

Cartographic Narratives of Human Settlements: The Origin and Transformations of 'Pete' in Petta Area of Bangalore, India

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Abstract

Bangalore Petta, also referred to as Bangalore Pete or City Market area has garnered considerable attention from urban researchers across numerous dimensions. The name "Pete" has been a recurring identifier across diverse cultures and languages, yet its origin remains enigmatic. These dimensions encompass the spectrum from morphology to perception and from visual to sensory, allowing for the exploration of diverse characteristics within this historical part of the city. Examining these settlements through various lenses is necessary to understand the significance of multiple dimensions of the city and Cartography, though a predominant tool for assessment, seldom explored in this context.

Delving into the study of one of Bangalore's oldest vernacular settlements through Cartography can unearth the visual and geographical aspects that reveals the historical layers, linguistic roots, and cultural stories woven into the fabric of the area. This method allows the tracing of the evolution of place names and uncover the narratives that have shaped the region's identity over time, offering a deeper understanding of the etymology that defines its character. Through maps, insights can be gained into how the landscape has been interpreted, inhabited, and transformed, enriching our appreciation of the area's rich and multifaceted history.

Utilizing mapping tools and through analysis of these maps, the study provided visual representations of the name's dispersal, including its shifts in morphology taking into consideration the sociocultural contexts, trade routes, and historical events that have contributed to the diffusion of the name. Comparative analysis of linguistic structures reveals the relationships between different iterations of the name, "Pette", once a prominent commercial center which has evolved significantly over time. Its transformation reflects the influence of surrounding developments and shifts in urbanism.

Keywords: Cartography, Etymology, Urban Morphology, Evolution. 'Pete' Bangalore.

Introduction

The region now known as Bangalore was shaped by a succession of South Indian dynasties, from the Western Gangas to the Cholas and Hoysalas. In 1537 CE, it entered a new chapter when Kempe Gowda laid its modern foundations. In 1638, the Marāthās ruled

Bangalore for nearly 50 years before the Mughals captured and sold it to the Wadiyar dynasty of Mysore.

After the British victory in the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War in 1799, they restored administrative control to the Maharaja of Mysore. According to the history described by the Government of Karnataka in their website Bengaluru Urban District (last updated in 2024), the old city became the capital of the Princely State of Mysore, a nominally sovereign entity under the British rule. Kempegowda I, a chieftain under the Vijayanagara Empire established the Vernacular settlement of Bangalore in 1537 CE. The planning of the vernacular settlement Bengaluru has been influenced by the Vijayanagara cities; thus, he envisioned this as a fortified city that would serve as a thriving trade and administrative center. He chose a strategic location on the Deccan Plateau, which has been well-suited for defense and trade, and has laid out the settlement's original plan with markets, residential areas and religious sites.

The Economic Times (2015), analyses the settlement of Bengaluru Pete established with the Mud Fort as the nucleus also known as the Bangalore Fort, with an area of 2.24 square kilometers (1 sq. mi). "Pete" is a Kannada word and it means "market". Roads were laid in four cardinal directions with entrance gates at the end of each road. Chikkapete Street ran East–West, while the Doddapete Street ran North–South. Doddapete was for large businesses ("Dodda" means large in Kannada) and Chikkapete was for small businesses (Chikka means small). Their intersection formed the Doddapete Square (present Avenue Road), the heart of Bangalore according to Fazlul Hasan et.al (1970). Halasoor, also called Ulsoor (East), Sondekoppa (West), Yelahanka (North), and Anekal (South) were the four gates erected at the cardinal directions which are an integral part of the city of Bengaluru even today.

According to Lopez et.al (2020), Pete is a well-organized network of markets associated with various trades and professions of the people in that locality with each street exclusive to one kind of trade. Hence, the streets in the Pete also followed a well-planned pattern and were given the names of trades pursued in such markets. For example, Tharagupete – market for grains, the Balepete – for Bangles and musical instruments, Chikkapete and Nagarthpete for textiles, Ballapurpete and Ganigarapete market for oils, Tigalarapete–flower market, the Cubbonpete – textile manufacturing, Sultanpete for Paper and stationery etc. The iconic "Avenue Road" which was earlier known as Dodaapete is more than 400 years old and it may have been derived from the fact that the road was lined with trees on either side.

According to historians, before the 17th century, the roads derived their Nomenclature from their orientation towards sunrise and sunset. While the roads in the East-West direction were called 'Surya Beedhi', Avenue Road could have been called Chandra Beedhi as it lay in the North-South direction. Another name of Avenue Road was "Raja Beedhi", the road which led to the palace or the citadel.

Government of Karnataka in their website Bengaluru Urban District (last updated in 2024), also provide an insight on the growth of the city. According to this, in 1809, the British shifted their cantonment to Bangalore, outside the old city, and a town grew up around it, which was governed as part of British India. Hedefalk et.al (2020) says that by 1881 AD, Bangalore had two nuclei; one a high-density area around the fort and its market (K. R. Market area) in Pete and the second Blackpally (Russel Market area) within the colonial city both linked together by the green corridor of Cubbon Park. The montage of bazaars, temple complexes and aghrahams in and around the Pete have got a further fillip during the rule of Kempegowda II, who built four cardinal towers setting limits for the growth of the Bengaluru pete as explained by Fazlul et.al. The visionary approach of the Kempe Gowdas, perceiving the needs of the growing population of the Pete, has resulted in building a number of lakes/ponds (called 'Kere' in the Kannada language) and temples (some are pictured in the gallery) in and around the fort.

However, according to Hedefalk et.al (2020), although Pete the largest informal economy of Bangalore has been designed in a contemporary style consisting of a network of streets for trade, they also represent the rich multi-cultural identity, social history, and economic geography of those times which is the origin of planning and designing of any urban agglomerate.

During the reign of Tipu Sultan, the Pete has had a prosperous economy and has expanded to a circumference of 5 kilometers (3 m) with well laid-out streets and flourishing shops. Pete has changed over centuries, but there are still buildings and businesses that date back to the 19th century and temples dating back to centuries earlier.

In this context, this study examines the origins and transformations of the Pete to reveal how the spatial organization and development of this area reflect broader socio-economic, cultural, and political shifts and to understand the morphological significance of etymological transformation. It focuses on the 'Pete' area of Bangalore, aiming to uncover how these narratives have influenced and been influenced by the lived realities of the 'Pete' area over time.

Its objectives are:

- To identify and synthesize literature that establishes the connection between the Bangalore Pete area, its activities and the etymology of the place.
- To examine the development of the Bangalore Pete area through cartography.
- To evaluate the etymological transformations of the Pete area from its origin.

Theoretical Framework: Cartography

In 1826, Malte-Brun described “Cartography” as the science of the graphical representation of geographical phenomena on maps. Cartography, or map making, has played a critical role in representing spatial concepts for thousands of years. These visualizations draw conclusions about population sizes, historical events, cultural shifts, economic conditions, spatial layouts, spatial patterns of epidemic outbreaks and weather patterns to help understand more about the world and how people impact it. The Nolli Map technique has been replicated many times to quickly analyze the relationships between spaces, analyze planning patterns and understand how to create a better urban experience. As pointed out by Government of Karnataka in their website Bengaluru Urban District (last updated in 2024), Maps can also represent the jurisdiction of the planning authority of the past and present, land use and existing property ownership boundaries accurately. It is of considerable use in planning and development of a community, region, or a Nation. Economic times claims that the iconic 1966 urban atlas by Wurman and Passonneau is the first comparative statistical analysis of 20 American cities that allows the readers to compare data on topics like population density, income intensity, and land use. Hence societal, political and cultural influences have a major impact on the etymology of a “Word”.

The theoretical framework for this study is rooted in the understanding that maps are not just geographic tools but also cultural artifacts that embody the socio-political contexts of their time as described by Lopez et.al (2020). This research views maps as dynamic texts that narrate the evolution of human settlements through both visual and contextual lenses.

The framework is informed by theories of urban history, and cultural geography, emphasizing the role of cartography in shaping and reflecting human settlements. It also considers the interplay between power, identity, and space in the construction and interpretation of maps. It is argued that this approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how spatial representations contribute to the identity and transformation of urban spaces as McCunn (2018) has examined.

Literature Review

Many studies related to cartography displaying connection between the intangibles of the city such as the social dimension and the tangibles such as history of the city. For example, McCormack et. al. (2004), has shown evidence that there is a strong association between activities and the environment of a city. According to Nair (2005), in the early years of etymological research, most of the research on cartography have focused on understanding and analyzing the ideal method of cartography, and its larger benefits to the city. In earlier research, elaborate discussions have been made to understand the use of history as a tool to analyze the development of urban society and its social problems, all of them represented through maps.

As described in Sensing Local (2024), studies are constantly growing towards tracking development through history by linking the adopted political regime with development policy

and their analogous impacts on evolving and declining patterns of urban development. These studies however only help in understanding the empirical shift in the political regime and little does it stress on the etymological understanding of a place. Post millenarianism, etymological studies have also evolved into justifying the association between spatial neighborhood conditions and their societal influence which has been made over a period of time from the origin.

In this connection, Sharma (2016) says that most often, in such research, strategies that are used are environmental and social variables, which could be individuals that quantify and compare geographically. According to Stachowski (2015), detailed discussions have seen an increase in relating intangible aspects of a society to a quantitative parameter such as knowing the significance of the possible social resource and how significance of the place could help in the growth of a neighborhood. According to a study on the evolution of neighborhood in the case of Cairo, there are studies showing the importance of dogmatic dictionaries, consisting of significant etymological data that distinguishes itself from each other due to their informational potential.

Thus, previous studies have emphasized their research to immediate understandings of etymology, their comprehension through cartography, and its techniques. As described in the article on main street of pettah (1890), these studies have interpreted various capacities of variables of certain cartographic parameters of etymology. The impact of larger significance of the cartography on etymology has been less discussed in societal aspects and insights. This paper, therefore, focuses to draw upon the connection between the etymology of pete and the significance of understanding Pete through the examination of maps.

Research Methodology

This research employs a detailed stratigraphic analysis which consists of recording the dimensions of the individual neighborhoods, the places, and the dimensions of psychological processes, which results in psychological attitudes, showcasing attributes of specific architectural features. According to Vaughan (2018), they enable the understanding of the intricate levels of space-etymology relationships.

It takes a historical and cartographic approach to unravel the historical development of the 'Pete' areas in Bangalore while also validating the etymology of the term 'Pete' through map analysis. It is conducted in three stages.

1. Data collection process which entails a selection of old maps and extensive archival research, encompassing historical documents and manuscripts, to trace the origins and evolution of these areas.
2. Data validation is ensured by cross-referencing information from sources, including maps, to corroborate the historical significance and linguistic roots of the term 'Pete.'
3. Findings are presented through maps and textual narratives, offering insights into both the historical transformation of the 'Pete' area and the etymology of the term itself.

In the exploration of the historical origins and evolution of 'Pete' in the Bangalore Petta area, the study is embarked through time, guided by the intricate cartographic narratives woven into old maps. These worthy cartographic artifacts unveil a fascinating chronicle: 'Pete' found its genesis as the bustling central marketplaces of pre-colonial Bangalore, pulsating with the vitality of the agrarian societies.

Findings

The Case Study: Pete Area

According to Lopez et.al (2020), Pete is a well-organized network of markets associated with various trades and professions of the people located in them. It has streets exclusive to one kind of trade. These streets follow a well-planned pattern and are given names of trades pursued in such markets.

Here are the markets and places.

- Tharagupete: market for grains.
- Balepete: market for Bangles and musical instruments.
- Chikkapete and Nagarthpete: market for textiles.
- Ballapurpete and Ganigarapete: market for oils.
- Tigalarapet: flower market.
- Cubbonpete: market for textile manufacturing,
- Sultanpete: market for paper and stationery etc.

The iconic “Avenue Road” which was earlier known as Dodaapete is more than 400 years old and it may have been derived from the fact that the road was lined with trees on either side.

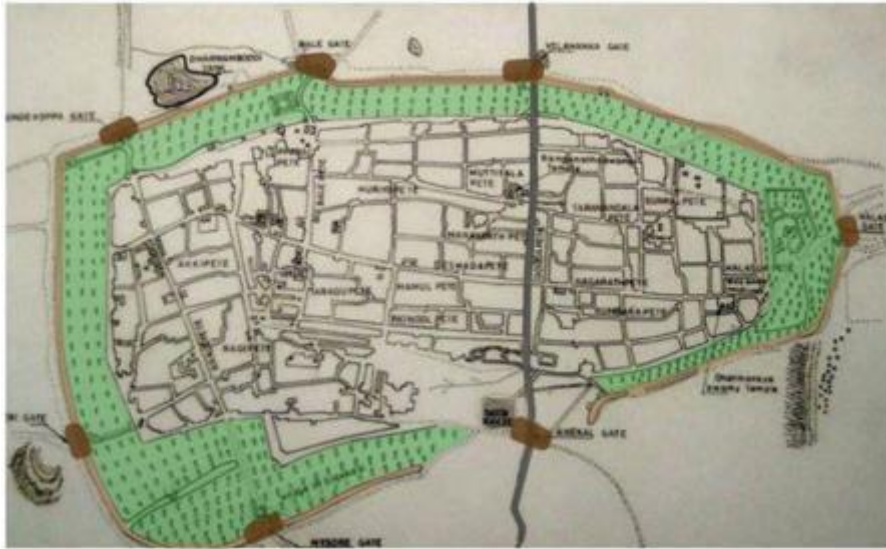


Fig. 1: Map of Bengaluru Pette region showing trade streets and agricultural land around
Source : Shubhashchandra & Subramanian (2020)

As shown in the Fig 1, the map illustrates distinct trade zones delineated along specific thoroughfares for the presentation and exchange of specific merchandise surrounded with agrarian fields. A section of a Bangalore map, displaying Pettah, its streets, and trade-related operations, sourced from Colonel Read's intelligence records from 1791, as referenced in Nair's work in 2005 on page 39 also published in Archdaily.



Fig 2: The Avenue Road
Source: ET Bureau



Fig 3: The main street of Pettah, Bangalore
Source: Edward Peter Rice (1890)

However, in the Fig 3, one can recognize a transition in building typology along the central axis of the Pette district, marked by the introduction of temporary roofs to accommodate a notably higher population density as described by the Government of Karnataka in the Infrastructure development ports and inland water transport department website.

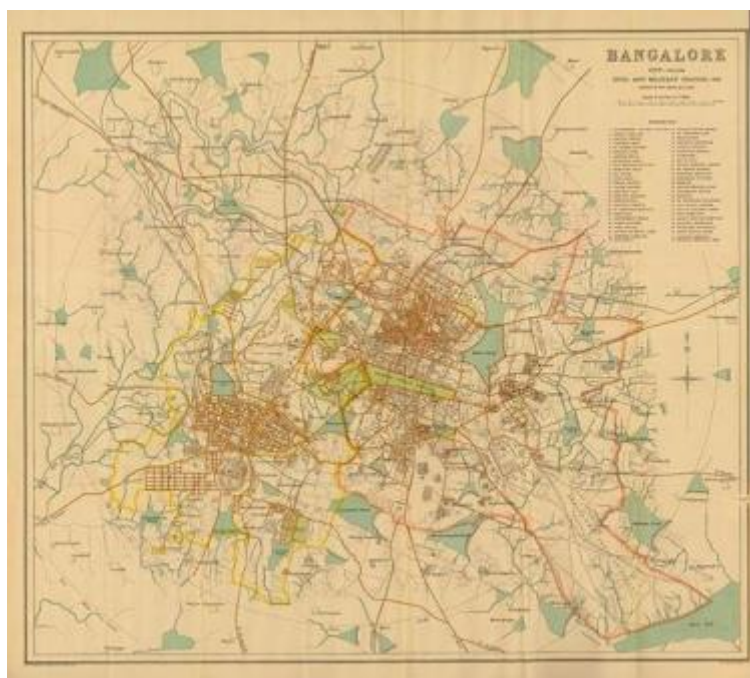


Fig 4: Map of Bangalore (1935)
Source: London: Stanley Paul & Co.



Fig 5: Contour Map of Bangalore showing the elevation
Source: Sensing Local, Peter van der Krogt (2015)

In connection with the Fig. 4. and Fig. 5, it can be clearly observed that the fort is being positioned in the southern part of the city, strategically overlooking the trade and residential parts with the vantage points.

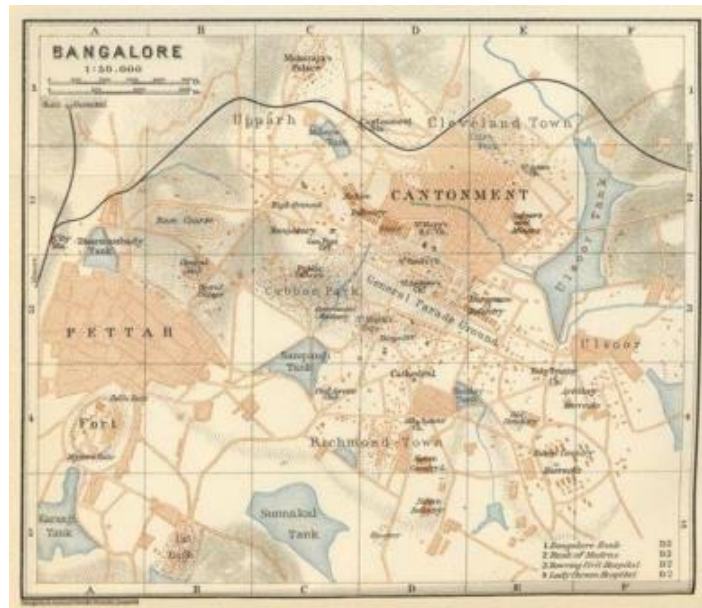


Fig 6: Map of Bangalore from the late 1900s
Source: Leipzig Geographical Institute of Wagner & Debes (1973)

During the British colonial era, it transformed under the geometric precision of gridiron layouts, metamorphosing from agrarian to commercial 'Petes,' central to trade and commerce. In the post-independence era, rapid urbanization absorbed these 'Petes' into an expanding urban tapestry, where they continue to thrive as cultural repositories and vibrant commercial hubs, bearing witness to the evolving story of Bangalore's urban landscape. These old maps, etched with history, reveal 'Pete' as a living testament to the intricate interplay of history, culture, and urban development, beckoning us to navigate the path of preservation and revitalization for these unique urban enclaves.

Discussion

The journey through time, illuminated by historical maps and records underscores the significance of 'Pete' in the Bangalore Petta area and this significance extends to the field of etymology. These historical materials reveal the rich etymological roots of the term 'Pete' as it evolved from being the vibrant central marketplace in pre-colonial Bangalore, pulsating with agrarian vitality, to becoming a commercial center under colonial influence and later adapting to post-independence urbanization. As mentioned in Economic Times, the study of 'Pete' within the context of etymology sheds light on how language and nomenclature reflect socio-economic changes over time. It highlights how the word 'Pete' has transcended its original meaning and has become symbolic of the historical, cultural and economic evolution of this region.

Moreover, this research underscores the importance of etymology in understanding the broader historical and cultural context. By tracing the evolution of the term 'Pete' alongside the transformation of the physical and social landscape, one gains insight into the relationship between language, culture and largely but crucially into urban development. These insights not only enrich our understanding of the past but also have implications for preserving and revitalizing cultural and historical landmarks. Etymology, in this context, serves as a bridge between the linguistic heritage of a place and its tangible history offering a deeper appreciation of the role language plays in documenting the evolving story of urban landscape. It also provides a compelling narrative that connects the past to the present enhancing our appreciation of the intricate interplay of history, culture and urban development in 'Petes' and beyond. Hence, it can be inferred that the growing density of people impacts not only the etymology of a specific place but also the future prospects of the surrounding neighborhood.

Conclusion

This research examined the origin of "Pete" in the Bangalore Petta area, to reveal its etymology. Its cartography shows that historical, cultural, geographical and linguistic factors have influenced the origin and various adaptations of this etymology. Tracing the lineage of 'Pete' to its colonial genesis, and understanding its pivotal role as focal points for commerce and cultural amalgamation has been a major focus of this research.

As described in Sensing Local (2024), the grid-based layout, specialized market zones, and diverse demographic compositions have contributed to the enduring character of 'Pete.' Nevertheless, the pressures of urbanization and contemporary development challenge the preservation of their historical essence. This synthesis of research on etymology related to "Pete" has enhanced our understanding of the rich tapestry of this historical part of the city. The data such as old maps, and literature related to cartography and etymology have provided an interesting morphology of how this name has evolved over time and this research has not only contributed to the understanding of the name "Pete" but has also exemplified the power of cartography in uncovering historical context, linguistic influences, and cultural narratives. This corresponds with what the data scientist Timothy Norris said "All maps are political statements that have the intention to change the world in one way or another,"

This paper thus concludes that Pette, once a prominent commercial center, has evolved significantly over time. Its transformation reflects the influence of surrounding developments and shifts in urbanism. The current identity of the neighborhood is shaped by its architectural ethnography and the etymology of its commercial vernacular. As it has adapted to changing trends, the architectural and cultural elements of Pette have evolved, influenced by the surrounding vernacular settlements. As analyzed by Leipzig Geographical Institute of Wagner & Debes, which was an important German cartographic printer and publisher of cartographic work in the 19th- and early 20th century, the stress and the indispensable utility of cartography in decoding the strata of historical significance within these spaces, is specifically seen in the core of the Petta area.

It is evident that 'Pete' areas transcend mere geographic delineations, serving as living vestiges of Bangalore's historical tapestry and cultural multiplicity. Collaborative efforts are imperative to ensure their perpetuation and rejuvenation, thus safeguarding their role in the evolving urban fabric of the city. Studies in future could focus on the socioeconomic and cultural impacts of 'Pete' areas, along with urban transformation strategies. Furthermore, comparative analyses with other historical urban areas and research on sustainable tourism and environmental implications could enrich our understanding of these unique urban spaces.

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