



# Madura Gazetteer

*Herman Jensen*

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The district of Madura takes its name from its chief town. The word is spelt Madurai in Tamil, and some historians (like Yule and Burnell) say that it is generally supposed to be the Tamil form of the name of Mathura, the very ancient and holy city of the Hindus. They point out that the name Madura seems to have been a favourite among eastern settlements under Hindu influence and there are places so called in Sri Lanka and to the north of Mandalayai and an island of the name near Java; and suggest that it was perhaps adopted out of reverence for the holy city of the north. The more religiously inclined insist that Madurai means anything sweet, the story being that Siva was so pleased with the buildings erected round about his great shrine by the first Pandyan King that, as a mark of special favour, he sprinkled the temples, towers, palaces and houses of the town of Madura with drops of sweet nectar shaken from his locks. The greater part of Madura was ruled by the Pandya dynasty. These Pandyas were the rulers of one of the three great kingdoms which in the earliest times held sway over the land of Tamils. This Gazetteer, now being made available again after a long gap, still remains one of the most authentic and detailed record of Madura. Apart from the actual district Gazetteer, all important details about the physical description, political history, the people, agriculture and irrigation, forests, occupation and trade, means of communication, public health and education, land administration and administration of justice are covered.

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