Chapter 2
Zamindari Tenure and Land Settlement in Ramnad Zamindari

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The Persian term ‘zamindar’ means ‘holder of land’.¹ The Zamindari system became predominant during the medieval period in India. During the seventeenth century the term ‘Zamindar’ replaced local terms indicating the same or similar kind of land right which had been followed in India like ‘khoti’ and ‘maqqaddam’ in Doab Satarabi in north India, ‘biswi’ in Awadh, ‘bhomi’ tenure in Rajasthan, ‘bharti’ or ‘vanth’ land tenure in Gujarat. ‘Zamin’ in Persian language means land. “The suffix ‘dar’ implied control or attachment, but not necessarily ownership.”² Irfan Habib in his work ‘Agrarian System of Mughal India’ argues that the ‘persons other than the king laid claim to a right upon land that in name was ownership’. He held the view that the Mughal’s jagirdar status was equal to European landlords, whose lands were easily transferable when the king needed them. Therefore Europeans came to conclude that there was no private property in India during medieval period.³ The French traveller, Francois Bernier discusses land ownership in his work Travels in the Mogul Empire A.D. 1656-1668. His view is that ‘the proprietor of every acre of land in the kingdom’ had ‘no idea of the principle of meum and tuum, relatively to land or other real possessions...’⁴ James Mill’s History of British India points out: “The property of the soil resided in the sovereign; for if it does not reside in him, it will be impossible to show to whom it belongs.” He concludes that the ‘ruler must be the

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¹ Wilson, A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, 502
owner of the land; there is no possibility to show to whom that property belongs to'.

According to the Report of the Madras Estate Land Act Committee the word *chowdary, crorie* and Zamindar were synonyms. Baden Powell states, ‘The Muslim ruler adopted the local rajah or local chieftain as Zamindar of their state and considered them ‘proprietor’ of the entire waste and cultivated land of his region’. After the Company took over the administration, they messed up land administration. Its intension was to collect more money rapidly within a short period. Danial Thorner noted that “Company needs money to extend and strengthen its rule in the Country”. Historians believe that land settlement of the colonial government in India was followed by the Muslim rulers’ administration policy. But land ownership in the Company rule in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries differed from Muslim rule. Initially the Company started their trial-and-error method in the land revenue policy in Bengal during the eighteenth century. The Company tried to understand the Indian customs and land patterns to collect regular revenue. It followed the Mughal pattern in the field of administration like *tahsildar, talukdar* etc. Robert Eric Frykenberg and Nilamani Mukherjee emphasise local influences on formulation of revenue policies.

9 Ainslie, ‘Landholding in India and British Institutions,’ 49.
Ranajit Guha and Eric Stokes stress the philosophical approach in land revenue policies of British.¹⁰

Company rule was founded in India, in the second half of the eighteenth century. Initially, the British did not bring about major changes in the land revenue administration. But in the beginning of the nineteenth century, a vital transformation happened in the land revenue policy of the British, especially in southern India. Land revenue was their vital source of income after they entered administration. They experimented with several kinds of land revenue policies. Their revenue policy was not the same in the all the provinces, where the practice was based on the nature and condition of the soil. As a result, they introduced three important revenue settlements in India, such as Zamindari or permanent settlement, Ryotwari and Mahalwari system. Ryotwari system was made with cultivators and Mahalwari settlement was made with groups of villages. The Ryotwari settlement was engaged in almost all areas of Madras, Bombay and Assam. The Mahalwari system was followed in all villages of Punjab.¹¹ The Zamindari system was engaged with landlords or chieftains. The Zamindari system was introduced in Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Central Province and part of the Madras region. Zamindari denoted landed gentry; and they were called ‘local bosses’. During the nineteenth century they played an intermediary role between ryots and governments in collecting land revenue and maintaining law and order in their allotted territories. They had close relationship and direct contact with the

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ryots. In the Madras Presidency, the Company decided to use the dependant poligars to collect land revenue from cultivators and decided to put an end to their defence force and ordered them to maintain the Company force.\(^\text{12}\)

### 2. Power and Authority of Zamindars

The Zamindar was considered the owner of the land, who could sell, mortgage on transfer the land if he desired. He had hereditary right over the land. If he failed to pay tax the government could take away the land from his ownership of rights.\(^\text{13}\) The Zamindar’s main duty was holding of the land and collecting revenue from the peasant and he was demanded to pay a fixed tribute to the Company.\(^\text{14}\) The rate of the payment of tax or *peshcush* was fixed in the case of zamindars, but it was not fixed in the case of ryots. Zamindars collected land tax accordingly to their interests from the ryots.\(^\text{15}\) The Zamindar had to pay a fixed amount to the government which was called *peshcush*. Usually revenue was collected at 66.6% of the total produce. The total amount of the tax was fixed and mentioned in the *Sunnud-i-Milkiat-Istamrar*.\(^\text{16}\) The government fixed the ownership of the land until they paid the fixed *peshcush* regularly.\(^\text{17}\) The assessment of the land tax was permanent and tax was fixed and collected as two-

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13 Bandyopadhyay, *From Plassey to Partition*, 84-86.
17 Sarveswaran, “Zamindars, the Feudal lords of Tamilnad,” 63-64.
S. Baliga points out that the Zamindar kept one portion of the total produce from peasant and the rest of the share was to be paid to the government. The government approved of the proposal and ordered the Board to make a settlement with zamindars, “whom it is our intention to constitute proprietors of their respective estates or zamindaris.... also to prepare information on the rights of the talukdars and under-tenantry.... In the havelly lands in which the property is vested immediately in the Company we have instructed the Board to form small sub-divisions of estates and to transfer the proprietary rights of all such lands to native landholders”. The Zamindar should issue pattas to his ryots and fix the rate of his share. The ryot can seek redress against the violence of zamindars’ illegal actions towards them. The Zamindar and ryots had an agreement on this system which was known as muchilikkas. In the Zamindari areas the revenue administration was under the control of the Zamindar. The Government lent some civilian help to Zamindars for maintaining peace and supporting the collection of tax, but the expense of the maintenance was the responsibility of Zamindars. The British were the ultimate controller of the Zamindars. The lake and canal irrigated territories came under Zamindari tenure. Each Zamindar had almost a thousand acres of land. He was the

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18 According to Romesh Dutt, the collection of the total produce was nine-tenth under the permanent settlement. Romesh Dutt, *The Economic History of India under Early British Rule* (London: Trubner & Co, 1906), 87; According to regulation I of 1793 the permanent settlement act was passed in Bengal and ninety percent of total produce was fixed as tax. Cited in G. Kaushal, *Economic History of India 1757-1966*, 110.


responsible person to maintain and improves irrigation sources in his allotted locale. Zamindars collected tree tax, waste land grass tax, cattle consumption grass tax etc. According to the Royal Commission on Agriculture, Zamindari settlement was made permanent and revenue was imposed on Zamindars who owned the estate. This settlement was practised without any proper survey or records. He had to collect revenue from certain limits of his Zamindari and the amount payable to the state was fixed permanently and was unalterable. In the case of waste land controlled by Zamindars, ryots should not cultivate such lands without getting permission from the Zamindar or his agent.

3. Permanent Settlement in Bengal Presidency

The Nawab of Bengal granted diwani rights (collection of land revenue) to the Company from 1765 A.D. Through these rights the Company gained privileges to collect tax from Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. In the beginning, the Company did not understand the nature of soil and people of India, this circumstance led to confusion in managing the agrarian economy and the society for a few years. In 1772, Warren Hastings, who was the Governor General of Bengal, introduced a new system called farming system or pannai system. This system failed to get more revenue for the Company. In 1784, the Board of Directors of the Company appointed Charles Cornwallis, Governor General of

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24 Royal Commission on Agriculture in India Introduction to Vol. III, Evidence taken in the Madras Presidency, Bombay, 1928, 12-13
India for regulating the revenue administration. Cornwallis observed that the earlier system of land revenue gave small earnings to the Company.\textsuperscript{26}

Until 1790 the Company government followed the annual revenue settlement based on the nature of the soil. Later, they decided to get regular revenue; therefore, they wanted to make changes in the land revenue administration. During the control of the Company, it faced issues of land ownership and collecting revenue from the land. Two senior servants of the Company, Charles Grant and John Shore presented two different ideas to implement land revenue administration. Shore’s view was that ‘the property or ownership of the land was in the hands of Zamindars, who was responsible to pay fixed revenue to the Government’. But Grant’s opinion was that ‘the Government had the whole land proprietorship with uncountable rights and made settlement with anyone, Zamindar or Peasant’. The England Government accepted the views of Shore and ordered Cornwallis to make settlement with zamindars as far as possible. Initially this settlement was made for ten years. Following the settlement, Cornwallis appointed Shore as the President of Board of Revenue. Cornwallis decided to make the settlement permanently, instead of testing for ten years. This view of Cornwallis was fully opposed by Grant and Shore. After a long discussion and discourse on the land revenue policy, Cornwallis announced on 10\textsuperscript{th} February 1790 the ten years land revenue

\textsuperscript{26} Bandyopadhyay, \textit{From Plassey to Partition}, 82-83.
settlement which would be made permanent after getting approval from Court of Directors.27

The Court of Directors’ letter on 19th September 1792, which reviewed the arrangements, made way for the permanent settlement in Bengal. There was a different view about the land rights of Zamindars under the Mughals, whether they had rights of property or the Collectors of revenue. Whatever the land rights of Zamindars on lands under the Mughals, the Court of Directors initiated permanent zamindari settlement to establish the ‘real, permanent, valuable landed rights over Bengal province and to confer “right upon the zamindars”. On 22nd March 1793 Court of Directors approved of it and the decennial settlement was converted to permanent settlement. Following this approval, the Governor General in council declared that “to the Zamindars, independent talookdars and other actual proprietors of land with or on behalf of whom a settlement has been concluded...... that at the expiration of the term of the settlement, no alteration will be made in the assessment which they have respectively engaged to pay, but that they and their heirs and lawful successors will be allowed to hold their estates at such assessment forever”.28

Accordingly, the Government made the Zamindars owners of land and demanded and ordered them to pay a fixed amount as annual revenue to the Government. This settlement created the loyal land holders in the state.29 Cornwallis’s codification of regulations in 1793 contains forty three regulations.

27 Majumdar, Advanced History of India, 791-794.
28 Gnanasundara Mudaliyar, Notes on the Permanent Settlement, 8,11.
29 Majumdar, Advanced History of India, 791-794.
Among the guidelines regulation VIII of 1793 formulated and made the decennial settlement in Bengal. Cornwallis and Philip Francis at the outset introduced the permanent settlement system in Bengal in 1793. Initially this arrangement was made as a temporary arrangement, later it was practised on a permanent basis by the Company. The Company had issues in administrating Bengal through well-known administrate officials. They utilised zamindars to collect revenue from peasants.  

Lord Cornwallis and Francis believed that Zamindari system was a suitable one to promote agricultural production and get permanent income or revenue to the Government. The main motive of this system was to maintain twofold strength of economic and political power. Shore believed that cultivators had rights on the land with fixed rent on it and Zamindar had right on the whole estate forever and fixed the land tribute. But the idea was that the initial permanent settlement was the fixed rate to be settled by the landholder with the state. But in the case of the cultivator the sum of fixed rate was paid to Zamindar which amount was fixed by Zamindars or landholders within the limitation of the Company orders. The letters of Court of Directors ordered to make permanent settlement made in every suitable instance with the zamindars with the exception of in case of incapacity, old age, lunacy, contumacy or notorious profligacy of character. Shore initiated the system of permanent settlement; Lord Cornwallis established his concept of economic policy towards Bengal.

30 Shilpi Kapur and Sukkoo Kim, British Colonial Institution and Economic Development in India, 11; Bandyopadhyay, From Plassey to Partition, 82-83; Arokiaswami and Royappa, The Modern Economic History of India, 102-103
31 Romesh Dutt, The Economic History of India under Early British Rule, 87.
32 Gnanasundara Mudaliyar, Notes on the Permanent Settlement, 15-17.
33 Letters of Court of Directors to Supreme Government of Bengal dated on 12th April 1786.
4. Debate over the Introduction of the Zamindari System in the Madras Presidency

There was a great discussion on fixing the land revenue assessment policies in Madras Presidency. The Circuit Committee\textsuperscript{34} was appointed to investigate the condition of northern circars and jagirs of Madras Presidency to introduce the permanent settlement. In 1786 this Committee recommended to the Government of Madras, that for implementing the permanent settlement more equipment and more information were needed for assessing the soil condition of the Madras Presidency. Moreover, the military force of the Zamindars was not controlled by the Mughals or Nizam. The Circuit Committee recommended to the Company to bide for some time to implement the permanent settlement in the Madras Presidency. In the 1790s in Bengal, Cornwallis tried his decennial settlement to assess the land revenue. In 1792 he introduced the permanent settlement in the Bengal Presidency before the completion of decennial settlement expired. He found the system of permanent to be successful in Bengal with the suggestion of the Board of Directors and advised Cornwallis to extend the system to other parts of India especially to Madras Presidency. But in the case of Madras, Collector and Board of Revenue members opposed the permanent settlement and argued that it was not suitable to Madras Presidency.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{34} Circuit committee was appointed during 1775-76 worked until 1778 and after five years of inactivity again worked from 1783-1788; P.T. George, ‘Land System and Legislation in Madras,’ \textit{Artha Vijanna} 12, No. 1 &2 (1970): 27.

\textsuperscript{35} B.R. Chakravarthi, \textit{Land Law in Madras Presidency} (Madras: P.R. Rama Iyar & Co, 1927), 34-36.
After the implementation of Permanent settlement in Bengal Presidency in 1793, the Court of Directors wanted to extend this system to the Madras Presidency. Northern Circar of Madras Presidency was the initial target for introducing the permanent settlement. On 21st April 1795, the Court of Directors intimated their intention of introducing the Bengal revenue system within the territories of Fort St. George and authorized the disbandment of the military followers of the Zamindars in the Northern Circars. On 2nd October 1795, Madras Government replied to the Court of Directors that “so much remained to be acquired in knowledge and reformed in practice that they should use great caution in introducing the Bengal Regulations”.  

The Court of Directors was keenly interested to introduce the permanent settlement in Madras Presidency. But the resistance and power of the poligars were main challenges faced by the Company in the Madras Presidency. On 9th December 1802 a *Special Commission* was appointed to make settlement.  

This Special Commission consisted of William Petrie (Member of Council) Cockburn (Member of the Board of Revenue), and J. Webbe who had acquired experience of the Bengal Revenue settlement. Hodgson (Secretary to Government, Revenue Department) was appointed as Secretary to the Special Commission. William Bentinck, the Governor of Madras (1803-1807), was supported by Munro in introducing the Ryotwari settlement in the Madras

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37 For more details about the *Report of Special Commission on Ramnad, Sivaganga and Tinnevelly Pollams* see Appendix No. 1
President. Thackeray\textsuperscript{40} visited the Madras Presidency and reported against the Zamindari system. But John Hodgson\textsuperscript{41} supported the introduction of the Zamindari system in the Madras Presidency.\textsuperscript{42}

The permanent settlement regulations prepared by the Special Commission and submitted to the Madras Government on 12\textsuperscript{th} July 1802 for its approval. Regulation XXV of 1802, Regulation XXVIII of 1802, Regulation XXIX of 1802 and Regulation XXX of 1802 were the important permanent settlement regulation made by the Special Commission. These regulations of the permanent settlement were important for establishing the principles of the zamindari system and fixing the duties and liabilities of the cultivators and landholders. The Regulation XXV of 1802 was “for declaring the proprietary right of lands to be vested in certain individual persons and for defining the rights of such persons under a permanent assessment of the land revenue in the British territories subject to the Presidency of Fort St. George”. Regulation XXVIII of 1802 was “for empowering landholders and farmers of land to distrain and sell the personal property of under-farmer and ryots and in certain cases the personal property of their sureties for arrear of rent or revenue and for preventing landholders and farmers of land from confining or inflicting corporal punishment on their under-farmer and ryot or their sureties in the British Territories subject to the Presidency of Fort St. George”. According to Regulation XXIX of 1802, was “for establishing the Office of Karnams and defining the duties of the land said

\textsuperscript{40} Member of the Board of Revenue.
\textsuperscript{41} John Hodgson was the member of Board of Revenue, who appointed in 1807 A.D
Office in the British territories subject in the Presidency of Fort St. George. According to Regulation XXX of 1802, “A Regulation prescribing pottahs to be used between landholders and their under-farmers, tenants and ryots in the British Territories subject to the Presidency of Fort St. George.”\textsuperscript{43} According to the \textit{Special Committee} and after a long discussion and argument, the permanent settlement was introduced in the Madras Presidency.

5. Permanent Settlement in Madras Presidency

The Company divided Madras Presidency into twenty one districts for the convenience of administration such as Ganjam, Vizagapatnam, Godavari, Kistna, Nellore, Anantapore, Chingleput, North Arcot, South Arcot, Kurnool, Bellary, Cuddapah, Salem, Coimbatore, Nilgris, Tanjore, Trichinopoly, Madura, Tinnevelly, South Canara and Malabar. After the formation of the new district, the Company started their process of reorganisation of administration.\textsuperscript{44} E. C. Greenway, Collector of Chingleput, played an active part in the introduction of the Permanent settlement in Chingleput Jaghir. He submitted an elaborate report on subject of the implementation of the Permanent settlement in the Chingleput to the Board of Revenue on 28\textsuperscript{th} March 1802. Greenway divided Chingleput Jaghir into sixty one zamindaris and each zamindari containing several villages.\textsuperscript{45} Initially the Zamindari settlement was first practised in Chinglepet District (1802) and then extended to Salem, southern and central districts of Madras Presidency.

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\textsuperscript{43} Gnanasundara Mudaliyar, \textit{Notes on the Permanent Settlement}, 37-38.
\textsuperscript{44} Renganathan, \textit{Zamindari System in the Madras Presidency 1802-1948}, 13
\textsuperscript{45} Fifth Report from the Select Committee on the affairs of the East India Company, Vol I, 217.
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On 30th September 1802, S.R. Lushington, Collector of Tinnevelly submitted a report on the introduction of the permanent settlement to the Special Commission. The Company agreed Mangaleswari Nachiyar as successor to the zamindari of Ramnad and planned to grant the permanent property right of zamindari of Ramnad to her. Lushington proposed a permanent assessment at two-thirds of the average gross revenue receipts during the six faslis of 1795, 1796, 1797, 1799, 1800 and 1801 exclusive of Salt, Customs, etc. Accordingly, the permanent assessment of the Ramnad was fixed at the sum of star pagodas 94,733. After the suppression of the south Indian rebellion and the death of Marudu brothers which occurred in the beginning of the nineteenth century, Edward Clive, Governor of Madras, appointed Padmathur Wodaya Tevar as Zamindar of Sivaganga on 6th July 1801 and placed him under the tenure of Zamindari. Based on the recommendation of Lushington, the permanent assessment of the Sivaganga was fixed at the annual sum of star pagodas 75,000.

In 1803 the Special Commission introduced the permanent settlement in Baramahal district, four divisions of Masulipatnam and two divisions of Vizagapatnam, the eastern palayams of Venkatagiri, Kalahasti, Bommarajapollam and Sydapore. In the southern palayams of Ramnad, Sivaganga and Tinnevelly the permanent settlement was introduced in 1803. 

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46 List of Collectors of Tinnevelly and Ramnad see Appendix No. 3
47 For more details of S.R. Lushington Report on Permanent Settlement see Appendix No.3
48 Gnanasundara Mudaliyar, Notes on the Permanent Settlement, 55.
49 Report of the Special Commission on Ramnad, Sivaganga and Tinnevelly (Southern Pollams) dated on 5th April 1803, para 8.
50 Report of the Special Commission on Ramnad, Sivaganga and Tinnevelly (Southern Pollams) dated on 5th April 1803, para 18,19
Board of Revenue introduced the permanent system in the northern circars except the Ceded districts, Malabar, South Kanara and Nilgiris where the Company was not necessitated to alter the old system of land tenure. Most of the palayams of the Madras Presidency had come under this system by 1804.

6. Duties and responsibilities of Zamindars

The ownership right of the Zamindars originated during the Mughal period as they claimed hereditary rights to a direct share in the produce from the lands under their control. The different terms were used in different parts of India to denote land control. The peasant groups were differently known as ‘muzari’, ‘asami’, or ‘raya’. In northern India a big zamindar who was engaged on behalf of smaller zamindars to pay revenue to the government was called a ‘talukdar’. But in Bengal the term ‘talukdar’ denoted a person of lower status than Zamindar. In south India also talukdars were of lower status than zamindars who were responsible for paying revenue to the government.

According to regulation VIII of 1793 zamindars and talukdars were the proprietors of the land. They had the hereditary right over the land. Shore’s report says that, under the permanent settlement the Zamindar had the rights of property in the soil and ryot had the occupancy right or rights of possession on

soil. But the ryot does not have the right to mortgage or sell the land. According to Permanent system, Zamindar was declared as proprietor of the all land includes waste and arable land within his limitation. The *havally* land was subdivided into *mutta* land which comprise several villages. These villages sold out to who asks for highest bid. The rate of the land tax was fixed by with reference of average collection of past years. Two third of the total produce was fixed as share of the government. Zamindars were restricted in their demand on ryots regarding the rate or share of produce. They were ordered to issue *pattas* to their ryots to fix the rates of customary rents. In case of zamindars’ infringement of *pattas* of ryots or in case of any other illegal action made by Zamindars, the ryot had the right to appeal in the civil court which was established in each district. In case of waste land controlled by Zamindars, ryot should not cultivate such land without getting permission from Zamindar or his agent. The Report of the Board of Revenue on waste land states:

“The *tarasu* or waste land, is subdivided into the *anadi karambu* or immemorial waste and the *seikal karambu* or waste land that has sometime been cultivated; each of these consists chiefly of tracts of common on which the *mirasidars* graze the cattle employed by them in agriculture, or of jungle, in which they cut the fire-wood used by them for fuel and both are held free from tax. should the mirasidars, however, possess the means, though it is understood that the consent of government is necessary before they can break up the plough; but the

57 Baliga, *Studies in Madras Administration*, 84.
moment any part of either seikar or anadi kambu is reclaimed, the nature of the land is changed, it ceased to be tarasu or waste, and no sooner is it converted into cultivated land than it is transferred as such, in the village accounts, to the head of varapet or tirvepet, and in common with all land of that description becomes..... liable to tax.”

Zamindar was the controller of his allotted territory, maintained law and order, solved the issues of ryots and furnished advance to peasants to cultivate land and collected tax from them due to the government. In this capacity he enjoyed a high social status, prestige and influence over the territory under his control and ownership of rent free land termed saverum. He received the customary right on share of crops by getting ready cash termed as rasum.

7. Zamindari Settlement and Hierarchical Structure in Ramnad Zamindari

In the beginning of the nineteenth century the entire southern Tamil country had come under the direct control of the British and rebel poligars were suppressed and pro-British poligars were reduced in status as Zamindars. The Company decided that assigned Zamindars were to be the revenue Collectors and demanded to be paid certain amount as peshcush or tribute. Zamindars were the revenue collectors of the Company and they had no rights to fix the land tax or rent without getting proper intimation from the government. Zamindars were the

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59 Minute of Board of Revenue, 5th January 1818.
60 According to glossary of fifth report, saverum means an allotment of land, or of the government’s revenue thereof held by Zamindars and other principal revenue officers, rent free as part of the emolument of their offices; a term used in the peninsula answering to nancar in the Bengal provinces. Glossary to the Fifth Report from the Select Committee, 1813, 41.
61 Gnanasundara Mudaliyar, Notes on the Permanent Settlement, 19.
responsible persons to allotted areas and they had to maintain law and order apart from the collecting of land revenue. They maintained good relationship with the Company Government. As a consequence, Zamindars left the administrations to the Company and followed a luxurious way of life. Personal litigation cases and increasing debts made them neglect the administration of estates and people’s welfare leading to maladministration by their ministers and officials.62

Zamindars’ political power was reduced and made them mediators between peasants and the Company. Zamindars divided their territories and distributed than to mirasidars or tenants and made agreements with them for certain percentage or melvaram or government share from the tenant. These tenants were mostly economically wealthy community people like Vellalans, Maravans, Nayakkans and Reddies. Peasants or landless labourers were like Pallans, Paraiyans and others were under the control of mirasidars. The mirasidars were the landholders or landowners who had the social domination and powers in the social structure. The following chart shows the landholding and social hierarchy of the Ramnad estate.

The above chart indicates the political, economic and social hierarchy of colonial Ramnad. In this case the Zamindars of Ramnad belonged to Maravan community, who constituted the royal or Setupathi family. The Zamindars distributed their areas to other communities like Vellalans, Reddies, Nayakkans to cultivate the land and collected certain portion from them as rent for the lands. These landlords cultivated the land by using the landless labours or pannayal and padiyal who were mostly Pallans and Paraiyans. They were given a little amount of the total produce of the crops and allowed to stay in separate areas respectively known as pallacheri and paraicheri.

The Zamindar socially and economically had a strong position and he was keenly interested to maintain the status or mariyathai, for in such capacity he granted lands to temples, celebrated festivals, royal functions, marriage ceremonies and rituals. After the introduction of the Zamindari tenure in the Ramnad region, the political power of the Setupathis was reduced as Zamindars or mediators between the government and ryots. In this sense, Dirks argues that
Zamindars were ‘nominal rulers’ of the Company’s government and his view was that the ‘powerless king’ could be called the ‘hollow crown’, who had no decision making power over the neighbouring states. But Pamela Price denies the concept of ‘hollow crown’ and she gives a strong argument about the Zamindars’ social and economic powers, status and honour or mariyathai in their territorial divisions. She argues that Ramnad Zamindars continued their honour and status in the colonial rule too. The present study accepts the views of Dirks, for the reason that Ramnad Zamindars were revenue collectors to government, and had no political supremacy over the allotted territories. Zamindars had maintained their power in their areas through military force before the settlement of Zamindari tenure. But after the settlement they could not stabilise their political power; instead they were concentrating on notions of life-style to strengthen their social power through the collection of land revenue from allotted regions.

The Zamindars, Government officers and landholders were regulated and supervised by regulation acts of 1802, 1822. In 1865 the rent recovery act provided the power to district Collectors to resolve the disputes between landholders and ryots regarding land assessment. The Madras Estate Act I of 1908 repealed the rent recovery act of 1865. Section 6 of this act protected the occupancy right of the ryot over the soil. The government legalised the protection of cultivators but the intension behind this act was to get more land revenue from the cultivators. A different kind of revenue collection was followed whenever the Company needed to change the revenue collection and to get a more regular income.
8. Zamindari Tenure and Ramnad Zamindari

8.1. Kattukuthagai or Lease System 1739-1800

During the eighteenth century kuthagai or lease system was practised. Under this system lands were leased for some period where land held at a permanent fixed money-rent which usually light. This system was mostly practised in the dry areas because dry land was quite away from the landlord’s place. Under Kattukuthagai the government gave part of land for cultivation to individual cultivators and land tax was collected based on the produce. It was followed from 1739 to 1800, but it was not followed continuously and the produce was shared by chieftains and cultivators. During 1760-1763 this was changed due to the management of Muhammad Yusuf Khan, Governor of Madura as he collected tax as money by the current price rate of the produce.

Prior to the nineteenth century the Ramnad Zamindari land had been divided into two categories, nanjai and punjai for purpose of revenue collection. In the first half of the nineteenth century Pradani Muthirulappa Pillai decided to sub-divide these nanjai and punjai lands into six types based on the nature and condition of the land such as nanjai proper, nanjai vanpayir, nanjaitaram punjai, punjai proper, punjai vanpayir and kulamkorvai. Nanjai land paid rent in kind based on the value of the total produce. Nanjai vanpayir land paid money on specific assessment of each product. Punjai vanpayir paid money like the ordinary punjai.

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63 According to Tamil Lexicon, spelled in Kattu-k-kuttakai which means a long-term lease of land; fixed rent; rent collected in a lump sum. Tamil Lexicon, Vol II, part I, 651-652.
64 Wilson, A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, 270; Dharma Kumar, Land and Caste in South India, Agricultural Labour in the Madras Presidency during the 19th Century, 21.
65 Pate, Madras District Gazetteers: Tinnevelly, 277.
assessment except when the cultivation was done on nanjai land other than those set apart for nanjai cultivation, in which case rent was paid based on specific assessment of the products. nanjaitaram punjai, punjai and kulamkorvai paid a fixed rate of money.  

8.2. Amani System 1793-1799

_Amani_ was the payment tax for the nanjai land produce. _Amani_ system was followed from 1793 to 1799 and the produce was divided between the government and cultivators. The government appointed agents to supervise the sharing system who were called _sibbendy peons_. They were always there in the village or land with the duty of supervising the cultivation and measuring the government share of produce. The _pisanam_ and _kar_ crops were the two main paddy crops under this system. _Pisanam_ crops began in February or March and _kar_ crops started in May or June. The Government’s share of the _pisanam_ crop collected initially in kind, later it changed into money payment, but in case of _kar_ crops share was in kind. The Company officials used to calculate approximately the total produce of the land. In case of _pisanam_ crop this evaluation process starts in February or March and fixing the tax most probably in the month of May or June. The _kar_ crops cultivation used to start in the month of May or June. The Company officials used to encourage the progress of cultivation to get more revenue from the land. The government share of the _pisanam crops_ cultivation was _three-fifths_ of the total produce. The harvest of the crops was under the

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67 Nanjai lands mostly produce Paddy. Nanjai vanpayir crops were Betel, Vine, Sugarcane, Plantain, Punjai vanpayir land products were Chillies, Brinjal, Tobacco, Saffron, Sweat Potato. Kolamkorvai land tax on produce of Paddy cultivation made in the bed of tanks. Report of the Madras Estate Land Act Committee, Part II, 118.
control of officials until the produce sold. At the end of June this crops were sold out and the officials collected some amount from ryots as kist. The government share was kept under preservation; later it was sold out with heavy profit.68

Initially the British followed two methods to collect revenue such as through Zamindars and directly by the Company’s renters. After the introduction of the Permanent settlement the Government appointed Zamindars as revenue collectors and renters and their responsibility was to accumulate the revenue from the villages. Initially there was no limitation of land tax by the Company; gradually the Zamindars increased the land tax year by year without considering the ryot’s conditions and without consulting government. At first the Company was not interested to control the Zamindar or mittadar with regard to collection of tax from the tenants or cultivators. Later when revenue was reduced from the Zamindars, the Company decided to interfere in the method of collecting tax. There was need to regulate the Zamindars and their officers related with land revenue collection. S.R. Lushington took charge as Collector of Ramnad and Tinnevelly in August 1801. During his period, a Special Commission was appointed in 1801 to supervise the permanent settlement in the Madras Presidency. The Zamindari Regulation of XXV was passed in 1802 and based on this regulation Zamindari system was practised in Madras Presidency during 1802 and 1807. In 1802, J. Webbe was appointed Special Commissioner to precede the permanent settlement in the Madras Presidency. He was the head of the drafting of the regulation of permanent settlement with the assistance of John

68 Pate, Madras District Gazetteers: Tinnevelly, 71; Ramasamy, TamilNadu District Gazetteers Ramanathapuram, 568.
Accordingly with the Regulation of XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, XXX and XXXI, permanent regulation of 1802 was passed on 13th July 1802 for regulating the Zamindar’s land revenue collection. In the same year the patta and karnam regulation also was made to regulate officers and official records for the protection of ryots. After the downfall of the poligars, pro-British poligars were redesignated as Zamindars. Mangaleswari Nachiyar was accepted as Ramnad Zamindarini orally in 1795 and recognised since 1803. Under the Special Commission report, the government adopted permanent settlement in Ramnad and made an agreement called Sunnud-i-Milkiat-Istamrar to Rani based on regulation XXV of 1802 which considered as deed of agreement to the Company’s supremacy. On 15th February 1803, S.R. Lushington, sent a letter to his assistant Parish, ordering him to set Rani Mangaleswari Natchiar as Ramnad Zamindarini. Accordingly on 20th February 1803 she agreed to pay peshcush Rs 3,24,404-3-10 to the Company. Formally On 21st February 1803 the Company introduced Zamindari settlement in the Ramnad. Rani Mangaleswari Nachiyar who was the sister of Muthuramalinga Setupathi, was the first Zamindarini of

69 Srinivasa Ragavaiyangar, Memorandum on the Progress of the Madras Presidency during the last forty years of British Administration, 228.
71 Chakravarthi, Land Law in Madras Presidency, 61.
72 For lineage of Ramnad Zamindari see Appendix No. 5
73 Ram Row, Ramnad Manual, 253-254.
74 See Appendix No.2 for more details
75 Sunnad means a prop or support, a patent, charter or written authority for holding either land or office. Milkiat-Istamrar means property rights in continuation. Wilson, A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, 28,44 For more elaborate details about Sunnad see Appendix No.6.
76 Nelson, Chapter III. 160
77 According to Report of Madras Estate Land Act Committee, stated peshcush was fixed Rs 3,31,565-8-0 on 22 April 1803. Report of Madras Estate Land Act Committee, part II, 111.
Ramnad. Mangaleswari Nachiyar continued her rule for four years with her minister Thiyagaraja Pillai.\textsuperscript{78} She was the first queen who agreed to \textit{Sunnud-i-Milkiat-Istamrar}, so she was called \textit{Istamrar Zamindarini} for remembrance of the settlement. In return Zamindar had given \textit{muchilikkas} \textsuperscript{79} or an agreement document to the Government for the zamindari tenure. On 12\textsuperscript{th} March 1803 Parishes stated that

“\text{I proceeded to Ramnad for the purpose of placing the Ranee Mangaleswari Natchiar in full possession of the Ramnad Zamindary upon the terms stipulated in your report to the special commission upon the subject”}. Further he noted that “The distinguished propriety which has marked the conduct of the Ranee during a period of eight years arising entirely from a superior understanding to most persons, in a similar situation, made it no difficult task to impress on her mind, the important advantages which would result to herself and to the people of her Zamindary from the arrangement established for the administration of justice of the Public Revenue on permanent foundations. In order that she might fully comprehend the benefit, which the execution of this system would confer on her, I explained the principles of the new arrangements in the fullest manner, by stating that her country would be secured to her under a Sunnud beyond the power of any person to take any part of it from her. The assessment she was to pay was fixed for ever and that however extensive might be the fruits of her own good management and industry, no increase would be demanded from her or from her children. To this effect the company’s faith

\textsuperscript{78} Ram Row, \textit{Ramnad Manual}, 261; Badan Powell, \textit{The Land System of British India}, 511.

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Muchilikas} a document called as \textit{kabuliyaat} or acceptance which was the legal tie-up of ryots and Zamindars. For original document of \textit{muchilikka} see Appendix No. 6
would be pledged in the most public and solemn manner and that she might be acquainted with the condition which would be required from her in return for those inestimable blessings, I caused the deed of permanent property to be distinctly and deliberately read to her, stopping occasionally in the most important parts, to be satisfied that she did not mistake its meaning”.

With the introduction of the Zamindari tenure in Ramnad, dynamic changes occurred in the political, social and economic history of Ramnad. Politically the rulers of Ramnad (Setupathis) or chief of palayakarars were converted to Zamindars and the powers of palayakarars were reduced. After the conversion to zamindari tenure, the Ramnad kingdom had reduced powers. In the first decade of nineteenth century there were different opinions about the expansion of the zamindari settlement in the entire Madras Presidency. Colonel Read and Sir Thomas Munro were eager to introduce the Ryotwari settlement in the Madras Presidency. During the period of William Bentinck (1803-06) agreed with Munro to forbid the enlargement of the permanent settlement in the Madras Presidency. After the prohibition of the expansion of the permanent settlement, the government decided to introduce temporary land revenue system in the Madras Presidency. S.R. Lushington roughly divided the land into four classes as karisal, veppal, pottal and sevval. The rate of these assessments varied based on the condition of the soil. In 1805, Lushington visited the villages and based on the lands he approximately fixed the land tax. He extended on advance of money

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80 Ram Row, Ramnad Manual, 254-261
81 After 1803, Ramnad Kingdom named as Ramnad Zamindari or Estate or Samasthanam, which means the Company politically, established their supremacy over the territory, it was under their supreme control.
82 Chakravarthi, Land Law in Madras Presidency, 50.
for *pisnam* cultivation. As the revenue from the *amani* system was not satisfactory to the Company government, the Company planned to change the pattern of revenue system.

### 8.3. Triennial Village Lease System 1808-1809

William Bentinck proposed a new land revenue system of village lease to the Board of Revenue. The Board agreed to Bentinck’s ideas and imposed them in the districts of Tinnevelly, Madura, Coimbatore, South and North Arcots in 1804. Under this system the government gave land to village community or head of the village community as lease to cultivate. The rate of the tax was fixed permanently with the average collection of the previous year; collecting tax from this land was called *shist*. In 1807 John Hodgson joined as member of the Board of Revenue, he made a strong recommendation to the Board in favour of the village lease system to continue. This lease system made agreement with ryots for three to five years. In case of ryots declining to cultivate, *mittadars* might be brought into the rented villages either singly or in groups. Therefore, the government accepted his report and implemented it in the triennial village lease system. It was practised during the period of 1808-1809 based on Hodgson’s recommendation. Accordingly, land tax was collected as *one-fourth* of the total produce. Initially, the rate of the tax was changed every year; later the government decided to extend the village lease system to ten years. The Company did not get proper revenue from the villages on triennial lease and

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83 Ramasamy, *Tamil Nadu District Gazetteers Ramanathapuram*, 573.
84 Rajayyan, *Tamilnadu A Real History*, 311; *shist* means remainder, balance of standard rent, after deduction. *Glossary to the Fifth Report from the Select Committee*, 1813, 43
decided to withdraw the three years lease system and planned to get more revenue from the land permanently. Thus, the Company initiated the ten-year lease system and implemented it in 1811. As a result, the amani system gradually vanished after the introduction of the decennial lease.85

8.4. Decennial Lease System 1811

The Company decided to extend the village lease system to ten years. In April 1809 finally the rate of lease was fixed; but the government did not gain more profit. As a result, they decided to withdraw the triennial village lease and implemented the decennial village rent system in 1811. The Company management decided to fix permanent rent rate for the villages for ten years. In 1817 several acres of land came under cultivation; therefore, paddy production increased. However, the ryots struggled to sell their produce; the karnams and mittadars bought the produce for low rates from ryots and in turn, sold for much profit. The Collector’s reports mention the abuse by karnams and mittadars.86 Consequently, for regulating the land revenue administration, the Company introduced the olungu system.

8.5. Olungu System 1821

The Company government decided that lease systems were not fit for getting regular income in the Rammad Zamindari. After the decennial lease settlement, the new system of olungu settlement was introduced in 1821. The

*melvaram* or government share was initially fixed as grains; later it was fixed as money based on the current price of the produce. If the current price was less, a standard price was considered. The contract of the *olungu* system was made with individual mirasidars, if he opposed to cultivate, the government made this settlement with ryots. If both refused to cultivate the land, this settlement was made with others. The *muchilikkas* or agreement was made with *mittadars* for the contract of *olungu* system by the Company.  

The *varam* system was followed in *nanjai land* to fix the land tax. In case of *punjai* land, the tax was collected as money or *tirva* and some portion of the produce. *Varam* or rent system of tax collection was practised in all the taluks of Ramnad Zamindari except Arunuthimangalam, Hanumanthagudi, Kuthagainadu, Orur, Kottaipattinam and some villages of Pallimadam taluk where the *tirva* system was enhanced. The *tirva* amount was collected varying from Annas 4-4 to Rs 4-5-8 per acre. In the land of *nanjai taram punjai*, *varam* or *tirva* system was practised till 1822. In 1823 the *tirva* method was introduced in the rest of the taluks of Ramnad Zamindari and the rate of the *tirva* differed from Annas 10-4 to Rs 1-9-9 per acre. In the case of crops which were not irrigated with tank water means the amount of the tax varied from Annas 4-6 to Rs 1-11-0 except Pallimadam where the fixed rate was a maximum rate of Rs 2-14-7 and a minimum of Annas 4. When tank water was used for irrigation, the rate of the rent was fixed as *sarasari* or average

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87 Ramasamy, *TamilNadu District Gazetteers Ramanathapuram*, 579-570  
88 *varam* system means the after deducted certain portion from the produce, one half went to *circar* as *melvaram* and half of the produce went to *ryot* as *kudivaram* share  
89 Nelson, Chapter III, 155-158.
and was collected from the land. The rate of the *punjai vanpayir*\textsuperscript{90} assessment in Pallimadam taluk was Rs 12-8-0; the rest of the taluks it was Rs. 2-4-11 per acre and highest rate assessment for betel-vine worked out to Rs. 14-8-0 per acre.\textsuperscript{91}

Since 1826 the government issued *pattas*\textsuperscript{92} for individual ryots and their rate of the rent was mentioned on the *pattas*. The village head had the right to collect the revenue dues from cultivators and he handed them over to the Zamindar. Under this system, the *melvaram* was fixed as standard price without measuring the total produce of the crops. They followed old land survey but it was not proper. Therefore, the cultivators struggled to pay tax to the Zamindar. The local *karnam* had fixed land rate without getting permission from the Collector and *tahsildar*.\textsuperscript{93} Munro reported to the government in 1826, that “the village head, mirasidars, *nantanmakarans*, *karnams* kept fertile land themselves and poor lands were given to the ryots. The *karnams* and *nantanmakarans* collected average land tax from the poor ryots which was called as *ivutaram*. The ryots struggled to pay this tax. The accounts were not clear and confusion might have happened in decennial lease.”\textsuperscript{94}

After H.W. Kindersley, G.D. Drury was the Collector in 1828; under him the wet lands were classified as *kannars* or blocks by the order of Board of Directors. They prepared and maintained the accounts of paddy cultivation

\textsuperscript{90} *Vanpayir* means land yielding garden produce in Tinnevelly, cultivated in back yards or select spots; consisting of plantains, sugarcane, tobacco, chillies. There was another name was called Toticaul or tottakal produce. *Glossary to the Fifth Report from the Select Committee*, 48

\textsuperscript{91} Report of Madras Estate Land Act committee, Part II, 141.

\textsuperscript{92} See Appendix No.7 for the original documents of *patta*

\textsuperscript{93} Pate, *Madras District Gazetteers: Tinnevelly*, 283-284.

\textsuperscript{94} Report of the Madras Estate Land Act Committee Part I, 210
followed by *kottais*. In the period from 1829 to 1839, 49,607 square miles of southern India came under the Zamindari System. The districts of Madura, Tinnevelly, North Arcot and Salem millions acres of lands were incorporated with the Zamindari system. In other Tamil districts of the Madras Presidency some part of the land was adopted in the Zamindari tenure. In 1842 to 1844 a new experimental method was followed in four villages of Tinnevelly district (Tinnevelly, Tenkasi, Ambasamudram and Sankarankoil) by E.B.Thomas, Collector of Tinnevelly. Later, the land system was modified based on the circumstances but it was not satisfactory. Around three hundred assessment rates were followed in *kar* and *pisanam* crops cultivation.

The mirasidars claimed the ownership of the dry and wet lands and waste land of the village. In the case of waste land if a cultivator tried to convert it into cultivable land, he had to pay a certain percentage of share to the mirasidar as tax. That tax or fee was called *samibhogam*; the rate of this *samibhogam* was a maximum of five per cent of the total produce. In 1850, the government ordered that if mirasidars left the land uncultivated for maximum five years, anyone can plough the land without entering it in the register. The *olungu* system of assessment was followed by the current price rate of the total produce. But this system was a failure due to the frequent increase of the current market price from 1853. The rate of the produce of the *olungu* system was fixed in the end of the fasli year in April. The peasant was not aware of the rate of assessment until the

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95 *kottai* means a measure of grains, varying in different places from 21 to 24 *Marakkals*. Wilson, *A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms*, 296.
96 Dharma Kumar., *Land and Caste in South India, Agricultural Labour in the Madras Presidency during the 19th Century*, 11
officials fixed it on his produce. The rate was increased which led to the dues of land rents. In 1855 one-third of the cultivable wet land was calculated as waste land, and the produce of these lands was utilised by local officers. The village accounts were not properly maintained. Discrimination followed in assessing the land rate of the wealthy and of the underprivileged cultivators. The government ordered to rewrite the land accounts and ratify the mismanagement.\textsuperscript{98} Karnams followed informal land survey and they could not recognise what the earlier methods of land survey were. In 1857 the total land assessment rate was twenty-eight lakh rupees. Hence in the period of 1859-60 the system of olungu needed to be withdrawn and a new settlement called mottafaisal was introduced in Ramnad.\textsuperscript{99}

\textbf{8.6. Mottafaisal System 1859-1860}

In 1859 the revenue system was modified and a new settlement mottafaisal, was introduced. But earlier this system had been tried in Tanjore District and later it was practised in other parts of southern Tamil country. Under this system the olungu standard price was fixed with inflexible rate.\textsuperscript{100} In 1859-60 after the adoption of the mottafaisal system current price of grains was reduced to thirty percent which was favourable to the ryots to pay the assessment. To decide the tax amount of wet and dry lands they maintained two accounts called A and B registers. Among these register the B register was a very important one. The B register contained the total area of the ryot, the cultivated

\textsuperscript{98} \textit{Report of the Madras Estate Land Act Committee} Part I, 210
\textsuperscript{99} Ramasamy, \textit{TamilNadu District Gazetteers Ramanathapuram}, 570-579
\textsuperscript{100} Pate, \textit{Madras District Gazetteers: Tinnevelly}, 290.
land for the last fasli year and the unutilised land. In 1864 this register was completed and ryot’s name was entered in the register and he had to pay the land assessment which was mentioned in pattas. Most of the villages were not surveyed separately. Therefore, this system was theoretically fixed and practically it was confusing. After the framing of the register, the ryot had concessions; they could pay tax on only irrigated lands; for uncultivated or waste land they did not need to pay.\textsuperscript{101} After forming these two registers the ryot had got pattas for his cultivated land and he was responsible to pay the fixed rate of land assessment. There was no uniformity in fixing the land assessment. There was no proper method in fixing and maintaining the register to assess the land. For assessing the nanjai land the government practised the average rate of the total assessment. After the introduction of mottafaisal, during 1860 to 1865, eighteen percent of cultivated land was increased. One more effect of the new system was mirasi claim vanished. Therefore, after banning the mirasi rights, there was controversy while issuing pattas as to whether pattas were to be handed over to cultivators or mirasidars; finally, pattas were given to the ryots. There were three kinds of villages; the first one was panguvali\textsuperscript{102}villages, which the mirasidars owned. Another was pattaviritti,\textsuperscript{103} whose mirasidars had rights to enjoy fixed portion of its production. The last one was the parumpattu villages, in which there was no intermediary between circar and the ryots. For this village

\textsuperscript{101}Ramasamy, Tamil Nadu District Gazetteers Ramanathapuram, 577; Pate, Mudras District Gazetteers: Tinnevelly, 290.
\textsuperscript{102}Panguvali villages means a village held in common by a certain number of coparceners, amongst whom the lands are distributed at various times, according to the votes of the majority of the shares and are held in severalty for a given time under such distribution. Wilson, A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, 397.
\textsuperscript{103}Pattaviritti means rent-free land held by Brahmins. Wilson, A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, 409
the government appointed official nattanmakaran who collected tax from the village.\textsuperscript{104} The rent act of 1859 gave right of occupancy to all cultivators who possessed lands for more than twelve years and forbade the rents from being raised, except for very critical reasons. The Tenancy Act of 1885 allowed the ryot to mortgage his possession and to lease it for periods not exceeding nine years.\textsuperscript{105}

9. Land, Weight and Currency Measurement

Land measurement was made based on the system of kolapiramanam or paimash\textsuperscript{106} survey. For measuring, Mahani kol (a wooden stick) was used. Based on this measurement the land was classified as nanjai, punjai, thittu, thidal, thoppu, aaru and kulam.\textsuperscript{107} In 1792, the land measurement of Ramnad was introduced throughout the Zamindari by Pradani Muthirulappa Pillai. He made a common tool for measuring nanjai and punjai lands. They followed measurement of a stick 22 5/16 of Muthirulappa Pillai’s feet (the length measure of 22 feet and a cross measure of 1 feet in length) equal to 22 1/2 English feet.\textsuperscript{108} In 1795 Ramnad came under the direct control of the Company and in 1811 the Company made a survey of the donated lands and villages by the Zamindars of Ramnad. After the entry of the Company rule, the old system of land measure

\textsuperscript{104} Pate, Madras District Gazetteers: Tinnevelly, 291.
\textsuperscript{105} Arokiaswami and Royappa, The Modern Economic History of India, 107.
\textsuperscript{106} Kolapiramanam means a statement of the whole extent and of the divisions of a village and its lands, whether cultivated or waste. paimash means measurement or survey methods. Wilson, A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, 292,422
\textsuperscript{107} Kamal, Setupathi Mannar Seppedugal, 29,70; Shanmugam, Setupathi Mannarkalin Samuthaya Porulathara Voralaru, 82.
\textsuperscript{108} Ram Row, Ramnad Manual, 73
measurement of kolapiramanam disappeared. During the period of the Company control different kinds of land measurement were followed such as kurukkam, kalavirayadi, and kuli. Zamindars collected different kinds of tax regularly, like varam, money, rent or swarnadeyam on the punjai lands of Ramnad Zamindari. The wet and dry land of the Ramnad Zamindari was measured by the term of kalavirayadi. The eight parts of marakalvirayadis and one hundred and twelve parts of kalavirayadi were called nanjaikuli. The kurrukkam measurement was used in the punjai land only.

For measuring Ghee, grains and oil they used magani, ulakku, padi, nali, kurani, marakkal and kalam. Among them magani was the smallest one. The following tables show the weights and measures used by bazaar men and the public of Ramnad Zamindari:

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109 Kamal, Setupathi Mannar Seppedugal, 31,70
110 One kurukkam was equal to 90 cents in all the taluks of Ramnad estate except Pallidmadam where calculated as one kuli was equal to 7 acres 65-9/16 cents. The panam was calculated all the taluks except Pallimadam was equal to Rs 0-2-0-8/23, in Pallimadam it was Rs 0-3-4-8/11. Report of the Madras Estate Land Act Committee Part II, 130
111 One kalavirayadi was equal to 14 marakalvirayadis or 1 acre 18 1/8 cents. Report of the Madras Estate Land Act Committee Part II, 128
112 kuli means a measure of one square foot. Wilson, A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, 301.
113 rent or revenue collected in money not in kind
114 Estate Land Act Committee Landholders’ Statement part III, 344; Ram Row, Ramnad Manual, 280-284
115 Magani was a rate of interest calculated in grains. Wilson, A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, 316.
116 Kurani a measure equal to twelfth of a kalam. Wilson, A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, 305.
117 marakkal means a grain measure in use at Madras, containing 8 padis or measures and being one-twelfth of a kalam; it formerly consisted of 750 cubic inches, but is now fixed at 800 cubic inches: 400 marakkals=1 garisa or garee. A Marakkal of rice or salt weigh 960 rupees = 12 sers, or 24lb.6oz; Wilson, A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, 331.
118 One kalam equal to twelve marakkals. Wilson, A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, 251. According to S.M. Kamal, One kalam was equal to ninety padi of paddy. Kamal, Setupathi Mannar Seppedugal,246.
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<th>1 pollam</th>
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<td>15 Marakkals</td>
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<tr>
<td>One measure of Paddy</td>
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10. Zamindars Measures and Methods of Tax Collection

The Ramnad area was mostly Zamindari and some parts of the land were *inam* lands. The following charts show the talukwise classification of the land in the Ramnad Zamindari. In Ramnad, land was divided into two categories, *nanjai* and *punjai*. In the first half of the nineteenth century under the *Pradani*...
Muthirulappa Pillai, these two major land divisions were sub classified into six sub-groups based on the nature and condition of the soil, such as *nanjai proper*, *nanjai vanpayir*, *nunjaitaram punjai*, *punjai proper*, *punjai vanpayir* and *kolamkorvai*. The Board of Revenue records indicate the method of land revenue practised in the Ramnad Zamindari as follows;

1. *Nanjai* land paid rent in kind, based on harvest of the total produce (for paddy cultivation)

2. *Nanjai vanpayir* type of land paid money as a specific assessment on each product. (for the cultivation of betel, vine, sugar cane, plantain etc.)

3. *Punjai vanpayir* paid money like ordinary *punjai* assessment except when the cultivation was raised on *nanjai* land other than those set apart for *nunja* cultivation, in which case specific assessment on products was paid. (*Punjai vanpayir* land products were chillies, brinjal, tobacco, sweet potato, etc.)

4. *Nunjaitaram punjai*, *punjai* and *kolamkorvai* lands paid rent as money, fixed on land, irrespective of the nature of crop raised. *Kolamkorvai* was a land tax on produce of paddy cultivation made on the bed of tanks.

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121 *Nanjai proper* means land suitable for paddy cultivation, *Nanjai vanpayir* means special crops cultivated land like betel, sugarcane, plaintain etc. *Nunjaitaram Punjai* land not fit for paddy cultivation and fit only for ragi, cholam and dry grains. *Punjai proper* land mostly dry and suitable for dry grains, *Punjai vanpayir* land classified for cultivating chillies, brinjals and sweet potatoes etc. and *Kolamkorvai* means the paddy cultivated with the bed of tanks without limits of the waters spread, limits of water spread was prohibited; Ram Row, *Ramnad Manual*, 287-288.


Ramnad Zamindari had six taluks: first Ramnad was mostly covered by sand, apart from this karisal, veppal and pottal types of land were found in the entire estate. Secondly, Muthukulathur Taluk was covered mostly by sand, karisal, veppal and sevval. Thirdly, Kamudi Taluk fully consisted of sand or manal, karisal and sevval. Fourthly, Pallimadam Taluk generally karisal and veppal land. Fifth, Rajasingamangalam Taluk, had pottal, vandal(aluvial) and sand in the coastal part, other part being by karisal land. Sixth taluk, Hanumanthakudi had mostly pottal, vandal and karisal lands.\(^{124}\)

The northern part of the zamindari soil was fully pottal and vandal, Saligramam and Rajasingamangalam consisted highest wet land or vandal type of land. Eastern side of Ramnad Zamindari mostly was sandy and southern part of the Ramnad taluk was covered with karisal, veppal and sevval soil. The karisal

\(^{124}\) Ram Row, *Ramnad Manual*, 152-195
type of soil fully covered lower part of Pallimadam taluk, Kamudi, Papan kulam, Muthukulathur and Abiramam. The following headwise charges were collected by British government from Ramnad Zamindari such as,

1. Establishment and Contingencies
2. Maramut
3. Peshcush
4. Interest on loan to government
5. Debt due by the estate
6. Road-cess
7. Commission due to government
8. Maintenance and education of minors
9. Allowance to other members of the family
10. Miscellaneous items. 

According to the Madras Estate Land Act Committee report, the land revenue collection was categorised varam, sarasari, tirva, cesses and miscellaneous. Varam tax was fixed when the ryot made harvest in his land. In the beginning of nineteenth century, yavana was also one kind of land assessment on wet lands and from this assessment the government received one lakh rupees, but in 1807 this tax was abolished. In 1855 the tax on vanpayir or bagayat was declared at the ‘double rate’ of the wet land crops. The pattam

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125 Letter from Raja Ram Rao to Madura Collector on 05.02.1882, 18
126 Board of Revenue, Court of Wards 1883 Madras, 23 June 1883, No. 1845
128 Yavana means money paid to the collector or manager from the land revenue. Wilson, A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, 560.
129 Pattam means rent, hire, contract or lease. Wilson, A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, 409.
and poruppu\textsuperscript{130} were the kind of charges collected as ‘quit-rent’ imposed on granted lands or Inam lands.\textsuperscript{131} For nanjai or wet land, generally tax or varam was collected as half of the produce and additionally nilavari or land tax was collected on paddy cultivated areas weather it was wet land or dry land. Ryots were demanded to pay the land rents and ordered to pay compulsory payment for arrangements (like travel allowance and needed things). It was practised until 1857. In case of punjai land the rate of rent was collected from 8 annas to two rupees per acre.\textsuperscript{132} There was sarasari rent collected from the ryot when he used tank water for irrigation. The rate of punjai vanpayir assessment differed in Pallimadam taluk due to the nature of the soil as compared with other taluks. The rate of the punjai vanpayir measurement of Pallimadam taluk was Rs 12-8-0 and in the rest of the taluks of Ramnad Zamindari was Rs 2-4-11 per acre.\textsuperscript{133} There was unique assessment followed in the taluk of Pallimadam due to the condition of soil which was somewhat better than that of other taluks of Ramnad Zamindari.\textsuperscript{134}

The revenue assessment on nanjai land was paid in kind varying with the harvest. nanjai vanpayir was paid in money a specific assessment on each product; in the case of punjai vanpayir it was money. For the nanjaitaram punjai, punjai and kolamkorvai land rent was paid as money fixed on land, irrespective of the nature of the crop raised. For the trees a specific tax on the kind of tree was

\textsuperscript{130} Poruppu means a low or quit-rent levied from lands usually granted in Inam or rent-free. \textit{Glossary to the Fifth Report from the Select Committee, 454}
\textsuperscript{131} Ramasamy, \textit{Tamil Nadu District Gazetteers Ramanathapuram, 575}
\textsuperscript{132} Report of Madras Estate Land Act Committee, Part II, 112; Ramasamy, \textit{Tamil Nadu District Gazetteers Ramanathapuram, 576}
\textsuperscript{133} Report of Madras Estate Land Act Committee, Part II, 141
\textsuperscript{134} Estate Land Act Committee Landholders’ Statements, Part III, 347
collected when it was collected come to fruition.\textsuperscript{135} The land tax was collected by maniyakar or ambalagar (village revenue officer). They were accountable to their head officer makanam. The land tax was collected as half of the produce in kind; later it was changed to cash. The Company officials used to calculate approximately the total produce of the land. The Company officials used to encourage the progress of cultivation to get more revenue. The government share of the pisanam cultivation was three-fifths of the total produce. The harvested crops were under the control of officials until the products were sold.\textsuperscript{136}

In the case of agricultural production, the share of common charge was different in all the taluks of Ramnad Zamindari. In Arunuthimangalam, Kuthagainadu, Orur and Kottaipattinam taluks common charge was collected at twenty percent and in the case of Ramnad, Kilakkad and Sickal taluk it was charged at ten percent. But in Kottaipattinam taluk share of common charge was deducted as four kalams, eleven Marakkals and five and half measures made for every 24 kalams of the gross produce.\textsuperscript{137}

The share of the Zamindar was melvaram and kudivaram or kilvaram share was the Cultivator’s share. The Government officers got grains of the produce which was known cutantaram or cuvantiram for salary. The pallans or kudumbans served as village measurers in some of the villages and had the right to get cuvantiram share from the produce. kudi cuvantaram was also one of the shares of the produce which was given for the village temple and was used to

\textsuperscript{135} Board of Revenue 21.12.1882, No. 3198 19
\textsuperscript{136} Ramasamy, Tamil Nadu District Gazetteers Ramanathapuram, 566-568.
\textsuperscript{137} Report of Madras Estate Land Act Committee, Part II, 118
maintain irrigation on temple lands. Tenants’ share was stored in nearby melvaram granary and after getting receipt from maniyakar, the ryot could take their kudivaram or kilvaram to home. In the case tenant had taken both melvaram and kudivaram shares without permission from superintendant he had to pay the highest produce of his field as punishment. The ryot could not dig tank or well within the fifty yards from the circar canal or tank, and thirty yards from the estate tanks. Betal cultivation was prohibited, because the cultivation of betel did not yield more revenue to the government. If the ryot cultivated it he it had to pay double tax. For betel cultivation tax was fixed during the picking-up of a single leaf, and also a transit duty was imposed. The ryot could pay punjai, nanjai assessment and tree tax in seven instalments; if he failed to pay certain instalment that amount was considered an arrear amount and would be collected next payment with one percent of interest.

The paddy cultivation on the nanjai land had a fixed tax of forty-eight percent; the ryot were responsible to pay this assessment as government share. In some parts of Ramnad, like Arunuthimangalam, Kuthagainadu and Orur, the payment of melvaram was fixed as fifty percent. Under the system of sharing system, the ryot had to pay whatever he cultivated on his field; the share of the total produce must be handed over to estate and without getting permission from government official the ryot could not harvest his crops. For harvesting paddy or other crops the ryot had to get permission from village officers or tahsildar

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139 Pavali Zamin collected monthly four instalments, Kannivadi estate and Ammanayakkanur Zamin collected eight instalments and Idayankottai Zamin of Madura country collected monthly seven instalments. *Report of Madras Estate Land Act Committee*, Part II, 166-197
140 Ram Row, *Ramnad Manual*, 331-333
which was known as ‘kanganam chit’. For that the ryot had to travel more than thirty miles to get approval or kanganam chit from government officials. After getting this receipt the ryot could harvest his crops. The kanganam officer was in charge of dividing the melvaram and kudivaram shares from the total produce. While dividing the melvaram share one of the duplicate copies of the chit had to be handed over to peishkar (dividing officer) for dividing the share of the produce. But during the period of harvesting, the officers of the Zamindars delayed the issuance of permission letter or kanganam chit. As a consequence the crops were ruined. The paddy crop of the nanjai land failed owing to the paucity of water for the grow of the grain was called ‘suddashavi’. The crops decayed owing to the flood after the sprouting of grains. It was called ‘manipidshavi’. After the verification of the loss by the estate officials ryot might be exempted from the payment of the rent or share.

Maravans and Vellalans were of land-owning caste, dependant on pallans and paraiyan community for cultivating their lands. The irrigation related share was utilised by Maravan headman or Ambalagar, Pallan caste or nirppaccis (water turner), konan or mukkuntar (head of konar caste) gave sluice goat for sacrificing; and paraiyan was the watcher of tanks, channels and sluices. The other castes or artisans and servants of villages too received shares of the produce such as carpenters, blacksmith, barbers, merchants, watchman, leather workers,

\[141 \text{Kanganam chit means the receipt of the permission for harvesting the crop to the Ryot from government officials. Village granary was called segarampattadai; Ram Row Ramnad Manual, 455-457. This receipt was valid for one day; ryot should use this receipt before 8 pm after that it was not valid.}
\[142 \text{Estate land Act Committee Landholders’ Statement, Part III, 345; Ram Row, Ramnad Manual, 79, 454}
\[143 \text{Report of the Madras Estate Land Act Committee Part I, 13}
\[144 \text{Estate Land Act Committee Landholders’ Statement Part III, 346}
and grave diggers. They got unmeasured handouts of the harvest called *kaipiccai* (taking grains by hands by the village officials). The cultivators gave tiny portions to the low caste village servants, like barbers, leather workers, drummers or grave diggers. The tenants were responsible to pay ten to forty percent of the total produce to Zamindars, additionally five percent for public expenses or *potu cilavu* like tank digging (*kulavettu* or *kulavattai*) to Zamindar. The cultivator had to pay the *kanganam* for supervision of the harvest. The total produce of the harvest was mostly consumed by Zamindar; the rest of the produce was spread over to various officers and caste people. Ultimately a small amount of the produce was left in the sub tenant’s hand.

The Company collected special tax on government officials known as *umbalavari* which was collected from *karnam*, *ambalagars* and other mirasidars. The rate of the tax was collected at 5 or 10 percent of the produce. *Kalappichchait*, *padakanikkai* and *palankatchi* were collected additionally apart from the usual tax. The well tax was fixed at two *fanam* per well for cultivating the land. In the region of Paramakudi, there was a peculiar tax, collected on dry land cultivation. The ryot had to pay rent for the crop before the crop’s cultivation. The cultivation of *porumpokku* or common land was

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146 *Estate Land Act Committee Landholders’ Statement*, Part III, 351
147 *alms at the threshing floor measured
148 *Padakanikkai* means a present placed at the feet of Zamindar or landlord. Wilson, *A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms*, 385.
149 *Palankatchi* means a present made to the Zamindar when the glad used of the dry crops being reap was given by ryot. *Estate Land Act Committee Landholders’ Statement Part III*, 352
151 Letter from Raja Ram Rao to Madura Collector dated 05.02.1882 17; *Estate Land Act Committee Landholders’ Statements*, Part II, 122
prohibited, like car track, *Oorani* (drinking water ponds), thrashing floor, burning and burial ground and etc. *Oorani* water was not allowed for the purpose of irrigation.\(^{152}\) Zamindars followed and collected different kinds of rate, based on the nature of the soil and produce. Ryots cultivated crops in the *nanjai* land. If well water was used for the land, rent was fixed at Rs 12-8-0 per acre for the first crops. In the case of second crop, with well water, the rate of the assessment was fixed at Rs 6-4-0. The rate for the *punjai* land was fixed in a range of 6 to 12 annas for acre.\(^{153}\)

There was average tax collected where the tank water was used without getting permission from government officers. The average tax was collected on the cultivated crops of the *nanjai* land.\(^{154}\) The ryot made a contract with proprietor for cultivating his land for certain amount for a period. It was known as *pathadappu*. In this case, the ryot was responsible to pay whether the cultivated or not on the land.\(^{155}\) Ramnad Zamindari collected additional cess apart from *mamul tirva* or customs tax like *nilavari* (land tax), *vaikkolvari* (straw tax), which was paid by the Pallimadam taluk cultivators for the *punjai* land. This tax was collected from *cowledar* and in the Taluk of Pallimadam an additional well tax too had to be paid by the ryot. The well tax was two *fanam* per well which was used to cultivate the land.\(^{156}\)

\(^{152}\) *Estate Land Act Committee Landholders’ Statement* Part III, 350-352
\(^{153}\) *Report of the Madras Estate Land Act Committee* Part II, 112-113
\(^{154}\) *Report of the Madras Estate Land Act Committee*, Part II, 123
\(^{155}\) *Estate Land Act Committee Landholders’ Statements*, Part I, 346
\(^{156}\) *Letter from Raja Ram Rao to Madura Collector*, dated 05.02.1882 17; *Estate Land Act Committee Landholders’ Statements*, Part II, 122
The Zamindars imposed tree taxes which stood on *patta* lands. In the village of Sickal, tree tax was imposed at the rate of 8 *annas* per coconut tree, and other trees the rate\(^{157}\) was assessed as five *annas* to four paise per tree. In Ramnad Taluk tree tax was assessed as two *annas* and in other taluks one *anna* and three paise were collected by Zamindars.\(^{158}\) In 1855, the Madras Government banned the tree tax in the entire Madras Presidency except in Ramnad, Tinnevelly and Salem areas where Palmyra trees tax was continued, this tax was the major source of income for the government in these regions. In Ramnad region from Palmyra trees the government collected rupees one lakh as tree tax.\(^{159}\) The landowners got half share of the tree in the southern part of Ramnad Zamindari where they leased their land. In Rajasingamanagalm and Aranuthimangalam Taluks they collected 40 percent and in the Taluks of Hanumanthakudi, Kuthagainadu, Orur and Kottaipattinam tree share was collected as 33 1/3 percent in Ramnad Zamindari. Zamindars collected Rs 9-15-9 as the rate of sugarcane cultivation. Plantain was cultivated in all the taluks of Ramnad Zamindari; and a fixed rent of Rs 14-13-7 per annum in Pallimadam taluk, and Rs 4-7-0 in the rest of the taluks were collected. After 1858, money collection was practised in some parts of the taluks of the estate. Later it was fixed in all the taluks. Zamindars collected half share of the total produce on the

\(^{157}\) For General trees fixed as 10 pies, for Guava tree fixed as one anna three pies, for lime tree three annas four pies, Pomegranate tree charged as 10 pies, Markova tree one anna three pies, and mango tree six annas 8 pies. *Report of the Madras Estate Land Act Committee*, Part II, 115

\(^{158}\) *Report of the Madras Estate Land Act Committee*, Part II, 115

\(^{159}\) Ramasamy, *Tamil Nadu District Gazetteers Ramanathapuram*, 580

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cultivation of second crop which was mostly of *kattaiparuthi* (Cotton on last year’s stubbles) and *kattamanacku* (castor oil seed).\(^{160}\)

The ryot had to pay money to landlord which was not included in rent; it was considered payable to the government not included in the rate of produce. Further the Board of Revenue noticed that whether such dues were paid in money or kind whether paid to *rajah, jagirdars, zamindar*, or government officers, it was considered as due amount to the government.\(^{161}\) During the period between 1872 and 1886, the total amount of the demand of the government was Rs. 10,67,207 but the collected amount was Rs 71,64,100; and total arrears of the *peshcush* amount was Rs 35,07,967.\(^{162}\) Thus the Zamindars increased the tax amount to compensate for their arrears.

**11. Land Revenue in Ramnad from 1787-1888**

The following chart shows the revenue collection of Ramnad Zamindari from 1787 to 1888.
The above chart shows a hundred years’ land revenue statistical record of Ramnad Zamindari from 1787 to 1888. The above sources clearly demonstrate the variation of the land revenues before the Zamindari settlement, under the Zamindars’ management and Court of Wards’ control of Ramnad. In 1795 when Ramnad came under the Company rule the land revenue was rupees 3,32,102; after the Zamindari settlement the land revenue of 1807-08 was rupees 6,24,305 which shows that the zamindari settlement filled the treasury of the Company. During the period of Court of Wards management there was more income and it increased in Zamindar’s management. At the beginning of the Zamindari settlement, the revenue was rupees 6, 24,305 (1807-08) and at the end of the nineteenth century or 1888, the revenue from the Zamindari system was rupees 8, 84,121. It clearly indicates that the colonial land revenue policy towards Ramnad achieved great results.

Since 1795, Ramnad came under the direct control of the British. After the conversion of Ramnad to Zamindari tenure, which was, for a short period, controlled by the Court of Wards, Ramnad faced issues of succession and civil disputes among Setupathis. During the periods of 1795-1803, 1816-1822, 1843-1846 and 1872-1889, Ramnad was under the control of Court of Wards. The Court of Wards’ management gave more importance and spent more to promote land revenue. The following table shows the Court of ward’s expenditure on irrigation work in the Ramnad Zamindari during 1873 and 1887:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL. No</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Amount of Expenditure in Rupees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1873</td>
<td>29,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1874</td>
<td>29,675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>29,687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1876</td>
<td>93,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1877</td>
<td>61,594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1878</td>
<td>1,09,122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td>43,644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1880</td>
<td>22,286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1881</td>
<td>26,878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1882</td>
<td>27,577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>32,359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1884</td>
<td>40,399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td>96,948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1886</td>
<td>51,178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>1887</td>
<td>42,318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>7,36,107</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The above statement gives a picture of year wise expenditure on irrigation. In 1878 the British government allotted and spent more (Rs. 1,09,122)
owing to the impact of the great famine of 1876-78. According to irrigation report of the Madras Estate Land Act Committee stated that there were no records to support this expenditure as claim that the Court of Wards, spent Rs 8,29,110-1-3 during the period between 1873 and 1889 for the improvement of irrigation. Further there are no records to show the subsequent progress until 1935. Again in 1935 Collector’s statement mentioned Rs 4,71,971 spent for irrigation improvement but there were no records to support this expenditure too. The irrigation report is significant, considering the peasants and landless labourers’ struggle for surviving.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Major Irrigation sources of Ramnad Zamindari</th>
<th>Tanks under on River</th>
<th>Amount spent for repair from 1873 to 1882 Rs</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vaigai</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>86,775</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Raguntha kaveri</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1,08,511</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Narayana kaveri</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2,449</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ghirutamalai</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8,450</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kotta karai</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2,716</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Virusilai</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5,418</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Pambar</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6,303</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Thenar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,421</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Manimuktar</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2,541</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Vellar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>2,24,922</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Board of Revenue, Court of Wards 1883, 23rd June 1883, No. 1845.

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The above statement shows that the British government gave more emphasis on and intended to get more income from the land; so they used more amounts of money to maintain the natural sources. The Company wanted to get the arrear and debt amounts from the Setupathis; therefore the Court of Wards was involved seriously in the improvement and progress of agricultural production, thereby attempted to resolve the zamindars debts and arrears with interest of Rs 25,84,892 by 1888.\textsuperscript{165}

12. Impact of Zamindari system on Peasants

Zamindari system created an elaborate system of official hierarchy and a long chain of intermediaries like, zamindar, talukdar and karnam between the state and actual cultivators of the land. The establishment of British rule in the southern Tamil country destroyed the tyrannical rule of local chieftains through regulating law and order. They measured the land and appointed district Collectors to collect revenue which action mitigated the oppressive treatment of cultivators and landless peasants by local poligars or chieftains. But the zamindars who replaced the local chieftains under the permanent settlement also proved oppressive in collecting tax from the peasants. The peasants expected justice from the courts of the English but that was not possible to get easily. They faced poverty due to non-natural, man-made causes and frequent atrocities of landlords and struggled a lot to maintain their daily life. In Chinglepet, Salem, Dindigul, Ramnad and Tinnevelly the system of permanent settlement failed and frequently the British had to take over control of zamindari land. The Board of

\textsuperscript{165} Ram Row, Ramnad Manual, 500
Revenue analysed and understood that over assessment of land and ignorance and lack of interest of Zamindars to cultivate the land were some of the important reasons reason for the failure. The permanent settlement was continued until 1921-22 in the Tamil region. The permanent settlement led to the decay of the village community and peasantry. Due to the failure of the permanent system, a large part of the land was reverted to the government. Village settlement which was recommended by the Tanjore committee report of 1807 was implemented in the Tanjore region. The permanent settlement failed in Bengal due to bribery and mismanagement of the accounts. The British tried this system in the southern Tamil country, but here too permanent settlement was not successful.

13. Overview

In the nineteenth century, in the Madras Presidency, out of 90 million acres of cultivating area, 27½ millions of total area was held by 849 Zamindars. Among them fifteen zamindars held 6¾ million acres. They were paying around two lakh rupees as peshcush to the government and 128 zamindars held 9½ millions of acres; they paid regularly a peshcush amount of 18,100 rupees to the government. 706 zamindars and mittadars held land of 2¾ million acres and paid a peshcush amount of 1,300 rupees to the Government annually. A million acres of land was under the Zamindar system in Madura, North Arcot and Salem

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166 Rajayyan, Tamilnadu A Real History, 310
167 Arokiaswami and Royappa, The Modern Economic History of India, 102-103.
168 Baliga, Studies in Madras Administration, 86-87.
169 Rajayyan, Tamilnadu A Real History, 311.
170 Srinivasa Ragavaiyangar, Memorandum on the Progress of the Madras Presidency during the last forty years of British Administration,132.
Districts.\textsuperscript{171} By the end of the nineteenth century in Madras, Bernard S Cohn mentions 804 Zamindars controlled 40 per cent of the land. The remaining 60 percent was in Ryotwari tenure.\textsuperscript{172} In Ramnad, the Ryotwari system was not practised owing to the nature of the soil and to get the arrear amount of the Zamindars of Ramnad. The Zamindari system was structured in the economic and social hierarchical order in the Ramnad society. The settlement brought about dynamic changes in the agriculture field and the agrarian order. This system created social imbalance in the Ramnad society which was based on the agriculture.

\textsuperscript{171} Dharma Kumar, Land and Caste in South India, Agricultural Labour in the Madras Presidency during the 19th Century, 11