CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

The Thesis, entitled, "Agriculture and Land System in the Pudukkottai State under the Thondaiman Rulers, (A.D.1700-1947)" aims to give a cogent account of the agronomical conditions, irrigation patterns and land system of an erstwhile princely state. The physical and human environment determine the march of the events in History. Of the various factors that shape and influence the history of any region, Agriculture and Land system are of paramount importance, because they are the linchpins that determine and shape the emerging socio-economic conditions of any region. The cause and consequence of any phenomena, including the agrarian system, require careful examination.

THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The political aspects of the Thondaimans of Pudukkottai has been the subject matter of two dissertations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The present study is about 'Agriculture and Land system in the Pudukkottai State.' Prior to Industrial Revolution, agriculture was the major occupation of the people. Neither the development of technology nor the market forces, could lessen the importance of agriculture. When compared to industries, changes in agriculture occur only at long intervals. The factors that contribute to the emerging agrarian
pattern and their relevance, is the subject matter of the study on agrarian relations. The main focus is restricted to the agrarian aspects that prevailed during the period selected for study. Other aspects receive only incidental treatment to highlight the background.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The theme, agriculture and land system, is no doubt a vast one. The study is limited to time, space and theme. The period selected, 1700 to 1947 might look like a pretty long one. As the region is situated in a dry agro-climatic condition, ravaged by either flood or drought with a very slow development of the productive forces, the tyranny of the time is not oppressive. Hence the topic for research is taken covering nearly two hundred and fifty years, the period of the Thondaiman dynasty, as a matter of economic significance. Regarding the area, it should be noted, that socio-culturally it constitutes a more homogenous area with specific features along with its distinct socio-historical evolution. Hence the interaction of the human resources with physical resources – two major components of the process of agriculture in the Pudukkottai tract, alone is discussed. In the process of production, relations of production are inevitable and hence in this study those who control the land and those who use it alone are highlighted. As a result, the study is limited to the working out of various issues connected with agronomy,
irrigation, land system in general and peasant community in particular. The reaction of the peasant community to the issues mentioned above is in a way relevant to this area of investigation.

THE SOURCES

For reasons which are obvious, the study is based on archival materials. The sources are numerous. Hence the researcher is confronted with the problem of plenty. The official stand-points alone, in these sources, are discernible. The response of the Darbar and the peasants could be seen only from the proceedings of the Pudukkottai Legislative Council. But for these proceedings, the study on the history of Pudukkottai is bound to become the officially sponsored history.

A. DARBAR RECORDS

Documents, records and manuscripts in abundance are preserved in the Record Room of the Public Office buildings of Pudukkottai. They are popularly known as 'The Darbar Records of the erstwhile Princely State of Pudukkottai.' They include the Annual Administrative Reports of Government Departments dealing with Revenue, Irrigation, Judicial, Currency, Coinage, Trade, Industry, Cultivation and Earth Salt Convention. The rainfall statistics of the Darbar contain authentic reports about the rainfall conditions of the state. Among the Darbar Records, geneology of
the Thondaimans and the statistical account of Pudukkottai (1813) are notable. The state's Palm Leaf Gazetteer, Inam office and Palace office manuscripts are valuable documents containing useful information about this state. Mention is to be made here of Ilandiral Ambalakaran manuscripts, Chinna Aranmanal Faisal Register and the Uthakurippukal (reminiscences of war).

The Pudukkottai Law Reports and the volumes of Pudukkottai Code, contain details of the instructions permitting and prohibiting actions of the people. Elaborately prepared accounts, in the report of the Administration of Pudukkottai State and the address of the Pudukkottai Darbar to the Representative Assembly, contain important sources of information. The records about the Pudukkottai State Police and Native Chiefs and the Translations, copies and extracts of letters of the Thondaimans are other sources of information. The Inam Records and the miscellaneous Revenue records pertaining to State and the standing orders of the Darbar and the electoral rolls are other useful documents of information.

B. THE INSCRIPTIONS

There are over a thousand inscriptions spread over as many as one hundred and thirty villages and towns within the Pudukkottai State. A brief summary of the contents of these inscriptions were published by the Darbar. They are Chronological list of the inscriptions of the Pudukkottai State,
Part I (1941) and Part II (1944). They are useful sources which yield the data for the reconstruction of the history of the pre-Thondaiman period. There are also published epigraphs of the Thondaiman period which are useful for the study of early Thondaimans. The Thondaiman Copper Plates published by the Tamil University, Thanjavur is also an important primary source.

C. THE TAMILNADU ARCHIVES

The despatches of the Madras Government, including the Minutes, Diaries and Consultations of the British period, were useful sources of information for this study. The Country Correspondence volumes that took place between the local powers and the Government and the Court of Directors of the Company were other useful sources of information. They include political and military consultations. The Census reports and the reports written by the Residents and Political Agents of Pudukkottai contain many useful pieces of information. The Reports of the Irrigation commission and the Indian Famine Commission, cover this area giving useful information.

D. THE LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

There is a General Library and a Post-Graduate Library in His Highness the Rajah's College, Pudukkottai. It has a collection of rare records and books. Special mention is to be made of the complete volume of the Proceedings of the Pudukkottai Legislative
The Pudukkottai Museum, at Thirugokarnam was established in the year 1910. It has Palm Leaf manuscripts, Copper plates, rare accounts and a few collections of Darbar Records. Portraits of rulers, sculptures, bronzes and paintings of Raja Ravi Varma (Darbar of Ramachandra Thondaiman, 1851) are useful sources of information, about the life style of the people. Avur was an important Christian missionary centre where a church was built on the Naik style in 1747. The services of the church as recorded by its followers, provide useful information. The palaces, public buildings, bridges, tanks, dams and other architectural monuments of this princely State even to-day, stand as mute witnesses to the civil construction skill of the Pudukkottai Darbar.

E. LITERATURE

The Thondaiman Anuraha Malai, Thondaiman Irattal Manimalai and Venkanna Servaikarar Velandan are some of the folklore materials available for reference. Venkanna's Thondaiman Vamsavali gives an account of the dynastic origin of the Thondaimans. The poet Seshiah has written a book called Vijaya Regunatha Sathakam.

As regards published materials, which can be taken as secondary sources, the works by Arokiasamy and Tirumalai are worth mentioning. Arokiasamy surveys the early colonisation of the
Vellar basin. Tirumalai has written a detailed account on the revenue and irrigation systems of the ancient townships of Pudukkottai. Kameswara Aiyar's biography of Seshiah Sastri provides more information on the many-faceted personality of the latter. Radhakrishna Aiyer in his General History of Pudukkottai State, gives an account of the political history of the state. The State's manuals by Venkatarama Ayyar and Thayagarajan give plenty of useful information on Pudukkottai. The Tamil Nadu Gazetteer on Pudukkottai by Gopalakrishna Gandhi is intended to provide a lot of information on varied subjects to Administrators. The 'Hollow Crown' by Nicholas B. Dirks is very important as it traces the emergence of Thondalman rulers from among the 'Little Kings' and the circumstances which forced them to wear the 'Hollow Crown' after the advent of the British. Nagarajan has written a biography of Tottenham, I.C.S., one of the Administrators of the Princely State.

F. ORAL TRADITIONS AND FIELD STUDY

Oral traditions and individual perceptions provide a better understanding of the people, their experience and social milieu. While dealing with the peasant community, oral traditions become important sources of history.

The researcher has benefitted much from personal observation and the dialogue he had with people during his visit, in the various parts of this district. Since the researcher has a close
touch with the locality under study, the varied influences could be correctly gauged and estimated. However, the researcher is always aware of the potential conflicts involved and has tried his best to overcome biases.

ANALYSIS OF THE CHAPTERS

With regard to chapterisation, in the introduction, the topographic and demographic profile of the Princely State, are discussed. The second chapter is about the political background of the State under the Thondaiman rulers, from their origin and suzerainty, down to its final merger with the Indian Union in 1948. The next chapter on the economic conditions up to 1700 attempts to provide a perspective to understand the theme of the subsequent chapters.

The fourth chapter on agronomy describes the physical resources and the cultivation processes that prevailed in the state. Agronomy is the science and economics of crop production. Agrarian traditions are orally handed down from one generation to another. The crops cultivated and the agrarian practices evolved by the people in the midst of floods and droughts are discussed in detail. Though irrigation could be clubbed under agronomy, in view of its importance, it is dealt with in a separate chapter. Irrigation was productive and protective of economic interests of the peasants. Here too the Thondaimans inherited the legacy of irrigation from their predecessors.
The sixth chapter on land system is about land rights, land tenure and land settlement. The penultimate chapter discusses the composition of and the interacting factors in the peasant community. The last chapter forms the conclusion, incorporating the findings of the earlier chapters.

GEOGRAPHICAL FACTORS

(a) THE LAND

The whole of the Pudukkottai State is situated in the northern hemisphere. It lies between 10° 7' and 11° 4' latitude and 78°25' and 79° 12' longitude. The Princely State is situated more or less in the centre of Tamil Nadu. The land stretches on all sides encompassing plains, small hills and uneven plateau surfaces. Hence it is a land locked territory, dotted with small hills and scrub jungles.

(b) THE CLIMATE

The region has a hot tropical climate. It gets erratic rains from the monsoons, the bulk of it is during October and November. The rainfall, temperature and humidity vary and no one can command and predict its behaviour. The farmers have to adjust the farming operations in accordance with the climatic conditions. The temperature is enervating. It extends over nine months of the year from February to October. The hottest months are May and June and the coldest months are November, December and January.
The average atmospheric humidity varies between 47 and 63 percent. The highest percentage found in November and August has the next lower value of 55 per cent. The average rainfall of the State is 32.4 inches (approximately 80 cms.). Yet the State's meteorological history is replete with instances of departure from the regularity of the 'Monsoon Rythm.' Cyclonic weather and extreme rainfall have caused floods in Pudukkottai at periodic intervals. The Pudukkottai soil is poor in retaining the available rain water and has been called as 'thirsty soil.' The weather, soil and the latitudinal lie have made it a dry-agro climatic zone in TamilNadu.

(c) THE RIVERS

Among the rivers, the most significant is the Vellar. It flows eastwards along the slope into Aranthangi. Vellar is a stream originating in the Velamalai, near Marungapuri in Tiruchirappalli. It has a length of eighty five miles. There are several dams of mud and masonry all along it. A dam near Kudimilivantai diverts Vellar water to Visalur, Vayalogam, Perumanadu and Kavinadu. The Kundar takes its source from the Kavinadu tank. After a course of about five miles, it joins the Vellar near Kadayakudi, where the Holdsworth Dam has been constructed. The Rambar is the surplus of the Perundurai tank of Tirumayam taluk. It empties itself into the Tamarai Kanmol tank. Then it flows in a south-eastern direction till it joins Vellar. The river Agnanavimochani or Agniaru carries the surplus water of the Kolathur tank. It passes through Perungalur, Malayar and Karambakkudi.
The Maharaja Samudram river is a narrow stream taking its source from the high lands of Vallam. After flowing through Kilankadu and Sengelmedu of Alangudi, it falls into the Agnanavimochani. According to Pharoahs' Gazetteer of South India (1855), this stream was originally a branch of the Uyyakondan river of Trichnopoly. The Ambultyar has its sources in Manjanviduthi tank in the forest to the east of Tiruvarangulam and passes through Alangudi and Vadakadu. The Karaiyaru is the surplus of a tank in the Viralimalal firka that passes to the west of Rajagiri and falls into Uyyakondan. The Suraiyaru is another stream in Kolathur. The Manimukta river gathers the drainage of the eastern end of Sirumalai hill. It carries the surplus water of Varappur tank and falls into the Neikkuppai kanmol. All these rivers are seasonal and not perennial and simply streams when compared to the major rivers of TamilNadu.

(d) THE HILLS

In Pudukkottai, hills are called malai irrespective of their dimensions or elevations. The most notable of these hills are Piranmalai, Narthamalai, Aluruttimalai, the Sevalur hills, the Annavasal hill, the Puram hills, Kunnanthumalai and the Sempattu hills. Among them, Piranmalai is the highest hill in the state on the south-west border reaching a height of 2119 feet above sea level. Apart from these hills there are elevated minor rocks at Viralimalai, Nedungudi, Kudimyanmalai, Tirugokarnam, Vaipuri, Kumaranmalai,
Kunnandarkoil and Malayadipatti. On the summits and slopes of these rocks stand well-known temples.

The forest of Pudukkottai are purely 'scrub jungles.' To accelerate the natural regeneration of forest, portions of waste lands are being converted into plantations by the Forest Department.

(e) ROCKS AND MINERALS

The rocks found in the Pudukkottai State are classified by geologists by their technical know-how. They are (1) Soils and sub aerial formations, (2) Aluvial formations, marine and fluviatile, (3) Laterite conglomerates, gravels and sands, (4) Cuddalore sandstones, grits and conglomerates, (5) Upper gondwana beds, hard mottled shales and (6) Gneissic or metamorphic rocks. In the absence of metals, rocks produce a few useful minerals. Granite and laterite quarries are found in Arimalam. Red Jaspar and pieces of rock crystal, both white and violet, are picked up near Sittannavasal and Pachal pottal in Kolathur.

Lime of superior quality is prepared from kankar found at Varappur and Karuppudiyanpatti. Brick clay and potters clay are collected from the alluvial deposits of the irrigation tanks. Ochre of different colours is found in and near the Sengirai forest near Tiruvarangulam. The statistical account of the state mentions several tracts like Malampatti where magnetic iron was found. Mica was collected at Annavasal and Karaiyur.
REVENUE DIVISIONS

The statistical account prepared in 1813 reveals the revenue divisions formed by the Thondaimans. The appendices to Mr. Bailey's report to the Government dated 1841, on the revenue divisions of the state consist of five divisions. They are Vadamukham, Melmukham, Kilmukham, Thenmukham and Kilanilai. Vadamukham was the northern-most taluk covering the north-western portion of the present Kolathur taluk bordering the Tanjore district. Melmukham consisted of portions of the Kolathur taluk and northern part of Tirumayam taluk, Kilmukham covered the northern half of Alangudi taluk. The southern half of Alangudi taluk was covered by the Thenmukham division. Kilanilai was the southern part of the Tirumayam taluk, bordering the present Aranthangi taluk. Towards the nineties of the last century, the princely state was divided into four taluks, namely Alangudi, Pudukkottai, Tirumayam and Kolathur. While Keeranur was a flourishing village, the taluk was named after Kolathur, an adjoining village, probably due to its association with the collateral branch of the Royal family.

The agrarian expansion of the region in the long run altered the social values of its inhabitants. The topographical features discussed above influences the productive relations and the land revenue administration. The floods cause temporary disruption.
Prolonged drought dislocated the agrarian order. Due to the absence of perennial streams the agricultural operations were on a meagre scale. Lands with irrigation facility are valuable. These factors are of paramount importance in the agrarian relations unfolded in this dissertation.
CHAPTER - I

REFERENCES


2. The region is scrub jungle with an admixture of hills, here and there, dominated by the martial community, Kailars.

3. Pudukkottai was the only Princely state in the Tamil region of the erstwhile Madras Presidency.

4. Pudukkottai Legislative Council was established in 1924.

5. The earth salt convention was about the suppression of the manufacture of the earth salt by the Princely state and the compensation given to it by the British.

6. It is a palm leaf manuscript kept in the Pudukkottai Museum. It is generally called the Statistical Account of 1813.

7. The name Avur can be divided into two words namely \( \text{Av} \), \( \text{Ur} \). In Tamil 'Av' means cow and 'Ur' means village. It indicates that it was the village of cows. The place was gifted to Catholic mission by Kattalur Palayakars. The region came under the domain of Pudukkottai Thondaimans and in 1696 Father Emmanuel Martins built a church there. It was destroyed and the present chapel seen in Avur today was built by Father Homem. Rajah Raghunatha Raya Thondaiman visited Avur in 1711 to meet the Bishop of Santhome who was in his pastural trip to the Madura Mission and to Avur. Vide Appendix, Plate 27.
8. It was a Tamil poem on Raya Thondalman. It gives some details of the genealogy of the line of Thondalman, the capture of elephant as a mark of skill by him, and the honours conferred on him.

9. It was another Tamil poem on Raya Thondalman.

10. It was a dance song otherwise called Valandan pattu written in praise of Venkanna Servaiyar who lived in the time of Rajah Vijaya Raghunatha Thondalman 1789-1807.

11. It was a Telugu poem on the Thondalman line of rulers written by a court poet named Venkanna, about 1750 A.D.


15. Vide Appendix, Map 1.

16. Appendix II Table for rainfall particulars.
