India has always been a country with a dominant rural population, agriculture being their sole or main profession. Hence it is inevitable that land, as a means of production, would play a decisive role in shaping the destiny of the population. It is of vital importance to find answers to questions such as (i) who owned or controlled this means of production, land?, (ii) who were actually involved in the process of cultivation? and (iii) what was the type of relationship between these groups? In otherwords, how did different actions of the society interacted with land as the focus of relationship. An enquiry into peasant community may provide the answers to the above questions.

In explaining the terms, peasant, peasant society or community, scholars have expressed divergent views. For instance, Marx considers the peasant as a class and not a class, i.e., they form a class since peasants are in a poor condition in relation to the dominant population and they are not a class since they are not in a position to organise themselves for the redressal of their grievances. Similarly Kroeber has proposed that the peasants constitute part society with part culture. The main criteria for the above
explanations are two fold: (i) only marginal land owners who
directly cultivate their land are to be considered peasant
and (ii) the rural-urban divide in which the urban population
are divorced of agricultural work and are dependent on the
agricultural surplus provided by the rural peasant folk.
Of course, majority of the rural peasantry may consist of
marginal land holders involved in direct cultivation work
with or without some type of labour force. But to equate
the term peasant with marginal land holders seems to be
inadequate.

Burton Stein takes a quite opposite view by explaining
the term peasant as land holding elite. But the land holding
elite of a particular time were nothing but those people who
were in a position to get favours from the then ruling power.
Further, a marginal land holder may be reduced to the
position of a tenant or a labourer if his small land holding
was confiscated for non-payment of land dues. Thus the big
land lords, marginal land holders, tenants who cultivate other's
lands and labourers are not static categories - but
interchangeable positions depending on circumstances. It is
revealed from the proceedings of the Pudukkottai Legislative
Council that an agriculturist was one whose income from other
sources did not exceed Rupees fifty per year. In other words, the peasant may be considered as one who is solely dependent on income from land, whether one is a land lord, marginal land holder, etc. If this proposition can be accepted, it can be presumed that all persons, including service castes such as the artisans and dependent castes - the pallar and paraiyar - may be said to form part of the peasant community. Further, these dependent and service castes were also involved in agricultural work in the piece of land assigned to them as service tenure, known as Kudi umbalam.

As regards the rural-urban divide, cited above, it is doubtful whether it can be applied in the Indian context. Scholars have pointed out that the towns of pre-industrial India cannot be taken as urban centres in the strict sense of the term, eating the agricultural surplus of the rural peasants. At the best the pre-industrial towns in India seem to be quasi-urban centres, not completely divorced from land. Thus Hall gives the details about the medieval mercantile towns of the Tamil country, known as nagaram, as being involved in both cultivation of their own land and the management of land possessed by temples and others. Having
considered the views of scholars regarding peasant or peasant community it becomes necessary to enquire the interacting factors within the peasant community revolving around land relations. But, before that, the various communities or castes who were involved in land relationship in some way or other may be looked into.

(1) COMPONENTS OF THE PEASANT COMMUNITY

The various sources, epigraphs, copper plates, Darbar office records and the proceedings of the Legislative Council reveal that in Pudukkottai, agriculture and land management is not the monopoly of a particular caste. A number of castes including the elite, dominant, martial and dependent in this grouping constitute the peasant socio-cultural order.5

THE BRAHMINS

In the Aryan caste hierarchical concept of society7 the Brahmins occupied the highest place. In Pudukkottai they had prestige and influence because of the patronage they received from the rulers. The chieftains granted brahmadeya lands to them. But in this tract of adverse and unfavourable
seasonal conditions, many of their early settlements declined. So during the period under study, the Brahmins were invited from the Kaveri Valley to settle in Pudukkottai region. Venkanna, the court Brahmin composed Vamsāvalī that attributed the divine origin of the Thondaiman rulers.

Lands were granted to Brahmins at Tiruppur (1712), Mutha Lakanna Chatram, Chandanata Kurichi (1724), Manchur (1934), Kadakudi (1718), Kiranur (1732), Ayyankulam (1787), Rangammal Samudram (1793), Tirumalai Rayapuram (1794), Sellakudi (1799), Mangammalpuram (1804), Kovilur (1802), Malaiyur (1803), Brahodambalpuram (1804), Pungudi (1805), Vaiyapuri Endal (1806) and Vijaya Regunathapuram (1826). Dwelling quarters were constructed to them at Vijaya Regunathapuram near Pudukkottai and Prasanna Regunathapuram near Kadayakkudi.

During the superintendence of the Tanjore resident who intended to keep the expenditure of the state reduced, no grants of inām lands were given to them. But in 1826 sanction was accorded by the British resident for the grant of lands to the Brahmins as a measure of charity. The enfranchisement of inām lands given to them caused concern among the Brahmins. According to Radhakrishna Aiyer, the
Rajah had to use tact and diplomacy to cajole the Brahmins to accept the new scheme.\textsuperscript{11}

The Darbar solicited the view of the āgamasāstrī whenever crucial issues were raised on important socio-cultural affairs. The presence of Brahmin officers from taluk office to higher levels revealed their influence in administration.\textsuperscript{12} Many Brahmins served with distinction in the Pudukkottai Legislative Council. Despite non-brahmin opposition in the Madras Presidency, their interests were protected in the Pudukkottai Dharma Samasthāṇam. As a minority community Brahmins were more cohesive than the other communities and enjoyed high socio-economic status. To minimise their entry in civil administration the Darbar stressed the Bachelor of Arts Degree as the minimum qualification for them to be in the civil service of the state.\textsuperscript{13} When they entered into government services their fertile lands were purchased by Nāttukkōṭṭai Chettiārs. Many of the Brahmins who received Brahmadeya lands supported the darbar to maintain status-quo in socio-cultural relations like temple entry proclamations and the abolition of devadasi system.
THE NĀTTUKKŌTTAI CHEṬṬIĀRS

The Nāttukkōttai Cheṭṭiārs were mostly interested in trading activities. The members of the trading community were generally denoted by the suffix chetti, which is derived from the Sanskrit Srēshthi. Their settled native home had spread over the tract south of Vellar basin. According to tradition they migrated from the Chola country at the invitation of a Pandya king. Their settled areas situated south of Vellar, north of Vaigai, west of Bay of Bengal and east of Piranmalai. In their community living, tanks and temples played a decisive role as revealed by the Thirumayam Nāttukkōttai Cheṭṭiār inscriptions.

When Thirumayam became a part of the erstwhile Princely state of Pudukkottai, the peasantry there were interested in the production of grains and the traders were interested in the exchange of commodities. In this way there prevailed closeness in economic activities between peasants and chettis. They employed the martial communities of the region as guards to protect the merchandise by paying Pādikāval dues (Protection money). From their home base, known as Cheṭṭinādu, they spread to other places of Madras Presidency and abroad to many parts of South East Asia.
Because of their immense wealth and strict code of conduct they gained prestige and influence. In Pudukkottai, if castes were ranked in general, they occupied a place next to Brahmins.17

They invested money on lands and buildings from their profits earned elsewhere.18 They renovated temples, tanks and constructed palatial living quarters as their abode. They provided employment opportunities to the poor peasants of other communities. Because of the construction activities of the Chettiars, there was acute demand for labour and wages shot up.19

The Chettiars were the creditors of the Thondaiman rulers and other Jâhirdârs.20 In many places the peasants were fully indebted to rich Nâttâkkottai Chettiars. The rural indebtedness and the dependency of the peasantry increased because of their extravagant spending during auspicious occasions. The debt relief acts were not helpful to improve the conditions of the peasants because loans were given only after pledging ornaments or vessels by them. If debts were orally contracted it was between close acquaintances.
According to Pungkonrai Velangudi Inscription, many sanctions were imposed against chettiar by their caste norms including cultivation of lands and claim of Kudivāram rates (dues of the tenant). The chettiar should not hold any office of the ambalam (headmanship) or hold umbalam lands (lands granted for village service). Those who violated the chett caste panchayat and those charged with sedition will not be entertained or admitted in their social functions. The very fact that restrictions were imposed on some of their activities reveals that they were involved in such activities, including land transactions. It is not unlikely that lands were taken by them as sureties for lending money and in case of default they became the owners of the land. Further, this community owned lands traditionally, though their main profession was trade. Even during the period under study, they purchased land from the Brahmins as noted above. Thus the Chettiyar community had also connection with agricultural production, of course as non-cultivating land owners.

The Nattukkottai Chettiar, because of their financial strength it was said that they could manipulate witnesses and create proxy criminals to represent them in the event of their troubles and tribulations. As they invested a lot of money on land and houses, the Darbar was inclined to
settle the land holdings of the chetti villages. It was called Chetti Nattam and the Darbar permitted appeals on it. The Nattam settlement was intended to give titles to chetti houses and thereby keeping litigation minimum.24

THE VELLĂLARS

The Vellălars were noted for their irrigation skill and agricultural practises. The term Vellalar can be explained as 'Vel' + 'ălar'; that is Vellam (water) Ālpavar (one who controls). It indicates the command of Vellălars on land and water. There was social division among them based on territory like Chōliya Vellāla, Pānḍya Vellāla and Nañchilnătu Vellāla. Some groups among them practised vegetarianism as a mode of their food habit. The popular saying that Kallar, Maravar and Ahambaḍiyar slowly and steadily became Vellălar, indicates that their rank swelled because of peasant colonisation.25 According to tradition they settled in the northern and southern banks of Vellar by the Chola and Pandya kings respectively. Royal sponsorship of settlement gave them much prestige and was valued high.26 Those who settled on the northern bank of the river Vellar were called Kō-năttu Vellălars and those settled on the southern bank were called Kănăttu Vellălars.27 The Therkattur manuscript
that describes the settlement showers praises on their agricultural skills and land reclamation. They were capable of finding out the underground deposit of water and constructed huge wells called Karālan Kinaru. 

It is claimed that the Vellālers brought with them barbers, potters, washermen, blacksmith, carpenters, oil pressers, betel growers, flower vendors, fishermen and shepherds. With their arrival, the social stratification of the region has increased. The outbreak of a clash between Konattu Vellālers and Kanattu Vellālers affected the tranquility of the region and to protect their respective interests they employed Kallar and Maravar mercenaries. At last it led them to violent conflicts and agrarian rivalry centered on land rights and temple honours. The Mela Panaiyur and Kulamangalam copper plates mention the violences that resulted in the damage to crops, public utilities and loss of life. It resulted in the domination of Kallars in the northern region and Maravars in the southern region of the Pudukkottai state.

Vellālers as a community were not very cohesive. In the social milieu they ranked next to Kallars and Chettiyārs. They centered their activities more on land pursuits. The locality and social system of the peasant folk
were maintained by them throughout the Tamil region. Dirks points out that the Vellāla title as Pillai evoked respect throughout Tamilnadu. But in Pudukkottai the title Ambalam evoked a similar respect and such a title Ambalam (headman) was not found among the Vellalar community.

MARTIAL COMMUNITIES

It was noted above (Chapter III) that the region was mostly a Mullai (forest) land, and during drought conditions it turned out to be a Pālai (desert) land. According to ancient Tamil tradition, the Pālai land was occupied by martial communities like the Maravar, Valayar etc. Hence it can be said that the martial communities of the region - Maravar, Kallar, Valayar etc., were the original inhabitants of the Pudukkottai region. Among these communities the Kallar community occupies the foremost place because of their matrimonial relationship with the Thondaiman rulers.

THE KALLARS

Of the triple caste of Kallar, Maravar and Ahanbadiyar the Kallars were notable because of their cultural value and
heroic deeds. They resided in Padaiparru villages (military stations) and rendered help to their chieftains in offensive and defensive operations. They as a community settled in agrarian groups in different places of the state called nadu. The 1911 census numbered them, 50689. The nadu prefix of the Kallar sub-caste indicates their inclination towards settled agriculture. Each nadu had several lineages. A list of such nadus found in Pudukkottal are included in the appendix. The Kallar nadu remained as a network, based on lineage and territory. The Kallar nadu in total acknowledged Thondaiman as their ruler. Among them, Ampunāṭtu Kallars called themselves superior because of their matrimonial relations with the Rajah.

As regards the social organisation of the Kallars, each lineage had a Karai ambalam, each village had an Urambalam, and nadu had Nattambalam. The Kallar militia constituted by the ruler participated in the various campaigns of the rulers. Their subsistence was assured by the grant of lands called amaram. Among them, the vahuppu sērvakārars constituted the nobility of the state. They too were given extensive lands. Kurikārars and Ūliyakārars were placed just above the ordinary amarakārars.
Of all the Kallars of Pudukkottai the Ampunāṭṭu Kallars were the most refined and the Viśaṅkināṭṭu Kallars were least refined. The amaram land holders among them who once fought on behalf of the state gradually became supervisors of amani lands and palace guards. Enfranchisement of lands and the resumption of antiquated service grants lessened their prestige.  

THE MARAVARS  

In Pudukkottai state, the Maravar settlement was found in places like Ponnamaravathy, Chevalur, Kulipirai, Athur, Panyur, Kulamangalam, Virachilai, Kollur and Vembalakkudi. In their settled places Pidari Amman temples were constructed and they worshipped 'Korravaal' a God of triumph. The Maravars moved to other places of inhabitation from Sivaganga and Ramnad. The marriage relationship of the Thondaiman dynasty with the family of the Rajah of Ramnad encouraged more Maravars to establish their settlements in Pudukkottai state.  

The settled Maravars were divided among themselves into various sub-divisions, called Kilai. It was also a
kinship group similar to a clan. The worshippers of a common deity generally constituted one Kilai. In Pudukkottai the Maravars could not develop an elaborate network of kinship organisation based on territory and lineage. As a result they were forced to inhabit separate regions in different parts of the state. They were identified often not by their territorial name but by their village name. 45

THE AHAMBADIOYARS

The Ahambađiyars showed heroism and valour as a martial caste and confined themselves as palace guards of the Thondaiman royalty. They occupied the highest rank among other martial communities of the state because they were the indoor servants of the rulers and were very close to the ruling house. 46 Their proximity to the Rajah ensured the personal safety of the ruler. According to 1921 census there were 7833 Ahambađiyars in the state. 47 They too possessed lands and were called ʻUliyakārār in the Thondaiman's court. Among the Ahambađiyar community some attained high positions in the administrative set up of the state. One group of Ahambađiyars who lived in villages south of Kiranur were called Kottalpattu Ahambađiyars. Another
group who lived in the southern part of the state were called Pillaiperan Ahambadiyars. 48

THE VALAYARS

Valai in Tamil means net. The valayars used it, either to catch fish in inland water or trap birds and animals in the forest. They were one of the predominant caste of this region whose rank in the social hierarchy was just above the scheduled castes and below the rank of other castes. According to Dirks they occupied the frontier between settled agriculture and the forest. He is of the opinion that Kallar control of Valaiyar labour contributed the extension of agriculture in Pudukkottai. 49 According to 1911 census there were 65504 valayars in the state. 50

Prosperous among the Valayars were designated as Valuvadis. 51 Socially conscious valayars call themselves as ambalakārars. They claimed that the ancient Muthariyar rulers belonged to their community. Some of the valaiyars were employed as priests in the temples of village deities such as Aiyanār and Karuppar. Thondaiman rulers gave land grants to them to assist the royal hunt. 52 The valaiyars were
found on a large scale in between settled areas and the forest especially in Ponnamaravathi and Sengirai areas.53

As tenants and labourers in other's lands they were sometimes referred to as Adimai. The lateral meaning of Adimai is slave. Here the term is understood as hereditary servants. Generally they did not enjoy Pāḍikavāl rights. Their nadus and lineages served only ritual purpose. When the martial castes expanded they forced the Valaiyars to reclaim their virgin lands. Because of their orientation towards peripheral aspects of peasant life they were unable to acquire the privileges associated with the local hegemony of peasant power.

Udaiyars were highly enterprising peasants. They were excellent agriculturists. According to Radhakrishna Aiyer they had a love towards land and always toiled on fields. The reward and return for their labour on land evoked jealousy and keen competition among other castes.55

THE SERVICE CASTES

The service castes provided a variety of agricultural tools and other useful household articles for the peasants to
enhance their prosperity. In Pudukkottai they include people practising different trades like artisans, carpenters, potters and weavers. It can be said that the might of the artisan castes had contributed to the material culture of the Pudukkottai region. Their subsistence was assured because their useful materials were demanded by all in the peasant community.

THE ARTISANS

Without the service of the artisans many of the agricultural tools cannot be locally produced. Some of the artisan classes were commonly identified as Kollan (Blacksmith), Thatchan (Carpenter), Kuyavan (Potter) and Neşavâji (Weaver). Inscriptions of the Pudukkottai state have references about blacksmiths and goldsmiths and the free grant of lands to them. In Tirukogarnam even today one can find the working of Silpāsāri (sculptor) and many of them still cherish their attachment with the Thondaiman dynasty. The services of the blacksmiths were utilised to make and repair tools like, crow bar, spade, 'aruvāl' or billhook and forge plough shares. In Thiruverangulam blacksmiths used furnace for smelting iron. The age old country plough used for wet land was small and light, while medium to heavy types were
used in gardens and dry lands. The Imperial Gazetteer reported that "if the plough is light to work man was forced to go over the ground many times." The high wheel carts were used to carry a fair load of supplies to the nearby lands. Crowbar was utilised to more heavy soil to make them useful and fit for cultivation.

The carpenters helped to build houses and to make simple ploughs and carts. The rural folks were in need of pots of different sizes, usually of earthenware. It means that more number of potters were available in Pudukkottai. The important pottery centres were Annavasal, Illuppur, Mangudi, Satyamangalam, Poovarasakudi and Kosalakudi. At Tiruvappur near Pudukkottai the Saurashtra Patnūls manufactured clothes called Sāyavēśtis.

In spite of the occasional attempts to separate the artisan, from the bulk of the peasantry and from each other by caste, their services were immensely helpful to all. Scholars have visualised a patron client relationship that prevailed between the peasants and the artisans in which the artisan entered into a long term contractual agreement with members of his own village and was guaranteed a specified share of the local harvest in exchange for his
service to the local community. In addition to this age old system of payment, the artisans were also allotted a piece of land, probably from the common land of the village as service tenure. Thus the artisans are closely related or part of the peasant community, not only for the services rendered by them but also for their involvement in the cultivation of the land allotted to them.

THE DEPENDENT CASTES

The dependent castes stood below the rank of all other castes in the social hierarchy. For their subsistence they worked on the lands of others as agricultural labourers. The social life of the dependent castes preserved primary agricultural practices and the folk culture in the countryside.

PALLARS AND PARAYARS

In the local caste ridden society two basic service groups known today as 'untouchables' were the Pallars and Paraiyars. They were hereditary servants otherwise called
Adinai of the dominant castes. The Pallars, many of whom were agricultural labourers, attached to villages dominated by other castes. Their nādu was none other than the nādu of the dominant caste in which they were called to serve. Their caste headman was called Kudumpan. As agricultural serf most of the Pallars supplied immense and indefinite proportion of labour to their patrons. In return they received subsistence as well as special gifts on private and public ritual occasions. Pallars who were employed to close and open sluice of irrigation tanks were called madai pallan.

Among Pallars and Paraiyars Kāṇiyāṭṭi - Urimai prevailed. It means the right to render a particular service otherwise called thollil. The services of the Paraiyars included cleaning the village streets, beating the drum, telling the news of death called Ketam to the relatives and burning the corpse. The Paraiyars who were employed in fixing the boundaries of villages were called ellaiodi Paraiya. Those who danced in village festivals were called Koothādi Paraiya. Similarly the highest of the Paraiya called vettāns were employed to render service to the entire village. They were given small māniyam lands by the Rajahs known as Vetti umbalam.
Arunthathiyars otherwise called Chakkillyars provided the leather bag attached to the water lift, called Kabilla. It was yoked by a rope to a pair of bullocks for the purpose of drawing water from a well. Ettam was a device used to lift water in which Arunthathiyars and others helped each other. Consequent on the mechanisation of wells by diesel engines and electric motor pumpsets, many of them lost their jobs.

INTERACTING FACTORS

In the previous chapter on land system it was noticed that there existed both private and common ownership in land. Among the land owners Brahmins, Vellālas and the Kallars figure prominently. It is possible that most of them including the Vellālar elite were not involved in the direct cultivation of land. Similarly among the tenure holdings also, particularly tenures related to temple services and officials, cultivation work could have been left to the tenants. Thus there existed the age old division of land owners called Ujavithu unpor and tillers of the soil, ujuthumör. Besides these two groups, there existed the third group, viz., the service and dependent communities or castes who were normally aligned with the dominant peasant elite of the locality.
As per the tradition noted above, the Velḷālas from the Pandya and Chola countries were respectively settled in Kāṇa nāḍu and Kōṇāḍu areas of the Pudukkottai region.60 Since the Pudukkottai region was a buffer zone between the power centres located in the Kaveri and Valgal basins, it is quite natural that both the powers carved out spheres of influence in the buffer zone by settling the peasant elite of the respective countries in the medieval period. If this is so, it can be presumed that the Pudukkottai region provided enough virgin land to be reclaimed and occupied when the Velḷālas migrated to this area.70 Further, the Brahmins were also encouraged by grants of lands in the form of dēvadāna and brahmadeya.71 But after the decline of the Chola power, there was political chaos in this area, as noted in the chapter on political background. This political vacuo was filled up by the martial castes, who were hitherto playing a subdued role. Ultimately the political unrest was set at rest by the advent of the Thondaimans with the support of the martial communities. Thus the pendulum swung in favour of the martial communities who became almost part and parcel of the power structure.72 This had an impact on land relations also. The Velḷālas, who formed the ruling elite of the medieval period, were pushed into an
insignificant position and now they could not even get the privilege of village head man called Ur ambalam.

Because of the political unrest in the pre-Thondaiman period, noted above, the interests of the Brahmins could have been affected. But the presence and blessings of the Brahmins were considered vital to the Pudukkottai state - Dharma Samasthanam - necessitating fresh invitations to settle brahmins by grants of lands, noted above. But alienation of lands in favour of the Brahmins could have affected the proprietary rights of the existing land owners, and tensions were averted during such land transfers. As noted above lands with good irrigation facilities in the Vellar basin were granted to them. As non-cultivating land owners they had to depend on the tenants to cultivate their lands. Similarly, the other non-Brahmin land holding elite could also have depended on the tenants. Thus the tenant and the land owner relationship assumes greater significance.

As noted under Land system, though there existed three types of tenancies, the Vāram system, i.e., the sharing of the produce in a given ratio between the tenant and the owner was widely prevalent in India; the owner's share was called melvaram, while the tenant's share was known as
kilvāram. The division of the cultivators share on the produce was not very regular. It varied from forty to fifty percent on the crops of dry grain and from twenty five to forty percent on paddy. On state lands the Thondaiman ruler fixed the government share of paddy at fifty percent and dry grain at 33 1/3 percent. 75

The power of allocation of land passed into the lands of the local chiefs who claimed sovereign attributes to themselves by virtue of the position they held. As a result the status of the peasant community in the princely state centered around the land practises of vāram, kuthagai and pannai system of the tenancy. 76 Tenancy may be beneficial or detrimental to farmer's interests. When society is static and has become stratified, tenancy may hinder agricultural development. 77 Secured tenancy and an assured possession of land alone can produce good results. Caste-wise distribution of holdings, the nature of tenancy arrangements, the size of farming family and the number of dependents and whole time agricultural workers in it were some of the factors influencing the peasant's way of life. 78 In Pudukkottai state the prominent classes of people who represented different castes of the locality like, Kallars, Udayārs and Nāttukkottai
chettis were fully or partly involved in the cultivating practices of their respective regions.  

Most of the Kallars of the Kolathur taluk became small husband men who increased their skills by assuming more role in the cultivation of lands. The same was the case of the Udaiyārs of Alangudi. They by their dints of hard labour and intelligent method of cultivation improved their lands.

The older class of Nāṭtukkottai chettis of Thirumayam taluk were small paṭṭādārs of land. With the flow of external money they became a more well to do class of land owners. They acquired land more for prestige and the security it offered as an immovable property. As proprietors of land they were not inclined to cultivate the lands by themselves. So in turn they were forced to depend on the cultivating tenants. The tenant took upon himself the burden of cultivation and maintenance of the land. Half of the produce from land was assured to him as the price for his labour. If the season fails, he trusts his landlord for his maintenance. It was informed that under the system the owner as cultivator cannot expect any profit from land and remained always at loss.
The influence of Valayars of the peripheral regions of Pudukkottai cannot be ignored. Being tenants and agricultural labourers in other's land, they served with commitment and always referred to as Adimali. Majority of the Valayars hereditarily practised cooly work and became responsible agricultural labourers to their masters in and around of their settled villages. A very few among them received mānyam lands (land grant). The most numerous Valaiyars served as Panniyal labourers to produce grain were hired on a year to year basis by Kallar, Vellālar, Brahmin and Chettiers.82

The amani system of land holding provided good quality of rice from Karaiyur for the use of the Thondaiman palace establishment.83 The land holders under amani suffered as a result of the corrupt practises and manipulations.84 It affected the inclination of the peasant to cultivate more and he was always a tenant at will. So by abolishing the amani system Seshiah Sastrī reiterated the views of the British. Yet under Thondaiman rule, the interests of the peasants and the traditional agrarian system were protected against the impact of British land arrangements made in the Madras Presidency.85 Pudukkottai being a tiny state many of the British techniques had not changed the existing
peasant order very much. Most of the traditional agricultural practices and tenancy land holding system were still clearly visible.

The peasant way of life here is rooted more on the soil. Cultivators who had holdings with a low level of land capability had a very limited income. During famine conditions they were in a much worse condition. In the 1876-78 famine in Pudukkottai\textsuperscript{86} conjee houses supplying gruel rice for the relief of the destitute were opened and arrangements were made for starting other relief works. The road to Madura was taken up as a relief work. Money was allotted for more water facilities and for removing prickly pear from tanks. Rice was purchased wholesale by the Rajah from Thanjavur to feed them. In the fifteen months from November 1876 to February 1878, 1041672 persons were relieved and when the famine was over, clothes and money presents were given to deserving people from the sums subscribed by the people including Rs.5,000/- contributed by the Rajah. It indicates the plight of the small land holders when confronted by natural calamities.

In Pudukkottai the problems associated with peasantry have become more complex. An alternative outlook is sought
for the improvement of local conditions through mutual favours. Vişānki nāṭṭu Kallars of Kolathur taluk were more ferocious and noted for their predatory activities like robbing and cattle lifting. Thuppukooli\(^87\) (detection money) was the demand of the cattle raider. It was a sum of money for the restoration of the cattle lost. It may cause fear, hardship and places impediments to the looser especially during times of cultivation. So they wanted to free themselves from this unfavourable practise.

The peasantry in Pudukkottai was confronted with tension, violent feuds resulting in bloodsheds, damage to agricultural lands and public utilities like tanks. Many of them did not have the capacity to invest more in the agricultural lands under their possession. The revolt of the Venkanna brought to light another dimension of the problems of the peasants. He was having 254 Āljīvitham lands. He promised to expose Raja Ramachandra's ulterior intention of increasing land revenue by the introduction of shorter measuring\(^89\) rods. He promised the abolition of quit-rent and grant of mirasi rights to his supporters. He assured reduction of taxes and restoration of lands usurped. He enlisted the support of the Vişāṅkināṭṭu Kallars.
The rebellion was principally caused by the extravaganza, indebtedness and mismanagement of the Rajah. Venkanna was anxious to acquire much respect and unusual honours without submitting himself to the authority of the government. Even though the British troops quelled the rebellion in August 1854, it reflects the tension and peculiar contradictions that prevailed in the princely state. As a result of the palace revolution of Venkanna, the finances of the state were temporarily put under the Political Agent's control and the peasants were persuaded not to side with the rebellion, which may cause agrarian unrest and rural violence.

Agricultural operations and the construction and maintenance of irrigation works would have required a greater man power in this region. This was provided by the service and dependant castes of the region. Considering the meagre agricultural surplus, it can be said that the condition of these people could not have been enviable. So, when the Nāṭṭukkōṭṭai Chettiārs offered the higher wages, they deserted their traditional customers, creating a scarcity of labour. Again the payment of wages became an important issue resulting in the Andakkulam riots in which the Kallars and
Muslims were involved. Further, the dependant castes, the Pallar and Paraiyar, were in state of slaves (adima) of the land owners, though enough details are not available in the extent sources. The effective control exercised by the martial communities over these people is clearly indicated in their socio-cultural set up. For instance, the Pallars, who were adopt in paddy cultivation, simply adopted the nādu (social) division of the dominant caste of the locality. 93

The temples in the villages played an important role as the central agency in establishing social harmony and stability among the inhabitants. The socio-economic stratification of the rural folk on the basis of land relations reflected in the celebration of temple festivals, sometimes leading to social tensions. In many villages there were severe competition among peasants to conduct temple festivals and to appropriate temple honours accompanied with it. 94 The peasant community that contested for respects and temple honours was in some classes reluctant to perform uliyam services to the temple. As the princely state of Pudukkottai was a Dharma Samasthanam the Darbar held the view that patta land holders must perform uliyam services. It
stressed the view that land holding in the state was burdened with *ūliyam* service to the temple. Pulling the temple car was a major *ūliyam* service. *Vāśalkattu āliyams* were the specific routine services performed in temples.

Ambunāṭṭu Kallars claimed that they need not perform *ūliyam* services in temples on the ground of their kinship considerations with the Rajah. But the Darbar maintained that *inabandus* (respect of the clan) were not *Rājabandus* (respect of the king). When the Christian and Muslim members claimed that their religious doctrines never permitted *ūliyam* services in Hindu temples the Darbar reported that land ownership was burdened with *ūliyam* services and so they should not have purchased lands when they were hesitant to perform *ūliyam*. As the state patronised non-Hindu institutions like Kāṭṭubēva Pallivāsal there was nothing wrong on their part to perform the services. If the Muslims were given exemption, any one purchasing lands from them would claim exemption and would result in bināmī transactions to avoid *ūliyams*. Because of the opposition to *ūliyam* services the Darbar was forced to collect one anna per rupee on land revenue for *ūliyam* services in temples. Events were reported about the imposition of a fine for the non-performance of *ūliyam* in temples.
Realising the cultural value of temples the wealthy Nāṭṭukottai chettiārs renovated many temples and restored their usual rituals. But their claim of full temple respects were contested by the nattars of a particular region who claimed temple respects on the basis of ancient customs. The issue was settled according to the relative strength of the contending parties and revived during the conduct of the next year festival. The Darbar maintained a schedule of honour for different communities as the activities were centered around temples where annual festivals were conducted.

Of all the annual festivals Dasara or Navarāttiri celebrated in Pudukkottai was the most important which reveals the cultural activities of the peasantry and the dynastic heritage of the Thondaiman rulers. It was celebrated on the first nine nights and ten days of the lunar month Asvini, the period from September to mid October. It was thought that the peace and prosperity of the royalty, the Brahmin and the peasantry will be assured by their close participation in the celebration of Dasara. The Rajah and the kingdom worshipped the deity Brahadambal at the Dasara festival. After 1940, the festival was challenged on the grounds of excessive brahminical patronage and the urgent
need to practice economy during world war time. The general attitude of the peasantry was in favour of it, as it was celebrated for more than 200 years. It was said that if Syed Mohammed Rowther spent twenty thousand rupees for Kanduri festival why the state could not spend on Dasara. The festival stressed poor feeding and efforts were made to curtail the huge expenditure involved in it.

Temple was the common ground where each caste had a role to share. It means the right to a share of honours in the temple. According to Dirks, when the martial Kallars settled in the countryside, they saw to it that their dominance should not be jeopardized at any time. The entry and share of each caste in the temple was regulated by a schedule of honour which was often ranked in a region. There was competition and rivalry among the peasantry to conduct village festivals. There was a rivalry regarding the theft of the Vinayaga idol between the villagers of Kummangudi and Menikandha. There was unrest because they accused each other. So the Dewan Pelshkar interfered and took a decision to fix a place and consecrate the idol if they agreed. But there arose differences among them about the direction in which the idol was to be consecrated. Such
disputes could not be settled by public servants and teachers because of the communal strength of the contending groups.

Village temple festivals provided an opportunity for the participation of different castes by incorporating them in different rituals. Field studies by this researcher has revealed the claims for temple honours and the spirit of compromise as existed in between communities. The scheduled castes were incorporated by asking them to tie the sacred bangle (Kappu Kaṭṭuthal) to indicate the commencement of the village festival. In Kalappal Udayarkoil they held the sacred umbrella. In the Peraiyur car festival villagers were earmarked for providing oil for the wheels of the chariot and the supplying of milk for the sacred anointment of the deity. The scheduled castes provide water for washing the feet of devotees. In Athiyampatti annual desilting of the village tank was clubbed with the festival and the event was called Kulavettu.

Temples serve to symbolise the hierarchical supremacy of the nadu where Kāṇṭiyāṭchī was the right to worship and receive temple honours. Marīyāṭhal varisal
or the roll call of honour at the village festival determines the order in which honours were to be given. The first honour belonged to the Rajah. So the second honour was given to Brahmins. The relationship between the Brahmins and the king was resolved here by accommodation. The Brahmin, though superior in caste hierarchy, accepted the primacy of the king, belonging to the Kallar community. The participation in a festival by sponsorship otherwise called mandakappadi gives special honours. On the day of festival the person, offering mandakappadi will be treated high upon the list of local dominant castes. In short every one in the village participated in the festival including, Kallars, Artisans and Paraiyars and men and women. Throughout the festival each caste and social group acted as part of the whole. Each part was graduated in relation to the whole and each gradation was marked by the service it rendered. As a result time taught co-ordinate accommodation was achieved among dominant agrarian communities and a kind of subordinate accommodation prevailed among other caste groups. The accommodation and adjustment marks land arrangement practises and temple honours.

The peasantry in Pudukkottai rooted more in the soil and solely depended on the income from land. Agricultural
work avert social neglect, and forms part of the assessment of peasant status and involvement. The interests of the Brahmin on land was recognised and fully protected in the Dharma Samasthanam. The Naṭṭukkōṭṭai chettārs gradually emerged as influential non-cultivating land holders. The martial Kallars and Maravars established their hold on land by their constant involvement in agricultural practices. The Vellālars who initially promoted the peasant way of life through land reclamation continued their traditional profession, of course accepting a subordinate role. The Valayars and artisans steadily added by their skill to the material culture of the peasantry. The dependent castes like Pallar, Parayar and Chakkiliyar helped to preserve the primary agricultural interests of the state by providing agriculural labour. This social stratification which was evolved on the basis of land relationship, got reflected, in temple worship which in turn acted as an agent of social integration by a process of adjustment and accommodation.
CHAPTER - VII

REFERENCES


3. This forms the main theme of his work; Burton Stein, Peasant state and Society in Medieval South India, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1985, p. 2.


6. The classification of elite, dominant, martial and dependent are nothing but a grouping to exemplify the socio-cultural order attached to it.


10. Ibid., p. 376.

11. Ibid., p. 459.


17. I.P.S., pp. 125, 205, 176.


19. Ibid.


22. Kenneth R. Hall, *Op.cit.*, p. 104. Even during the period under study they purchased land from the Brahmin as noted above. Thus the Chetṭār community had also connection with agricultural production, of course as non-cultivating land owners.


28. Such wells which were constructed are still found in Annava sal, Madiyanallaur, Kunnandarkoil, Virachilal and Pillamangalam.


34. *Appendix* XIII.


36. Hand written Records called Faisal Registers give details about the grant of lands to amarakars.


42. Ibid.


45. Ibid., p. 264.

46. Ibid., p. 267.


49. Ibid., p. 270.

51. Ibid., pp. 182-183.


53. Ibid., p. 270.

54. The Dharmaśastra view of Sudra cannot be applied here.


56. I.P.S., 296, 329.


58. I.P.S., 467.


61. It was called Māttuvāṇḍy, Appendix, Plate 5.


65. Ibid., p. 275.

66. Ibid., p. 276.

67. Appendix, Diagram IV.

68. Land system accommodates land owners and tillers of the soil where dominant, service and dependent are relationships revolved around agriculture.


71. Ibid., p. 61, Assignments of lands were given for 212 temples and 21 villages to Brahmins.

72. The Rajah Regunatha Raya Thondaiman (1686-1730) could establish the foundation for a powerful state with the help of martial Kallars and others. The supporters were Ilandari Ambalakaran, Nallakutti Valamkondan and others.
Chapter on land system gives a detailed account of the tenancy as prevailed in Pudukkottai state.


They went to South Asian countries for Trade and returned money at home to buy landed properties and thus became owners of a lot of lands.

Amani system, more details are given in Chapter VI on Land system.
85. Many changes were less visible in Madras Presidency because of its vastness and different historical heritage. Such is the case with the tiny state of Pudukkottai. Herman Kulke and Dieman Rothermund, *A History of India*, Delhi, 1986, pp. 263-264.


102. Ibid., p. 211.


111. The relationship that prevailed among different communities of the region helps to settle the historical methodology.

