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GROWTH OF FORT ST.GEORGE IN MADRAS



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Short Profile

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the matter that how the British founded Fort St. George and how they extended their territory from there to the erstwhile Madras. The origin of Madras has its own history. In the past it was called Madraspattinam. The British shortened it to Madras. The Fort St. George was erected in a fisherman's coppam. Vijayanagar recognized the place Madraspattinam in 1645 and by Golconda in 1679. It was a distinct place from the new town, which designated as Ford St. George. But

the British applied the term Madras to the combined places of Madraspattinam and Fort St. George. The first official use of Madras, found a place in Firman granted to Sir Francis Day by the ventatappa Nayak in 1639. Madras then seemed Chinnapattinam or little town to Directors of East India Company, as it was capable of further improvement.

KEYWORDS

settlement and acquisition, factories.

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INTRODUCTION

The English East India Company began setting up factories on the East Coast since 1611. Subsequently, in 1639 Francis Day bought a place of land to the north of Santhome. The advent of the British traders to Madras paved for the establishment of settlement and acquisition of more new territories. The Fort St. George that was founded on the site bought by Francis Day. Thirteen years passed to construct the Fort. Cohen shared with Day the privilege to construct the Fort around which grew later the city of Madras. At Fort St. George, there emerged a regular form of British Government. A native settlement called black town and British settlement called white town developed in and around of Fort St. George. The residents of the black town comprised of mostly Tamils, the Telugus, the Jews and the Muslims. Native merchants preferred to have residence in the Black town. The inhabitants of this town built their houses so as to make the streets vast but they appeared uneven and irregular. No houses were allowed to be above certain height to avoid obstruction of the view from Fort St. George. In 1674 there were 118 houses in the white town. This town was soon dropped when the British built their houses along the road leading to Santhome. There were seventy-five houses built in Black town in 1674, which was later on called George Town. The English people who lived around Fort St. George was estimated in 1700 at 114. These people included company soldiers, freeman, sailors, maidens of British race. The addition of company soldiers brought the total nearly 400. Thus around 1702 Fort St. George with castle and fortifications and territory gradually emerged a large city consisting of a number of houses in Madras. The British began to realize the importance of possessing the surrounding villages to safeguard their settlements around Fort St. George against the impending danger from Muslim rulers and the French. They negotiated with Nayak and Muslim rulers for additional territory. In this concern from the Sultan of Golconda, the British got a number of privileges. The British agreed to pay the Sultan of Golconda, 1,200 pagodas, per annum, as rent for the site of Madras. Triplicane came under the control of British from Muja Khan, a chief under Sultan of Golconda. Access to the south was made easier by the construction of Triplicane Bridge. In course of Time, the Company extended its territory to include fifteen villages around Madras.

Subsequently the motive for trade consideration for political authority urged the British to expand their territories, resulting in further acquisitions in Madras. The presence of large number of native powers big as well as offered them great advantages. They employed spies and agents either Brahmins or the Muslim. They presented gifts to the rulers, sent bribes, gave objects of curiosity, extended hospitality and even offered aid in arms. They even competed with other European powers and carried tales against the competitors. Through their successful diplomatic moves, manoeuvres, and display of military strength, they gained a number of possessions, won commercial rights, got exemption from payment of customs and privilege to erect walls. Organization of an administrative system and establishment of military posts added political advantages to their commercial settlements and transactions. They evinced great interest even in the matter of little concern. The caste system was a boon to the British in every inch of their expansion of trade and as an expansionist in the field of politics. It served as a chessboard for the British to play their games and tricks that gave success in their aims. The Hindus in the Black town belonged to two divisions known as right and left hand casters. The British intervention in their problems was a welcome to the Hindus. The British played the role of mediation in the most successful from which guided to find many new fields of investment. The British administrators hoped that the merchants of the two castes at Fort St. George divided, they would have

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vied with each other and attended to the company's business best and those they would have undertaken to serve the company cheaper. The intention made the British to involve to involve in endless troubles and dispute . The British kept both casts in balance so that neither should claim superiority over the other. If the castes were found either secretly or openly to disturb the settlement they were declared a public enemy to the interest of the British nation as well as to the company's settlement on the East Coast .

There were frequent caste troubles in the Black town during the administration of Governor Thomas Pitt (1698-1709). The Company's servants frequently instigated the troubles. Thomas Pitt championed one side and William Fraser, Council Member, supported the other side . During the governorships of Joseph Collets, (1717-1720) differences arose between the komitti and chetty over the temple issue. The British authority involved and solved the problems by prohibiting erection of new temple and use of any flags in the public processions. The British at St. George took care not to increase the number of Muslim inhabitants . The British had been always watchful over them and carried it fairly that they had no just cause of discontent . Thus the British through the adoption of various means and ways kept their interest in tact and expanded their territories around Fort St. George since the second part of the seventeenth century.

By founding Fort St. George in Madras, the British introduced a new way of life to the native people. The fort served as a ladder for the British ascendancy in the Madras presidency. It became the headquarters of the British Governors of Madras and their council members. The transaction of the British affairs on the cormandel coast dispatched to the court of Directors from Fort St. George. The Fort slowly turned as the centre of political activities of British administrators and statement. It showed the growth of various activities in Fort St. George. In the passage of time it was raised to the rank of a separate presidency from the position of little Agency.

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