CHAPTER - II

PONDICHERRY AND ITS TRADE ECONOMY ON THE EVE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Pondicherry was known to the Roman traders as Poduke in the first century of the Christian era. Excavations conducted at Arikamedu in the environs of Pondicherry show that flourishing maritime commerce existed there and it had discontinued after the withdrawal of the Roman traders in the third century A.D. The rule of Pallavas witnessed the diversion of trade and commerce of Pondicherry to the northern port of Mahabalipuram. Later, the Chola kings developed the southern port of Nagapattinam and so commercial activities of Pondicherry region on the east coast dwindled. A recent study of the Coromandel region during the sixteenth century points out that the port of Kunimedu to the north of Pondicherry emerged as an international trading centre. The Portuguese who traded on the Coromandel coast settled at Devanampattinam, south of Pondicherry in order to divert the commerce of Kunimedu; but they could not succeed in their attempts since the Marakkayars of Kunimedu who were rich and powerful having trade contacts with South East Asia successfully prevented it. Such a development made it possible for the French in
the Seventeenth century to settle down at Pondicherry to participate in the commerce of the region.

The medieval economy of Pondicherry was dependent on agriculture. Land in this region was very fertile because of the Gingee river and its tributaries like Ariyankuppam river and Kilinjiyar or Chunambar which provided sufficient quantity of water for irrigation. Both food crops and cash crops such as paddy, indigo, sugarcane, coconut, Kambu, cholam, groundnut, tobacco, betel leaves, chillies, gingili, cotton and pulses were chiefly cultivated. Besides, vegetables and fruits were grown. Some studies show that handicrafts were well developed and catered to the needs of both local and overseas markets. However, we shall examine how the arrival of the Europeans in general and the French in particular subsequent to the establishment of a factory by them at Pondicherry in 1674 contributed to considerable changes in its trade economy.

EARLY EUROPEAN CONTACTS WITH PONDICHERRY

The Portuguese

The Portuguese who came to the Malabar coast by the end of the fifteenth century conducted trade in pepper. As time went on they diversified their trade by purchasing
cotton textiles for West Africa, where they had firm establishments for trade. Thus the Portuguese came to Coromandel coast because it was very famous for its textiles, and established a trading lodge at Pondicherry along with other settlements at Nagapattinam, PortoNovo, Devanampattinam, St.Thome and Masulipatanam. They conducted great trade and carried excellent cotton textiles from the aforesaid ports to Pegu, Siam, Malacca and West Africa. However, they could not continue their trade for long in Pondicherry and had to abandon their lodge because in 1614 Muthukrishnappa nayak of Gingee expelled the Portuguese from Pondicherry which was under his control.

The Danes

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Danes appeared on the Coromandel coast and between 1616 and 1620, they established their factories at Tranquebar and Pondicherry. In 1624, the lodge at Pondicherry was given to them by the Nayak of Gingee. They constructed a large mansion at Pondicherry and developed the cotton manufacturing industries by providing necessary facilities to the weavers and other artisans. However, they could not continue there for a long period. When they left Pondicherry, the weavers and other artisans entered into the
services of other European Companies and worked as intermediaries for their export trade.

The Dutch

In the early part of the seventeenth century, when the Dutch realised the significance of textile trade of the Coromandel coast with Malacca, they established their factories at Petapoli and Masulipatanam in 1606, at Tirupapuliyur in 1608 and at Pulicat in 1610. In 1616 they closed their factory at Petapoli due to the extortionate demands of local haveldar. In 1618 they abandoned their factory at Tirupapuliyur because of the civil war among the Nayaks of this region and so they shifted their commerce to Pondicherry. Later in 1620 they left the Pondicherry lodge and settled at Tenganapatanam. In the second half of the seventeenth century, they again appeared at Pondicherry for procuring textiles and continued to remain there from 1664 to 1670.

The English

The English also wished to establish their factory at Pondicherry, for which in 1624 they sent their ships to this port. In 1639, Francis Day visited Pondicherry twice and stayed in the Danish lodge with a view to starting
commerce there. They tried their level best to get permission from the local ruler of Gingee even after the French settled in Pondicherry. But they failed in their efforts to obtain the requisite permission from the local ruler, as the French influence with the court of Gingee was very strong, and so the English could not set up their trading factory at Pondicherry.

EARLY EFFORTS OF THE FRENCH TO TRADE WITH INDIA

Indeed, like other Europeans, the French merchants had a strong desire to secure a share in the lucrative trade in oriental commodities. During the reign of Louis XII, in 1502, Paulmier de Gonneville, captain of Honfleur, sailed in his ship l'Espoir from the port of Havre towards Indian Ocean, round the cape of Good Hope, but a storm in the sea carried his ship to the coast of Brazil. In 1526, some merchants of Rouen sent their ships commanded by a Portuguese mariner named Estevao Dias Brigas from the port of Dieppe with some pieces of artillery towards the East which reached Diu in 1527 after rounding the cape of Good Hope. Jean Ango, a famous shipowner, fitted out two ships Sacrée and Pensée in 1529, in which two brothers Raoul and Jean Paramentire undertook a commercial expedition towards East Indies, leaving the port of Dieppe. They visited
Sumatra, Malacca, Maldives and Madagascar islands and returned to France with a considerable cargo of spices. But these voyages did not leave any serious impact.

Nevertheless, the King Francois I, successor to Louis XII, encouraged his merchants to undertake long voyages. But later from 1531 onwards he changed his policy as the Portuguese prevented the French sailors from entering into the Portuguese colonies. In addition, since there was the civil war in France, no serious efforts were made in this direction. However, in 1600, Pierre Vamperue, a ship owner of Rouen, had a fleet of seventeen ships which were employed in the Indian commerce. A Company was established on 18th May, 1601 at Saint Malo which fitted out two vessels, Le Croissant of 400 tonnage and Le Corbin of 200 tonnage in which Francois Pyrard de Laval travelled and reached Madagascar on 18th February 1602. Not less than forty one persons died at Madagascar. After three months, on July 3rd Le Corbin was wrecked at Maldives Islands, the ship Le Croissant however survived and visited Maldives, Ceylon, Nicobar and Sumatra islands and returned to France after a successful voyage.

During the peaceful and prosperous reign of Henry IV, who cherished greatly the importance of overseas trade,
the French East India Company was established in 1604 under the letter patent of the king with exclusive trading privileges for fifteen years. In 1611, when the project was renewed under Louis XIII, trade declined for want of funds. However, in 1615, in order to send their ships regularly towards the East, two merchants of Rouen gave petition to the king to transfer, in their favour, the privileges granted to the previous Company, but this movement was opposed. However, after hearing the arguments from all the concerned, the king reorganised the Company on 2nd July 1615. This Company assumed a new name and was called Compagnie des Maluques, it was conferred exclusive privileges for 12 years. This Company fitted out two ships of 600 tonnage each, namely, Saint Louis and Saint Michel under commanders Nicolas Frotter de la Bardeliere and Louis Hans de Decker respectively. They set sails from the port of St. Malo in 1616 towards Java. They included a few Dutch among their crew. The ship Saint Louis arrived at Pondicherry in July 1617, from where she proceeded towards Achin carrying considerable cargo of textiles to join the other ship; but as the ship Saint Michael was captured by the Dutch at Java, it returned to St. Malo after a successful expedition. Subsequently, on 2nd October 1619, the Company sent another expedition of three ships L'Hermitage,
L'Esperance, Moutonorenci with an advice boat of 75 tonnage from the port of Hanfleur towards East Indies. The aforesaid ships reached Achin. At Java one of these ships, L'Esperance with her cargo worth 5,00,000 ecus (coins) was attacked and sunk in the sea by Schouten, the Dutch ship and her cargo worth 5,00,000 ecus was set on fire at Batavia.

The commander of this expedition Augusten de Beaulieu started his return voyage alone with Moutonorenci on the 1st of February 1622, leaving L'Hermitage to his assistant Andre Jocet who made the coastal navigation under the name of Petite Esperance between the islands of Sunda and Malacca. He was massacred by the Dutch. Guillaume Gauthier de la Terrerie, successor of Andre Jocet with a cargo of one million, was also captured by the Dutch. But Augustin de Beaulieu reached the port of Havre in France on the 1st December, 1622.

When cardinal de Richelieu became the powerful Finance Minister of France, he realised fully well the importance of the French Commerce in the East. He was also concerned very much with the Dutch and their jealously against the French interests in the Far East. And so the crafty Richelieu put to good use his diplomacy and so in 1624, Richelieu lent the French support to the Dutch against
the house of Austria, in exchange he obtained from the Dutch favour of non-interference in the French trade in the East and West Indies and released the French merchants from harassment by the Dutch. In 1626, he made a declaration in the French Assembly that as in neighbouring countries he was going to form big trading companies and thus to compel the French merchants to participate in the eastern trade. He decided to grant large privileges to the traders similar to those enjoyed by those of neighbouring countries. In October 1626, he was proclaimed the Great Master Chief and Superintendent General of the Navigation and Commerce of France.

In 1630, two financiers, Berruyer and Desmartins established a Company under the title of Compagnie particuliere de Neigation pour exploiter les Isles'a l' Est de Madagascar and made an expedition towards Madagascar with Rigault as captain. He reached that island in 1632, and surveyed it. Between 1630 and 1632 Gilles de Regimont, a Dieppean, travelled to India and the Persian Gulf. Between 1633 and 1637, several voyages were undertaken towards the East Indies and Madagascar, by one Dieppoise Society which drew the attention of Cardinal Richelieu. The Cardinal noting the success of these voyages granted to
Rigault and his assistants on 29th of January 1642 certain concessions and privilages to reach the Madagascar and other neighbouring islands and establish colonies and commerce. With the efforts of Richelieu, King Louis XIII signed letters of patent rights on 15th of February 1642 which also changed the Dieppoise Society into Compagnie de l'Orient. By the letters patent signed later on 24th June of 1642, the king also granted exclusive privilege for ten years.

When the first French ship of Compagnie de l'Orient commenced its expedition, Richelieu died. This expedition was intended to establish a French colony in Madagascar, so that it might serve as a halting point on the sea route to reach India from France. This expedition under captain Rigault reached the island of Madagascar in 1643 on its south east coast. There fort Dauphin was founded and a small colony grew in and around fort Dauphin. But however the later expeditions did not achieve any success due to the mismanagement of expeditions by the leaders and also on account of unfavourable climate of the place, and above all on account of the hostility of the natives.

Under these circumstances, Etienne de Flacourt was sent to fort Dauphin on 19th May, 1648 in the ship Le Saint Laurent with nineteen colonists. He took possession of
Governorship of the Fort Dauphin on 5th December, 1648 and sent Le Bourg to occupy the island of Mascarin which he called Bourbon island. Between 1650 and 1660 the French sailors explored the sea route to India through the cape of Good Hope and their vessels frequently sailed to the Indian coasts. At the same time, the French did not neglect completely the much shorter land routes to India, through Aleppo, Baghdad, Isfahan, Quandahar and Multan through which several French travellers such as the Capuchin missionary Father Raphael Du Mans, and others like La Boullaye Le Gouz, Jean de Thevenot, François Bernier and Jean Baptiste Tavernier reached India. When Cardinal Mazarin became Finance Minister in the long reign of Louis XIV, the commercial expansion of France abroad was completely neglected because of frequent wars with Spain and so no serious efforts were made in this connection until Colbert became the finance minister.

COLBERTISM IN FRANCE

Mercantilism spread all over Europe when Jean Colbert took office as Finance Minister of France. The principal object of Mercantilism was the economic interests of the nation as a whole, rather than the interests of the individuals or parts of the nation and consequently
accumulation of bullion, and establishment of importance of exports over imports etc. This mercantile policy had already inspired France as well. When Colbert became the finance minister upon the death of cardinal Mazarin in 1661, he found the weakness of the French financial position and noted also the unanimous desire of the mercantilists, who were mostly government officers and intellectuals, for the development of country's wealth.

In such a context, Colbert naturally desired France to be in the forefront of the prosperous countries of Europe by securing for her a right place in international trade. Therefore, he followed strictly the mercantilist policy. Later this policy came to be known in France as Colbertism. In order to strengthen the economic might of the French nation, he directed agriculture, industry, commerce and maritime trade to one common future of growth and expansion of overseas trade; he also reformed the entire financial administration, for which he did not neglect to get favourable opinion even from the public. He cancelled the claims of the nobles for freedom from taxation, and imposed indirect taxes. To safeguard the domestic industry not only did he invite skilled artisans from outside France, but also encouraged the import of
foreign raw materials; and he prohibited the entry of foreign products whenever it meant precious metals leaving 39 French kingdom. In every area he laid down strict rules and exercised detailed supervision of the central power. He also established a powerful French naval force with one hundred warships, sixty thousand soldiers, and constructed naval ports such as Brest, Toulon, Rochefort and bought the port of Durkirk from the English to protect the merchant marine.

Colbert planned to form a group of powerful, rich and strong companies protected by the Royal Government like the Dutch Company to establish colonies and to carry on regular trade with India. In all these efforts, he echoed the unanimous desire of the merchants to his master Louis XIV and with his consent the La Royal Compagnie de France aux Indes Orientales was established with a capital of one thousand livres and was placed under the management of a General Chamber of twenty one directors. This General Chamber had rights to appoint Governors for its possessions and to renew one-third of the members every year and also to prepare the accounts every six months to submit to the assembly of shareholders yearly. The charter of this Company was registered in the parliament on the 1st of
September 1664. An exclusive privilege of fifty years was granted to this Company to trade in India and was permitted to promote Christianity in Madagascar and its neighbouring islands.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A FRENCH FACTORY AT PONDICHERRY

In 1664, the Company sent a group of three merchants namely Bebber, Mariage and Dupont through land route to Isfahan with the letters from King Louis XIV to the king of Persia. They arrived at Isfahan in July 1665 and were cordially welcomed by the king of Persia, who granted special concessions for trade. Here, Bebber joined de la Boullaya Le Gouz, who had come much earlier and left for Surat, where they arrived in March, 1666 and met Thevenot and Tavernier. At Surat, they were cordially welcomed by the Mughal Governor of Surat, thanks to the Capuchin Father Ambroise's friendly relations with the Governor. After finding the situation very useful for trade, de la Boullaye Le Gouz sent a detailed account of the country to Colbert in which he advocated strongly the dispatch of French vessels to India and concluding alliances with Indian princes. In spite of opposition from the Dutch, the two merchants went to Agra and met Aurangzeb and obtained a favourable firman from him. Aurangzeb on the 4th
of September 1666 ordered the Governor of Surat to earmark a site off Swally to the French for trade there just like the Dutch and the English.

At this juncture, the French Company put out to sea four ships of three hundred tons each. These ships sailed to Madagascar. It was in this expedition, that François Martin was employed as submerchant. He left the port of Brest on 1st of March 1665, boarding on the ship, Aigle, and arrived at fort Dauphin at Madagascar by the end of July 1665. Another expedition was fitted out by the Company next year in 1666. Meanwhile, François Caron who had gained wide experience in eastern undertakings while he was with the Dutch, left the Dutch Company and joined the services of Colbert, who was only too eager to take him and appointed him Director General of French Commerce in India. The expedition fitted out by the Company in 1666 left France under the leadership of Francois Caron and a Persian named Marcara, a native of Isfahan, who knew the local customs of India. They arrived at Madagascar in 1667. The Company resumed all activities necessary to establish direct commerce with India after trying to found a Company at Madagascar twice.

On reaching Madagascar, François Caron found the French establishment in so deplorable a condition that he
disliked to waste his efforts. François Caron, therefore, decided to have direct commercial relations with India. He left fort Dauphin in October 1667, and arrived at Surat in the beginning of 1668, passing through Cochin. At Surat he met Bebber and established the first French factory on the strength of the firman obtained by Bebber from Aurangazeb. He sent the ship back to Madagascar. Having decided to extend French Commerce on to the Coromandel coast in the same year, François Caron directed Marcara to proceed to the court of Golconda and to obtain trade privileges to establish a factory at Masulipatanam. Marcara, accordingly, proceeded to the court of Golconda. On the way he met with opposition from the English and the Dutch. He, however, managed to tide over all the difficulties created by them and on 5th December 1669, he obtained from the king of Golconda a firman which permitted the French to trade in his kingdom, without paying any tax for imports and exports. In the same year the French secured another firman from Aurangazeb to found a factory at Masulipatanam. and did in fact establish a factory at that place, where Marcara was temporarily appointed as the Director in 1670 and put up buildings in a village which later came to be known as France Petta.
François Martin who had stayed four years at Madagascar, moved to India and made his voyage from Surat to Red Sea region between 10th of March and 21st of November 1669. Later he came to India and met Caron at Surat. At that time, Caron sent Goujon and François Martin to Masulipatanam where they arrived on the 7th of August 1670. Goujon became the chief of the French counter. In 1670 with the efforts of Francois Caron, the French established their factories at Rajapur, Tellicerry and Mirjan on the Malabar coast, but the last factory was abandoned by them in 1672 and it was later occupied by the Dutch. Meanwhile, Caron suggested to Colbert to take possession of the island of Ceylon and impressed upon him the great commercial advantages in spice trade of that island so as to have a firm footing in the country. His project was approved by Colbert. Owing to a conflict, Marcara was arrested at Masulipatanam on the 21st of September 1670, and was sent to Surat. In the same month, Goujon died. Francois Martin was to become the chief of the Masulipatanam factory. At that time Sher Khan Lodi, Governor of Valikondapuram under the Sultan of Bijapur invited the French to trade in his own territory for the purpose of developing textile trade. This prompted Francois Martin to send an Armenian to Valikondapuram to explore the possibility of developing
commerce. The Armenian after visiting the country reported on the commercial potentiality to Francois Martin, who could not do anything on his own without the permission of Caron. He, therefore, wrote to Caron on French commercial prospects in the country of Sher Khan Lodi.

On the first of April 1671, Caron left Surat on one of the three ships named St. Francois to establish a factory at Bantam. Marcara, being unable to work with him, embarked with his supporters on the same vessel. At that time Francois Baron, an ancient French consul at Allepo, came to assist Caron for managing the affairs of the French factory at Surat. After establishing a trading counter at Bantam, Caron left Bantam for Surat. But he could not stay there long. He set sail in 1673, with all his wealth for Marseilles as Colbert summoned him back to France, to hear upon the petition given by the French Directors against him. His ship sailed to Lisbon by way of Gibraltar, but on entering the harbour it struck on a rock in which Caron met with his ill-fated death.

Meanwhile, on the 21st of March 1672 a French squadron under the command of admiral Bianquest de la Haye
came to anchor in the Bay of Trinkomali. Having negotiated with the king of Candy, he succeeded to build a fort there. But on finding some opposition from the natives of the island and resistance from the Dutch who had their settlements there, with exclusive trade right over the whole coastal Ceylon, he left the Bay on the 9th of July 1672 and anchored at St.Thome on the 20th of July. At this juncture, the French at Masulipatanam sought the help of Bijapur Sultan and de la Haye attacked St.Thome and captured it on the 25th of July from the Sultan of Golconda.

When Sher Khan Lodi came to know about the capture of St.Thome by the French he wrote a letter to de la Haye and offered a site for a French establishment in his own territory. In November 1672, de la Haye sent one of his personal guards Bellanger de l'Espinay, to pay a visit to Sher Khan Lodi and to procure provisions for his troops to protect St.Thome. Bellanger de l'Espinay left St.Thome with an able Indian interpreter, Antonio Cattel, and came to Valikondapuram on 18th of December where he was warmly welcomed by Sher Khan Lodi. After arriving at Porto Novo from Valikondapuram, he reported to de la Haye on his successful negotiations. He came down to settle at Pondicherry on the 4th of February 1673. He sent also
provisions to St.Thome. This was the beginning of the French settlement at Pondicherry. On 30th of June 1673, de la Haye himself came to Pondicherry and returned to St.Thome on the next day soon after inspecting the site and with a view to future development.

When war broke out in Europe between the Dutch and the French, the Dutch joined hands with the Sultan of Golconda and blockaded the port of St.Thome by sea, while the Sultan sent his forces and attacked the French by land to drive them away from the port. In this situation, Bellanger de l'Espinay wrote to de la Haye in January 1674 to send an assistant to him. In compliance, François Martin was selected and sent to Pondicherry. Martin worked with de l'Espinay in good faith to overcome the difficulties and to manage the opponents. In spite of the best efforts, de la Haye had to surrender St.Thome to the Dutch on 23rd September 1674 and he recalled Bellanger de l'Espinay. Leaving the letter of Sher Khan Lodi and the affairs of Pondicherry with François Martin, Bellanger de l'Espinay went to St.Thome where he joined de la Haye and embarked for France.

Only François Martin remained at Pondicherry with sixty Frenchmen. On the strength of the letter issued by
Sher Khan Lodi on April 1674, he built up the French factory strongly at Pondicherry and became the first Governor of that factory on the Coromandel coast.

TRADE UNDER THE FRENCH INFLUENCE UPTO 1700

After the establishment of the factory, trade began to grow rapidly at Pondicherry under the able administration of François Martin. In order to boost the Company's trade in the midst of evil designs of the Dutch and the English, François Martin brought with him an eminent merchant, called Tanappa Mudaliar from Poonamalle to Pondicherry, where the latter made his permanent settlement. He became the chief broker of the Company. Within a year, forty houses were built for a small number of weavers who were to develop and defend the factory. Besides, François Martin received from Sher Khan Lodi three hundred men whose services were utilized not only as soldiers but also as colonists. He gave a piece of land to each of them to construct houses and also set up looms. Thus he encouraged them to produce a large quantity of textiles for export. No sooner did he try to develop the economy of the region, than he had to face the threat from the Marathas. In 1677 Shivaji captured Gingee and threatened to attack Pondicherry. François Martin managed to obtain a firman from
Shivaji by paying a large sum of money through one of the native chieftains and later he got another firman from Shivaji's son Shambaji in 1689 to defend the factory. At the same time, he was granted permission to collect land revenue from the district of Pondicherry by Sher Khan Lodi as he was not able to repay the dues. Hence, François Martin continued to construct houses and warehouses to store the cloths for the shipment to France. In order to avoid heavy expenses on account of transportation of merchandise from interior parts, François Martin invited the weavers, artisans and merchants of surrounding places to come down and settle at Pondicherry. He obtained the grant of Pakkumudayanpet. Thus the French were able to get manufactured there 5000 pieces of cloths per month. Nearly two years after the establishment of the factory, François Martin constructed houses, shops, markets and open bazzars for the colony by spending 10,00,000 livres. He continued to encourage the weavers and merchants to produce large quantities of cloths. Thus trade, both internal and external, began to flourish gradually at Pondicherry.

In order to expand the Company's commerce, and to bring rice for local consumption, on 16th July 1686, François Martin obtained the village of Kaveripumpattinam,
three leagues north of Tranquebar, and concession for doing business in Karaikal from the Nayak of Tanjore. The textile industries bloomed at Pondicherry and its surrounding villages under the direct control of the French. Different kinds of commodities such as textile and paddy were brought to Pondicherry from the interior parts. The Company merchants were also sent over to the manufacturing centres in the interior parts of Gingee, Golconda and Masulipatanam to bring cloths for export. To fulfil the demand of the growing population, rice was brought to Pondicherry by several barges from Porto Novo, Tanjore, Nagapattinam and Kaveripumpattinam and it was sold to the poor people at the same price paid by the Company.

Exports covered various goods. Different kinds of cloths such as painted cloths, handkerchiefs and food grains were collected from various production centres and were exported to France. The Company ships plied between the port of Pondicherry and the ports of Bantam, Siam, Mergui and Tenasserim carrying Cargoes of various sorts. Merchandise such as silver, wine, broad cloths, coral and other articles of commerce were imported into Pondicherry and these were sent to Cuddalore, Porto Nova, Tranquebar and Kaveripumpattinam in the south and to St.Thome,
Masulipatnam and Bengal in the north for sale where the French had their own agents.

In the beginning, the French made regular investment in textile trade and collected considerable quantities of textiles from various centres through their merchants. But in 1963, when the Dutch attacked and captured Pondicherry the brisk trade of the French declined fast in Pondicherry and there was no active trade for nearly four years when it was in the hands of the Dutch. After a peace treaty was signed in 1697 in Europe between the Dutch and the French, the former returned the port of Pondicherry to the French. Their textile trade began to pick up gradually in the Coromandel region. In this period the import of spices by them was not enough to conduct reasonably good trade. So, they started their trade in coffee, but that was not profitable. By the end of the century, i.e. in 1699 their total trade in India recorded a peak of 30,00,000 pounds, of which 25,00,000 pounds worth of goods were accounted by exports and 4,00,000 pounds worth of goods by imports.

The hinterland of Pondicherry consisted of several fertile paddy cultivating villages such as Murungapakkam, Ariyankuppam, Olukarai, Villianur, Tavalakuppam, Embalam,
Abishekapatnam, Nettapakkam and Bahur. In the seventeenth century, Pondicherry and its surrounding villages were under the control of various local rulers. The arrival of the French on the Coromandel coast witnessed the development of Pondicherry and its neighbouring villages in the Gingee province. It was brought under the direct control of Sher Khan Lodi who gave the site to the French for establishing trading settlements. Pondicherry began not only to develop into a big town, but also to extend its boundary.

It was during the period of François Martin that the boundary of the region began to spread towards north, west and south. The seat of the Council of the French was shifted from Surat to Pondicherry and the latter became the headquarters of the French in India subsequent to the issue of a Royal Edict in 1701 setting up a Conseil Souverain. The Sovereign Council was set up at Pondicherry by the French as a court to render justice to the French residing in India or involved in the transactions of colonies during the rule of Louis XIV. There were also Provincial Councils as in the other French trading centres in India, as is evident from the Royal Edict of February 1701. The Council was headed by the Director General of the East India Company. Merchants were associated to the extent of the
three in civil matters and five in criminal cases. Justice rendered in other establishments was appealable to this Council. In addition to rendering justice, the Superior Council dealt with all matters relating to commerce, administration and expenditure of various trading centres and it controlled the French trade in the East. When in 1703-6, Daud Khan, the Mughal General conquered the Gingee province, François Martin obtained the villages of Kalapet, Olukarai, Murungapakkam, Olandai, Pakkumudayanpet and Karuvadikupppam from him. In 1708, Herbert who was the Governor of Pondicherry at that time acquired the village of Ariyankupppam from the Nawab of Carnatic.

Under Dumas, Pondicherry's boundary was gradually extended towards the south and the west. In September 1740, Safdar Ali Khan the Nawab of Arcot granted to Dumas the villages of Theduvanatham Abishekappakam, Odiampattu Thirukanji and Kottakupppam for the assistance rendered against the Marathas. Under Dupleix, the boundary was further extended towards the west and the south. The additions were Villianur and Bahur including eighty adjoining villages granted to Dupleix by Chanda Sahib. It is in this way, that the area of Pondicherry region came to be under the French territory.
These regions started to assume a new shape under the French. With a view to extending the manufacturing industry in and around Pondicherry, to acquire timber and to collect food grains and textiles in abundance to meet the requirements of growing population, the French Governors intended to expand the area by supplying arms and ammunitions including presents to the local rulers. We shall see in the next chapter how production was carried on in this region and contributed towards development of trade in the eighteenth century.
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