

Preface

The earliest record of an attempt to arrange for the preparation of statistical account of the different districts of the Bombay Presidency is in 1843. In 1843 Government called on the Revenue Commissioner to obtain from the Collectors as part of their next annual report the fullest available information regarding their districts. The information was specially to include their own and their assistant's observations on the state of the cross and other roads, not under the Superintendence of a separate Department on the passes and ferries throughout the country. on the street in the provincial towns and on this extension and Improvement of internal communications. As from Collectors alone, could any knowledge of the state of the district be obtained the Collectors were desired to include in their Annual Reports, in observations on every point from which a knowledge of the actual condition of the country could be gathered with the exception of matters purely judicial which were to be supplied by the Judicial Branch of the Administration. Government remarked that, as Collectors and their Assistants during a large portion of the year moved about the district in constant and intimate communication with all classes they possessed advantages which, no other public officers enjoyed of acquiring a full knowledge of the condition of the country, the causes of progress or retrogradation, the good measures which requires to be fostered and extended, the evil measures which call for abandonment, the defects in existing institutions which requires to be remedied, and the nature of the remedies to be supplied. Collectors also, it was observed, have an opportunity of judging of the effect of British rule on the condition and character of the people, caste prejudices and on their superstitious observances. They can trace any alterations for the better or worse in dwellings, clothing and diet and can observe the use of improved implements of husbandry or other crafts, the habits of locomotion, the state of education particularly among the higher classes whose decaying means and energy under our most levelling systems compared with that of preceding governments will attract their attention. Finally they can learn how far existing village institutions are effectual to their end, and may be available for self-government and in the management of local taxation for local purposes.

The question of preparing District Statistical Manuals was not again raised till 1870. In October 1867 the Secretary of State, desired the Bombay Government to take steps for the compilation of a Gazetteer of the Presidency on the model of the Gazetteer prepared during that year for the Central Provinces. The Bombay Government requested the two Revenue Commissioners and the

Director of Public Instruction to submit a scheme for carrying into effect the orders of the Secretary of State. In reply the committee observed that a third form of special knowledge would be required for writing accounts of Parsis Khoja's and other castes and tribes that in short the undertaking would be one of much wider scope and greater difficulty than the preparation of the Gazetteer of the Central Provinces. Much thought would be required before the general plan could be laid down, and after the plan was fixed all sorts of questions as to arrangement and treatment of particular parts would be sure to arise. In the Committee's opinion local Revenue Officers could not as a rule find time to devote to work of this description without neglecting their ordinary duties; but they could correct and amplify such information as a special officer could compile from the published and unpublished records of the Government.

In January 1868 the Bombay Government decided that the general supervisor and direction for the work should be placed in the hands of a committee consisting of the Revenue Commissioner, the Director of Public instruction, and the Commissioner of Customs, and that an Editor should be appointed with a small copying establishment to act under the direction of the Committee. The Editor was to give his entire time to the works and was expected to finish it in about a year. He was to collect and arrange in alphabetical order all recorded information regarding the towns and other Places of Interest in each Collectorate, and to send printed on half margin each draft which completed the local officers for verification additions and alterations. When the drafts were returned and corrected by the Editor, they were to be laid before the Committee.

The Committee were requested to meet at Poona in June 1868 and to report to Government on the best mode of preparing and editing the Gazetteer and supervising its publication. In August 1868 the Bombay Gazetteer Committee composed of Messrs. A.F. Bellasis Revenue Commissioner N.D. Chairman, Mr. W.H. Havelock Revenue Commissioner S.D. and Sir Alexander Grant, Director of Public Instruction, submitted a report recommending various arrangements as far as possible. These proposals were sanctioned on the 11th September 1868. Adhering to the arrangement followed in the Gazetteer of the Central Provinces, which had met with a approval of the Secretary of State, Mr. Crowe, drew out the list of subjects which was forwarded to all Collectors Sub-Collectors and Survey Superintendents. In 1869 the draft articles prepared by Mr. Crowe were submitted to Sir W.W. Hunter of the Bengal Civil Service who expressed his satisfaction at the progress made. In 1871 Mr. Crowe's draft article on the Dharwar District was sent to Mr. W.W. Hunter for opinion who in addition to detailed criticism on various points made the following remarks.

"My own conception of the work is that, in return for a couple of days' reading, the Account should give a new Collector a comprehensive, and at the same time, a distinct idea of the District which he has been sent to administer. More reading can never supersede practical experience in the district administration. But a succinct and well conceived district account is capable of antedating the acquisition of such personal experience by many months and of both facilitating the systematising a Collector's personal enquiries. The Compiler does not seem to have caught the points on which a Collector would naturally consult the Account. In order that the Editor should understand these points it is necessary that he should have had practical acquaintance with district administration and that he should himself have experienced the difficulties which be set an officer on his taking charge of a District or Sub-Division. The individual points will differ according to the character of the country. For example in deltaic district the important question is the control of rivers; in dry districts it is the subject of water supply. But in all cases a District Account besides dealing with the local specialities should furnish an historical narration of its revenue and expenditure since it passed under the British rule of the sums which we have taken from it in taxes and of the amount which we have returned to it, in the protection of property and person and the other charges of Civil Government".

Sir William Hunter laid much stress on the necessity of stating the authority on the strength of which any statement is made and of the propriety of avoiding anything like libels on persons or classes. In 1871 Sir W. Hunter was appointed Director General of Statistics to the Government of India. In this capacity he was to be a central guiding authority whose duty it was to see that each of provincial Gazetteers contained the materials requisite for the comparative statistics of the Empire. In October 1871, pending the compilation of the census returns Mr. Crowe was appointed Assistant Collector at Sholapur and the Gazetteer records were left in a room in the Poona Collector's office. In September 1872 the whole of the Gazetteer records including thirty one articles on British Districts and Native States were stolen by two youths who had been serving in the collector's office as peons. These youths finding the Gazetteer office room unoccupied stole the papers piece by piece for the sake of the trifling amount they fetched as waste paper. Search resulted in the recovery in an imperfect state of seven of the thirty one drafts. The youths were convicted and sentenced to a year's imprisonment in the Poona Reformatory.

In 1873 Mr. Francis Chapman then Chief Secretary to Government took the preparation of the Gazetteer under his personal control. And in June 1873 Mr. James Macnabb Campbell, C.S. was appointed Compiler. An important

change introduced by Mr. Chapman was to separate from the preparation of the series of District Manuals certain general subjects and to arrange for the preparation of accounts of those general subjects by specially qualified contributors. Besides to the interest taken by Mr. Francis Chapman the Gazetteer owes much to the advice and to the support of Sir W.W. Hunter, who in spite of the delay and expense which it involved, secured the full record of the Survey and other details in which the Bombay revenue system is specially rich. The most important contributors of this class were for Bijapur Messrs. Mr. H.F. Silcock, C.S., A. Cumine, C.S. and M.H. scott, C.S.

Bombay
Customs House 1896

James Macnabb Campbell.

Extract from the preface written by James M. Campbell for the Bombay Presidency volume (Part-I) on Gujarath History in 1896.