

The First Map of Independent India

In addition to the most obvious symbol of a sovereign nation, the National Flag, stamps, coins, currency notes and maps are also salient markers of political authority. The personalities and icons who figure on the stamps, the markings on the coins, the imprints on the currency note which are either the legal tender or guaranteed by a central bank, and the maps published under the authority of the government represent the leitmotifs of the political sovereign. All governments at all times have exercised absolute control over these external manifestations of state authority. Even though postal communication has given way to internet and whatsapp for personal communication, stamps, first day covers and commemorative issues reflect the what the sovereign wants to convey. Philatelists organize exhibitions to display their collections, and often chose to mount frames with special themes. With respect to coins, we have dedicated coin collectors whom we place under the category of numismatics. Starting out with coins, we now have numismatic collections which feature currency notes as well. The official currency also reflects the privileged position of state languages, and the Indian currency note gives the description in fifteen regional

languages, in addition to Hindi and English. It is relatively easy to carry on with these hobbies, for in our everyday life, we come across stamps, coins and currency notes and one does not really have to make an effort to 'seek them out'.

On the other hand, while students, especially those pursuing history and geography do get to work on their map –books, and many offices and classrooms do display the national and state maps, we do not spend more than a fleeting moment to understand how these maps came to get their current configuration. Over the next few weeks, I will take you along the journey of official maps published by the office of the Surveyor General of India from 1947, the dawn of India's Independence. However, it should be pointed out that from 15th August of 1947 to 26th January 1950, India was independent, but still a Dominion.

The first map of independent India, showing 'Provinces, States and Districts' was published under the direction of Brigadier G F Heaney, Commander of the British Empire (CBE) & Surveyor General of India at the Survey of India office at Dehradun. Incidentally, Survey of India Press has the distinction of also printing the first stamp of India, as early as 1854, and later the first Constitution of India. Before taking a look at the map, it's important to see the masthead, and note some key observations. These include the following: the Indo Pakistan boundary is not demarcated as an international boundary, and that this alignment is in accordance with the

best information available. It also mentions that the grouping of states is shown as it existed before the 15th August 1947, except that Bahawalpur and Khairpur states have since acceded to Pakistan. In addition to the category of demarcated and undemarcated boundaries, there is a special marker for the Pakistan boundary.

This map shows how the British left the two dominions and the 571 princely states on the 15th August, 1947. The nine provinces of India are East Punjab, United Provinces, Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Assam, Central provinces, Madras, and Bombay. Pakistan had Sind, Baluchistan and North West Frontier Province, West Punjab and East Bengal.

Now we come to the princely states. Jammu & Kashmir (including Gilgit)are shown on the Indian side. Other than Hyderabad, Mysore, Bhopal and Baroda, most of the princely states are bracketed together, and they are described as Punjab states, Rajputana, States of Western India, Central Indian states, Deccan states, Madras States (for Cochin and Travancore and) and Eastern states .This classification of princely states is interesting, for it ceases to exist in the next map, and is probably based on the administrative construct of the Ministry of states which was charged with the responsibility of getting these integrated into the Indian Union.

Thus, Bhawalpur, Khairpur, Patiala, Kapurthala, Fraidkot, Jind, as well as the hill states of Mandi, Suket, Bilaspur, Basahar, Sirmaur, and even Tehri Garhwal are under the heading of Punjab states. In addition to these prominent states which found a place on the map, nineteen smaller states are mentioned in References. Shimla is shown as the capital of Punjab, though in the immediate aftermath of the Partition, many government departments had moved to Jullundur, Hoshairpur and Ambala as well.

Rajputana includes Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur (Mewar) Jaipur, Alwar, Bharatpur and Dholpur, among others. Most of these states would later become Rajasthan. In fact in this large territory, the only area directly under British rule was Ajmer. From 1878 the region had been constituted as a chief commissioner's province known as Ajmer-Merwara.

The States of Western India include Cutch, Navanagar, Rajkot, Bhavnagar, Kathiawar, Porbandar, Junagadh, Amreli, Bhaunagar, and Palitana, there were such small principalities like Mangrol and Manavdar.

Central India states included Gwalior, Indore, Tonk and Rewa and a host of small principalities. Many of these wanted to be part of Rajputana, but perhaps because it was becoming too unwieldy, this category was created.

Eastern states is perhaps geographically the most widespread : starting as it is with Sarguja, Jashpur, Udaipur, Gangpur, Kanker, Bastar, Khairagarh, Nandgaon, it stretches towards

the east to include Cooch Behar and Tripura. Incidentally, Manipur and Khasi Hills are not shown as an Eastern state – perhaps an indicator of their independent and direct relationship with the Union government.

Then there is a category called the Deccan states which were seventeen in number, the most prominent amongst them being Kolhapur - but they were a diverse group. There were the Maratha rulers of Akalkot, Jath, Mudhol, Phaltan and Swantwadi. Aundh and Bhor were ruled by Brahmins, and then there were the Patwardhan states of Sangli, Wadi and Ramdurg. Janjira and Savanur were Muslim rulers – the former were of East African origin, and the latter from the Miyana tribe of the Pathans. One can just marvel at this diversity (and acceptance) of rulership!

Madras states include Travancore, Cochin and Puddokotai. Within the princely state of Cochin there is the coastal city of Cochin which is British territory, and was also the administrative headquarters for the Laccadive and Minicoy islands in the Arabian Sea, which, like the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal was administered directly by the Union government .

Then there were the French and Portuguese territories. The French had

Pondicherry on the West Coast, and a small territory called Yanam in the erstwhile East Godavari district and Chandannagore in the Hooghly district of West Bengal. (This

was the place all the Bengal revolutionaries would rush to while evading arrest from the British). Portugal had Goa on the West coast as well as Dadra and Nagar Haveli comprising two separate geographical entities: Nagar Haveli wedged between Maharashtra and Gujarat, and, one mile to the northwest, the smaller enclave of Dadra, which is surrounded by Gujarat.

In the next column, we will see how the internal boundaries of India are getting demarcated into states under the Indian Union.