



RESEARCH ARTICLE

‘Monarchical modern’: the making of Mysore city, 1880–1940

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Abstract

The unique status of the city of Mysore arose from the fact that it was divested of all administrative functions save that of the Palace establishment. Principles of city planning were innovatively pursued, through a combination of sovereign authority and diverse forces, techniques and devices more properly associated with ‘governmentality’. It was among the first cities in India to have a City Improvement Trust in 1903. An investigation of the work of the Mysore City Improvement Trust in its negotiations with the municipality on the one hand and the Palace establishment on the other foregrounds the ‘monarchical’ as a specific form of power. What were the specific forms of material and temporal ‘ordering’ that came to distinguish Mysore city from its counterparts? This article looks at four distinct moments of this journey, related respectively to sanitizing, botanizing, ornamentalizing and spectacularizing, together producing a ‘depth of historical distance’.

Does Mysore city, as the ‘royal capital’ of the princely state of Mysore, offer us the chance of bringing together two different kinds of modern materialities that have occupied scholars of the colonial Indian city? Many have chosen to focus on monumental architecture as the sign of modernity.¹ Others have examined the introduction (though fitfully and unevenly) of new urban amenities and techniques – sanitation, water supply, roads, parks, public transport, lighting and indeed planning – as municipal administrations, increasingly under indigenous leaders, were formed from the late nineteenth century.² Mysore city was, however, uniquely

¹T. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain’s Raj* (London, 1989); P. Chopra, *A Joint Enterprise: Indian Elites and the Making of Colonial Bombay* (Minneapolis, 2011).

²See J. Hosagrahar, *Indigenous Modernities: Negotiating Architecture and Urbanism* (London and New York, 2005), especially the discussion on Clarkegunj, 123–32; N. Gupta, *Delhi between Two Empires, 1803–1931: Society, Government and Urban Growth* (Delhi, 1981); W. Glover, *Making Lahore Modern: Constructing and Imagining a Colonial City* (Minneapolis, 2008); S. Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism, and the Colonial Uncanny* (London and New York, 2005); P. Kidambi, *The Making of an Indian Metropolis: Colonial Governance and Public Culture in Bombay, 1890–1920* (Aldershot and Burlington, 2007); S. Legg, *Spaces of Colonialism: Delhi’s Urban Governmentalities* (Oxford, 2007). On the importance of sanitation, see Glover, *Making Lahore Modern*, 40–1; as Chandavarkar says, ‘The sanitary question was conceived less as a social than an administrative

divested of administrative functions, which were concentrated in the nearby city of Bangalore; there was thus enhanced focus on the royal functions of Mysore city from the late nineteenth century. It was also a city without a substantial European presence (as in the 'divided' presidency cities, in cantonments and civil stations,³ or in hill stations).⁴ Mysore's engagement with modernity, therefore, foregrounded princely power in ways that are yet to be recognized. The city emerged as a specific, though improvised, practice of monarchical power, with a bureaucracy committed to producing and sustaining a newly invented royal urban fabric, while yet giving it the depth of historical distance. It is this practice of power that I describe as the 'monarchical modern'.⁵ It focuses 'on the systematic redefinition and transformation of the terrain on which the life of the colonized was lived' as David Scott enjoins us to do in his explication of 'colonial governmentality'.⁶

However, the term modernity has been found too capacious and vague, so its foundational links with colonialism have been qualified by a plethora of adjectives – 'unreasoning', 'uncanny', 'uneven', 'indigenous', 'incomplete', 'hybrid' and even 'perennial'. Does the term 'monarchical modern' then simply announce another particularity related to the princely city?⁷ Or would Mysore city's development be aligned with Thomas Metcalf's elaboration of an 'aesthetic imperialism' that was evident in the

problem, concerned in the first place with the health of European troops and with the safety and well-being of British and Indian elites.' R. Chandavarkar, 'Sewers', in *History Culture and the Indian City* (Delhi, 2009), 31–58, esp. 43.

³Anthony King developed the idea of the 'third culture', a specifically colonial hybrid which draws on, but is distinct from, the metropolitan culture and indigenous society, though 'caste' remains a striking absence. A. King, 'The colonial third culture', in *Colonial Urban Development: Culture Social Power and Environment* (London, Henley and Boston, MA, 2007; orig. publ. 1976). See also C. Cowell, 'The *Kacchā–Pakkā* divide: material, space and architecture in the military cantonments of British India (1765–1889)', *ABE Journal*, 9–10 (2016), Dynamic Vernacular, <https://journals.openedition.org/abe/3224>.

⁴J. Kenny, 'Climate, race, and imperial authority: the symbolic landscape of the British hill station in India', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 85 (1995), 694–714; P. Kanwar, 'The changing profile of the summer capital of British India: Simla 1864–1947', *Modern Asian Studies*, 18 (1984), 215–36; E. Wald, 'Health, discipline and appropriate behaviour: the body of the soldier and space of the cantonment', *Modern Asian Studies*, 46 (2012), 815–56.

⁵The concept of the 'monarchical modern' advanced here differs from Stephen Blake's discussion of pre-modern sovereignty as expressed in the imperial capital of Shahjahanabad. Blake elaborates the idea of the city as an expression of a 'patrimonial-bureaucratic' empire, in which the city itself was modelled on the imperial household: 'From the micro-perspective, the sovereign city was an enormously extended patriarchal household, the imperial palace-fortress writ large.' S. Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India, 1639–1739* (Cambridge, 1991), xii, also 86. As we shall see, the Mysore bureaucracy blended the modalities of an independent, rational governing structure while simultaneously supporting modern principles of town planning for the general population, with a commitment to extending the Maharaja's aesthetic vision of Mysore as a royal city. I inaugurated the discussion of the 'monarchical modern' as a concept and the successful creation of the depth of historical distance in 'The museumized cityscape of Mysore', in *Mysore Modern: Rethinking the Region under Princely Rule* (Minneapolis, 2011), 127–63. I continue this discussion here, foregrounding the quotidian practices of power, particularly in the planning of layouts, gardens, roads, returning to the development of Mysore as the site par excellence of 'spectacularizing' a monarchical modern power.

⁶D. Scott, 'Colonial governmentality', *Social Text*, 43 (1995), 191–220, esp. 205.

⁷R. Chandavarkar had warned against such proliferations in 'Urban history and urban anthropology in South Asia', in *History Culture and the Indian City*, 206–35, esp. 217.

kinds of public and private structures that were built during the colonial period?⁸ No doubt, Mysore shared much in common with other colonial cities of the same time, but our concern here is with the patterns that were uniquely enabled and made visible at this site, with enduring consequences up to the present day. I will elaborate here a specific form of material and temporal ‘ordering’, encompassing both the monumental and the quotidian, built form and performative practice, which drew as much on the ‘sovereign’ power of the monarch – though mediated by an increasingly powerful bureaucracy – as on a creative adaptation of the diverse modern forces, techniques and devices more properly associated with ‘governmentality’. Although the results were ambiguous, Mysore’s urban form and emerging public rituals together formed the basis of a new social memory and a new narrative time.

Plans for towns and cities in India stopped short of fostering the ‘rule of freedom’ that Patrick Joyce has foregrounded in his discussion of the new measures and techniques that transformed the industrial city in England.⁹ In contrast, Partha Chatterjee’s analysis of Calcutta under colonial rule argues that the ‘rule of colonial difference ensured that the difference between white town and native town was known and observed by all residents’.¹⁰

I would like to argue that Mysore precisely offers us an opportunity to go beyond the ‘rule of colonial difference’, given that there was continued reliance on pre-colonial segregational hierarchies as well as departures from them. As Aya Ikegame says of Mysore, ‘the city was not simply a spatial representation of existing social stratification, but a device to make concrete and enforce social stratification itself’.¹¹ The princely state of Mysore, created in 1799 following the British defeat of their indomitable foe, Tipu Sultan (r. 1782–99), was brought under direct rule following the Nagar Rebellion of 1830/31, and returned to (indirect British) rule by the Wodeyars only 50 years later, in 1881.¹² I will trace the practice of the modern through a focus on four moments in the period from the 1880s to the mid-twentieth century. The first – the sanitizing moment – was shared by many Indian cities at the time, but the Mysore case makes amply visible the foundational ways in which existing social hierarchies were upheld and even promoted in rules of urban planning, which nevertheless aspired to produce a new civic consciousness.¹³ The second moment refers to the botanizing of Mysore state, a process that found its fullest flowering in the cities of Mysore and Bangalore. The third moment, of ornamentalizing, refers to the process by which a new aesthetic order, including

⁸Metcalf, *Imperial Vision*, 5.

⁹P. Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London, 2003), 14.

¹⁰P. Chatterjee, ‘A postscript from Calcutta’, in M. Reiker and K. Ali (eds.), *Comparing Cities: The Middle East and South Asia* (Lahore, 2010), 312. Chatterjee, however, uses the examples of popular culture (theatre and football) to suggest that ideas of equality were nevertheless actively translated into the Calcutta context, often through the practice of illegality, *ibid.*, 319. See also Legg, *Spaces of Colonialism*, 209.

¹¹A. Ikegame, ‘The capital of raajadharmā’, in *Princely India Reimagined: A Historical Anthropology of Mysore from 1799 to the Present* (London and New York, 2013), 132.

¹²B. Hettne, *The Political Economy of Indirect Rule: Mysore 1881–1947* (Delhi and Malmo, 1978); S. Chandrasekhar, *Dimensions of Socio-Economic Change* (Delhi, 1985); Nair, *Mysore Modern*.

¹³Kidambi is exceptional in taking on the question of caste and space and preference of people for caste wise residential patterns, *The Making of an Indian Metropolis*, 80–1, 91. On caste itself being considered injurious to public health ‘because [it was] prejudicial to public happiness’, see P. Datta (citing R. Martin), *Planning the City: Urbanization and Reform in Calcutta, c. 1800–c. 1940* (New Delhi, 2012), 93.



Figure 1. Fort Palace complex before reconstruction and renovation: Fort South Gate Road showing opulent mansions, and the Gopuram (entrance tower) of the Sweta Varahaswamy temple on the left, late nineteenth century.

Source: *Mysore Palace: Celebrating a Century* 2012 (Ramsons Kala Pratishtana, 2012).

principles of planning and architectural beauty, begins to take on an independent value, while renewing the relationship between the Maharaja and his subjects. I refer finally to the moment of spectacularizing, in which the city and the Palace become – representationally at least – more porous, braiding together a new narrative time. In sum, these initiatives succeeded in producing an altogether new social memory: that of an ‘antique’ royal city.

The uncertain ‘capital’ city

When Mysore was chosen over Srirangapatnam as the site for the coronation of the restored child-king Krishnaraja Wodeyar III, it was to distance the ‘restored’ Wodeyar dynasty from the legacies of the most indomitable foe of British rule, Tipu Sultan. But colonial officials were confronted with a virtually barren cityscape in Mysore, since the capital of the Mysore kingdom since 1610 had been the island fortress of Srirangapatna. Tipu Sultan’s efforts at establishing afresh the city in Mysore, beginning with a Fort at Nazarabad, were abandoned following his defeat by the British, and the stones were reassembled at the site identified as the former home of the Wodeyar king. When the powers of Krishnaraja Wodeyar III were whittled down after the Nagar Rebellion of 1830/31, the continuance of the Wodeyar line became uncertain, and Mysore city remained more or less confined to the structures, including temples, within the Fort complex, with only some settlements beyond its walls (Figure 1). The Maharaja was a prisoner of sorts, negotiating a large and growing private debt as his profligate gift-giving became a cause of

worry to the colonial officials. Of the 12 agharahas¹⁴ he established in Mysore state, six were located in Mysore city, largely to the west and south of the Fort.¹⁵ The only two monumental structures that were built in Mysore at this time, apart from the Government House (built in 1805), were two pleasure Palaces, the Vasantha Mahal (1842) and the Jagan Mohan Palace (1861).

The continuance of the Wodeyar kingship beyond the life of Krishnaraja Wodeyar III (r. 1799–1868), who was without a legal heir, remained uncertain until his adoption of a two-and-a-half-year-old Chamarajendra Wodeyar (r. 1881–94) was finally accepted by the colonial government in 1865. Upon Krishnaraja Wodeyar III's death, the establishment within the Palace, which consisted of remnants of 25 departments, and 9,687 retainers, was chopped down to 12 employing 3,196 people.¹⁶ By 1872, some Fort buildings that were crowded around the Palace were pulled down to make way for the Nagarkhana block, and a system of underground drainage was first introduced.¹⁷ But only in 1881 was Mysore city's future as the permanent abode of the Wodeyar royal family finally settled.

Sanitizing: from mohalla to bureaucratic agharaha

In 1881, Mysore was 'restored' to direct rule under the new Maharaja Chamarajendra Wodeyar X. He was aided in his efforts by able Dewans, first Rangacharlu (1881–83) and then Sheshadri Iyer (1883–1901). By 1884, new arrangements within the Palace and Fort area called for 'the removal of all small houses and hovels situated both to the north and south of the Palace, and of all houses, other than really good ones, within a radius of 150 feet of the Palace, the space thus cleared being laid out as gardens'.¹⁸ Fort clearance was for 'ventilation and easier sewerage' as the bureaucracy increasingly anticipated and even feared epidemics: therefore, the north-western angle of the Fort was to be 'cleared away bodily' except for a line of six houses of two storeys; instructions were given to 'sweep away' all the small houses to the south-western angle of the Fort, in order to clear 'what must be a nest of disease lying under the very walls of the palace'. The Dewan struck an alarmist tone in 1886 saying that there was 'No time to be lost since the poisonous effluvia from the slums I visited might I believe at any moment breed a disastrous epidemic'.¹⁹

The displacements were primarily of several service communities of Gollars (or shepherds), washermen, tailors and others, on the north wall of the Palace; the

¹⁴Agharahas are settlements exclusively for Brahmins.

¹⁵Ikegame, *Princely India Reimagined*, 125.

¹⁶Major C.A. Elliot, *Correspondence relative to the Maharaja's Palace Affairs*, Karnataka State Archives (KSA).

¹⁷*Palace Administration Report 1868–1918*, KSA, 5.

¹⁸Proceedings of the Dewan to His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore, General, dated 26 May 1884, file no. 24 of 1879, sl. nos. 1–78, Municipal, KSA.

¹⁹Proceedings of the Dewan to His Highness the Maharajah of Mysore, 18 Jul. 1886, file no. 24 of 1879, sl. nos. 1–78, Municipal, KSA. This set of Fort clearances was quite different from strategic transformations undertaken in Delhi and Lucknow following the revolt of 1857. See Gupta, *Delhi between Two Empires*, 1–38; and V.T. Oldenburg *The Making of Colonial Lucknow: 1856–1877* (Princeton, 1984), esp. 27–144.

houses on the south-west of Karikal Thotti; a small detached house of Tankasale, as well as some bigger houses on the north of the Palace Salagere wall. The displaced were to be rehoused outside, even if the plan proved costly, while large house owners were to be paid the price of their houses. Above all, overcrowding had to be prevented by prohibiting new houses from being built within the Fort.

Yet the best-laid plans for resettlement of people from the crowded Fort area ran aground on the question of how caste segregation was to remain undisturbed. Repeatedly, the Building Committee and its successor (from 1903), the Mysore City Improvement Trust, ran up against those occupants of the city whose very presence posed an unnamable threat to 'improvement'. I will give just three examples of the intractable problems posed to urban planning, even of a piecemeal kind, by lower-caste presence.

In 1880, a clutch of projects were announced in addition to the improvements to, and drainage of, the Fort. They included the Western Extension, the provision of new bathing tanks below Kukkarahalli reservoir and the establishment of Gordon Park.²⁰ Land was purchased in 1880, 1884 and 1886.²¹ Gordon Park – named after the Mysore commissioner – was formed and the extension of the bathing ghats below the Kukkarahalli tank were ordered by the Dewan. However, when no houses were built on the sites that were purchased, the government intervened. A Building Committee was established in 1886–87, which included Standish Lee, Mysore's sanitary engineer responsible for the Fort drainage and clearance, members of the Mysore Municipality, district administration and Palace, with other local notables.²²

Where occupational groups displaced from the Palace area – the Gollars, the Pindaries (irregular horseemen) and the Kakars²³ – showed eagerness to settle down, the first signs of unravelling were noted. As an 1896 memorandum had it, 'Owing to the pressing demand for house sites, no uniformity in the extension of sites was observed'; as a result, 'equality of length was observed' in the forming of streets, 'but no order was observed in the breadth'.²⁴

Roads were straightened, with plans for avenues with trees.²⁵ Sweepers' huts near the female hospital had to be removed. The huts of the Pindaries near the Jagan Mohan Palace were too many to be removed, and were first marked for improvement. A scrupulous survey and numbering of houses would act as a check on new huts springing up to undo the improvements, but by 1885, the decision was made to remove the Pindaries altogether.²⁶

²⁰Note on Important Public Works in Mysore by Mr Krishna Iyengar, file no. 25 of 1913, sl. nos. 1, 2, 3, Maramath, Divisional Archives Office (DAO), Mysuru.

²¹Dewan K. Sheshadri Iyer, memorandum, 19 Jul. 1886, file no. 12 of 1892, sl. nos. 1–57, Municipal, KSA.

²²H. Nanjundaraj Urs, memorandum, file no. 12 of 1892, sl. nos. 1–57, 19 Oct. 1896, Municipal, KSA.

²³It is not clear whether this refers to members of an Afghani Pathan tribe, or 'to an exogamous sept of Kamma and Muka Dora', in E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, vol. III (Madras, 1909), 44.

²⁴Memorandum, 19 Oct. 1896, file no. 12 of 1892, Municipal, KSA.

²⁵Memorandum, camp nos. 35 and 36, 29 Oct. 1884, Dewan K. Sheshadri Iyer, file no. 24 of 1879, sl. nos. 1–78, Municipal, KSA.

²⁶Municipal Boards' Office to secretary of the Dewan of Mysore, 25 Feb. 1885, file no. 24 of 1879, sl. nos. 1–78, Municipal, KSA.

By 1886, all land for the Western Extension had already been purchased. With Mysore's sanitary engineer Standish Lee in charge, a permanent gang of 200 convicts was to be stationed in Mysore for the establishment of the extension and bathing ghats and for building Gordon Park; only a small portion of work on the bathing tank which 'ought not to be done by convict labour' was to be organized differently.²⁷ Still, a total of 295 houses was given in exchange for those taken in the Fort; 725 sites were given out; 632 houses were built.

Looking back in 1896, the municipality could proudly claim:

In the western side of the City, the former abode of jackals and jungle animals, there are now many main and cross roads, wide streets with handsome bungalows having conservancy lanes at the back, which are very important for the health of people especially in large towns. Persons who were deprived of their houses by improvement in the Fort, and other parts of the town have all found new abodes here and many who were homeless have constructed and occupy their own houses.²⁸

This language of improvement suppressed the anxieties that had haunted the files, notings and decisions of the Building Committee, the municipality or the government, presenting instead the triumph of planning in the new extension. Yet what of its unabashed commitment to segregation? Planning the Western Extension and Chamarajpura was itself, as the discussion put it, 'castewar' (i.e. caste-wise, derived presumably from 'jatiwar'): there was to be 'a clause clearly defining the castes and classes of the community who are to occupy the houses in the specified localities, though there is to be no restriction as to the ownership of the properties'. Streets were thus laid down for 'Brahmins, Artizans, Non-Vegetarians; Europeans and Eurasians'. This category confusion, this *mélange* of caste, class, occupation and race, itself signified fear of the disarray into which social hierarchies could be thrown. Considerable official anxiety was expressed about ensuring that 'the condition having reference to different streets being allotted to different castes is not broken',²⁹ a condition that the secretary of the Building Committee affirmed was scrupulously observed. Formal title deeds were to mention the caste, since it was not only a question of who owned the new houses; it was also a case of laying down that the houses could not be let to people of other castes.³⁰

²⁷Memorandum, Dewan, 7 Jul. 1886, file no. 24 of 1879, sl. nos. 1–78, Municipal, KSA. We hear no more of the convict labourers, and whether they too were absorbed into the city.

²⁸H. Nanjunda Raj Urs, secretary, Building Committee, 19 Oct. 1896, file no. 12 of 1892, sl. nos. 1–57, Municipal, KSA.

²⁹A. Rangaswami Iyengar, deputy commissioner, Mysore, to chief secretary to Dewan of Mysore, 21 Jun. 1894, file no. 12 of 1892, sl. nos. 1–57, Municipal, KSA.

³⁰The Mysore Municipality objected to a Brahmin widow who rented her house to a 'professor', clearly non-Brahmin. 'Occupation by other castes of houses built in localities intended for specified castes in the Western Extension of the Mysore city', file no. 298 of 1893, sl. nos. 1–5, Municipal, KSA; extract from the proceedings of the Building Committee at Mysore, 8 Jun. 1894, file no. 12 of 1892, sl. nos. 1–57, Municipal, KSA; office of the secretary of the Building Committee, Mysore, to deputy commissioner, Mysore District, 16 Jun. 1894, file no. 12 of 1892, sl. nos. 1–57, Municipal, KSA. As the municipality specified, grants would be given only against a statement that sites in Chamarajpura and the Western Extension 'clearly define the castes and classes of the community' who are to occupy the houses in the specified localities. Extracts of the

Other examples abound. Three Holeyas (formerly subordinated caste) families located at Kukkerahalli village, which was the site of a large tank to supply water to the Palace, proved an especial problem in 1896: despite the Dewan's orders, the 'Holeyas refuse to move without adequate provisions for their activities (i.e. backyards for storing straw).'³¹ They considered the sites they were offered inauspicious, in general expressing their preference to remain where they were to the deputy commissioner of the Mysore District.

In his marginal notes, an unidentified bureaucrat shifted attention away from the recalcitrance of the Holeyas to explain the anxiety that wracked the breasts of the improvers:

The few Holeyas Houses referred to are those in a very low situation and during the rains, water backs up several feet against their walls and sometimes floods the floor. This water cannot be drained into the bathing tanks for obvious reasons. Hence the project in the late Special Improvement division, to place the houses on new higher sites on the south on land to be acquired and allotted for the purpose and to dispose of the drainage locally from the E.E. [executive engineer].³²

Finally, the Amildar was instructed to acquire them at as low a price as possible³³ and the land brought under the Land Acquisition Act 1894.³⁴

Similarly, since the Summer Palace had to be inoculated from disease (cholera) but also rendered 'uncontaminated' by the very presence of lower castes, a proposal was made in 1893 to acquire the houses of the Holagere of Ittigegud.³⁵ 'The inhabitants of Ittigegud repeatedly urged the necessity of removing the Holagere from its present locality on the ground of it being situated uncomfortably close to the houses of other caste people.' The matter was referred to a sub-committee, which said that 'Holeyas are mixed up with other caste people; therefore move them to higher ground because it is impossible to layout conservancy lines.' The Holeyas agreed to move to higher ground when compensated by the municipality, which hoped to recover that amount from those 'higher class of Hindus' who would come forward to take up sites, build houses and 'improve that part of the suburb which is now unsightly'.³⁶ The anxiety about caste was paralleled by the detailed, and decidedly forensic, investigation of the single cholera

proceedings of the Building Committee at Mysore, 8 Jun. 1894, file no. 12 of 1892, sl. nos. 1–57, Municipal, KSA.

³¹Improvement in Mysore City, file no. 24 of 1879, sl. nos. 1–7, Municipal, KSA.

³²Marginal notes, deputy commissioner, Mysore District, to secretary to the Government of Mysore (GoM), General and Revenue Departments, 22 Jul. 1896, file no. 24 of 1879, sl. nos. 1–7, Municipal, KSA.

³³Executive engineer, Mysore Division, to chief engineer, Mysore, 18 Aug. 1896, file no. 24 of 1879, sl. nos. 1–7, Municipal, KSA.

³⁴Proceedings of the GoM, order no. 3621, 15 Sep. 1896, file no. 24 of 1879, sl. nos. 1–7, Municipal, KSA.

³⁵President, Mysore Municipal Board to chief secretary to the Dewan of Mysore, 31 Jan. 1893; A. Rangaswami Iyengar, deputy commissioner and municipal president, to chief secretary GoM, 6 May 1893, file no. 24 of 1879, sl. nos. 1–7, Municipal, KSA. The Holagere (sometime spelt as Holageri) denoted the space occupied by Holeyas, who were regarded as an 'untouchable' caste in Mysore.

³⁶President, Mysore Municipal Board to chief secretary, 31 Jan. 1893, file no. 24 of 1879, sl. nos. 1–7, Municipal, KSA.

case, with measures suggested for transforming the sanitary habits of the general population (Figure 2).³⁷

To take another example, in 1903, it was decided to relocate about 2,000 families of Palace servants from the Fort, for which houses were to be built 'of suitable proportion' for the Palace servants of the other departments (other than Palace Barr and band) who belong to various castes and classes.³⁸ The provisions were necessary 'Keeping in viewing the object avowed of safe guarding the Royal family from infection', but also since 'The removal of so many Palace servants from the heart of the city will also relieve congestion.'³⁹ A 'fine breezy site' to the west of Chathanhalli High Road was found best suited to 'good houses', but the bureaucrat recorded in dismay: 'there is a holageri in a portion of it, and it is no exaggeration to say that its neighbourhood is shunned by all would-be house builders' who preferred to 'crowd into the opposite hollow and grounds adjoining Chamaraj Agrahar'. If only the Holageri could be removed 'the whole of this maidan can be made available for the Palace servants'.⁴⁰ And the Chamundi Extension was thus made possible.

Measures for protection from disease thus equalled those offering protection against caste pollution. But they were not free from the embarrassed recognition by bureaucrats of the formal commitment to the promise of planning, which implied a more equal distribution of facilities that were a mark of the modern. The troubling presence of the Dod Holageri was itself proof of a previous marginalization:

When the Dod Holageri was sufficiently removed from the town to secure the immunity of the latter from *contamination* [last word crossed out in the document] But the town on the south has been since growing and has outstripped the Holageri in more than one side. Its complete removal from its present situation is therefore a matter of absolute necessity from the sanitary and [white out in the document] points of view.⁴¹

The acquisition of 11 acres of land for housing of Palace servants proceeded apace, and the people of Dod Holageri were dispatched to the south of Veeranna's Weavers' Lines, as Lakshmipuram came into being.⁴²

Here too, as in the Western Extension, what took the place of the Dod Holageri was no secularized space that effaced social inequality and introduced the commodity law of equivalence. Instead, it was resolved that the Palace sub-committee should furnish a list 'castewar' of the families who would have to be housed in the extension. There were 451 houses for 16 categories of people, ranging from Brahmin and

³⁷S.M. Fraser, tutor and governor of His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore, to H. Nanjunda Rao Urs, vice president, Mysore City Municipality, 6 Feb. 1897, file no. 13 of 1896–97, sl. nos. 1–15, Municipal, KSA.

³⁸Correspondence for health camp at Chathanahalli, file no. 2 of 1902, sl. no. 23, Maramath, DAO, Mysuru.

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰Proceedings of the sub-committee for the improvement of the city of Mysore, 22 Feb. 1903, file no. 2 of 1902, sl. no. 23, Maramath, DAO, Mysuru.

⁴¹Proceedings of the sub-committee for the improvement of the city of Mysore, 17 Sep. 1903, file no. 2 of 1902, sl. no. 23, Maramath, DAO, Mysuru.

⁴²Proceedings of GoM, 3 Mar. 1903, file no. 2 of 1902, sl. no. 23, Maramath, DAO, Mysuru.

Chamrajpet in Bangalore, the reassertion of social difference over-rode the possibility of creating a more secularized space, by which class would replace caste.⁴⁵ Nor was it only the poor lower castes who were incorrigibly undisciplined about municipal law: upper castes (usually Brahmins, but also Ursus) were willing to bend, if not break, municipal rules related to the breadth of roads or the enclosure of conservancy lanes or to add to their sites and houses.⁴⁶ Though some of these practices were disallowed, it revealed the sense of growing entitlement among some sections who were encouraged in their civic neglect.⁴⁷ 'When stands are given in the house compounds', Sanitary Engineer Standish Lee complained in 1900, 'the orthodox people construct small cisterns by their side, and allow water to run into them for use as they consider it otherwise objectionable from a religious stand point'.⁴⁸ In the Jalapuri Extensions, planning went awry since there was continued adherence to principles of auspiciousness: 'According to native rules of building, the houses should face the cardinal points and so the roads were accordingly aligned' making them steep, whereas no extra steep slopes were detected in the Idga (Mohammedan) Extension.⁴⁹

The surface imperative of adhering to the rules of a sanitary and healthy modern city was revealed in the conversion of mohallas into extensions, though the obsession with preserving the caste order resulted in the creation of the 'bureaucratic agraphara'. Discussions about water supply, storm water drainage, sewage – and the material arrangements that would make that possible – V-shaped drains, stone-ware pipe traps, siphons and outfall sewers were always marked by the concessions and adjustments that people made to ensure caste segregation. Thus, 'Although no distinction was observed in allotting the sites according to communities owing to the pressing demand, as above stated, yet Brahmins and other high caste Hindoos cautiously observed to be either in one line of street, or in one agrapharam as far as possible.'⁵⁰ No wonder *Indian Engineering* commented in 1889 that

A crying evil in Mysore state is the abuse of privilege by Government officials. Whenever an extension of a congested town is undertaken, the influential officials and their protégés always reserve for themselves the best available sites,

spatial reorganisation and urban life in late colonial Delhi', Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University Ph.D. thesis, 2018; S. Sinha, 'Crime and the city: Delhi 1911–1956', Jawaharlal Nehru University Ph.D. thesis, 2020.

⁴⁵The 'Holeyas' were housed in Jalapuri, 'Pindaries' in the Idga Extension, where the inhabitants of Patanadaganagakere were also housed. Replies to queries of the Dewan by the president of the Mysore Municipality, 16 Nov. 1901, file no. 459 of 1892, sl. nos. 1–34, Municipal, KSA. See also J. Nair, *The Promise of the Metropolis: Bangalore Twentieth Century* (Delhi, 2005), 50–4; and R. Vishwanath, *The Pariah Problem: Caste, Religion and the Social in Modern India* (New York, 2014), 65.

⁴⁶Proceedings of the Building Committee of Mysore, 25 Sep. 1893; proceedings of the Building Committee of Mysore, 12 Jun. 1895, file no. 12 of 1892, sl. nos. 1–57, Municipal, KSA.

⁴⁷Extract from the proceedings of the Building Committee at Mysore, 8 Jun. 1894, file no. 12 of 1892, sl. nos. 1–57, Municipal, KSA.

⁴⁸Mr Standish Lee, superintending sanitary engineer, to chief engineer, GoM, file no. 47 of 1900, 20 Jun. 1900, sl. nos. 1–6, Municipal, KSA.

⁴⁹J.E.A. D'Cruz, assistant engineer, report to accompany plans and estimates for the drainage of Jalapuri and Idgah Extensions, 2 Jun. 1903, file no. 106D of 1903, sl. nos. 1–9, 1903–04, Municipal, KSA.

⁵⁰H. Nanjundaraj Urs, memorandum, 19 Oct. 1896, file no. 12 of 1892, sl. nos. 1–57, Municipal, KSA.

and...in the cities of Bangalore and Mysore, large plots of ground, several groups of sites are disposed of for upset prices which in many cases are only nominal, and the individuals owning them merely for the purpose of speculation are allowed to keep them vacant for years.⁵¹

Despite this, there was hearty endorsement of Mysore's plague prevention measures by Charles T. Martin, director of the Lister Institute of Preventive Medicine, who was impressed by the numbers of houses demolished and 'the number of individuals actually "planted out" in your model extensions up to the present time'. 'This method of dealing with the plague problem has not been discovered by me in any other part of India.'⁵²

Did the settlement of those evicted from the Fort area follow the same principles of raajadharma that Aya Ikegame has noted for the transformations within the Palace grounds, in which Western principles of improvement and traditional kingly role as a protector of dharma were 'somehow reconciled and strengthened'?⁵³ She continues, 'The improvement of the city was certainly one of the occasions on which people could differentiate themselves from others by using caste ideology in the same way as they would use a census to claim a higher status.'⁵⁴ Yet, of what new order was this a sign? I have shown elsewhere that even developments within the Palace Fort walls were overtaken by considerations of symmetry and balance, rather than upholding raajadharma alone.⁵⁵ Was raajadharma extended only to the people who were displaced from the Palace? Was it upheld only at the moment of Palace restructuring? Was the obligation to maintain caste segregation in the city that of the Maharaja, or the upper castes who had entrenched themselves in the modern institutional spaces of the Improvement Trust and the municipality?

Newer extensions of the 1910s and 1920s – Vontikoppal for instance – were unmarked by the anxieties of caste segregation; no doubt, upper-caste privilege had been 'secularized' within the modern city following the founding moments of extension planning in the late nineteenth century, though the market too could have played a role in keeping subordinated castes out. Such a reading is upheld by two other developments of the time: the active settlement of the members of the Ursu clan on prime sites throughout the city,⁵⁶ and the quiet burial of the vision of Patrick Geddes.

⁵¹*Indian Engineering*, 14 Jan. 1889, 24.

⁵²Charles T. Martin, director of the Lister Institute of Preventive Medicine to Sitarama Rao, chairman, Mysore Municipality, and president, Mysore CITB, 7 Oct. 1906, file no. 455 of 1905, sl. nos. 5–6, 1906, Municipal, KSA. A few years later, a more sobering assessment of the achievements of the Improvement Trust was made by the memorandum of D. Cruz, executive engineer, Mysore Improvements Division, 23 Nov. 1909, file no. 365 of 1909, sl. nos. 1–7, 1909, Municipal, KSA.

⁵³Ikegame, *Princely India Reimagined*, 121.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵Nair, 'The museumized cityscape of Mysore'.

⁵⁶As the administration report of the Maramath Department had it: 'The construction of grand bungalows for important Ursu gentlemen, is also entrusted to this department.' Sirdar Gopalraj Urs, Chammappaji Urs, Subrahmanyaraj Urs Golahalli Devajammani and Bakshi Basappaji Urs were among those who occupied 'comparatively handsome and decent' houses in the period between 1915 and 1920. *Administration Report of the Maramath Department, 1919–20*, 19, *Administration Report of the Maramath Department, 1920–21*, 19, file no. 1 of 1921, sl. nos. 2–66, Maramath, DAO, Mysuru.

Patrick Geddes' 10-day visit to Mysore in 1915 briefly opened up a new optic on the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. He exulted about the physical proximity of raja (king) and praja (people), since many relatives of the raja were still crowded around the Palace, but his ideas were swiftly thwarted by Mirza Ismail, then private secretary to the Maharaja.⁵⁷ The latter preferred an aesthetic that isolated the ruler and his Palace, thereby reorienting the relationship between the figure-ground or solid-void⁵⁸ and making the Palace a sculptural object in the midst of rolling lawns. This went beyond the imperatives of sanitizing the space of the Fort, to an active botanizing and ornamentalizing of the Fort and the city.

Botanizing: compensating for the extreme linearity of the extensions

At the Local Boards and Municipal Conference, held in Mysore in 1915, H.F. Marker, who had been the executive engineer at the Palace Maramath, and assistant engineer of the Public Works Department in Mysore, lectured on 'The aims and objects of Town Planning and how to attain them.'⁵⁹ His generalizations about town planning were unexceptional when he sang the virtues of 'fresh air, light, sunshine, relief from congestion and overcrowding, housing of the poor and attractive surroundings'. But in addition to sanitation and planning, he foregrounded the virtues of ornamentation, reserving his praise for Hardinge Circle, artistically laid out with flower beds, visually unobstructed by any architectural buildings (Figure 3). The extreme linearity of the extensions, while symbolic of urban modernity, had to be compensated by the introduction of nature's softening elements.⁶⁰

The botanizing of Mysore state had its roots in the time of Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan. It received a fresh impetus in the colonial period, under Benjamin Heyne in the early nineteenth century, continuing under John Cameron and reaching its apogee under Gustav Hermann Krumbiegel, the economic botanist who worked as superintendent of government gardens and museums and farms in Mysore from 1908 to 1932 (and continued informally thereafter).⁶¹ Krumbiegel had excellent credentials as a highly trained and experienced gardener/botanist, beginning his apprenticeship in the Royal Gardens at Pillintz (1880–84), working in the fruit gardens of Schwerine, assorted private gardens at Hamburg, entering Kew

⁵⁷M. Ismail, *My Public Life: Recollections and Reflections* (London, 1954), 49–50. For greater detail, see Nair, 'The museumized cityscape of Mysore'.

⁵⁸James Holston elaborates on the relationship between solid and void in the modernist city of Brasilia, where solids (buildings) were placed in and surrounded by large open spaces (voids), undermining the more fluid, interchangeable, relationship between solid-void, or figure-ground, that was a feature of the pre-modern city. J. Holston, *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia* (Chicago, 1989), 101–44.

⁵⁹File no. 260–24, 1917, Maramath, DAO, Mysuru.

⁶⁰On Jaipur Maharajah Ram Singh's pet public garden project, see Metcalf, *Imperial Vision*, 131, 133.

⁶¹On Benjamin Heyne and G.H. Krumbiegel, see A. Mathur and D. Da Cunha, *Deccan Traverses: The Making of Bangalore's Terrain* (New Delhi, 2006), esp. 171–83. See also P. Bowe, 'Lal Bagh – the botanical garden of Bangalore and its Kew-trained gardeners', *Garden History*, 40 (2012), 228–38; M. Jagadeesh, 'Gustav Hermann Krumbiegel, 1865–1956: renowned horticulturist and landscape architect' (Bangalore, 2016), https://archive.org/stream/Krumbiegel/Krumbiegel_djvu.txt, accessed 29 Jan. 2021; Annapurna Garimella, 'Labors of a park', www.academia.edu/42956869/Garimella_Labors_of_a_Park_ROUGH_DRAFT_of_Published_Paper (*Marg*, 2019), accessed 29 Nov. 2021.

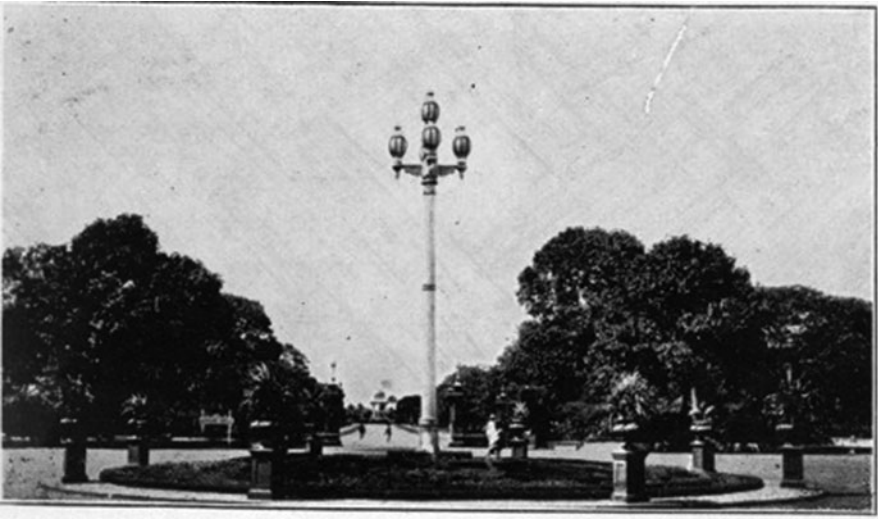


Figure 3. Hardinge Circle, Mysore City.
 Source: *Picturesque Mysore* (Government of Mysore, 1936).

Gardens in 1888 to receive training in organography, systematic botany and economic botany, taking assorted courses in science, geometry and perspective drawing. He entered the service of the Maharaja of Baroda in 1893, and established no less than 30 gardens spread over 1,903 acres, which included parks, pleasure gardens, nurseries etc.⁶² He began working for Mysore in 1908.

Even in the late nineteenth century, Standish Lee, then in charge of the establishment of Gordon Park, had been asked to source his plants from Dariya Daulat Bagh, Lall Bagh and the Forest Department.⁶³ By 1914, a large and complex department of Palace estates and gardens had been set up by absorbing the more modest Khas Chaman Kaval or grazing grounds establishment.⁶⁴ It divided the landscape of Mysore into Gardens, Estates, Pastures, Cattle Breeding Establishments and Miscellaneous. Laying out gardens – at Neshaut Bagh, Karikal Thotti, Jagan Mohan Palace and Summer Palace – was one of the principal duties of the department, catering to places of public resort. Jungles were cleared to make way for parks.⁶⁵ As one of the earliest reports of the department had it, ‘A marked feature of the day is the introduction of bright coloured foliage and flower plants. Hedges are becoming more common; and nothing is better liked than a good lawn. Fountains seats and bowers are becoming popular. Above all tidiness is insisted upon in everything.’⁶⁶ ‘Since much difficulty is felt in propagating ornamental

⁶²Krumbiegel to Dewan of Mysore, 11 Jun. 1907, file no. 315 of 1906, sl. no. 87/91, General Miscellaneous, KSA.

⁶³Dewan K. Sheshadri Iyer, memorandum, 19 Jul. 1886, file no. 12 of 1892, sl. nos. 1–57, Municipal, KSA.

⁶⁴‘History of Kavals’, file no. 2 of 1917–18, sl. no. 43, Palace Estates and Gardens, DAO, Mysore.

⁶⁵*Administration Report of the Estates and Garden Department 1924–25*, file no. 6 of 1925, sl. no. 137, Palace Estates and Gardens, 1925, DAO, Mysuru.

⁶⁶‘History of Kavals’, 9, file no. 2 of 1917–18, sl. no. 43, Palace Estates and Gardens, DAO, Mysore.

plants and shrubs' due to constant demands, it was said 'hot houses and ferneries' were to be immediately constructed both in Karikal Thotti and in the central nursery on an extensive scale.⁶⁷

How had this increasing focus on landscaping of the public and private spaces of Mysore state's major cities, Bangalore and Mysore, been achieved? From his early days in the bureaucracy, Mirza Ismail, though not quite an Attila of the straight line (like Baron Haussmann in mid-nineteenth-century Paris), was quite authoritarian in his attitudes to the form and shape of the city. He was as impatient about removing 'ugly structures'⁶⁸ as he was keen on building new ones. Mirza's triumph over the Geddesian principle in 1915, which he detailed in his memoir, gave him a freer hand to align with Krumbiegel and with the Maharaja in elevating the aesthetic to its position of independent value.⁶⁹

To offset the beauties of the built form, spaces free of unsightly habitation had to be eliminated. As private secretary to the Maharaja, by 1916, Mirza completed a process that had begun as early as 1879, calling for 'wholesale clearance' in evacuating the Fort of all but the Palace and its temples.⁷⁰ The City Improvement Trust would acquire the remaining buildings at a cost of Rs 75,000, and, in the words of the Dewan, 'All the open spaces near and in front of the Palace may be tidied up, and suitably laid out by the Superintendent of Gardens, and then handed over to the Palace for maintenance' (Figure 4).⁷¹

Krumbiegel's career in Mysore is interesting precisely because he arrived with formidable skills as an economic botanist, turned into a landscape gardener, town planner and even architect, prized for his aesthetic sensibilities, and for unseating traditions of flower and plant growing that were well known and practised for centuries.⁷² 'Finer skills and more developed ideals set horticulture apart from agriculture', he admitted, looking beyond use and commerce toward the refined art of 'Landscape Gardening', from where it was a short step towards

⁶⁷Administration Report of the Working of the Palace Estates and Gardens Department for the Year 1923–24, file no. 6 of 1925, sl. no. 137, Palace Estates and Gardens, 1925, DAO, Mysuru.

⁶⁸For instance, he declared opposition to the ugly Rani Chattram, demanding it be pulled down. *Selections from the Records of the Mysore Palace*, vol. II (Bangalore, 1997), 94. His marginal notes were equally imperious: 'The EE has got his own way of making buildings attractive. He must aim at simplicity and not make building gaudy in appearance as he is inclined to do.' Another comment: 'I have no respect or admiration for the Mysore PWD and their ways of constructing buildings are neither economical nor useful.' And vis-à-vis the stables and outhouses of railway quarters, Mirza said: 'These are a standing disgrace to that department. Let us avoid any reference to them at all!', 25 Dec. 1919, file no. 2 of 1893, sl. no. 05, vol. I, Maramath, DAO, Mysuru.

⁶⁹Lakshminarasappa, assistant engineer, Mysore, to Mirza Ismail, private secretary to the Maharaja, 3 May 1917, file no. 10 of 1916, sl. no. 203, Maramath, DAO, Mysuru.

⁷⁰Proceedings of meeting held on 3 Jul. 1915 with His Highness the Yuvaraja, Kantharaj Urs, Campbell, Krishna Iyengar and G.H. Krumbiegel, file no. 24 of 1915, sl. nos. 45, 46, 47 135–81, Municipal, KSA; Mirza Ismail, private secretary, to His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore to Dewan Visvesvaraya, 14 Dec. 1915, same file. Acquisitions continued for three years, and were paid for by the GoM. Note by Dewan Visvesvaraya, 17 Dec. 1917, file no. 24 of 1915, sl. nos. 73, 118, 124, 128–30, Municipal, KSA.

⁷¹File no. 10/1916, sl. no. 203, Mysore City Inspections by the Dewan on 23 Oct. 1916, Maramath, DAO, Mysore.

⁷²There is acknowledgment of work in 'economic botany' that references 'hybridizing and plant breeding', but the larger discussion is of the Public Gardens and Parks in Hayavadana Rao, *Mysore Gazetteer*, vol. IV, *Administrative* (Bangalore, 1929; reprint 2011), 694–712.

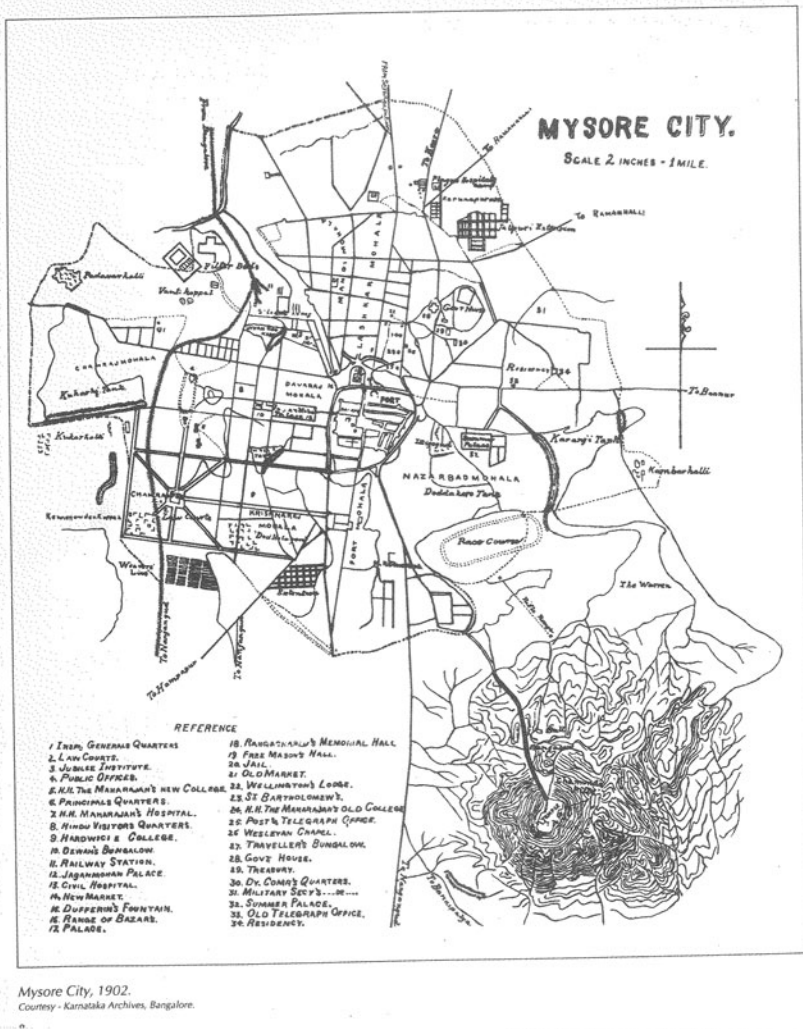


Figure 4. Map of Mysore city, 1902.
Source: T.P. Issar, *The Royal City* (Bangalore, 1991), 7.

town planning. ‘The laying out of Open Spaces, Avenues, and Boulevards are but natural adjuncts to Landscape gardening.’⁷³

The reorientation of the estates, similarly, which were largely ‘left to nature’, was crucial: ‘all sorts of trees whether they were useful or not were allowed to grow and no systematic work was being done’. Therefore old and useless trees were cut down and now ‘every attempt is being made to work the gardens in accordance with scientific principles and from a commercial point of view as far as possible’.⁷⁴

⁷³ Mathur and Da Cunha, *Deccan Traverses*, 182–3.

⁷⁴ ‘History of Kavals’, 12, file no. 2 of 1917–18, sl. no. 43, Palace Estates and Gardens, DAO, Mysuru.

This began a process in which Krumbiegel reset the urban landscapes of Mysore and Bangalore from a more or less purely aesthetic perspective: privileging the eye, focused on the lawn as a vast open green space that would enhance the sculptural qualities of buildings, particularly in the Palace compound;⁷⁵ designing borders and cement flowerpots; consigning Indian plants and flowers, particularly those used for puja, to designated spaces – at Madhuvana, Tavarekatte and Manorajan Mahal – while the rest of Mysore was awash with flowering trees, shrubs and plants of exotic hues; waging battle against ‘common Indian plants like *acalypha indica* and *arunda donax*’.⁷⁶ As the *Mysore Gazetteer* had it, ‘a qualified officer designated as Curator was in 1923 appointed’ to be in charge of the large number of gardens situated in Mysore. They included Curzon Park, Gordon Park, and the Government House Garden (Figure 5). Smaller gardens in individual homes, such as the official residence of the Dewan of the state, the private secretary’s quarters, the durbar surgeon’s quarters, the University Gardens and Sir Kantharaja Urs House also came under his purview.⁷⁷

Krumbiegel also designed temporary gardens for the Dasara Exhibition, which had become a regular annual affair.⁷⁸ By the late 1930s, it was said that ‘amidst fairly laid out Gardens, the Exhibition Ground itself is a thing of beauty’.⁷⁹ It was an aesthetic that required constant interventions by Krumbiegel, and training of those employed. He instructed the gardeners at Lokranajan Mahal, for instance, ‘to remove the shrubs’ leaving one ‘here and there and far apart and outside the compound wall to make a lawn’.⁸⁰

Krumbiegel’s skills as an economic botanist were successfully deployed in Mysore,⁸¹ but for the most part, the distinction between horticulture and agriculture, town and country, and use value versus exchange value, were tilted in favour of enhanced visual pleasure.⁸² Nevertheless, the horticultural splendours of Mysore were unusual, since the favourable climate, water and soil combined to make the state a place where both tropical and the temperate plants could grow side by side, resulting in considerable experimentation with hybridization and crossbreeding.⁸³

⁷⁵For details, see Nair, ‘The museumized cityscape of Mysore’.

⁷⁶‘History of Kavals’, 9, file no. 2 of 1917–18, sl. no. 43, Palace Estates and Gardens, DAO, Mysore.

⁷⁷Rao, *Mysore Gazetteer*, vol. IV, 712–13: Gardens and Parks.

⁷⁸G.H. Krumbiegel to secretary All India Dasara Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition, 18 Jun. 1930, file no. Exhibition Committee 9 of 1930, sl. nos. 1 and 2, DAO, Mysuru.

⁷⁹*Mysore Information Bulletin*, vol. II, no. 10, Oct. 1939, 250.

⁸⁰Memorandum of instruction from G.H. Krumbiegel, file no. 2 of 1917–18, sl. no. 43, Maramath, DAO, Mysuru.

⁸¹For instance, the dislocations caused to the supply of fuel and fodder to the Palace by the predominance given to ornamental gardening had to be managed as well. *Administration Report of the Estates and Garden Department 1924–25*, file no. 6 of 1925, sl. no. 137, DAO, Mysuru.

⁸²The Dasara Exhibition, however, included a ‘Horticultural and Economic Botany’ section, as well as a town planning section, both hailed as attractive in themselves. ‘Dussera in Mysore’, *Times of India*, 23 Oct. 1928.

⁸³Ismail, *My Public Life*, 40–1. I am not discussing here the design and ornamentation of Brindavan Gardens, credited to the visions of Mirza and Krumbiegel: see, however, S. Narayanswamy, ‘Sir Mirza’s contribution to ornamental gardens of Bangalore and Mysore’, *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, Special Number, 38, no. 4 (1997), 51–4. It is interesting that models for garden building that drew from the symmetrical Mughal Garden, as in Dariya Daulat at Srirangapatnam, appear to have been relinquished in favour of European-style parks and gardens, except in Brindavan Gardens. M. Jagadeesh says ‘He prepared the landscape plan [for Brindavan Gardens] on the lines of Charbagh, a Mughal Style Garden’, ‘Gustav

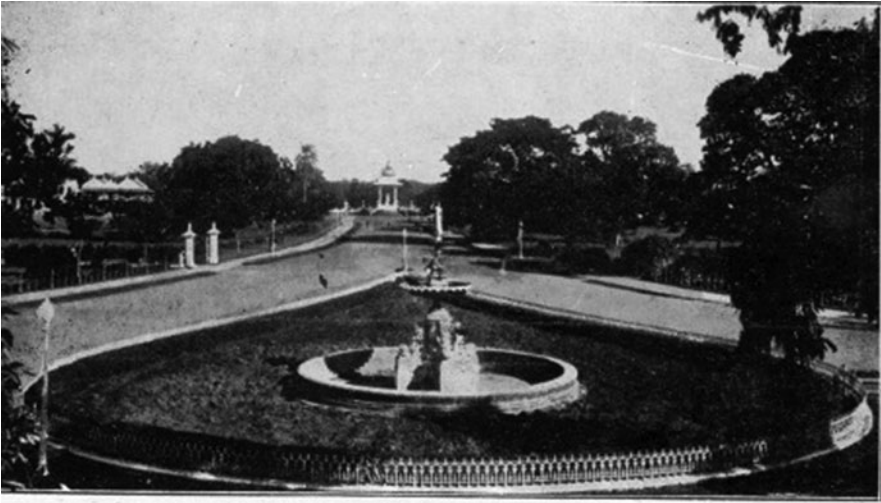


Figure 5. Curzon Park, Mysore city.

Source: *Picturesque Mysore* (Government of Mysore, 1936).

At the time when Krumbiegel took over as the economic botanist of Mysore, the landscaped Gordon Park and Curzon Park, whose status as ornamental or landscape was somewhat indeterminate, were the two parks of Mysore. The Palace itself was ‘without a garden’ until then. Thus, even the Fort walls, which had no military relevance by the early twentieth century, were turned into design objects and a new gate was set into the Fort wall to bring the refurbished Palace into a direct line of vision from the eastern end.⁸⁴ This elite vision raised the obvious question of resources, and the tension between the municipality and Trust Board on the question of financial responsibility for botanizing the city in the name of a ‘public convenience’ brought contradictions to the fore. When the municipality suggested in 1915 that the Trust Board pay the Rs 47,996 for the planting of trees on the main roads of the city, and take over payment to an avenue inspector, an indignant board replied that while no doubt ‘the planting of avenue trees is desirable from a sanitary point of view’, there was no room in its founding principles for ‘roadside arboriculture’ since ‘the Mysore City Improvement Regulation is to provide special attention to slums and other insanitary areas. Anything intended to beautify the city is not...intended to fall within the scope of operations of the Trust Board.’ Such objections proved ineffective against the formidable triad of expert, bureaucrat and monarch.⁸⁵ By 1930, 25 of Mysore’s 180 mile roadage were avenues with trees,

Hermann Krumbiegel’, 19. By the late 1930s, Brindavan Gardens had become an important part of the tourist circuit, a veritable ‘Fairlyland on the Cauvery’. See, for instance, the lavishly illustrated SALAR-E-HIND (a special number on Mysore) published by Saif Azad, (Bombay, Sep. 1938).

⁸⁴Nair, ‘The museumized cityscape of Mysore’.

⁸⁵The Maharaja’s detailed interventions on matters ranging from Palace furnishing and architecture, acquisition of property for construction of royal homes, design of new Palaces, avenues and public parks and memorials, reveal as keen an interest in the development of Mysore as the bureaucrat and the expert. This ranged from approval of designs for houses in the syces lines to designs and decisions on the Palace

a touch of Paris being introduced in the naming of two broad avenues as boulevards (Figure 6). It was Mirza Ismail, as we shall see, who recognized that the state had a responsibility towards making city beautification an encashable proposition.⁸⁶ There was growing recognition of the pilgrim and tourist public which visited the city for the Dasara festivities, including the now annual Dasara Exhibition, and the jatre (or festival procession) to the Chamundi Hills.⁸⁷ Ornamentalism – the gastronomy of the eye – was no longer a luxury but an imperative.

Ornamentalism: the gastronomy of the eye

The ‘innoculation’ of the royal family from potential infection was the goal of the decongestion of the Fort and the laying of sewage lines (prior to the 1898 plague).⁸⁸ In Mysore, the sanitarian logic was also extended to protecting the family from what were increasingly deemed as unsightly features of the city. Such dedication to the gastronomy of the eye, already inaugurated in efforts at botanizing, was no doubt shared by other princely states, such as Baroda, Jaipur and Bikaner.⁸⁹ But Mysore’s urban aesthetic was a product of a unique alliance between technical experts, bureaucrats and the ruler himself (as well as his family). Far from being subordinated to an imperial aesthetic, Mysore’s elites knitted together a vision for the city, which, despite critiques to the contrary, succeeded in establishing the depth of historical distance, while elevating and valorizing the visual elements of city design.

The logic of enhancing the beauty of the city, in addition to rehousing the displaced, was once more raised by Dewan Visvesvaraya, in marking the construction of the Vontikoppal Extension on 1,037 acres: ‘This Extension will meet a much felt need, and will add considerably to the beauty of Mysore city.’⁹⁰

Ornamentalism in the city took many forms: for one, it involved the construction of Palaces for three sisters of the Maharaja between 1905 and 1917.⁹¹ Second, it involved settling the Ursu clansmen on equally important sites, placed under the care of the Maramath Department.⁹² Third, there was insistence, from the time

building: Mirza Ismail to V.V. Karve, Mysore Municipality, 11 Jul. 1914, file no. 18 of 1913, sl. no. 116, Maramath, DAO, Mysuru. The Maharaja’s personal interest in city planning was testified in many writings, for instance M. Vivesvaraya, *Memoirs of My Working Life* (Bangalore, Published by Author, 1951), 87.

⁸⁶The Mysore Dasara had attracted between 150,000 and 200,000 visitors by the 1930s; ‘Mysore city would not thus have benefited if it was not made so attractive, and if the festivities were not held on such a grand scale.’ Ismail, *My Public Life*, 50. Also Narayanswamy, ‘Sir Mirza’s contribution’.

⁸⁷GO no. 221–5 MI 51–14–63, dated 12 Jul. 1915, file no. 265 of 1914, sl. nos. 1 and 2, Municipal, KSA.

⁸⁸By 1910, the whole city was provided with underground sewage, thanks to the efforts of the then chief engineer, M. Visvesvaraya. Hayavadana Rao, *Mysore Gazetteer*, vol. V, part 1 (Bangalore, 1930), 766, 772.

⁸⁹Metcalf, *Imperial Vision*, 105–40. On the cities of Saurashtra, and especially on the aspiration of Jamnagar to be Paris, see H. Spodek, ‘Urban politics in the local kingdoms of India: a view from the princely capitals of Saurashtra under British rule’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 7 (1973), 253–75, especially 261.

⁹⁰M. Vivesvaraya: 6 Jan. 1916, file no. 24 of 1915, sl. nos. 16 and 42, Municipal, KSA; similar arguments were made for the Chamundi Extension to the south of the Fort. T.G. Lakshmana Rao, chairman CITB, to V.R. Thyagraja Iyer, secretary, Revenue Department, GoM, 7 Jun. 1916, file no. 24 of 1915, sl. nos. 101, 113, 117, 126–7, Municipal, KSA.

⁹¹I have discussed this in detail in ‘The museumized cityscape of Mysore’.

⁹²File no. 15 of 1915, sl. no. 175, Building Sites for Certain Ursu Gentlemen, Maramath, DAO, Mysuru. I have elsewhere described this process, from which I also draw here: ‘The museumized cityscape of Mysore’.

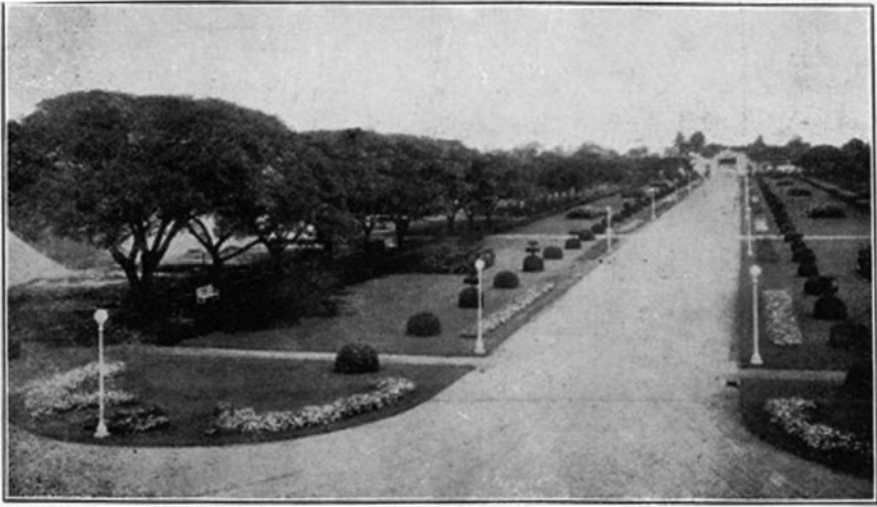


Figure 6. The avenue leading to Government House, Mysore.
 Source: *Picturesque Mysore* (Government of Mysore, 1936).

of Sheshadri Iyer, not only on ‘good frontages’ for these newly constructed homes, often at municipal expense, but also on broad streets with avenue trees.⁹³

None of these measures went uncontested, whether by individuals querying the ‘public purpose’ in acquisition of land for private aristocratic homes,⁹⁴ or the municipality itself objecting to expenditure on beautification. For instance, Dewan Sheshadri Iyer’s demand for good frontages to be built on Pleasure Palace Road at municipal cost was strenuously opposed because it was considered of doubtful benefit and not a legitimate charge on municipality funds, which had to be spent on the sanitation of the city. Still, as many as 13 owners were asked to be paid by the municipality, while other structures, including temples, were improved at Palace cost. The municipality, meanwhile, took on this burden not as a loan but as something to be recovered from the people concerned.⁹⁵

Mirza Ismail, faulted by visiting journalists for having paid too much attention to the aesthetics of city building when there were hungry people around, silenced his critics by linking the beautification efforts to the economic gains that accrued from the thousands who flocked to the Dasara festival.⁹⁶ As I have shown elsewhere, the emergence of a large and growing pilgrim and tourist public also settled the question of whether it was the Palace or the state that should pay for the expensive beautification of the city and even the alteration of the Palace *sejje* to

⁹³Dewan K. Sheshadri Iyer, memorandum, 29 Oct. 1884, file no. 24 of 1879, sl. nos. 1–7, Municipal, KSA.

⁹⁴On the challenge to the acquisition of his land for the Third Maharajkumari’s mansion by Murti Rao, see Nair, ‘The museumized cityscape of Mysore’, 148.

⁹⁵File no. 76 of 1901–02, sl. nos. 1–16, Municipal, KSA.

⁹⁶Concluding speech at the Dasara session of the Representative Assembly on 22 Oct. 1937, by Diwan Mirza M. Ismail, in *Address of the Diwans of Mysore to the Mysore Representative Assembly from 1913 to 1938*, vol. III, 333, as cited in Ikegame, *Princely India Reimagined*, 158.

accommodate larger numbers seeking darshan during the birthday and Dasara darbars.⁹⁷

Such beautification drives were not without their conceits: Mysore's boulevards are a case in point. To the extent that boulevards usually signified broad roads with medians and lines of trees that emphasize arrival at an architectural feature or a landscape, Mysore's boulevards led nowhere in particular. Along the 1 km stretch of Krishnaraja Boulevard were a series of discretely positioned buildings, from the Oriental library to the court complex, each individually ornamental, but with no overall coherence in terms of purpose or architectural elements (Figure 7)

Mirza's hopes for Narasimharaja Boulevard, which stretched past the New Guest Mansion (Lalitadri Mahal) towards Chamundi, were dashed when the Ursus were permitted by the Maharaja to build their homes along that road. Both boulevards ended up emphasizing the sculptural quality of monumental buildings, though the road itself became a metaphor of progress, as of unimpeded movement (Figure 8).

Elements of the urban were re-purposed to enhance the aesthetic value of the Fort, instead of enabling easier sanitary maintenance. Encircling the Palace, the Fort wall served no strategic or protective function, and yet was useful in marking off and isolating the Palace within it as a sculptural element. Unlike the Bangalore Fort, which was dismantled by the late nineteenth century since it was strategically redundant, the Mysore Fort was carefully rebuilt, and continually refined as a voluptuous design element. Until the nineteenth century, Forts in the presidency cities marked 'the presence of an occupying power',⁹⁸ but they were pragmatically dismantled to make way for more contemporary needs. Mysore represents an unusual example of a Fort that was rebuilt and maintained (up to the present day) solely for its symbolic and independent aesthetic value.

Despite recognizing the irreducibility of caste practices within the sphere of the modern, Ikegame overlooks the independent place of the aesthetic in emerging conceptualizations of the city, which centrally involved the 'rule of experts' – horticulturists (e.g. G.H. Krumbiegel); architects (e.g. Henry Irwin, E.W. Fritchley, Bruno Paul⁹⁹ Lakshminarasappa and P. Subrahmanyam); sanitary engineers and public health experts (e.g. Standish Lee) and artists (e.g. K. Keshavaiah, Y. Nagaraju, S. Shankara Raju, S.R. Iyengar and Y. Subramanya Raju) – to create a new 'bureaucracy of beauty'.¹⁰⁰ The construction of the new East Gate was freed from norms of Fort building, since it did not have the customary temple to Anjaneya.¹⁰¹ Instead, there was pronounced emphasis on symmetry: the Gayathri temple (built between 1929 and 1948) was envisaged as a complement and a balance to the existing Trineshwaraswami temple, for instance. Such a subordination of the norms of Fort and temple building to aesthetic compulsions calls into question the argument that there was strict adherence to the moral obligations of raajadharma.¹⁰²

⁹⁷Nair, *Mysore Modern*, 150–7; Ikegame, *Princely India Reimagined*, 135.

⁹⁸Metcalf, *Imperial Vision*, 8.

⁹⁹*Selections from the Records of the Mysore Palace*, vol. II, 73–5.

¹⁰⁰I borrow the term from A. Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty: Design in the Age of Its Global Reproducibility* (Cambridge, MA, 2006).

¹⁰¹See, for instance, S. Srinivas, *Landscapes of Urban Memory: The Sacred and the Civic in India's High Tech City* (Hyderabad, 2001), 38–43.

¹⁰²Nair, 'The museumized cityscape of Mysore'.

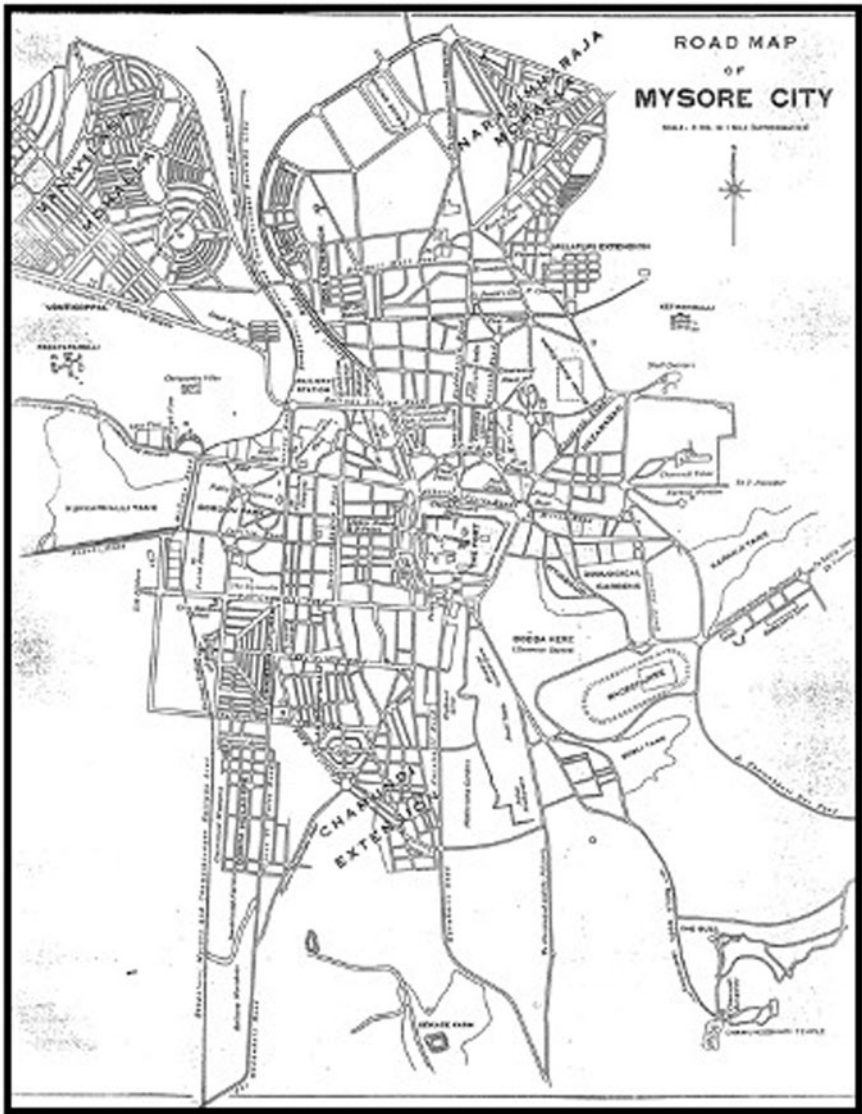


Figure 7. Map of Mysore city, 1930, showing the Narasimharaja Boulevard in the south-east corner; the Krishnaraja Boulevard, which runs before the Law Courts, is unmarked in this map. Source: C. Parsons, *Mysore City* (London, 1930).

Spectacularizing: a new social memory and narrative time

‘The Dasara in Mysore is observed as a semi-religious function’, said Hayavadana Rao in his 1930 *Mysore Gazetteer*.¹⁰³ Indeed, by the 1920s, there was a distinct

¹⁰³Rao, *Mysore Gazetteer*, vol. V, 780.



Figure 8. Individual buildings as ornaments to the city: Mysore High Court, c. 1907.
Source: Clare Arni/Martin Henry Postcard Collection, Bangalore.

resetting of the relations between the city and the Palace that breached the strict separation between the sacred and the civic. There were ample signs of the large domestic and non-domestic tourist public arriving in Mysore, no longer just for participation in the Chamundi jatre (which brought as many as 10,000 people to Mysore in 1928), but to savour the visual pleasures of a princely city. The great periodic influx was partly addressed in the steady expansion of the Palace *sejje*. The Maharaja and the people of Mysore and those from beyond were increasingly drawn into a new temporality in this princely city. The interactions were multi-layered, since not only did the Maharaja journey out into the city on the day after Dasara and on his birthday,¹⁰⁴ but people too began to flock to the Palace for the durbars, to the Art Gallery and the annualized Dasara Exhibition for recreational pleasures just as much as to propitiate the Goddess Chamundeswari (Figure 9).

The city of Mysore entered the Palace in more ways than one. Between 1934 and 1945, a series of 26 large-scale murals were mounted on the walls of the Amba Vilas Palace, featuring the Dasara procession of Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV, his brother and his nephew, as well as some representations of the Birthday Procession, the Durga Puja and the car festival at Chamundi.¹⁰⁵ Based on photographs, the murals doubled the landscape of the city. It also doubled the act of witnessing, since

¹⁰⁴B.R. Rao, 'The Dasara celebrations in Mysore', *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, 11 (1921), 301–11.

¹⁰⁵*The Magnificent Mysore Dasara* (Bangalore, 1994).



Figure 9. The Mysore Palace (Amba Vilas) after the renovations and reconstruction of the *sejje* (porch), c. 1932.

Source: Clare Arni/Martin Henry Postcard Collection, Bangalore.

those who were present on the streets of Mysore were now enshrined on the walls, themselves being seen along with the royal procession. The city's emergence as a processional space, and the Maharaja's ritualized circumambulation of the city – which was witnessed by its residents – was doubled as viewers walked through the marriage pavilion, vicariously mingling with participants in the Dasara procession (Figure 10). As much importance was given to the meticulously identified bureaucracy, colonial officials and other social and cultural elites as to members of the procession and the ordinary people of Mysore, atop their terraces and homes.¹⁰⁶

In this period, the city had already acquired the depth of historical distance. Lewis Rice, the author of *Mysore and Coorg: A Gazetteer*, had claimed in 1896 that Mysore had no antiquity, but his successor, Hayavadana Rao, in 1930 revised that sentence to read that 'The present town of Mysore can boast of considerable antiquity', tracing mention of the place back to the tenth century.¹⁰⁷ If this claim to antiquity became the basis for building a new social memory, equally successful was the claim of the pilgrim/tourist who participated in the production of a new narrative time. Henceforward, the Dasara procession became as much a site of spectation as the splendours of the Palace itself. The procession and its representation competed with the auspiciousness of the darshan of the Maharaja, sometimes even superseding it, as Mysore city became increasingly associated with the emergence of mass tourism.

¹⁰⁶Rao, 'The Dasara celebrations'.

¹⁰⁷L. Rice, *Mysore and Coorg: A Gazetteer Compiled for Government*, vol. II: *Mysore by Districts* (Bangalore, 1876), 256; Rao, *Mysore Gazetteer*, vol. V, 750.



Figure 10. Mural of the Birthday Procession of Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV, with his brother, Naraimsharaja Wodeyar, and nephew, Jayachamarajendra Wodeyar, all on horseback, Amba Vilas Palace, Mysore. Artist: Y. Nagaraju. Photo credit: Clare Arni, Bengaluru.

Conclusion

The arrival of the ‘modern’ in a city like Mysore marked a sharp departure from other forms of monumentality. There was no social class whose ideological power was writ large in the space of the city, as happened in fin-de-siècle Vienna.¹⁰⁸ Neither did a strategic imperative lead to city transformation, as was true of Lucknow and Delhi.¹⁰⁹ Nor did it fulfil a grand imperial vision, of which the building of New Delhi was the best example.¹¹⁰ Mysore challenges Clifford Geertz’s well-known inversion of the relationship between power and pomp, and as carried forward by Nicholas Dirks in his discussion of the little kingdoms of southern India.¹¹¹ Mysore city had escaped smoke-stack industrialization, and was not freighted with the duties of an administrative capital. Rather than representing the depletion of de jure power, and support for pomp in its stead, Mysore’s landscape spoke of a new narrative contract between people and Palace, mediated powerfully by the bureaucracy, which negotiated multiple new demands being placed on the Palace, as well as emerging demands for a right to the city. It

¹⁰⁸On the liberal ordering of Vienna, see C. Schorske, ‘The Ringstrasse: its critics, and the birth of urban modernism’, in *Fin de siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York, 1981), 24–111; D. Harvey, *Paris: Capital of Modernity* (London, 2006).

¹⁰⁹Gupta, *Delhi between Two Empires*; Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow*, 27–144.

¹¹⁰S. Liddle, ‘The city as the site of spectacle’, Unit 35, *Colonial Cities 1, Urbanisation in India*, Indira Gandhi National Open University, School of Social Sciences, Delhi, 2014, 34–7.

¹¹¹C. Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton, 1980); N. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge, 1988).

was no theorized, singular or totalizing vision, but a piecemeal, provisional one. Despite the range of powers involved – the government of Mysore, the Palace, the municipality, the Building Committee and the Trust Board – an interesting compromise emerged between the inhabitants, the technocrats and the Maharaja in asserting some norms of city planning while continuing to defy others.

At the same time, we have seen the attention paid to the grammar of caste in the maintenance of what I have called ‘the bureaucratic agrahara’. The foundational deformations of planning reveal a commitment to the public rule of planning; these rules were, however, subordinated to norms of private entitlement, whether they were based on caste or on proximity to the ruling chief.

The relationship between the ‘traditional’ and the ‘modern’ in styles of city building and architecture was redrawn since principles of religious ‘tradition’ were incorporated not only in the styles of decoration (as in the interiors of the Palace), but also in the very techniques of infrastructure building. K.P. Puttanna Chetty, as Bangalore municipal president, might have made pious exhortations in 1915 for maintaining cities as livable in and clean by taking on civic responsibilities as a ‘religious obligation’, but the ground had been laid for a distinct social ordering.¹¹²

The segregationist logic that had been incorporated as tradition in city planning was, by the 1930s, refashioned into a different claim on tradition, that of Mysore’s antiquity focused on the Palace and its increasingly secularized rituals.¹¹³ By the mid-twentieth century, Mysore city was marked by the contradictory, but simultaneous, emergence of a secularized upper-casteness and an open avowal by non-Brahmin castes of caste difference (as evident in the pages of *Mysore Star* and *Sampadabhyudhya*, non-Brahmin and Brahmin newspapers respectively). No wonder M.A. Sreenivasan, as president of the Mysore Municipal Council and chairman of the Mysore City Improvement Trust Board from 1938 to 1939, expressed his distaste for the ‘politicized atmosphere’ in the municipality. Instead, he set for himself the task of

lobbying, talking to individual councillors, visiting the mohallas and speaking to citizens to explain that water supply and sewerage were *casteless, neither Brahmin nor non-Brahmin*, that every foul pit latrine removed and replaced by a flush latrine in any locality was the greatest service that could be rendered for the upliftment of the Depressed Classes, apart from eliminating the risk of cholera, typhoid and other diseases in the city.¹¹⁴

Sreenivasan also recounts his contribution to the city of Mysore: a modern agrahara (his choice of term, which is translated as ‘group housing colonies’) of 40 houses, built by the municipality for Rs 5,000. Perhaps it was with good reason

¹¹²*Mysore Star*, 4 Jul. 1915.

¹¹³I would like to thank Ajantha Subramanian for urging me to emphasize this point. In Oct. 1927, Mirza Ismail was asked by Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV to travel behind him in the most important Hindu festivals of Dasara. M. Bhagwan, *Sovereign Spheres: Princes, Education and Empire in Colonial India* (Delhi, 2003), 160.

¹¹⁴M.A. Sreenivasan, *The Last Mysore Pradhan* (Bangalore, 2005), 109.

that *Mysore Star* complained about the ‘nabobism’ of the municipal president, who behaved like the monarch of all he surveyed.¹¹⁵

Despite this indifference of the municipality, it is clear that Mysore’s reinvented landscape had forged a new narrative link with the people of Mysore. It would remain an enduring expression of the triangulated power of the expert, the bureaucrat and the Maharaja, in the service of a distinctly monarchical modernity.

¹¹⁵*Mysore Star*, 2 Jul. 1922. It is interesting that the *Mysore Star* discussed municipal matters only in terms either of elections and representative questions or of water supply, drainage and sewage, clean surroundings, etc. There is a singular absence of interest in questions of city aesthetics, or even architecture; certainly there is no discussion of the new extensions and their monopoly by upper castes. There are, however, detailed bromides on the municipality itself as a site of unjustifiable Brahminical dominance, corruption and deceit. For instance, *Mysore Star*, 2 Aug. 1924, 10 Aug. 1924, 17 Aug. 1924, 25 Aug. 1924, 9 Oct. 1929.