



18TH CEN PROCESS OF URBANISATION IN SOUTH INDIA

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Abstract

ABSTRACT

It is not easy to write the history of the process of urbanisation of any region in India -- which may account for the fact that very few such histories have been written. One obvious problem concerns the availability of data: where a paucity of sources for the pre-colonial period suddenly becomes replaced by a superfluity for the colonial epoch, but many of doubtful validity. Also, it is difficult to think through the economic implications of the profound social changes, which took place in the 18th century and which challenge any simple notions of continuity. Whereas in 1700, south-east India had been an important part of a textile manufacturing industry of world significance, by 1900 it stood on the agrarian periphery of an entirely different global economic order. Whereas in 1700, it possessed large centres of local expenditure and consumption (in the palaces of its rulers and the bazaars of its many armies), by 1800 much of its surplus was being expended and consumed elsewhere. Whereas, still in 1700, much of its population was highly mobile and moved sub-regionally to take advantage of opportunities, by 1900 they had become more sedentary and, indeed, were beginning to experience shortages of land and resources. But, conversely, history did not only chart out a course of increasing hardship and decline

KEY WORDS: Urbanisation, Industrial revolution, overseas Markets, Profitable trade, monopoly, political overlordship.

I. INTRODUCTION

. Indeed, it was not only overseas markets for goods which now expanded, but also those for labour and capital. While scope for physical mobility within south-eastern India may have been reduced, employment opportunities were starting to abound – under the umbrella of British imperial authority – in the surrounding economies of the Indian Ocean from south and east Africa to Sri Lanka, Singapore, Burma and Malaya. Nor were these only opportunities for employment. With ‘white’ capital scarce and ‘white men’ prohibitively expensive to keep in the tropics, new opportunities also appeared for the deployment of Indian capital. In Burma, the Irrawady delta was turned into the early twentieth century’s principal export rice bowl largely through the endeavours of Nattukkottai Chetty bankers hailing from Ramnad district in South India. Under the aegis of the ‘colonial’ factor, Indian economic history has been inclined towards Manichean conventions of interpretation – in which everything that



happened across the 'long' 18th century has to be construed in either strongly positive or negative terms. But the contours of more detailed regional historiography may throw shadows which confuse simple assumptions and blunt predilections of argument. The most that the historian -- true to his last -- can do is to demarcate the differences and point to the possibilities. The rest is speculation.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE REGION- SOUTH INDIA AND URBANISATION IN ECONOMIC TERMINOLOGY

The region of 'south-east' India, on which this paper concentrates, can most easily be conceived as consisting of the territories governed by the Presidency of Madras from c.1801 -- with the exclusion of the two western districts of Malabar and South Kanara. It stretches down the south-eastern littoral from Vizagapatnam in the North to Kanya Kumari in the South and reaches as far inland as Bellary, Coimbatore and the environs of Bangalore. In economic terms, this conception is somewhat arbitrary and has mainly been chosen because the data from the colonial era is most readily organised in this way. In fact, there were always important flows of goods and people linking this region to economies further to the west (in the territories of the princely states of Hyderabad, Mysore and Travancore) and also to the North, especially Bengal. Nonetheless, the region also has a certain degree of historical integrity. Its local cultures escaped Mughal overlordship until very late and preserved patterns of 'little kingship' and temple-based religion, which were distinctive in relation to the rest of India.

FACTORS WHICH WERE CONDUCTIVE FOR THE PROCESS OF URBANISATION

Many important factors were responsible for the process of urbanisation in south India.

1. The region's definition also properly highlights the significance of the sea, which provided conduits for bulk as well as luxury commerce and which, in many ways, dominated economic aspirations.
2. The region saw intensive forms of interaction between its Telugu-speaking North and Tamil-speaking South -- with the former constituting source territories for the migration of peoples, goods and ideas towards the latter.
3. As its coast-line would suggest, the region has been heavily involved in overseas-trade, going back to Roman times. The prevailing winds and currents also permitted an extensive coastal trade in bulk commodities, reaching right up to Bengal. At least in the 17th and 18th centuries, tens of thousands of tons of Bengal rice were floated down the coast -- to the central Coromandel ports including Madras -- on the southwest monsoon; and no smaller quantities of southern sea-salt were floated back on the north-east monsoon.
4. There was also a major grain trade within the region, moving mainly from north to south: coastal Andhra 'fed' central Coromandel, while rice produced in the southern deltas (of the Kaveri and Tambraparni) rivers was exported either to Sri Lanka or around the tip of Kanya Kumari to Kerala. English East India Company (EEIC) trade registers noted dozens of small ports along the Thanjavuru coast before 1782, each thought to be responsible for the export of 5- 10,000 tons of paddy a year.



5. New Features of Urbanisation in Early Colonial Period With the coming of European colonial traders in India, the process of urbanisation entered into a new phase. Cities grew up in the coastal areas as ports-cum-trading centres. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries European trading posts were established initially for trading purposes. As the British power grew in the nineteenth century, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras became the political centres too.

6. We find the emergence of new economic and political institutions, new modes of communication such as telegraph, railways, advanced system of roads and waterways. The process of urbanisation became smooth and widened the structure of economic opportunity and widened the social horizons of people

7. The colonial port cities of Asia have recently attracted renewed attention not only from students of European imperial expansion, but also from others concerned with urban growth and change. These cities, founded by Europeans or developed by them as central links in worldwide colonial political and economic networks, stood apart from precolonial urban centers. Their foreign origins or control, their coastal locations, their central positions within European colonial systems, their emphasis on commercial rather than ritual activities, and their ethnic and cultural heterogeneity are important features which distinguish them from most indigenous cities in Asia.

8. Many possessed a dual social and spatial structure, furthermore, which contrasted with the more unitary and often ritualized order of the noncolonial centers. Products of a changing political world order, these colonial cities became recognized centers of change in their own societies.

THE EARLY BEGINNINGS BY EUROPEAN MERCHANTS

FACTORIES, FORTRESSES AND COMMERCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

The Italian merchants had recognized warehouses (factories) in Cairo and Alexandria to carry on trade and commerce. Following this instance the Portuguese, too, founded factories on the coastal regions of India and certain other places in Asia. Factory could be defined as a commercial organization having an autonomous subsistence set up within the country with which another country had commercial relations. Each factory had an officer called factor who was assisted through a number of persons appointed through the Portuguese king. He was the agent of the Crown to promote economic, financial, and administrative activities of all sorts. In all situations Portuguese national interests were paramount thoughts. Factories also required protection from hostile elements. So, to consolidate and strengthen their power the Portuguese also attempted to fortify their factories. A chain of factories and fortresses came into subsistence for the support of the maritime trade mannered through the Portuguese. These fortified centers were expected to serve the Portuguese to check the movements of vessels owned through the others and to function as areas for the reserve of military and naval forces. The system of factories had a great role to play in the commercial arrangements in the period beginning with the sixteenth century till the mid-eighteenth century. Let us briefly discuss the factories recognized through the Portuguese in dissimilar regions.



WESTERN INDIA PLAYED AN IMPORTANT PART IN URBANISATION.

In the Malabar region the Portuguese recognized their first factory in 1500 at Calicut. Though, it had a short-existed subsistence. The Zamorins also did not allow the Portuguese to fortify their factories there. In 1525, finally, the Portuguese abandoned their construction at Calicut. Though, in the other regions, of Malabar coast, factories were recognized at Cochin (1501), Cannanore (1503), Quilon (1503), Chaliyam (1531), Rachol (1535), Crangannore (1536), Mangalore and Honaver (1568) and Bhatkal through the Portuguese. All of these factories were fortified in due course. Nizam- ul Mulk of Ahmednagar also permitted the Portuguese to have a factor at Chaul in the second decade of the 16th Century. In the north-west, Cambay (Khambayat) was the main port of call on the route from Malacca connecting Calicut, the ports of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf with the ports of the Mediterranean. Besides Cambay, the Portuguese also recognized their factories at Diu (1509, 1535), Bassin (1534), Surat, Daman (1599) and Bhavnagar. Therefore approximately the whole coastal belt of Malabar, Konkan, and north-west India was brought under the Portuguese power.

Eastern India Direct contacts began to be recognized with the Eastern coast of India in the wake of the capture of Malacca and the beginning of the Portuguese settlement there. The Portuguese navigators came crossways many merchants from the Eastern coast of India who had trade relations with Malacca and other South East Asian centers. The Portuguese composed textiles and other commodities from several port towns of the Coromandel Coast like Masulipatnam, Pulict, San Thome, Pondicherry, Cuddalore, Porto Novo, Nagapatnam, etc. The latter was a significant port for the Portuguese in their trade with Porto Novo, Malacca, Manila, and other region of the east. Meiliapore recognized as San Thome to the north of Nagapatnam, had also a Portuguese settlement which was bounded through walls. The Portuguese also recognized a fortress at Manar in 1518 on the western coast of Ceylon. This fortress, though not on the main land of India, could control the movement of vessels to the East from the western side of the subcontinent. The Portuguese also tried to establish commercial contacts with Bengal from A.D. 1517. The first effort in this direction was made at Chittagong, the chief port of Bengal throughout this period. After much maneuvering, they at last obtained permission from Mahmud Shah, the king of Bengal, to erect factories at Chittagong and Satgaon in 1536. The second settlement at Hugli was granted to the Portuguese through Akbar in 1579-80. The third one was recognized at Bandel through a Farman of Shahjahan in 1633. Yet, on the eastern coast throughout the 16th Century there were no fortresses as on the western coast. Still the settlements, with a few artillery, were able to oversea the movement of vessels carrying commodities.

POLITY AND ECONOMY IN DECCAN AND SOUTH INDIA

Geographical Setting Geography plays a crucial role in the politico-economic developments. Certain salient geographical characteristics of South India and Deccan influenced the developments in the region. Broadly, the whole tract lying south of the river Narmada is recognized as South India. Though, technically speaking, this tract consists of two broad divisions, Deccan and south India. Deccan Deccan is bounded in the north and north-east through Narmada and Mahanadi rivers, while Nilgiri hills and Pennar river form its southern boundary. To the west and east lie the Western and Eastern Ghats beside with long coastal strip on both the sides. The area flanked by the vast western sea coast and the Sahyadri ranges is recognized as Konkan, a sub-region of Deccan. The whole strip is full of dense forest, and



the soil is not adequately fertile. The area boasts of great strategic importance. So, a number of strong forts were built there. The well-known ports of Chaul and Dabhol also come under this region. On account of its hard access, local chieftains (deshmukhs) often manifested shifting loyalties and at times defied the Central authority. You would discover that it was this geographical location that played crucial role in the rise of the Marathas. On account of its hilly and forest tracts, the Deccan states were hard to penetrate, but, from the side of southern Gujarat it had an easy access through the fertile Baglana tract. For this cause it repeatedly fell under the sway of the Gujarat rulers. Finally in the 16th century, the Portuguese altered the balance in that region. With minor variations, Goa marked the boundary flanked by the Bahmani and the Vijaynagar states. The central Deccan (from the Ajanta ranges to the Nilgiri hills and Palaghat gap) possesses black soil which is good for cotton farming. The Khandesh and Berar tracts of Maharashtra lying beside the banks of the Tapti and the Wardha and Painganga rivers were recognized for fertility. This led to frequent encounters flanked by the Malwa and Bahmani rulers for the occupation of Kherla and Mahur.

THE HISTORY OF URBANISATION OF THIS REGION

Flanked by the Krishna and Godavari lies the flat plain which is also wellknown for its rich cotton soil. The rivers, too, are not perennial; as a result, tank irrigation became significant. Beside the Krishna valley lays the Kurnool rocks where the well-known Golkonda mines were located. The southern Deccan plateau (parts lying in modern Karnataka) is also rich in mineral possessions (copper, lead, zinc, iron, gold, manganese etc.). The region south of the Krishna Tungabhadra doab shaped South India. The coastal belt in the east is recognized as Coromandel while the western tract from south of Kanara (from the river Netravati down to Cape Comorin) is recognized as Malabar which is bounded through the Western Ghats in the east. We have already discussed how throughout the Chola period the focus of activity was confined mainly approximately the Kaveri tract which, throughout the Vijaynagar period, shifted further north-east towards Tungabhadra-Krishna doab (the Rayalseema tract) where the capital of Vijaynagar was situated. Throughout the 13-16th century, this tract remained the centre of thrash about: first, flanked by Vijaynagar and Bahmani, and later flanked by Vijaynagar and its successor Nayak states and the Bijapur rulers.

The Qutb Shahi rulers also joined the disagreement regularly. Another characteristic that influenced the 16th century South Indian polity, economy and society was the migration of the Telugu population from the northern tracts (of South India) which started from the mid-15th century and sustained throughout the 16th century. Interestingly, this movement was from the coastal and deltaic wet land areas, which were greatly fertile, wellcultivated and well-irrigated. There might have been numerous causes for these migrations like, the Bahmani pressure; deliberate attempts on the part of the Vijaynagar rulers to extend their dominion further south; natural process, that is, movement from more densely populated areas; the soil was well suited to the migrants since it was excellent for dry farming, etc. At any rate, it had deep socio-economic impact. For instance, the development of dry farming led to the rise of tank irrigation which became the crucial part of the 16th century South Indian economy. Secondly, its comparatively low productivity acquiesce low surplus which helped in the rise of what the modern scholars call —portfolio capitalists| in this tract.



THE DEMAND FOR INDIAN COMMODITIES

The chief aim of the Portuguese in discovering the sea-route connecting the East with Portugal was to collect spices directly from the places of production rather than from the hands of the intermediaries like the Italian or the Muslim traders. Pepper became a necessary ingredient in European food. The demand for pepper went on rising, especially for the sake of preserving meat. Besides, ginger, cinnamon, cardamom, mace, nutmeg, and many exotic herbs from the east had a market in Europe. A special diversity of textiles like Muslin, chintz, etc. and few animals like elephants, too, found their method to Portugal. The Portuguese did not have enough commodities to exchange for those accessible in the East. Their commodities had a limited market in the middle of the eastern nobility. Hence valuable metals, especially silver, minted or in bullion; were brought to the East from the West for buying goods.

Malabar and Konkan Coasts Pepper occupied the first place in the middle of the commodities traded from Malabar and the Konkan coasts. In the initial stage pepper from Malabar was measured to be distant better in excellence than that from Malacca, Java, and Canara. Towards the second half of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, pepper from Canara began to be exported in larger quantity than before. It is estimated that the Portuguese exported from Malabar in relation to the 25,000 to 30,000 quintals of spices of all sorts annually to Lisbon in the first decade of the sixteenth century. Through the end of the century, the contractors were given a targeted export of 30,000 quintals of pepper from the Malabar Coast to Lisbon. The records of the first half of the sixteenth century illustrate that 36,664 quintals of pepper was sent to Portugal from the Malabar and Konkan coasts in 1546. Ginger constituted another bulk item of trade from the Malabar Coast. It was accessible as conserve, too, for export. Cinnamon was another commodity exported from Malabar, though its excellence was not as good as that from Ceylon. White and red sandalwood also found their method to Portugal from the Malabar Coast. Besides these Myrobalans of all sorts were composed from Malabar, Dabul, Vijaynagar and Deccan in general for export to Portugal. Likewise sealing wax, indigo, spikenard, tamarind, arecanut, textiles, ivory and turmeric were other items that were exported in varying quantity to Portugal from the Malabar and Konkan coasts. Slaves, too, became a commercial commodity for export. The request made through the Zamorin of Calicut in 1498 to Vasco da Gama provides a clue to the commodities that were imported into the Malabar and Konkan coasts. He had asked for gold, silver, coral and scarlet. Afonso de Albuquerque, the Portuguese governor of Goa, gave a list of commodities to the king of Portugal in 1513 that could be marketed in India. This incorporated items like coral, copper, quicksilver, vermilion, brocades, velvet, carpets, saffron, rose-water and cloths of several types. All these items were not from Portugal, but the Portuguese started procuring them from several places, like Flanders, Germany, England and other European countries. For instance, damask, lead, cinnabar, gold from Soffala, French and English linen clothes, alums tone, tin, opium, steel, Genwa velvet, scarlet from Florence, red cloth from London, cloths from Holland, raw and worked corals, etc. were brought to India. Minted coins of several denominations were incorporated in this list. All these were brought to Cochin which was the commercial headquarter of the Portuguese in India. From there they were later sent to several parts of India. When the Portuguese headquarter was shifted to Goa, most of the significant articles like gold, silver and cash were taken there and sharing was done from there.



Trade Taking into account the details of the Portuguese enterprise on the Malabar Coast in the period flanked by 1500 and 1506, an Italian estimated in 1506 that the total investment needed for conducting trade with the East was 170,000 ducats every year. The king of Portugal provided only one-fourth of this amount and the rest was raised through the merchants and financiers who collaborated with the Portuguese king. In 1500 he issued an order permitting native as well as foreign merchants to fit out their own vessels to the East. Revenues composed in the form of booty, tributes and taxes levied on ships of the private merchants also provided funds for the conduct of trade with India. European Merchant-Financiers Italians, especially the Florentines, occupied a significant position in the middle of the financiers in the sixteenth century. Most of the Italian financiers concluded contracts with the Portuguese king. They supplied cash or materials to the king at Lisbon. The king used them to purchase pepper and other commodities from India. These commodities were given to these financiers at Lisbon in view of the contracts signed. Though, some of the financiers also sent their own factors to India. Cash or commodities were always sent under the supervision of the Portuguese authorities to the East.

EUROPEAN TRADITIONS AND THE MODERN PERIOD

Buildings imitating contemporary styles of European architecture, often mixed with a strong provincial flavour, were known in India from at least the 16th century. Some of this work was of considerable merit, particularly the baroque architecture of the Portuguese colony of Goa, where splendid buildings were erected in the second half of the 16th century. The 18th centuries witnessed the erection of several buildings deeply indebted to Neoclassic styles; these buildings were imitated by Indian patrons, particularly in areas under European rule or influence. Subsequently, attempts were made by the British, with varying degrees of success, to engraft the neo-Gothic and also the neo-Saracenic styles onto Indian architectural tradition. At the same time, buildings in the great

CONCLUSION

Urban development in colonial South India from a broad economic history point of view and with a focus on its environmental dimension, covering the period from the First Carnatic War until the 18th century by which time the English East India Company had consolidated its power. It discusses themes such as urban development; infrastructural development; housing and buildings, city and suburbs; and development of land and roads in the colonial period. Using extensive archival resources, it offers new insights on the various aspects of the shifting urban physical environment and captures the development of Madras city limits; road infrastructure, building of paved streets, whitewashed walls and compounded houses; establishment of garden houses; use of land resources; development of masonry bridges by merchants; housing problems; and the building of Fort House, Garden House, Admiralty House, Pantheon House, Custom House, etc. in Madras, to describe the impact of colonialism on urban environment.



An important contribution to the history of urban economics and environment, this book with its lucid style and rich illustrations will be an essential read for scholars and researchers of colonial history, modern Indian history, environmental history, urban environment, urban history, political economy, urban economic history, Indian history, and South Asian studies.

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