Chapter III

COLONIAL INTERVENTION
1. POLITICAL EXPANSION OF THE BRITISH

Following the fall of the Great Chola and the Pandya Empires, Tanjore became an easy prey to foreign intervention. The Nayaks and the Marathas held sway over Tanjore in succession. During this period Europeans acquired trading position in the Tanjore region. The appearance of the Portuguese on the coast of Malabar in the closing years of the fifteenth century was one of the rare events in history.\(^1\) The Portuguese were followed by the Dutch, the Danes, the English and the French. They fought with each other for the most profitable trade with India in general and South India in particular. To begin with, the Nayaks of Tanjore had offered trading facilities to Portugal. At different places the Portuguese established factories, of which Nagapattinam grew into prominence. The Dutch occupied this place in 1660 and made it their head quarters on the east coast of South India. The Danes had a settlement at Tranquebar. Since 1690, their commercial interest appeared to have been limited in scope.\(^2\)

In alliance with the Portuguese, the Danes thwarted the English when they attempted to get a foothold at Karaikal on the Tanjore coast. The Danes claimed that they had the sole right to set up trading establishments all along the coast from Nagapattinam to Pulicat.\(^3\) Until the beginning of the eighteenth century the English and the French could not establish their commercial settlements in Tanjore. Two factors, commerce and competition for political foothold, drove the European powers into Tanjore. The vast agricultural resources, products of manufacture, facilities of transport, open hinter-land and
the presence of numerous ports in the country offered opportunities of great magnitude to the enterprising merchants of the West. Having a central location on the Carnatic coast and on the highway from Europe to the Indies, Tanjore was a place of strategic importance. Fascinated by these factors the English as well as the French developed interests in the affairs of the Kingdom.

Tanjore region witnessed a continuous struggle between the local potentates in the 17th and early 18th centuries. By the middle of the 18th century, the county came under the control of the Nawab of Carnatic. Tukkoji, the Maratha King ruled Tanjore from 1728 to 1736 A.D. Political misfortunes and succession questions created instability and disorder in the kingdom after him. Sahuji, who was disputed by Siddhoji, usurped Tanjore throne. In the tussle that ensued Sahuji was forced to seek the support of the French to get back his throne. In return, he offered the cession of Karaikkal and the fort of Kirkangarhi with their dependent villages. Anxious to secure possession of a foothold on the delta of Cauvery, the French readily accepted the offer. M. Benoit Dumas (1736 – 1741), the Governor General of Pondicherry, promptly concluded a settlement with the deputies of Sahuji. He agreed to render financial assistance to the extent of one lakh of rupees, and military aid for the recovery of the throne. Sahuji, on his part, promised to cede Karaikkal and Kirkangarhi together with their dependent villages to the French company.

In a palace revolution, Siddhoji was overthrown and Sahuji entered Tanjore in triumph. Now he refused to carry out the obligations of the promise given earlier to the French. This made Chanda Saheb to forge an alliance with
the French governor of Pondicherry. Fearing trouble, Sahuji agreed to surrender Karaikkal including 81 villages and a payment of seven lakh rupees. This is how Karaikkal had become a colony of the French and soon M. Hollard was made the head of the French Government at Karaikkal.

The Carnatic wars made their impacts on the political scenario of Tanjore. Sahuji was ousted from the throne by Safdar Ali and the vacant throne was handed over to Pratap Singh. To get back his kingdom Sahuji appealed for French assistance and when it was denied he entered into an agreement with the British. The lure of Devikottai and consideration of trade interest made the English to support the claim of Sahuji. Anxious to get quick possession of Devikottai, the British army from fort St. David marched towards Devikottai. Pratap Singh’s forces under General Manoji forced the English army under Captain Hope to retreat to fort St. David. Military operations were continued again for the purpose of capturing Devikottai. In the month of June 1749 the British forces under Lawrance captured the fort at Devikottai. Pratap Singh agreed to surrender Devikottai to the Company in return for the withdrawal of support to Sahuji. This was perhaps the Company’s first armed intervention in Tanjore, which secured the possession of Devikkottai.

In the meantime both Chanda Sahib and Mohammed Ali, in their struggle for control over Trichirappalli, pressurised Pratab Singh to supply military aid and provide monetary assistance. Considering the gravity of the situation, Pratab Singh evaded immediate reply. It made Chanda Sahib provoked and he invaded Tanjore. The Tanjore ruler had to purchase peace by
payment of rupees 70 lacs. For security reasons the Tanjore Kingdom went
closer to the British, which eventually led to the second invasion of Chanda
Sahib, assisted by the French. The crisis was averted due to the timely
intervention of the British forces, which won decisive battles against the
Chanda Sahib – French combine.

During the subsequent years, the British acted as arbitrators between the
Carnatic Nawabs and the king of Tanjore. The British made a policy shift in
favour of Mohammed Ali, their ally in the Carnatic. In 1763 Pratab Singh died
and Tuljaji, his son, succeeded him. The Raja fell into arrears of payment of
tribute to the Nawab of Arcot, the ally of the English. He was also believed to
have been intriguing with Haider Ali of Mysore and wooing Marathas for
military aid. These were the reasons cited by the English for the occupation of
Tanjore in 1773. When the Madras Council decided on the annihilation of
Tanjore Raj, Tuljaji, earnestly appealed to the Governor Wynch in these words:

"Some offence should surely be proved upon me,
without any show of equity to wage an unjust war
against me is not consistent with reason. This
charitable country has the support of multitudes of
people, if you sir, will preserve it from destruction
you will be the most great, glorious and honoured of
mankind. I am full of confidence that you will never do
injustice yourself nor listen to face the oppressor."

But the Rajah's appeal fell on deaf ears. In fact, the helplessness of the Rajah,
the avarice of the Nawab and the connivance of the English sealed the fate of
the kingdom.

In 1773 the forces of the Nawab and the Company invaded Tanjore.
They defeated Tanjurian forces and set fire to the town. Tuljaji, his ministers
and relatives were taken prisoners in the palace. The grateful Nawab rewarded the services of the Company with a payment of ten lakhs of star pagodas and entertained three battalions of British troops at his expense. From 1773 to 1776 Tuljaji was in house arrest and the Nawab administered the Tanjore kingdom. Meanwhile, the Governor General sent Lord Bigot, the Governor of Madras, to Tanjore for the restoration of king Tuljaji in Tanjore. Consequently, the Rajah regained possession of his kingdom and the Nawab lost his prominence in Tanjore.

In return for the services rendered to the Rajah, the Governor promptly required him to enter into a treaty with the Company. The helpless king had no alternative but to yield to the pressure. The new settlement that was signed in 1776 imposed numerous restrictions and liabilities on Tanjore. It restricted the armed strength of the Rajah to a mere 500 men. The weakened state accepted British protection. The Company obtained the right to garrison the fort of Tanjore and to station its forces in strategic places. In order to meet the expenses of the British forces stationed in Tanjore, the Rajah was required to pay four lakhs of pagodas, amounting to about twelve lakhs rupees, every year to the British. Besides, he was forced to cede the district of Devikottai, adjoining the British settlement, already acquired from Pratap Singh. Subsequently, instead of the district of Devikkottai, the Madras Council compelled the Rajah to cede the important commercial center of Nagore with 277 villages, yielding an annual revenue of two and a half lakhs rupees. The treaty imposed limitations on the foreign relations too. Tanjore agreed to render
no assistance whatsoever to the enemies of the English and to enter into no relations with other powers without British consent.\textsuperscript{14}

By the treaty of 1776, the Rajah was required to shoulder an enormous burden of twenty-two and a half lakhs rupees, four lakhs as a regular tribute to Arcot, twelve lakhs to the Company for meeting the expenses of the army, four lakhs, being a reduction in annual revenue on account of the Nawab’s retention of Hanumantagudi and two and half lakhs suffered as loss due to the surrender of Nagore to the Company.\textsuperscript{15} So the British intervention in Tanjore marks the transformation of the Company from an arbiter to protector and from spectator to participant. In its relation with the Nawab, it shifted its emphasis from legalism to militarism and from alliance to partnership.\textsuperscript{16}

When Raja Tuljaji died in 1987, there was a war of succession in Tanjore. To solve the succession issue, the British sent Sir Archibald Campbell to Tanjore. With his intervention Amir Singh, the legal heir to the throne, succeeded on 10\textsuperscript{th} April 1787. Sir Archibald Campbell signed a treaty with Amir Singh on the same day. The treaty consisted of sixteen articles. It stated as its objectives, the consolidation of peace in the coast and establishment of a defence system under the British guidance. The Company assumed the right to direct war, to command the forces, to occupy forts and to dismantle them whenever it felt it a necessity. Most of the articles dealt with the revenue estimation, guarantees for the punctual payment, involvement of British officials in the collection of revenue, British military support to the Rajah’s administration on requisition, etc.\textsuperscript{17} Amir Singh quickly earned popularity by
introducing tax concession ranging from four to twelve per cent in his endeavour to encourage cultivation. With the confidence and support of the people he ruled the country and denied tax payment to the British. Provoked by this breach of agreement the British governor of Madras, Sir Charles Oakelay, abrogated the treaty of 1787 and forced the Rajah to sign a new agreement on 10th July, 1793.

The treaty of 1793 consisted of ten articles. It annulled the treaty of 1787 with a confession of truth that the resources of Tanjore were inadequate to enable the Rajah to perform his financial engagements. The first article declared that the friends and enemies of either party were the friends and enemies of both. The subsequent articles dealt with the military power of the company, the financial obligations of Tanjore and the protection of the Rajah's interest, though there remained no substantial interest to be protected.\(^\text{18}\)

There was a rift between Amir Singh and the British in connection with the collection of state revenue. Amir Singh not only denied payment of tax, but also appealed to the Maratha powers for assistance to eliminate British influence from his country.\(^\text{19}\) But he became helpless. Meanwhile, Lord Hobart directed Macleod, the Resident of Tanjore, to examine the ascendancy right of Serfoji. A conspiracy was hatched by the Company's government with the connivance of Danish missionary, Fr. Schwartz.\(^\text{20}\) Amir Singh was deposed and the Tanjore Kingdom was handed over to Serfoji, the adapted prince. Amir Singh spent his last days at Thirupanandal.\(^\text{21}\)
Within a few days after the assumption of the throne, Serfoji confessed that he had no experience in the transaction of public business and requested Fort. St. George to take over the administration of his state for a period of not more than two years.\textsuperscript{22} The Company responded and proposed a new treaty for the better management of Tanjore, particularly the administration of justice. It was also intended for securing to the Honourable English East India Company a regular discharge of their existing and future demands on Tanjore.\textsuperscript{23} The treaty was concluded in 1799. In the same year Lord Wellesley concluded a subsidiary treaty with the Rajah of Tanjore, who practically resigned the whole administration in return for an annuity of £ 40,000.\textsuperscript{24} Rajah Serfoji was permitted to retain the fort of Tanjore with civil jurisdiction.

After Serfoji, his son Shivaji ascended the throne. Since he had no male heir to succeed, the Tanjore Kingdom became merged with the British territory. The Resident ruled as the representative of the Company in Tanjore till 1859. Later British Government appointed collectors, who became the direct agents of the British Government. According to Modi records Kedal became the first collector of the district.\textsuperscript{25}

2. COLONIAL LAND POLICY

In the beginning of state formation, land revenue was not the primary income of the state. In course of time, when the king asserted his rights over land, arbitrary collection of land tax became inevitable. It became more rigorous, when income from external trade dwindled down due to the religious
injunction, which forbade Hindu traders from travelling on the seas. The whole idea was an offshoot of priestly machiavellism. Traditionally states were morally bound by the rate as fixed by the Dharma Sastras. But war needs, situational exigencies and increasing demand for public works increased the need for the collection of additional revenue from land. Water cess, grazing tax, protection tax and professional tax on farmers, which were linked with the process of production, further burdened the peasant communities. It is quite certain that all or many of the native states demanded half of the gross produce as tax. The Chola state was not an exception to this general trend. During the Imperial Cholas, the whole land was properly measured and taxes were levied in kind. There was no marked change in agrarian policies of the later Cholas and the successive governments. Perceptible changes were noticed only when the British political hegemony was established in the Tanjore region.

After the battle of Plassey, the British got diwani rights over the Twenty-four Parganas in Bengal. In the South after the Carnatic Wars they acquired political rights and revenue collecting rights. There arose a need for revamping the land revenue system of the newly acquired territory to meet the needs of conquest and consolidation. To begin with, New Zamindaries were created and lands were auctioned to the highest bidders. Customary rents were abolished and the Zamindars were given the freedom to collect whatever amount they could as rent. It was expected that the introduction of the British pattern of landlordism would lend stability to British rule in India.
The extraction of higher revenue was inevitable for varied reasons.

1. As colonial government was under obligation to protect the conquered territories from the attack of native kings and other Europeans, they had to maintain a big standing army, which involved a huge expenditure.

2. With the acquisition of more territories, administrative structure also got expanded and the colonial government needed more revenue to meet the expenditure on salary disbursed to their administrative personnel.

3. Money had also to be allotted for other items like payment of pensions and home charges. Investment on transport and communication, public works, cooperative credit societies and education was substantial. Highways policing, maintenance of choultries, provision of public utilities, conservation of natural infrastructure, relief works, destination promotion and similar other areas, where the colonial government had taken interest involved huge expenditure.

To a certain extent trade deficit, if any, was also to be adjusted from Indian revenue. Above all, the British interest to establish that their rule was rational and utilitarian in spirit forced them to engage in new revenue experiments.

On the eve of British occupation, the whole district of Tanjore was placed under a revenue system popularly known as ‘Amani’ system. The system went on from 1800-01 to 1803-04, when money rents, calculated on the
basis of data obtained from the existing revenue records and the experience of the previous administration, was introduced. Since 1804 in their attempt to find out a proper land revenue settlement, the British experimented with several tenurial systems. Since they were strangers and lacked definite knowledge regarding the revenue potentially of the region, they experimented with temporary settlements like Annual Lease, Triennial Lease, Quinquennial Lease, Mirasi Tenure, Olungu Settlement, Muttamfaisal Settlement, Ryotwari and Inamdari settlements.

The Company's financial requirements for meeting the cost of its expanding territorial administration began to increase rapidly and the entire land revenue system was tuned up to meet that need. The Collector of Tanjore, Wallace introduced an Annual Lease System, which was in practice for three years from 1804 - 05 to 1807 - 08. The rates in accordance with the immemorial native customs were fixed on the gross yield for each village. A Patta was issued to each, specifying the proportion of the lump sum assessment payable by the pattaholder. This was carried a step further in the Annual Lease, by which even a village owned by a single ryot, the cultivators were asked to apportion the village assessment among their fields. This recognition of individual ownership was an interesting anticipation of later reforms. It had considerable influence on the course of revenue affairs.

After the experiment of annual lease, the British appointed a committee in 1806, to consider the best mode of realizing the revenue of Tanjore in the future. The committee advocated for the adoption of a system of 'village rent'
as opposed to either a “ryotwar” or “Mootah” (i.e. Zamindari) settlement. The Government readily accepted the recommendation. It was nothing but a continuation of the old system by which the assessment was imposed on gross produce for the whole village. The initiatives taken in the earlier settlements towards the recognition of individual responsibility were thereby rendered inoperative. The special feature of this lease was that the rent was assessed in money and not in grain. The period of the lease was fixed as three years and hence it came to be called as Triennial Lease. This system achieved remarkable success. This is proved by the fact that nearly four-fifths of the villages agreed to the terms proposed by the collector. Those who opposed the Triennial Lease were however allowed to opt either the amani or annual rent system.

Introduction of a fixed money rent instead of grain rent was disadvantageous to the peasants. In addition to that, unfavorable seasons severely affected paddy production in the last two years of the Triennial experiment. Therefore a renewal of the Lease for another five years was proposed. This was called Quinquennial Lease. Under this lease, the state demand was fixed for the whole term of lease. The government promulgated the lease system with rigorous rules providing for direct dealing with sub-tenants in case the land-owning ryots did not agree to the new proposals. Protest came but it was feeble. In majority of the villages money rent was accepted with an average reduction of seven per cent of the rates of the former triennial lease. Some villages were assessed on grain rent basis and allowed to return to amani. This lease was found to be more satisfactory than the previous
lease, although some of the seasons were not favourable. When the lease was renewed for another five years, the ryots agreed to it without demur. However, during the period of the lease, ryots were unable to dispose of their grain profitably. This seriously affected the interest of the peasants. Hence the government was forced to find an alternative, resulting in the introduction of Mirasi system.

The term ‘Mirasi’ which is of Perso-Arabic origin refers to a “right of heritance” over a share of the agricultural produce as well as over other privileges either in virtue of a service or a putative royal grant. In Tamil it means ‘kaniatchi’ (inheritance in land). Brahmin owners preferred to call it “swastiyam”. ‘Khanbhora, was the Marathi term used in Tanjore to mean the same. It seems that the term had been used to denote a variety of hereditary land rights. The headman or village watchman or the temple professionals including dancing girls, all might have enjoyed mirasi right over lands held by them as remuneration for their services. The term appears to have been introduced in Tanjore by the Nawab’s officers in the year 1774 - 75. It fell into disuse after the restoration of the country to the authority of the Rajah. It was subsequently brought universally into use by Harris, the British official. The system was based on the theory of joint communal ownership of village land. In former times often it involved the joint management of the common lands or their distribution at stated intervals among the villagers for cultivation. Such a system was equally well adopted for the taxation of the villagers constituted by individual ryots.
Wallace classified the Mirasidars into three groups. In the first category came the mirasidar, who owned the whole village land and was termed as Yekabogum. Secondly, villages, each portion or share of which were cultivated, and separately enjoyed, by one or more individual mirasidars were termed. Paulabogam: There were 2202 Paulabogam villages in the district. The third came under the category of Sammudayam villages, under which lands were held and cultivated either conjointly by a number of mirasidars, or separately by an individual mirasidar. The produce was shared by all the mirasidars of the village. Naturally the mirasidars were jointly held responsible for the revenue, thereof. There were 1774 Sammudayam villages in Tanjore.

The mode of production had been adjusted accordingly. There were 1,012 villages cultivated directly by mirasidars without the intervention of Poragoodies. Porgoodies were the exclusive cultivators in 1898 villages and in 1923 villages cultivation was undertaken partly by mirasidars directly and partly by poragoodies. Of the computed number of poragoodies engaged in the cultivation of the soil about 28,323, were engaged under the services of Brahman mirasidars, and about 18,989 tilled the lands of non-Brahmin mirasidars. The total number of poragoodies was estimated at about 47,312, while the mirasidars numbering 62048 were distributed throughout the district. Among the total number of mirasidars, the Bhramins constituted 17,149, while the non-bhramin Hindu and Christian accounted to 43,492. The number of Muhammadan mirasidars was 1,457. Due to the luxurious life of mirasidars and their fraudulent tax collection methods, the
Company officials could not extract revenues properly. So they decided to introduce a new settlement called Olungu Settlement.

Rights over land in the mirasi villagers varied from year to year, making assessment of tax on particular field absolutely impracticable. Most of the troubles experienced in mirasi settlement had been caused by fluctuation in prices. The government was anxious to meet the contingency of future fluctuation in the price of grain and to ensure a sense of ease in mind of the people. So the district collector was urged to introduce Olungu Settlement temporarily in 1821 – 23. As it was found to be successful it was made permanent in 1823 and continued for nearly forty yeas since then. However, the Olungu Settlement was a complex one. The underlying principles were the fixing of a standard grain outturn for each village and calculation of government’s share by the application of varam rules. The commutation of grain share into cash was made at a rate fixed primarily with reference to past prices but liable to annual alteration, if current prices fluctuated beyond certain limits. Sometimes the determination of standard produce had been effected by fraud. Moreover, during this period, irrigation was improved to some extent and so two crops were obtained even from single croplands. Additional area of land was also brought under cultivation. Hence a new settlement was called for.

With the expansion of cultivation it was found to be difficult to fix the revenue in the absence of exact figures on the area of and under extended cultivation. Five years after the introduction of Olungu Settlement, Kindersley introduced Muttamfaisal Settlement, which began concurrently with the
paimash survey, a system of rough measurement. Tanjoreans regarded it with a respect amounting almost to reverence, as it was far better than the previous ones. The main feature of the Muttamfaisal Settlement was the removal of the element of price fluctuations in the fixing of the commutation rate. A further extension known as the Taramfaisal Settlement provided for the distribution of lump sum assessment of different categories of fields in the villages. However, the Muttamfaisal Settlement involved a lot of bargaining with the ryots. The field wise distribution of the assessment was made largely in accordance with their wishes. As differences arose between collector Cambell and the government on the method of assessing taxes, this settlement was abandoned in 1831. Hence, Olungu, Muttamfaisal and Taramfaisal settlements were in operation simultaneously.

In 1859 the government's settlement policy underwent another change. As a result the Muttamfaisal Settlement was reintroduced. It was also extended to all the villages, which still remained under Olungu Settlement. There were still one or two survivals of the archaic Amani and Olugu systems. In more than 100 villages, obtained by the government from the Raja of Tanjore by a process of exchange, a system of lease for varying terms for a lump cash sum was adopted. Apart from that 46 villages near the coast in Nagapattinam and Thiruthuraipoondi taluks were brought under lump cash assessment individually. These villages were known as "Kattukuthagai" 42 villages as they did not come under either Olungu or Muttamfaisal Settlement because of their poor productive capacity.
During the Muttamfaisal Settlement, collector Wallace introduced the practice of issuing pattahs to ryots of Tanjore. Yet, pattahs (title deeds) to individual ryots were issued in a systematic way only in 1865. Considerable progress was made during 1867 - 68 in introducing the pattah system in Muttamfaisal villages as gleaned from the board proceedings. Only eighty-six villagers out of a total of 2,357 and eighty - out of 28,389 hamlets remained out of the Muttamfaisal Settlement. In all, out of a total of 1,17,878 ryots only 5,272 were left out from the issuance of pattahs. In Fasli 1287 (1877 - 78) the British Government appointed officers by whom, the settlement of the several taluks in the district was made. Table below shows details about the number of villages and the time taken for the process of issuing pattahs in each taluk, and the number of pattahs issued.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of officers</th>
<th>Name of the taluks</th>
<th>Number of villages covered</th>
<th>Total number of pattas issued</th>
<th>Stations where the Jamabandy was made.</th>
<th>Time taken for the settlement of each taluk.</th>
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<tr>
<td>E.L. Pearson</td>
<td>Nagapattinam</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>4257</td>
<td>Thiruvarur-Nagapattinam</td>
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<td>Acting Sub Collector</td>
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<td>EE spencer, Esq., Head Assistant Collector</td>
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<td>270</td>
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<td>419</td>
<td>19131</td>
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<td>HHO Parrel Esq. and J.P. Fiddian Esq. Assistant Collector (s)</td>
<td>Pattukottai</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6139</td>
<td>Pudukkottai Setubava</td>
<td>25(^{th}) February and 8(^{th}) July 1878</td>
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<td>Kurtalam</td>
<td>24&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; and 26&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; April and 24&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; and 26&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; June 1878.</td>
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<td>28 and 29&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; June 1878.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tiruturaipundi</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>7644</td>
<td>Tiruturaipundi</td>
<td>18&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; to 24&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; June and 17&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; July 1878.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1866</td>
<td>Settimulai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>177</td>
<td>9507</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2352</td>
<td>138644</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Settlement Report of Tanjore, Fasli 1287 (1877-78) PP.1-2

Of the 138644 pattahs distributed as given in the table, 13,031 were fresh pattahs, and 98,668 were unaltered old pattahs. These details are given in the form of a table below.

**Table No. 7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total no. of Pattahs</th>
<th>Fresh Pattahs issued</th>
<th>Old Pattahs modified</th>
<th>Old Pattahs not altered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fasli 1286</td>
<td>1,36,532</td>
<td>32,971</td>
<td>50,442</td>
<td>53,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fasli 1287</td>
<td>1,38,644</td>
<td>13,031</td>
<td>26,945</td>
<td>98,668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>2112</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>45549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease</td>
<td>19,940</td>
<td>23,497</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By Ryotwari settlement government made a permanent contract with the ryots for a payment of rent to the lands, which they cultivated. In this system there was no role of zamindars or any other intermediaries who in earlier times acted as links between the ryots and the government on revenue matters. Munro introduced ryotwari system in the newly conquered territories of Madras in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. As far as Tanjore district was concerned revenue officials opined that ryotwari system would not suit Tanjore because of its complicated tenurial practices. But on Munro’s insistence it was introduced in 1826-27. It was found to be unsatisfactory by the administrative officials and there was a great demand for resettlement. This demand grew strong in 1881 and the government decided that the district should be ‘surveyed and settled’. However, only in 1887 the government decided to entrust the work of settlement to G.P. Clark, who at that time was engaged in the work of settlement of the Madurai district. Clark submitted a scheme to the government of Madras in 1892. This settlement brought all the villages of the district under one system, which was introduced in 1893. The resettlement effected by Clark considerably increased the revenue collected from Tanjore.

The ryotwari system accommodated some new elements. In the old settlement there was scope for the ryots to bargain with revenue officials during assessment. Obviously it led to an extraordinary complexity of rates. Clark reported that there were 920 wet rates varying from Rs. 13-7-0 to Annas 8-2 per acre and 770 dry rates varying from Rs. 10-1-5 to Annas 1-11 per acre.
Moreover there were 750 different rates for garden lands\(^48\). Multiplicity of rates was abolished and the new settlement provided for only a limited number of rates, which were fixed on the basis of the quality or taram of the land surveyed. The new rates adopted by the settlement are summarised below in the table:

Table : 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taram</th>
<th>Wet delta</th>
<th>Wet non – delta</th>
<th>Dry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rs.</td>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Paise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The other most important feature of the settlement was the classification of the soil into different categories. It is noticeable that a large area was placed in the alluvial series, alluvial loam and clay being rated in two tarams higher than the corresponding loam and clay of the regar series. In the Thiruvaiyaru region, known as the ‘breast of Tanjore’, nearly 1000 acres of lands were distributed, which came under a district classification owing to the better quality of its alluvial loam.

Upland region was classified into three categories in accordance with the availability of irrigation facilities. Thus lands on the west of the district were regarded as belonging to first class because of their easy access to water. Lands lying on the eastern side belonged to the second class, while the tail end area came under the third class due to the vagaries of climatic conditions, marked either by shortage or flooding of water.

Regarding fragmentation of holdings we do not have reliable statistics. But pattahs had been classified into two categories: one group of pattadars paid more revenue to the state and the other paid lesser amounts. The number of pattadars paying less revenue to the state was more than the former. It is presumed that fragmentation was a common feature among the small pattahdars than persons owning large areas of cultivable land. The practice of issuing pattas individually and severally also indicates that in the latter case fragmentation might have been common.

In the ryotwari settlement, all the villages in the district were brought under one system. There was no difficulty in bringing the 46 villages in the
south – east corner of the district, which had been assessed on lump cash assessment (the kattukuttapanai villages, as they were called in old villages) in line with the others. In the case of the government villages of the old palace estate, the occupancy right was sold to the ryots and they henceforth were treated like the rest in the district. The survey and settlement then proceeded on the same scientific line as elsewhere.51

Scientific survey, direct payment of tax by the ryots and the recognition of their rights over property were experienced for the first time by all the villages of the district under a uniform system. These could be regarded as the important merits of ryotwari system. However, it had many defects also. Scientific survey could not be done for the entire district. Only Tanjore, Kumbakonam and Sirkali taluks were fully surveyed. Another defect was that the ryots suffered a lot due to high tax assessments, which were made for the entire district without taking into account the nature and productive capacity of the lands spread over different regions. As Clarks classification of lands in to different grades was made without any scientific basis, his revenue settlement failed, there by paving the way for the subsequent re- settlement.

Ryotwari settlement was made for a period of 30 years from 1893 to 1923. After the expiry of the settlement, Government of Madras introduced another settlement called resettlement. G.H. Jackson was appointed as special settlement officer.52 Re - settlement was carried out and new rates were introduced in all the taluks from 1923-24. The registry in the revenue records
was thoroughly revised and brought up-to-date by a special revenue staff followed by a re-survey of holdings.

Jackson had found that the classification of irrigation sources in the old delta area was far from scientific and would need considerable alteration. He did not however recommend any major change in view of the impending execution of the Cauvery-Mettur Project (CMP). It was anticipated that the project would substantially alter the capacity and character of the existing sources. Moreover the existing classification was accepted over quarter of a century and was intrinsically connected with the soil sorting. The resettlement proceedings were guided by the following norms:

(a) If a defective source is improved or a new source is constructed by the government, the government shall be at liberty to revise the classification, and impose such wet rates of assessment and water rate as they may deem fit on the lands commanded by the source.

(b) On the completion of the Cauvery-Mettur Project, the government reserved the power to reclassify the irrigation sources in the upland tract and to impose on the wet lands registered under these sources the wet lands rate appropriate to the new classification that might be assigned to them.53

The construction of CMP created a major modification in the settlement areas of Tanjore. Delta region was divided into old and new. Extension of area under cultivation and cropping intensity were the special features of the
project. However, the situation could not prolong because the Rajaji Ministry cancelled the existing settlements causing a lot of sufferings to the peasants.

Tanjore is unique in the sense that it was here large areas of land were donated to temples, mutts, Brahmins, officials, etc. These inam lands were also brought under a special settlement. They were largely confined to the area under wet cultivation. Here, the ruling power had always shown a keen involvement in the village by maintaining irrigation works and collecting of land revenue. It also never surrendered its rights to interfere in the disposal of the waste. Personal inam was found on a moderately extensive scale in Tanjore. It is noticeable that two-thirds of such inam rested on Sanad grants from the raja. Usually such grants embraced the entire village. Among them, two-thirds of such villages were situated in Pattukottai, often paying a heavy jodi or quit-rent. They owed their origin to the rajah’s efforts to open up the wastelands. In this sense they simply followed the pattern of other mirasi villages, not reckoned as inam, but had originated as agraharams for Brahmin or Vellala colonists.

Inam was therefore, largely separated from the ordinary village structure. It was a device for encouraging colonization rather than one to escape the revenue demand. Inam villages given to Brahmins and Vellalas were mostly converted wasteland. These lands were not permanently exempted from tax, since it was purely a temporary arrangement to increase cultivation. In course of time all inam lands were substantially converted into ryot lands.
In the early days of British settlement there was a tendency for the occupancy right to become and obscured and obliterated. During the last hundred years many villages however got their occupancy rights extended or confirmed. As a result, the great majority of tenant holders became the proprietors (or sub-proprietors) and possessed a permanent and heritable right of occupancy in the lands of their tenancies. Home farm lands in which the holder of estate enjoyed the right to occupancy were the only exception and were specially delimited by law as such. There were two important types of tenancy, under the occupancy right holder system, namely, the Varam and the Kuthagai. Under the former the tenant paid as rent a share of the crop, where as under the latter he paid a fixed sum in cash or a fixed amount of produce. Variations occurred under both the systems depending on the nature of the land, the irrigation facilities, seed, manure and plough cattle provided by the land lord or tenant respectively and the kind of crops raised.

The Board of revenue was at the head of the revenue administration. Originally constituted in 1786, its functions were defined by the Madras Regulation I of 1803. The reorganized Board consisted of four members with three secretaries and an assistant secretary. Two Land-Revenue Commissioners of the Board of Revenue looked after land-revenue administration including collection of land revenue, irrecoverable arrears, waste land management, etc. In the districts, District Collectors were the heads of the revenue administration assisted by Deputy Collectors. Districts were divided into Taluks and Tahsildars were in charge of the revenue administration. Big Taluks were
further divided and placed under the control of deputy Thasildars. Under the Thahsildars were Revenue Inspectors, whose duty included supervising the village accounts. The village head was not only a rent collector as far as his village was concerned but also was a magistrate disposing of petty cases both of civil and criminal in nature. Next came the Karnam whose duty was keeping the village accounts and registers in tact. In the Jamabandi, peasants could get their annual rents fixed. They could demand remission of rents citing crop failure due to natural calamities.

Colonial administration's revenue assessment had been very high. Munro on the eve of his departure to England in 1807 was of the opinion that the 45% of the gross produce collected by him was exorbitant. He suggested a reduction of the revenue by a quarter. But his advice was not heeded and in most of the cases land revenue collected from the ryots exceeded 50% of the gross produce. Bishop Heber observed in 1826 that "Neither the native nor the European agriculture, I think can thrive at the present rate of taxation. Half of the gross produce of the soil is demanded by the government". Moreover peasants were compelled to pay the tax in money. Money rent was disadvantageous to the peasants because very often it led to the fall of money value of grain. There was opposition to the introduction of money rent in Tanjore. Only with the use of coercive forces that money rent was introduced in 4204 villages out of the total of 4720 villages in the district. Govt. records speak about instances when small peasants sold their produce below market level to meet their obligation to the state. Collector Forbes reported in 1854 that
the revenue assessment was so severe that “there remained no gold ornaments
nor brass pots among the common ryots.” According to J.B Norton land
revenue collected in the Madras Presidency was higher than in Bengal 61.

Stringent provisions of the Act-39 of 1858 and also Act II of 1864
authorised revenue authorities to seize the properties of defaulters and sell
them. The collector of Tanjore district stated that “not even the wealthier
landed proprietors escaped the process of distrait under Act II of 1864 and it
was a fact that in April – May, the month of heavy kists, jewels of no small
value came into the market for loan 62. Moreover horrifying methods including
torture were applied by native officials under the supervision of British
officers. In the opinion of the Torture Commission, “the greatest body of ryots
is not in a state of ease. In general, the ryots submit to oppression and pay what
is demanded by a person in power rather than to have recourse to the tedious,
expensive and uncertain process of law suit”.63

The rigid revenue policy of the government and its coercive method of
collection continued throughout the 19th century as well as in the early 20th
century leading to agitation in 1890 and 1920 in Tanjore. In 1933 Tanjore Land
Owners Association demanded remission of land revenue because there was a
great fall in price of grain during the depression year. Yet, the government was
unwilling to heed their demand.64 The policy of colonial government to extract
a heavy land tax with the application of coercive methods led the ryots to fall
into a debt trap.
In certain cases remissions had been made. Remissions fell under two categories: ‘Casual’ and ‘Fixed’. Remissions were allowed in case of withering of crops (Shavi) due to water shortage or blight. Under casual remission peasants were allowed remission of land revenue if they raised only dry crops due to non-availability of water in lands, which came under wet assessment. This type of remission was called as ‘Tirwa-Keme’ (Reduction of revenue).

Again under ‘Fast-Kam’ (Crop deficiency) remission was allowed when one crop failed in a land assessed for two crops. Remission was permitted in case of a land in question was taken for public purpose or washed away by river.

Fixed remissions were granted for reasons other than seasonal causes. Under fixed remissions the following categories were included: Converted lands on elevated plains and lands cultivated by lift irrigation also received remission. In an attempt to encourage plantations, groves and topes were allowed to claim tax remission for a period of twenty years. Under ‘Dasabandham’ remissions were allowed for carrying out construction works or repair of tanks, wells, channels, etc. Wastelands if brought under cultivation also received remission.

Peasant protests against the oppressive taxation policy of the colonial government were not uncommon. But they were unorganized and sporadic in nature.Demanding reduction of land revenue, the ryots of Sirkalai Taluk resorted to a form of protest by neglecting agricultural operations in 1827. They also refused to repair a breach in a dam that supplied water to a tank. In the year 1832 when 390 villages in Tanjore district were affected due to failure of
monsoon, the ryots demanded that assessment should be made on the basis of actual produce of the crops. The government turned down their demand and the angry peasants refused to reap the crop. However they failed to achieve their objective. On another occasion, a similar incident took place in the Mayavaram Taluk in 1837. In this case, government servants attempted to harvest the crops when the peasants failed to do so. In Tanjore, protesting against the onerous tax levy the peasants recorded their strong protest in 1890 and 1920. The reasons attributed to the failure of peasant protests were; absence of peasant organizations, lack of class consciousness, failure of cohesive efforts, conservative mindset, power of owner class, brevity of alternate employment chances outside traditional sector, severity of social sanction system and the coercive authority of colonial state.

3. IMPROVEMENT IN IRRIGATION SOURCES

Construction of Grand Anicut by Karikala, is the first recorded irrigation engineering work. After Karikala Imperial Cholas made developments in irrigation by constructing canals, channels, lakes, etc., throughout Cholomandalam. From the time of Imperial Cholas to the annexation of Tanjore by the British East India Company no substantial improvement of irrigation facilities was undertaken in the Cauvery region. Famines occurred frequently and there are records for the occurrence of major famines in 1709-1711, 1728, 1731-1734, 1737, 1782, and 1792. People were badly impoverished and the self-sufficient village structure broke down. When the Company
took possession of the province of Tanjore, the irrigation system was in bad shape. Agriculture was in a chaotic condition, being dictated by factors such as, the lack of reinvestable surplus, unscientific taxation laws, failure of crops, unstable market conditions, migratory character of the peasantry, fluctuation of stocks and the static nature of land rights.

During the early years of colonial hegemony, policies aimed at improving the irrigation system, was not given adequate importance. But natural forces, such as famines and floods causing loss of revenue, forced the colonial government to take some remedial measures to improve the irrigation system. The British engineers set their first task on repairs and restoration of old indigenous irrigation works for better utilization of the available supply. Interest for revenue maximization motivated them to improve the quantity of supply. After analyzing the various causes deeply, Captain Coldwell, the British engineer, reported in 1804 that if measures were not taken immediately it would lead to the ruin of Tanjore. 68

The first engineering problem of the Cauvery delta was the sharing of the available water between the main river and the Coleroon and ensuring supply without flooding the irrigation channels in the delta. This was solved by undertaking five engineering works the Grand Anicut, the Upper Anicut, the '150 yards (137-16km) Calingula', The Cauvery - Vennar Regulator and the Vadavagudi Surplus. 69 The Grand Anicut fulfilled its purpose for some centuries, and in 1830 it was still in operation. But the vagaries of the river had not been watched, and by that time the main stream had begun to flow down on
a northern channel known as the Coleroon. Hence district of Tanjore had lost much of its former prosperity. The Coleroon arm was scouring itself deeper and the Cauvery was getting silted up. The silting not only interfered with the passage of low flows but also reduced the carrying capacity of the Cauvery arm. As a result the flood level rose frequently, breaching the low flood banks and causing inundation and silting of the tract.

Sir Arthur Cotton realized that the first responsibility was to ensure adequate flows to the delta. He decided to tackle the problem right at the head of the delta, where the first split of Cauvery river occurs. He planned and constructed the Upper Anicut across the Coleroon arm during 1836-38. It was a plain construction with a body wall and the necessary aprons. The primary object of this anicut was to divert the low supplies in the Cauvery into the southern branch, which was the feeder channel to the old delta.

The construction of Lower Anicut provided irrigation facilities for 2000 acres of anadeeturs (Uncultivated lands) in the village of Pudupatnam in Sirkali taluk. The mirasidars of the village whose irrigated lands were about 27 acres were unable to bear the expenses of cleaning and cultivating the remaining wasteland. Sambasiva Sastri, a mirasidar was in possession of a considerable area of uncultivated land. He made a proposal to the sub-collector for cultivation of cultivable land at the rate of 100 acres per annum on the following terms, viz:-

1st and 2nd year - rent free
3rd year - rent ¼ tax
4th year - rent ½ tax

5th year - rent ¾ tax

6th year - full tax\textsuperscript{72} on conditional basis. While this proposal was under consideration, another mirasidar undertook cultivation in about 533 acres of uncultivated land. So the above terms and conditions were extended to other miradidars of the areas with some modifications. These arrangements led to further improvements in the irrigation system of the Cauvery region.

Even after the construction of Upper Anicut, Lower Anicut and improvements made on the Grand Anicut floods continued to disturb agricultural operations. There was no means of avoiding floodwaters rushing into the delta. Floods damaged large quantities of crops, channels and distributaries. To avoid the situation, Captain Mead made a proposal in 1870. He suggested for regulators being built on Cauvery and Vennar at the head of the delta close to the Grand Anicut. Major Mortgomerie, who was asked to examine the proposal, gave his report in 1881. He made his recommendation to built a regulator and construct suitable ventway in Veenar to pass all the local floods. Major Mortgomerie’s recommendations were revised by Colonel Mullins who suggested construction of head regulators for both Cauvery and Vennar about 61 m (200 ft) downstream of the Grand Anicut at right angles to the same. The plan and estimates for Rs. 6.88 lakhs were sanctioned by proceeding no.778½ of the Government of Madras dated 1.9.1883.\textsuperscript{73} The Cauvery Regulator was constructed with 14 spans of 11.28 m (37 ft) each and
Vennar Regulator with 11 spans of the same length. The project was completed in 1886.  

When the Madras Government improved the flood control mechanism in the Cauvery region, the Mysore Government was seriously attempting to expand its area of cultivation in the Cauvery region. As it would affect the interest of the peasants of Tanjore, it was protested by the Madras Government. So an understanding was reached between the Madras and Mysore Governments with regard to the use of the water of the Cauvery river in 1892. It was agreed that the Mysore State was entitled to build storage reservoirs on condition that the prescriptive rights of Madras to get its share of supply should not be interfered with.

Consequent on crop failures in many districts of Madras Province such as Chengalpat, North Arcot and South Arcot, Trichirappalli, South Coimbatore, Madurai and Tinnevelly in 1891-92, there was large scale migration of people to regions where employment opportunities were available. The people of Ramnad in Madurai district migrated in large number to the neighbouring delta district of Tanjore, when a fair fall of rain in March generated more employment. The famine of 1899-1900 also affected the life of the people in the Province. Government took considerable steps in the form of relief works and appointed two famine commissions in 1898 and 1901. The appointment of the irrigation commission followed suit in 1903. These commissions paved the way for the amending of the famine codes and adoption of a progressive irrigation policy. Until then the Irrigation policy of the government was not in
tune with the requirements of the situation. The appointment of an irrigation Commission was an indication of the readiness of the government to devote greater attention to schemes of irrigation. It also marked a fundamental change in the attitude of the government towards irrigation works in India.  

In 1901, the government appointed a study team to report on the phenomenon of rural poverty. The team conceded that the peasants were poor but not poorer than their British counterparts and that their poverty was attributed to the failure of monsoon. The result was the creation of a separate department of agriculture in 1901. The formation of a separate department of agriculture on the recommendation of the famine commission was a landmark in the history of agricultural development in India. Government emphasized the need to improve the irrigation facilities for agricultural development. According to Agricultural Statistical Report of India, in Tanjore, there were 8,25,396 acres of land which received irrigation facilities through government canals in 1914-15. It increased to 8,33,951 acres in 1915-16. Tanks, wells and other sources of irrigation were also improved. The total increase accounted for 982,202 acres in 1914-15 and 9, 91, 382 acres in 1915 – 16.

When the Madras Government improved the irrigation facilities in Cauvery basin, Government of Mysore also extended its irrigation networks. To get their riparian rights, Madras Government appealed to the Indian Government and then to the British Court. Due to the intervention of the British Government both Mysore and Madras Governments agreed to solve the problem related to the sharing of the Cauvery water. In pursuance of this
compromise A.R. Banerjee, Dewan of Mysore and P. Hawkins, Secretary to the Madras Government (Public Works Department) signed the historical agreement on 18 Feb, 1924, popularly called the Final Agreement on Cauvery Water Issue.

According to this agreement both the governments agreed to construct a dam each in their respective states. The Mysore Government was to construct a reservoir across river Cauvery at Kannambadi, now known as Krishnrajsangara. The height of the reservoir should not exceed 112 feet. The Mysore Government was at liberty to carry out future extensions of irrigation. However the limit of extension through its tributaries was fixed at 110,000 acres. The Madras Government on its part agreed to limit the new area of irrigation under the Cauvery – Mettur Project to 3,01,000 acres. The capacity of the new reservoir at Mettur was fixed at 93500 million cubic feet. It was also provided that if scouring sluices were constructed in the reservoir at a lower level than the irrigation sluice, the date on which such scouring sluices were opened should be communicated to the Mysore Government.

The Madras Government built the first storage reservoir across Cauvery at Mettur between the years 1928-34 with a capacity of 2645Mm$^3$ (93.470 Mcft). This remains to be the largest storage reservoir in the state even today. Besides stabilizing the existing irrigation in the basin below the reservoir, an extent of 1,22,000 ha, (3,01,000 acres) was proposed to be brought under a new irrigation scheme. It was decided to construct a new canal called the Grand Anicut canal adjacent to the cauvery delta. This has six vents 9.15m x 1.168
(30ft x 5½ ft). Each vent was fitted with radical shutter. The Grand Anicut complex had new features resulting from considerable modifications of old anicut with head regulations for the river Cauvery and Vennar and the newly excavated Grand Anicut canal. The Cauvery-Mettur Project was completed in 1934 and inaugurated on 21-8-1934 by the then Governor of Madras Sir George Frederick Stanley, Whose name the reservoir now bears.

The Grand Anicut canal area commanded by Cauvery - Mettur Project (CMP) is called the new delta. Since the execution of the scheme, piecemeal extensions of irrigation were made from the G.A Canal. Notable among them were: (1) the extension of the canal, beyond Narasinga Cauvery in Aranthangi taluk to stabilise and ayacut of about 15,000 acres chiefly commanded by riverbed tanks and 2. The Uyyakondan extension channel, part of the Kattalai Higth Level Channel Schemes (KHLC). It brought in a new ayacut of 4,481 acres besides supporting a second crop in another 4000 acres. The G.A Canal commands a vast area in the new delta with its scientifically designed channels and vents. Since it serves the sandy and loamy upland tract, where the seepage is heavy, watercess was assessed at a concessional rate.

Supplementary sources of irrigation in the delta served as an insurance against seasonal vagaries. It was expected to improve the supply of an area of one million acres already irrigated and to bring under cultivation a new area of 2,21,000 acres of first crop and 90,000 acres of second crop. It would also supplement the supply to an existing wet area of 80,000 acres, then irrigated
by unreliable sources of supply. The cost of the scheme was about Rs. 6.12 lakhs.

Added to this, the government also constructed several large irrigation systems and numerous smaller works in areas where there was land suitable for cultivation. At the time of completion of CMP, there were 8,63,986 acres of land receiving irrigation facilities through canals in Tanjore. Next year it creased to 909,522 acres. Consequently the total irrigated area in the district it increased from 9,86,332 to 10,04814 acres. Further the Government of India gave a subsidy of 19.26 lakhs towards irrigation improvement programmes in the district. Under this scheme an area of about 40,000 acres were brought under cultivation initially. Thus by the end of March 1946 an area of 60,157 acres was converted of which 52,224 acres were under paddy.

To bring more lands under cultivation the government provided loans to the ryots free of interest in the first year and thereafter at 3 per cent per annum. Granting a subsidy of Rs. 10 per acre of land reclaimed also encouraged extension of cultivation. Moreover as an incentive package programme the government provided seeds and manures and exempted water-cess. The various steps taken to improve irrigation facilities were intended to protect agriculture from the gamble of monsoon and avert severe famine and semi-famine conditions.
4. IMPACT ON THE AGRARIAN CLASS STRUCTURE

In the Pre-colonial period land was the property of kings. They granted lands to communities such as Vellalas and Brahmins, military officials, civilian administrators and men who were close to the kings. Further, the temples and mutts also received lands from rulers. In course of time land holding rights were acquired by other communities also. During the colonial period, when new avenues of employment were available to the high castes, their interests on land decreased and quite a lot of lands transferred hands. In the process some more castes acquired ownership rights over land. Of these castes the most prominent were Kallars and the Padaiyachies. These two classes of migrant settlers came during the feeble and corrupt administration of Amar Singh in the later half of the 18th century. Making use of chaotic conditions, they devised means to take possession of lands of weaker ryots.

Hyder Ali’s invasion afforded an opportunity to a large group of Kallars from the south and other intruders to gain a footing in the delta. No doubt in majority of the cases the new settlers occupied lands for which there were no claimants. In fact arrangement were made by the state itself to settle the migrants in the depopulated areas. The native government, which was in a state of bankruptcy did not bother about the legality of the landholders. Their sole aim was to realize the revenue from the lands. On many occasions, old mirasidars were deprived of possessions; because they were unable to resume cultivation without aid or indulgence in regard to the “Sarkar” demand. They
were superseded by enterprising settlers to whom any term on which they could acquire property was an advantage.

British land revenue policies were unique in character. Zamindari settlement in Bengal, Mahalwari settlement in Bombay and Ryotwari settlement in Madras altered the existing agrarian structure giving it a new dimension. British exploitative methods were imposed forcibly on the agrarian masses. To increase revenue, the British introduced many land revenue settlements in Tanjore. Those who were unable to pay the tax lost their hereditary rights. The peasants of the British period could be categorized into:

1. Marginal peasants; usually chronically deficit house holds;
2. Small peasants who produced just enough for subsistence;
3. Middle peasants who had a sizeable enough surplus and had the flexibility in changing the cropping pattern according to market signals; and
4. Rich peasants with potential surpluses\(^\text{92}\). However, the status of the respective categories of economic agents varied across the regions and so did the process of commercialization.

Introduction of permanent settlement created a class of landlord. But it failed to bring significant changes in the productive process. Since the colonial government became the supreme power in the sub-continent, the big zamindars were reorganised as pillars of revenue collection. The policy makers did not see why they should hand over a substantial fraction of the potential tax revenue to a bunch of idle landlords. The government introduced Rent Act in 1859 by
which agrarian law was redefined. Ryots became classified into: (a) permanent ryots paying fixed rents; (b) occupying ryots, protected against arbitrary eviction and rent increase; and (c) non-occupancy ryots paying the competitive rents.

In the nineteenth century moneylenders did acquire their debtors' properties. Under the unfavourable conditions that prevailed a cultivator was forced to relinquish his entire surplus to repay his and his ancestor's debts. His position was hardly distinguishable from the 'rack-rented tenant' of British records. We come to understand that a cultivator was forced to relinquish more than the net produce. Therefore, due to the British land policy, the former proprietor was reduced to the level of a landless labourer. In contrast, moneylenders and traders became absentee landlords, resulting in the revitalization of landlordism. Apart from that, during this period due to population increase, extension of cultivated area, improvement in communication and opening of new markets, the competition for land became keener. The prices and rents surged upwards and the profits of the landowner recorded an increase. The land itself became more valuable and it induced the moneylender, to acquire more of it. Owing to the sub-division of holdings and the pressure of population on the land the occupancy rights holder was in a worst position to resist.

The British adopted different methods of landholdings in Tanjore region, because it was the center of agricultural activity. From the beginning of the nineteenth century Amani system of revenue collection was introduced and
high rent was collected from agriculturists with the support of revenue collecting agents. Hence landlordism became activated with the help of intermediaries. The landlords of Tanjore were distinguished by the name mirasidars, the owner of the lands. The body of mirasidars composed of individuals from all the castes and Mohammadans and native Christians. However, in many areas of Tanjore, Brahmin and Vellala landlords were larger in number. In some areas, group of villages comprising up to six thousand acres were owned by Temples, dedicated chiefly to Lord Siva and managed by Brahmin trustees. The Brahmins of Tanjore, who numbered about one-fifteenth of the population in the district, were more numerous, wealthy and influential landlords than elsewhere in Tamilnadu. Likewise Vellalas were larger in number in Mannargudi region. According to Settlement Report of 1860 there were many Vellalas, who were influential men, holding large tracks of land paying rent as much as Rs. 7000 a year to the government. Usually the whole village and in several cases considerable portion of villages were owned by a single individual or family.

The British frequently changed their revenue policies introducing new settlements and issuing pattas to the landholders. They issued pattas to all communities and introduced ryotwari system. By this system no intermediaries were created and the settlements were made directly with the ryots. The fact was that due to the prevailing inequality in landholdings, the bigger landlords came to dominate the agrarian set up in many respects. They indulged in many semi-feudal forms of exploitation. Due to the British occupation, agricultural
products were exported by which the emergence of market centers became inevitable and new merchant groups emerged. Introduction of Western education, created an opportunity to enter the educated Indian elite into British administrative services. As a result a new salaried class emerged. Occupational necessity forced them to migrate towards urban centers and peripheries of cities. As a result absentee landlordism became activated. In course of time due to attraction towards urban luxuries, educational expenses of wards, parental obligations, accommodation requirements and all that related to increasing sophistication in lifestyle, the migrants were at severe economic crises. To cope up with the financial strain, they opted for parting with their holdings. The decline of joint family system and fragmentation of holdings, together with increasing instances of failure of contractual obligations on the part of tenants further accelerated the process of land transfers. The beneficiaries of this situation were usually the enterprising among the tenants and thrifty tenant-labourers. Initially they leased out their lands to tenants; but in course of time they ceased to be landholders and sold their possessions to others.

During the 20th century the landlordism was further activated. Landlordism made great strides in the following periods: (1) period of rising princes (1900-1915); (2) post - war period (1915- 1929); (3) the Depression period from 1929- 1937; (4) the period of debt relief legislation 1937- 1943; the war period from 1943 onwards. When land became a valuable commodity to be bought and sold, owing to the growing prices for agricultural produce, men with surplus savings began to buy lands. The persons who purchased lands
were Zamindari landlords, civil and criminal court lawyers and government servants. Absentee landlords got an impetus from these groups who had surplus money to invest in lands.  

During First World War and after prices of agricultural goods increased. The price of paddy rose from Rs. 280 to 380 per acre. So the value of lands increased and hence both moneylenders and big land owners began to purchase lands, which were sold by the small and medium owners in lieu of their debts. But even this could be blurred, for, the untouchable labour was permitted in his own right to cultivate inam lands.

Completion of Mettur Dam and construction of Grand Anicut Canal (G.A Canal) not only extended the area of cultivation but also improved the irrigation system. Improvements were made throughout the delta region in general and south- west upland region called new delta in particular. In the new delta region value of land increased but due to depression effect land became cheap. Moneylenders, salaried people, agriculturist investors, war profiteers and textile mill owners have joined in the land deals. In the old delta areas also agricultural activities were intensified and land transfer was common. In Kumbakonam, silk weavers had become big landowners. The social value of land and the status that it accorded to the owner induced prestige-thirsty non-agricultural groups to invest in land. Here, it is important to note that land was the biggest employment-generating sector and the land owner as the employer had potential power and enhanced status in the village community set up.
During the Second World War period land transfer was further intensified. The richer classes of landlords had purchased more lands tempted by the margin of profits. Land transfers during the period were more from the small and marginal farmers with ownership status of 25 acres and less, to rich bourgeoisie. The incidences of land alienation from the richer class of landlords was not uncommon, yet it was only marginal. Lands transferred in this case were usually of small plots and unproductive or less productive patches, intended to meet the cost of additional purchase of adjacent tracts with potential economic value. While the tenants belonged to higher castes, labourers (Panniyals) invariably hailed either from the Palla or Paraya caste. Generally, Pannaiyals were attached to the lands of their masters.

Commercialisation of agriculture adversely affected the small peasants and they were compelled to meet state revenue and debt obligation. A large section among the small peasants sold their lands and became tenants. Tenants however, were not happy because the rate of Varam or Kuthagai collected from them was exorbitant. Even government records refer to high rates of varam collected from the tenants. Generally tenants had to part with 2/3 of the grass produce to the landlords. Penington, the Collector of Tanjore, stated in 1885 that the rent collected from Varamdhar was high.

Since the beginning of the recorded history, landless agricultural labourers in Tanjore were in a state of servitude as they remained attached with the lands of their masters. When the colonial government assumed the administrative powers, it did nothing to ameliorate the condition of these
slaves. But evangelists and humanitarians pressurized the government to abolish slavery in India. Hence by an act passed in 1843 agricestic slavery was abolished in British administrated areas of India, including Tanjore. Even after 1843, agricultural labourers continued to serve their masters by executing bonds for the loans, which they borrowed to fulfill familial obligations. As they could never pay the loans in their lifetime, their descendants also had to serve till the repayment of the loan. Thus slavery was made perpetual. Corporal punishments were given to the labourers if their work was found unsatisfactory.

Even the condition of the so-called free agricultural labourers did not improve. Their wage was deplorably low. In Tanjore, a pannaiyal was paid 1½ Madras measured of Paddy in 1885. In Kumbakonam, the wage of the pannaiyal was 1¾ Madras measures. Penington in 1885 estimated that the whole earnings of a pannaiyal was at about 30 to 36 kalam's of Paddy per annum and stated that the earnings of the whole family did not exceed Rs. 50 of which Rs. 7-8-0 was spent on drinks. Many of them were forced to seek employment outside the country. Over population occurrences of famines and unattractive rates of wage paid to the agricultural labourers were some factors, which induced them to find jobs in the plantation in Ceylon, South Africa, Malaya, Burma, etc. Emigration of labourers from Tanjore had begun as early as in 1815. But only after 1843, there were large-scale migration. The Settlement Report of 1922 gives the following figures of Tanjore coolies, who emigrated from Nagapattinam port to the Federated Malay States:
Besides, every year thousands of coolies from Tanjore were dispatched to Ceylon by the Labour Commission. Table below gives the details of migration from Tanjore to Ceylon:

Table : 10

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Infant</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>1905</td>
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<td>197</td>
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<td>2151</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>613</td>
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<td>3753</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2732</td>
<td>1132</td>
<td>839</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>4823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Infant</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
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<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>2261</td>
<td>724</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>3641</td>
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<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>2274</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>3549</td>
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<td>666</td>
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<td>1918</td>
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<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>6583</td>
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</table>

Source: G.O. No: 1537 : p.167

Plantation workers were economically better than those who preferred to stay with their former masters because with savings from the wages paid by the plantation owners, they purchased small pieces of land in their villages. Further, it provided them an escape mechanism them from odd forces of exploitation and social tyranny. As a consequence of large scale emigration of labourers agrestic labour force became scarce. The shortage was so acute that the landowners of Tanjore petitioned to the district collector in 1912 demanding restriction or emigration of agricultural labourers to plantation fields of Malay, Ceylon, etc. But the petition was rejected. Due to this, labour demand seems to have been high, resulting in the rise in wages as is revealed by the Settlement Report. The tenants and labourers of Tanjore had persisting grievances against the landlords. Forgetting their caste differences
they identified themselves as a class. Organised under the influence of Leftist Movement, they fought for their rights in the 1940s under the banner of Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, which was founded in Tanjore in 1943.

To sum up, the colonial occupation of Tanjore region had introduced new elements in the regional agrarian order. The British interest in revenue maximization, forced them to experiment different assessment patterns. In the process a section of the old landholding class lost control over their traditional rights and new class of landowners emerged. The thrifty and industrious among the tenants became elevated to the status to landholders, exploiting the situation created by absentee landlordism. Thus in Tanjore landholding rights were redistributed substantially because of the intervention of the colonial state. At least three classes of landowners emerged in the process—the traditional landholding families, service personnel and lender class who became landowners and tenant farmers, elevated to owner status. The British land policy also generated conditions favourable for entry of land, in the market. Once land entered the market, those who had money to invest, purchased land, thereby achieved the status of landowner. Thus the process of redistribution of land rights continued. It had substantial impact on the class structure and land based power distribution pattern. However, major land concentration remained with the traditional owner families and thus created a divide among landholders - rich peasants, middle peasants and marginal farmers. It had weakened the forces of traditional class solidarity. Class cohesion became absent and it had weakened the bases of traditional landlordism. At the same time, because of the
absence of any effective mechanism to regulate tenancy rights, the quasi-feudal structure continued to sustain. Abolition of agrestic slavery could not achieve the desired effect because of the absence of land redistribution. It forced serfs and slaves, without no land for their labour and sustenance, had to return once again to their old masters. This in turn helped the traditional owner class to tighten their grip over the slave castes and labouring mass. Realising resistance futile they fixed their expectations on national freedom, which they believed would find a solution to their prolonged sufferings.

END NOTES:


9. Ibid.


16. Ibid., pp. 87.

17. Ibid., pp. 91-94.

18. Amir Singh’s Letter Correspondence in Marathi Language, found in Saraswathi Mahal Library, Tanjore.


27. Govt. of Tamilnadu, History of Land Revenue Settlement and Abolition of Intermediary Tenures in Tamil Nadu, p. 412.


29. Govt. of Tamilnadu, History of Land Revenue Settlement and Abolition Intermediary Tenures in Tamil Nadu, pp. 412-413.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.


34. Govt. of Madras, *Papers on Mirasi Rights*, p.89.


37. The Poragudies were an inferior class of Sudras, devoted to the business of agriculture. In Tanjore there were two classes of Poragudies; one which by cultivating the lands of a particular village from generation to generation, has acquired by prescription and tacit acknowledgment a right to continue in the cultivation thereof, which the mirasidars never think of disputing, but which the Poragudies of themselves, sometimes, though very seldom, renounce. The other class of Poragudies were those who engage with the mirasidars on terms similar to those of the hereditary Poragudies for the cultivation of the lands, but whom the latter eject at pleasure.


41. Ibid., p.6.

42. Ibid.


45. Ibid.


47. G.O. No. 1537: 1922, pp. 6-7.

48. Ibid., p.8.

49. Ibid.


52. Ibid., p. 423.

53. Ibid.


56. Ibid.


59. Ibid., pp. 88 - 89.


61. Ibid., p. 51.

62. Madras Land Revenue Records No. 1872 Settlement of Tanjore 1870-71, p. 44.

63. Torture Commission Report, 1855, pp. 88-105


68. C. Ramachandran, op. cit., p. 54.

70. Govt. of India, *Report of the Indian Irrigation Commission, 1901 - 03*

71. Mohanakrishnan, *History of Irrigation Development in Tamil Nadu*,
   pp. 30-31.


73. A. Mohanakrishnan, *Selected Papers on Irrigation*, (Tiruchy:

74. Ibid.


76. Govt. of India, *Mysore – Madras Cauvery Arbitration, 16th July 1913
   to 19th May 1914*, p.1.

77. Govt. of India, *Report of the Famine of 1891- 92*, (Madras :

78. B.M. Bhatia, *Famine in India – A Study in Some Aspects of the
   Economic History of India 1860 –1945*, (Madras : Asia Publishing


80. Govt. of India, *Agricultural Statistics of India, 1915 –16 Vol. 1*,
81. Government of India, Final Agreement between Mysore and Madras
Government in Regard to the Construction of Dam and a Reservoir

82. Ibid.

83. Ibid.

84. Mohanakrishnan, History of Irrigation Development in Tamilnadu,
pp. 37-38.

85. History of Land Revenue Settlement and Abolition of Intermediary
Tenures in Tamil Nadu, p. 426.

86. R. Sundaresan, et al. Thanjavur District – A Socio- Economic Profile
Project Team – pp. 6-7.

87. Government of India, Royal Commission on Agriculture in India,
Vol. III p. 266.

88. Govt. of India, Agricultural Statistics of India, 1934 – 35 Vol. 1,
(Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1937), p. 100.

89. Natarajan, Food and Agriculture in Madras State, (Madras: Govt.


91. Ibid.

92. Ibid.

93. Peter Robb, ‘Land and Society: The British ‘Transformation’ in India
Peter Robb ed., Rural India – Land Power and Society under British
94. Govt. of India, Note on Land Transfer and Agricultural Indebtness in India nd, para 56 quoted in Dharma Kumar, Colonialism, Property and the State, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.20.


97. Ibid.


102. G.O. No. 24 Proceedings of the Public Department 8th January 1912, (Mis) np.

103. G.O. No. 1537: 1922. p.27.