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TAMIL NADU ARCHIVES

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU

REVENUE DEPARTMENT

G.O. No. / ~~B.P. No.~~	1929	Press. / Mis.
Dated	28-11-1878	~~197~~ :

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Archives I—5,806—24-2-78.

No. 2,917.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF REVENUE, dated 1st November 1878.

Read the following letter from J. B. PENNINGTON, Esq., Collector of Tinnevelly, to C. A. GALTON, Esq., Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated Courtallam, 13th September 1878, No. 675 :—

WITH reference to G.O., No. 1,171, dated 25th July 1878, calling for a further report on the Pearl Fisheries, I have the honor to enclose copy of a letter from Captain Phipps on the subject, and to state that, after reading all the reports, &c., obtainable from Ceylon, I am reluctantly compelled to admit that it does not seem possible to do anything towards making the fishery more certainly lucrative than it is at present.

2. As observed by Captain Phipps in paragraph 6 of his letter, the Chank Fishery (which* once brought in as much as 4,500 Rupees in a year) seems to be recovering after a long period of depression, and is of itself sufficient to justify the retention of a thoroughly sufficient establishment, the total receipts from this source alone having been over twelve lakhs since the beginning of the century.

* In 1825, 1826, and 1827.

ENCLOSURE No. 1.

From Captain G. A. PHIPPS, Superintendent of Pearl Banks, to J. B. PENNINGTON, Esq., Collector of Tinnevelly, dated Tuticorin, 22nd August 1878, No. 7.

WITH reference to your foot-note, No. 1,250, dated 14th instant, to the Order of Government, No. 1,171, of the 25th ultimo, I have the honor to inform you that I know of no further precaution that can fairly be undertaken for the protection of the young oysters than is now observed. The injury from which they have lately suffered so greatly is no doubt from being preyed upon by predatory fish, and I fear there is no means known for preventing this.

2. During the north-east monsoon the boat *Pearl* is employed daily, keeping a watch over the banks known to have oysters on them (the crew being the same that is employed for the *Margaret Northcote*, and the Tindal warns off any fishermen that he may find near. It is seldom, however, that this has to be done, as the banks are situated ten or more miles off the land, and there are few fishing canoes that go so far.

3. The chank divers, who work only during the fair season, are now all engaged on behalf of Government, and as the shells are not found on the rocky ground which compose the pearl banks, there is no occasion for them to trespass. The Parmandadies who go in the chank canoes are well aware of the places where fishing for chanks is not permitted, even if anything was to be gained by going on the prohibited ground.

4. In the neighbourhood of Manaar, where the Ceylon pearl banks are mostly situated, the Ceylon Government have no chank fishery, and the number of fishermen is small to what we have on this side. The pearl fisheries have always been more frequent. The reason for this is, I believe, that the banks are of greater extent and situated closer together, and they do not suffer so much from currents. A small establishment similar to ours is kept up in the north-east monsoon, but in the south-west there is no occasion for this, as the heavy seas and strong winds, as on this side, prevent boats from venturing out so far, and the water is also so discolored that nothing on the bottom could be distinguished. In Ceylon they have had similar misfortunes to what we have lately had, and not many years ago lost a large bank of valuable oysters only a month or two before it was to be fished. So destructive are the skate that this bank of oysters was completely cleared off between the time of inspection in November and the fishing time in the following March ; and I have recently learnt that on the shore at Manaar the fishermen have only lately been getting tremendous quantities of skate, as many as 500 at one haul of their nets. If a shoal of this fish get on a bank, the oysters must be destroyed, and no means are known to prevent it which would be in any way feasible.

5. Regarding sea fisheries I do not think that anything can be done more than is at present attempted. Pearl fisheries have always taken place at long intervals, and I do not also think that any more costly means for their protection would result in any good. After a long experience I am not in favor of any more liberal expenditure on guard boats, &c., and consider that, until the result appears to be somewhat assured, it will be well to keep all expenses as low as practicable. The prospects of the banks now stocked can be carefully watched with the ordinary establishment.

6. In regard to the chanks, which is also one of the sea fisheries of this coast, this of late years is becoming more valuable. Twenty years ago the revenue realized was under Rupees 4,500 per annum; this year I expect to obtain over Rupees 20,000. To do this a small establishment is entertained for receiving and counting the shells. My own services are, I consider, remunerated by the allowance granted me as Superintendent of Pearl Banks. I mention this to show that I have endeavored to make the sea fisheries self-supporting, though the Government will believe me when I say that the successful management of a large number of ignorant divers, who are nearly always partly intoxicated, requires the exercise of unvarying good temper and patience.

7. The question might occur if it would be advisable to prevent the fishermen going to sea beyond a short distance from the shore. I do not think this could well be done without doing serious injury to their means of livelihood. There are so many well-populated villages on the coast the people of which have no other avocation; they use mostly nets from catamarans, and are generally within four or six miles of the shore. At times when the weather is very fine they are found some greater distance at sea, and perhaps in the absence of the guard boat they may now and then approach near a pearl bank. They, however, to prevent injury to their nets, generally avoid rocky ground, and as the oysters lately lost were destroyed by fish, the fishermen cannot be blamed, and I am not inclined to suggest that any restrictions should be placed upon their calling which might prove vexatious; they are well aware that if found near a pearl bank they will be brought before the Magistrate and punished.

(True Copy.)

(Signed) J. B. PENNINGTON,
Collector.

SUBMITTED to Government in continuation of Board's Proceedings, dated 27th June 1878, No. 1,775.

2. In the Proceedings above quoted the Board submitted a report on the examination of the pearl banks, and remarked that further inquiries were being made by the Collector with regard to the Ceylon fisheries, in view of ascertaining whether better results might be hoped for if a more liberal expenditure were incurred on establishment and conservancy.

3. The Collector now reports that he has been reluctantly compelled to abandon any such hope, and this view is shared by Captain Phipps, who remarks that, after a long experience, he is of opinion that until the result appears to be somewhat assured it will be well to keep all expenses as low as practicable, and adds that the prospects of the banks now stocked can be carefully watched with the ordinary establishment.

(True Copies and Extract.)

J. Murrock
Acting Sub-Secretary.

To the Secretary to Government, Revenue Department.

Copy to the Collector of Tinnevelly.

Erd. G. Freeman.

Board of Revenue,
MADRAS.
1878.

To
THE SECRETARY TO GOVT.,
REVENUE DEPARTMENT.

Dated November 1st.
Printed 11th.
Received

PROCEEDINGS, 1ST NOVEMBER 1878, No. 2,917.

NOVEMBER.
No. 2,917.

Pearl Fisheries.— Submitting to Government letter from Collector of Tinnevelly furnishing further report called for on the 7.