



Establishment And Development Of Tiruchirapalli Contonment

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Abstract

The consolidation of British power in India guaranteeing peace and security of life began to create a better atmosphere for urban function. Various geographic and cultural factors stimulated the growth of the city of Tiruchirapalli during the British period [C.E. 1800 to 1947]. They were in the form of administrative buildings, Railways buildings, educational institutions, and medical institutions of both government and Christian missionaries. The institution of cantonment and garrison during the colonial period, the growth, spatial structure, and character of the Indian cities of later period were all greatly influenced by the British. Cantonment was totally a new kind of urban centre established by the British on the Indian landscape, because of the very nature it invited special location preferences, many of them were situated at strategic locations. They founded settlements of their own, near the existing indigenous cities, with new patterns, particularly bungalow-type buildings, as could be seen in Tiruchirapalli. Hence, the purpose of this research article is to narrate the establishment and development of Cantonment and its various features.

Keywords: British, Cantonment, Colonialism, Preston Battery, Puthur, Tiruchirappalli, Uraiyur

I. Introduction

The establishment of Cantonments and Garrisons during the colonial period marked the growth, spatial structure and character of a number of Indian cities. In South India, Bangalore and Hyderabad are the best examples of cities whose development have been significantly influenced by the Cantonments. The Cantonment at Tiruchirapalli also made the same impact similar to Hyderabad and Bangalore. The impact of Colonialism made drastic changes in the process of urbanization in India. The western type of cities

developed because of colonization. As a result, a new type of city emerged with unique physical structures and other features with a special focus on heterogenetic urban factors. Colonialism induced multiple urban factors which brought in urban development in Tiruchirapalli. This led to various kinds, as centres of political, administrative, military, religious and trade or commerce.

Because of a stable system of trade, artisans and merchants became permanent residents of the city, resulting in the specialization of crafts and innovation in transport, all of which are often identified as urban forms. All the above would appear to operate in different degrees and at different levels in the evolution of urban centres as urban studies should be made in specific socio-historical contexts of the spatial and temporal expansion of the cities. Tiruchirapalli is very well suited to the above categories. In the modern period, in general, the town may be classified according to the predominant functions found in them, such as it may be residential or dormitory town, political or administration town, transport or communication town, commercial, industrial or business mart, cultural town and defence town.

II. Tiruchirappalli as the Headquarter

The walled fort city had by now become a strategically important, economically viable and militarily protected transit point in Southern India, therefore, military troops were permanently stationed at the walled city. For political and administrative convenience, Tiruchirapalli City was made as the Head Quarters of the District and the Taluk. Fort walls and moats were cleared for hygienic purposes to get clean air. The protected walled city culture and civilization spread to its peripheral areas. The various geographic and cultural factors, which stimulated the growth of the city of Tiruchirapalli during the British period [C.E. 1800 to 1947], were the changes that took place in the administrative boundaries of taluks and district headquarters, the introduction of Municipal Administration, the construction of Railways, the beginning of many educational institutions and medical facilities by government and Christian missionaries, the introduction of civic amenities and the Industrial development.

III. Formation and functioning of governance in Tiruchirapalli

The consolidation of British power in India guaranteeing peace and security of life began to create a better atmosphere for urban function.¹ Walter Hamilton, writing in his Description of Hindustan in 1820, refers to the then existing towns and cities of India at the beginning of the 19th century.² During the period from 1800 to 1947, the geographical and cultural factors that stimulated the growth of Tiruchirapalli were the following.

1. Introduction of many educational institutions and medical facilities by the government as well as by the British and American Christian Missionaries.
2. The construction of railways and the installation of roads and bridges, Posts and Communication.
3. and the construction of Churches, Markets and Court complexes.

The strategic importance of a place is an important consideration in founding cities. Colonialism and its political power influenced urban development in colonial societies.³ The result was a combination of very high population density in relatively small areas and relatively low population density over other larger areas.⁴ During the colonial period, new cities, Cantonment Civil Lines and boulevards were created for the British residents which were far from the reach of the natives.⁵

IV. CANTONMENT

The military station or cantonment was an entirely new kind of urban centre introduced by the British on the Indian landscape, because of the very nature it invited special location preferences,⁶ many of them were situated at strategic locations. The establishment of cantonment and garrison during the colonial period, the growth, spatial structure and character of the Indian cities of later period were all greatly influenced by the British.⁷ They founded settlements of their own, near the existing indigenous cities, with new patterns, particularly bungalow type buildings, as could be seen in Tiruchirapalli. The spatial development of the colonial city was a new phenomenon and lay close beside the indigenous city, preserving its existing cultural milieu as well. Cultural and military-strategic centres flourished due to stable political functioning under a foreign yoke.

The experience of the Carnatic war led to the organization of the native troops into battalions. In 1759 as per the plan of the select committee, the sepoy force of the 7000 men formed into seven battalions of which two were stationed at Tiruchirapalli. Each battalion was officered by two subalterns, three Sergeant Majors, one Block Commandant and three Inspecting Captains.⁸ Since 1750, Tiruchirapalli Fort began to play a role as an important military strategic centre retaining a considerable degree of importance. The military authority of the British government then decided to continue its concentration on Tiruchirapalli Fort. Subsequently, sanitation works were carried on by repairing certain drains and watercourses within the fort area. For some time, after the siege of the fort, the garrison remained in the fort itself the upper rock cave was the powder magazine. The arsenal functioned in the southern foot of the rock what is now the Little Bazaar Street.⁹ The Britishers were quartered around the Teppakulam during the time of the siege.¹⁰ The fort contained the Arsenal, the Commissariat, the Ordnance Stores, the Pay officer garrison, hospital and jail. It has been observed that compared to the crowded streets, numerous

buildings and the proximity of rock, the temperature of the fort was generally higher than that of the immediate neighborhood.

During the British regime, two famous batteries called Preston Battery and Dalton's Battery were erected on the north and northwestern side of the fort wall respectively. Tiruchirapalli Fort had long been one of the most important military posts in the south of India.¹¹ Military and strategic factors as part of the larger interplay of political forces have been crucial in the emergence, location, growth and decline of cities all over the world. Towns for example developed as feudal establishments.

Soon after the British acquired political power of the region, military troops from different stations were moved to Tiruchirapalli and were stationed there to maintain its strategic importance. From Vellore, the 2nd Battalion of the 14th Regiment of North India and Her Majesty's 12th Regiment from Dindigul marched to Tiruchirapalli, in September 1801 and November 1801 respectively. In December 1801, the 2nd Division of Artillery forces arrived in Tiruchirapalli from Madurai. In November 1802 the 1st Battalion of the 13th Regiment of North India moved from Tiruchirapalli to Erode. In the month of September and November 1804, Her Majesty's the 12th Regiment forces from Karunguli and 1st Battalion of 20th Regiment of North India from Tanjore marched to Tiruchirapalli.¹² In 1804, the 12th Regiment so far stationed in the Fort, now occupied the cavalry line at Puthur, the adjacent place to the South of Uraiyur marked an important military station.¹³ The strength of soldiers stationed here was about 1200 Europeans. In order to provide comprehensive accommodation new barracks were planned to be opened at Puthur. At Uraiyur Pagoda nearly 500 soldiers were stationed.¹⁴ Since the first movement of troops from the fort premises to Uraiyur and later on to Puthur caused spatial urban expansion affected in establishing military lines and the bazaar. Parade ground for the troops was acquired in the vicinity of Puthur in 1810. In order to establish new lines at Puthur, the two existing toddy shops were removed and the ground was given for the occupation of the sepoys. New lines were formed in 1814 at Puthur.¹⁵ A Military bazaar was formed for the benefit of sepoys who were stationed at Puthur and Uraiyur. The shops owned by private persons within the limits of the military bazaar that caused nuisance were asked to vacate.¹⁶

Heavy floods often occurred in the rivers Cauvery, Coleroon, and Uyyakondan canal often visited the town, especially in 1809, 1817, and 1818-19. It breached many places and submerged a number of villages around Fort city. Due to the natural havoc, cholera and plague spread and affected public health very much.¹⁷ The Officer Commanding Southern Division selected a separate site for the European Barracks. The Medical committee submitted a report regarding the general health and sanitary condition of the proposed site and analyzed the suitability of the ground for European Barracks and residential

settlements. The Quality and quantity of water were analyzed and a separate report for water procurable was submitted. Another report recommended a new Civil Lines and a separate street for married men. The Engineer submitted a report about the size and nature of the soil.¹⁸ With the increase in the size of the settlements, the internal spatial arrangements of the town became more congested. The towns came to be divided into distinct quarters, the Black town, where Indian troops resided, and the White town with garden houses for British troops and officers in the new suburban area. Part of the military regiment of Europeans was shifted to the South of Uyyakondan canal, the land newly proposed on the vast high and plain ground formed another wing of the Cantonment.

In 1831, the 39th light North Infantry Regiment was stationed at Tiruchirapalli. The request of the Officer Commanding of Tiruchirapalli was recognized by the government and a piece of land for the sheltering of the sepoy of 39th Regiment of Northern Infantry was allotted. Therefore new military lines were formed. The government sanctioned an order to purchase land to build sheds for the sepoy of the regiment. Local people were forcibly vacated and the land was acquired for the establishment of military lines and bazaar. In 1833, the horse keepers and grass cutters of the 6th regiment of Light Cavalry occupied a piece of ground. This occupied land was appropriated for military purposes by the government. Horse keepers and grass cutters were allowed to form a cavalry line. About 40.5 cents of land was acquired by vacating 26 native huts for the extension of the 6th regiment cavalry lines at Puthur.¹⁹

Large urban areas were not industrial in character but were colonial, administrative, military or marketing centres developed. In other words, these areas were characterized by a kind of urbanization that was externally imposed.²⁰ Due to political unrest in British India during 1857, the government took serious and speedy measures in strengthening the military power. It erected five temporary barracks for European troops. Artillery barracks were altered and constructed a privy and Sergeant's quarters at Tiruchirapalli.

In 1858, the new cantonment was constituted on the site of the high open ground near the Collector's house. Therefore the garrison from the centre of the fort town was permanently shifted to the new ground. Puthur, the suburb of Tiruchirapalli was developed by strengthening the military troops. In 1858, the 21st Regiment of Native Infantry was stationed at Puthur. In 1862 the 23rd Native Infantry and 105th Regiment were stationed here and a separate hospital and Quarters for Apothecary were attached to this regiment.

The housing development is the mark of urban development and hence Line -houses were constructed. The District Engineer erected 26 line-houses as Family Quarters for the Artillery houses. The government-sanctioned Rs 13,000 towards the construction of these line houses. The boundary limits of the military cantonment were subjected to the

extended area, by the order of the government. The Layout and construction of buildings were principally planned. A good number of buildings for officers and civil lines quarters were constructed. Public Works Department was involved in building developments at the Cantonment area of Tiruchirapalli.

The arrival of European troops in 1860 found a lack of accommodation. The Military Chief Engineer reported to the government about the immediate erection of temporary arrangements for the accommodation of 150 Artillerymen and quarters for six sergeants. The year 1864 was marked by great importance in the history of the Cantonment of Tiruchirapalli. A number of development measures were introduced during this year especially on the eve of the formal constitution of Cantonment and Municipal administration in Tiruchirapalli in 1865 and 1866 respectively.

The new development plan included a recreation room for the battery of Artillery at a cost of Rs. 5,200. Generally, it was utilized by the European barracks. The arms room at Puthur was renovated and five ranges of the Temporary Infantry barracks were also repaired.²¹

A group of buildings were built by the Public Works Department. Additional works were carried in the Artillery buildings, for which the military department approved the plan and estimate. A Cantonment exclusively for European Infantry barracks was planned in Tiruchirapalli town. The Government encouraged this move from a defence point of view. Native residents were evicted from the proposed area. The native market and Para cherry settlement were removed from the vicinity of the European barracks.²² A good deal of correspondence occurred between the government and military board from time to time regarding the Cantonment of Tiruchirapalli which was officially formed in 1865.²³

V. Improvement measures of the Military department

With the approval of the Military Department, the Public Works Department adopted measures to develop and expand the residential area of Tiruchirapalli town by constructing quarters, laying new roads and repairing old buildings and roads. The Magistrate of Tiruchirapalli reported to the government for the introduction of the Towns Improvement Act and to revise the limit of the cantonment.²⁴ The area of the cantonment was found unnecessarily extensive. Until 1866 Tiruchirapalli was a large military station but in 1866 there were only two regiments of Native Infantry and about 200 European soldiers stationed. The strength of military forces was reduced in view of the opening of the railway line between Nagapattinam and Erode via Tiruchirapalli. The limits of the Cantonment were decided to be reduced, in accordance with the actual need of the station.²⁵ Separate quarters for Apothecary of the 25th Regiment of Native Infantry were constructed by the

order of the military department.²⁶ Hospital was opened exclusively for European soldiers in Royal Artillery.

The Cantonment map was brought out by the government. The limits of the cantonment were marked by a yellow line and a number of boundary pillars. It was seen that the military line was divided into two portions by the Uyyakondan canal. The larger portion comprised nearly all British residents including officers and the Collector's offices and the smaller portion comprised the Puthur parade ground and the lines of the 23rd Regiment together with the houses of the British officers.²⁷ Government ordered to apply Towns Improvement Act to the town, where troops were stationed.

The Advocate-General advised the Magistrate to nominate the Officer-Commanding of the station or any officer in the Division to be the Vice-President of the Municipal Commission and the salary for this post was paid from the Public Treasury from taxes levied on the Sepoy's houses which implies that the taxation of the houses in cantonment was being a part of the Municipality.

A wide road was formed in the cantonment which marked the urban feature of Tiruchirapalli town. Almost all the roads were designed to be wide, most of the roads were formed keeping in mind the utility and further growth. Long straight and broad roads were the features of the planned layout of the cantonment. For example, Reynolds Road, Benwells Road, Birds Road and Pensioners Road were formed out of perfect planning and execution. In 1867 seventeen miles of roads within the cantonment were maintained by the military authority. The Public Works Department repaired these roads with the expenses being met from the annual grant of imperial funds.

VI. Cantonment Magistrate

As per the proceedings dated 23rd Nov. 1863, of the judicial department, Capt. Bird was entrusted with magisterial authority for enquiring into and taking cognizance of breaches of the rules and regulations framed under the clause of Sec.19 of the Madras Cantonment Act 1 of 1866. The Cantonment Rule Chapter 5 refers to measures for inspecting and controlling houses of ill-fame and for preventing the spread of venereal diseases among the Europeans. Periodical inspection and enquiry by the judicial department cleared the cases relating to public health. Therefore Urban health was given due importance.

VII. Condition of streets and houses

The condition of the streets and houses in the cantonment area was strictly maintained. Instructions were issued to the owners of the property within the cantonment limits to construct a wall or hedge around their compound and to keep them in proper order and maintain them with a height of four feet. The external wall of houses, yards, boarding, and

the public ways was to be lime-washed annually. The streets were generally straight and wide. They were always kept clean. Sanitary measures were introduced periodically which kept a hygienic environment. The 'Garden houses' reflected the western 'Garden City', they were built within the residential areas of the cantonment. Drainage condition was gradually improved, especially at the lines of the 9th Regiment. Every action in the process of fulfillment of basic amenities marked the concern of public health and urban development in the vicinity of the Cantonment area.

VIII. Military building and land use pattern

Lands with buildings or under utility or non-agricultural purposes were considered urbanized land. Till the previous 150 years, the military regiments' role led to the formation of many buildings and structures for use of the military. The proliferation of continuous bungalow-type buildings reflected the western urban 'Garden city' characteristics. About 29 massive structural buildings for different purposes were occupied by the military regiment.²⁸

The beginning of the 20th Century witnessed the development of the urban conditions in Tiruchirapalli Town. Military strength was improved by opening of the Boers Camp. Primary and subsidiary buildings were built to accommodate the Boers Camp and various infrastructures were improved like drainage, lighting, water supply, and fire protection point.

IX. Conclusion

The formation of the cantonment marked new features to Indian polity and society because of the establishment of the British settlement which brought advanced urban conditions to Indian urban culture. It is not an exaggeration even if we presume in general, the presence of cantonment brought in urbanization and urban development in Tiruchirapalli witnessed this fact on a large scale in its modern urban growth. Further Tiruchirapalli slowly gained its predominance due to strategic location, continuous military movement towards and out of the city strengthened this aspect. The movement of military forces from the core city towards Uraiyur brought urbanization to the new place. The formation of civil lines and construction of bungalow-type quarters for the military sowed the seeds of urbanization and urban development other than military areas. Military in the early stage got closely involved with the civil and infrastructural development until it was taken over by municipal authority.

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¹³ Consultation No. Serial No 368-369. **Board of Revenue**, 5th January 1804.

¹⁴ **Old Records of Trichinopoly 1800-1835**, Vol. I, pp. 23-25.

¹⁵ **Ibid.**, Vol. II., p.191.

¹⁶ **Ibid.**, p. 191.

¹⁷ **Ibid.**, p. 191.

¹⁸ **Ibid.**, p. 191.

¹⁹ **Ibid.**, p. 269.

²⁰ **Op. cit.**, Breese, Gerald (1969), p. 3.

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²² Proceedings No 223 & 224, **PWD**, 13th December 1864.

²³ **Op.cit.**, Hemingway 1907, p. 336.

²⁴ Proceedings No.1118, **Public**, 30th October 1866.

²⁵ **Ibid.**

²⁶ Proceedings No 44 & 45, **PWD**, 2nd March 1866.

²⁷ Proceedings No 108, **Public**, 16th March 1867.

²⁸ Proceedings No 2089, (W) **PWD**, 23rd August 1881.