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Old Pondicherry (1673 - 1824) Revisited

For the past twenty years the IFP and EFEO, in collaboration with INTACH, have been involved in various projects to preserve the Cultural Heritage of Pondicherry. Using their rich collection of photographs, they have provided documentation to scholars (historians, archaeologists, architects); they have prepared a catalogue of significant buildings in the old town and have undertaken the renovation of some of them.

Investigations on the historical plan have been carried out by the scholars of these institutions regarding some crucial periods of the town development.

First of all, discoveries have been made about the origins of the town. From Dutch maps and plans, they have shown that, along with the French, the Dutch also played a part in the creation of the town at the end of the 17th century.

Secondly, concerning the reconstruction of the town after the destruction wrought by the British in 1761, they have published a Register of Land in the white town which constitutes a veritable cadastre, an inventory of the essential elements of urban life.

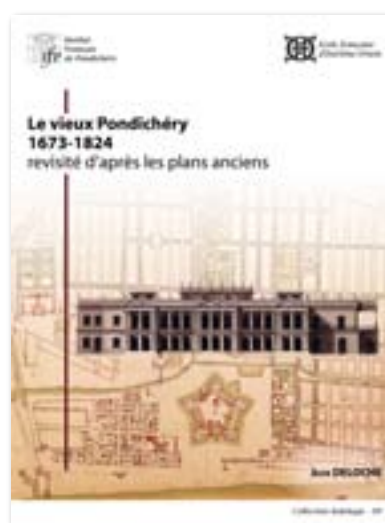
Finally, they have published a minute survey of the territory in the form of Historical and Statistical Accounts of Pondicherry, Karaikal, and Chandernagore, made in 1823-24, which can be considered the first Gazetteers of India.

In 1936, a local historian, M.V. Labernadie, published a famous monograph on the history of the town (*Le vieux Pondichéry*). Some years have passed and it is now time to 'revisit' Old Pondicherry.

From Dutch maps preserved in the National Archives at The Hague, Netherlands (Collection Leupe, code VEL) and from the unique collection of maps and plans preserved in the Centre des archives d'outre-mer, Aix-en-Provence, France (CAOM), a comprehensive picture of the Urban Development of Pondicherry from 1673 to 1824 is here presented.

Abbreviations

AN: Archives nationales, Paris
CAOM: Centre des archives d'outre-mer, Aix-en-Provence,
Dépôt des fortifications des colonies, Indes, portefeuille n°
V, SHAT: Service historique de l'armée de terre, Vincennes
VEL: Collection Leupe, National Archives, The Hague



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