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INTERPRETING THE COLONIAL LANDSCAPING OF THE DEEP SOUTH AND MALABAR SURVEYS OF 1790-1800

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Up to the 18th century, there was little knowledge of the geography of Deep South, as the terrain was under the control of native kingdoms. To westerners, the maps depicting the physiography of South India were based on tradition and tales of mariners and travelers. This information was passed from generation to generation. But in-depth details on landscapes are mainly confined to coastal terrains and their hinterlands. French geographers put forward considerable information in this regard. The Dutch cartographers in the 16th and 17th centuries made the earliest maps of the Deep South. Two among them are prominent.

- *Nova Tabula: Terrarum*
- *Canara, Malabarica, Madura and Coromandalia*

Both these maps were prepared by Hadriano Relando, and they were decorated with animals, birds, and ships. Hadriano, the Dutch cartographer, created a map of the East Indies. A coloured map of South India with Ceylon and the Maldives by Jaspar Gentet of Batavia. Bernoulli's[1] map, *Portion d'une Carte du Sud de la Presquile de l' Inde Faite par des* Brahmes que; comprehend le Tanjaour, in it, location of towns, rivers all given. [2]The first map that projected the interior of the Deep South was that of Father Jean Venant Bouchet, *Carte des Missions de Pp de la Compagnie Jesua dan la Madure et les Royaumes Circonvoisins* in 1722. In it, the term *Solarin* covers both Malabar and Travancore. This map was sent to France, prefixed to his letters.[3]
An outline of the Deep South geography was elaborately made first by French Jesuit missionaries. The French geographer Delisle also made an attempt to display the terrain of the South. Later, Manneville, the French navigator, made his first voyage to Puducheri in 1719. Father Bouchet[4], in 1719, prepared a rough map of South India. Later, in 1737, D'Anville published his first map of South India in 1737.

D'Anville depended only on astronomical observations made by Jesuit missionaries and details of the routes described by European travelers. He quoted Father Vincent-Maria and Noel; in his view, they were the authorities of knowledge related to Malabar and south of Calicut. He first set the example of accompanying the Map with a Memoir

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exhibiting the data on which it had been constructed. His maps, the *Map of South India and the Great Map of India*, were published in 1752, and the *Map of the Coromandel Coast* was published in 1753.[5] He exchanged maps with Robert Orme for providing the material to write history. Orme was most industrious in collecting geographical material to illustrate his history. His map was republished in London by Jeffrey's in 1754.[6]

After 1750, many surveys were made by military officers with the army of the South. In 1755, William Jennings of the Artillery made a survey around Madurai, especially of the marches of Colonel Heron, who was sent to collect revenues in Madurai and Tinnevelly on behalf of the Nawab of Arcot. For military purposes, surveys were mostly required. The struggle between the English and the French involved both trying to know more about the geography of the region.[7] The war ended with the supremacy of the English with Eyre Coote's decisive victory at Wandiwash in January 1760. Between 1765 and 1766, the British felt the need to distinguish between the territory belonging to the Nawab and that of the Mysoreans. These scant pieces of information needed further upgradation, which was successfully done by the British. Interpretations of early records of the East India reveals that temptation and encouragement from London led to such enterprises. With the entry of the British, they needed to update the geography of the Deep South. Interpreting the early sources, encouragement from London was duly obtained for such enterprises. The Thames School of Chart makers was fully established in mapmaking in the 17th century. By 1700, a manuscript-copying industry on the banks of the Thames developed. They supplied sets of coastal charts from the Persian Gulf to the Bay of Bengal and from the Andaman Sea to Macao and Amoy. They relied primarily on Dutch manuscript sources but also consulted French and English sources.

The primary information regarding the landscapes was obtained from the survey of military routes in the Deep South. Under John Call, considerable information had been collected on Trichinopoly, Tinnevelly, Madurai, and Malabar. The biggest challenge faced by the British was to understand the geography of the Deep South. The deep forests of Satyamangalam, Thamarasery regions of Wayanad, and Nilambur appeared to be an unsolved stigma before the British. [8]Their needs include;

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- to ascertain the extent of cultivated land
- to estimate the value of revenue resources
- safety and regularity of communication by sea and rivers
- defense of western coastal frontiers
- to spot out the rich spice pockets in the Western Ghats
- to defend Tipu Sultan, their biggest enemy
- to find out new terrains to implant commercial products

The earliest map of Madras is dated 1710; it was surveyed under the order of the late Governor Thomas Pitt Esq. under the title, *Plan of the City of Madras*. Later, a map of Madras encircling villages, with boundaries, appeared in 1773. At the time of the capture of Madras by the French, *A Plan of Madras and Fort St. George* were taken by the French. Other maps of Madras included,

- *Plan of Fort St. George*
- *Plan of Fort St.George and the Bounds of Madraspatanam*

Another great effort was taken by Lieutenant John Pringle, who built a new school of Surveyors, the Offices of the Madras Guides. Pringle prepared a *Book of Roads* in 1777. [9]He was ordered to survey Tanjore anicut and its irrigation channels; he finished it with great exactness, and the Government thereupon approved Pringle's appointment as Captain of Gides to the Army. He reported his march from Trichinopoly in 1779, through Travancore to Anjengo. Pringle reported that the journey to Anjengo was by way of Palayamkotah. The journey was retarded in the beginning by the rivers and tanks, which were full. They planned to reach Anjengo through Madura and across the Ghats to embark on the capture of the French settlement at Mahe. He complained to Brathwaite that the King of Travancore, though treated with great civility, did not allow him a passage by direct and good road through his country. He had been escorted by a Subedar and 20 Sepoys. The Subedar told him that he was not allowed to strike into the country, 200 yards from the seashore, along which the road goes. He was not permitted to meet the local people, even the Portuguese missionaries.

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In 1780, Pringle put forward a scheme for establishing a Corps of Guides for collecting military information and surveys. Otherwise, it is risky, as the inhabitants generally fly at the approach of the Body of Troops. In 1786, fresh orders were issued regarding the Corps of Guides with Pringle as Captain, along with 3 native officers, 2 drummers, 1 Pakhali, and 63 sepoys. [10]Pringle's skill was fully utilized when Hyder Ali invaded Carnatic in 1780. He prepared a Chart of the route of the Grand Army in the Carnatic. It was headed by Major General Hectic Munroe, Lieutenant General Sir Eyre Coote, and Major General James Stuart. He set up different encampments and places of action. Pringle surveyed the marches of the army under Eyre Coote and measured the positions of Porto Novo and Ambur. Ambur is the most westerly point determined with accuracy from Trichnopoly.

Another prominent figure was Robert Kelly, who was one of the most persistent surveyors of military roads for several years. His atlas covers a description of the country, its geography, climate, and peoples. In his view, when Hyder Ali came to power, actually, no kingdom was left not annexed to Mysore between the river Krishna and Travancore. In his atlas, he pointed out four Divisions;

- Hyder Ali Dominion,
- Carnatic Nawab's dominions
- Travancore Dominions.
- Bassaulat Jung's dominance,

Kelly submitted details of Colonel Fullarton's[11] marches two years later in a Frontis piece map entitled, *Sketch of the Southern Countries of India. Routes t*raversed by the armies commanded by Colonel Humberson and Colonel Fullarton were displayed.[12] Kelly joined Fullarton's army and surveyed its marches from Nagapattanam and Madurai to Palakkad and Coimbatore. But he was killed as the Madras Government made no mention of the duel with Urban Vigors. His younger son, Robert Abraham, refers to his father's death cut short by treachery. The Supreme Council allotted him a gratuity of 3000 Arcot rupees.[13]

The immediate necessity of mapping Malabar definitely emerged with the conquest of Malabar by Tippu in relation to the Third Mysore War.[14] Lieutenant Colonel Hartley

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was sent to the coastal area by April 1790, and by October, he advanced up to Palakkad Gap.[15]In December, an army wing from Bombay under the Governor General Abercromby captured Cannanore and was able to drive out Tippu's army from Malabar.

Reynolds, another stalwart in mapping the terrain of the South, accompanied Hartley's detachment. He was an able surveyor. In that encounter, the British were supported by Colonel Reynolds, the Surveyor General. Records available regarding a survey of Cochin, a survey between the hills about Paulghateherry, a survey of the Malabar Coast and Calicut, and a map of Malabar showing the limits of Coorg, all made by Reynolds. He and his party reached at the top of the Ghats in 1791.[16] He was entrusted to examine the part of the Malabar Coast. After Hartley's return, he was again detached by Sir Robert Abercromby's[17] orders to explore the Thamarassery Pass. He had to find out whether that route was fit to march the army to Seringapatam. The Reynolds maps included;

- *Survey of Cochin*
- *Survey Between the Hills about Palghatchery*
- *Survey between the Malabar Coast and Calicut Country*
- *A Map of Malabar showing the limits of Coorg.*

Under the Treaty of Seringapatam, Malabar was ceded to the Company. Again, 12 years after that treaty, Malabar was ruled by the Bombay Presidency. The Governor of Bombay decided later on that the various defence works and surveys necessary for the security of Malabar would be undertaken. The Governor ordered Lieutenant Emmet Johnson to proceed to the coast. Johnson's letters, whilst on Survey in South Malabar, in March 1793, surveyed the west end of Palghat Range and the south of Munnar Pass.

Moncrieff and Woodington assisted Emmit in his survey of the northern Superintendency, which included Coorg and Wayanad. By 1792, a survey of the Coorg-Mysore boundary was completed. In December 1794, Sartorius[18] sent the completed maps to Bombay, as stated by him that he had the honour of transmitting the Maps of the Northern and Southern districts of the Malabar Province. By completing the

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survey, the benefits expected, creation of good public roads, the enhancement of trade, and the procurement of specialist movement of Troops.

In October 1795, Captain Moncrieff was appointed to make a more thorough survey. Captain Moncrieff was employed after the final defeat of Tipu. With the assistance of Williams, he was able to prepare 25 maps regarding the geography of the Deep South. The deep interiors, rich spice pockets, all projected to the Western world.[19] For the first time, to crisscross the mighty Western Ghats and to afford better communication with the interiors of the Deep South, all became possible to the native Kings. But its net result was the draining of the native resources to the shipping zones. After the final defeat of Tippu, Captain Moncrieff, with the assistance of Williams, was employed in North Malabar and Canara. The work took place during the military operations against Pazassi Raja of Kottayam. In 1800, Colebrooke, Surveyor General at Calcutta, submitted to the Government a map of the Southern Peninsula. Colebrooke and Meckenzie, of the Madras Presidency, agreed to a mutual exchange of maps. All the preliminary efforts in the survey of the Deep South finally culminated in the Great Trigonometrical Survey begun by William Lambton in 1802.[20] Major hurdles and decisions faced by the Company in procuring knowledge of the terrain and preservation of maps include;

- The difficulty of acquiring any geographical knowledge of countries remote from the Company's position.
- Regarding the custody and distribution of surveys, a strict warning was issued not to pass it in the hands of the enemies as the Company was passing through turbulent days of the 18th century.
- The Surveyor General has held the safe charge of all surveys which reached it to him.
- In Madras, the Chief Engineer was the custodian of maps and surveys.
- Regarding loss of material, strict orders were sent out by the Court of Directors to prevent such incidents.
- The proposals for appointing a Surveyor General of Madras were first raised by the Chief Engineer Patrick Ross[21] in 1775. Again, in 1779, Robert Kelly demanded it. Again, another attempt was made by Michael Topping's.[22] His

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demand was accepted by the Company. He was appointed as the Company's astronomer, Geographical and Marine Surveyor in Chief.

- After Topping died in 1796, Mackenzie[23] was appointed to his post. He was a strong supporter to Arther Wellesley in his siege of Seringapatam.

Conclusion

The British surveys led to rewired the relation between power, land, and identity. For tax purposes, the earlier Jenmi system and other customary rights were. Again, after these surveys, they were able to convert them to structured taxable plots. While going through the surveys, most officials collected inscriptions, oral histories, and palm-leaf manuscripts; most of them were translated. The collection of manuscripts, inscriptions, and local histories now preserved in the archives of Chennai, Trivandrum, Eranakulam, and Mysore helps to reconstruct the history of the terrain thoroughly. Moreover, precise triangulation and mapping of every hill, forest, and border helped them to construct roads and railways. It mostly helped them to settle disputes among the native kingdoms. After the surveys, they were able to categorise the terrains suitable for plantations of teak, tea, and coffee, timber logging depots, etc. The surveys conducted by the British produced some lasting benefits. It laid the foundation of modern mapping of the Deep South. The 19th-century advancements in colonial science are visible in all the surveys. Today's connectivity between the states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka owes to these surveys. The tribal folks who resided in the Western Ghats were projected to the outside world through the surveys. The tribals were utilized by them to get proper knowledge of the Deep South. Another vital factor is that these surveys correctly pinpointed the spice pockets in the Western Ghats. The forest tracts suitable for spice promotion were converted to taxable spice estates.

Endnotes

1. Johann Bernoulli translated and published the works of Joseph Tieffenthaler, a Jesuit priest who travelled extensively in India. He was instrumental in producing maps of the Ganges and Ghaghara river systems, specifically the *Carte Generale du Cours du Gange et du Gagra* published in 1784. His maps provided crucial, detailed descriptions of the interior of India based on firsthand Jesuit missionary travel notes.

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2. Historical Records of the Survey of India published by the Order of Surveyor General of India, Dehradun, 1945, p.238
3. *Ibid.*, p.246
4. Father Bouchet was born in France on April 12, 1655. He became a novice in the Society of Jesus on October 1, 1670. He came to India in 1688.
5. *Historical Records of the Survey of India, op.cit.*, p.331
6. *Ibid.*, p.87
7. K Sivasankaran Nair, *Keralam Oru Lanthakkarante Dhrishtiyil* (mal.), State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005, p.12
8. C Grant Robertson & J G Bathalomew, *Historical and Modern Atlas of British Empire,* Methuen & Company, London, 1905, p.4
9. *Historical Records of the Survey of India, op.cit.,* p.239
10. *Ibid.*, p.95
11. Colonel William Fullarton was a Scottish soldier, statesman, agriculturalist and author and an intimate friend of Mackenzie. Later he became a member of the House of Commons between 1779 and 1803.
12. *Historical Records of the Survey of India, op.cit.,* p.343
13. *Ibid.,* p.99
14. Prema Kasturi& Chithra Madhavan(eds.), *South India Heritage, An Introduction*, East West Books, Chennai, 2005, p.173
15. Pandit Sunderlal, *How India Lost Her Freedom,* Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2018, p.357
16. *Historical Records of the Survey of India, op.cit.*, p.232
17. Abercromby was a British army officer, administrator, and Governor of Bombay from 1790 to 1792.
18. John Sartorius was born in 1740 and died in 1801. From 1792, he was in charge of the defense works and survey of frontiers in Malabar till his death.
19. S R Ashton, *British Policy Towards the Indian States, 1905- 1939,* Curzon Press, London, 1982, p.19
20. Mahesh Rangarajan& K Sivaramakrishnan(eds.), India's Environmental History, Colonialism, Modernity and the Nation, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2012, p.95
21. Patrick Ross was appointed as the Chief Engineer at Madras on 15 September 1770
22. Michael Topping was a British maritime surveyor. He was appointed to the post of Survey Chief by the East India Company.
23. Colonel Colin Mackenzie was a Scottish army officer in the British East India Company. He later became the first Surveyor General of India.

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