

Colonial Police in Madras Presidency: Shifting Priorities

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Abstract

This paper gives a comprehensive account of the Police system in the Madras Presidency during the colonial period. The Police as an institution play a vital role in maintaining peace and order in society. However, colonialism creates its own unique imperatives. The Indian subcontinent has been under British colonial rule for over two centuries until 1947. To administer a vast country like India with a hugely diverse population, the British colonial rulers had to devise a Police structure which would not only help in upholding law and order but also ensuring the advancement of its commercial interests. The colonial instruments of criminal justice and Police systems played a crucial role in maintaining their dominance and supremacy in India. This paper will analyse the particular shifts in the policing strategy of the colonial government in the Madras Presidency. In 1858, East India Company was dissolved and the British Crown took over the direct control of the government in India. How was Police organisation in India impacted? What were the changing priorities of the colonial government after 1858? How was Madras Police affected? This paper will examine how the Police organisation, largely composed of Indian people was significantly responsible for the continuance of colonial rule in India in general, and Madras Presidency in particular.

Keywords: Police, Madras, Presidency, law and order, colonial, East India Company.

Introduction

Madras, Chennai in the present day, is not just a capital city, as it is now, but encompassed a huge and varied geographical area on which diverse people

lived, who spoke different languages, ate distinct food and followed various religions. Madras Presidency was the most significant province of British Raj in South India, extending from present day South-coastal

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