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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS

REV DEPARTMENT

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Not to be folded or roughly handled

21/3

No. 461. Read the following letter from Captain L. CONWAY-GORDON, R.E.,
Examiner of Public Works Accounts, to Major-General G. W. WALKER,
R.E., Secretary to Government, Public Works Department, dated Fort St.
George, 14th July 1876, No. 114-W.

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the Proceedings of Government,
No. 1,491, dated June 15th, 1876, relating of the names of districts,
and, as partly responsible for the oversight therein noticed, I feel it desirable to explain
the circumstances under which the new method of spelling was adopted.

2. As far as this office was concerned, no oversight took place; in the draft
standing order submitted for the approval of Government, the Jonesian system of
transliteration was deliberately adopted for vowels in accordance, it was thought, with
the express orders of the Madras Government. In their Order, No. 1,404, dated
September 12th, 1859, the Madras Government resolved to introduce this system of
transliteration for all Native words, except the names of particular places which had
become stereotyped by long usage in a conventional form, and it is evident from the
papers printed with this order that lists of all such places were to be prepared, and
that in writing all other names not included in these lists the prescribed system of
transliteration was to be strictly adhered to.

3. This is in fact the course which has subsequently been approved of by the
Government of India and by the Secretary of State, and which has been practically
followed by all the local Governments in India. All or nearly all have already
published in the *Gazette of India* two lists of the names of all their principal places;
one, a small list containing the few names which are considered to have acquired
fixed spelling; the other, the bulk of the names properly transliterated.

4. Mysore commenced in July 1875, Coorg followed in September, and the
North-western Provinces in October of the same year. The Punjab published its
list in January 1875, Oudh in May, Assam in August, Bombay in September, and the
Central Provinces in November 1875. This year has seen the issue of an official list
of the names of the places in Bengal and Hyderabad. Madras, though the first to
take up the question, is now nearly the only Government which has not yet definitely
settled the orthography of the names of its principal places.

5. In the absence of an authoritative list of the names of those places which
are considered to have acquired a fixed spelling, it appeared to me that the orders of
Government held good to transliterate all others in the manner prescribed. I was in
fact in hopes that the Madras Government, the first to commence, had resolved to be
alone in completing the work in a thorough manner, and by transliterating all names
without exception on the Jonesian system to reduce to a minimum the number of
stumbling blocks, which words spelt on any other system at all, must inevitably present to
our children trained to associate in ninety-nine names out of a hundred a particular
sound with a particular letter.

6. In taking this view, which now appears to be incorrect, I was to some extent
led astray by the example set me by the Secretary of State. In the absence of any
authoritative spelling, I see that he spelled the names of the Madras Districts in much

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Works Department,
21st August 1876. No. 2,189.

the same way as is done in this office. His 'statements exhibiting the moral and material progress and condition of India,' observe Godavari, Tanjor, Karnul, Balari, Cuddapa, Nellore, Chengalpat, Trichinapalli, Tinnevelly, and Coimbatore.

7. The system of spelling adopted by the Accounts Branch may perhaps appear singular; but the singularity arises entirely from the fact of our having endeavored by such lights as we have to put out orders of Government, which, as a rule, appear to be ignored.

8. Attention having now been called to the subject by the Madras Government, I venture to hope that, in accordance with their orders of the 12th September 1859, some serious effort may be made to secure uniformity in the spelling of Native names, and also to check the very general practice of using Native terms in official language in lieu of their English equivalents. The latter practice, though strictly forbidden, is nearly universal. As an instance, I might cite the following sentence taken from the records of the Madras Government as recently as the 7th June,—
'The ryots could put up a temporary whangany to increase the supply which used always to be done by kody maramut.' How many ordinary English readers would understand it? Such a sentence is not English; it is a local patois.

9. Not only does official correspondence teem with Native words, most of which have proper equivalents in English; not only are we oppressed by Native weights and measures, and even in some cases by a Native calendar; but the difficulty is further increased by these Native words being so badly transliterated, that their very etymology is doubtful. As an instance, I will take the Tamil word 'jalli,' broken stone or gravel, which, after appearing in the records as 'jully,' has got finally crystallized into the English word 'jelly,' and, as such, is current for the department. Who would recognize the Burmese word 'shinbyin,' plank, which, probably owing to its having something to do with wood, appears in the Madras records as 'shimbeams.'

10. As regards the names of places, it is not too much to say that the same name frequently appears in such different forms that any one who was not aware that they were different forms of the same name would unhesitatingly put them as the names of different places. For instance, who would imagine that Bezoarah and Beswada were the same place? Who would identify Damarapak with Thamara-pakum? To show how little attention is paid to the spelling of Indian names, I may instance the name Pattampadi, which in the same Budget appears indifferently as Patterpaudoo, Puttumpaudoo, and Pottampadu. In the papers printed with a single order of Government, the same name 'Pattampadi' appears spelt in three different ways, while in those printed with an order of Government received a few days previously it is spelt a fourth way, and in the Budget a fifth.

11. Had I space I could easily multiply such instances indefinitely. But I will briefly conclude with an extract from the Proceedings of this Government of nearly seventeen years ago—an extract, I may say, quite as true now as it was at the time it was written; 'the official language is so redundant and confused as to be a positive obstruction to public business, and to cause in the aggregate an enormous waste of invaluable time.'

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Works Department,
21st August 1876. No. 2,189.

No. 462. ORDER THEREON, 21st August 1876, No. 2,189.

ESTABLISHMENT, No. 24.

an uniform system of spelling proper in
No. 1,404, dated 12th September 1876,
further delay.

ORDERED to be recorded.

2. His Grace the Governor in Council
concurring in the expediency of establishing
an office that the lists ordered in G.O.,
(Department), be prepared without

(True Extract.)

Colonel,
Offg. Under Secy. to Govt., P.W.D.

To the Examiner of Public Works Accounts.

" Revenue Department. ✓

" Public Department, with copy of Note by the Hon. R. S. Ellis, c.s.

Exd. E. C. Shunker.

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Govt. of 1876 Madras

PUBLIC WORKS.

To

THE EXAMINER OF PUBLIC
WORKS ACCOUNTS.

&c., &c., &c.

Dated August 21st.

Issued

Recd.

Sept 5th

Encl.

G. O., 21st August 1876, No. 2,189.

AUGUST.

Nos. 461-462.

Spelling Proper Names.—Concurring as to
the expediency of establishing an uniform
system of —, and desiring that the lists
ordered in G.O., No. 1,404, of 12th Septem-
ber 1859 (Public Department), be prepared
without delay.

No 2089
Signed.

5th September 1876