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ROLE AND POTENTIALITY OF TRADITIONAL MARKET SYSTEMS IN THIRD WORLD URBANIZATION Some Observations From South India

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PERSPECTIVES AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The problem of severe and growing distortions in Third World urban systems such as hierarchical polarization¹, spatial imbalances², functional deficiencies³ and socio-economic biases⁴ has become more and more acute. In India, every new census adds fresh dimensions to these problems. The provisional Population Tables of the 1981 Census⁵ are a case in point. They reveal a marked acceleration in the pace of urbanization, along with growing imbalances, during the decade 1971-81.

However, as has to be expected in a vast country like India, urbanization processes, patterns and problems vary considerably from region to region⁶. Hence scientists and planners have become increasingly aware that the phenomenon of overall acceleration in urban growth and its diverse causes and problems have to be explained at a regional level through the working of the respective regional economies⁷. This will be the first major perspective of the paper.

The same holds good for solving the problems. Again, regional settlement structures and processes have to be the starting-point for formulating regional policies. In addition to mere economic considerations, socio-cultural and political factors have to be taken into account⁸. This will be the second major perspective of the paper.

When considering regional structures and processes, scientists and planners should be aware of the existence, importance and potential of indigenous, long-standing elements of the space economy⁹. Such elements which have evolved without any planning "from above" may truly indicate the needs and problems of the regional society; moreover, they may serve as starting-points for a regional policy that focusses on the basic needs and participation of the rural masses. This will be the third major perspective of the paper.

Taking the South Indian state of Tamilnadu as a case, the paper will try to explain its urbanization experience through the working of its different regional economies. In this context, one important indigenous element of Tamilnadu's regional space economies, namely traditional rural market systems, will serve as a key variable. By examining this variable, the paper tries to highlight some spatial, functional and social deficiencies of Tamilnadu's urban system. Eventually the paper argues that such "grass-roots" elements of the space economy may have a potential for urban systems development "from below".

DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MULTI-LEVEL NODAL SYSTEMS

Recently, small and medium-sized towns have attracted the attention of regional planners who strive to overcome the counter-developmental effects of unbalanced urban systems in Third World countries¹⁰. This new stream of regional policy can be regarded as a reaction to the generally poor performance of the older "growth pole" concepts¹¹. In this context, multi-level nodal concepts have been developed, which shift the focus of regional planners away from large urban centres and capital-intensive large industrial undertakings to small and medium-sized towns.

In India, such multi-level nodal concepts have been discussed since the Third Five Year Plan (1961/62-1965/66)¹². The work of MISRA and SUNDARAM13 can be regarded as a good example of the latest stage of this discussion. The starting-point of MISRA and SUNDARAM is their belief that urbanization in India is not a process to be feared, provided that it is deliberately planned so that it is made to shed its "parasitic"¹⁴ nature. The older concept of sectoral growth poles, however, is rejected by MISRA and SUNDARAM, on the grounds that it will create "volcanic islands in the ocean of tradition" which will be "barren because for a great majority of people, they will be out of bounds"¹⁵. The concept of functional and sectoral growth poles is even more unacceptable against the background of the present emphasis on distributive justice in Indian development planning¹⁶, because it is likely to accentuate inequities¹⁷. Instead, MISRA and SUNDARAM propose the creation of a "well-knit system of growth foci", that, to their conviction, will lead to a "generative" type of urbanization¹⁸.

The system of growth foci consists of a five-tier hierarchy, each on a different regional level and each with specific functions ¹⁹. Firstly, on a macroregional level, growth poles are suggested, where tertiary activities shall dominate and from where growth and development impulses shall diffuse to the entire nation. Secondly, on a meso-regional level, growth centres with the emphasis on industry shall mainly serve to counter the dominance of the metropolitan centre. Thirdly, on a micro-regional level, growth points shall mainly be engaged in the handling and processing of agricultural products. They correspond to what JOHNSON²⁰ calls market towns. Finally on interlocal and local levels, service centres and central villages shall provide a minimum of social and economic services for the population of even the remotest parts of the country. Such a system of growth foci is meant to provide both vertical and horizontal linkages integrating the national space into a single unit²¹.

To sum up, growth foci shall serve mainly three purposes. Firstly, they shall function as centres where innovation and growth are generated and diffused. Secondly, they shall function as service centres in the sense of CHRISTAL-LER's Central Places²². Thirdly, they shall function as centres of spatial, economic and social integration.

It is the objective of this paper to focus on the lower strata of MISRA and SUNDARAM's hierarchy and, in doing so, concentrate on the service and integrative functions of growth foci development. These two aspects are regarded as critical elements of the rural development process, because the living conditions of the rural masses are largely determined by the services available and accessible to them²³ and because an internal territorial integration²⁴ based on a network of small centres²⁵ is considered to be the suitable spatial framework for rural development "from below"²⁶.

URBANIZATION IN TAMILNADU 1961 - 1971 - 1981 (Figs. 1 and 2)

Tamilnadu's urban system is dominated by Madras City and its urban agglomeration which reached a population of 4.3 million in 1981. For Tamilnadu, Madras is clearly a primate city²⁷, by far exceeding Coimbatore, Madurai and Salem agglomerations, both in its dimension and functions. Spatially, we observe an evident dichotomy in the distributional pattern of urban centres which coincides with the physiography of Tamilnadu (Fig.3). In the eastern lowlands, towns, many of them small or medium-sized, are generally evenly distributed, with no major cities breaking this uniform pattern. Contrary to this, the urban system is highly concentrated in the western upland part of the State. Here we see a number of large cities, with many satellite towns clustered around them, and considerable gaps in the urban system, where even small and medium-sized towns are missing. From this we can establish first evidence that the service and integrative functions of the urban system which are under consideration in this paper are probably insufficient in the western interior part of Tamilnadu.

The urbanization process between 1961 and 1971 reveals four major trends (Fig. 1):

1. The urban population increased at a rate of 38,6 %.





- 2. 75,5 % of this increase occured in class I towns (over 100 000 inhabitants).
- 3. The smaller a town, the lower was its growth rate. Towns of classes IV to VI (below 20 000 inhabitants) had even negative rates, which indicates outmigration.
- 4. 151 new towns emerged, so that the total number of towns reached 443.

Spatially, we observe a marked tendency that urban growth concentrated in the western upland part of the State, leaving the eastern lowland part stagnating. In the west, urban growth occured mainly around the large cities, first of all around Madras, but also around Madurai, Coimbatore, Erode, Salem and Trichy agglomerations. Here, medium-sized towns show growth rates that are far above average, and here we also find the vast majority of the new towns that emerged in the $60s^{28}$. This corresponds to the tendency that the growth rate of small and medium-sized towns decreases with increasing distance from the cities. To sum up, urbanization in Tamil Nadu in the 60s was a regionally dichotomous, spatially highly concentrated phenomenon.

Between 1971 and 1981, the rate of urban growth declined to 27,8 %. The spatial pattern of urbanization, however, remained basically the same. Madras City, and especially the surrounding towns, still reveal extremely high growth rates. The same is true to the urban agglomerations of Madurai and Coimbatore. Their growth rates increased to 50 resp. 100 % during the decade. This can only partly be attributed to the fact that satellite towns were incorporated into the city proper. Comparing upland and lowland urbanization, we find that the described dichotomy in urban growth patterns has further been accentuated in the 70s.

We may conclude from this that small and medium-sized towns that could function as service centres for the rural population and that might contribute to integrating the space economy of Tamilnadu are decreasing in importance²⁹. They are highly unevenly distributed, especially in the western parts of the state, and this trend has been accelerated during the last two decades.

EXPLAINING TAMILNADU'S URBANIZATION PROCESS AND PATTERNS

It is not the main concern of this paper to discuss the factors that determined Tamilnadu's urbanization process and patterns in detail. We may therefore confine this point to summarizing an explanatory attempt made by KURIEN and JAMES in their study on economic change in Tamilnadu during the 60s³⁰ and to adding some comments.

In order to explain the considerably higher urban growth rates in the west, KURIEN and JAMES make a basic distinction between dry (unirrigated) districts in the west and wet (irrigated) districts in the coastal lowlands of Tamilnadu (Fig. 3). Urbanization, to their opinion, is a reflection of the



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diverging regional economies of wet and dry cultivation, which are in turn determined by physiographic and rainfall patterns (Fig. 3). Wet cultivation is essentially monocultural and economic activities are centred around paddy cultivation. Because it is highly labour intensive and because land is frequently utilized, the workforce is retained in rural areas, and a sizeable number of dependents is supported. Wet districts appear to be largely selfcontained, self-sustained and essentially closed in terms of the nature of the interaction within them. They have a tendency to perpetuate themselves and have limited ingredients which can absorb and develop change impulses from outside. Contrary to this, dry cultivation is basically diversified. With considerable cash crop cultivation, it is also more commercialised than wet cultivation. In contrast to wet districts, dry districts have many foci of economic activity besides agriculture. Agricultural activity alone does not provide labour opportunities throughout the year, and hence many households have to be engaged in both cultivation and other activities. Dry districts are not as settled as wet districts, and mobility of the labour force is an inherent factor. Economic activity in the dry districts is thus considered to be essentially open and unstable with many ingredients than can absorb, retain and reinforce external stimuli.

To KURIEN and JAMES' opinion, urbanization patterns exactly reflect this dichotomy between the regional economies. Stagnating towns in the wet districts are explained as manifestations of a stagnating volume of rural-agrarian activities. In this type of town, in their number and spatial distribution, full capacity in trade and other transactions connected with primary activity and household industry has already been realized. So, a certain type of urbanization process that KURIEN and JAMES call "old style urbanization" had been fully elaborated and had exhausted itself by the beginning of the 60s.

Contrary to this, "new style urbanization" in the west is based on secondary, mainly industrial activities, that had proliferated markedly during the 60s and that can be associated with the striking growth of urban agglomerations in the dry districts of Tamilnadu.

Basically, KURIEN and JAMES thus explain the urbanization process through the dominant role of geophysical factors such as rainfall patterns and physiographic features, that shape the regional economies which, in turn, determine urbanization process and patterns. Such a "geo-deterministic" explanation, however, seems insufficient. Firstly, KURIEN and JAMES overlook historical factors that, in precolonial and colonial times, shaped the regional economies and urban system of Tamilnadu. In colonial times, for example, irrigation development and the establishment of urban centres went hand in hand, to secure revenue incomes and grain surplus from irrigated lands³¹. The urban system of Tamilnadu has certainly to be examined against this background. The same is true to the introduction of cashcrops in the late 19th century. Primacy of Madras is another phenomenon that has to be explained historically by economic and political factors³². Secondly, KURIEN and JAMES do not

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examine the interrelationship between recent changes in agriculture ("Green Revolution") and the urbanization process. It is certainly worth discussing why the urban centres in the wet regions, where the impact of the Green Revolution was most evident³³, did not experience growth, although we can expect that the volume of rural-urban interaction has increased considerably through "Green Revolution". Thirdly, KURIEN and JAMES do not consider the nature of the industrialisation process. Industrialisation has been of a typically import-substituting type, with capital-intensive, large-scale enterprises, based on modern technology. Such type of industrialisation which relies heavily on agglomeration factors may serve to explain the polarized nature of urban growth in Tamilnadu. Lastly, KURIEN and JAMES do not explain why industry has concentrated in the western part of the State. We may hypothesize that the great number of footlose population, many of them trained in small industries, attracted undertakings that were in search of an extremely cheap, mobile, and somewhat skilled workforce.

TRADITIONAL MARKET SYSTEMS AND THE URBANIZATION PROCESS: A CASE STUDY OF CENTRAL TAMILNADU

The study area of Central Tamilnadu consists of four districts, two of them wet, two of them dry. The wet districts are Thanjavur and South Arcot. Based on the extensive canal system of the Cauvery Delta, Thanjavur is the rice-bowl of Tamilnadu, paddy being cultivated in monoculture, except in the southeastern and western parts. South Arcot has also a lot of paddy, which is irrigated mainly by pumpsets; in addition, we have considerable groundnut cultivation in the central parts of the district. The dry districts are Salem and Dharmapuri. Their cropping pattern is much more diverse than that of the wet districts, with millets and cash crops dominating.

Urbanization in Thanjavur (Figs.1 and 2) is clearly of the "old style" type. Out of the 30 towns, 8 fall into the functional category of primary activity, two of secondary activity, and the remaining 22 are based on agro-trade and services. The distribution of towns does not show much concentration. Urban agglomeration takes up only 3 of the 30 towns and the rest are single towns. The number and spatial distribution of towns is such as to optimize trade and other transactions associated with primary activities. Such an "optimization result", as KURIEN and JAMES call it³⁴, is not easily disturbed. Growth of urban population in Thanjavur (18,3%) was only half the State average. Towns growing at rates above State average are only found in the western part of the district. South Arcot shows basically the same pattern. There is not a single industrial town. Growth rates were above average in the drier northern, below average in the wet southern part of the district.

This situation stands in marked contrast to Salem. Here, urban population is

highly concentrated in Salem agglomeration, leaving the rest of the district with few stagnating urban centres. This is typical of "new style" urbanization. The growth rate of urban population was three times that of Thanjavur (52, 2%). During the 60s, 28 new towns emerged, 22 of them in the surroundings of Salem city. Out of Salem's 43 towns, 2 are primary, 25 are secondary, 16 are tertiary. There are high urban growth rates in the vicinity of Salem City, and low growth rates in the hinterland. Dharmapuri is a case with a nearly lacking urban system. All the 7 towns are based on tertiary activities. The larger ones are growing, the smaller ones stagnating.

Evidently, the service and integrative efficiency of the urban system is low in the dry districts and high in the wet districts of the study area. However, this does not imply that those people who are out of reach of urban service centres have no access to services at all. It neither means that integrative spatial elements are completely lacking. The regional space economies have rather maintained and developed indigenous means of fulfilling these functions. In this respect, traditional rural market systems, organized on a periodic (weekly) basis, play a key role.

When we consider weekly market distribution, hierarchies, development and functions (Figs.4 and 5), we therefore observe marked correlations to urban patterns and processes. Where the urban system is evenly distributed, with many small towns easily accessible for the rural population, as is the case in Thanjavur and South Arcot, periodic markets are evidently not an essential element in the space economy. In Salem, however, with its polarized urban system, and in Dharmapuri, where an urban system is absent, weekly markets fill the gaps and serve the rural population as periodic central places of the lowest order and as marketing outlets. Moreover, they contribute to integrate the regional economy spatially, functionally and socially. We shall discuss this hypothesis through a number of regional cases.

1. In entire Dharmapuri District (A, see Figs.4 and 5), we observe an extrem-

ely even, hierarchical pattern of weekly market distribution. Due to poor transport facilities, and due to lacking towns, the majority of the rural population of Dharmapuri has no access to urban facilities. Weekly markets serve to provide basic needs to these people. All the markets for which information is available are non-specialised markets, supplying mainly grain, pulses, vegetables, manufactured goods, services and cattle. At the same time, they function as primary marketing outlets for small quantities of agricultural produce. By their periodicity, and by traders' mobility, more goods and services can be offered at closer spatial intervals than would be the case with permanent markets. Weekly markets of Dharmapuri that are significantly growing concentrate along the western (B) and eastern (C) highlands that border the district. They mainly serve as centres of supply and exchange for the cattle and sheep-breeding population of remote hill locations. These markets thus play an integrating role between the two regional economies of highlands and plains.





2. Around Salem city, we find a dense cluster of periodic markets (D). Here, towns are not lacking per se, but, being mainly industrial towns, they lack sufficient functions to serve both rural and urban population. All these markets are non-specialised markets (Fig. 5) which mainly offer agricultural produce for the urban and manufactured goods for the rural population. They also function as marketing outlets for the produce of small and marginal farmers of the surrounding villages. They are thus integrative elements between the rural



Fig. 5 Functions of Weekly Markets in Central Tamil Nadu 1982

Source: Survey of Unpublished Revenue Records, All Panchayat Union Offices of Central Tamilnadu, July-October 1982

and the urban economies.

3. There is a chain of weekly markets around the Kolli Hills (E) and the She-varoy Hills (F). In the first case, weekly markets serve as marketing and supply points for hill tribes to whom towns are not accessible³⁵. Again, two different regional economies and two different social groups are integrated. Most of these foothill markets are now declining (Fig.4) because of competition of a large new weekly market that was recently established in the highland

itself. The weekly markets around the Shevaroy Hills³⁶ mainly serve to supply coffee plantation labourers with rural and urban goods and services. Most of them stagnate because of the stagnating plantation economy.

4. In South Arcot, three large and growing weekly markets have recently emerged around Neyveli Township (G). Here, we have a situation similar to that of Salem agglomeration. The fast growing township that is based on lignite mining and a large thermo-power plant is not adequately integrated into its rural hinterland³⁷, and its functions are insufficient to supply its fast growing urban population, for whom the weekly markets fulfill important service functions. Many of the remaining markets of South Arcot are specialised markets (Fig. 5), mainly cattle markets. We can see this clearly in the western part of the district (H) where exchange takes place between a cattle deficit wet and a cattle surplus dry district.

5. In Thanjavur, where weekly markets are generally rare, we have exceptional concentrations of weekly markets in the western (J) and southeastern (K) parts of the Cauvery Delta. The western part was a dry region 50 years ago, when a new canal system was established here. Urban development has evidently not kept pace with population and production growth. Weekly markets, most of them growing, fulfill central place functions and also mediate between dry and wet districts, partly as specialised markets (firewood, timber, cattle, fish). In the southeastern part, the situation is similar to that of Dharmapuri. This region with its vast, periodically flooded swamps is highly inaccessible, especially during monsoon time. Weekly markets fulfill service and integrative functions for the population of the remote villages. The remaining weekly markets, where the wives of coastal fishermen supply fresh and dry fish to the protein-lacking paddy growers.

We can learn from these cases that weekly markets do play an important role as service centres and points of regional economic integration, especially where urban centres or functions are absent. Moreover, our empirical studies show that weekly markets are also converging points especially for the weaker sections of the population³⁸. Around 500 000 visitors attend the weekly markets of the study area every week, the great majority of them landless, small and marginal farmers, tribals, untouchables, both for supply and marketing functions. Urban functions are generally biased against these social groups³⁹. Thus the weekly markets also serve social functions, counterbalancing the social barriers of the urban system. In this connection, weekly markets can rightly be regarded as a "welfare system"40. This point is further stressed when we consider the low profit margins of around 10 % of the turnover realized by the mobile market traders. Moreover, the market system provides employment for the rural poor: more than 10000 traders, most of them part-time, trading on small or even marginal scales, regularly attend the markets of the study area.

We may conclude from the foregoing that weekly markets do evolve and develop

in reaction to the efficiency or inefficiency of a regional urban system, and do so in spatial, functional and social terms. The current models on optimal town-size distribution⁴¹ consider neither the spatial nor the social dimension of the problem. Even if they tried to do so, they would have to take into account regional resource endowments, levels of economic development, population distribution and mobility, their purchasing power, their needs and preferences⁴², and their social stratification, and then relate these to the actual and needed distribution and functions of the urban system. Looking at the distribution, functions and development of the traditional market system directly or indirectly incorporates all these variables and their interaction. This is because such market systems which have evolved "from below" and are maintained and organized informally are highly adjusted to the varying conditions, needs and problems of their regional economy and society, and because they can flexibly react to any changes that occur.

PERIODIC MARKETS FOR URBAN SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT "FROM BELOW"?

If we accept, on the one hand, that periodic markets truly reflect deficiencies in an urban system, we can, on the other hand, postulate that they could also serve as starting-points to make the urban system more efficient for the rural masses. Markets, in this context, could function as transmission-points to link rural to urban development⁴³. Where the urban system is incomplete, or where urban functions are insufficient, weekly market sites could be selected to locate public services, possibly on a periodic, mobile basis⁴⁴, and to promote supply, marketing and information functions. At present, however, the periodic market system is even discouraged "from above": from the 228 public weekly markets of the study area, 4.72 million of Rupies were extracted as market-fees in 1981/82, without any investments and improvements being implemented in turn.

Instead of establishing growth poles at the upper level of the urban hierarchy, to diffuse growth and development impulses from above, we would suggest to give first priority to the development of the lower strata of the hierarchy, corresponding to MSIRA and SUNDARAM's service centres or central villages. Such a strategy that starts at the bottom of the urban system and makes best use of indigenous elements of the space economy can much more probably be expected to mobilize endogenous resources, strengthen self-reliance of the rural population, integrate the rural economy both horizontally and vertically, and benefit the weaker sections of the society. Traditional market systems, in this context, could provide a spatial framework for rural development "from below".

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VERÖFFENTLICHUNGEN DES HWWA-INSTITUT FÜR WIRTSCHAFTSFORSCHUNG-HAMBURG

H.-E. Scharrer/W. Hesse/H. Krägenau

JAPANS WIRTSCHAFTSENTWICKLUNG, AUSSENHANDEL UND WETTBEWERBSFÄHIGKEIT

Der Handels- und Leistungsbilanzüberschuß Japans ist seit Anfang der siebziger Jahre kräftig gestiegen. Besonders die USA und die Europäische Gemeinschaft bekamen die japanische Exportoffensive zu spüren, hinter der das Wachstum der japanischen Importe deutlich zurückblieb. Das Handelsungleichgewicht hat nicht nur protektionistischen Strömungen in den Industrieländern Vorschub geleistet. Es hat auch die Frage nach den gesamtwirtschaftlichen und wirtschaftspolitischen Bestimmungsgründen der japanischen Wettbewerbsfähigkeit und hier insbesondere nach der Rolle des Yen-Kurses im Zahlungsbilanz-Anpassungsprozeß aufgeworfen. Dies ist auch die Thematik der vorliegenden Studie, die im Auftrag des Bundesministeriums für Wirtschaft entstand.

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