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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS

Revenue DEPARTMENT

G.O. No. / B.P. No.	779.	Press / Misc.
Dated	25. June	196 1874

Not to be folded or roughly handled

M.R.O.

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
25th June 1874.

No. 225. Read the following Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 5th June 1874, No. 1,361 :—

Read again G. O., dated 22nd July 1873, No. 763, Revenue Department, recorded in Board's Proceedings, dated 2nd August 1873, Miscellaneous No. 4,867.

Read also the following letters :—

From A. WEDDERBURN, Esq., Collector of Coimbatore, to H. E. STOKES, Esq., Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 25th September 1873, No. 218.

With reference to Board's Miscellaneous No. 4,867 of 2nd August 1873, I am adverse to the invasion of every petty saltpetre maker's premises to impose a duty on the salt, an inferior article that remains after saltpetre is formed. The consumption of this inferior stuff cannot, to a great extent, affect the sale of good sea-salt, and the real remedy (as was found with smuggling in Great Britain) is to sell the excised article at a price, which lessens the profits of illicit trade.

2. If sea-salt were offered for sale at a price that the poorest could afford, the earth-salt would be good as a manure, or be given to cattle.

3. I disapprove of developing the salt trade by raids on the people by Police or otherwise. If salt were carried by rail at a rate at which minerals (stone, coal, etc.,) are at home, the inland price would not be so disproportionate to that at the places of manufacture, but I was informed by the late Mr. J. Fisher that the Railway rates for saltpetre were practically prohibitive.

4. There seems however no objection to letting the saltpetre makers compound (if they can be got to do so) for the duty on the salt which remains after the saltpetre is eliminated. A considerable difficulty is the very petty way in which, and numerous places about 250 where, saltpetre is manufactured. The proportion of salt to saltpetre [illegible] I need here not to exceed one-tenth, and most likely the makers will rather destroy the salt than pay a duty of Rupees 2 per maund, which the sale value of the article would not cover, being in fact the price of sea salt which the poorest classes cannot well afford to buy.

From F. PRICE, Esq., Acting Collector of Salem, to J. GROSE, Esq., Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 28th November 1873, No. 380.

I have the honour to reply to the Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, Miscellaneous No. 4,867, dated 2nd August 1873.

2. I some time back had thoughts of recommending the introduction of Act XXXI of 1860, but upon consideration I was of opinion that it would hardly be worthwhile doing so, at any rate for the present.

3. What first induced me to think of the matter was an application for a license to manufacture saltpetre in the Dharmapuri Taluq. I held inquiry into the matter and learned that saltpetre when manufactured is also refined. The applicant, whom I know to be a very poor man hardly better than an ordinary cooly, stated that he could not pay any large sum for a license to manufacture and refine, and that if he could not refine, permission to make the salt would be of no use to him. I, therefore, thought it better to let the matter drop.

4. I doubt whether the same process as that described by Captain Court is carried on everywhere. In Dharampuri it is totally different. I went to the only place where saltpetre is regularly made and saw everything. Shallow pans are formed by beating the earth hard and putting up little mud banks. The material from which the saltpetre is obtained is a chalk kind of earth which is found only about the village, and is scraped off the surface with the hands. This is then mixed up in the pans with water and allowed to evaporate. The substance which effloresces when evaporation takes place is collected, washed and again evaporated, and the result is saltpetre and an extremely nasty bitter deliquescent salt, which being mixed with earth and other impurities is thrown away. It is quite unfit for use with food. I have never heard of any earth-salt being made or sold in the sub-division.

6. The salt obtained at Madura cannot after all be very much. There may be smuggling of saltpetre, but this generally must be carried from the place to another without a pass from a Magistrate. The number of maunds for which passes were granted in this district during the past twelve months was 11,677. Taking Captain Court's proportion, this would represent 3,153 maunds of salt, the value of which calculated at the price of that manufactured from sea water would be Rupees 5,045. The price of saltpetre here is 6 Annas per cwt. or 24 lbs. There cannot be very much more, or it would be cheaper than this.

7. I think that it would be hardly worthwhile to introduce Act XXXI. of 1801 into this district.

8. I would suggest for consideration whether persons who apply for passes for the transmission of saltpetre and who must buy it from the manufacturers should be called upon to pay the duty upon a number of maunds of salt calculated upon one-third of that of maunds of saltpetre shown in their passes. This would have the effect of making the actual manufacturer pay the duty, for the refiner or trader would on this account cut down the price which they now give for the saltpetre itself. Any attempt to make the manufacturers themselves would only lead to extortion and fraud. The manufacture of saltpetre is far too limited to allow of the entertainment of any special establishment to overlook and check it, and the only agency that could be employed would be the Village Officers, who would certainly make it a business profitable to themselves. It would be out of the question to utilize the Police for this purpose, as they have as it is a great deal more than they can properly perform.

9. If the scheme above suggested does not meet with approval, I would advocate the entire prohibition of the manufacture of saltpetre by some people through fear of its being used for illicit purposes.

From J. E. DUNNETT, Esq., Acting Collector of Tinnevelly, to J. GROSE, Esq., Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 22nd February 1874, No. 30.

With reference to the Proceedings of the Board, No. 4,867, dated 2nd August last, I have the honour to report that saltpetre is manufactured in eighty-one villages of this district chiefly for Messrs. Fischer and Co., and for one Maya Nadan of Madura. The quantity made annually cannot be accurately ascertained, but is estimated to be about 16,000 maunds.

2. A small quantity is used here for medicines and country gunpowder for blasting and fireworks. The rest is sent to Madras.

3. It is asserted that the salt educed in the process of manufacture is not sold or bartered for grain, but is dissolved in water and mixed with the earth from which the saltpetre is made. Most of the Tahsildars and Deputy Tahsildars believe this assertion, and say that the salt is considered unwholesome, but I doubt whether implicit reliance can be placed in the accuracy of their information. Whether the salt be good or bad, its value must be considerable, and it is not likely that the whole of it is destroyed, there being no supervision or check at present.

4. It is certain however that if this salt is used at all the use of it is confined to a few people of the poorest classes, and it is a question whether it would be wise to permit its manufacture and sale for the sake of any revenue that could be thus obtained. If the salt could be openly sold it would be refined and mixed with better salt, and the difficulty of preventing the manufacture of common earth-salt would be considerably increased.

5. I would, therefore, recommend that Act XXXI. of 1801 be extended to this district; that licenses for the manufacture of saltpetre alone be granted; and that the penalties provided by Section 6 for making salt be strictly enforced.

In their order of the 22nd July 1873, No. 703, the Government directed the Board to ascertain and report the opinions of the Collectors of Coimbatore, Salem, Trichinopoly, and Madura, marginally noted as to the advisability of extending the provisions of Act XXXI. of 1801 to this Presidency.

2. The Collector of Coimbatore deprecates interference with the use of the salt educed by the manufacture of saltpetre, as he is of opinion that the consumption of the inferior article cannot, to any great extent, affect the sale of good sea-salt, the proportion of salt to saltpetre being duty about one-fourth. He sees no objection to compounding with the manufacturers for the duty, but points out that they would probably prefer to destroy it, as the market value of the article would not equal the duty of Rupees 2 per maund, and that the limited scale on which, and the multiplicity of places at which, the manufacture is conducted, present difficulties.

3. The Collector of Salem describes the process of manufacture which was carried out in his presence, and states that the salt resulting therefrom was quite unfit for use with food. Assuming the proportion of salt to saltpetre to be one-third, he estimates the yield for the past twelve months as nearly 4,000 maunds of salt, but is of opinion that it is hardly worth while to introduce the Act. He points out that the manufacture is too limited to allow of the entertainment of a special establishment to watch it, and suggests that the duty on one maund of salt to every three of saltpetre should be collected from persons applying for passes for the transport of saltpetre, who would make a corresponding deduction in the prices paid to the manufacturer, so that the duty would practically fall on the latter. As an alternative, he proposes a fee of Rupees 10 for every license to manufacture and refine saltpetre in lieu of duty.

4. The Collector of Trichinopoly is of opinion that the Act should be extended to that district, and suggests that the proportion of salt to saltpetre should be ascertained by experiment and duty charged on the maximum amount of salt deducible from the quantity of saltpetre which the manufacturers licensed to refine. He also proposes an analysis of the salt to ascertain whether it is wholesome, and that in the event of its being pronounced a prohibitive duty should be imposed for its destruction enforced.

6. The Collector of Madura estimates the quantity of saltpetre annually manufactured in the district at 10,000 maunds, and remarks that it is generally considered unwholesome and rejected not to be sold or harvested. He doubts the policy of prohibiting the manufacture and sale on the ground that increased facilities for the illicit manufacture of common earthenware would be afforded thereby.

7. From these reports it appears that the manufacture of saltpetre is not very extensive at present, and were it permitted in the existing footing, no notice need be taken of it; but the trade may and it is to be hoped that it will survive and increase. A certain quantity of common salt is always produced in the process of making saltpetre, and from Captain Court's letter, recorded in G. O., dated 23rd July 1873, No. 701, it is clear that the quantity may be largely increased by the addition of salt bearing earth at the time of washing for saltpetre. The common salt so produced is the perquisite of the coolies and is used by them and bartered by them for grain and toddy. The possession of such salt is a breach of the salt laws and is sometimes punished; the trade in it is, however, recognized and, if not repressed, may increase; at present it is hardly business to put it down. But if Act XXXI of 1873 be introduced, the manufacture of saltpetre without a license will be quite illegal, and the duty of destroying any salt evolved in the manufacture will devolve on the lessee.

8. The Board are of opinion, therefore, that the Act should be extended to this Presidency, that licenses should be granted to manufacture as well as to manufacture and refine saltpetre, but that the license should in no case convey permission to produce common salt during the process, it should on the other hand provide that all common salt or earth containing common salt, deposited at the premises of manufacturers pending of saltpetre, should be at once destroyed. The Board do not consider that the above provisions would in any way interfere with the saltpetre lessee, while they would certainly check the manufacture of earth-salt. Some people in parts [illegible] saltpetre.

No. 228. Dated 22nd June 1874. No. 779.

Forwarded, Revenue No. 10-c

Sd/-

(True Extract.)

(Signed) C. CR. MASTER,
Acting Secretary to Government.

To the Board of Revenue,
&c. &c. &c.

Read U. C. circular.

Has Shanbhogue the Governor in Council has come to the conclusion that the Act in question should not be extended to this Presidency.

No. 1,361.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF REVENUE, dated 5th June 1874.

Read again G. O., dated 22nd July 1873, No. 763, Revenue Department, recorded in Board's Proceedings, dated 2nd August 1873, Miscellaneous No. 4,867.

Read also the following letters :—

From A. WEDDERBURN, Esq., Collector of Coimbatore, to H. E. STOKES, Esq., Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 25th September 1873, No. 218.

WITH reference to Board's Miscellaneous No. 4,867 of 2nd August 1873, I am adverse to the invasion of every petty saltpetre maker's premises to impose a duty on the salt, an inferior article that remains after saltpetre is formed. The consumption of this inferior stuff cannot, to a great extent, affect the sale of good sea-salt, and the real remedy (as was found with smuggling in Great Britain) is to sell the excised article at a price, which lessens the profits of illicit trade.

2. If sea-salt were offered for sale at a price that the poorest could afford, the earth-salt would be good as a manure, or be given to cattle.

3. I disapprove of developing the salt trade by raids on the people by Police or otherwise. If salt were carried by rail at a rate at which minerals (stone, coal, etc.,) are at home, the inland price would not be so disproportionate to that at the places of manufacture, but I was informed by the late Mr. J. Fisher that the Railway rates for saltpet e were practically prohibitive.

4. There seems however no objection to letting the saltpetre makers compound (if they can be got to do so) for the duty on the salt which remains after the saltpetre is eliminated. A considerable difficulty is the very petty way in which, and numerous places about 250 where, saltpetre is made, the proportion of salt to saltpetre is considered here not to exceed one-tenth, and most likely the makers will rather destroy the salt than pay a duty of Rupees 2 per maund, which the sale value of the article would not cover, being in fact the price of sea-salt which the poorest classes cannot well afford to buy.

From F. PRICE, Esq., Acting Collector of Salem, to J. GROSE, Esq., Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 28th November 1873, No. 380.

I HAVE the honour to reply to the Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, Miscellaneous No. 4,867, dated 2nd August 1873.

2. I some time back had thoughts of recommending the introduction of Act XXXI. of 1861, but upon consideration I was of opinion that it would hardly be worthwhile doing so at any rate for the present.

3. What first induced me to think of the matter was an application for a license to manufacture saltpetre in the Dharampuri Taluq. I held inquiry into the matter and learned that saltpetre when manufactured is also refined. The applicant, whom I know to be a very poor man hardly better than an ordinary cooly, stated that he could not pay any large sum for a license to manufacture and refine, and that if he could not refine, permission to make the salt would be of no use to him. I, therefore, thought it better to let the matter drop.

4. I doubt whether the same process as that described by Captain Court is carried on everywhere. In Dharampuri it is totally different. I went to the only place where saltpetre is regularly made and saw everything. Shallow pans are formed by beating the earth hard and putting up little mud banks. The material from which the saltpetre is obtained is a bluish kind of earth which is found only about the village, and is scraped off the surface with the hands. This is then mixed up in the pans with water and allowed to evaporate. The substance which efflorescent when evaporation takes place is collected, washed and again evaporated, and the result is saltpetre and an extremely nasty bitter deliquescent salt, which being mixed with earth and other impurities is thrown away. It is quite unfit for use with food. I have never heard of any earth-salt being made or sold in the sub-division.

5. The salt obtained at Mohanur cannot after all be very much. There may be smuggling of saltpetre, but theoretically none can be moved from one place to another without a pass from a Magistrate. The number of maunds for which passes were granted in this district during the past twelve months was 11,877. Taking Captain Court's proportion, this would represent 3,959 maunds of salt, the value of which calculated at the price of that manufactured from sea water would be Rupees 7,918. The price of saltpetre here is 6 Annas per viss of 3½ lbs. There cannot be very much made, or it would be cheaper than this.

6. I think that it would be hardly worthwhile to introduce Act XXXI. of 1861 into this district.

7. I would suggest for consideration that persons who apply for passes for the transmission of saltpetre and who must buy it from the manufacturers should be called upon to pay the duty upon a number of maunds of salt calculated upon one-third of that of maunds of saltpetre shown in their passes. This would have the effect of making the actual manufacturers pay the duty, for the wholesale dealers would on that account cut down the prices which they now give for the saltpetre itself. Any attempt to watch the manufacturers themselves would only lead to extortion and fraud. The manufacture of saltpetre is far too limited to allow of the entertainment of any special establishment to overlook and check it, and the only agency that could be employed would be the Village Officers, who would certainly make it a business profitable to themselves. It would be out of the question to utilize the Police for this purpose, as they have as it is a great deal more work than they can properly perform.

8. If the scheme above indicated does not meet with approval, I would advocate an uniform charge of Rupees 10 (to include compounding for the salt evolved) for every license to manufacture and refine saltpetre. The quantity of salt procured by the process is too small to affect the revenue under this head in any appreciable degree.

From J. H. PENNINGTON, Esq., Acting Collector of Tuticorin, to J. GROSE, Esq., Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 22nd February 1874, No. 45.

In reference to the Proceedings of this Board, No. 4,867, dated the 2nd August last, I have the honour to report that I have had the subject fully discussed.

2. The provisions of Act XXXI. of 1861 may, in my opinion, be extended to this Presidency, the manufacturers of saltpetre being under Section 7 of the Act at liberty to compound for the duty leviable on the salt required in the manufacture. The Divisional Officers are all of the same opinion.

3. The quantity of salt produced in the manufacture of saltpetre may be accurately ascertained by experiments carefully made under personal supervision, and the proportion arrived at may be taken as the standard. Each applicant for a license may be made to specify the maximum amount of saltpetre he proposes to manufacture for the year and to compound for the duty on the maximum amount of salt calculable from such quantity of saltpetre. Rules under Section 10 of the Act may be framed for deterring the license holders from turning out more saltpetre than the maximum originally specified.

4. The Acting Head Assistant Collector has however brought to my notice that the salt produced by the manufacture of saltpetre is by some people thought unwholesome. I would, therefore, suggest that before any steps are taken about the matter, the salt be analysed by a competent chemist, and should the result show that the salt is, as an article of food, injurious to health, its evasion duty should be discharged by the imposition, under Section [illegible] of the Act, of the maximum duty leviable on salt, or by making the manufacture of saltpetre with salt on pain of a pecuniary penalty for neglecting to do so.

5. Approved by Deputy Collector Mahomed Yusuf Sahib, the introduction of the Act will not be objected to, the duty being but little more than what is now levied on an extensive scale, which causes far greater injury to the salt revenue, but this is altogether a different question.

From W. McQUHAE, Esq., Collector of Madura, to J. GROSE, Esq., Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 5th February 1874, No. 29.

With reference to the Board's Proceedings, Miscellaneous No. 4,867, dated 2nd August 1873, I have the honour to report that saltpetre is manufactured in eighty-one villages of this district chiefly for Messrs. Fischer and Co., and for one Maya Nadan of Madura. The quantity made annually cannot be accurately ascertained, but is estimated to be about 16,000 maunds.

2. A small quantity is used here for nautches and country gunpowder for blasting and fireworks. The rest is sent to Madras.

3. It is asserted that the salt educed in the process of manufacture is not sold or bartered for grain, but is dissolved in water and mixed with the earth from which the saltpetre is made. Most of the Tahsildars and Deputy Tahsildars believe this assertion, and say that the salt is consumed gratuitously, but I doubt whether implicit reliance can be placed in the accuracy of their information. Whether the salt be good or bad, its value must be considerable, and it is not likely that the whole of it is destroyed, there being no supervision or check at present.

4. It is certain however that if this salt is used at all the use of it is confined to a few people of the poorest classes, and it is a question whether it would be wise to permit its manufacture and sale for the sake of any revenue that could be thus obtained. If the salt could be openly sold it would be refined and mixed with better salt, and the difficulty of preventing the manufacture of common earth salt would be considerably increased.

5. I would, therefore, recommend that Act XXXI. of 1861 be extended to this district; that licenses for the manufacture of saltpetre alone be granted; and that the penalties provided by Section 6 for making salt be strictly enforced.

In their order of the 22nd July 1873, No. 763, the Government directed the Board to ascertain and report the opinions of the Collectors of Coimbatore, Salem, Trichinopoly, and Madura, marginally noted, as to the advisability of extending Act XXXI. of 1861 to this Presidency.

2. The Collector of Coimbatore dissents altogether from the proposal, as he is of opinion that the manufacture of saltpetre, as he is of opinion that the consumption of the inferior article cannot, to any great extent, affect the sale of good sea-salt, the proportion of salt to saltpetre being only about one-tenth. He sees no objection to compounding with the manufacturers for the duty, but points out that they would probably prefer to destroy it, as the market value of the article would not equal the duty of Rupees 2 per maund, and thus the limited area on which, and the multiplicity of places at which the manufacture is conducted, present difficulties.

3. The Collector of Salem describes the process of manufacture which was carried out in his presence, and states that the salt resulting therefrom was quite unfit for use with food. Assuming the proportion of salt to saltpetre to be one-third, he estimates the yield for the past twelve months at nearly 1,000 maunds of salt, but is of opinion that it is hardly worthwhile to introduce the Act. He points out that the manufacture is too limited to allow of the entertainment of a special establishment to watch it, and suggests that the duty on one maund of salt to every three of saltpetre should be collected from persons applying for passes for the transport of saltpetre, which would make a corresponding deduction in the prices paid to the manufacturers, so that the duty would eventually fall on the latter. As an alternative, he proposes a fee of Rupees 10 for every licence to manufacture and refine saltpetre in lieu of duty.

4. The Collector of Trichinopoly is of opinion that the Act should be extended to his Presidency, and suggests that the exemption of salt to saltpetre should be ascertained by experiments and duly charged on the maximum amount of salt calculable from the quantity of saltpetre which the manufacturer is licensed to refine. He also proposes an analysis of the salt to ascertain whether it is wholesome and that in the event of its being condemned, a penalty to be enforced or its destruction enforced.

5. The Collector of Madura estimates the quantity of saltpetre annually manufactured in the district at 16,000 maunds, and states that it is generally considered unwholesome and reported not to be sold or bartered. He doubts the policy of permitting its manufacture and sale on the ground that increased facilities for the illicit manufacture of common earth-salt would be afforded thereby.

6. From these reports it appears that the manufacture of saltpetre is not very extensive at present, and were it to remain in its existing footing, no notice need be taken of it; but the trade may and it is to be hoped that it will revive and increase. A certain quantity of common salt is always produced in the process of making saltpetre, and from Captain Court's letter, recorded in G. O., dated 22nd July 1873, No. 763, it is clear that this quantity may be largely increased by the addition of salt bearing earth at the time of washing for saltpetre. The common salt so produced is the perquisite of the coolies and is used by them and bartered by them for grain and toddy. The possession of such salt is a breach of the salt laws and is sometimes punished; the traffic in it is, however, recognized and, if not repressed, may increase; at present it is no one's business to put it down. But if Act XXXI of 1861 be introduced, the manufacture of saltpetre without a license will become illegal, and the duty of destroying any salt evolved in the manufacture will devolve on the licensee.

7. The Board are of opinion, therefore, that the Act should be extended to this Presidency, that licenses should be granted to manufacture as well as to manufacture and refine saltpetre, but that the license should in no case convey permission to separate common salt during the process; it should, on the other hand, provide that all common salt, or earth containing common salt, deposited in the process of manufacture or refining of saltpetre, should be at once destroyed. The Board do not consider that the above provisions would in any way interfere with the saltpetre trade, while they would certainly check the manufacture of earth-salt. Some would no doubt be clandestinely made, but the quantity would not be great.

(True Copies and Extract.)

Acting Sub-Secretary.

To the Acting Secretary to Government, Revenue Department.
- to the Collector of Coimbatore.
- to the Collector of Salem.
- to the Collector of Trichinopoly.
- to the Collector of Madura.

Dr. J. J. L. Carter, on special duty.

REVENUE DEPARTMENT.

No. 920

From Board of Revenue

Dated 25 June 1874.

FOR ORDERS.

Forwarded, for issue 16th September 1874, No. 1,391.

Offg. Secretary.

Copy of G.O. of Madras, dated 16th September 1874, No. 1,391.

Forwarded to the Collector of Coimbatore.
- to the Collector of Salem.
- to the Collector of Trichinopoly.
- to the Collector of Madura.

Dr. J. J. L. Carter, on special duty.

Mr. E. C. Shuter, Executive Engineer, Cauvery Delta.

Collector's No. XXXI of 1861.—Reports from certain Collectors on proposals for the introduction of the Provisions of Act XXXI of 1861 into certain districts.—Board's opinion as to the necessity for such introduction.—Act not introduced.

JUNE 1874.

Lecture to Dr. [illegible]
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FOR ORDERS.