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GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE WHOLESALE GRAIN AND VEGETABLE MARKETS OF MADRAS CITY

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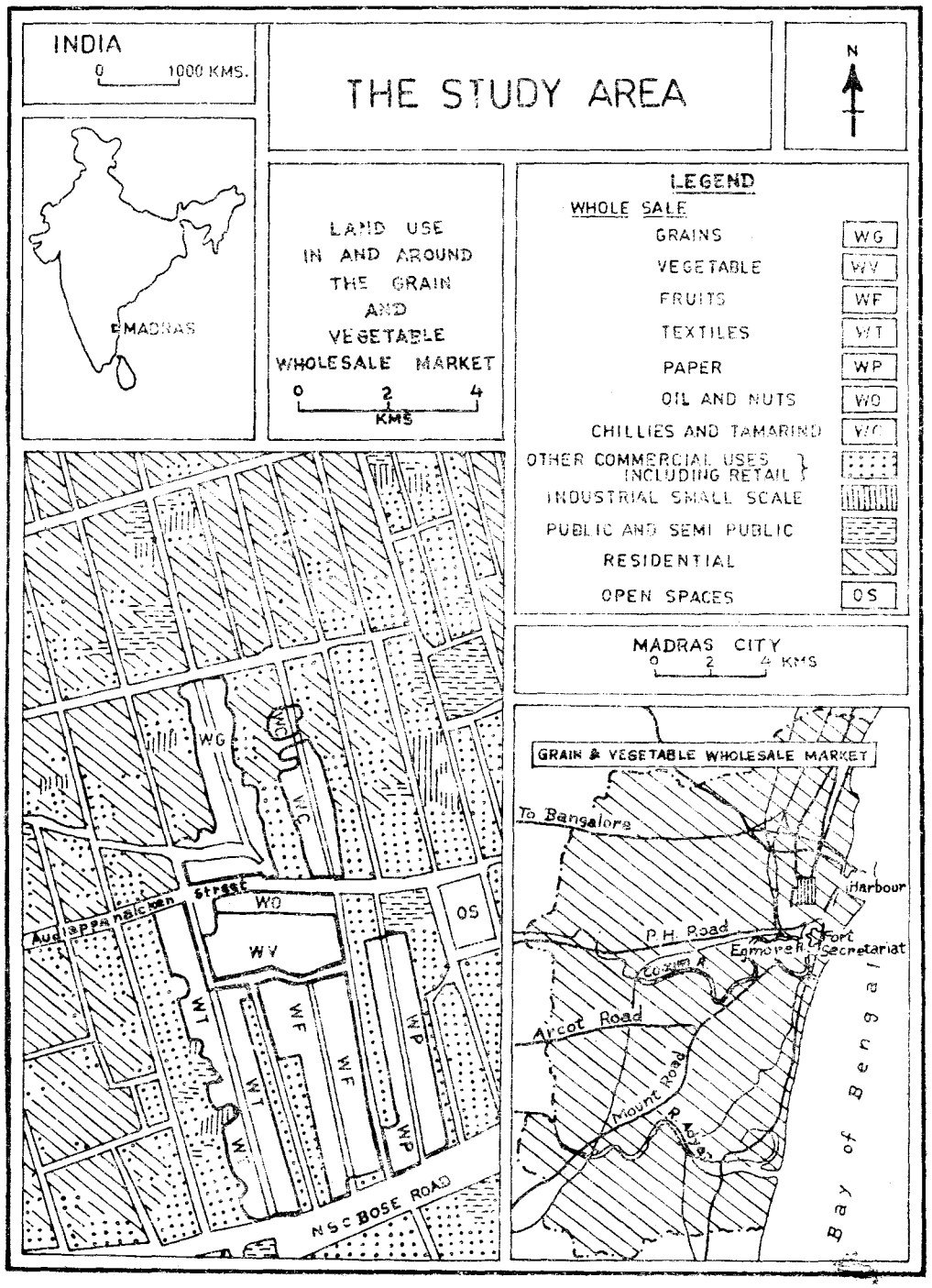
ABSTRACT : The article deals with the location, growth and development of the wholesale grain and vegetable markets of Madras city. A background of the historical development of the markets and their importance as one of the functional units of the city has been dealt with. The paper also gives an idea of the growth of wholesaling as a consequence of improved transportation facilities and increase in the city population.

In this paper an attempt is made to study the growth and development of the wholesale grain and vegetable markets of Madras City. The location and growth of wholesling in a city is intimately related to the other land uses in the city, especially residential and commercial land uses, because of the constant interaction that takes place between them. This interaction increases with increase in the population of the city and creates serious transport problems and problems of sanitation in and around the wholesale markets. The study of the gtowth and development of the wholesale markets is of utmost importance from the point of view of the spatial interaction and the resulting spatial problems that are generated. This helps in planning a better market to cater to the increasing demand with increase in city size.

The wholesale markets dealing in grains and vegetables, are located in the oldest part of the city, known as George Town (Fig.1). It occupies specialised areas on the western side of the CBD (Rajan, 1969 and Suryanarayan, 1973). Wholesale activity has long been carried on in this part of the city mainly because of its accessibility.

It is a fact that most of the wholesale activities occupy relatively little *land area in the City, and as a consequence, there is a high degree of concentration of this activity.* The location analysis of the wholesale grain and vegetable markets of Madras City has revealed the following interesting points. The activity has the maximum benefit from the occupancy of site, at points of maximum accessibility within the city. These benefits are greater access to road transportation terminals. The City bus terminal at Parrys Corner; and the Express bus stand and the Central bus stand to the south of it, from where buses ply to and from different directions and connect the city to other cities, towns and villages within and without the State of Tamilnadu; Rail road terminals such as Central, Salt Cotaurs, Beach and Fort Stations - the latter two on the suburban railway line; greater pedestrian traffic because people move into the CBD every day and movement is even greater, being at the convergence of all the transportation routes. Therefore the present location of the activity is in the vicinity of the point of " maximum aggregate travel " (Porter, 1963).

Better accessibility is therfore the main cause for the location of this activity close to the core. The presence of wholesale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THE STUDY AREA
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LAND USE IN AND AROUND THE GRAIN AND VEGETABLE WHOLESALE MARKET
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KMS
LEGEND
WHOLE SALE
GRAINS WG
VEGETABLE WV
FRUITS WF
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PAPER WP
OIL AND NUTS WO
CHILLIES AND TAMARIND WC
OTHER COMMERCIAL USES INCLUDING RETAIL
INDUSTRIAL SMALL SCALE
PUBLIC AND SEMI PUBLIC
RESIDENTIAL
OPEN SPACES OS
MADRAS CITY
0 2 4 KMS
WG
WC
WO
WV
OS
WT
WF
WP
NSC BOSE ROAD
GRAIN & VEGETABLE WHOLESALE MARKET
To Bangalore
Harbour
P.H. Road
Fort
Secretariat
Egmore
Cooum
Arcot Road
Mount Road
Bay of Bengal

Fig. 1

activity whithin the city structure has been already referred to by Beckman and Engle (1953); Harris and Ullman (1959); Ratcliffe (1959); Revzan (1961), while discussing the area closest to the CBD. Since wholesaling function is to facilicate the flow of goods in the marketing channels, the importance of wholesalers' accessibility to his markets and to a lesser extent to his suppliers cannot be overestimated. Therefore proximity to transport nodes and break of bulk points associated with the CBD can be of great advantage to many types of wholesalers (Simons, 1966, p. 3.).

The wholesale market in its present position is, therefore, a result of the growth and accretion of the city around its nucleus. The demands on the market have been increasing steadily, from its inception, with the growth of the city in population and area. This market should, therefore, be considered as one of the vital organs of the city.

This central area is characterised by high density of population ranging from 1000 to 1500 persons per hectare. It is characterised by intensive land development, mixed land uses, exorbitant land values, narrow streets and excessive traffic concentration and concentration of financial, banking and commerial establishments (Census Report, 1961).

Within this area, the 'Kotwal Chawadi' situated on Audiappa Naicken Street, is the only wholesale vegetable market in the city. It is the earliest of the markets, founded in 1787 (Census Report, 1961 and Love, 1913).

Just to the North of this market are a series of parallel and perpendicular streets-a typical grid iron pattern of street alignment, and the grain wholesale market is located along two streets, the Annapillai Street and the Acharappan Street, together forming an 'L' shaped market (Fig.1).

Historical Background of the Grain and Vegetable Wholesale Markets

About the year 1720 A.D. a piece of land called the 'Komatla Thotta' or the 'Cutwal Chawadee' (Kotwal Chawadi) otherwise called the 'Kooragalaya Thotta', situated on Audiappa Naicken Street, within local limits of Madras, was dedicated by the then owner thereof to the General Body of the Vysia Caste people at Madras, in order that the income arising therefrom might hereafter be appropriated and applied for performances, festivals and charities of the said caste people. The members of the Arya Vysia Community acquired several properties both movable and immovable and constructed a temple – 'Sri Kanyaka Parameswari' and dedicated the temple for the benefits of the members of their own caste (Souvenir, Sri Kanya Parameswari Devasthanam Charities, George Town, Madras).

The first Kotwal or Overseer of markets was appointed in 1777 (Srinivasachari, 1939, p.192), and in 1787, a regular police scheme was instituted and a committee of police was organised including the clerk of the market (Love, 1913). Thus came into being the Kotwal Chawadi Market, which was the collecting centre of the produce of the surroundings. According to Love (1913), prior to 1787 there was no organised markets in the city except a small market in Loans Square (a few yards to the east of Kotwal Chawadi Market now left as an open space) and a fish market North East of the Fort. We can, therefore, safely conclude that the beginnings of the present wholesale vegetable markets at Kotwal Chawadi, was sometime in 1787 and was the first organised market in the City.

Adjacent to the Kotwal Chawadi and just to the north of it is the wholeseale grain market which did not come up simultaneously with the wholesale vegetable market. An enquiry on the field revealed that the present wholesale grain market was a subsequent development of the vegetable

wholesale market, although the exact date cannot be ascertained. Kotwal Chawadi market was the collecting and distributing centre of both vegetables and grains originally, and probably as trade increased they got separated into two separate markets, the vegetable wholesale and the grain wholesale markets, giving rise to two distinct areas of functional specialization.

Changing patterns of sources of supply and demand

When the wholesale grain and vegetable markets struck root in their present location, transportation network was poor and these markets had their sources in the immediate vicinity, just outside the city built-up a rea.

The present City of Madras was originally a loose agglomeration of isolated villages, and, the surplus vegetable and grains from these villages found their way, into the markets of the City (Love, 1913). These commodities were mostly brought into the city by bullock carts and hand carts. Due to the poor transportation facilities these people had to necessarily depend on slow moving traffic.

It was in 1856, the first section of the railway line was laid connecting Madras to Arcot and it was extended to Raichur in 1871, Mettupalayam in 1873. The doubling of the tract from Madras to Perambur was completed in 1874. The headquarters station of the Madras railway was built at Royapuram, near the beach at that time.

Introduction and extension of railway facilities, and the improvement of road network in the city and the coming up of the National Highways, linking the city to other distant places gave a face-lift to the function of wholesaling, as the wholesalers were able to get their supply especially of vegetables (which due to the perishability had to be transported much faster than grains which could stand longer hours of travel without getting spoilt), and grains from other places which led to an enlargement of the sources of supply. Vegetables started moving in from as far as Coimbatore, Ooty and Bangalore. At present the vegetables mostly arrive from within the State – within a radius of 300 kms. and from Bangalore in the neighbouring State of Karnataka, Potatoes, Peas and Onions are sometimes got from U.P. and Punjab.

As far as grains are concerned, rice is mostly got from the Tanjore District of Tamilnadu and Nellore District of Andhra Pradesh. Millets are mostly procured from Karnataka. Wheat comes from Punjab.

Therefore the sources of supply of bulk of the vegetables and grains lie mostly in Tamilnadu while all the other States put together account for the remaining. The wholesale market is well connected to the sources of supply due to the proximity of the railway tarminals– Central, Salt Cotaurs, Beach and Fort Stations and at the convergence of good road network from all directions into the city.

The retailer outlets in the initial stages were limited to the built up area of the city. With the expansion of the city in area and population the boundary of the outlets enlarged, as a consequence of the coming up of new residential and retail areas. The wholesale market is also linked with the rest of the city of Madras, as their customers are the retailers distributed all over the city. Along highly accessible routes such as the suburban railway line, retailers residing even outside the Corporation limits within a radius of 20 to 30 kilometres from George Town, gravitate towards the wholesale market for the purchase of goods.

Wholesale trade, therefore, has a two directional focus, namely, producer oriented flows and user oriented flows. It follows, that the wholesale trade area is the net result of the functioning of wholesale market as the centre of gravity, to which goods are attracted from multiple points of production and, the dispersing centre from which goods move to various classes of customers (Revzan, 1961). The volume of trade handled by the wholesalers has increased from 1964 to 1976, during a span of 12 years as is seen from Table I.

Table I Annual Arrivals of Grains and Vegetables into the Wholesale Markets

(Figures in Tonnes)

Commodity	1964	1976
Grains		
Rice	1,50,000	1,80,631
Other cereals excluding wheat	80,000	
Jowar	N. A.	35,253
Bajra	N. A.	24,721
Maiza	N. A.	9,730
Ragi	N. A.	7,633
Barley	N. A.	12,584
Other small millets	N. A.	1,513
Grains and Pulses	75,000	1,88,401
Total	3,05,000	4,60,466
Vegetables		
Brinjal	12,600	15,768
Tomatoes	18,360	21,900
Green Chillies	6,120	9,380
Cluster Beans	360	1,535
Bhendai (Ladies finger)	360	1,289
Bittergourd	180	630
Snakegourd	9,000	10,820
Banana (Green)	5,000	8,960
Avarai	1,800	3,420
Onions	18,000	33,215
Yam	1,800	4,325
Colacasia	1,800	2,150
Potatoes	3,600	49,275
Carrot	1,080	2,920
Cabbage	1,080	4,150
Beans	3,250	5,840
Chow Chow	11,000	12,480
Beetroot	N. A.	2,815
Others	4,610	9,650
Total vegetables	1,00,000	2,00,522

N. A. = Not available 1 Tonne= 1000 Kgs.

Source : 1964 Data – Department of Agricultural Marketing, Government of Tamilnadu.
1976 Data – Various branches of the grain and vegetable merchants' Association.

Table I gives an idea of the arrivals of grains and vegetables into the respective wholesale markets in 1964 and 1976 (field enquiries).

During a span of 12 years the increase in grain arrivals in the wholesale market of the City has been 50.97% over that of 1964, while the increase in vegetable arrivals has been 100.52% during the same period.

In general the table clearly brings out the fact that the volume of trade in the wholesale market has been on the increase, probably, keeping pace with the increase in population and a consequent increase in the

demand for these products. The wholesale grain and vegetable markets will necessarily have to play a greater role with the increase of the City residential and commercial areas and also with the restructuring of the city so that the population densities of the outer belt of the city are increased as proposed by the M. M. D. A. (1975).

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