old customs and conventions. To determine, once for

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\* His function was similar to that of a *karnam*.

all, the rights of the Government as well as the rights of the individuals on the lands, it was felt necessary to issue another ordinance. Hence, by repealing the above said ordinance of 25 October 1826 the ordinance of 7 June 1828 was issued to regulate the ownership of lands and the collection of land tax.<sup>20</sup> This is the basic and primordial law to which one has to refer even now for matters relating to the origin of land ownership.

According to this ordinance (1828), all the lands in Pondicherry region were divided into four categories :

(a) The first category included all lands over which the Government had given away the right of ownership. These lands were permanently transferred to private persons without any payment of rent and in some cases on payment of a fixed rent in cash. They are the dwelling sites in Pondicherry town, *manais* and *manaimappus* of villages, garden lands, *sanad maniams* or lands offered by Indian princes or French Government in recognition of services rendered, *devasthanams* or lands donated to temples, choultries, religious and charitable institutions and finally the *tarpadimaniams* or lands given to village servants as remuneration for their services.

Although these lands could be freely enjoyed by the proprietors, this right of enjoyment was subject to certain restrictions. The dwelling sites and the village *manais* should not be converted into any other kind of land. The *devasthanam* lands could not be sold, given in exchange, mortgaged or leased out, except with the prior permission of the government. *Devasthanam* lands will automatically become government lands when the purpose for which they were initially assigned was not fulfilled. The *tarpadimaniam* lands could neither be sold nor mortgaged. They could, however, be given on long lease or exchanged with the permission of the government. So far as lands conceded on payment of rent were concerned, the possessors could keep them as long as they wanted and part with them by executing a deed to this effect with the government.

(b) The second category comprised of lands permanently given by the government to private persons retaining, however, the right of ownership. These were called *adamanams*. These lands were subject to a tax in cash proportionate to the average value of the crops raised on the lands varying from 32 per cent to 48 per cent. The owners of *adamanam* land had the right to alienate their properties or to mortgage them. But they could not dispose of by

parcelling out these lands. They could raise all kinds of crops and improve the irrigation facilities. But the tax to be paid by them could never be increased or revised. Besides, they were exempted from payment of all fees due to the *sibandhis* and other charges like *sevandiram* and *murai* paid to *naynars*, *nottakkarars*, *thottis*, *talearies* and *comboukarars*. Nonetheless, they were always bound to pay the village servants not paid by the Government, besides such contribution to temples and some other customary dues. Muslims and Brahmins enjoyed a concession known as *mina* of 10 per cent on the tax over *adamanom* lands in Villiyanur and Bahur Communes.

Cultivators who held *adamanom* lands were given an advance in the month of August every year in proportion to the extent of lands held by them to meet the agricultural expenses. They had to repay the loan without interest in two equal instalments on 15 January and 15 May every year.

All land leased on *adamanam* was subjected to a tax payable in cash at the following rates based on the average yield of the land :<sup>21</sup>

48 per cent for paddy lands irrigated by channels, tanks, etc.

43 per cent for paddy lands irrigated with the help of *picottahs*.

32 per cent for paddy lands irrigated with the help of small *picottahs*.

The tax was payable in seven instalments by the holders of *adamanom* land as follows :

15 November	..	3 per cent.
15 December	..	5 per cent.
15 January	..	15 per cent.
15 February	..	20 per cent.
15 March	..	20 per cent.
15 April	..	15 per cent.
15 May	..	20 per cent.

They were allowed to harvest the crops only after full payment of the tax or after furnishing sufficient security. In case they were in default, *adamanom* lands were attached and taken over by the government.

They were entitled to a remission of tax in case the yield was less than half the normal yield in accordance with the findings of a commission composed of a *tahsildar* or *bécheqar*, revenue officials and four notables.

Those who, under force of circumstances, wanted to part with their *adamanom* holdings were required to execute a *rasinamah* deed in the presence of two witnesses and the *écrivain* and the *régisseur* or the farmer of the village and **commis du Bureau du domaine**. The deed should then be approved by the **Receveur du Domaine** (custodian of government property).

(c) The third category included all *poromboke* lands, that is to say, all lands under the enjoyment and ownership of the government. They were classified into three groups: cultivated lands, cultivable fallow, uncultivable or waste lands. Only the cultivated lands were leased out for a limited period.

The *poromboke* lands could be sold, assigned with or without rent, given as *adamanom* or leased out for a short period. The sale was effected by tender or auction. The assignment was offered for a fixed rent subject to the condition that sugarcane and other cash crops were raised within a period of three years on the cultivable fallow lands. *Adamanoms* or leases were executed on an agreement to pay a tax proportionate to the value of the crops raised on the fields.

(d) The fourth category included all lands which did not fall under the category of private property or under the aforesaid classification of lands and which might be considered as public property.

This fourfold classification of lands was followed without any major change till the year 1853.

The above ordinance provided for the payment of land tax directly to the '*domnine*'. The dues in respect of *adamanom* lands and the lease amount in respect of lands farmed out were to be collected by the **Receveur du Domaine** who received in this connection an allowance at the rate of one per cent. The villages farmed out were administered by the *pattamaniagars* (*régisseurs*) selected from among the notables and appointed by the Governor.

The *pattamaniagars* were to be under the control of *tahsildars* and *béchechars*. In respect of the rented out lands, an allowance at the rate of half per cent of the amount collected was given to the *tahsildars* and the *béchechars*.

Every year during the first fortnight, the farmers and *régisseurs* had to submit to the **Receveur du Domaine** a nominal list indicating the required remissions, the arrears and the advance or *varacoms* to be sanctioned to the cultivators. Thereupon, the **Receveur du Domaine** after inspecting the villages and hearing the concerned persons, had to submit to the government a general statement of collection to be made. These statements, duly approved by the Governor, were returned to the farmers and *régisseurs*.

The farmers were entitled to a certain percentage of their collection towards meeting the collection expenditure. This percentage was fixed as follows :

	Percentage
Where collection was less than 600 pagodas ..	12
Where it was from 601 to 1,200 pagodas ..	10
Where it was 1,201 pagodas and above ..	8

The *régisseurs* were entitled to an allowance proportionate to the amount collected by them at the following rate :

Collection	Percentage
From 300 to 400 pagodas ..	5
From 401 to 550 pagodas ..	4½
From 551 to 700 pagodas ..	4
From 701 to 900 pagodas ..	3½
From 901 to 1,200 pagodas ..	3
From 1,201 and above pagodas ..	2½

It was prescribed that the collection of each *régisseur* should not be less than 300 pagodas. These were the salient features of the **Ordonnance** of 7 June 1828.

It may be seen that the ordinance did not envisage any major deviation from the old principle that gave the king the exclusive right over the land. Hence the local people at several times raised objections against the ordinance; but for a long time no attention was paid to their objections. At last, the Governor referred the matter to a Commission which came to be known as **Commission d'Agriculture et de Commerce** constituted in the year 1848.<sup>22</sup> This Commission recommended two things: (1) a remission of tax, (2) the conferment of ownership rights to the cultivators.

Following the advice of the commission several letters were sent from France asking the local government to reduce the heavy burden of tax imposed on the cultivators. Some changes in the system of taxation was also felt necessary for simplifying the accounts of the **Domaine**. Consequently an **arrêté** was issued on 19 February 1853 giving a general remission of tax with effect from 15 July 1854 at the following rates : 23

23 per cent for assigned lands.

33 per cent for *adamanom* lands.

50 per cent for uncultivated lands.

The same **arrêté** also fixed the land tax to be collected in future at the rate of one-fourth of the gross income derived from the lands. All special concessions such as *mina* were also abolished.

Following the fixation of the rate of land tax, the lands were classified according to their nature into two broad categories such as wet lands and dry lands which were further subdivided into different classes as follows :

Class (1)	Wet lands (land tax per kany) (2)			Dry lands (land tax per kany) (3)		
	Rs.	Fs.	Cs.*	Rs.	Fs.	Cs.
1st class .. ..	18	5	8	9	2	16
2nd class .. ..	17	4	0	8	1	8
3rd class .. ..	16	2	16	7	0	10

\* Rupees, fanams, caches.

**Fanam** was a local coin equal to 1/8 of a rupee. **Cache** was equal to 1/24 of a fanam.

	(1)			(2)			(3)		
			Rs.	Fs.	Cs.*	Rs.	Fs.	Cs.	
4th class	..	..	15	1	8	5	6	16	
5th class	..	..	14	—	0	4	4	8	
6th class	..	..	12	6	16	4	1	14	
7th class	..	..	11	5	8	3	4	0	
8th class	..	..	10	4	11	2	6	10	
9th class	..	..	9	2	16	2	2	16	
10th class	..	..	8	1	8	1	6	22	
11th class	..	..	7	0	0	1	3	5	
12th class	..	..	5	6	16	0	7	12	
13th class	..	..	4	5	8				
14th class	..	..	3	4	0				
15th class	..	..	3	2	16				
16th class	..	..	1	1	8				

As regards the conferment of ownership rights to the cultivators, it was considered that such a step would not only strengthen the relationship between the cultivator and his land, but also increase thereby the productive capacity of the land to the advantage of the government. An Imperial décret was issued on 16 January 1854 under which all land-holders were declared the undisputed owners of the lands they cultivated, provided they had cleared the payment of tax.<sup>24</sup>

All land-holders were thus conferred the right of full ownership viz., with independent saleable rights. At the same time all land-holdings were again divided into the following three broad categories for the purpose of land tax collection :

1. Holdings belonging to the proprietors in accordance with the provisions of the Imperial decree of 1854.
2. Lands assigned with or without payment of rent.

\* Rupees, fanams, caches.



3. Government land leased out on request to parties subject to the payment of rent representing both land tax and lease amount at the same time.

This is in brief, the history of land revenue administration upto 1854.

*Survey and settlement :*

Land tax was collected on the basis of a *payemache*\* originally drawn up in 1806\*\* during the British interregnum and then modified in 1830 for Bahur and Villiyannur and then again between 1818 and 1860 for Pondicherry and Ozhukarai.<sup>25</sup>

The *payemache* was drawn up in palm leaves and contained village-wise all particulars of each field viz. serial number, name of the land, boundaries, measurement of each side in 24 ft. chain (7.31 metres) the extent in *kany* (equal to 53.53 ares), details of superstructures, number of crops grown, the amount of tax, nature of land and the mode of irrigation. The register also contained the total extent of private lands, government or municipal *poromboke* lands and the total area of the villages.

It was found that the classification of lands into two main categories as wet and dry land) did not facilitate the equitable imposition of taxes, as taxation was based mainly on irrigation facilities. In due course, many dry lands were converted into wet lands; but the tax imposed on them remained the same resulting in some sort of discrimination in the assessment of tax between landowners.

\* The old survey register showing the name of the owner of lands, its survey number, area, classification, surroundings and summary description of the land in local measurements (*kany, couji, visam*.)

\*\* J.H. Garstin mentions in the South Arcot District Gazetteer published in 1878 that before the French Districts were given up, they were carefully surveyed, and the original survey plans, bearing the signatures of Colin Mackenzie, Surveyor General of India, and Lieutenant Sim of the Engineers, and dated June 1816 is one of the most important records in the Special Agents Office. (vide p. 172).

It was not also found possible to levy tax properly on the basis of the *payemache*. In order to remedy the defects of the old system, the **Conseil Général** in its deliberations dated 28 and 30 January 1887, called for the preparation of survey maps indicating the boundaries of the communes, villages and lands. The *arrêté* issued on 4 March 1887 ordered the setting up of a **Cadastré** in Pondicherry and other communes. Under an agreement signed on 2 March 1887, the work was entrusted to De Closets, an Engineer on a remuneration of Rs. 150 per sq. km. Although he was expected to complete his work within a period of three years, progress was slow. The agreement was therefore cancelled on 16 May 1888.

The work was then entrusted to Engineer Quaintenne under an agreement signed on 21 October 1889 on a remuneration of Rs. 2-1/2 per hectare. He was asked to furnish in three years, (1) a sectional plan of the village (**plan parcellaire**) on a scale of 1/2000 showing the survey number of each revenue village, (2) a sectional plan of the commune on a scale of 1/10000, (3) a general plan of the communes on a scale of 1,40,000 and (4) a schedule giving all the necessary particulars for each section of land. 26

The *arrêté* of 6 November 1889 laid down the conditions for carrying out the work and also established a **Bureau du Cadastre** in the office of the 'Service des Contributions' to deal with all administrative aspects of the survey work. While the contractual work was under way, the Cadastre Office is said to have done nothing but hamper its work leading to the cancellation of the agreement in July 1893. The same month Quaintenne was appointed (as per the *arrêté* of 22 July 1893) **Géomètre en Chef** of the **cadastre**, and he began to set right matters. However, the proposal submitted by the administration to vote necessary funds for continuing the cadastral work was rejected by the **Conseil** which instead called for an investigation of the work carried out till then. This brought about the mission of Engineer Getten who went through the records and recommended their early utilisation.<sup>27</sup> The **Conseil Général** which took up the question in 1897 accepted in principle the proposal that every type of land-holder should be made liable to pay land tax and voted the funds required for carrying on the work which was duly approved by the *arrêté* of 18 April 1898. A Commission was also constituted to determine the nature and the net income of each portion of land in the entire region of Pondicherry.

On the basis of the recommendations of this commission, lands were to be broadly classified into three categories :

1. Irrigated lands or wet lands.
2. Non-irrigated lands or dry lands.
3. Waste, non-cultivable lands (*manavaries*).

The first two categories were to be divided into three classes each and the third category was to consist of only one class. But this work of classification came to a standstill the very next year for want of funds.

In 1899 the **Conseil Général** again refused to vote funds for carrying on the work and called upon the administration to study the question and submit details of the proposal based on the new formula of land tax. The work remained somehow bogged down till 1908 when the question came up again for consideration. The proposals submitted by the **Chef du Service des Contributions** on 20 July 1908 was finally approved by the **décret** of 9 July 1913 and came to be enforced by the **arrêté** of 11 August 1914. Thus the survey work in the different regions was undertaken during different periods as noted below :

Pondicherry	..	1889—1910
Yanam	..	1887—1890
Karaikal	..	1912—1920
Mahe	..	1929—1932

The land records so prepared were as follows :

1. Copy of the **plan parcellaire** i.e. map prepared on a scale of 1/2000 showing survey numbers for each revenue village.
2. Copy of the **tableau synoptique** i.e. a register grouping in serial order all survey numbers of a revenue village with the following particulars: Nature of lands (wet, dry, barren); classification, ownership (*patta* or *poromboke*); if *patta*, the number of the same; if *poromboke*, whether belonging to municipalities or Government, corresponding *payemache* number, area in metric system as well as in the local system.

3. Copy of the **matrice cadastrale** i.e. a register grouping holdings *pattadar*-wise in each revenue village and showing the following particulars: name of the owner of lands, survey number, classification, area in metric system.
4. Commune maps on a scale of 1/40,000 (40 metres are represented by 1 mm.). There are four such maps.
5. Section maps which consist of many villages on a scale of 1/10,000 (10 metres are represented by 1 mm.). There are twenty such maps.
6. Field maps (**plan parcellaire**) on a scale of 1/2,000 (2 metres are represented by 1mm.). These plot maps are drawn on a sheet of 106 cm × 66 cm size. There are three hundred and six such sheets.
7. **Tableau synoptique**.
8. **Matrice cadastrale**.
9. **Fiche cadastral** i.e. a separate sheet grouping holdings *pattadar*-wise in each revenue village. These are true copies of the **matrice cadastrale** in alphabetical order.
10. **Liasse**, i.e. registers giving particulars about classification, every survey number (10 years).
11. *Payemache* register i.e. an old survey register showing the name of the owner of lands, its survey number and its extent, its classification, surroundings and summary description of the land with the local measures (*kany, couji, visam*).
12. *Patta* register, i.e. showing *pattadar*-wise the cadastral survey number and the corresponding *payemache* number with the name of the owner and the area in local measures.
13. **Etat de section** i.e. a register showing particulars of survey number of the land with the name of its owner, classification and area in metric measures.

The records of survey number, holdings of *pattadars* and the village map were maintained at the village level by the **Surveillants du Domaine**. The **Bureau du Cadastre** maintained the maps of communes, villages, fields, holdings of *pattadars* etc. at the territorial level.

The land records as drawn up after 1887 continued in use at the village and territorial level until very recently.

Though the survey was done for each field, maps were not prepared for each field with the measurements. They were prepared only for each village and for each of the communes covering a number of villages and dividing the communes into sections. It was often found difficult to collect data about land ownership, tenancy, cropped area, fallows, etc. with the help of these records. In the case of tenancy lands, it was not so easy to know the names of tenants and the area of lands leased out. In order to remedy this situation, the Pondicherry Survey and Boundaries Act, 1967 was passed by the legislature in 1967 and the Directorate of Survey and Land Records was formed the same year to carry out a fresh survey. The re-survey operations were completed in August 1973. This survey not only took the measurements of the boundaries of each holding but also the details of persons owning and enjoying them.

The question of classification was also considered by the *Conseil Général* on 9 December 1909. It admitted that the old classification of lands into two categories of 16 and 12 classes (vide pp. 933-934) was cumbersome and complicated. But at the same time, it did not agree to reduce all of a sudden the 16 and 12 classes of each category into three classes only. By way of a compromise, the Council suggested three main categories, with six classes each in the first two categories and three in the third.<sup>28</sup> Accordingly it was also decided to constitute a Land Classification Commission to determine the category and the class of each land according to the new classification. The classification work actually commenced only after it was finally approved by the *Conseil d'Etat* in France under the *décret* of 9 July 1913 duly promulgated by the *arrêté* of 11 August 1914. Along with the Land Classification Commission for each area, a Superior Classification Commission was also formed in Pondicherry. The Superior Commission selected typical plots in some of the villages in Pondicherry region, estimated their net yield per hectare and communicated them to the local commissions to enable them to divide the lands into categories (as wet, dry, wooded or uncultivated) and classes. The Superior Commission fixed up five types for category two (dry lands) and two types for category three (waste lands) and stated that if any paddy field having a net yield equal to or higher than that of the 1st class in category one, it will be classified as class one, that having a net yield equal to or higher

than the second class, classified as second class and so on, so much so, the net yield which was less than that of the 5th class would be put in the sixth class.

The Classification Commission noted the survey number of each plot, the extent, the class to which it corresponded by comparison of its yield per *kany* with the list of prototypes of lands drawn up by the Superior Commission together with the name of the owner of the plot, the number of crops, the means of irrigation, the nature of crops raised, etc.

Following the publication of the report of the various commissions, aggrieved parties were free to lodge their objections. The objections were scrutinised, heard, and orders issued. Those who still felt grieved could appeal to the Superior Commission through the **Chef du Service des Contributions**. The Superior Commission was composed of the Chief of the Contribution as President. The Commission consisted of, besides a member of the **Conseil Général**, a delegate each of the **Chambre de Commerce** and the Chamber of Agriculture and the Government.

Significantly, the Commission had no authority to declare dry lands into wet lands even though water from government sources was utilized to irrigate the land. Whenever dry land was to be converted into wet land, the owner of the land concerned had to apply to the **Conseil du Contentieux Administratif** (Administrative Court). The Court sought the opinion of the Public Works Department on the feasibility of irrigating the dry land with water from government sources and only then passed orders wherever necessary, converting dry land into wet land. Only on receipt of such an order, the land was classified as wet land in the records of the Revenue Department and wet assessment as indicated in the order was collected.

In the meanwhile, the deliberation of 11 December 1912 had prescribed that a general revision of classification of lands should be carried out once in five years. Accordingly the next revision ought to have taken place in 1917. This was delayed due to the emergency following the First World War. The work relating to the classification was next sanctioned by the **arrêté** of 21 January 1919. Work was actually carried out in Pondicherry as per the **arrêté** of 26 May 1920, in Karaikal as per the **arrêté** of 28 August 1924 and in Yanam as per the **arrêté** of 2 September 1924.

The *arrêté* of 2 September 1929 which ordered the next classification work in Pondicherry was not carried out in view of the depression.

On 27 December 1931 the *Conseil Général* in its deliberation resolved that henceforth classification of lands should be carried out in Pondicherry, Karaikal and Yanam once every ten years and proposed the next classification to be carried out in 1935, 1936 and 1937 in Pondicherry, Yanam and Karaikal respectively. This was, however, not given effect to. The *Conseil Général* reaffirmed its faith in the 10 year schedule at the session of 12 December 1934 and ordered the reclassification of lands from one class to another on the basis of the increase in the yield of land or improvement in the potentiality of the soil, etc.

The work was actually carried out in Pondicherry in the year 1935, in Yanam in the year 1936 and in Karaikal in the year 1937. The last such operation was carried out in 1957. The next settlement due in 1967 was however, not carried out as the Administration decided to fix the rates according to the classification of soil and the fixation of *taram* as in Tamil Nadu. Hence the Pondicherry Settlement Act, 1970 was brought forward to decide the rate of assessment on each land generally following the principles of ryotwari settlement as in vogue in Tamil Nadu. The Act was passed on 7 April 1970 and the settlement operations started in December 1971.

Under the Pondicherry Settlement Act, 1970, lands are divided into groups and classes, based on the nature of their soil, their irrigation and cultivation facilities and other allied circumstances such as rainfall, marketing facilities and profits of agriculture. Lands of like-productive capacity are bracketed together into *tarams* or grades. The productive capacity is determined on the yield of the staple crops, usually food crops grown in the areas, and they are paddy in the case of wet lands, *ragi*, *cholam*, *cambu* and *varaḡu* in the case of dry lands. The number of *tarams* vary from region to region and it also differs for wet, dry, garden, *lanka* and *paduḡai* lands. Separate rates of assessment are attached to each *taram*. The rates of assessment per hectare are as follows :

## PONDICHERRY REGION

Taram	Wet	Dry
(1)	(2)	(3)
	Rs. P.	Rs. P.
1.	26.42	9.88
2.	23.48	8.32
3.	20.54	6.94
4.	17.60	5.56
5.	14.68	4.18
6.	13.13	3.38
7.	11.73	2.77
8.	10.18	2.00
9.	8.79	1.38
10.	7.41	0.91

## KARAIKAL REGION

Taram	Wet	Dry	<i>Padugai</i> (i.e. lands between the river embankments and the water course.)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Rs. P.	Rs. P.	Rs. P.
1.	41.07	20.39	20.39
2.	35.21	14.68	14.68
3.	29.33	11.73	—
4.	26.25	8.65	—



(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Rs. P.	Rs. P.	Rs. P.
5.	23.48	7.41	—
6.	20.39	5.85	—
7.	17.60	4.32	—
8.	14.68	3.71	—
9.	12.98	2.94	—
10.	11.73	2.15	—
11.	10.18	1.24	—
12.	8.65	0.62	—

## MAHE REGION

Taram	Wet	Garden	Dry
	Rs. P.	Rs. P.	Rs. P.
1.	24.39	41.07	8.32
2.	19.62	35.21	5.56
3.	14.68	29.33	4.18
4.	9.73	23.48	3.56
5.	7.41	17.60	2.79
6.	4.94	11.73	2.15
7.	2.47	5.85	1.38

## YANAM REGION

Taram	Wet	Dry other than lanka (islands in Gautami Godavari) and <i>padugai</i> lands	Dry
	Rs. P.	Rs. P.	Rs. P.
1.	35.21	20.39	32.12
2.	29.33	14.68	26.24
3.	26.24	11.73	20.39
4.	23.48	8.65	14.68
5.	20.39	7.41	11.73
6.	17.60	5.85	8.65
7.	14.68	4.18	7.41
8.	12.98	3.38	5.85
9.	11.73	2.77	4.18
10.	10.18	2.15	..
11.	8.65	1.38	..
12.	7.41	0.77	..

The resurvey and settlement operations in respect of agricultural lands in the territory were taken up and completed by 30 June 1973 in Pondicherry and Mahe regions and by 30 June 1974 in Karaikal and Yanam regions. The settlement operations included the fixation of assessment and preparation of Register of Rights showing the names of landowners, tenants, lessees, etc.

The new rates of assessment became effective from the *fasli* years 1383 and 1384 as detailed below :

Pondicherry	} Fasli 1383 (year commencing on 1 July 1973)
Mahe	

Karaikal }  
 Yanam } Fasli 1384 (year commencing on 1 July 1974)

For single crop lands, if changed into double crop lands in the course of the same year, and if irrigated with water from government source, the second crop charge on the land was half of the single crop assessment under the Act whereas it was 1/4 of the basic tax before its enforcement.

No exemption from land tax for lands held by *devasthanams*, charitable and religious institutions was granted in conformity with article 7 of the **délibération** dated 11 December 1912 according to which "all the lands of the Pondicherry settlement without exception shall be subject to land tax".

#### *Land revenue:*

In the beginning, the French Company itself exploited the lands directly and derived an income of 524 pagodas of which 229 came from Ariyankuppam, 84 from Kalapet and 76 from Olandai, the balance of 135 being the outcome of seven other negligible villages. The acquisition of Ozhukarai in 1706 increased considerably the revenue since it yielded first 566 pagodas and then nearly double this amount.<sup>29</sup>

By about 1710 when Hebert was the Governor, the Company resorted to the system of letting out lands to the renters for a specified number of years. The Company's revenue increased considerably under this system (42,553 French livres). Nainiappapillai who was then the Mudaliar (chief of the natives) evinced much interest in the affairs of the Company, and did much to improve the revenues to the extent possible. He was also instrumental for conducting negotiations with the Carnatic Nawab for obtaining the cession of Murungappakkam village which further raised the Company's income.<sup>30</sup> Yearwise details of income from land revenue are not available. However, from the random data available it becomes evident that there was a gradual increase in the income.

In June 1724 the Company farmed out the lands of Ariyankuppam and Ozhukarai villages to Guruvappapillai (nephew of Anandarangapillai) at the rate of 2,155 pagodas.<sup>31</sup>

In 1733, the lands were leased out for five years at the rate of 2,646 pagodas per annum. In 1738 the lease was renewed for another period of five years at an increased amount of 4,152 pagodas per year. <sup>32</sup>

In 1773, lands were leased out for a total sum of 7,885 pagodas as shown below :

Ozhukarai villages	..	2,017 pagodas
Border villages	..	2,557 ,,
Abhishekapakkam villages	..	2,692 ,,
Ariyankuppam villages	..	619 ,,
Total	..	<u>7,885 pagodas</u>

In 1791 the lands were leased out for a total sum of 2,33,925 livres as detailed below :

Villiyannur and Bahur	..	1,80,000 livres
Border villages	..	16,350 ,,
Alankuppam village	..	1,275 ,,
Abhishekapakkam and Ozhukarai		36,300 ,,
Total	..	<u>2,33,925 livres</u>

The income from land revenue in the year 1802 was placed at 6,378 star pagodas according to the South Arcot Gazetteer.

It is evident from official records that the rate of land tax had undergone some changes subsequently. For instance, the Government order of 8 July 1861 granted a temporary remission of 10% in view of the increase in the price of salt. Thereafter, the rate of land tax was not revised until 1912.

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\* This is based on the information contained in a manuscript available at the French Institute, Pondicherry. (*vide* Demandes et questions faite à Mr. Law par Mr. Bellecombe.

Based on the recommendations of the Land Classification Commissions a new schedule of land tax was drawn up in 1910.<sup>33</sup>

Class	Average net income per kany.	Rate
<i>Wet or paddy lands</i>		
	Rs.	Rs. *
1.	170	21.250
2.	140	17.500
3.	110	13.750
4.	80	10.000
5.	50	6.250
6.	20	2.500
		1/8 or 12½ percent
<i>Small grain lands (dry lands)</i>		
1.	135	16.875
2.	105	13.120
3.	80	10.000
4.	55	6.875
5.	35	4.375
6.	15	1.875
		1/8 or 12½ percent
<i>Waste lands</i>		
1.	30	3.750
2.	20	2.500
3.	8	1.000
		1/8 or 12½ percent

\* As per the decimal system 1000 millièmes — 1 Rupee.

Based on the above schedule, the Council fixed the rates of land tax. But the *délibération* fixing the rates as above was not approved by the Government. Again the *Conseil Général* discussed this question and finally decided in favour of the above rates in the sitting held on 11 December 1912.

The *Conseil Général* also passed a resolution on 30 December 1912, authorising the apportionment of 2.5 per cent of the land tax to the municipalities. This deliberation was finally approved by the *décret* of 8 September 1917 and was given effect to by the *arrêté* of 18 October 1917.<sup>34</sup>

As per the *délibération* of 30 December 1912, enforced by the *arrêté* of 24 January 1916, municipalities in the territory were entitled to receive an additional centage at not more than 20 per cent of the basic land tax in order to augment their resources. There were two kinds of centage charges viz. those required for ordinary and extraordinary items of expenditure. In both the cases, the maximum limit was fixed at 20 per cent.

The following statement gives the total income from land revenue during the first quarter of this century :—

Year	(In rupees)				
	Pondicherry	Karaikal	Mahe	Yanam	Total
1900	1,09,289	70,858	5,345	6,896	1,92,288
1902	1,09,250	70,858	5,345	7,262	1,92,715
1903	1,09,698	85,000	5,345	7,151	2,07,194
1904	1,09,941	70,858	5,346	6,944	1,93,089
1906	1,10,083	70,858	5,335	7,184	1,93,460
1917	1,48,770	99,260	6,385	7,555	2,61,970
1923	1,66,000	1,60,000	7,800	7,400	3,41,200
1924	1,47,000	1,57,000	7,800	7,600	3,19,400
1925	1,67,000	1,57,000	7,800	6,600	3,38,400

In the ordinary session of 1930, a general reform of taxes was suggested on the ground that the rates of the taxes fixed long ago (1912) could not hold good at a time when the entire world was seriously hit by the severe economic crisis. The **Conseil Général** was also of the view that some relief should be given to cultivators who were badly affected by the depression. The Government agreed to the suggestion of the **Conseil** and by the **arrêté** dated 26 May 1931, appointed a Commission for submitting a plan of fiscal reforms.<sup>35</sup>

This commission suggested some changes in the system of collection and a reduction in the rate of land tax. Consequently on 27 December 1931, the **Conseil Général** recommended a reduction of land tax from 1/8th to 1/10th of the net income. The Administration argued that this reduction, if given effect to, would result in a deficit of Rs. 66,000 in the budget and pointed out that the **Conseil Général** had not suggested the means to meet such a shortfall. The **délibération** was, therefore, not approved by the Government.

Next year, the need for reducing the land tax was even more acutely felt because the price of paddy had declined still further. The price of paddy which was sold at Rs. 4 per kalam in 1920 had fallen to Rs. 1 1/2, badly affecting the cultivators. Moreover, the export of paddy to Singapore and Colombo was also adversely affected due to competition from Indo-China. Only 84,000 tons of paddy were exported in 1931 as against, 1,29,000 tons in 1929.<sup>36</sup> All these factors justified the demand for reducing the tax as a measure of relief to the cultivators. The **Conseil Général** also renewed its proposal for reducing the land tax by one-fourth. This time they suggested some increase in the rates of other taxes to meet partly the deficit. Even now the Government did not approve the **délibération** of the **Conseil Général** on the ground that the equilibrium of the budget should not be disturbed due to the reduction of land tax.

The question was taken up again in 1933. Now the administration itself came forward with an alternative proposal. Instead of reducing directly the rate of land tax, they proposed a reduction of the net income of the land on the basis of which the rate was fixed.<sup>37</sup> This was justified on the ground that the price of land had decreased everywhere following the sharp fall in the price of paddy. The proposed alternative was found to be suitable to reach the goal. Hence the **Conseil Général** too agreed to fix the net income per hectare at a lower level as follows :

**Paddy Lands**

	Rs.
1st class Average net income per hectare	127.500
2nd class Average net income per hectare	105.000
3rd class Average net income per hectare	82.500
4th class Average net income per hectare	60.000
5th class Average net income per hectare	37.500
6th class Average net income per hectare	15.000

**Dry Lands**

1st class Average net income per hectare	101.250
2nd class Average net income per hectare	78.750
3rd class Average net income per hectare	60.000
4th class Average net income per hectare	41.250
5th class Average net income per hectare	26.250
6th class Average net income per hectare	11.250

**Forest or uncultivable lands**

1st class Average net income per hectare	22.500
2nd class Average net income per hectare	15.000
3rd class Average net income per hectare	6.000