Trade and Politics on the Coromandel Coast 1640-1720

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by

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the work incorporated in the Thesis entitled Trade and Politics on the Coromandel Coast 1640-1720 has been carried out by Radhika Seshan, who worked under my supervision. She has consulted primary and secondary source materials on the topic. Such materials have been duly acknowledged in the Thesis.

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Radhika Seshan

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Introduction

The history of South India has, till late, been rather neglected. After J. Tallboys Wheeler's 'Madras in the Olden Times' (1862) and H.D. Love's 'Vestiges of Old Madras' (1913), virtually nothing was done till Tapan Raychaudhuri's 'Jan Company in the Coromandel' (1962). In recent years, however, South Indian history is beginning to be rescued from the back burners, and it is no longer correct to say that South India is studied only by South Indians, or that historians and students of history alike ignore the history of the peninsula. Perhaps beginning with Burton Stein's segmentary state model[1] South India is now being looked at both in relation to Indian history as a whole, and in the context of specific regions / kingdoms of the peninsula. The result is, naturally, a fairly impressive amount of writing on different aspects of South Indian history, a lot of which is the result of the ongoing debate between the protagonists and antagonists of Stein's theory. However, most of these have concentrated on the question of the nature of the state and the various institutions of the state.

The main attempt of this thesis will be to examine the role of the European companies in Indian trade in the 17th and early 18th centuries, their positions vis-à-vis the Indian rulers and Indian traders, and the changes in the position of all three over the period. The

[1] B. Stein - Peasant State and society in Medieval South India (OUP, 1980).

beginning of this period saw most of India still under the rule of the three major Empires – the Mughal, Golconda and Bijapur. In the Far South, Vijayanagar was on the verge of disintegration, but the Nayak kingdoms were still strong. This period was also one of boom for Indian products, for India's products became part of the global exchange system. By the end of the period, Golconda and Bijapur had vanished; the Mughal Empire was disintegrating, and in its place was a host of successor states, each jostling for power. The Europeans were also involved in these power struggles. The thesis will therefore attempt to map the change, with specific reference to the Coromandel Coast.

That trade and politics were, are, and will be interlinked is a statement so hackneyed as to be virtually a cliché. However, for Indian history, there still continues a belief that the two were separate. This separateness was built into, firstly, the caste structure, which allowed only one section of the community to engage in trade, and secondly, to the overwhelming importance given to land and land revenue. . As the emphasis was on land, priority was naturally given to those who were entitled to a share in the produce. The tiller was not really taken into consideration. Merchants may have dealt in the produce, but unlike the elite, they could not claim a share by right. So, like the peasant, they too were supposed to be unimportant. It has generally been believed that trade was never really seen as an additional source of income for the state, far less as an alternative one. Such statements are, however, held to be more true of North than of South India, because, in the latter area,

the smaller area of land available for cultivation and the resultant lower land revenue led to the encouragement of trade by the rulers of the southern kingdoms. Colonial writings on India, emphasizing, as they did, the 'otherworldly' aspect of Indian life, further underlined these attitudes. States in India were concerned with land revenue, and were therefore essentially anti-commerce. The people of India, being more concerned with ritual / religion, were also, if not actually anti-commerce, then generally indifferent to commerce. Merchants, in this kind of view, are held to have operated, not precisely in a vacuum, but definitely in a separate world – one that encompassed the sea, which was "neutral domain", and so, "were not the concern of the state"[2].

As a natural corollary to such statements is the belief that traders had no role to play in politics. They were on the periphery, and remained there; and so, there was no need for them to seek representation or be involved in the politics of the court. Therefore, instances of such merchant politicians as Mahmud Gawan and Mir Jumla are held to be the exceptions that prove the rule. This point is one of the major areas of emphasis within this research.

The change - i.e., closer links between trade and politics, came with the Europeans. They did come as traders, but in the Indian context, they found it increasingly difficult to function without a political hold. So, in the case of Britain after the Industrial Revolution, the final

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[2] S. Arasaratnam – Maritime India in the 17th century (OUP, 1994), p. 174.

form of the trade-politics link emerged, in the shape of a country ruled by a trading company. Such sweeping statements obviously ignore the fact that the East India Company itself did not really profit from its involvement in Indian politics. While individuals amassed huge fortunes, their employers, back home in London, were saved from bankruptcy only by the intervention of the English Parliament. In 1751 Thomas Saunders[3] wrote from Fort St. David: "We must recognize that if Europeans had not intervened in these affairs and had left Indian princes to resolve their own quarrels, that might have been infinitely more beneficial to trade."[4] The Company was pulled into local politics by its own officials in their capacity as private traders, and who then used their official position to bolster their stand.

It appears rather illogical to state that foreign traders needed a political foothold in the country in which they were trading, while the merchants belonging to that country did not. Trade is not possible in an atmosphere of insecurity, and it was in the interests of the merchants to keep a close watch on what was happening on the political front. It was the political scene that led to the need to establish political control and secure trade, and the foreign companies got the support of the Indian traders because they were able to guarantee a degree of security. The period under review, much more that the later 18th century, forms, in my opinion, the period of transition.

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[3] Saunders was a member of the Council at Fort St. David.

[4] Quoted by H. Furber - Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient (Minneapolis, 1976), p. 156.

Sources

The present research is based mainly on the English records, partly because the English were, ultimately, the most successful, first in adapting to the Indian scene, and later changing it to suit their needs; and partly because much of the English sources still remain underutilised. Many scholars have studied the way in which the English changed the Indian scene, but the process of adaptation still requires a great deal of research. Far more than the Dutch, their prime competitors during most of our period, they understood the importance of working within the existing structure, and of using existing symbols of legitimacy to gain widespread acceptance. It could perhaps be argued that the beginning of the process by which the English East India Company became the "Company Bahadur" in Bengal was worked out through trial and error in Madras.

The sources are mainly the voluminous records left behind by the English, many of which have been published as the Records of Fort St. George. These consist of the Diary and Consultation Books, covering the day-to-day affairs of the Fort from 1672 onwards. Then there are the Letters from Fort St. George for the years 1679-1765 and the Letters to Fort St. George for the years 1681-1765. Some of the Despatches to and from England are also available, as are a few

Consultations for Masulipatnam and Fort St. David. The records are, unfortunately, incomplete.

Some Persian chronicles are available for the period, covering the history of Golconda before, during and after the Mughal invasion. These include Bhimsen's 'Nuskha-i Dilkusha', Khafi Khan's 'Muntakhab-al Lubab', and Saqi Musta'id Khan's 'Ma'asir-i-Alamgiri'.

A number of travellers also visited the region or lived there during the 17th century. Nicolao Manucci, for instance, lived in Madras from the 1690's. Other travellers to the area include Thomas Bowrey and Jean-Baptiste Tavernier. Streynsham Master, the governor of Madras from 1676-80, has left behind a fairly detailed diary, as has Francois Martin, the French resident at Pondicherri.

Very few indigenous sources exist for the period. The diaries of Ananda Ranga Pillai are perhaps the only important source, but they really refer to the later period of Coromandel history (after the 1730's), when Anglo-French rivalry was at its height. They are, therefore, not very useful in the present context. A few inscriptions are available, and have been published in the Annual Reports of South Indian Epigraphy.

Of the works so far done on the history of the Coromandel Coast, those of Wheeler and Love consist mainly of excerpts from the

original records, grouped together either chronologically, or under sub-headings like 'relations with the French' or 'fortifications of the city of Madras'. Both are useful, for they contain excerpts from the records of the early years of the settlement of Madras, which have since perished. Tapan Raychaudhuri's book is a study of the working of the Dutch Company on the Coromandel Coast.

Of late, there has been a fair amount of work done by scholars like S. Arasaratnam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam. There is naturally a great deal of work that needs to be done, and there are a great many areas that have been touched merely in passing. One such aspect is that of trade and politics. Recent works, such as those of Chris Bayly[5], have made a beginning, by pointing out that the Indians in a sense created a basis for British rule. Bayly and Subrahmanyam[6] carried the idea further with their theory of "portfolio capitalists", where they pointed out that many of the nobles of Golconda, particularly, were actively involved in politics. Immanuel Wallerstein's theory of the Modern World-System[7] has also sparked off many debates, both on the theory itself, and on the role, if any, played by the countries of the Indian Ocean region[8].

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[5] C. Bayly - Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars (OUP, 1990).
[6] S. Subrahmanyam - Merchants, Markets and the State in Medieval South India (OUP, 1991).
[7] Wallerstein, Immanuel – The Modern World System II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World Economy 1600-1750 (New York, 1980).
[8] For an examination of the debates, see M.N. Pearson – Before Colonialism: Theories on Asian-European Relations, 1500-1750 (OUP, 1988).

S. Arasaratnam, after a series of articles and a book on various aspects of Dutch power In Sri Lanka, finally published his book, "Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650-1750", in 1986. It is probably one of the most detailed and well-researched books on 17th and 18th century south India, for he has used both Dutch and English sources extensively. But he has not discussed the Indian political scene in such detail, and he makes virtually no reference to the kinds of links between Indian merchants and Indian rulers, except possibly in the case of Malaya Chetti. Again, while he discusses the workings of the Dutch company extensively, as also the competition between the European companies, he does not adequately explain the process by which the English gradually came to value the aspect of force that the Dutch had always used, and the way in which they learnt to use it more effectively. Arasaratnam's book discusses the working of the companies and their trade in fair detail, but more from Dutch than English records. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, too, has an impressive list of published articles and books, but many of the former deal mainly with the Portuguese rather than the other Europeans. One of his major contributions has been, as mentioned above, the theory of the portfolio capitalist. This theory has been criticised by many historians, who say either that the term itself is meaningless, or that it has not been adequately defined, or else that both the words have modern connotations and so ought not to be used. However, those who have criticised him have not really made any attempt to provide an alternative, and so, at present, it is the only term that we have. In a sense, much of

the present research is based on the idea that portfolio capitalists did exist in 17th century India. However, the changing scenario deprived them of the political structure in which they held their "portfolios", and ultimately replaced their variety of "capitalism" with another, not home-grown, which ultimately changed the face of the world. Far more than Arasaratnam, Subrahmanyam has placed the working of the East India Companies within the milieu of Indian politics.

The area known as the Coromandel Coast was included in the three large Nayakdoms of the south, Madurai, Thanjavur and Jinji, but their history has been almost totally neglected. Virtually nothing has been written on these kingdoms since R. Sathianathaiyer's 'History of the Nayaks of Madura' (1924), V. Vriddhagirisan's 'The Nayaks of Tanjore' (1942) and C.S. Srinivasachari's 'History of Gingee and its Rulers' (1943). All these authors mention the trade of the European Companies and the wealth of records they have left behind, but very little more. And this, despite the fact that that all three Nayaks attempted to get the English and the Dutch to settle within their dominions, or the fact that the Dutch were extremely active in the far south. Nagapattinam had been a Portuguese settlement, and the Nayak of Thanjavur enlisted the help of the Dutch in ousting the Portuguese. Devanamapatnam, near Cuddalore, was offered to the English by the Nayak of Jinji, and was the site of their Fort St. David by the end of the century.

As has been pointed out earlier, the Europeans came to India not as potential conquerors but as merchants. It was in the capacity of traders that they had to deal with the local political powers, and as traders, they were on par with the Indian merchants. In fact, when it came to the manipulation of state support, they were at a definite disadvantage vis-à-vis their Indian competitors. It is our contention that the nature of Indian trade and the role of Indian merchants was so bound up with the political structure as it then existed, that the collapse of that structure, more than the competition offered by the Europeans, led to the decline of Indian traders. The Mughal empire, which expanded into the south at the end of the 17th century, did not in any sense provide a viable alternative to the earlier structure, because the empire collapsed well before any such alternatives could be effectively worked out. It is, therefore, significant that the attempts of the French and the English at jockeying for better positions and privileges had virtually come to an end before 1757, the official date of the beginning of British rule. In other words, before entering Bengal, the British had established a base for themselves in the south, from which to take advantage of the events in the north. To stretch a point, it could perhaps be argued that the French lost precisely because they could not maintain themselves in the south.

The area known as the Coromandel Coast covers the stretch of coast between Point Calimere in the south and Ganjam in the north. The Pennar river formed a natural boundary between north and

south Coromandel. An important feature of the coast is that it is very little indented, and, unlike the west coast, has almost no natural harbours. Vishakhapatnam, perhaps the only exception, was of no importance in our period. Most of the ports were either totally exposed to the ocean, or at the mouths of rivers, and so suffered from all the attendant problems of silting. Given the factor of cyclones during the monsoon, such open roads were a definite hazard. As a result, no one port had any striking advantage over another, with the result that the coast was dotted with a number of ports, each tapping a fairly small hinterland in its immediate neighbourhood, in addition to participating in the general internal trade of the south, and depending on the political situation in its vicinity for it continued prosperity. As S. Arasaratnam has pointed out, "Coromandel ports were thus set in a regime of equality, with perhaps one achieving the position of *primus inter pares*, though not for any length of time."[9] While there are a number of ports with a long history, almost none of them escaped the prosperity / decline curve common to all Coromandel ports. In other words, the connection between trade and the political situation was more immediately visible along the Coromandel coast.

During the 17th century, the most important ports (from north to south)[10] were, firstly, Bimlipatnam, which was one of the ports involved in the "country trade" (i.e., the coastal trade) in rice up to Bengal and down to Sri Lanka. It was important to Europeans more as supplier

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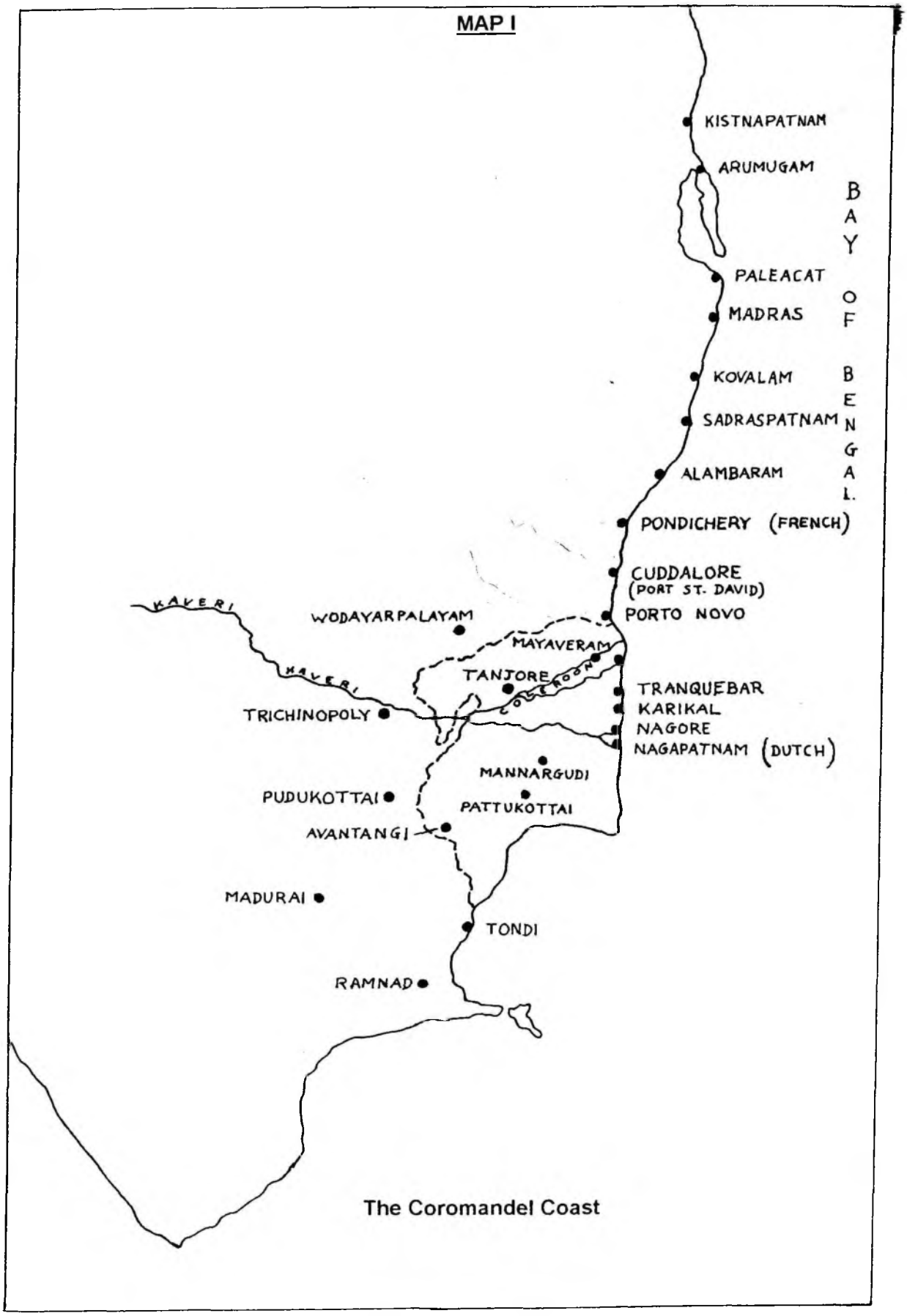
[9] S. Arasaratnam - Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650-1750 (OUP, 1986), p. 8.
[10] See Map 1.



The Coromandel Coast

of foodstuffs than textiles. South of Bimlipatnam there was a cluster of ports around the Godavari delta, of which Narsapurpeta was the most important. This port was the centre of the local shipbuilding industry, and according to Bowrey, the king of Golconda's ships were built here[11]. Near Narsapur was Madapollam, a textile producing centre, known for a special variety of cloth "chequered somewhat fine"[12].

South of these came Masulipatnam, the major port of the Golconda Empire, and the most important one on the east coast for most of the 17th century. It had one of the worst anchorages on the coast for, in addition to being open to the ocean, it also suffered from the disadvantages of a river port. Ships were forced to anchor out at sea, and goods transported to and from them in small boats. Masulipatnam's importance was not due to its natural advantages, for it had none, but to the fact that it was the major outlet for the products of the Golconda empire. It therefore occupied a position similar to that of Surat on the West Coast. Masulipatnam's merchants, both Telugu Chettis and Persians, were involved in the coastal trade and in the trade across the Bay of Bengal. In addition, the Sultan of Golconda would annually send out a ship to the Red Sea - mainly for pilgrims, but also for trade. The Europeans naturally came first to this port, for in addition to the factors discussed above, it was the centre of a major textile-producing region. In the defeat of Golconda by the Mughals, Masulipatnam was a major

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[11] T. Bowrey - A Geographical Account of the Countries Around the Bay of Bengal, 1669-1679, ed. R.C. Temple (Hak. Soc., 1905).

[12] H.K. Sherwani and P.M. Joshi - History of Medieval Deccan, 1295-1724, Vol. I (Hyderabad, 1973), p.25.

casualty, for it then became just one more Coromandel port, no better and no worse than the others.

South of Masulipatnam came Petapoli, also known as Nizamapatnam, where the English had a factory.

In the south Coromandel, the first port of any importance was Armagon, where the English established a factory in the 1620's. Then came Pulicat, the chief factory of the Dutch on the coast, and their first fortified settlement, for their Casteel Geldria was established here in 1611-12. Trade from here was totally under Dutch control, and all merchants had to submit to official VOC policy. Pulicat, like Masulipatnam, is illustrative of the peculiar nature of Coromandel ports, which owed their existence to factors other than geography; once the Dutch left, the port declined, until by the 19th century it was just a fishing village, unimportant even in the coastal trade.

South of Pulicat was Fort St. George or Madraspatam (now Chennai), the seat of English power. Like Masulipatnam, Madras was noted for being one of the worse anchorages on the coast, and it owed its existence and subsequent importance solely to the English. Mailapur (now a suburb of Chennai) had been an important port in ancient times, but by the 16th century was a fishing village of no great importance. Near Mailapur was San Thomé, where the Portuguese had a

settlement; it was known more for its religious associations than its commercial activity.

South of Madras were a number of ancient ports - Sadraspatnam, Pondicherri, Devanamapatnam, Porto Novo (the base of the Indian Muslim merchants known as 'Klings' and 'Chooliars'), Tranquebar (where the Danes had a fort) and Nagapattinam (taken from the Portuguese by the Dutch in the late 1650's). Almost all these ports tapped the weaving villages of the modern Nellore, Chingleput, and North and South Arcot districts,

Broadly speaking, there were three major political payers in the south, both simultaneously and consecutively. Golconda and Bijapur were the earliest, for they defeated the last Vijayanagar ruler, and divided the kingdom between themselves. The Marathas quickly replaced Bijapur. With the conquest of Golconda by the Mughals, the latter became the main Indian power, along with the Marathas. This kind on outline tends to obscure the fact that there were any number of smaller kingdoms, and a great deal of warfare. These rulers, small only in comparison with Golconda or the Mughals, included the Nayaks of Madurai, Thanjavur and Jinji, and the Setupati of Ramnad. The Marathas took over Thanjavur, and also established another kingdom at Jinji. In addition, there were the settlements and forts of the Europeans. As said above, there were also a number of wars, which continued, with occasional breaks, for most of the 17th century. Beginning with the defeat

of the Vijayanagar armies at the battle of Rakshas Tangadi (Talikota) in 1565; to the civil war in the Vijayanagar empire between 1610 and 1614; going on to the southward expansion of Bijapur and Golconda in the 1630's; the Maratha incursions in the later half of the century; and finally, the expansion of the Mughal Empire, there was a period of maybe thirty years in which there was no large scale movement of armies. Nor did the coming of the Mughals signal an end, for warfare continued right up to the end of the period under review. The Mughal-Maratha conflict was, during this period, concentrated precisely in this area. There were also attempts by the Mughal forces to suppress the other rulers of the region, as for example, the Raja of Mysore. In 1713, the factors at Fort St. George reported that their "Suba [was] at present engag'd in a warr with the Misore people very prejudiciall to the Trade of these parts... we hope the fate of the Empire will be soon decided and that we shall have some Active men to govern in these Parts, till when Trade cannot flourish"[13]. India's trade reached its peak precisely during this period, and in spite of it. However, no "good government" was immediately possible, for the second decade of the century saw the beginning of the process of fragmentation of the empire. Arcot emerged as one the earliest of the successor states in the south, linking its fortunes with the English, while claiming legitimacy from the Mughals. In this context, the relative security that the Europeans offered through the 18th century, did drive the merchants closer to the outsiders, and so formed one of the bases on which the British were able to lay the foundations of their rule.

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[13] Records of Fort St. George - Diary and Consultation Books (henceforth RFSG -

Plan of Study

As the sources, and the focus of attention, are on the English Company, most of the instances quoted or used as examples are with reference to the English, and specifically at Madras. This is because, of the three ports / fortified settlements of the Europeans (Pulicat, Madras and Pondicherri), Madras perhaps best exemplifies the stages in the development of the Europeans, especially the English, from a trading, sea-oriented Company to one ruling on land. The thesis is divided into four chapters, as well as an introduction and a conclusion. The **Introduction** lays out the hypothesis of the thesis, together with a survey of the primary sources and the seconday works so far written on the approximate theme of this work.

Chapter I, entitled "The Trading World of Pre-17th century Coromandel", looks at the patterns of trade, production and politics that existed in the period prior to the one under review. An attempt is made in this chapter to look at the way the merchants worked within the political structure that existed at that time.

Chapter 2, entitled "Of Politics and Trade", descrives the breakdown of that political structure in the course of the 17th century, and the competition between the European Companies themselves, and their respective positions vis-à-vis the Indians on the other.

Chapter 3 discusses the Indian merchant in the 17th and early 18th centuries, who started from a position of strength and ended in one of dependence. It therefore studies the careers of three Indian merchants in

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Diary), 4 February 1713.

detail, so as to analyse the nature and causes of the shifting positions of the Indian merchants.

Chapter 4 is devoted to "Our Fort and City", i.e., the town of Madras. It describes the expansion of the town as well as its position vis-à-vis the Indian states, the Indian merchants, and the bases of its increasing importance, in both the political and the economic worlds of India.

The **Conclusion** sums up the arguments presented in the earlier chapters of the thesis, so as to test the hypothesis laid out in the introduction.

Chapter 1

The Trading World of pre-17th century Coromandel.

It is now well established that the 17th century boom in Indian textiles initially arose out of the European demand for spices. Pepper was the main item demanded in Europe. It has been estimated that, between 1513 and 1610, each Portuguese ship carried home between 4,345 and 7,891 quintals – approximately 25,000 quintals per year[14]. The Europeans arrived in Asia to find a well-defined intra-Asian trade network, in which Indian, particularly Coromandel, textiles played a pivotal role. Naturally, Europeans touched first on the west coast of India, and from there sailed on to the Spice Islands, where they discovered that, not only was there no demand for European goods, there was also no (or at least, very little) demand for bullion. However, there was a demand for textiles, and a well-established pattern of exchange of spices for the textiles of the Coromandel – so much so that, in 1612, the Coromandel Coast was described as the "left arm of the Moluccas". Without its textiles, the "trade in the Moluccas [would] be dead"[15]. The

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[14] M.N. Pearson – Before Colonialism ... op. cit., quoting Niels Steensgaard – "The Return Cargoes of the Carreira in the 16th and early 17th centuries", in T.R. de Souza (ed.) – Indo-Portuguese History: Old Issues, New Questions (New Delhi, 1985), p. 22.

[15] Om Prakash – "The Portuguese and the Dutch in Asian Maritime trade: a Comparative Analysis", in Sushil Chaudhury and Michel Morineau (ed.) – Merchants, Companies and Trade – Europe and Asia in the Early Modern Era (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 175-188.

Portuguese, the first European traders on the Asian scene, tried to impose a monopoly on the existing Asian shipping, through a system of strategically located forts (like Ormuz and Malacca), and by a judicious use of passes, called cartazes[16]. This system, backed as it was by an equally judicious use of religion, and the establishment of Portuguese centres ranging from Goa, the seat of the Estado da India, to Macao, was reasonable effective for about a century. The Portuguese were apparently content with controlling the shipping, and their mixture of sword and Bible in establishing their empire was rather different from that of the other Europeans. Illustrative of this is the fact that they had no major stations on the Coromandel Coast; San Thomé, as mentioned earlier, had religious rather than commercial significance, and Nagapattinam, their only station, was a very minor one in the Estado's scheme of affairs. But what they did not have in terms of possessions, they seem to have made up for through influence at the local courts, which they used, with a fair amount of initial success, to block the Dutch entry into the Coromandel[17].

By the time the Dutch came on the scene in the 17th century, Portuguese power had already begun to decline. Not surprisingly, they (the Dutch) attacked the Portuguese monopoly and possessions vigorously, both by armed attacks on Portuguese factories and ships and by a system of treaties with various local princes. These

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[16] M.N. Pearson - Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat.(Berkeley, 1976).

[17] For example, they successfully blocked the Dutch efforts to get a concession to build a factory at Cuddalore, by using their influence at the Vijayanagar court.

treaties granted the Dutch exclusive rights of purchase of certain specified commodities[18], at stipulated prices. They also demanded exclusion of other European and Asian competitors[19]. In contrast to the Portuguese, their aim was not just control of shipping, but control of the trade in spices. As a natural corollary to their interest in spices, their main factories in India were on the Coromandel coast, where, from Pulicat in the first half, and Nagapattinam towards the end of the 17th century, they attempted, with a fair degree of success, to monopolise the trade in spices and later, the products of the Ramnad and Sri Lanka coasts. However, their main concern was the Spice Islands, and so, their headquarters in Asia was located not in India but in Batavia.

The English, later arrivals in Asia, established toeholds, albeit precarious ones, at Bantam and Amboyna, but lost the latter after the Amboyna massacre early in the 17th century. They continued to make attempts to settle factories at Sumatra (York Fort), Bencoolen and Priaman (Atchin, Aceh), but their focus of attention was India and her textiles. Perhaps because of their early inability to match the Dutch resources, in terms of both money and ships (of war and trade), they began, very early, to concentrate much more of their attention on India. This meant, on the one hand, greater attention being paid to selling European goods in India, and on the other, in the interests of profitable

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[18] Something the English objected to later - see E.B. Sainsbury (ed.) - A Calendar of the Court Minutes, etc. of the East India Company (Oxford, 1935), the debate regarding the provisions of the Treaty Marine, vol. xxviii, *passim*.

[19] Dutch records - Dutch treaties, 1643-1711; also S. Arasaratnam - "Mare Clausum: the Dutch and Regional Trade in the Indian Ocean" in Journal of Indian History (henceforth JIH), 1983, p. 73.

trade, to developing a demand for Indian goods in Europe. Indian textiles had long been famous. The concentration of the Europeans on the Spice Islands did probably lead to an increase in the amount of traditional cloth manufactured, but the increased interest in textiles also led to the manufacture of cloth solely for the Europeans[20]. The 17th century was definitely a boom period for Indian textiles, and Indian artisans were functioning in extremely favourable market conditions, in the sense that whatever they wove was bound to find a buyer. As late as 1701, the factors at Fort St. George complained that the Dutch, to "engross the weavers", had deposited ten pagodas per loom as opposed to the customary five pagodas per loom[21]. The reverse of this was that, much more than formerly, they were tied into world market conditions, and so were susceptible to its fluctuations. For example, in the course of the 17th century, the English gradually began to change the kinds of textiles they bought, from the coarser varieties to the finer ones. Finer textiles required more of an initial investment or advance, which had to be made through the Indian merchants. But orders were placed on the basis of projections of the market two years later – so if, in the meantime, trends had changed, fresh orders would reflect the changed trends, and thus affect the weavers also[22]. When these fluctuations were added to increasingly chaotic political conditions at home, the weavers and merchants were forced to function within steadily narrowing limits, until finally, their only security lay within the bounds of the Company's trade. As pointed out

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[20] See Tables
[21] RFSG - Diary, 1701.
[22] See also below, p. 24.

earlier, in the process of ensuring its own position, and the trade of its employees, the Company steadily moved into the acquisition of political power. This process has, of course, been well documented for the 18th century, but the groundwork had been laid earlier.

I

Weaving was obviously a major occupation. Today, the silks of South India are world famous, but during the period under review, the Coromandel was famous mainly for cotton cloth. While we do not have names of very many different varieties of cloth prior to the 16th century, from that time onwards, we do have the names of a number of cloth varieties. Basically, however, Coromandel cloth was classified as painted ("pintadoes"), or printed. In the former, as the name indicates, the design was painted on to the cloth, in accordance with a pattern (usually a traditional one), while in the latter, designs were printed with a block (often wooden) on which the design had been engraved. In the late 19th century, it was stated that Indian cotton fabrics were of three kinds - (I) block-printed only; (ii) block-printed and hand painted; and (iii) hand painted only[23]. Dyeing with vegetable dyes was well known, with some of the primary colours like red being particularly famous[24]. As a major element of the dyeing process was the washing of the cloth, settlements

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[23] E. Thurston - The Cotton Fabric Industry of the Madras Presidency (Madras, 1897), p. 13.

[24] E. Holder - Dyes and Dyeing in the Madras Presidency (Madas, 1896).

of what the Europeans called "washers" were found dotted along all the major rivers, and particularly along the Godavari[25].

Mention is made of many weaver communities, of which the most important in earlier times were the Devanga, Saliya and Kaikkolar. The last named apparently combined military activities with weaving during the Cola period, but became full-fledged weavers with the establishment of the Vijayanagar Empire. They usually settled in the streets around a temple (as can be made out, even today, by a purely cursory look at the street names in the major textile towns of the south, like Kanchipuram and Madurai). Apparently a tax was levied on each loom, with concessions being made in case a single family owned a large number of looms[26]. Other inscriptions mentioned, for instance, a tax of two *panam* on the loom of each Kaikkola weaver living near a particular temple[27]. Early in the 17th century, an inscription from the South Arcot district records an agreement by the weavers to pay a small sum every month, "for the encouragement given to them to resettle in the village, ... when owing to hard times they had emigrated to other places"[28]. Later in the same century, however, other than the Kaikkolar, who are called "trouble makers"[29], the only other weaving caste specifically mentioned is

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[25] The mineral content of these rivers was a crucial element in fixing the colours.
[26] South Indian Inscriptions (henceforth SII), Vol. IX, pt. 2, no. 516, dated approximately 1526, says that if a single family had ten looms, only nine were to be taxed.
[27] Annual Report on South Indian Epigraphy (henceforth ARE), 272 of 1912, the temple at Nerumbur.
[28] Ibid., 390 of 1925.
[29] H.D. Love - Vestiges of Old Madras (3 volumes, London 1913, henceforth Vestiges, followed by vol. no.), II, p. 29.

that of the "Janrawar", who were persuaded to settle in the vicinity of Fort St. George[30].

The skills of the weavers are well attested to by the Europeans. Patterns were dictated by tradition; and the Europeans, to their disgust, found that minor variations in design, of no significance to them, could result in the entire stock becoming unacceptable in a particular region. The degree of specialisation is well brought out as early as 1538, in an inscription which goes into the details of how much yarn is to be used in a particular kind of loom, in what fashion, and by whom[31]. This, however, did not in any way mean that the weavers were incapable of innovation, for in 1696, the factors reported that all the looms in Udayar Palayam had been altered to meet the English East India Company's requirements[32]. Newer patterns, to suit European tastes, were given to the weavers, who were generally able to follow them fairly easily. One of the rare complaints from the artisans in the English records comes from 1696, when the painters said that they "did not understand Painting with a good Chay" (a root used for a red colour), as they had always worked on coarse cloth, "with a more ordinary Chay". However, one person from among the painters later volunteered to teach the others, as he understood the new method[33]. Some attempt was made to get weaver to make cloth "after the Bengal fashion", but this was apparently unsuccessful. It appears that some individuals had also

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[30] Ibid., I, p. 547.
[31] Tirumalai Tirupati Devasthanam Inscriptions, Vol. IV, no. 112. This kind of weaving was to be done only by Muslims.
[32] RFSG - Letters from Fort St. George, 18 August 1696.

emerged as "master weavers"[34], while other weavers had taken to selling the cloth they made. References to "Cilai Cettis" are found fairly early[35]; and in 1694, the factors complained that two "merchant weavers" had forced the weavers to make the "Manilha sort of cloth" instead of that required by the Company[36]. Shortly afterwards, the Company entered into contracts with these merchants for the supply of the Company's cloth.

Different areas apparently produced different kinds of cloth - so, the best "paintings" came from the area around Masulipatnam, while the South Coromandel produced good printed calicos. However, there was no hard and fast rule, and in fact, perhaps the only typical cloth of the Coromandel was the longcloth, so named because of its unusual length[37]. Outside Persia, the best Persian-style carpets were produced near Elluru, in the Golconda kingdom[38], but by and large, as mentioned earlier, Coromandel was known primarily for its cotton textiles.

Weaving was obviously a very important profession, and the weavers in earlier times apparently enjoyed many privileges. The Madras Museum Copper Plates of Uttama Cola provide some instances of such privileges, which apparently could include temple management

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[33] RFSG - Fort St. David Consultations, 30 January 1696.
[34] ARE, 221 of 1929-30 - an individual was given a site on condition that he pay four *panams* for every loom set up in it.
[35] "Cilai" is still used in parts of Tamil Nadu to mean sari.
[36] RFSG - Diary, 5 November 1694.
[37] "72 coveds long by 2 coveds broad", according to the records. A coved measured about 18 inches.

and the maintaining of temple accounts. Interest on paddy and money accruing on investments by the temple was to be apportioned among the different shrines, and two weavers were entrusted with this task[39]. Whether such privileges continued into the 17th century is unclear, but it is likely that they did, for hints of their traditional privileges are to be found in accounts of the clashes between the left hand and right hand (*idangai-valangai*) castes.

The *idangai-valangai* was the unique vertical division of castes in South India. It has been suggested that this marks the division between the agricultural / artisanal groups and the industrial / mercantile groups. However, Buchanan lists merchants and weavers in both groups[40]. In the Cola period, this may have referred to military divisions[41], but by the time of Vijayanagar, the *idangai-valangai* comprised different professional castes, who were involved in intense social conflict. Clashes between the two were frequent even in the 17th and early 18th centuries, as, for example, in Madras in 1652 and 1707[42], and apparently at Pulicat also[43]. The factors at Fort St. George reported to the Court of Directors in 1652 that "the countrey round about, as well as this and all other townes in this Kingdome, are divided into Two Generall Casts, namely the

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[38] R.C. Temple (ed.) - The Diaries of Streynsham Master (2 volumes, London, 1911), vol. I, account of journey from Masulipatnam back to Fort St. George.
[39] SII - Vol. III, pt. iii, no. 128.
[40] Francis Buchanan - A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar in 1800 (London, 1907), p. 77. The list is reproduced in Appendix I.
[41] V. Ramaswamy - Textiles and Weavers in Medieval South India (OUP, 1985), p. 58.
[42] RFSG - Diary, 26 August 1707, in which details of settlement of 1652 are given; Vestiges I, pp. 118-119; II, pp. 25-30; and W. Foster (ed.) The English Factories in India (henceforth EFI), 1651-54, p. 155 and *passim*.
[43] RFSG - Despatches to England, 22 December 1707.

Belgewarres [Balija-varu] and the Bereewarres [Beri-varu], who for many hundred yeares together have ever had a Quarell one with the other who Should be the more honourable Cast and have Presidency [precedence] of the other"[44]. At this time, the Madras Council under the Presidentship of Aaron Baker drew up a detailed list of which streets were earmarked for which castes, and further stated that "Sheshadree Chittee, as madiator to each Cast, his servants nor the Companys servants and Painters cannot pass these streets"[45].

II

The textile industry was, obviously, a highly organised one with each stage, from spinning of the yam, to weaving, bleaching, dyeing and painting being done by different groups of artisans. Some families may have been involved in the entire process, but in such cases the quantity produced was probably not very large, i.e., for domestic consumption only. For bulk production, the involvement of merchants was very necessary, because by the 17th century, the weavers operated only with advances from the merchant. A 17th century observer put this down to the poverty of the weavers, who, "betweene their inbred way of feeding Bramenys and the extortions of their Aveldars, live meerly from hand to mouth..."[46]. This seems to be in contrast to the conditions

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[44] Vestiges, I, p. 120.
[45] Ibid.; and EFI, 1651-54, p. 155 and *passim*.
[46] EFI - New Series (ed. C. Fawcett), vol. II - The East Coast and Bengal, pp. 160-161.

prevailing earlier[47], but it is possible that the views represent the two extremes, for weaving was both a purely domestic occupation as well as one that catered to a larger market. Nevertheless, by the 17th century, dependence on the merchants had probably increased. The system of advances has been compared to the putting-out system, but it should be remembered that only money, and almost never raw materials, was advanced. In 1675, the English factors reported that "here as in all other parts of this Coast, and as we understand at Suratt and the Bay also, as well by the Dutch as English and all others, it has been customary and of course to deliver mony forehand to the Merchants for the more timely accomplishing of their investments..."[48]. The advances were necessary for the merchants to get the required quantities of cloth, and the factors in India early declared themselves in favour of working through middlemen, for fear that "att the yeares end, when wee expected to be invested of our goods, wee should undoubtedlye come shorte of half our quantitye, besides undergoe a hazard of their [the weavers] running away where there were no hope for us to fynd them"[49].

Trade was obviously an integral pan of the economy of South India from early times. Major and minor trade routes criss-crossed the peninsula, as is clear from the accounts of people like Tavernier and Master. Coromandel merchants had traditionally been involved in the trade to Southeast Asia, though a few ships sailed every year to the Red

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[47] As mentioned in inscriptions, as also references to "master weavers", see above, p. 25.
[48] RFSG - Diary, 28 Sept. 1675.
[49] EFI, 1622-23, letter from Pulicat to the President, p. 104.

Sea also. The main areas to which Coromandel ships sailed were Tenasserim, Siam, Malaysia, Java, Sumatra and Borneo[50]. Imports included gold from Aden and China, silver from China and Japan, elephants from Ceylon and Pegu, horses from Arabia and spices from Sumatra. Exports were mainly of different kinds of cloth, rice to Aden, Ormuz, and Sri Lanka[51]. Of these, cloth formed the major item.

Between the 8th and the 17th centuries, much of this trade had been handled by merchant gullds[52]. Inscriptions refer to a great many groups of merchants, such as the Ainnurruvar, Valanjiyar, Nanadesi, Manigramam, Anjuvannam, etc.; the first named, the Ainnurruvar, figure prominently in many inscriptions. The Ainnurruvar (or 500) was a group of itinerant merchants, who apparently travelled all over the south. The organisation was established in the 8th century at Aihole, probably as the result of the decision of a group of Mahajans or Brahmans (also called the 500 Svamis of the Mahagrahara of Aihole) to set up an institutional base for the commerce of the region[53]. It has also been suggested[54] that such merchant organisations grew out of small groups of merchants who traded with isolated communities, and who came together for mutual protection. The term `500' continued to be used

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[50] B.A. Saletore - "Some Aspects of the Overseas Trade of Vijayanagar from the Accounts of European Travellers" in the B.C. Law Commemoration Volume, pp. 114-127.

[51] T.V. Mahalingam - Economic Life in the Vijayanagar Empire, pp.110 and 113.

[52] The term 'guild' is not used in the medieval European sense of an organisation of professionals, bound by a set of carefully drawn up rules of conduct, and with definite criteria for membership. Rather, it is used in the sense of 'association'.

[53] M. Abraham - "A Medieval Merchant Guild of South India" in Studies in History, 1982, Vol. IV, No. 1, p. 6; M. Abraham - Two Medieval Merchant Guilds of South India (Delhi, 1988), Ch. II.

as a conventional one even after the organisation grew in size and composition, comprising people of different castes, religions and regions[55]. As the largest merchant organisation, they apparently had mercenaries to protect their goods. They also set up protected mercantile towns called Erivirapattinas.

The activities of the 500[56] were closely linked to the Colas, in the sense that they were actively encouraged by the Colas[57]. They stepped into all the regions that the Colas conquered, as, for example, the Kongu and Ganga countries after these areas were conquered by Rajaraja I and Rajendra I. In the 11th century, Aiyapolil Kattur[58] and Basinikonda[59] were made Erivirapattinas under special charters from the Cola rulers of the region. The former inscription calls the 500 the "virtuous protectors of the Vira Valanjika", consisting of various subdivisions coming from the "four quarters, the 18 towns, the 32 *velarpuram*, and the 64 *ghatikasthanas*". It then went on to say that the inhabitants of the new erivirapattina were to be exempted of all communal contributions, and that the town was not to be inhabited by those merchants who "demanded taxes or tolls by threatening people with drawn swords or by capturing them", as well as by those who

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[54] K.R. Hall - Trade and Statecraft in the Age of the Colas (Delhi, 1980), Ch. 6.
[55] M. Abraham, op. cit., Ch. III.
[56] Sometimes referred to as the *Nanadesiya Tisaiayirattu Ainnurruvar* - "The 500 of the Thousand Directions and Several Countries.
[57] Inscriptions of the Pudukottai region, 9th to 11th centuries, such as the Munisandai inscription (Pudukottai State Inscriptions, no. 61), testify to this in the early period.
[58] ARE 256 of 1912.
[59] ARE 342 of 1912.

"wantonly deprived people of their food or otherwise afflicted them"[60]. Such instances show the involvement of merchant organisations in local administration, which apparently took place through the nagaram. Hall has identified nagarams as marketing centres of a region, as well as "one among the several indigenous administrative institutions..."[61]. The nagarams worked in close cooperation with the *ur* or sabha. It has been suggested that the nagaram was an assembly, and in those towns inhabited only (or mainly) by merchants, it was probably the only assembly[62]. In Pallava inscriptions, four nagarams can be identified[63], but the number increased considerably under the Colas, so that there was generally one nagaram in each nadu[64]. The nagaram later became part of the supra-regional trade and so it "represented the point of intersection between the nadu territory and the wider world of commerce"[65]. It was in this context that the itinerant merchant corporations entered the local field.

The middle Cola Period (985-1150) saw a phenomenal increase in the number of nagarams, which now came into existence both in newly conquered areas and in neighbouring kingdoms. They began to be used as "interdependent agents of political synthesis under

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[60] ARE 256 of 1912, part II.
[61] K.R. Hall, op. cit., p. 51.
[62] K.R. Venkatrama Aiyar - "Medieval Trade, Craft and Merchant Guilds", JIH, 1947, pp. 269-280.
[63] R. Champaklakshmi - "Developments Within: Urban Processes in the Early Medieval Period A.D. 600-1300" in Trade, Ideology and Urbanisation (OUP, 1996), p. 213, and Table IV, pp. 264-287.
[64] According to Hall, each *nadu* served as the local marketing territory for the *nagaram*. K.R. Hall, op. cit., p. 130.
[65] Ibid.

the Colas", and so, the nagarams became "part of a wider network of inter-regional and overseas trade"[66].

The activities of the 500 continued to increase between the 12th and the 14th centuries. At about the same time, weavers also began to organise themselves into guilds. The Kaikkola guild of weavers was supposed to have been divided into four *tisai nadus*, 18 *kilai nadus*, and 72 *nadus*[67]. Kanchipuram began to emerge as the headquarters of the weavers' organisations, and is referred to in a number of inscriptions as "*mahanadu*"[68]. The guild was expected to handle the affairs of its members, and also dispensed justice when necessary[69]. Increasingly, weaver guilds begin to figure in inscriptions as making donations of different kinds to temples, just as the 500 did. From about the 12th century, weavers are also mentioned in connection with donations of land[70].

From the late 13th century, craft groups and merchant organisations began to come closer together, and weavers apparently took to trading in textiles. References to Cilai Chettis[71], merchants trading in cloth, had begun earlier; from the 14th century, one comes across weavers who are given the suffix "Chetti", indicating that they were

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[66] R. Champaklakshmi - "Developments Within ....", op. cit., p. 216.
[67] ARE 300 of 1909-10. What precisely is meant by these divisions is unclear, but it is perhaps significant that the term 'nadu' is used, as in Cola times, this was an administrative division.
[68] ARE 286 of 1910-11.
[69] V. Ramaswamy, op.cit., p. 40.
[70] Ibid., p. 49 and passim.
[71] SII, VII, 553.

involved in trade. Weavers-cum-traders formed themselves into the Saliya Nagarattar[72], and there are more references to taxes on looms[73], and of concessions to weavers to encourage them to settle in certain areas[74]. A 15th century inscription refers to one 'Narpattenayira' Solakumaran, which makes it clear that he was a master weaver, who employed several weavers[75], and also makes it clear that he was by no means exceptional. Other inscriptions of the 16th century refer to the Kaikkolas as merchants[76], as well as master weavers. Inscriptional evidence also points to merchants being involved in gifts of tolls to temples[77].

Such evidence points both to the increasing importance of trade, as well as to the increased involvement of weavers in trade. This, then, would imply closer connections not just between craft and mercantile organisations, but also between such organisations and the local administrative bodies. There was apparently less reliance on royal support, and more involvement at local levels with other organisational groups like the Citrameli Periyanadu or the Padinen Visaya. The former was an organisation of agriculturists, which has been described as a periyanadu (large nadu) assembly created by "the cultivators themselves in order to defend their interests against the centralizing activities of the

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[72] ARE, 308 of 1913.
[73] Ibid., and 300 of 1909.
[74] ARE 390 of 1925.
[75] ARE 221 of 1929-30.
[76] ARE 16 of 1935.
[77] See, for example, ARE 88 of 1914 (13th century).

Cola monarchs"[78]. Such larger nadus were, therefore, a "defensive response by the cultivators, created to protect the vested interests of the local landholding elite (*nattar*) who transferred their political dominance to the new periyanadu assemblies"[79]. The 500 joined such organisations to levy *maganmai* and *pattanapagudi* (tolls and shares of towns), and it appears that such levies could be made only in conjunction with such bodies[80].

Thus, by the 14th century, trade organisations were deeply entrenched into local institutions, and were intrinsic to the economy of South India. Obviously, far from being `outside` the state, they were an essential part of the local and supra-local agencies of the state, which could not be ignored by any king. The extent and degree of the change brought about under Vijayanagar rule is still unclear. That trade did not decline is clear from accounts such as that of Abdur Razzaq and the Russian traveller Nikitin, as well as from inscriptions. Weavers and weaving organisations were now more important, and by the 12th century the Kaikkolas were beginning to claim a higher social status, and granting jewels, etc. to temples in their own right[81]. Nor were kings backward in recognizing the importance of trade. It has been suggested that the external policy of the Colas was considerably influenced by mercantile interests, so that their wars in South Karnataka can be seen as an attempt to establish control over the main trade routes between

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[78] K.R. Hall, op. cit., p. 203.
[79] Ibid., p. 204.
[80] R. Champaklakshmi - "The South Indian Guilds" in Trade, Ideology and Urbanisation, op. cit., p. 320.

Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, while the attacks on Sri Lanka and Srivijaya, far from being mere plundering raids, were clearly commercial ventures, designed to encourage trade with those areas where pockets of Tamil merchants already existed[82]. The Motupalli grant of the Kakatiya king Ganapati of the 13th century, which remitted a large number of taxes on the goods of merchants who traded from and to Motupalli[83], can be seen in the same light. Approximately one century later, the grant was renewed by Annapota Reddi, who permitted "the merchants of Motupalli who traded with distant islands and coast towns to stop at their will in their homes at Motupalli and to leave them for other places", without any official pressure. Further, duties on gold and silver were abolished, and merchants were allowed "the liberty to sell their goods brought from other shores to anybody under any conditions and to carry in exchange, likewise, to other countries any goods they chose". In addition, it was proclaimed that no cloth was to be detained in the warehouses, and tolls on other articles were to be the same as earlier[84]. Nayaks or kings were expected to make good the losses suffered by merchants in their areas[85].

From the 15th century, the number of inscriptions referring to merchant organisations begins to decline, and there are only two of any importance in the 17th century. One of these, from Narayanavanam (approximately 1620), records the gift of tolls on various articles of

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[81] V. Ramaswamy, op. cit.
[82] R. Champaklakshmi - "Developments Within...." op. cit., pp. 221-25.
[83] ARE 600 of 1909, part II.
[84] ARE 601 and 602 of 1909, part II.
[85] ARE 10 of 1920 (copper plate inscription) relates the troubles undergone by a Nayak at the time of the occupation of Karnataka by the Nawab of Golconda; 621 of 1920, of Sriranga's time, mentions the remission of taxes payable by the weavers and merchants for three years on account of the "plunder suffered by the people".

merchandise such as cloth, pepper and jaggery[86]. Another, from Lepakshi, mentions Madanna and Akkanna, Golconda's ministers, as the "best of Brahmins", and states that the "lords of the Ayyavole both Paradesa and svadesa" led by their chief Prithvi-setti Rayana Bhaskaranna, in consultation with the local caste-guilds, including the *tantuvayins* [weavers], *vastra-bhedakas* [cloth dyers] and *vastra rakshakas* [possibly tailors] fixed certain rates on pack bullocks, looms, etc. as *maganmai*[87]. This is one of the rare instances in which a specific merchant is mentioned in connection with the guilds, and it is perhaps significant that it comes in the 17th century, when there are more references to individual merchants than in earlier centuries.

Trading patterns as established prior to the 17th century therefore show that the merchants operated within the existing political framework, and in fact, supported its functioning in a number of ways. The temple has long been identified as an essential feature of South India's rural economy, but the inscriptions, such as those regarding oil for lamps in the temple, or the assigning of a certain portion of the tolls collected to the temples by the guilds, especially the 500, show that the temples, through the guilds, were also part of the wider mercantile network. Weavers were also accommodated in the streets around the temples, as can be seen from the names of the streets in places like

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[86] SII, XVI, No. 315; ARE 377 of 1911.

[87] ARE copperplate 18 of 1917-18 and 581 of 1912. The earlier inscription (377 of 1911) also refers to what appears to be the same person, with the difference that he is there called Rayanamantri Bhaskara.

Kanchipuram even today. The directions of Indian trade were equally well established.

As late as 1871, it was reported that "all castes and classes of people are traders", but the "chief trading caste is the Chetty, of whose males 42% are engaged in trade..."[88]. In our period, we find references to Komatis, Beri Chettis and Balija Chettis (all Telugu Chettis). Tamil Chettis and Brahmans were also engaged in trade. Muslim traders were apparently more to be found in Porto Novo and Nagur than in Madras and Pulicat, while members of the Golconda nobility were actively engaged in trade from Masulipatam. Fryer reported that the Masulipatam traders were "well skill'd, and [could] arithmetize the nicest Fractions without the help of Pen and Ink; much given to Trafficke and intelligent in the way of Merchandize..."[89].

The records also refer to the activities of the Indian Muslim merchants, called 'Klings' and 'Chooliars'. In the 15th and 16th centuries, they were referred to as wealthy merchant communities, but early in the 17th century, Floris talked of them in the context of the peddling trade, for he said that they brought "a corge or less of diverse sorts, running with this through all the country, giving the goods so cheap that it is to be admired at..."[90]. At the other end of the scale are the references to

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[88] Report on the Census of the Madras Presidency, 1871, p. 184.
[89] W. Crooke (ed.) - John Fryer's A New Account of East India and Persia, being Nine Years Travel, 1672-1681 Hak. Soc., 1909), in 2 vols., Vol. I. p. 90.
[90] W.H. Moreland (ed.) - The Voyage of Peter Floris (Hak. Soc. 1934), p. 70.

"chooliar merchants"[91], who were often wealthy ship owners. In later censuses, four subdivisions were identified among the chulias - Marakkayar, Labbai, Rawther and Kayalar[92]. The first among these was the wealthiest, and were concentrated mainly in Porto Novo and Nagore. They tended to stay away from the Europeans, but had considerable influence at local courts, especially at the court of the Thevar of Ramnad[93]. In the 17th and early 18th centuries, there are frequent references to one Makhdum Nina, a merchant and shipowner of Porto Novo, and to the competition he offered to the English at Fort St. David[94]. In 1691, he was reported to have "brought his family and Shipping to Settle at Cuddalore". In return for his having been "very industrious and Serviceable" in drawing other rich merchants to settle there, as well as the expenses he incurred in fortifying the town, it was decided that he be "commissioned Captaine of the Chuliars Moors and Gentue..."[95]. Later, he reported that he had spent 1,700 pagodas in a present to Daud Khan, on the Company's account[96]. This resulted in some problems between the Company and Makhdum Nina, for the latter had been told in no uncertain terms that he should not spend more than 300 pagodas. Serious efforts were still made to get him to settle at Fort St. David, in the hope that he would boost the declining trade there[97]; he wanted assurances from them about free and fair trade and religious freedom,

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[91] RFSG - Letters from Fort St. George, 20 March 1687.
[92] Report on the Census of the Madras Presidency, 1871, and E. Thurston - Castes and Tribes of South India, Vol. IV - Labbai, Vol. V - Marakkayar.
[93] S. Arasaratnam, op. cit., p. 219.
[94] RFSG - Diary, 9 July 1691.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid., 7 October 1703.

which the English were quite prepared to grant, but ultimately, he never did move to Fort St. David.

The pattern of trade that had been established prior to the 17th century therefore saw the traders being extremely active both within and without the country. Working within the guilds, they supported, and drew support from, the political system that existed from the Cola period onwards. As has been shown earlier, they were part of the nagaram economy, and their activities were instrumental in linking nagaram, nadu and the wider world of commerce. The establishment of the Vijayanagar Empire almost certainly brought about a change, visible in the decreasing number of inscriptions referring to the guilds. The question of whether the Vijayanagar Empire was the "nearest thing to a war state"[98] or not is outside the scope of this research; but it is possible that the armed merchant guilds were seen as a threat to the state, and also that protection to the traders was taken over by the Nayaks and others, instead. If this is what occurred[99], then the result would be, firstly, the deepening of the local base of the merchants, making them much more prominent figures in community life[100]; secondly, the greater involvement of merchants in politics, and thirdly, the emergence of individual traders rather than trade organisations. The process by which merchants were absorbed into the political life of the state has been pointed out earlier

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[97] Chief of Fort St. David to Directors, 1710-11 - cited by S. Arasaratnam, op. cit., p. 220.

[98] K.A.N. Sastri - History of South India (3rd. edn., Madras 1966).

[99] This is merely a hypothesis, currently unsupported by any research.

[100] In this connection, it is interesting to note that the Nattukottai Chettiars claim to be descended from the Ainnurruvar.

(the increasing involvement in the nagarams, for instance, or the instances of granting tolls to the temples). Following this, would be the emergence of important individual traders, as happened in the next century. The 17th century was the period of individual traders like Malaya Chetti or Kasi Viranna; of merchants in politics, like Malaya Chetti and Mir Jumla; and finally, of merchants and East India Companies, like Kasi Viranna and Ananda Ranga Pillai.

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Chapter 2

Of Politics and Trade.

At the beginning of the period under review, most of the Coromandel Coast lay within the Golconda kingdom, the richest of the southern kingdoms in the 17th century. As late as 1687, when Golconda had been affected by warfare and the Mughal siege for over a year, it was reported that the treasury contained, in addition to a variety of precious stones and bullion, coined money to the tune of some seven million gold hun and about 20 million silver rupees[101]. The same chronicler further reported that, when the contents of the treasury were finally dispatched northwards, the train of carts (carrying the treasure) stretched for miles.

Golconda's southward expansion had been at the cost of the tottering Vijayanagar empire, at the beginning of the century. At that time, the political situation in South India was reported to be extremely volatile, full of "great troubles and broyles..., both homebred and foreign...."[102]. Early in the century, civil war broke out in the Vijayanagar Empire, in which the Nayak of Thanjavur, and the Nayaks of Madurai and Jinji were ranged on opposing sides (the latter espoused the cause of the usurper). Thanjavur's protégé was ultimately successful; but the ascent

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[101] Khafi Khan, II, p. 367.
[102] EFI, 1642-45, p. 184.

of Venkatapati Raya meant only a temporary cease-fire. Warfare did not cease totally, for the Nayak of Madurai continued to be engaged in attempts to enlarge his territory at the cost of the Thevar of Ramnad and the Nayak of Thanjavur, while also trying to resist the encroachment of Mysore into his own land.

The 1630's saw the southward expansion of the Mughal Empire, and Bijapur and Golconda signed the Deed of Submission to Shah Jahan in 1636. No further attempts were made by the Mughals until late in the reign of Aurangzeb, but Bijapur and Golconda now turned their attention southwards once again. From this time, the records are full of accounts of the movement of armies. In 1642, part of the territory of the Nayak of Armagon was conquered by Bijapur, and the English were sure that the "Moores" would "have all this country ere many years; for what with the King of Vizapore on one side and the King of Gulquondah on the other, the Gentues themselves being divided among themselves, it is even impossible that their country can continue."[103]

The last king of the Vijayanagar Empire, Sriranga III, ascended the throne in 1642, and was immediately involved in wars with his Nayaks. In that year, he marched south at the head of an army. Tirumala Nayak of Madurai formed an alliance with Vijayaraghava Nayak of Thanjavur and the Nayak of Jinji, but Thanjavur later went over to

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[103] Ibid., p. 45.

Sriranga's side. Tirumala Nayak appealed to Golconda for help,[104] and the Golconda troops besieged the capital, Vellore. Sriranga, for his part, appealed to Bijapur, who provided help in exchange for "15 lacke of pagothaes and 24 elephants".[105]

The armies of Bijapur and Golconda now continued to operate in the south, and in 1644, Pulicat was besieged by the Golconda troops. The Nayak of Jinji began to advance with the intention of joining Golconda, but Sriranga recalled his general Krishnappa Nayak (who was at the time engaged in operations against Jinji)[106]. Krishnappa Nayak fell on the besieging army, " and put the Moores to flight beyond Armagon, where they are now gathering a head againe...."[107]

Sriranga was initially successful in his efforts, but in 1646, there was a joint invasion by Bijapur and Golconda, with Mir Jumla leading the latter's forces. Mir Jumla quickly gained possession of the areas around Pulicat, as well as the fortress of Udayagiri, before marching further south. The Nayak of Thanjavur purchased peace,[108] but the Nayak of Madurai concluded an alliance with Bijapur, and marched to Jinji at the head of a combined army. However, Golconda, then engaged in the siege of Jinji, now came to an agreement with Bijapur, and, handing over the siege to Bijapur, retired northwards. Jinji fell in 1649 to

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[104] R. Sathianathaiyer - The Nayaks of Madura (Oxford, 1924), p. 127.
[105] EFI 1642-45, p. 116.
[106] C.S. Srinivasachari - History of Gingee and its Rulers (Annamalai, 1943), pp. 162-163.
[107] EFI 1642-45, p. 193.
[108] V. Vriddhagirisan - The Nayaks of Tanjore (Madras, 1942), p. 140.

Bijapur. Vellore, the Vijayanagar capital, had fallen to Golconda a year earlier, and with that, the Vijayanagar Empire came to an end. Sriranga was forced to flee, and finally found shelter in Mysore. The erstwhile empire was now divided between Golconda and Bijapur, with Golconda seizing those areas "of the coast of Coromandel, which lay conveniently for him; and the King of Bijapur, having taken what lay next to him, pursued his conquest as far as the Cape of Negapatam"[109]. The end of the Vijayanagar Empire did not, however, mean an end to the wars, for Bijapur and Golconda now began to dispute the division of the spoils[110]. In 1653, the fortress of Penukonda was taken by Bijapur's troops. Mir Jumla, alarmed at the success of Bijapur, now tried to instigate the Raja of Mysore to attack Bijapur. Sriranga, who had taken refuge in Mysore, tried to take advantage of this development to return to his empire, and was initially quite successful. He managed to recapture many of the districts near Madras, with the exception of Poonamallee; this was probably easier for him to do, as by this time (1656), Mir Jumla had defected to the Mughals. In November 1656, Sriranga besieged Pulicat, "where 'tis said most of the Nabob's riches are stowed"[111]. Sriranga's troops were led by Koneri Chetti, but in January 1657, he (Koneri Chetti), came to an agreement with Mir Jumla's lieutenant, Tupaki Krishnappa Nayak and abandoned the siege. Sriranga's troops were defeated, but now Golconda's troops entered the arena against Tupaki Krishnappa Nayak. In October 1658, Tupaki Krishnappa Nayak's forces were

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[109] S.N. Sen - The Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri, account of Thevenot, p. 91.
[110] EFI 1651-54, p. 99; Vestiges, I, p. 107.
[111] EFI 1655-60, p. 97.

defeated by Golconda's troops, led by Quli Beg (later Neknam Khan). In 1659, Bijapur once again marched south, and captured Thanjavur. Sriranga lost what little he had managed to regain, and retired once again to Mysore.

Thus, from 1642-1659, there was more or less continuous warfare, "with parties of both sides in all places", and with "sometimes the one, sometime the other party [proving] alternately victorious, and between them both draw a miserable ruine on the country...."[112] Nor was this an end to war, for the conflict between Madurai, Thanjavur and Mysore continued. In 1660-61, Madurai invaded Thanjavur. In 1663, Bijapur invaded Madurai, and besieged Trichi with Thanjavur's help. The Nayak of Madurai (Chokkanatha Nayak) purchased peace, and, in turn, marched on Thanjavur.

In 1672, Abul Hasan Qutb Shah, the last of the Golconda Sultans, ascended the throne. The same year also saw the arrival of the French to the Indian coast. They established themselves at San Thome, near Madras, a place where, according to Thevenot, chintz "much finer and of better colours than anywhere else in India"[113] was made. However, they did not stay in possession of the place for any length of time, for in 1674, they were defeated by the forces of Golconda, helped by the Dutch, and left San Thome for Pondicherri. The following year saw the resumption of hostilities between Madurai and Thanjavur. Thanjavur

[112] Ibid., pp. 97-98.

was invaded once again in 1673, and was finally defeated, and its Nayak, Vijayaraghava killed[114]. Chokkanatha Nayak installed his foster brother as the new Nayak of Thanjavur[115], but he soon revolted, and asserted his independence. Vijayaraghava's son appealed to Bijapur for help, and Ekoji was sent to Thanjavur. In 1676, he usurped the throne to establish the Maratha kingdom of Thanjavur[116].

However, at the beginning of the period under review, most of the coast was ruled by Golconda. A small section, that around Jinji, remained under Bijapur until 1677-78, after which it was captured by the Marathas under Sivaji. By 1678, therefore, there were two Maratha kingdoms in the south; one at Jinji, and the other at Thanjavur, controlling the Kaveri delta. Further to the south, was an area nominally under the Nayak of Madurai, but actually under their former subordinates, the Setupatis of Ramnad. The European companies had settlements dotted along the coast, within the territories of all these separate powers, and had to deal with them both on the coast itself, and in the interior, in the cloth manufacturing areas.

Abul Hasan's reign also saw the rise to power of the Brahman brothers, Madanna and Akkanna. Madanna was reported to have begun his career as a sarraf, and later became the secretary of

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[113] S.P.Sen, op. cit., p. 111.
[114] V. Vriddhagirisan, op. cit., pp. 146-147
[115] R. Sathianathaiyer, op. cit., p. 165.
[116] K. Rajayyan - A History of British Diplomacy in Tanjore , p. 13.

Syed Muzaffar, who was made the Mir Jumla in 1672[117]. Later, Syed Muzaffar was replaced as the Mir Jumla by Madanna himself. Madanna then instituted a policy of appointing his own relatives to high posts in the government. To start with, his brother Akkanna was put in charge of the army, Then, in 1675, Madanna took the farm of the southern part of the Golconda empire, and appointed a relative, one Podili Lingappa, as *tarafdar* of Poonamallee.

While much is made of Madanna's policy, it is to be remembered that Brahmans had generally been part of the government earlier, too, and not just in the Golconda Empire. For instance, two Brahman brothers, Venkata and Kanappa, were the *adigars* at Madras, and they managed to gain enough favour with the English to temporarily oust the Chief Merchant, Sesadri Chetti[118]. At about the same time, Mir Jumla's personal secretary was reported to be a Brahman. Later in the century, in connection with the Marathas of Jinji, one frequently comes across the name of Gopal Pandit, the "chiefest man" of the Maratha ruler of Jinji. On the other hand, what emerged under Madanna was apparently a deliberate policy of promoting Brahmans over others. This aroused the hostility of the established nobility of Golconda; while the efficiency with which the rents were collected, as well as the limitations sought to be enforced on trade, especially at Madras, resulted in the animosity of the English as well. It is perhaps this last which has led to so

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[117] These and other details regarding Madanna are based on H.K. Sherwani – History of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty (Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi 1974), and Y.H. Khan – Farmans and Sanads of the Deccan Sultans, (Hyderabad, 1963).

[118] Vestiges, I, section on chief merchants at Madras.

much being said about the system of tax farming in Golconda. While accepting the fact that Golconda was the wealthiest of the southern kingdoms, there is always the implication that this wealth was the result of exploitative tax farming practices. In the post 1674 period, under the leadership of Madanna, the mechanics of tax farming were probably systematised, so as to be much more visible, as well as more efficient, from the government's point of view, but it was not yet the sign of an impending collapse of the economy or the state, with everyone out to grab as much of the wealth as possible. On the contrary, the system set in place by Madanna probably formed the basis of the Mughal settlement after the conquest, as J.F. Richards[119] has pointed out. At the beginning of our period, it was probably this systematisation which allowed the alliance between Golconda and the Marathas, which linked the wealthiest and the most warlike of the southern powers.

The rise of the Marathas under Sivaji brought a new element into the politics of the Deccan. Marathas had arrived on the Coromandel Coast with the Bijapur army early in the 17th century, but they became an important force only after the 1670's, when the conflict between the Nayaks of Madurai and Thanjavur escalated. At about the same time, in Maharashtra, Sivaji was crowned the Chhatrapati. Sivaji's raids had initially been directed at the Bijapur kingdom; but before long, the raids had also taken him into the Mughal Empire. In the south, however, given the fact that the Marathas had come in with the Bijapurl

[119] J.F. Richards - Mughal Administration if Golconda (Delhi, OUP, 1975).

army, it still seemed reasonable to apply to Bijapur for help, whether against Golconda or, as happened later, against Madurai. Mention has already been made of the invasion of Thanjavur by Chokkanatha Nayak. The widow of the Thanjavur Nayak escaped with her son to the safety of the Dutch settlement of Nagapattinam, and appealed to Bijapur for help. The Sultan sent Ekoji, Sivaji's half-brother, on an expedition, in the course of which the Nayak placed by Madurai on the Thanjavur throne (Alagiri Nayak), was defeated. The son of the late Nayak, Chengmaladas, was placed on the throne. In 1676, when the Adil Shahi Sultan died, Ekoji usurped the throne to establish the Maratha kingdom of Thanjavur.

In 1674, the year Chengmaladas was installed on the throne, Sivaji had himself crowned as an orthodox Hindu king, in a well-orchestrated and carefully conceived ceremony[120]. Shortly after this, Madanna, the Brahmin minister of Abul Hasan Qutb Shah, persuaded the Golconda king to enter into an alliance with Sivaji. According to this, Golconda was to send 100,000 *hun* every year to the Marathas[121], in exchange for which the kingdom was to be kept safe from Maratha raids. In 1677 came the next stage of this alliance, when Abul Hasan subsidised Sivaji's Kamatak expedition. The idea was that Sivaji would march through Golconda to Thanjavur and Bijapur's possessions along

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[120] G.S. Sardesai - New History of the Marathas (3 volumes, Bombay, rev. ed., 1956), I, pp. 215-225.

[121] Jadunath Sarkar - History of Aurangzib (5 volumes, Calcutta, 1912-30), IV, p. 335.

the coast, and after conquering those areas, he would hand them over to Golconda[122].

The factors at Fort St. George reported that Sivaji was "entertained in the King of Golcondas service", and had marched through the country "with an army of 20 million Horse and 40 million Foot". The vanguard of this army was reported in May 1677 to be at Kanchipuram, "about 4 leagues Gentu hence"[123]. Fort St. George was put into a state of readiness to repel any possible attack by Sivaji, but the latter made no such attempt, and merely wrote asking for some supplies to be sent to him[124]. It was considered important to retain Sivaji's friendship, for his power was reported to be increasing, and he exercised "so much authority in the King of Gulcondahs Country, that he sends about to receive the Kings Rents by his own people"[125]. However, this desire did not include supplying him with "Ingeniers", as this would result in "encreasing his power, [and] rendering both Golconda and the Moghull our Enemys..."[126]. The English were, at this point, involved in a very delicate balancing act, which required them to placate all the important political parties on the Coromandel Coast.

In accordance with the alliance with Golconda, Sivaji marched towards Jinji, the centre of Bijapuri control on the coast. The

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[122] He did not stick to the latter part of the agreement. Instead, in addition to the already existing kingdom of Thanjavur, he also established Maratha strongholds at Jinji and Vellore.
[123] RFSG - Diary, 9 May 1677.
[124] Ibid., 14 May 1677.
[125] Ibid., 18 June 1677.

fortress was captured without much delay, but instead of handing it over to Golconda, Sivaji kept it, to establish the second centre of Maratha power in the south. Jinji continued to be attached to the parent kingdom in Maharashtra (unlike Thanjavur, which was conceived, and existed as, an independent kingdom), and became more important as a Maratha stronghold at the end of the century, when Rajaram fled there for sanctuary. Jinji remained in Maratha hands until it was captured by the Mughals.

Having captured Jinji, he marched towards Thanjavur, but then came to an agreement with Ekoji, by which he "delivered back to Eccogee a good part of the Country worth 2 Lacks of Pardoes per Annum which [he] had taken from him, and Eccogee in lieu thereof had paid 3 Lacks of Pardoes in ready money ...."[127] Later in the same year, Sivaji was reported to be in the vicinity of Kanchipuram, "whereupon the inhabitants were put into great feares, thinking that the Towne would be taken and plundered, and they reported alsoe that those Horse with other forces were intended to proceed further into the King of Gulcondahs country, and to take Pullimelee Castle ...." The report proved to be false, for the troops were actually engaged in the siege of Vellore. Abdullah Khan, commandant of Vellore fort, shortly afterwards surrendered to Sivaji, so that "Sevagee by his Deputys [had] a full and quiett possession

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[126] Ibid., 3 October 1677.
[127] Ibid., 8 April 1678.

of all those countrys about those two strong Castles of holds of Chenge and Veloor ...."[128]

In 1681, Prince Akbar rebelled against Aurangzeb, and fled south to take shelter at Sambhaji's court. There already existed an alliance between the Marathas and Golconda, which, though strained by Sivaji's refusal to give up Jinji, nevertheless still existed. Aurangzeb could not afford the possibility that Akbar, supported by the Marathas and Golconda, would gain control of the Deccan. As he was aware, that (i.e., control of the Deccan) had been the route that he himself had followed to the throne. The Deccan and its problems therefore became of immediate concern, and in 1682, the Emperor's court moved to Aurangabad. Aurangzeb spent the remainder of his reign in the Deccan.

In 1685, the Mughal army moved into Bijapur, which fell a year later, after which operations against Golconda began. During the campaign against Bijapur, a message from Abul Hasan to the Marathas had been intercepted, making plans for concerted action against the Mughals[129]. Shah Alam (later Bahadur Shah I) was sent to begin operations against Golconda. At the Battle of Malkhed, the Golconda army was defeated; the commander-in-chief of the Golconda troops, Muhammad Ibrahim, defected to the Mughals[130]. Abul Hasan left Hyderabad to retire into the fortress of Golconda. The official reason for

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[128] Ibid., 21 August 1678.
[129] Sarkar, op. cit., IV, p. 345.
[130] Jadunath Sarkar (tr. & ed.) - Saqi Musta'id Khan's Ma'asir-i-Alamgiri (Calcutta, 1947), p. 164.

the attack on Golconda was that Abul Hasan had "made his vagabond Hindus the managers and administrators of the affairs of State", and that the Persians (i.e., the Shias) "began to practise there publicly all kinds of shameful sins..."[131]. Equally important, of course, was the fact of the alliance with the Marathas, and the non-payment of tribute to the Mughals. (This last was according to the terms of the Deed of Submission to Shah Jahan.)

In 1686, Madanna and Akanna were murdered in Golconda fort. This removed the two main "managers and administrators" but did not end the Mughal threat, and on 14 January 1687, Aurangzeb's troops marched into the kingdom. Shortly afterwards, the siege of Golconda fort began[132]. In May 1687, Shaikh Nizam, commander of the Golconda forces outside the fort, defected to the Mughals, and finally, on 21 September, after a siege of "eight months and a few days"[133], the fort fell.

The coastal areas, naturally, did not remain unaffected by the problems, but in the decade before the vanishing of the Golconda Empire, there had been a certain degree of peace, in the sense that there was no widespread movement of armies. Problems did occur, for the local officials put frequent hindrances in the way of trade, and the English began to make serious efforts to find a place outside Golconda. This had

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[131] Ibid., p. 174.
[132] Ibid., p. 177. Trenches were ordered to be dug from 7 February 1687.
[133] Ibid.

to be in the "Gingee country". Desultory attempts had been made to establish a factory in this part of the coast even earlier, as, for example, at Devanamapatnam around the 1640s. In 1674, Nasir Muhammad Khan of Jinji offered to allow the English to settle factories "at or near Porto Novo, and at Vardavur neare Polichery and to make forts..."[134]. The offer was considered very seriously, not, at that time, so much because of the possible threat from the Indian rulers, but because of the neamess of the French (at San Thomé) and the Dutch (at Pulicat), and the possibility of English trade at Madras being affected thereby. No immediate result ensued, but from the 1680s, the matter began to be pursued more vigorously.

In 1684, the Court of Directors at London decided to write to the president of their factory at Surat. The idea was that he would contact Sambhaji, "to press him to give you a speedy and favourable dispatch in that your demand of liberty to build a ffort in his Country..."[135]. In 1685, it was decided to dissolve the factory at Masulipatnam, on account of "the neamess of Madapollam and Pettipolee"[136]. Two years later, all the three factories were dissolved, "by reason of the Warrs & troubles in those parts, and danger of the Mogulls forces..."[137]. The English derived some consolation from the fact that the Jinji area was still trouble-free. The Dutch had the same benefit, for from the 1660s, they had been increasingly been concentrating their attention on the far south,

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[134] RFSG - Diary, 20 March 1674.
[135] RFSG - Despatches from England, Letter to Fort St. George, 2 July 1684.
[136] Ibid., Letter to Fort St. George, 12 August 1685.
[137] RFSG - Diary, 1 August 1687.

from their headquarters at Nagapattinam. This port was also in Maratha territory, for it was in the Thanjavur kingdom.

News of the taking of Golconda fort and the imprisoning of Abul Hasan reached Madras in October 1687. Aurangzeb appointed Qasim Khan (later Ali Asghar Khan) as the first Mughal *faujdar* of the Karnatak. He was reported to have arrived with 10,000 men to the "Chengie country, to warr against those parts"[138]. Qasim Khan was a former Golconda official, as was Mahabat Khan, the first Mughal governor. Another former Golconda official, Fateh Khan, was confirmed as governor of Chingleput, while "Madanna Anta Puntolo and Sanganna" were restored to their former positions as governors of Kanchipuram and Poonamallee[139].

Thus the Mughal conquest did not send any immediate signals of drastic change, for many of the old officials continued. Of the Europeans, the English were the most apprehensive, for they were already involved in a conflict with the Mughals in Bengal. The Dutch and the French were reported to have gone to the Mughal camp, "to congratulate his conquest". It was decided that, as an initial measure, the English would write to "our friend Nabob Mahobat Cawn, ... to congratulate the Mogulls conquest of the Fort & Country, and to offer to offer our Services to him..."[140]. The continuing of the Golconda officials

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[138] Ibid., 21 November 1687.
[139] Ibid., 28 November 1687.
[140] Ibid., 14 November 1687.

was, however, a purely temporary phase, and from December 1687 they began to be transferred to other parts of the Empire[141]. Ruhullah Khan, the chief *bakshi* of the Empire, became the new governor. The Mughals divided the former Golconda kingdom into two parts, comprising the suba of Hyderabad and the suba of the Karnatak. The latter had its headquarters at Kanchipuram, from where the attacks on the Marathas were organised. By 1689, therefore, the arena of warfare had once again moved to the coast. In 1690, Ali Mardan Khan was appointed *faujdar* of the Karnatak. Technically subordinate to the *subadar* of Hyderabad, he was actually equal in status, and reported directly to the court. Ali Mardan Khan was rather ineffectual in his official capacity, and became the first Mughal official to be kidnapped by the Marathas. He was held prisoner for two years, and was finally released only after the payment of a large sum as ransom.

Maratha attacks on the south had begun in 1687, with the end of the Golconda kingdom and their alliance. From 1690, the Mughal-Maratha conflict centred on the fortress of Jinji. Zulfiqar Khan, son of the *Wazir* of the Empire, was put in charge of the siege of Jinji. In May 1691, Kam Baksh was "sent to put down the rebels of the country of Jinji and to root out the enemy who ruled there"[142]. The Mughal-Maratha conflict was reported to have "so alarm'd the Country, that most of the Inhabitants

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[141] Ibid., 12 December 1687 and 16 January 1688; J.F. Richards - Mughal Administration in Golconda, Chapters V and VI.
[142] Ma'asir, op. cit., p. 202.

have left Conjeveron & the other great Townes, to secure their persons & estates, from their violence..."[143].

In 1696, Maratha and Mughal troops were reported to be near Fort St. David; the Marathas were said to be at Tiruvadi, when Daud Khan arrived "with about 3,000 choice horse". The Marathas fled "and the Moors resettled"[144]. Jinji finally fell to the Mughal forces in 1698 after a nine-year siege; the "hundred other forts which make up the kingdom of the Karnatak with some ports of the Europeans, were annexed to the empire.... The conquered fort was named Nusratgarh"[145].

Thus the 17th century was clearly a turbulent one. The English factors were, at the end of the century, ordered by the Court of Directors to "keep fair with all parties and side with none without absolute necessity and if yt happens be sure to engage no further than yt you may Secure your retreat and have a fair excuse is afterwards question'd for it: yt what you did was ye effect of meere necessity not choice, yt warr and bloodshed are inconsistent with ye Essence of a merchant ...."[146]

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[143] Ibid., 26 December 1687.
[144] RFSG - Diary, 5 February 1696.
[145] Ma'asir, op. cit., p. 238.
[146] RFSG - Despatches from England, Letter to Fort St. George, 1698/99.

"Warr and Bloodshed" were, no doubt, incompatible with continued trade: but the Indian merchants were hard put to continue with their trade. In 1690, the Kunimedu merchants of the English Company submitted an account of their reasons for the poor quality cloth that they had supplied. They declared that they had had their contract well in hand, "but the Mogulls visiting these parts, together with the Sadd mortality and famine put a great Check thereto, by the weavers going to other places...." In addition, "Severall weavers ran away with our mony, so that every way we are losers". Such uncertain conditions would naturally make them more wary of risking their own money, and so, the tendency would be to gravitate towards those who would provide them with money. Supplying cloth to the Companies meant, firstly, that they did not have to tie up large sums of their own money, and secondly, that with the protection of the Company's name, they could, perhaps, trade on their own account as well. For the Company's trade, they could, when necessary, claim more advances; for instance, when the merchants at Sadraspatnam and Tevnepatam complained to the Dutch about their losses, "they forthwith advanced them 15%, notwithstanding which they could perform their Contract, whereupon the Dutch ordered them to desist from any further provideing...."[147] Given 17th century conditions, therefore, security of both trade and person was to be had only in the

[147] RFSG - Diary, 1 May 1690.

vicinity of the European forts. Here, the English had the edge, for they never imposed the kind of control that the Dutch did at Pulicat and Nagapattinam. The factors were told to "countenance and encourage all Merchants that shall come hither to trade from other parts of India by permitting them a free market and civill Treatment. They paying ye Customes and duties established...."[148] In keeping with this policy, the Court of Directors concluded, in 1688, an agreement with the Armenian merchants, stating that the Armenians would "now and at all times hereafter, have equal share and benefits of all indulgences this Company have or shall at any time hereafter grant to any of their own Adventurers or other English merchants", and that they would have "free liberty to live in any of the Company's cities, garrisons or towns in India, and to buy, sell and purchase land or houses...; neither shall they pay any other or greater duty in India than the Co.'s factors."[149]

Relations between the Companies and the state were most often characterised by extortion. Masulipatnam was the first place to which the Dutch and the English came. There were definite advantages to settling in the place, which, as mentioned earlier, was the chief port of the Golconda Empire, and occupied a position similar to Surat on the west coast. It was the centre of a major textile producing region, and was also well connected overland. The importance of Masulipatnam was recognized fairly early, for the English factors reported

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[148] RFSG - Despatches from England, Letter to Fort St. George, 29 December 1680.
[149] Quoted by J. Tallboys Wheeler - Madras in the Olden Times, in 3 Vols. (Madras 1860-62), I. p.221.

that the "welth and welfare of the kingdome of Gulcondah" lay in its "inland manyfactures, which findes most or all his vent by sea transporte, shipped the most part by the Moores and the least part by the Cristians ...."[150]

However, merchants at Masulipatnam also had to face a great many hindrances to trade. The Governor of Masulipatnam was a royal official, but one who had bid for the appointment - i.e., a revenue farmer. The usual pattern was, apparently, of one person taking up a farm, and then sub-letting it to others, so that any person who could "devise a newe course of raysinge newe revenues"[151] was very welcome. One "newe" source was obviously the European merchants.

In 1620-21, a new governor was appointed, who had taken the farm of Masulipatnam for "15,000 pagodas per annum more then his predecessor". He farmed out the monopoly of "buying, selling and changing all gould and silver brought into this porte" to one sarraf, with the result that the English could not "put of our ryalls but as that onely sharoffe please to take them...."[152] This attempt led to concerted action by the English, Dutch and the local merchants, so that after about three months, the monopoly "fell of itselfe"[153].

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[150] EFI, 1624-29, p. 281.
[151] Ibid., 1622-23, p. 46
[152] Ibid., 1618-21, p. 265.
[153] Ibid., 1622-23, p. 46.

This was the first, and probably the only, instance in which Indian and foreign merchants came together, in the 17th century, to resist the obstacles placed by state machinery in the path of trade; and the one thing of which there was no shortage was obstacles. In the early 1620's, the English complained that they had been "discorraged" from the trade of Masulipatnam by the "unsufferable abuses" of Mahmud Taqi, the former governor and the then governor, who had "infringed our previlege and the antient custom of the land".[154] They submitted a list of their demands, including (I) the liberty to trade at Masulipatnam without "abridgment", and (2) that the Governor should not detain their goods. If he wanted to purchase any, then he should "bargaine in his own house, according to reason and custom of merchants."[155] In fact, they declared that these obstacles were the main reason for their move to Armagon.

Not that Armagon was much better, for the Nayak there was found to be unfriendly. Shortly before the move to Madras, the English reported that Armagon "affords nothing of itself, not so much as a peece of whit Cloath [*sic*] but comes from other places: as for Merchants, how misserable poor they are, by the Nagues continuall forceings...."[156] The move to Madras did not remedy matters for any length of time, for, as mentioned earlier, before very long, the frontiers of Golconda had expanded to include the area around Madras. Mir Jumla's forces blockaded Madras between September 1657 and April 1658, while

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[154] Ibid., 1624-29, p. 282.
[155] Ibid., pp. 317-318.
[156] Vestiges, I. p. 15.

Neknam Khan blockaded it in 1666[157]. But the worst, and most constant, hindrances came after 1674, when Madanna and Akanna became Golconda's ministers. In 1675, Madanna took the farm of the southern part of the Golconda Empire, and appointed a relative, one Podili Lingappa, as tarafdar of Poonamallee. Lingappa's name is, thereafter, consistently mentioned in connection with hindering the trade at Madras.

In 1678, Lingappa wrote to Kasi Viranna, the Chief Merchant of the English at Madras, "threatening to doe this Towne all ye mischief at Court that possible he could if he did not lend him a sum of mony." In another letter, Lingappa informed Viranna that "he had sent his Men for all the Sharofs and Coyners of this Towne with all the Chops [*chhaap*] and Stamps for pagodas to be brought away to him Imediately". Viranna wrote back that the shroffs and coiners in the mint were the Company's servants, for the English had minting facilities at Madras even "before this country fell under ye Kings of Gulcondah", and so Lingappa had no rights over them.[158] In 1679, all the corn coming into Madras was stopped. A letter was written to Lingappa, in response to which he replied that there was "much Corne of Pullimelee to be sold, & the Kings occasions requiring the mony, if we would furnish 7000 pagodas to supply the want, they would take off the stopp."[159] Lingappa next tried to fix the price at which paddy was to be sold in the markets of Madras. The then governor, Streynsham Master, declared that the market was "free to

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[157] EFI 1655-60, p. 137.
[158] RFSG - Diary, 9 August 1678.
[159] Ibid., 11 February 1679.

all men to buy and sell in", that no one could be forced to sell their goods at fixed rates, and "if it should please God to make it dearer or cheaper 'twas not in the power of a man to alter what God Almighty had decreed...."[160] Lingappa was also reported to have taken up the farm of San Thomé, earlier in Viranna's hands, for the same sum that Viranna had paid. In 1680, he placed an embargo on all the cloth coming into Madras. Again, in 1681, he placed an embargo on all goods and provisions coming into Madras, forbidding the "Country people to carry anything to Towne"[161]. It was at this time that it was decided to try to get permission to set up a fort and factory in the "Chengy Country which is out of the Gulcondah Dominions", for this would prevent "Lingappa or any other Soobidar of this Country from being capable of spoiling all our business." It was believed that the Dutch on the coast were more successful than the English precisely because they had a large number of factories, "which being divided into severall governments, if they be obstructed in their business by one Governour they have another place to friend...."[162]

In 1684, when Lingappa had been the *tarafdar* long enough to be a constant thorn in the flesh of the English, the factors were told that, if absolutely necessary, they could take strong action, to make the "Governors... sensible of Our power"[163]. Soldiers were to be sent out

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[160] R.C. Temple (ed.) - The Diaries of Streynsham Master, 1675-1680, And Other Contemporary Papers Relating Thereto, in 2 vols. (London, 1911), I, p. 75.(henceforth cited as Master).
[161] RFSG – Diary, 6 April 1681.
[162] Ibid, 6 January 1681.
[163] RFSG - Despatches from England, 2 July 1684.

from England for the better defence of the Company's settlements on the coast, and if any further problems were encountered, then the factors were to inform the Golconda authorities that Madras had "cost the Company 300,000 pounds Sterling; when they will reimburse the Company that Sume, You will move us to accept it & give them the ffort & towne..."[164]. However, this could be done only if the factors successfully established a base in the Jinji territory. The underlying reason was the same as the one that inspired the English to move out of Golconda in the first place - that Jinji did not have the kind of state structure that Golconda did, and would perforce give more freedom of action to the English. In one way, this can be compared to the English encouragement of trade at Madras - that they would at least get the customs duties; the same logic would apply to a smaller kingdom. In the case of Golconda, control of the source of the income, the fort, was necessary.

The Mughals, too, were concerned with the same thing. Within the Empire, the Mughals had never allowed fortifications, for they did not see any need for merchants to defend themselves when the state was there to do it for them. The Europeans, for their part, believed that the fortifications were necessary precisely against that state, for it was seen as encroaching, obstructive and oppressive, and so, detrimental to the interests of European trade. From the Indian point of view, what was being done was, if successful, beneficial to the Indian merchants, for it would once again place the Indian and European merchants on an equal

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[164] Ibid.

footing. It is in this context that one must see Sa'adatullah Khan's attempts to establish a port on the Coromandel coast. Unfortunately, the conquest of Golconda, followed, very shortly, by the disintegration of the Mughal Empire, led to smaller kingdoms, who could not exercise even a limited degree of control. More important, it led to an extremely fluid situation, in which there were constant movements, not of armies, but of armed raiders, not excluding the Marathas, who increased the dependence on the secure European fort.

In the 17th century, this was the major advantage that the European companies had - that they were able to negotiate with the local governments on fairly equal terms. The volume of trade that they controlled, and therefore the amount of revenue that they could generate, was far in excess of the individual Indian merchants, who no longer had the support of the guild. While initially the Indian merchant could mobilise state support, the increasing political instability made this steadily more inaccessible. Equally important, the absorption of Golconda into the Mughal empire led naturally, to both, a shift in centres of power, and centres of legitimacy. The Mughal emperor was a distant figure, both mentally and physically, and the new state structure was one to which the merchants had to adjust. However, they were not given the time to make this adjustment. The collapse of the new structure before the establishment of both, the system and the access to power within the system, together with the increasing tendency to localisation and regionalisation, provided the base for increased rivalry among the

European powers, to consolidate their hold. Here too, the Indian merchant was rather worse off than the Europeans, for he often lacked the resources to get access to the new courts. So, once again, it made more sense to link their fortunes with the Europeans.

Relations between foreign merchants and the state were not limited to the kinds of obstacles listed above. On the west coast, at least, foreign merchants were generally welcome, as is clear from Barbosa's account. He says that when any merchant arrived at Calicut, the King "assigned his a Nayre, to protect and serve him, and a Chetie clerk to keep his accounts and look after his affairs, and a broker to arrange for him to obtain such goods as he had need of ...."[165] This, of course, was not the precise pattern followed on the east coast, but nevertheless, overtures were made by a number of local rulers to the Europeans. For instance, in 1622, the Nayak of Thanjavur suggested that the English could settle in his dominions, saying that they could buy "pepper and anything the land doth afford, and likewise buye those commodities that they [the English] doe bring with them, as tine, leade, iron and redd cloth...."[166] He gave them the choice of living under his protection, as the Portuguese had been doing, or "to fortifie as the Danes have done" at Tranquebar[167]. In 1608, Krishnappa Nayak of Jinji gave the Dutch permission to build a fort at Devanamapatnam. However, Portuguese influence at the Vijayanagar court put paid to the Dutch

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[165] Longworth Dames (tr. and ed.) - The Book of Duarte Barbosa, in 2 vols. (Hak. Soc., 1918), Vol. II, p. 77.
[166] EFI 1622-23, pp. 51-52.
[167] Ibid., p. 337.

plans[168]. In 1610, the Dutch made an agreement with the Vijayanagar king, Venkata, by which they got exclusive rights to Pulicat, for other Europeans were not allowed to live and trade there[169]. Two years later, they were allowed to build a fortress there. Devanamapatnam eventually became the site of the English Company's Fort St. David.

In the case of the Nayak of Madurai, while the Europeans were welcomed, they were generally not allowed to build fortifications. In 1658, after the capture of Nagapattinam, two Dutch officials were deputed to the Nayak's court, to try and get a grant for exclusive rights to the pearl fishery, in return for payment of a toll of 2%. No other Europeans were to be allowed to trade in the Bay of Madurai, pepper was to be brought in only on Dutch ships, the Dutch were to be given preference in the purchase of rice, and lastly, permission was to be got for the building of a fort at Tuticorin. The Nayak categorically refused to accept these proposals[170]. The monopolistic efforts of the Dutch could really take off only at the end of the century, when the Nayak was too weak to enforce his orders, and also needed Dutch support against the Thevar of Ramnad. At about this time, the Nayak sent letters inviting the English to settle within his kingdom, and said that "much pepper" was available there. The English did not take him up on his offer[171]. A similar overture had been made earlier, by "the Cawn of Chengie Nasir Mahmud Cawn". This offer was very seriously considered in view of the "great

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[168] H. Heras - The Aravidu Dynasty, p. 443.
[169] Ibid., p. 453.
[170] S. Arasaratnam - "The Dutch East India Co. and the Kingdom of Madura, 1650-1700", Tamil Culture, 1963, pp. 47-74.

troubles" faced by the English, because of the Dutch and the "Inconvenient Neighbourhood of the French". No decision was actually taken, but options were left open, and a letter and a "present" sent to Jinji[172]. The idea was dropped when the French left San Thome for Pondicherri.

In 1634, the English got the so-called "Golden Farman" for trade in the kingdom of Golconda. This remitted customs on "such goods and horses as the English shall bring for their Companies accompt", and stated that the farman had been granted because the Sultan's subjects "have commerce" with the English[173]. Another farman granted in 1639, was more or less a repetition of the Golden Farman.

In 1639, they got the grant of Madras from Nayak Damarla Venkatadri (or Venkatapati), the ruler of Kalahasti, who ruled the coast from Pulicat to San Thomé. The grant gave "full power and authority to governe and dispose of the Goverment of Madraspatam for the terme and space of two yeares...." All goods either imported or exported by the English were to be completely free of customs duty, and they were to pay half the regular inland tolls. In addition, they were granted the right to mint coins in Madras[174]. The grant was renewed in 1645 by Sriranga. The reasons ascribed to the Nayak for the grant were that he wanted his country to "flurrish and grow rich", which was possible only through trade;

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[171] RFSG – Diary, 16 February 1681.
[172] Ibid., 20 March 1674.
[173] EFI, 1634-36, p. 14.
[174] Vestiges, I, p. 17; EFI 1637-41, pp. 156-158.

and he hoped that the fort, once built, would shelter him from his enemies, if necessary[175]. Later in the century, when the English were trying to move into the "Chengy country", they entered into a treaty with Rajaram, the Maratha king. The English purchased the "Fort of Tevnepatam, with al its gunns, buildings etc. necessaryes..., as also the ground Woods and Rivers round the said Fort within the random Shott of a greate Gunn..." for the sum of "fourty thousand Chuckraes" (chakrams). The grant further stated that the fort was to be "soly under the disposure of the English Company and noe other whatsoever and that neither the Duan, Soldiers, Avaldars or any other Governours or Officers, Shall upon any pretence whatever have anything to Say or doe within the said fort or ground...." As in the case of Madras, the government of the town was totally in the hands of the English; and here too, they got the right to mint coins. Unlike the earlier grant, however, this one specifically said that the king would "assist and defend them in the quiett and free Possession [of the fort], from ye French and all other European Nation or others...."[176] the change in the attitude of the English to other Europeans is thus clearly visible in the terms of the two grants, for it was only in the latter that they felt the need to specifically exclude other companies. In this, it is possible to see yet another attempt to imitate the Dutch, who had been signing similar treaties from the very beginning. In other words, the English felt the need both, to try and establish a monopoly, and maintain it with armed power.

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[175] Ibid., p. 20.

Other European companies also came to an agreement with the local rulers. When the French arrived in India, they first occupied San Thomé, but after they were forced to surrender and leave that place, they came to an agreement with Sher Khan Lodi, the Bijapur Governor of the region, for the grant of Pondicherri.[177]

The treaty signed between Ekoji and the Dutch in 1676 also falls into the same pattern. This was probably the earliest of the agreements made by Ekoji after he became king. By this time, the Dutch were beginning to shift their base of operations from Pulicat to Nagapattinam, to try and exercise greater control over the Tuticorin coast and over Sri Lanka. By the terms of this treaty, the Dutch were given the privilege of paying only half the tax on exports from and imports into Thanjavur, as well as mint facilities in Nagapattinam; but the two seaports of Karaikal and Tirumalairajavirapattinam (which had been leased to the Dutch in 1674) were to revert to Ekoji[178]. It was at this time that the English stepped up efforts to set up a base in this area. Mention has already been made of the rather fruitless negotiations with the Nayak of Madurai. With Jinji, negotiations were begun shortly after the establishment of Maratha rule there. They dealt mainly with Harji Raja, the "Chief Subidar" of the region, and his representative, Gopal Pandit, the Subedar of Porto Novo. The English wanted leave to settle at and trade from Porto Novo, Cuddalore and Kunimedu. This was granted in

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[176] RFSG - Diary, 15 August 1690.
[177] L. Varadarajan (tr.and ed.) - India in the 17th century (Memoirs of Francois Martin), (Manohar, 1981), Vol. I, part 1, p. 120 and *passim*.
[178] ARE copper plate no. 11 of 1935-36.

1682. They further asked that lower customs rates be levied on their merchants; specifically, "at Coomeed [Kunimedu] one per cent; at Cudaloor one, and three Eights; and at Porto Novo two, and one eight which together is one and a half per cent." Also, they asked that they be free from "other Petty troublesome Customes to Talliars, Concoplies and Pagothaes"[179]. For their part, Gopal Pandit and Harji Raja declared that the English were to come and settle at the seaport "without feare", so that " the Divan may receive greater and greater benefits"[180] – a statement strikingly reminiscent of the wishes attributed to Damarla Venkatadri at the time of the grant of Madras. Unfortunately for the English, they were not left to enjoy these benefits for very long, as the 1690's saw the spread of the Mughal-Maratha conflict to this region.

Mention has been made earlier of Malaya and Chinanna Chetti, who apparently provided diplomatic services in exchange for Dutch protection of their ships on the routes to Arakan and the Malay Peninsula[181]. The point is, that at this time, the Europeans (especially the Dutch) were seen merely as additional participants in the Indian markets. Their importance to the local rulers lay less in the volume of their trade, and more in the fact that they were seen as a counterpoise to the Portuguese. It is this feature that emerges from the grant of Pulicat by Venkata in 1610. The grant clearly showed that the Dutch were not replacing the Portuguese: instead, each of the two European nations was

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[179] RFSG – Letters to Fort St. George, 9 January 1682.
[180] Ibid., 12 January 1682.
[181] J.J. Brennig - "Chief Merchants and the European Enclaves of 17th century Coromandel" in Modern Asian Studies (henceforth MAS) 1977, pp.325-326.

to serve as a check on the other, a situations that could benefit the locals. The same applied to Golconda also, where the Dutch were required to protect Golconda's shipping from Portuguese attacks, and were, in fact, held responsible for any damage caused by the latter. That the Dutch were not regarded as a threat is clear from the fact that, from the 1620's, Masulipatnam merchants again began to trade clandestinely with the Portuguese. Mir Jumla, from the 1640's, began to supply the Portuguese fortresses in Sri Lanka with rice, at a time when they were being besieged by the Dutch, in exchange for cinnamon and elephants, secure in the knowledge that the Dutch could not interfere with his shipping[182].

It was this kind of confidence that steadily decreased in the course of the 17th century, as the various Indian states grew steadily weaker. It may be argued that it was this weakness that led to increasing extortion. Revenue farming was the only way in which the state could get a share of the revenue, but that led to less control over smaller units, and so to extortionate demands and increased decentralisation, and then to the final breakdown of the established system.

From 1687, the major problem was that of relations with the Mughals. The Dutch were reported to have sided with the Mughals against Golconda, and the English were advised to give Golconda "all the secret Countenance and advice in his affairs ... and assistance likewise

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[182] S. Subrahmanyam - "Persians, Pilgrims and Portuguese: The Travails of Masulipatam Shipping in the Western Indian ocean, 1590-1665", MAS 1988, p. 520.

underhand for his money ... so as ... wisely to improve the present advantage for ye Good of ye English Nation...."[183].

The French were the first of the European Companies to reach a settlement with the Mughals, which they managed at a cost of Rs. 10,000 is 1688. In 1689, the Dutch got a favourable settlement - they were allowed to trade throughout the former Golconda Empire free of any tolls, land or sea custom, or market duties. Their earlier rights to mint coins and collect customs at Pulicat were also re-confirmed[184].

It took a long time for the English to come to an agreement with the Mughals, for they were, to start off with, in a disadvantageous position, as a result of their problems with the Mughals in Bengal. However, relations between the two began to improve from 1689, and in 1690, the factors at Fort St. George were informed that arrangements were almost complete for a farman for Surat and Bengal. No agreement had been reached on Madras mainly because the negotiators did not have the exact terms of the earlier grants for Madras. It was therefore decided to send copies of the two most favourable grants to the Mughal camp[185]. Their position was further strengthened when they supported the Mughal faujdar, Ali Asghar Khan, and later the commander of the Mughal army, Zulfiqar Khan, against the Marathas. The promised farman from Aurangzeb finally never arrived, but the English managed to

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[183] RFSG - Despatches from England, Letter to Fort St. George, 22 March 1687.
[184] J.F. Richards - "European City States on the Coromandel Coast" in P.M. Joshi and M.A. Nayeem (ed.) - Studies in the Foreign Relations of India - Prof. H.K. Sherwani Felicitation Volume (Hyderabad, 1975), pp. 508-521.

establish cordial relations with the local authorities (Zulfiqar Khan, Asad Khan, Daud Khan Panni and others), and so to stabilise their position. It is here that one can see the first traces of the policy that the English followed later with such success, that of establishing local connections with local notables, so that the approval of the court could be got more easily, or was rendered unnecessary.

In December 1690 the English got a farman from Zulfiqar Khan, which confirmed them in their possession of the "Fort and Factory of Chinnapatam with accustomary Priveledges, the English Factorys of Metchlepatam, Madapollam Vizagapatam etc. within the territorys of Darullchard [*Dar-ul-Jehad*, or land of war] alias the Gulcondah Countrey, also their Settlements and Factorys of Dewnapatam, Eslamabad alias Cuddaloor, Mamood Bunder alias Porto Novo, Trimlevassull [Tirumalavasal] etc. Factorys within the territoryes of Chingee ..."[186].

The farman, however, was not followed to the letter, especially in the areas around Fort St. David. Mention has already been made of the bands of Marathas and the Mughal armies at Tiruvadi, near Fort St. David. The fall of Jinji did not change matters noticeably; instead, once again, attempts began to be made to gain control over the factories. It was reported that, after the fall of Jinji, the "Aveldar" called the merchants and told them that if any of them had "concerns in Cuddalore",

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[185] RFSG - Diary, 1690.
[186] Ibid., 16 February 1691.

they would be well advised "to withdraw the same"[187]. Most of the problems were caused by Sulaiman Khan, who was said to have "a desire to cause trouble to this place"[188] (i.e., Fort St. David). Between 18th and 26th February 1698, Cuddalore was attacked by Sulaiman Khan, but he was beaten back. A little later, in 1698, the factors reported that the losses suffered at Fort St. David were calculated as amounting to 104,397 pagodas. This sum included losses to the Company, to "the Chuliars and other Black Merchants, to Committees, Chittees and Shroffs", as well as the losses incurred as a result of houses, gardens, paddy fields, cotton and cotton yarn being burnt[189]. Some attempts were made to resolve the problems, for Daud Khan sent one "Ageesee Cawn" to settle matters, for he said that the attacks on the English were "very prejudiciall to his Master's jaggeer"[190].

In 1701, it was reported that of the "five or six thousand weavers" that had settled near Fort St. David, there were only about 200 left. Some had, indeed, deserted as a result of the Mughal attacks, but many more had been drawn away by the French, so that Pondicherri now had between 1500 and 2000 weavers[191]. The complaint that their competitors were taking away their weavers was not a new one: mention has been made, earlier of Dutch attempts to "engross the weavers" by

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[187] RFSG – Fort St. David Consultations, 13 January 1698.
[188] Ibid., 24 January 1698.
[189] Ibid., 29 April 1698.
[190] Ibid., 8 June 1698.
[191] Ibid., 1 August 1701.

paying them 10 pagodas per loom as opposed to the customary 5 pagodas per loom[192].

In 1702, Daud Khan was reported to have arrived at San Thome "with considerable forces of horse and foot..."[193]. He besieged Madras for a while, and seized some of the Company's goods[194]. Daud Khan was reported to be acting in accordance with the *husbulhukum* of the Emperor, which accused the Europeans of taking on the role of pirates, rather than preventing piracies. This was, in fact, a major concern of the Mughals at this time, for Mughal ships on the Red Sea route were being attacked by pirates. The idea had long existed, that purchase of passes from the Europeans entitled those who had purchased them to the protection of the European ships, and thus, the Europeans were to be penalised for their failures in this respect. Here again, we see the continuation of the idea that had existed under Golconda – that the Europeans were merely additional players in the Asian markets, and their expertise was to be used while they were kept under control. Unfortunately, the local powers were now less able to exercise that control. In this instance, the English did not try to conciliate Daud Khan: rather, they sent him a letter saying that Madras could withstand a two year siege "besides the Sea open to us"[195]. At the same time, a letter was drafted to be sent to the other Europeans on the coast, saying that "wee

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[192] RFSG - Diary, March 1701.
[193] Ibid., 29 January 1702.
[194] RFSG – Fort St. David Consultations, 10 February 1702.
[195] RFSG – Diary, 7 February 1702.

should find it our Interst to join and assist each other in this matter...."[196]. After the early 17th century joint action at Masulipatanam, this was the first proposal of any joint action – and significantly, it made no mention of any appeal to Indian merchants. The proposal, however, came to nothing, for the rivalry between the Europeans was too intense to permit any kind of joint action, even against a common threat.

In the long run, the Mughal invasion, and the subsequent Mughal-Maratha conflict, probably did more to increase the power of the European Companies than anything else. The Europeans had, of course, been always aware of the greater advantages that they would have in dealing with the smaller kingdoms, as can be seen in, for instance, the Dutch establishing themselves at Pulicat, and the English at Armagon and Madras. They were, therefore, wary of the Mughals when they first arrived in the south, particularly as they already had experience of the strength of the Mughals in the north. In both Surat and Bengal, the Europeans had not been allowed to fortify, and therefore, it appeared that the fate of the forts in the south hung in the balance. However, before the consolidation of the conquest could take place, and the Mughal system of administration could be firmly established, Aurangzeb had died. It has been pointed out that, in the initial stages, the Emperor's purpose was "to mobilise, as completely as possible, funds that could be used for further aggressive expansion"[197]. This naturally meant that administration was a

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[196] Ibid., 11 February 1702.
[197] J. F. Richards - "The Imperial Crisis in the Deccan" in Journal of Asian Studies, 1976, pp. 237-256.

low priority, to be left in the hands of those on the scene, to manage as best they could. Aurangzeb's successors had less likelihood of succeeding, for they could not exercise even that degree of control, and so the Deccan continued to be left in the hands of the nobles. As in the past, with the representatives of Golconda, the Europeans did face obstacles, but the difference was that these obstacles could be dealt with at the local level itself, without reference to a higher authority. In the 1670's, when Lingappa was busy putting obstacles in the way of smooth trade in Madras, the factors complained of "misgovernment at the helm", with a King who was more interested in pleasure than administration; but they were the last to deny that there was a state machinery that was in reasonably good working condition - enough, at any rate, to control them. By the 1690"s, this had vanished. In 1698, the Mughal commander, Sulaiman Khan, was dissuaded from attacking Cuddalore (near Fort St. David) on the grounds that the "English were now much stronger than formerly", and where, earlier, they kept to the Fort, they were now willing to march out to attack[198]. The beginnings of this attitude can be traced back to 1678, when Streynsham Master declared that he would oppose Lingappa's attempt to fix the price at which paddy was sold by force, if necessary.

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[198] RFSG - Fort St. David Consultations, 7 May 1698.

II

The other aspect of the problems was one that was not limited to the coast or to the south, but was common to all areas in which the Europeans traded. This was the rivalry between the Europeans. Mention has already been made of the Portuguese efforts to keep the Dutch out, by using their influence at the local courts. The Portuguese succeeded in blocking Dutch efforts to set up a factory at Devanamapatnam[199], but this was only a temporary success. Thereafter, the Dutch successfully attacked and broke the Portuguese monopoly and captured many of their strongholds, like Ormuz and Malacca. By 1656, the Portuguese possessions in Sri Lanka had been taken over, and in 1658, the last possession of the Portuguese on the Coromandel Coast, Nagapattinam, was also captured. With this, Portuguese power on the Coromandel coast came to an end. Many Portuguese continued to live on the coast, but as private citizens rather than as members or representatives of an empire. While this aspect, i.e, of the private citizen / merchant, had become fairly well established even earlier[200], it was confirmed by the Dutch conquests.

Of far more importance in our period was the Anglo-Dutch rivalry, which dominated much of the 17th century, and the Anglo-French

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[199] C.S. Srinivasachari - History of Gingee and its Rulers, *passim*.
[200] Sanjay Subrahmanyam - The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700 (Longman, 1993) and Improvising Empire, (Oxford, 1990).

rivalry, which began in the 17th century in a minor way, but steadily increased, to culminate in the well-documented Anglo-French wars of the 18th century. This European rivalry began in Asia and often exploded into wars in Europe, and the effect of the wars fought in Europe were felt in Asia. War was not a regular or a necessary occurrence, but the rivalry was constant and took many forms.

Through most of the 17th century, Dutch trade was on a larger scale than that of either the English or the French[201]. Quite apart from the European end of the enterprise, they also participated in the well-established Asian trade networks to a much larger extent than any of their other European competitors. A Dutch administrator, Jan Pietersz Coen, aptly described the nature of the Dutch participation when he said, "Piece goods from Gujarat we can barter for pepper and gold on the coast of Sumatra, rials and cotton from the coast (Coromandel) for pepper in Bantam, sandalwood, pepper and rials we can barter for Chinese goods and Chinese gold; we can extract silver from Japan with Chinese goods, piece goods from the Coromandel coast in exchange for spices, other goods and gold from China, piece goods from Surat for spices and various other trifles – one thing leads to another. And all of it can be done without any money from the Netherlands and with ships alone"[202]. As has been mentioned earlier, the Portuguese introduced the system of cartazes, but the Dutch used the cartaz much more effectively.

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[201] French trade became an important factor only towards the end of the 17th century. The Danes, the only other Europeans on the coast, had a single factory, Tranquebar, and a virtually negligible presence.

In some cases, it was used to eliminate Asian shipping[203], as happened along the stretch of coast between Tuticorin and Sri Lanka. More often, the cartaz was used as a means of redirecting shipping, so that Batavia had to be a port of call. In the first half of the 17th century, if Amsterdam was the re-export capital of the world, then it was not through lack of trying that the Dutch failed to make Batavia the re-export centre of Asia.

In addition to control of shipping, Dutch ships also participated directly in the trade of Asia, and consequently were far less dependent than the English on supplies of bullion from Europe. Dutch ships took a supply of textiles and spices to Japan, along with a few select European articles, which were sold for silver and, less often, for gold. Chinese silk was also acquired in exchange, and this, with the bullion, was used to make purchases in India. The English had no role to play in the Japan trade, for 17th century Japan, under Tokugawa rule, had retreated into isolation. The Dutch were the only foreigners permitted in Japan, but they too were restricted to the artificial island of Deshima in the harbour of Nagasaki.

Despite their best efforts, the Dutch found that they could not monopolise all the shipping of Asia. For one thing, there were far too many ports in India alone, and it was impossible to police all of them[204]. For another, while the Dutch ships were definitely superior to the Asian

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[202] Quoted in Niels Steensgaard – The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century (Chicago, 1974), p. 407.
[203] H. Furber - Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient (OUP, 1990), p. 268.
[204] As the Malabar, Madagascar and other pirates discovered later in the century.

ones, they were on par with those of the other Europeans. Too much interference with European shipping would have led to war, and then to disruption of trade, whether on a large or a small scale, which was something no-one wanted. All the other Europeans also issued cartazes, and the pass finally only indicated which European Company was in charge of defending the ship to which the cartaz had been issued. Often, Asian shippers took cartazes from all the Companies, rather than risk getting into trouble.

As has been mentioned earlier, the Dutch made treaties with the local rulers, in which they specified exclusion of other Europeans. They also actively helped local rulers against the Europeans, as for example, between 1672 and 1674. At that time, the French had taken possession of San Thomé, and were besieged by the Golconda troops with Dutch help. Earlier too, the Dutch had helped their brokers, Malaya and Chinanna, with arms and ammunition, to be used for the Vijayanagar emperor. Helping with arms and ammunition was done at the time of the Mughal conquest also, for there were reports that Daud Khan had been supplied "with powder and ammunition from Policat..."[205].

Anglo-Dutch rivalry could, and did, take many forms, not all of which were concerned with shipping. For instance, both the English and the Dutch had minting facilities, but it was noted that the Dutch made their pagodas "finer than the Standard of the Country", which made them

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[205] RFSG - Despatches to England. Letter from Pitt to London, 19 February 1702.

acceptable in more places than the English pagodas. This, according to the English, was not only "for their own Conveniency, ... but to debase ours"[206]. It took almost another full decade before the English pagodas gained parity with the Dutch ones, "& in some places 1 per cent. better". Problems however continued, for the Dutch "malitiously endeavoured to depretiate them by advising Madana to coyn great quantities of our Stamp and Shape, but a fanam less in value..."[207].

While condemning the "underhand" methods of the Dutch, the English nevertheless admired the way in which they functioned, particularly their expertise in collecting and increasing their revenues. The Dutch were reported to make "places conquered or fortify'd, to pay the charge of their preservacion, as well as the first Cost of their Settlement..."[208]. The English factors were advised at regular intervals to imitate Dutch methods in order to "make the English Nation, as formidable as the Dutch, or any other Europe Nation, are or ever were in India..."[209]. They attributed the skill of the Dutch not only to the fact of their "engrosment of spice" but also to their ability to make the "Natives pay the charge of their fortified places..."[210]. The factors on the coast tried to justify their position by saying that the Dutch raised revenue only in the places they conquered, and not from places like Pulicat and Batavia, but the Court of Directors at London refused to pay any attention to them. They agreed that the Dutch did not have "sovereign authority [in Pulicat],

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[206] RFSG - Despatches from England, Letter to Fort St. George, 8 January 1674.
[207] Ibid., 1683.
[208] Ibid., Letter to Fort St. George, 20 July 1683.
[209] Ibid., 26 August 1685.

nor the entire Customes", which was the reason for their war with Golconda, but they failed to see why Madras, with all the advantages gained by the original grant, and the freedom of trade there, could not increase its revenues. On the contrary, they said that Madras ought to do better than Pulicat, for the latter would never attract as many traders as Madras did, as this would affect the Dutch monopoly.

By the end of the 17th century, the English position had improved, and as the Court of Directors said, it was no longer possible for the Dutch to call them a "parcel of meere trading merchants or pedlars..."[211]. Some amount of cooperation between the two Companies had begun from the 1680s, when, in addition to the East India Company, another group of merchants (called the Interlopers) had been granted a charter to trade by Charles II. The Interlopers were regarded as a greater threat, and so the Dutch were often asked for help in keeping them out.

Towards the end of the century, problems flared up once again, but the English, at any rate, did not want to go to war, because it would "be thought by the Vulgar but a Warr for Pepper". They did realise, however, that a confrontation would have to come sooner or later, both for "the dominion of the British as well as the Indian seas", for otherwise, the Dutch would have a total monopoly of all the spices. This would

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[210] Ibid., 14 January 1685.
[211] Ibid., 9 June 1686.

naturally give them all the economic benefits, and would also allow them to defray the expenses of a large navy in Europe[212].

In the long run, Dutch methods themselves led to their losing their initial primacy. Dutch methods of finance and payment grew steadily more cumbersome, requiring, as they did, approval from Holland before anything could be done. In the case of the English, the promotion of private trade, and the increased dependence on the customs from trade as much as the trade itself, led to less bureaucratisation, and consequently, easier and more direct links between London and India. From the 1690s, as the English Company managed to streamline its activities, the Dutch withdrew more and more into the far south and Sri Lanka. This left the field clear for the English, for the French, though established at Pondicherri since the late 1670s, had too many problems at home in France to be able to offer any sustained threat until the 18th century.

The general decline in the trade of the Coromandel in the closing years of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century probably ended the Anglo-Dutch competition. Suspicion continued, for in 1702, when there was a possibility of a war with France, it was said that the Dutch would not help the English, "but underhand the Contrary..."[213]. In 1711, it was reported that the Dutch investments on the coast had

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[212] Ibid., 3 August 1687.
[213] RFSG - Despatches to England. Letter from Pitt to London, 19 February 1702.

been far lower than usual[214]. By 1713, the Dutch were trying to borrow money from the Armenian inhabitants of Madras, without any success[215].

From the 1690s, in fact, Anglo-French rivalry was becoming more serious. Warnings were sent to English ships of the arrival of the French fleet in 1691, and English captains were advised to put into Dutch-controlled ports if necessary, to avoid the French[216]. In 1701, the Indian merchants at Fort St. David refused to enter into a contract with the English at the same prices as formerly, because the French had made such large investments that all prices had gone up[217]. A little later, it was discovered that many of the washers had left for Pondicherri, for the French paid higher rates than the English[218].

Problems with the French escalated steadily, so much so, that in 1709, it was decided to send a "black fellow... on each Vessell to go up to Madras with the... Compas. bales to own the goods as his in case of any disturbance from the French"[219]. As is well known, the final settlement of these problems was only after the Anglo-French wars of the Carnatic. In this period, however, the problems were concentrated essentially on the question of supplies and products. As sources of supply were still under Indian rulers, and the Europeans had not yer begun to interfere in the internal affairs of these principalities, the

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[214] Ibid., 4 September 1711.
[215] Ibid., 11 January 1713.
[216] RFSG - Diary, 2 January 1691.
[217] RFSG - Fort St. David Consultations, 2 August 1701.
[218] Ibid., 14 December 1702.
[219] Ibid., 3 March 1709.

problems between the two still followed earlier patterns. In other words, rivalry was not yet over the source of the supplies, something which began to happen from the next decade.

Chapter 3

Chief Merchants and Others.

Merchants in India could be divided into a number of categories, based on the nature of the commercial activity in which they were involved. Such categories were by no means mutually exclusive; on the contrary, many overlapped, and often a single merchant was involved in a wide range of activities. The categories seem to be found in the guilds also, which talk of "*nanadesi, paradesi,* and *svadesi*" merchants. Translations of the terms are varied, but on the whole, it appears that the first group comprised merchants who lived in India, and traded both within India and to other countries. The second group probably comprised non-Indians involved in Indian trade, or merchants involved only in export trade, while the third group probably consisted of merchants involved exclusively in internal trade.

In the 17th century, the categories of merchants included, firstly, shipowners, involved in long-distance and in country trade (i.e., the port-to-port trade of the coast). The scale of operations could vary, from a person like Mir Jumla who was reported to own 10 ships, to others who had perhaps one ship. These ships also carried freight, so that even merchants who did not own ships were involved in export trade. Members of the royal family, especially the Mughals, were also

participants in this freight trade. These, perhaps, correspond to the *nanadesis* of the earlier period.

Another category of merchants was those who dealt in the commodities of import and export. They usually had extensive links in the hinterland, which enabled them to distribute the imported goods and supply the goods required for export. It is possible that the Chief Merchants of the East India Companies belonged to this category.

In addition to these, were those who were involved in money changing or money lending activities – the sarrafs of the north being a prime example.

While one can distinguish varieties of commercial activities, the large merchants often combined all of them. For example, they were involved in export and import, as well as in money lending activities. However, in the course of the 17th century, the scale of operations of the Indian merchants began to decrease. Increasingly, they limited themselves to one category of operations, that of the middleman / broker involved in supplying the articles required by the Europeans. Those appointed as Chief Merchants were important, but in that capacity, more than as independent traders.

The first half of the 17th century was dominated by two men, Malaya Chetti and Mir Jumla. Malaya and the members of his

extended family were active in both the trade and the politics of the Coromandel coast until almost 1659, and Mir Jumla, as is well known, very comfortably combined trading and political activities within the Golconda kingdom. In many ways, he was the quintessential portfolio-capitalist.

Malaya Chetti, also referred to as Astrappa or Achyutappa Chetti, was, as mentioned earlier, one of the most important merchants of the early 17th century. He was a major ship-owner and trader, whose ships were sent, from his two main bases of Pulicat and Devanamapatnam, as well as from other ports of the Coromandel, to Arakan, Pegu, Tenasserim, Kedah, Aceh and Sri Lanka[220]. Members of Malaya's family were active in both commercial and political ventures in different parts of the Coromandel for much of the first half of the 17th century. Malaya became chief broker of the Dutch at Pulicat. It is possible that the Dutch tried to settle in Devanamapatnam because of Malaya's connections there, and later established themselves at Pulicat for the same reason. In 1632, Malaya contracted with the Dutch to supply textiles worth 23,000 pagodas.[221] Till his death, he, and after his death, his brother Chinanna supplied the company with different varieties of cloth, and shipped larger amounts on their own account.[222]

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[220] S. Arasaratnam - Merchants ...., op. cit., p. 222.
[221] J.J. Brennig - Chief Merchants ...., op. cit., pp. 321-340.
[222] V. Ramaswamy - Textiles and Weavers...., op. cit., p. 134.

Malaya was, in addition to being a trader, a tax farmer. In 1633, he got the farm of Pulicat's revenues on payment of 33,000 pagodas[223], and also collected the customs on imports and exports for some years. He apparently defrauded the Dutch Company and the merchants in his capacity as collector of customs duties - something that became a bone of contention later on, when the Dutch began to deduct 1000 pagodas annually from the rent of Pulicat[224]. He also took the farm for Devanamapatnam, where, too, the Dutch had a factory, thus becoming their landlord at both places. In addition, he took the lease of the Danish fort in Tranquebar: Dutch attempts to get a sub-lease of the fort from him were foiled by the Nayak of Thanjavur[225].

Malaya's brother Chinanna[226] was an important merchant and tax farmer in his own right. He seems to have been even more active in court politics than his brother, particularly at the court of Krishnappa Nayak of Jinji. In the 1630's, he led an armed force in favour of Jinji's contender to the throne, and in 1636-37, he acted as the Nayak's emissary in talks with the Nayaks of Madurai and Thanjavur[227]. However, they fell out in 1638, at which time Chinanna's fort in Devanamapatnam was destroyed by the Nayak[228]. In a fight between Chinanna, his nephew Koneri Chetti and a Jinji noble Tupaki Krishnappa Nayak (the same

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[223] J.J. Brennig - Chief Merchants ...., op. cit.
[224] S. Arasaratnam, op. cit., p. 222.
[225] Ibid., p. 223.
[226] The records tend to be rather confusing, for they refer to Malaya and Chinanna as one and the same person. However, it appears that Malaya died around 1636, and the position that he had occupied was taken over by his brother.
[227] J.J. Brennig, op. cit.
[228] S. Arasaratnam, op. cit., p. 223.

person who commanded Sriranga's troops and later became Mir Jumla's lieutenant), Chinanna was defeated, and moved to Pulicat, to become the Dutch chief broker in place of his brother Malaya. The differences between Chinanna and the Nayak were later resolved, and Chinanna re-established himself in Devanamapatnam - without, however, giving up his activities as chief broker.

Chinanna's political activities seem to have continued even after his shift to Pulicat, the only difference being that these activities now tended to centre on Chandragiri, the capital of the truncated Vijayanagar Empire, and Sriranga, the last Vijayanagar king, He offered his services to the king in 1643, with Dutch artillery and support. The latter was seen by the English as an attempt by the Dutch to gain a monopoly over Coromandel trade, for they wrote that the Dutch "have bine a projecting and now they have wrought it that Mollay, their merchant, is like to bee as powerfull with this king as the Serkayle [*Sar-I-Khail*, i.e., Mir Jumla] is att Gulcondah; and, to ingratiate him thoroughly into his favour, they have assisted Mollay with men and gunns for the subdueing of castles ... for the king..."[229]. Dutch support to the merchant was later withdrawn, perhaps because they were afraid of losing control over their broker, and members of Chinanna's family still at Pulicat were imprisoned. Chinanna retaliated by besieging Pulicat, and seizing one of the Company's merchants at Tiruvattur. A Dutch force sent out from Pulicat was defeated, and the English, rather gleefully, reported that "the

[229] EFI, 1642-45, p. 154.

great difference betwixt the Dutch and Mollay ... is now fallen into open warrs.... Soe that it is come to such a pass through Molays meanes, who is in such favour with the King that he ruleth both King and Contry, and hath prevaled soe farr with the King to send his Mandates to all his Governours throughout his kingdome to seaze upon all the goods which is in any Jentue Merchants hands belonging unto the Dutch, and whosoever shall be found to deny any of their goods, that party to be seazed upon and all his estate forfeited to the King...."[230] The English certainly benefited, for they accepted the confiscated Dutch goods[231]. The Dutch were saved only by the invasion of Golconda, at which time Chinanna was ordered to the defense of Udayagiri, which was besieged by Mir Jumla. Chinanna was forced to surrender, and returned to Pulicat.

Around 1657, Chinanna apparently shifted his base of operations to the Thanjavur kingdom, and leased the revenues of Nagapattinam for about 40,000 pagodas per year[232]. He continued to maintain this position (i.e., of revenue farmer) even after the expansion of Bijapur: the only difference was that he now leased the ports of Devanamapatnam and Alambaram from the Bijapur commander rather than the Thanjavur Nayak[233]. After the Dutch captured Nagapattinam

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[230] Vestiges, I, p. 64 - letter from Fort St. George to Surat, 8 September 1645.

[231] Ibid., p. 45. This led to some hostility between Pulicat and Fort St. George, but closer links between the English and Vijayanagar through Sesadri Chetti, the English Chief Merchant and a member of the Malaya family. It was at this time that the English got their grant of Madras reconfirmed by Sriranga.

[232] S. Arasaratnam, op. cit., p. 223.

[233] It has been suggeste, by J.J. Brennig, op. cit., that, as the political role of these merchants was entwined with the "Hindu" political structure, they were bound to suffer from the expansion of the Muslim kingdoms. However, more studies of this aspect need to be undertaken, for it implies that trade had to be aligned differently to suit different

from the Portuguese, Chinanna was apparently instrumental in getting them a grant from the then Nayak of Thanjavur, Vijayaraghava. The grant began by saying that "Chinnanna Setti, had earnestly submitted to us by means of petitions that your company was very desirous of carrying on trade operations in the port of Nagapattinam.... Therefore, as desired by him, you are permitted to come to Nagapattinam to carry on trade."[234] Chinanna and Malaya were clearly far from being on the periphery of the state, or outside the political framework of the state. Working within that framework, they clearly used their expertise in the twin areas of trade and politics to their own benefit.

The other outstanding personality of the first half of the 17th century is Mir Jumla. Here again, it must be stressed that Mir Jumla, far from being an exception, fit perfectly into the established mode, of Persian emigrants into the Deccan who transcended the so-called merchant / politics divide. The first half of the 15th century had seen extensive commercial contacts between the western Deccan and the Persian Gulf ports, in which the Kazaruni merchants (belonging to the area near Shiraz) were important[235]. Later in the same century we have Mahmud Gawan Gilani, wazir of the Bahmani kingdom, who belonged to a family with widespread mercantile links[236].

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religions; or alternatively, that state policies were defined by religion, which does not seem to be the case.

[234] K.A.N. Sastri - South India and Southeast Asia - Studies in their History and Culture (Reprint, Mysore, 1978), pp. 202-203.

[235] K.A.N. Sastri - History of South India, op. cit., pp. 248-252.

[236] Ibid.

Mir Muhammad Said Ardestani arrived in the Deccan in the retinue of a horse trader, then went on to farm a diamond mine, branched out into trade across the Bay of Bengal, and then, in succession, was the *sardaftardar* in Hyderabad, *havaldar* in the Nizamapatnam region, and finally, Mir Jumla of the Golconda Empire.[237] He thus became the most influential man in the empire, next only to the Sultan himself; but without, in any way, decreasing the scope of his mercantile activities. On the contrary, he apparently branched out into money lending also. He loaned money to the English at Masulipatnam in 1642-43, and again at Madras in 1646-47.[238] Repayment of such loans was in accordance with Mir Jumla's needs, whether political or mercantile, for in one instance, it took the form of a brass gun.[239] In 1651, the English at Fort St. George reported that the "whole kingdom of Gulcondah is governed by him...." They went on to say that he brought in, annually, revenues to the tune of "twentye hundred thousand pagodas", and that he had "of his proper owne four thousand horse, three hundred elephants, four or five hundred cammels, and ten thousand oxen, which transporteth his goods up into severall countrys, as Gulcondah, Vizapore and into dyvers parts of the Great Moguls country.... Concerning forran navigation, he hath trade to Pegue, Tenasaree, Acheen, Rackan, Persia, Bengalla, Moka, Peruk, Moldeevaes, and Macassar. He hath tenn

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[237] J.N. Sarkar - The Life of Mir Jumla, the General of Aurangzeb (2nd edn., New Delhi, 1979).
[238] Vestiges, I.
[239] EFI, 1646-50, p. 166. He first lent 16,000 rials of eight, and then 10,000 pagodas, and the English continued to be in his debt from March 1646 to June 1647.

vessels of his owne, and intends to augment them, makeing much preparation for building of more."[240]

Later in the same year, Mir Jumla also tried to get a monopoly of cloth - the English reported that "not ... a piece [was] to bee sold but by his owne ministers, who are to engross all from the weavers and have order to rate them at 20% profitt to whomsoever will buy, or keepe them in his warehouses...; and this course he is resolved to continue, untill hee can bring a monopoly upon all imported goods."[241] Even after he defected to the Mughals, he kept up his trading activities through his agents, who operated in "Pallacatt, Metchlepatam, etc. places of Cuttubshawes [Qutb Shah's] dominion, by vertue of the Moghors power."[242]

Malaya, Chinanna and Mir Jumla are far from being the only examples of their kind. The Khan-i-Khanan of Bijapur, who was also the governor of those areas of the Karnataka conquered by Bijapur, was reported to own ships which he used in extensive overseas trade, as well as to appoint merchants to trade on his behalf.[243] Other names that one comes across are, in Golconda, Muhammad Taqi, who was merchant and governor of Masulipatnam (in which capacity he put a great many obstacles in the way of the English trade), Mir Kamaluddin, and Mir Muhammad Murad. Frequent references are found in both Dutch and

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[240] Ibid., 1651-54, p. 12.
[241] Ibid., p. 22.
[242] Ibid., 1655-60, p. 92.
[243] S. Arasaratnam, op. cit., p. 225.

English records to the participation of Mir Jumla and Mir Kamaluddin in the Red Sea trade, and the Dutch found that Mir Kamaluddin had sent cargoes of cloth and sapan wood to Persia, that he had purchased from the Dutch. The Dutch were unable to do anything about it.[244] Further south, members of Malaya's family - Chinanna, Sesadri, Koneri and Lakshmana, to name a few - continued to be important.

Outside India, too, Indian and Asian merchants were extremely active. William Methwold, writing in the early 17th century, declared that the Indians "build great ships ... some of them not lesse than 600 tunnes.... With these their ships they traffique ordinarily to Mocha in the Red Sea, to Achyne upon Sumatra, to Arrecan, Pegu, and Tenassery on the other side of the Gulfe, and to many ports alongst their owne coasts, as farr as Zeloan [Sri Lanka] and the Cape Comoryne."[245] At Malacca, the presence of the Bengal, Masulipatnam and Pegu merchants hindered the English Company's purchases[246]. As early as 1620, the English factors at Masulipatnam had declared that the "welth and welfare of the kingdome of Gulcondah doth consist in itts inland manyfactures, which findes most or all his vent by sea transporte...."[247] Later in the century, when English trade had been affected by the exigencies of the wars that had until then been taking place, they

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[244] T. Raychaudhuri - Jan Company in Coromandel, 1605-1690 (The Hague, 1962), p. 121.
[245] W.H. Moreland (ed.) - Relations of Golconda in the Early 17th century, p. 36.
[246] EFI, 1642-45, p. 130.
[247] Ibid., 1618-21, p. 281.

reported that, though their trade was "much decayed within this fewe yeares, ... the Moores doe trade more than they ever did."[248]

This, then, was the position that prevailed in the first half of the century. However, farther south, it is noticeable that, with the final collapse of the Vijayanagar Empire, there are no longer many instances of merchants being involved in politics. From now onwards, the shift to the forts begins to take place.

From the very beginning, the Europeans had seen the need for a dubash or broker, who would be able to purchase the goods required by them. Such brokers, on the West Coast, could be either independent merchants engaged on a percentage commission, or, more rarely, employees of the Factory.[249] On the West Coast, weavers were usually found near market towns, and so were easily accessible. In South India, however, weavers tended to be widely scattered in the interior, and according to the Europeans, very mobile - all they needed was trees under which to set up their looms. This meant, on the one hand, that more brokers were needed to go into the country to supervise or collect the goods that had been commissioned; and on the other, that regular attempts were made to get the weavers to settle in the vicinity of the forts. As the weavers were generally too poor to purchase any of the material they required, the system of advances was absolutely

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[248] Ibid., 1661-64, p. 179.
[249] John Irwin - "Social Relations in the Textile Trade of the 17th century", Indian Studies: Past and Present, 1960, pp. 380-384.

necessary. The factors pointed out that the weavers never undertook any work without it, and said that it had been "customary and of course to deliver mony aforehand to the Merchants for the more timely accomplishing of their investments."[250] It was calculated that "to provide hundred thousand pagodas worth of Callicoes, he must be fain to give out for above half so much more to allow for disappointments..."[251]. The merchants therefore acted as contractors for the provision of cotton cloth, as well as agents for the sale of goods brought out from Europe. Money to be advanced to the weavers was given to the merchants, who were then responsible for delivering the finished goods; and the advances were also a contract with the weaver, ensuring that he would supply the required quantity. Lists of the Company's requirements were sent out to the factories from London, after which the factors issued musters to their brokers, together with a statement of the maximum price to be paid. These musters were stamped with the Company's seal, and then delivered to the weavers along with the advances. The finished cloth was delivered to the Company's warehouses, where it was compared with the original muster. It was generally presumed that the original and the finished product did not match, and so, even before sorting, payment was made on the basis of the cloth being of the "lowest sort". After sorting, the final payment was made, and there are frequent complaints about the strictness of the sorting.

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[250] RFSG - Diary. 28 September 1675.
[251] Ibid.

There were also differences in the methods of commissioning different kinds of cloth. In 1678, the Masulipatnam factors reported that the finer varieties were "provided by persons of as plentiful Estates as reputation and experience, and therefore need no further anticipation of moneys for carrying on the work [except what was customary], that is one moyety [half payment] upon contract"[252]. The merchants involved in providing the coarser varieties were usually poorer, and therefore needed larger advances.

Th. 8228

From the inception of the English settlement at Fort St. George, a number of merchants had been associated with it. The first Chief Merchant was Sesadri Chetti, usually referred to as "our Merchant Sesadra Nague". As mentioned earlier, he was a member of Malaya's family, and probably arrived at Madras along with Koneri Chetti shortly after 1640. Sesadri, too, was involved in local politics, for the English reported that Malaya (actually Chinanna) was supporting him in his efforts to become the "sole Marchant in the King's Dominions"[253]. He was stated to be a trustworthy merchant, "alwaies honestly clearing his Accompts, furnishing with good commodityes, and advancing the sale of our Europe goods, especially Corall..."[254]. However, he later lost the Company's favour to two Brahman brothers, Venkata and Kanappa. The latter had begun as adigar (headman) of Madras, but had risen to become Chief Merchant. Perhaps in an attempt to regain his position,

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[252] Masulipatam Factory Records, Vol. 2, consultation of August 1678; also cited by J. Irwin, op. cit.
[253] Vestiges, I, p. 64.
[254] Ibid., p. 144.

Sesadri incited the first of the right hand / left hand caste disputes in Madras in 1652. Still later, (around 1651), he was reported to owe the Company "a greate summe of money"[255].

Around 1662, Beri Timanna, "the only person experienced and to be trusted"[256] was appointed as the Company's Chief Merchant. His entire career was centred on Madras and the English Company. He began as a dubash - in 1680, the factors said that there was a need for a dubash "to find out good and able Merchants for improving the sale of our Europe goods...; which formerlye was Tymonas Imployment..."[257]. He was apparently involved in the private trade of one of the Company's factors (Greenhill), and went on to become a toll collector. He and his partner Rudriga were accused of taking 300 pagodas on goods taken out of, or brought into, the factory. They were imprisoned, and made to pay 1500 pagodas to the Company.[258] However, the office did allow him to build up his personal fortune, and become the Company's Chief Merchant. Unlike Sesadri, he did not belong to any of the established mercantile classes, nor did he have any influential contacts outside Madras. As a "migrant with no identifiable associations with the region outside Madras, a member of a caste of relatively low status who had reached financial success and high ascribed status in the Company's service, Timanna far more than Sesadra identified himself with the

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[255] Ibid., p. 122.
[256] EFI 1661-64, p. 165.
[257] RFSG - Diary, 2 September 1680.
[258] Vestiges, I, p. 128.

Company and the enclave it dominated."[259] It was as the Company's merchant that he managed to acquire certain privileges which were later inherited by the later Chief Merchants. These included the right of paying only half the customs "upon all manner of goods that he should Import or Export at this towne by Sea or Land, whether the said goods be brought in for the Honble: Companies Accott: or brought in or carried out for the Accott: of himself singly or in partnership...."[260] This concession was got as a result of a *qaul* from Neknam Khan. Timanna's partner as chief merchant was one Kasi Viranna (or Hasan Khan), and after the former's death in 1669, Viranna continued as the Chief Merchant.

Kasi Viranna dominated the Madras scene until his death in 1680. He was involved in the Company's trade, and was a merchant in his own right. He also took up a few revenue farms, of places like Armagon, Kottapatnam and San Thomé[261]. Nor was he averse to dealing with the Dutch or the French: Abbé Carré, a French priest at Madras, reported that, during the siege of the French in San Thomé by the Golconda troops, Viranna sent his men at night with information and supplies[262]. Earlier, complaints had been made to the Governor (at this time Foxcroft) against Timanna and Viranna, linking them with the private trade of an earlier Governor, Sir Edward Winter. It was alleged that contracts had been made at grossly inflated rates, while the amounts paid to the weavers were the normal ones. The difference was divided

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[259] J.J. Brennig, op. cit.
[260] RFSG - Diary, 27 November 1678.
[261] Master, op. cit., I, p. 77; II, p. 152.

among the three. It was decided to imprison Timanna and Viranna, and further, that they "should never be settled in the Choutry and Goverment of the Towne againe, or have the sole management of all buying and selling with the Company as before..."[263]. This resolve did not last for any great length of time, and before very long, Timanna and Viranna had regained the Company's favour, and were back in Madras, stronger than before. By 1672, Viranna was apparently in a better position, for in that year, the factors at Fort St. George reported that Viranna and "the heirs of Timonah" provided "¾ of the ... stock, Vizt. Pagodas 60 million"[264]. In 1676, Viranna was accused of being a partner in the private trade of yet another of Fort St. George's Governors, Sir William Langhorne. With Viranna's help and active connivance, Langhorne reportedly received 20,000 pagodas annually. Viranna indignantly denied all charges, saying that all his dealings with the English were those of "a free merchant, and no Servant of theirs..." He added that it was "not of late only that [he began] to trade with [the Company]" and his dealings had not been "in private, but openly and publickly"[265]. On the contrary, the Company still owed him 9,000 pagodas, which they had not repaid for 13 years[266]. In connection with this, Viranna wrote to the Court of Directors, claiming that the Company owed him 9,175 pagodas. The directors refused to accept any such liability; on the contrary, they said that Viranna and Timanna had defrauded them to the tune of nearly 200,000 pagodas. In any case,

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[262] C. Fawcett (tr. & ed.) - The Travels of the Abbe Carre in India and the Near East, 1672-74, 2 Vols. (London, 1947), Vol. II, pp. 605 and 610.
[263] Vestiges, I, p. 231.
[264] RFSG - Diary, 14 June 1672.
[265] RFSG - Diary, 14 September 1676.
[266] Ibid.

no mention of any debt had been made until 1669, and then by Viranna alone, and not by his partners in the stock[267]. However, that he was involved in at least some trade, either on his own account, or in conjunction with some Company officials, is clear from the fact that, in 1679, a parcel containing "diamonds, bezoar and musk" was received at London. The value of this was £ 1,172 9s. 6d.; and Sambrooke, the person to whom this parcel was sent, had also borrowed another £ 126 from Viranna. It was decided that Sambrooke was to pay the full sum in London and bills of exchange for this sum were to be drawn on Fort St. George, payable to Viranna[268].

The Court of Directors at London objected to the virtual monopoly that Viranna had over the Company's trade. They wanted to increase competition among Indian merchants, so as to get the best possible deal for the Company, and refused to believe that only one man was trustworthy enough to get the Company's contracts. If his presence was an advantage to Madras trade, then it was because the factors allowed him to "grow and Remayne Master of that trade and therefore it is More then tyme to provide against the consequences of this Mischief Least ye continuance put it beyond remedy...."[269] Instructions were sent out to them to try and establish good relations with the governors of the

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[267] RFSG -Despatches from England, 8 January 1674.
[268] Sainsbury - Court Minutes, op. cit., p. 374, minutes of 10 November 1679.
[269] RFSG - Despatches from England, Letter to Fort St. George, 15 December 1676.

cloth producing areas, so that Viranna could do business only as an employee of the Company.[270]

The Court of Directors was particularly concerned because of the time lapse between sending out the lists of supplies and actually getting the supplies, a gap of two years. The lists were drawn up on the basis of the market as it then existed, and tastes could (and did) change in two years. What made it worse was the fact that the cargo sent out from England consisted mainly of bullion. For instance, in 1675, five ships, of a combined tonnage of 2,140 tons were sent out to Fort St. George, containing, for the Fort, £ 14,832 in goods and £ 105,167 in bullion; for Masulipatnam, goods that could be sold there (the value is not specified) and £ 30,000 in bullion; and for Bengal, £ 23,000 in goods and £ 67,000 in bullion.[271] The value of the cargoes received in 1675 was £ 183,085 1s. 9d.[272]. In 1708, the amount sent out in four ships to the "Coast and Bay" was £ 300,000 in goods and bullion, of which £ 60,000 was to be invested on the coast and £ 240,000 in Bengal[273]. The following year, the total amount sent out had fallen to £ 260,000, of which £ 180,000 was for Bengal and the rest for the coast[274]. Obviously, they wanted the best possible deal for the Company even though investments on the coast had decreased considerably.

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[270] EFI (New Series), Vol. II, p. 143.
[271] RFSG - Despatches to England, Letter from Fort St. George, 24 December 1675.
[272] Sainsbury - Court Minutes, op. cit., p. 135.
[273] RFSG - Despatches from England, Letter to Fort St. George, 4 February 1708.
[274] Ibid., 9 January 1709.

The factors, for their part, felt that they had no "bad debts", and those that did exist, were "made before that the Investments were undertaken by Tymona and Verona, in times of much less troubles then Since have been..."[275]. Besides, the cloth provided by Viranna was better, for he sent "five of his own Servants unto each place being eighteene in number, having each their own circuits and severall others subdivided, with orders to looke after the business better and remedy what amiss...."[276] They further said that, but for Viranna's influence, no merchant would contract with the English. He and Timanna's heirs alone provided a quarter of the Company's requirements[277], and pointed out that Viranna was being wooed by the Dutch and the French.

Viranna was also involved in a large number of other activities in and around Madras. He and Timanna had earlier built a "Paddy Bancksall", and, in return, had collected a small fee on the paddy and rice brought into the town.[278] In 1676, he rented the paddy grounds at the rate of 40 pagodas per annum,[279] and was reported to have gone to considerable expense in "clearing the Sand from the Sea wall".[280] When the Company decided to levy a small charge of 2 fanams per house to recover the money they had paid in fortifications, "all the Inhabitants any their own Merchants all but Cassa Verona had shut up their shops ... [and] had stopped all provisions from coming to

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[275] RFSG - Diary, 29 February 1676.
[276] Ibid., 28 September 1675.
[277] Ibid., 7 May 1675.
[278] Ibid., 18 February 1676.
[279] EFI (New Series), Vol. II, p. 146.
[280] RFSG - Diary, 29 February 1676.

Towne...."[281] Viranna had taken up a number of revenue farms, so that he had almost the entire stretch of coast between Madras and Armagon in his hands (with the exception of Pulicat). He had been offered the district of Poonamallee, but had been induced to decline the offer, as it would have taken him off the Company's business.[282] In 1677, the Council reported that Kasi Viranna's town could annually make "4000 ordinary ginghams and 1000 fine ones"[283], which would seem to imply that he had enough weavers under his direct control to be able to get that quantity of cloth.

At around the same time, he had obtained the grant of San Thomé and "its dependencies, by sea and land" from the Sultan of Golconda. The terms of the grant were very similar to those granted to the English in Madras.[284] The question of San Thomé, however, became a problematic one later, for Lingappa also wanted it. The town and its villages had been rented to Viranna for 1500 pagodas per annum, but in 1679, Lingappa was given the farm for the same sum. The reason for this was that he had farmed the whole region for two lakh pagodas, and he declared that there was no possibility of getting that amount without San Thomé. "Verona to prevent the inconvenience that may accrue to the Revenues of this Towne, by stoppage of Goods, Graine and the Callico Investment this yeare, hath writt to Golconda to use all meanes possible

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[281] Ibid.
[282] EFI (New Series), Vol. II, p. 146.
[283] Ibid., p. 176.
[284] Ibid.

to wrest St. Thoma out of Lingapa's hands againe."[285] In recognition of Viranna's importance and his services to the Company, it was decided to present him with a gold chain and a gold medal stamped with the Company's arms, "to the value of £ 100"[286]. However, news of his death reached London before the chain could be presented, so orders were sent to turn it into coins.

Viranna died on 28 March 1680, intestate. He had only one daughter. After his death, Lingappa demanded that 2,000 pagodas be paid to him by the new Chief Merchant, and declared that Viranna used to lend 6,000 pagodas per year, interest free, to the Divan; and "if he that is now appointed our Chief Marchant will doe these things..., we may doe our business with content."[287] A little later, he also declared that as Viranna was dead, he would appoint a Havaldar for Madras.

Viranna had been assisted by "twenty six chief merchants, and many more below them", among whom were Timanna's brothers, Pedda and Chinna Venkatadri. In 1678, the latter had been imprisoned, following reports that he had "exacted a tax from the Shopkeepers, Fishermen, Beetle and Tobacco merchants". As he was also the head of the Peons in the Company's service, for which he was paid "100 fanams per mensem", it was decided to remove him from that post, "whereby he may injure the Townes people, or under colour lead a party against the

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[285] RFSG - Diary, 31 August 1679.
[286] Sainsbury - Court Minutes, op. cit., 4 November 1679.
[287] Ibid., 15 September 1680.

government". He was involved in similar activities in other ports also, for he had "command of the watch of... Chycaracoat"[288]. The other brother had, till then, received a small duty, for "maintenance of the right hand Danceing Wenches, and, for the collecting the same, imploys a Concopla or Writer at the Choultry". It was decided that he would no longer be entitled to that sum[289]. On Viranna's death, they were appointed to the post of Chief Merchants.

Viranna, in all his activities was Chief Merchant first, and everything else later. He was influential in the interior, but not to the extent that the Malaya family was, for he had no direct access to the court. His contact was more with the lower levels of administration; i.e., with those levels that comprised the extortionists. His value to the Company lay in the fact that he could deal comfortably with this level; but in any conflict, as for instance with Lingappa over San Thomé, it was the latter who was more likely to succeed. Thus, his influence was in the nature of reflected glory, for his rise to power was in Madras and because of Madras. His forays into revenue farming were more of a sideline, for the farms that he did take did not yield much.[290] By the 1670's, it was clear that Viranna had decided that his primary loyalty was to the English,

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[288] Master, op. cit., Vol. I, Journey from Fort St. George to Masulipatnam; also RFSG - Diary, 13 March 1679.
[289] Ibid., 25 November 1678.
[290] According to Master, he had taken the farm of Armagon's customs, which were no more than 60 pagodas per annum, and San Thome gave him only the 1500 pagodas for which he had rented it. Master, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 77.

whose interests he represented to the Golconda administration. This last included paying bribes out of his own pocket when necessary[291].

The beginnings of the new equation between merchants, companies and the state had begun to be worked out under Timanna, and been more or less clarified under Viranna, and reached its final form under Viranna's successors. Pedda and Chinna Venkatadri were ordered to finalise accounts with all the merchants who had been involved in the trade with Viranna; but they declared that they had no knowledge of what Viranna had done, nor did they have the means to pay anything; and shortly afterwards, left town with the "Pedda Naique and the Chief Painter with other Painters, the Muckwas, Cattamaran men and Cooleys"[292]. The Council ordered them to "submit to Justice", failing which their "houses, goods and Estate" would be confiscated. The brothers finally returned, and were imprisoned, but later released and allowed to join the joint stock that had been set up. Lingappa objected to their imprisonment, saying that no demands should be made on the two until they had been "favoured" for four yeares, after which they would be able to satisfy all parties[293]. But not much notice was taken of what he said. Still, they did continue to trade on their own account, and also apparently had ships of their own; mention is made of a ship called "Tagraia" belonging to Chinna Venkatadri, and of "several Pegu Merchants" arriving at Madras on one of his ships[294].

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[291] Vestiges, I, pp. 90-91, 391-392, and *passim*.
[292] RFSG - Diary, 26 October 1680.
[293] EFI (New Series), Vol. IV, p. 27.
[294] RFSG - Diary, 25 March 1686 and 13 April 1686.

The Dutch experience was rather different. After their experiences with Malaya and Chinanna, they did not give their contracts to any one merchant, but to a large number of merchants. In the 1670's, they were reported to owe large sums of money on the coast, but they did not pay any interest on it. The money was owed to the merchants from whom they bought their goods, and so, they merely "over rated their goods by 30 to 40%".[295] They were the first to establish formal partnerships, or joint stocks, among Indian merchants. The departure of Chinanna for the kingdom of Thanjavur had resulted in a number of problems for the Dutch, not the least of which was bad debts. Another problem was the quality of cloth, and the quantities required. The Dutch had earlier realised that the quantities they needed meant that a larger number of merchants had to supply the same varieties of cloth - which meant more advances, greater competition among the merchants, which would lead to higher prices, and a correspondingly greater likelihood of bad debts.

The first attempts at a joint stock were made under Laurens Pit, the Dutch Governor of the Coromandel from 1652-63. He began with the merchants supplying a variety of cloth sold in the Moluccas, known as "ternate cloth"[296]. These merchants were asked to band together in an association, so that they would no longer compete

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[295] Master, op. cit., I, p. 297.

[296] J.J. Brennig - "Joint Stock Companies of Coromandel", in B.B. Kling and M.N. Pearson (ed.) - The Age of Partnership: Europeans in Asia before Dominion, pp. 71-94.

among themselves. The result was a dramatic improvement in the quality of cloth, and so Pit went on to form three more such associations, two for longcloth or "Guinea cloth", and another from embroidered muslins[297].

The Dutch went on to introduce similar joint stocks in all their settlements along the coast. Their example was followed by the English at Madras after Viranna's death, in 1680, and also by the French at Pondicherri.

Two rather conflicting opinions have been expressed about the joint stocks. One, that of Brennig, views it as "an early instance of the attempted transfer of a basically European commercial institution to a non-Western economic environment."[298] Arasaratnam, on the other hand, believes that the "concept of the joint-stock must certainly have been prevalent in some form in the merchant guilds that flourished under the Vijayanagar Empire."[299] It should be remembered that these Indian joint stocks were not independent organisations, nor were they a logical development of the trends in India, Rather, they were associations created by the Europeans to serve their own needs, and so were carefully watched over by them. They were, therefore, a means of exercising control over the Indian merchants, so as to increase the profits of the Company concerned.

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[297] S. Arasaratnam, op. cit., p. 240.
[298] J.J. Brennig - "Joint Stock....", op. cit.
[299] S. Arasaratnam - "Indian Merchants and their Trading Methods (circa 1700)" in Indian Economic and Social History Review, pp. 85-95.

The total capital of the stock was fixed according to the means of the merchants involved, and then the duties were divided among the chief shareholders. In 1688, the English set up a joint stock consisting of 12 head merchants, of whom two were responsible for the seals of the stock and for calling meetings, two were in charge of the cash, three looked after the textile trade, two were in charge of the goods imported from Europe, and three were in charge of the artisans. Junior merchants were required to go into the country to supervise the work of the weavers[300]. At the end of the year, the accounts of the company were finalised, and dividends declared "for each shareholder who then received the amount due to him after deduction of what he had drawn from the common fund"[301]. The total capital of the stocks varied between 150,000 pagodas at the highest and about 100,000 pagodas at the lowest.[302]

During the tenure of Pit's successor, Cornelius Speelman, such joint stocks were formed in most of the Dutch factories, but with varied results; so that, in North Coromandel, such associations began to come into existence only after 1680. At Nagapattinam, the process was even slower, with the first joint stock being established only in 1689.[303] The Indian merchants in the joint stocks had both rights and obligations. Of the former, the most important was the exclusive right to the import and export trade of the European companies, with preference being

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[300] RFSG - Diary, 19 April 1688.
[301] S. Arasaratnam - Merchants...., op. cit., p. 244.
[302] S. Arasaratnam - "Indian Merchants ....", op. cit., p. 87.
[303] S. Arasaratbam - Merchants..... op. cit., p. 247.

given to them to complete their investments in time. Of the latter, the major one was the concept of collective responsibility, something that was not always accepted when large sums were involved. For instance, at Fort St. George, a joint stock led by Chikka Serapa fell into debt, but the merchants could not decide among themselves about its settlement. Serapa offered to pay his proportion, but was told that "there was no proportion in a joint stock"[304]. Serappa was imprisoned for a while, but to no effect. He complained that his imprisonment had "so much prejudiced his Credits in the Country that it hindred the bringing in the Goods to finish the last contract..."[305]. Later, the joint stock broke up, and the English were forced to accept proportionate repayment.

The main advantage of the joint stock to the Europeans was that it dispensed with the need to make large advances to the merchants, for the joint stock itself was made responsible for the advances. But such contracts could really work only so long as there were wealthy and influential merchants who could provide the major portion of the stock, and who could supervise the junior merchants. Given the factor of increasing dependence on European trade, and the increasing difficulties faced in the investment as a result of wars and famine, the number of wealthy and influential merchants began to decline. Also, "influential" in the 17th and in the 18th centuries tended to mean different things, so that, an influential merchant of the 17th century was one who had influence with the local governments, while in the 18th

[304] RFSG - Fort St. David Consultation, 9 September 1703 and 11 October 1703.

century, such merchants were those who had influence within the European enclaves. In the case of Madras, from 1720, concern began to be expressed about the steadily declining trade, which meant that the merchants drew nearer to the factors in their private trade, rather than in the Company trade. It was from this time that the feature, so common in the late 18th and 19th centuries, began to take shape, where all rich Englishmen, whether merchant or official, had their own personal dubashes[306]. The joint stocks were often "dominated by one or two merchants who provided all the capital and put their relatives and servants as partners."[307] This naturally limited the amount of money they could put into the stock, and so undermined one of the basic reasons for establishing the joint stocks, that of reducing advances. In the context of the increasing instability of the early 18th century, no merchant, whether as an individual or as part of the joint stock, could be persuaded to tie himself down to a specific contract.

In some ways, the English found it easier than the Dutch to recover bad debts, for at Madras, the merchants were allowed to buy houses and land, something that the Dutch did not permit. The monopolistic control of the Dutch, as opposed to the freedom at Madras, also tended to draw more merchants there. Pondicherri under the French also drew a large number of Indian merchants[308], but of the three (i.e.,

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[305] RFSG - Diary, 11 October 1703.
[306] Susan Nield-Basu - "The Dubashes of Madras", MAS, 1987, pp. 1-31.
[307] S. Arasaratnam - Merchants...., op. cit., p. 214.
[308] S.P. Price and K. Rangachari (ed.) - The Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai Vol. I, p. 119, says that "The Brahmans, Komattis and Tattuvadis who flocked into Pondicherri from morning until evening of this day, from Arcot, Vellore and Wandiwash, and other places, might exceed 1,000 in number."

Pulicat, Madras and Pondicherri), Madras grew fastest, and largest in terms of merchants, while Pondicherri attracted the largest number of weavers, who came as a result of the French reputation for paying reasonable prices. This process picked up momentum after the 1730's, when the French investment increased.[309] At Madras, the only successful experiment at establishing a weaving village was Chintadripetta in 1734, which was initiated by two merchants, Vennala Narayana Chetti and Chinnathambi Mudaliar[310].

As mentioned earlier, European trade was considered to be beneficial to an area. In 1682, for instance, a letter was received from Gopal Pandit, the Subadar of Porto Novo, offering the English a *qaul* to settle at Porto Novo and Kunimedu, to "augment the Diwan's Profitts... and encrease the Place..."[311]. The English wrote back, asking for some more concessions, on the same lines as those enjoyed by the French at Pondicherri, but were told that nothing "more than what was agreed of at first" was possible[312].

Mughal conquest disrupted the existing patterns, and problems continued to affect the trade of the coast until after the end of the century. For instance, in 1695, it was reported that the revolt of the Telugu Rajas had affected the trade of Vishakhapatnam and Masulipatnam. Two attempts had been made to "plunder Vizagapatam",

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[309] RFSG - Despatches to England, 1 October 1733.
[310] Vestiges, II, pp. 259-261.
[311] RFSG - Letters to Fort St. George, 12 January 1682.
[312] Ibid., March 1682.

and only timely action by the English factory there had repulsed the raiders. Vishakhapatnam was reported to be "the only place in all those parts which has not submitted to the Rajahs..."[313]. The Mughal official was reported to be grateful for this, but not to the extent of allowing the English to fortify their factory.

The last years of the century saw the trade of the coast being severely affected, not only because of the wars, but also because of a general famine. All the Europeans found that only the slave trade was flourishing, because starving people came to the ports to sell themselves. Things began to improve in the early years of the 18th century. Once again, trade began from Madras, and one area of trade, which was beginning to be explored, was that to China. In 1702, some inhabitants of Madras fitted out "two small Country ships, with considerable stocks..."[314]. The Company decided to lease out one of their ships to these merchants, so as to provide them with a small degree of protection.

Aurangzeb's death upset the delicate balance once again. The English were quick to note that the government had "in Generall... grown much weaker", for "none of the great men keep up the number of Horse allowed by the King, but apply the money to their own use..."[315]. The effect was, on the one hand, to intensify the attempts at control by

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[313] RFSG - Despatches to England, 3 April 1695.
[314] RFSG - Diary, 22 May 1702.
[315] RFSG - Despatches to England, 22 December 1711.

the local officials, and on the other, the tacit acceptance on the part of the Europeans of the need for force to maintain their position. This acceptance had been steadily increasing since the last two decades of the 17th century, and mention has been made earlier of the vigorous defence of Fort St. David by the English. The security that the European fortified settlements offered had been clear to the Indian rulers for a long time; as was stated earlier, Mir Jumla's treasure was stored at Pulicat, and on Bahadur Shah's death, "several considerable persons came down from Arcott with great sums of mony to be lodg'd within our walls..."[316]. The Mughal officials took advantage of this security, but tried in various ways to get more control over the settlements. Sa'adatullah Khan captured Jinji in 1714, and then declared that Cuddalore and the other towns near Fort St. David were part of his jagir, and had to be given up to him. The English protested, saying that their title to all these areas was clear, unlike that of the French at Pondicherri, for they had purchased the towns well before the Mughal conquest. But they were aware that they were vulnerable, for the passage of goods into the towns could be easily stopped. The necessity of defending their trade increasingly prompted the Europeans to be aggressors rather than defenders. This aggression had to be against European competitors as well as Indian rulers. The support of the latter was necessary to ensure the end of European competition, and so increasingly the French and the English began to involve themselves in the politics of the courts of the various Indian rulers. Indian merchants no longer had influence at the courts, except as

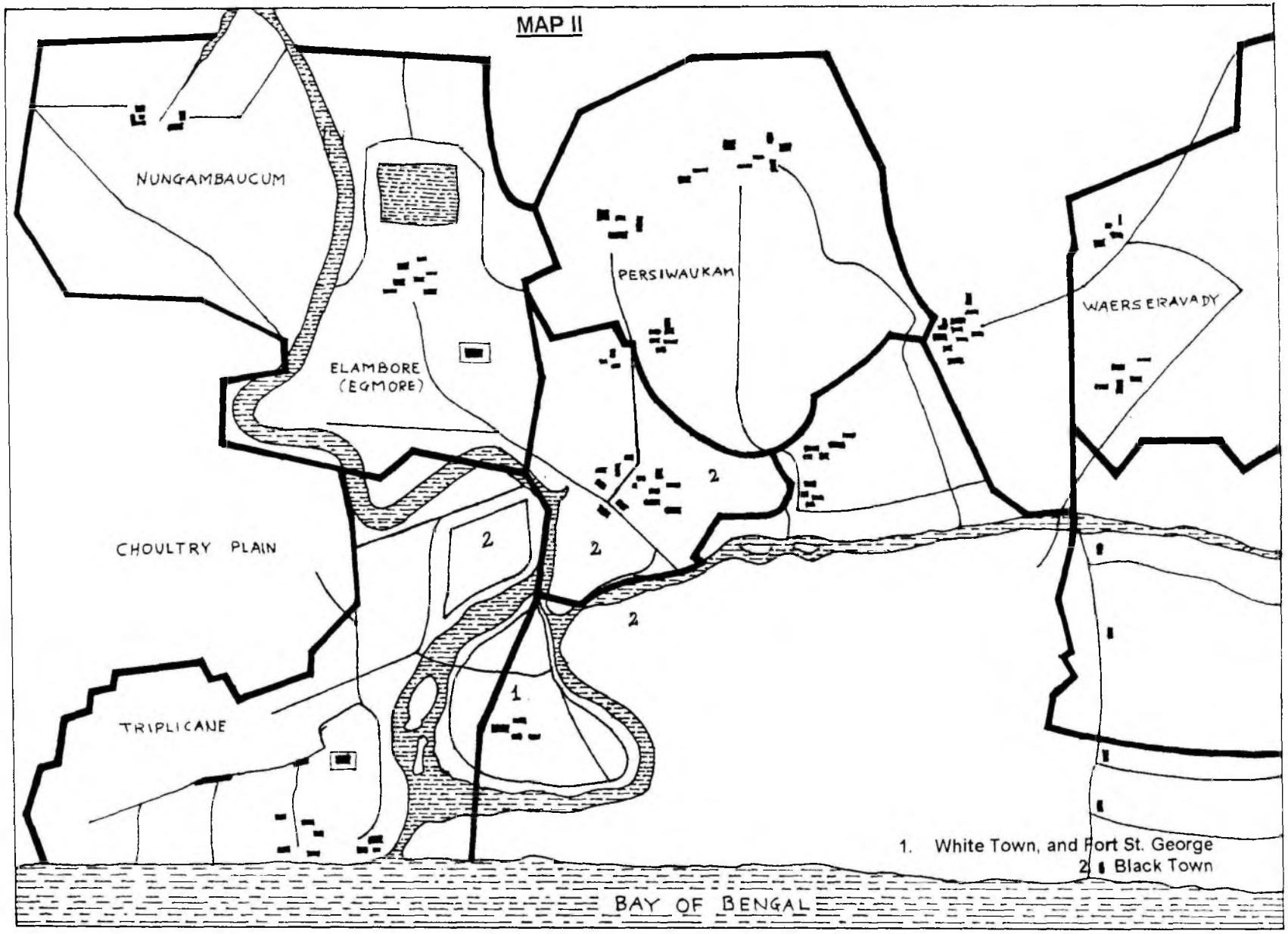
[316] Ibid., 14 October 1712.

representatives of the European companies. The period under review thus saw the beginnings of the transformation of the role of the Indian merchant, from a free merchant to a broker / agent of the European company. Here, too, he acted, not as the sole agent, but as one among a number. Lacking a political structure to support his economic activity, his economic role too became steadily narrower.

Chapter 4

"Our Fort and City"

The establishment and the development of the European settlements on the Coromandel Coast in the 17th century took place at more or less the same pace as the decline of the Indian states. The development of the city of Madras is, perhaps, illustrative of the way in which the English began to provide an alternative to the Indian merchants, in more ways than one. Prior to their arrival, the place had been, if not deserted, then nearly so, for it was one of the innumerable fishing villages that dotted the coast. Just a few miles south of the site of the future Fort St. George was Mailapur, once an important port, but in the 17th century, just a fishing village, known more for its proximity to San Thomé. (Today, it is one of the most crowded parts of Chennai). San Thomé itself was a Portuguese establishment, which was, successively, in the kingdoms of Thanjavur and Golconda, then in the hands of the French, and then Golconda again. Later in the century, it was farmed out, first to Kasi Viranna, and then to the Company, through another of its merchants. The English got the grant of Madras from the Nayak of Kalahasti, Damarla Venkatapati, in whose dominions it lay, with


MAP II
NUNGAMBAUCUM
ELAMBORE
(EGMORE)
PERSIWAUKAM
WAERSERAVADY
CHOULTRY PLAIN
TRIPLICANE
1
2
2
2
2
1. White Town, and Fort St. George
2. Black Town
BAY OF BENGAL

permission to build a fort. This, the earliest of the English possessions in India, soon developed a distinct identity.

The area nearest the Fort soon came to be known as White Town, for other than the official buildings, the residences of the Governor, the Council members and the other Englishmen also lay there. Within White Town were the Church and the cemetery, but Indians and Armenians were not allowed to be buried there, for this was purely for the Company's employees and Englishmen. Towards the end of the century, the factors wrote to London, asking whether rich merchants could be allowed to go to and from the fort as free merchants. The Court of Directors replied that they would consider the matter, and approved of the factors' "design of Inviteing rich Banians and China merchants, to live at the ffort", calling it a "prudent and generous" move[317]. White Town was fortified in stages, and, as and when necessary, the walls were strengthened. In the interest of easy defense, no houses or other establishments were allowed near the walls, and a clear stretch of ground was to be maintained all around the fort. In the early 18th century, in fact, homes, which had come up too near the walls, were ordered to be demolished. The idea was to make Fort St. George and the nearby town strong enough to withstand any assault, whether by an "Indian prince" or by "ye Dutch power of India if we should happen to have any difference with them hereafter..."[318].

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[317] RFSG - Despatches from England, Letter to Fort St. George, 16 March 1684.

North of White Town lay the Indian part of the settlement, known variously as Black Town, Chinnapatnam (from which we get the present Chennai), Madraspatan, or Madras. To begin with, there was no clear demarcation between White Town and Black Town, but, as mentioned earlier, as White Town began to be gradually enclosed by walls, the division grew sharper. Twenty years after the first settlement, the two parts were clearly and separately identifiable.

In 1674, the factors were asked to try and collect a "Quit rent for the houses in the Town", but to be very "cautious of causing any disorder or discontent among the inhabitants..."[319]. By 1682, however, the tone of the instructions had changed. Now, they said that, by "Dutch Portuguese or Indian methods" sufficient revenue should be raised at Madras to "defray at least the whole constant charge of the place"[320]. Shortly after, the Court of Directors recommended that Black Town should also be "walled round and completely fortified at the charge of the Inhabitants, whether it please or displease them or anyone else..."[321]. This resulted in an immediate uproar in Black Town, where the inhabitants "did... tumultuously and mutinously combine together, commanding the Severall Casts to desist from their labour, & service to us..."[322]. Earlier, too, the same thing had happened, for when an attempt was made to collect 230 pagodas from the inhabitants of Black Town[323], "all but Cassa

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[318] Ibid., 31 May 1683.
[319] Ibid., 6 January 1674.
[320] Ibid., 20 September 1682.
[321] Ibid., 16 March 1685.
[322] RFSG - Diary, 3 January 1686.
[323] The amount to be paid was 2 fanams per house.

Verona [Kasi Viranna] had shut up their shops & gathered up to ye pagoda, and by intelligence their Tribes in the country had stopped all provisions from coming to Towne,.... They did not value the summe, but the Precedent"[324]. At that time, for fear that the merchants and others would leave the town, the factors had backed down. Barely ten years later, they declared that the merchants were free to leave the town if they did not want to pay the dues towards fortifying Black Town. In fact, "Soldiers were drawn out... to suppress the Tumult...", and they were told that, if they stopped goods entering the town, they would be "sought out and punished"[325].

The change in the attitude of the British is clear indication of the decreasing support that the merchants were able to muster within the country. In 1676, Golconda still existed, as an independent and fairly strong empire. Madanna, Akanna, and the various members of their family were, no doubt, regarded as the major oppressors of the Europeans, but the fact remained that, for the Indian merchants, they were the representatives of a traditional political structure. As has been mentioned earlier, after Viranna's death, Lingappa came out in favour of Pedda and Chinna Venkatadri, saying that they should be "favoured" for four years. At the same time, Akanna threatened to destroy the Company's trade at Golconda, unless the brothers were restored to their position as chief merchants[326]. Earlier, when the brothers had got into

[324] RFSG - Diary, 29 February 1676.
[325] Ibid., 3 and 4 January 1686.
[326] EFI, New Series, vol. IV, p. 27.

trouble in Madras, over non-payment of their debts, they fled from Madras to Lingappa's camp.

In 1686, the Golconda Empire's continued existence was under serious threat. Lingappa and other officials of the same level were, no doubt, still present, but lacking the backing of a solid state structure, they did not have any real power to force the Europeans to do as they desired. The merchants, therefore, had to work out other, newer, equations, and given the political turmoil that afflicted the south for the next two decades, these equations had to include the Europeans. It is in this context that one has to see the recurrence of caste disputes in Madras and other places along the coast, for the first time since 1652. Black Town was the scene of the caste disputes mentioned earlier, in 1652, 1707 and again in 1717.

In 1707, a fight broke out in Black Town between the left- and right-hand castes, and the Governor of the fort was forced to "order Guards to lye out to keep the Peace..."[327]. The Council decided, as in 1652, to try to solve the problem, and so as an initial measure, Black Town was surveyed, and "a Draught of all the Streets and Buildings in the Petta" was drawn up. It was found that the demarcation of 1652 had become rather unclear, and some of the right hand had built their houses in the streets belonging to the left. They were ordered to sell their houses and move back to their own streets. To make sure that "neither Cast may

[327] RFSG - Diary, 26 June 1707.

pretend Ignorance of their limits", it was ordered that four boundary stones be set up, with the orders "inscribed thereon in English and Gentue"[328].

This did not solve the problem, and in August it was reported that many of the right hand had left the town. The Governor then "summoned Twelve of the Principall Heads of each Cast" and shut them up in a room in the fort to discuss and settle matters[329].

The main problem was not that of streets or houses, but the fact that the right-hand castes felt that they were not being favoured as much as the left. Similar caste disputes occurred at other places along the coast, including Porto Novo, Nagapattinam and Tranquebar, at the same time. It was believed that, in addition to the fact of the right hand being less favoured, there were also problems because of the alteration in "the Old Method of advancing Money on Contracts"[330]. The Europeans felt that the left-hand caste was more trustworthy and, in fact, the Dutch were reported to have "turned off the right hand Cast, and used the left in their investments..."[331]. As this aspect of the problem was not resolved, the disputes continued. The right-hand castes withdrew to San Thomé, and "sent for the heads of their Cast out of the country..."[332]. The English at this time made only minor concessions: they removed the boundary stones, and allowed exchange of houses until June 1708. What was

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[328] Ibid., 17 July 1707.
[329] Ibid., 26 August 1707.
[330] RFSG - Despatches to England, 22 December 1707.
[331] Ibid., Abstract of Letter from Pitt to London, 23 December 1707.

made more clear, was that the English were the masters in Madras, and neither Sa'adatullah Khan nor any of the other Mughal officials could do anything to change matters.

In effect, what was done was to divide Black town between the two castes, with the left hand caste being given the eastern side of the town, nearer the sea, and the right hand being given the western side.[333] In 1717, it was decided that both castes were to be encouraged and "kept in a Ballance, and neither suffer'd to claim a superiority over the other..."[334].

Settling caste disputes was only one aspect of the involvement of the British in Black Town. In numerical terms, the population of Black town, from the beginning, outnumbered the handful of Europeans in White Town. But Fort St. George and surroundings were always "our Fort and town of Madraspatam" - i.e., it was the Company that was in charge. They needed Black Town's merchants, without whom they could not carry on their trade; but the Black Town residents, in the course of the 17th century, needed them more. For the Company, trade was for profit; for the Indian merchants, trade from Madras was a matter of survival. The fact that the English accepted, and allowed, the traditional patterns in Black Town (as in the matter of separation along caste lines) made the adjustment easier; especially when profits were to

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[332] Ibid., 10 September 1707.
[333] Even though the *idangai/valangai* division is no longer important, this division can still be seen in the streets in the older parts of Chennai.
[334] Vestiges, II, pp. 142-143.

be made, either directly in the Company's service or through the private trade of its factors. As mentioned earlier, the basis of the later Dubash system, which was castigated so fiercely later, was laid at this time.

Black Town had its full complement of merchants, washers, bleachers, boatmen and others. The small English contingent at Fort St. George was more concerned with the security of the establishment than with maintaining day-to-day law and order in the town (unless, of course, it posed a threat to their security). They were, of course, very conscious of the freedom that the original grant had given them, of governing the town. They therefore actively resisted any attempts by Golconda, first, and the Mughals, later, to appoint an official (a Havaldar) to look after the affairs of the town, and objected to any attempt to look outside Madras for redressal of grievances. This, in fact, was one of their main complaints against the Armenians, for they complained that, in case of any problem, the Armenians approached the Mughal officials directly, without reference to the English. Early in the 18th century, when a large number of Muslims had settled at Madras, it was believed that most of them were spies of the government. The "Persians and the Pattans" were also considered untrustworthy, and all the Muslims had grown "very insolent". They were ready "to make applications to the Country Governours on all occasions". The factors were therefore ordered to allow as few of them as possible, to settle in Madras, and if ever any justification was found, to drive out the others as well[335]. Ships

[335] RFSG-Despatches from England, Letter to Fort St. George, 2 February 1712.

belonging to the Mughals continued to put into Fort St. George and Fort St. David, and Daud Khan was also reported to have built a house at Mailapur, near San Thomé[336]; and, as far as possible, the factors tried to oblige the officials - but only if this could be done without jeopardising their own position. For instance, they were prepared to give the Bakshi a bill of exchange for "three hundred and sixty tomands to be paid in Persia"[337]. But they refused to surrender one of the merchants of Madras, who was reportedly in debt to Sa'adatullah Khan's brother at Vellore, for they feared the "ill consequence" of giving up "any inhabitants to the Justice of the Moors"[338].

From the beginning, a large number of "native functionaries" were associated with the Town. One very important functionary was the Peddanayak. The post of the Peddanayak was one that was familiar in the south, for, as head of the "Talliars" (Talaiyaru) or watchmen, he was responsible for maintaining the peace. The talaiyaru were probably the earliest form of police. In villages, they were concerned with petty thefts, and minor breaches of the peace, and offenders were probably arraigned before the panchayats (caste or village). In Black Town, the panchayat was replaced by the choultry court, but other than that, the functions remained the same. Payment was through an extra charge levied on all goods, called the "Peddanague duty", which everyone, except Company officials, had to pay. In 1684,

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[336] Tuzak-i-Walajah, op.cit., p. 64.
[337] RFSG-Diary, 11 November 1702.
[338] Ibid., 25 May 1713.

this duty was fixed at "half a fanam per pagoda for Christians and three-quarters for others"[339]. Apparently, some attempts were made later to defraud the Peddanayak, for complaints were made that those liable to pay the Peddanayak duty were passing off their goods as belonging to the Europeans, who did not pay. Orders were therefore passed that if any European or Armenian was found allowing this, then the goods would be forfeited and "He or they shall be fined at the pleasure of the Governour and Council"[340]. The Peddanayak was also in charge of maintaining the peace, and it was decided that all inhabitants would pay an annual duty of "Three fanams for every great house, Two fanams for a smaller, and One fanam for the smallest of all"[341]. The earliest reference to the Peddanayak in the records comes from 1654, where the "Peddy Nagues house and his free ground in the Village"[342] are mentioned. The area came to be known as Peddanaikpetta, a name it still retains.

In 1659, the terms of employment of the Peddanayak were worked out, and a qaul granted to one Timmappa[343]. He was to employ 50 peons, who would maintain peace in the town, and would therefore, be sent to any part of the town at the discretion of the Choultry court. They were to arrest any offenders, and would also be held responsible if anyone escaped and "if any Merchant or Inhabitant of this Town shall run away, and any of your people, having knowledge thereof, shall conceal itt, that then you are to bring that party run away againe, and correct him

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[339] Ibid., I, p. 517.
[340] RFSG -Diary, 10 May 1703.
[341] Ibid., 24 December 1701.
[342] Vestiges, I, p. 417.

that knew of his departure."[344] The number of peons was increased to 100 in 1701. It was possible for the inhabitant of one town to take on the duties of the watch of another town, for Chinna Venkatadri was reported to have "command of the watch of this towne" of Srikakulam[345].

Apparently, the Peddanayak also had to pay a sum to the Golconda government, for there is mention of a sum of 200 pagodas which was "formerly paid by the Peda Naigue once in 10 yeares"[346]. It was claimed that the Peddanayak of Pulicat paid 1000 pagodas to the King, and Lingappa wanted the Peddanayak of Madras to pay the same amount, but later agreed to accept just the 200 pagodas. In 1688, it was decided to farm out the office to the highest bidder[347].

Obviously, a similar system was in operation at Fort St. David also. The appointment of peons or watchmen was left to the Peddanayak without too much interference by the Company officials, and naturally, the tendency was to appoint people belonging to one village and one caste. The watchmen at Fort St. David were mainly from Udaiyarpalayam, which was also the place where both Fort St. George and Fort St. David merchants invested a great deal of money for the supply of cloth[348]. But while the English were prepared to accept these appointments, this was only to a certain limit, for they refused to allow the

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[343] See Appendix - III for the grant to the Peddanayak.
[344] Vestiges, I, p. 419.
[345] RFSG -Diary, 13 March 1679.
[346] Ibid., 3 January 1679.
[347] RFSG - Despatches from England, Letter to Fort St. George, 25 January 1688.
[348] RFSG - Fort St. David Consultations, 20 December 1697.

Udaiyar of Udaiyarpalayam to nominate whomsoever he chose. The difference was that the Peddanayak was a functionary, who could be removed when necessary, but the Udaiyar was an independent local ruler whose involvement within the fort or settlement could not be tolerated[349].

Another important functionary was the Conicoply (from the Tamil *Kanakkupillai*), who was in charge of maintaining the accounts at the Choultry. Most merchants employed their own Conicoplies, and in addition the English appointed a "Town Conicoply", who was paid 20 pagodas per quarter. The post was passed on from father to son "from the time of the Jentue Kings through the Government of the King of Golconda the Moratas and the Mogulls...." In 1696, the factors advised that the post be continued even if there were not too much work, for they said that "if hee should be wholly ruined... he would... apply himselfe for satisfaction to the Nabob and Duan, where he would probably be heard... so far as to occasion us trouble..."[350].

The Choultry was an important part of the administration of Madras. It was "a court of petty causes, a custom-house, and a registration office for the record of sales of real property, and for the licensing of slaves."[351] The Choultry began to function shortly after Fort St. George was established, and the first Adigar (headman of the town)

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[349] Ibid., 12 December 1698. By 1698, most of the Poligars had become independent rulers, maybe not of very large areas, but rulers nonetheless.
[350] RFSG - Despatches to England, 6 March 1696.
[351] Vestiges, I, p. 126.

was Kanappa[352], who occupied the position between 1644 and 1648. In 1648, it was decided to appoint Englishmen to act as magistrates at the choultry, but in 1661, the then Governor, Sir Edward Winter, decided to return to the old practice. He appointed Timanna and Viranna to the choultry. The next Governor went back to the practice of appointing Englishmen, but decided that there would thenceforth be two Justices at the Choultry court.

In 1678 Streynsham Master reorganized the Choultry court. The number of justices was raised from two to three, and it was decided that at least two would be present during trials or registration of bills of sale of property. In order to make sure that the work was carried out properly, it was decided that the "customer[353], mintmaster (when there is one in that office), and Paymaster, or any two of them, do every Tuesday and Fryday sett in the Choultry to do the common Justice of the Towne as usuall, and do take care that the Scriven of the Choultry do duly Register all Sentences in Portuguez as formerly; and that there be an exact Register kept of all Alienations or sales of Slaves, houses, Gardens, boates, Shipps, etc..."[354]. A Brahman was usually appointed to the choultry, at a salary of 177 fanams per month[355].

All "Rents and Revenues" were collected by the Customer, who was to maintain separate books for land and sea customs. Land

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[352] Ibid., p. 127. He apparently inherited this post from his father, who was said to have been in the Company's service from 1614.
[353] The man in charge of collecting customs and the 4th in the Council at Fort St. George.
[354] RFSG - Diary, 31 January 1678.

customs included "corne received for Toll in the paddy banksall ... and also what received monthly for Company's part of the Weighers duty and for registering houses, slaves, etc." Lists of land and sea customs received from Indians and Europeans, and lists of ships that put into or went out of Madras, together with point of origin or destination, were also to be maintained.[356] In 1680, it was decided to "let to farme or Rent all the Choultry Customes that arises upon all Goods, Merchandize, Corne, Provisions and other things whatsoever which are not imported nor exported by sea for one whole yeare..."[357].

In 1688, the duties to be paid on import and export of goods by land or sea from Madras, as well as anchorage duties for ships of varying tonnage, were laid down in detail.[358] All Englishmen, whether Company servants or not, were to pay 4% duty on the value of all goods imported or exported by sea. Jewels and Bullion, which were the Company's monopoly, were exempted from this. Other Europeans were to pay 6%. Goods laden at Madras, but not belonging to the Company, would pay half the custom duty, but nothing was charged on goods being re-exported. Land custom was also fixed at 4%. If goods brought into Madras by a merchant were taken out again without being sold, then no further duty was to be paid; however, if they had been sold, then the buyer would have to pay 2% duty.

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[355] Ibid., 6 May 1678.
[356] Ibid., 31 January 1678.
[357] Ibid., 17 May 1680.
[358] Ibid., 8 March 1688 and 5 April 1688.

In 1678, it was decided to set up a Court of Judicature, because "many complaints have lately been for want of a due course for the administration of justice"[359]. The Governor and Council were to meet every Wednesday and Saturday to hear cases, and their orders were to be executed by the Justices of the Choultry, and "one Constable Bayly or Officer under them". The idea of trial by a jury of 12 men was introduced at this time, and it was ordered that all court proceedings were to be taken down by a Clerk of the Court. The choultry court would continue to handle "all causes of small misdemeanour, matters of the peace, and actions of Debt of the of 50 pagodas New and under,... and also all other causes of a higher or greater vallue by consent of the partys, in all which cases (if any Partys find themselves agrieved) Appeales are or shall be allowed to the Court of the Governor & Councell..."[360]. In December 1678, it was decided to appoint a Clerk of the Market "to prevent frauds and abuses in weights and measures, and to preserve good order in the Marketts in the Towne and Suburbs"[361]. The weights and measures were to be stamped with the Company's seal, and any malpractices that were discovered were to be decided at the choultry court.

Between 1640 and 1680, the amount of land under the control of the Company was added to by the grant of a number of villages, including Egmore, Triplicane, and Nungambakkam (all part of modern Chennai). In 1680, the Company managed to make a direct

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[359] Ibid., 18 March 1678.
[360] Ibid.
[361] Ibid., 9 December 1678.

contract with the washermen to "whiten, wash and beat the Company's cloth at more moderate rates then it hath been hitherto...." The washers were to be paid directly by the Company, at specified rates,[362] so that they would have "noe dependence upon any of the Companys Marchants or other whatsoever in this their business, but they shall be wholy under the Direction, protection and dependence of and upon ye Governour & Councell..."[363]. The part of the city occupied by the washers had, even earlier, been called Washermanpet, and this contract made no difference, either to location or name. Mention has already been made of attempts to get weavers to settle near the town.

The population of Madras consisted of Telugu Beri Chettis, Tamil Komatis, Portuguese, Armenians, "Moores", a few Frenchmen, and, of course, Englishmen, both free men and Company servants. The Portuguese had moved to Madras from San Thomé shortly after the establishment of the Fort. They were welcomed by the English, for it was believed that their presence would attract more Indians. In fact, in a petition of 1679, the Portuguese claimed that their presence drew "Painters, Weavers, workemen and other inhabitants, who know only our command"[364]. The Portuguese were also important from the point of view of defence, for many of the soldiers of the fort were Portuguese. Over the course of the century, however, the Portuguese came to be regarded much more warily, especially as they made frequent attempts to get San

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[362] See Appendix II.
[363] RFSG - Diary, 13 May 1690.
[364] Ibid., January 1679.

Thomé back into their own hands. Orders were sent out that the Portuguese should not be allowed "to settle quietly at St. Thoma", but "such interruptions & molestations" were to be given "as shall render that place too hot for them"[365]. The Portuguese did succeed in getting the grant of San Thomé from the Mughals, but by that time, the town had already become more or less what it is today, a suburb of Chennai. Many of the Portuguese continued to live at Black Town, for in 1706, when the Company was trying to recover the expense it had incurred in fortifying Black Town, the Portuguese were required to pay 3,300 pagodas, the highest sum[366].

In 1687 a charter established a Mayor and Corporation for Madras, because "the making and establishing of Corporations in Citties and Towns that are grown exceeding populous tends more to the well-governing of such populous Places, and the Increase of Trade, than the Constant use of the Law Martiall in trivial concerns...." The Mayor was appointed for one year, and the new Mayor was to be elected each year on 29th September from among the Aldermen. There were to be twelve Aldermen besides the Mayor, of whom three were to be Englishmen, three Portuguese and seven "Moores & Gentues". The three Englishmen were to be Company servants, and if they left the Company's employ, then they would not be Aldermen any longer. In addition, it was stated that two brothers were not to be Aldermen at the same time, and it was

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[365] RFSG - Despatches from England, Letter to Fort St. George, 11 September 1689.
[366] RFSG - Diary, 6 July 1706. The Company had earlier asked the inhabitants to work out an equitable distribution of the expense, but as they did not do so, the then Governor,

recommended that the factors "so mix the heads of all Casts... that you may alwayes hold the balance"[367]. There would be not more than 120 Burgesses, who were to be elected by the Mayor and Aldermen. If an Alderman's post fell vacant, it was to be filled by election from among the Burgesses. A Mayor's court was also established, which was empowered to try all civil or criminal cases, and was a court of appeal in all civil cases where the "value of the award exceeded 3 pagodas, and in criminal cases if the offender was sentenced to lose life or limb"[368]. In 1692, it was recommended that, in future, most of the Aldermen consist of "the heads of severall forreigne Casts vizt. one or Two Hebrews, One or Two Portugueze, and one or Two Gentues, and one Moore if you have a sufficient number of that Cast..."[369].

In 1678 suggestions were made about keeping the town clean "after the Manner in England by taxing every house at a moderate rate, and to appoint a Scavinger to collect said monys, and therewith to hire Cooleys to carry away the dirt and filth...". The "Principall Persons" of the town objected to this, on the grounds that the "Divan or the Mogull and Braminy Governors of the Country for the Kinge might come to know the great number of houses and familys that is in this Towne, and thereupon might raise new Impositions upon them and create trouble to the Towne...." In reality, however, they were afraid if a list were made, then it would be easier for the English to tax them. In the same year, a

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Pitt, drew up an assessment. The Portuguese were assessed higher than the "Chittee Cast" who were assessed at 2,000 pagodas.

[367] RFSG - Despatches from England, Letter to Fort St. George, 28 September 1687.

[368] Vestiges, I, pp. 497-499.

suggestion was, in fact made, that quit rent be collected. However, as the practice was totally unfamiliar to the Indians, it was decided that the best way would be to "make an absolute bargaine and sale of the grounds every purchaser paying for the purchase at a Reasonable rate to be set...". All such purchases would be registered at the choultry[370].

Measures were taken for the maintenance of streets and houses in Black Town. It was decided that two persons "dwellers in each Street, bee appointed by the Justices to bee Overseers thereof". Their duty was to make sure that any payments due at any time were properly collected, and that the streets were kept "in repair and good order". In addition, owners of houses in a dilapidated condition were given six months to "decently repair, build or well fence the Same in, ... or Sell them to those that will". Failing this, the Company would take over those houses "to bee Sold or disposed of, as they shall think convenient"[371].

Orders were also passed to safeguard the interests of the Indian merchants, whether in Company trade or in private trade. No one in the Company's service was to be permitted to leave for England "till he have paid all just debts to the Natives of India, or given bail to their actions." In all cases, whether between Indians or between Indians and Englishmen, "the Oaths of all native Indians of good fame & credit within the Agency of ffort St. George Shalbe admitted...". In important cases,

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[369] RFSG - Despatches from England. Letter to Fort St. George, 22 January 1692.
[370] RFSG - Diary, 16 December 1680.
[371] Ibid., 9 July 1688.

such oaths were to be repeated in the temples[372]. Other orders included the appointment of a Dubash, who, unlike Timanna and Viranna, would not be involved in trade.

Constant efforts were made to attract merchants to settle at Madras. In 1688, an agreement was signed between the Armenians and the East India Company at London, giving the Armenians the right to trade to and from any of the ports to which the English traded, or where the English had a settlement, on the same terms that the English enjoyed[373]. Armenians had begun to settle in Madras even earlier, for they were reported to have made Madras their permanent base on the Coromandel Coast from 1666. They had been trading along the coast since the 16th century, and claimed to have directed the Portuguese to San Thomé[374]. Before long, the Armenians were reported to be among the richest inhabitants of Madras[375]. While there were not too many Armenians who lived permanently in Madras, there were many who traded from there "Yearly to Bengall, Manilha, Acheen, Persia, etc. or are Trading to the Kings Camp, Zulphaker Cawns Camp and Golcondah". But they declined to supply the Company with cloth, despite its offer of paying "15 % on the prime cost". They said that this was because of the unsettled state of the country, but the real reason, according to the factors, was that 15 per cent profit was far too little, "when they expect

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[372] RFSG - Despatches from England, 27 October 1682.
[373] Ibid., 1688. The agreement was concluded on 22 June 1688.
[374] Mesrovb Jacob Seth - Armenians in India From the Earliest Times to the Present Day - A Work of Original Research (first published Calcutta, 1937, reprinted Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1992), p. 579.
[375] However, in Pitt's assessment, they would pay only 600 pagodas.

twice or thrice as much profit by voyages"[376]. By the end of the century, a constant complaint was that the Armenians had taken over almost the entire trade of Madras, much to the detriment of the Company's trade.

The factors were continually urged to increase the revenues of Madras by encouraging merchants to settle there and giving them "a free market and civill Treatment"[377]. Later, in the trade to China, the factors were advised to allow "all others Inhabitants of our Fort & Town, whether they be English, Portuguez, or Natives" to join in the trade[378]. Private trade of the Company officials had already been permitted, "to any Port or Places in the East Indies to the Northwards of the Equator, except Tonqueene and Formosa"[379]. At times, private trade was also regarded as necessary, as for instance, in the trade to Manila. Instructions were sent to develop this trade, "But not under English names or as part of the Company as that would cause trouble with the Spanish rulers of the islands"[380]. The idea was to make Madras a "Center of trade from all places of India wherein it is not convenient for us to establish Factories". It was hoped that this would enable the factors to buy "Pepper, China, Pegu & it may be in time, Nutmegs, Cloves, & many other Comodities, which otherwise you can never hope to purchase"[381]. Efforts to improve the revenues of Madras took many forms, including allowing merchants to take up farms. As has been mentioned earlier, the

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[376] RFSG - Despatches to England, 6 March 1696.
[377] RFSG - Despatches from England, 29 December 1680.
[378] Ibid., 13 February 1684.
[379] Ibid., 8 January 1674.
[380] Ibid., 28 August 1682.
[381] Ibid., 13 February 1684.

English managed to get the grant of several more villages near Madras, and these villages were often farmed out to merchants. For example, in 1704, one "Kittee Narain" was allowed to rent Egmore, "Persiawaeke [Pursuvakkam] and Tandore" for seven years a 1,300 pagodas per annum. The factors also considered whether to take up farms for the Company, as, for example, of San Thomé. But they were instructed not to do so unless they felt it was essential for the continued trade of Madras. It was finally decided to get one of the Company's merchants to rent it, for fear that the rent might be increased if it came to be known that the English were renting it.

Added to all this was the total freedom given in matters of religion. Black Town had an Armenian Church, a mosque and several temples. The Court of Directors instructed the factors to "allow to all their Natives the liberty of their Severall religions", and to make sure that no "prejudice [was] done to Churches Mosques Pagodas or other Publick places where God is worshipped or pretended to be worshipped"[382]. It had been a custom of Black Town that the Muslims paid a small duty to the "Gentue Pagodas", while the Hindus "pay'd something to their Muskees [mosques]", but the payment by the Muslims had been discontinued since 1699. Following a petition by the Hindus, the Muslims were ordered to resume paying the duty[383]. While the English did not interfere in any matters concerning Indian religions, they were more concerned with the Christians. Marriages between Roman Catholics and

[382] Ibid., 20 January 1685.

Protestants was also permitted, mainly because the "Roman Catholics of the Portuguez Nation" who had arrived with the establishment of Madras, were found to be "Loyall and Serviceable in the defence of the place ... and our greatest income arises from the Customs upon their Commerce"[384]. However, they declared that all Englishmen were to be brought up as Protestants. No Portuguese priests were to be permitted to live in Madras, and the Roman Catholics were looked after by two French priests.

The primary consideration of the English was always trade. Their treaties with the Indian princes, or the grants that they received from them, were directed as much towards freedom of trade in India, as security of trade in competition with the Dutch, and later, the French. The Dutch were far more strict in their dealings. In the 17th century, the Dutch were the real inheritors of the Portuguese system that had been superimposed on the Asian trading network. The Portuguese system had involved the building of fortresses at strategic places all over Asia, and the issuing of passes to Asian shippers. Both the Dutch and the English continued the system of passes, but, while the English concentrated on India and her textiles, the Dutch tried to impose a monopoly of spices, through stricter control of Asian trade. No Asian trader was allowed to deal in cinnamon or pepper, as these were monopolies of the Dutch. After the India-Ceylon trade was taken over in the second half of the 17th century, arecanuts joined the list of articles

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[384] RFSG - Diary, 27 March 1707.

that were a Dutch monopoly. Any vessel going east of Cape Comorin had to carry only a Dutch pass, for the passes of the other Europeans were not acceptable[385]. The result was that the Dutch earned the hostility not only of the merchants, but also of the rulers, particularly of Malabar.

The Dutch attempts to increase their trade and income ranged from making their pagodas "finer then the Standard of the Country"[386], to helping Golconda to besiege the French at San Thomé, to helping the Thevar of Ramnad against the Nayak of Madurai (or vice-versa, depending on what would bring them more profit). Far more than the English, they were prepared to use force to back up their demands.

The English certainly did admire some of the Dutch methods, for the factors were constantly urged to imitate the Dutch methods in raising revenues, so long as these did not put them into "ye disaffeccion of ye People"[387]. The factors were urged to do all they could to improve their position, for otherwise they would be so weak in India, that the Dutch would be able to "rout them out of all India in one year, as they have already out of the noblest parts of India"[388].

However, as mentioned earlier, in the long run, Dutch methods only aroused hostility. The question of religion also became a

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[384] RFSG - Diary, 22 March 1680.
[385] S. Arasaratnam - "The Dutch East India Company and the Kingdom of Madura", op. cit., pp. 70-71.
[386] RFSG - Despatches from England, 8 January 1674.
[387] Ibid., 20 July 1683.
[388] Ibid., 14 January 1685.

However, as mentioned earlier, in the long run, Dutch methods only aroused hostility. The question of religion also became a rather problematic one for the Dutch. In the 17th century, Protestant fervour was still high in Europe, and particularly so among the Dutch, who, as Protestants, had won freedom from a Catholic country. Reformist zeal was at this time aimed more at Catholics than at non-Christian religions, but after the capture of Nagapattinam, when Dutch activities began to be more concentrated along the Madurai / Sri Lanka coasts, the Dutch came into contact with a primarily Catholic population. The Paravas, the inhabitants of this area, had been converted to Christianity by the Portuguese, and fiercely resisted Dutch attempts (led by Rev. Baldaeus) to convert them to Protestantism. They were naturally more prepared to support local rulers (whether the Nayak of Thanjavur or Madurai, or the Thevar of Ramnad) and local merchants against the Dutch.

The result was that the English were able to establish a more stable base in India. The monolithic, monopolistic organisation of the Dutch East India Company, which depended on force, did not have any supporters, for they did not offer the Indian merchants any alternative to being wiped out of existence; the only choice was, whether to be destroyed by the (lack of) Indian political authority, or by the Dutch commercial one. The English, on the other hand, first got the cooperation of the Indian merchants, and then used force.

But they did not succeed in attracting weavers and other artisans to the town. It was reported that during the famine, the Dutch had "bought at Metchlepatam many of the prime workmen, Weavers, Painters etc. & transported them to their Colonyes"[389], and the English were criticised by the Court of Directors for not doing the same. In 1690, the then Governor, Elihu Yale, persuaded a few families of weavers to come and settle at Black Town, but that there were not too many weaver families even after that, is clear from Pitt's assessment of 1706, in which two castes of weavers were together liable to pay only 38 pagodas[390]. As mentioned earlier, it was only after 1730, when a suburb for weavers was established at Madras, Chintadripetta, that the number of artisans in the town increased. By this time, however, the English were beginning to shift the scene of their operations more to Bengal, so that the establishment of the weaver settlement did not have the same impact that it would have done at, for instance, the middle of the period under review. As it was, the English merely had the satisfaction of succeeding in fulfilling a long-held desire, at a time when it did not really do them much good.

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[389] RFSG - Despatches from England, 15 February 1689.

[390] RFSG - Diary, 6 July 1706. The "Kicull Warr Cast" was to pay 20 pagodas, and the "Sallawarr Weavers" were to pay 18 pagodas

Conclusion

The White Queen said to Alice, in "Through the Looking Glass": "It takes all the running *you* can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!" This perhaps sums up the position of the Indian merchants at the end of our period. The structure to which they were accustomed had collapsed, but they were trying not to lose what they still had. So, their "running" was an attempt to come up with a fresh set of equations, that would allow them to (at least) stay in the same place.

Merchants in South India, far from being on the periphery of the state, had a definite and important role within it. This role was as important in the context of the smaller kingdoms that emerged in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries, as in the larger, older established kingdoms – whether that was Golconda, the Nayaka kingdoms, or the kingdoms of the Maravas. Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam have discussed[391] the activities of Citakkati Maraikkayar (Periya Tambi Maraikkayar) in the Ramnad kingdom in great detail. Somewhat similar, were the activities of Makhdum Nina at Fort St. David and Porto Novo. Merchants had contacts with the administration at all levels from the lowest to the highest, and often combined in themselves the roles of merchant and bureaucrat. The aspect of income from trade may not have been very important to kingdoms like Golconda as a whole (though even

this is doubtful), but it is very clear that the Governors, especially of Masulipatnam, found trade very lucrative[392]. Mention has been made earlier of the frequent complaints about the obstacles put in the way of their trade. One Governor had farmed out the monopoly of changing money to a single sarraf. Later, there was also an attempt to restrict the English trade to certain specific merchants, so that the latter could, in effect, dictate the price of both sale and purchase to the former[393]. The shift to Madras in 1640 also did not help the English as much as they hoped, as before long, that part of the country had been conquered by Golconda. In this, it may be possible to infer that Golconda was loth to lose the income generated by English trade. The earlier discussion about Malaya, Chinanna and Mir Jumla makes it clear that they were able to use their dual roles to greatest effect.

Traditionally, concessions had been made to increase trade. A Farman regarding the settlement of a township in the Karnataka said that the traders should be excepted from the zakat and other cesses in the newly settled area for a period of five years[394]. Both the Golden Farman and the grant for Madras referred to the importance of trade as a source of income. When Madras was besieged in 1657, the siege was raised in 1658 on the grounds that "it was not profitable ... to warr with

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[391] V. Narayan Rao, D. Shulman and S. Subrahmanyam – Symbols of Substance: Court and State in Nayaka period Tamilnadu (OUP, 1998), Chapter VII.2, pp. 264-304.
[392] One indication is that the annual farm of Masulipatnam was 1,80,000 pagodas - H.K. Sherwani - "Administration, International Conduct and Social Conditions under Abdullah Qutb Shah", JIH, 1966, p. 11.
[393] EFI 1624-29, p. 282.
[394] Y.H. Khan (ed.) - Farmans and Sanads of the Deccan Sultans, p. 14.

merchants."[395] Merchants were willing to come together against a common threat, as, for example, in a conflict between the Dutch and the Indians, when the latter made common cause with the English[396]. While the records are full of instances of obstacles to trade, no mention is made of the effect of such obstacles on Indian merchants. If one sticks to the traditional theories, then it would be possible to argue that the merchants were unaffected, for they were not concerned with state policies. On the other hand, it is also possible to argue that merchants were very concerned with wars, for, as suppliers, they stood to gain, no matter which side won. The latter, however, presupposes only brief periods of war, followed by stable political and economic systems once again; the latter was definitely lacking in 17th century South India.

Malaya, Chinanna and Mir Jumla were able to use force to back up their position. But with Kasi Viranna, we find absolutely no mention of any kind of force. If any force was to be used, it had to come from the English Company, not from Viranna as an individual. His fortunes were totally bound up with Madras, in contrast to the earlier merchants, who ranged the length and breadth of the Coromandel, without limiting themselves to any one port.

Throughout the 17th century, the Dutch had always been willing to use force whenever and wherever required. The English 'progressed' from being told to appeal to the Indian rulers for help when

[395] EFI 1655-60, p. 175

necessary, to being told, at the end of the century, to use force when necessary, provided they had a "fair excuse if afterwards questioned for it"[397]. By 1706, the Court of Directors had begun to approve of action taken against the local rulers, which, they said, was the "best way to make these treacherous People hearken to reason and prevent any future attempts on your Inhabitants...."[398] Equally approvingly, they remarked that the Dutch never "missed any opportunity of raising, nor grudge at any pains in improving their revenues, those together with their Trade to and fro in the country and their spice and Jappan trade have ... made them formidable to all the Powers round about their Settlements ...."[399] By 1711, however, the English were beginning to report that the Dutch investments had declined; and attempts made by the Dutch to borrow money from the Armenian merchants of Madras came to nothing[400]. What is significant is that from the 1680s, the English were increasingly talking of their "martiall" power. The implication was that, to gain the stature of the Dutch, it was necessary to use force.

Early in the 17th century, the Portuguese had used their influence at the local courts to try to keep out the Dutch, but had not succeeded. The Dutch then used their merchants to get concessions from the rulers, and later, when their merchants no longer had access to the courts, managed to force local rulers to sign treaties that gave them a monopoly. But the monopoly itself resulted in the decline of trade, and

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[396] Ibid., 1665-67, pp. 242-3.
[397] In 1698.
[398] RFSG - Despatches from England, 18 Jan. 1706.
[399] Ibid., 4 Feb. 1708.

with the Dutch increasingly focusing their attention on Indonesia, their presence on the coast became virtually peripheral. It may be argued that they had marginalised themselves, by moving from Pulicat to Nagapattinam; but the move was in perfect accordance with the policies that they had consistently followed. They had moved to Pulicat in an attempt to get away from the control of Golconda; but when Pulicat also came within the Golconda Empire, they once again moved, this time to Nagapattinam, in the Nayak of Thanjavur's dominions. Also, their focus was always more on spices than on cloth, and control of the Bay of Madurai and the Sri Lanka coast was essential to their monopoly of pearls, chanks, arecanuts and cinnamon in the far south. The English were well aware of the importance of the monopoly, for they declared that "if ever they come to be Masters of yt commodity [pepper] as they are already of nutmegs, mace, cloves & Cinamon, the sole profitt of that one commodity will be more to them than all ye rest and in all probability sufficient to defray ye constant charge of a great Navy in Europe."[401] The English did not really play any very important role in resisting the Dutch, but in the first two or three decades of the 18th century, Dutch investments in India began to decline.

Competition between the Dutch and the English was now replaced by that between the French and the English. In some ways, what happened in the south can be seen as an extension of what the Portuguese had done one century earlier - i.e., they had used their

[401] RFSG - Despatches to England, Fort St. George to Company, 11 Jan 1713.

influence at local courts to keep out their rivals, something that the English and the French now began to do. The difference was that, unlike the Portuguese, the English and the French, in the 18th century, were also prepared to use force. Even earlier, wars between nations in Europe had spilled over to India; now, when the local political situation had already resulted in postures of defence, such defensive measures could also be directed against other Europeans and the states in which they operated.

Thus, late in the 18th century (in 1787), Philip Francis, in his "Speech on Indian Affairs" could, with complete justification, declare: "From factories to forts, from forts to fortifications, from fortifications to garrisons, from garrisons to armies, the gradations were natural, and the result inevitable; where we could not find a danger, we were determined to find a quarrel."[402]

The main sufferers in all this were, naturally, the Indians. The Europeans could retire behind their fort walls, or, in extreme cases, to their ships, to get away from their problems (the last was never resorted to, it just remained as a final option); but the Indians had no such options. Their fortunes were bound up with the local governments, and the fact that, when one local government fell, there was nothing comparable to replace it with, drove them ever nearer to the security

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[401] RFSG - Despatches from England, Letter to Bombay, 3 Aug 1687.
[402] Quoted by W. Hickey - Tanjore Maratta Principality in South India (Madras 1872), p. 124.

offered by the Europeans. Given 17th century conditions, it is easy to see why Malaya, Chinanna and Mir Jumla had court connections, while Kasi Viranna had only local connections. By the middle of the century, the process of decentralisation had taken firm hold, and so, Indian merchants were left with very few choices. They could move further south, to Jinji, Thanjavur or Madurai, or they could move nearer to the Europeans. Many did choose the former option, and until the 1680's, the records do, fairly frequently, mention that weavers, etc. had fled to the "Chengy country" for shelter. This can also be the reason for the success of Porto Novo, which had a large population of Indian merchants, who competed with the English at Fort St. David. If they stayed in Golconda, they may have (and did) suffer from the demands of the local administrators, but that system also gave them room to manoeuvre. The Mughal system was totally alien to the South Indian merchants, but given time, they would have adjusted to that as well. But the arrival of the Mughals, and the subsequent Mughal-Maratha conflict, also deprived them of the option of moving to Jinji. There was also no point in going farther south, as that would bring them within the purview of the monopolistic control of the Dutch. So, they were left with the choice of either the French or the English. The English had been on the coast for a longer period; more importantly, both at Madras and at Fort St. David they had set up a framework of legal institutions, which incorporated some of the traditional institutions, and were also designed to promote trade. From the 1680's, the Court of Directors constantly issued instructions to the local factors about increasing revenue, and allowing merchants freedom of trade so

long as the customs duties were paid. The English Company also allowed private trade, where, too, the Indian merchants had the opportunity to participate and make a profit. It is, therefore, not surprising that more and more Indians began to draw closer to the English Company, in the pursuit of life, a reasonable amount of liberty, and profit. Only as English control increased, and as colonial rule took a firmer hold after the 18th century, did they lose the second, though the last was still possible, though on a reduced scale.

The Mughal conquest of the south after 1687 worsened rather than improved matters. For one thing, the functioning of the Mughal Empire was unfamiliar to the people of the south. For another, before any system could be brought in, the Mughal Empire had begun to disintegrate. Shortly after the conquest, the Deccan was divided into two subas, Hyderabad and the Karnataka. As mentioned earlier, the faujdar of the Karnataka was technically subordinate to the subadar of Hyderabad, but he reported directly to the Emperor. The result was to make the Emperor a very distant figure, in contrast to the situation under Golconda, where the Sultan was at Hyderabad. This naturally meant increased localisation of power, a process that further heightened the tendency towards disintegration. In such a situation, alliance with one or the other of the Europeans was often the key to success. The Europeans, for their part, were concerned with the continuation of trade and a steady supply of the products that their home markets required. Given the fact that most rulers ruled over a very small area, it was in the

interest of the Europeans to try and get the entire hinterland under their control. This was why the Anglo-French rivalry in trade spilled over into politics.

The policies followed by the British in the 18th century were, therefore, based on their experiences with the situation vis-à-vis the Indian rulers, merchants, and their European competitors, and shaped by their own requirements. These requirements did include the paying of dividends to the shareholders back home in England, but also meant the building up of personal fortunes. In the quest for the latter, they managed to get the full support of the Indian merchants, and then to consolidate their hold, not just of their fort and factories, but of India as a whole.

In a rather different context (that of the Nayak kingdoms), it has been pointed out that the Nayaks had certain "minimal components of statehood"[403]. These were, money, mobility, a horizontal base, vertical linkages, and a deity or deities. With the possible exception of the last, it could be argued that the Europeans, and, increasingly from our period, the English particularly, also had all this. Money they obviously brought in abundance – witness, not just the amounts invested by all the Comapnies on the coast, but also the money expended in what was euphemistically called 'presents' at the varlous courts. Mobility, too, was theirs, especially on sea. Just as the new Nayak elite had been willing to

[403] Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam, op.cit., pp. 54-55.

travel in search of fortune, so also the Europeans had travelled far, and were willing to engage in a number of activities for profit. Most of the Europeans did acquire a horizontal base, in the shape of a port, which they fortified, and from where they could expand outwards. Given the fact that they had these three, vertical linkages could be established with as many of the local powers as necessary, to continue their activities. The late 18th century title of "Company Bahadur" can thus be seen as one more in the series of efforts by the British to establish such linkages. Such efforts had begun at Masulipatnam and Surat, and had their fruition in grants like the Golden Farman, or the grant from Sriranga, or the grant from Zulfiqar Khan and Daud Khan Panni. And finally, while there were no personal deities to give additional legitimacy, there was no interference with the beliefs extant in the country either (at least, not by the English, and not in the period under review). Mention has been made of the temples in Madras, and of the decisions taken by the English in various matters concerning religion. At the same time, care was also taken to observe the customs of the country, as, for example, when a new farman was received at Fort St. George. The Governor of the Fort and his council usually went to receive it outside the walls of the settlement, and the farman was then carried in state through the town, accompanied by "trumpets drums and cymbals". This kind of outward compliance would naturally lend emphasis to both, the vertical linkages, and the horizontal base.

Finally, the fluctuating conditions of the 18th century had led to the emergence of a number of smaller kingdoms, all of which were eager to get money, and to control sources of money. One method of getting money was, of course, the obvious one – that the revenue that was collected was not remitted to the centre. Another method was to tap the foreigners. Unfortunately, the newly established kingdoms were, obviously, less powerful than the old, and were unable to control the Companies. Contrary to what had been the case earlier, these new kingdoms needed the support of the outside elements to maintain themselves, for they themselves were threatened by others, who wished to share in the spoils. As the Europeans, too, needed to secure themselves and their investments, it was logical for them to try and control the new kings, and through them, their kingdoms. In the process, as mentioned above, Anglo-French rivalry was heightened. The rivalry that had begun with trade now extended to control over sources of the products used in that trade, and then to the land itself. Trade and politics entered a new phase, one in which the local rulers and merchants were pawns in the moves of the Companies.

APPENDIX - I

List of castes included in left- and right-hand divisions according to F. Buchanan:-

"The tribes, or castes, comprehended in the Eddagai, or left hand side, are nine.

1) Panchala, comprehending, (1) The Cubbinadeva, or blacksmiths, (2) Badiga, carpenters, (3) Cunsugaru, coppersmiths, (4) Cul'badiga, masons, (5) Axala, gold and silver smiths.
2) Bheri Chetty, merchants, who pretend to be of the Vaisya cast.
3) Devanga, a class of weavers.
4) Haganigaru, oilmakers, who use 2 oxen in their mills.
5) Gollur, or Golawarlu, who transport money.
6) Paliwanlu, 2 tribes of cultivators, who are not of Karnataca origin.
7) Palawanlu
8) Baydaru, hunters.
9) Madigaru, tanners or shoemakers. The Panchala command the whole party....

The castes forming the Ballagai, or right hand side, are 18 in number.

1) Banijigaru, who are of many trades, and many religions. The two most conspicuous divisions are,
    1) Panchum Banijigaru, who are traders and wear the Linga.
    2) Teliga Banijigaru, who worship Vishnu.
2) Wochgaru, cultivators of the Sudra cast, and of Karnataca extraction.
3) Jotiphana, oilmakers, who use one bullock in the mill.
4) Rungaru, calico printers, and taylors.
5) Ladarau, a kind of Mussulman traders, who are followed by all the artificers of the same religion.
6) Gujerati, merchants of Guzerat.
7) Camatigaru, persons who are really of the Vaisya cast.
8) Jainaru, worshippers of Jain.
9) Curubaru, shepherds, blanket-weavers, and cultivators.
10) Cumbaru, potters.
11) Agasaru, washermen.
12) Besta, palankeen-bearers.
13) Padma Shalayvaru, a kind of weavers.
14) Naindaru, barbers.
15) Uparu, persons who dig tanks, and build rough walls.
16) Chitragaru, painters.
17) Goallaru, keepers of cows and buffaloes.
18) Whalliaru. The people called Parriars at Madras....

The Panchum Banijigaru are the leaders of this division."

Ref.: Francis Buchanan - A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar in the year 1800, (pp. 77-78).

APPENDIX - II

INCREASE IN RATES SOUGHT BY WASHERS: APRIL 2, 1706

SPECIFIED CLOTH SOUGHT	EXISTING RATES	INCREASE	TOTAL
LONG CLOTH fanams/corge	36 fanams/corge	2 doodas*/piece	41
SALAMPORES f 40 c 20	16 " / " coveds+/corge	1 dooda /piece	18
MOREES f 40 c 40 "/ "	10 " / "	1 " / "	12
GINGHAMS f 40 c /corge	32 " / "	3 doodas/ "	39
FINE MOREES f 40 c /piece	12 " /piece	1 dooda / "	14
NECK CLOTH / 16 coveds	5 doodas / "	3 cash / "	1 f
FINE GINGHAM f 40 c /corge	10 fanams/corge	1 dooda / "	12

* This is the only time that this word appears in the records, and the currency equivalent is not clear.

+ A coved is a measure of cloth (18").

Ref.: RFSG - Diary, 2 April 1706.

APPENDIX - III

"Copy of Cowle given to Pedda Nague [by Chambers in 1659], entered in Diary of 1686:-

"Whereas formerly you watched out Towne with 20 Peons, & having not sufficient maintenance allowed to contest you, for 2 or 3 years you left that Imployment, Saying also that 20 Peons, the Town being greater than formerly were not sufficient to watch itt, wherefore we made this agreement with you as followeth Vizt.

"That Moorte Nagues Son Timmapa, shall build a house & dwell in the Towne, & watch the Said Town, with 50 Peons, and for the Said Service you shall be allowed the following duties Vizt.

"That you shall have 18 Paddy fields given you rent free.

"That out of every Stack of Paddy you shall have one Bundle in the Ear, and one Tombe grain.

"That out of what graine Soever growes within the bounds of the Towne, you shall be allowed 6 measures out of every Collome.

"That the Fisher men shall pay you per Ann 225 fanams.

"That those that buy Fish, & carry it out of Towne, shall pay out of every fanams worth 4 ^{ca}.

"That out of every draught of Fish you shall be allowed 10 Fish.

"That for Fishing in the River shall be allowd you 10 fa. per Annum.

"That for what goods is brought in the Choultry the Company receives ^{fa} 1.36 ^{ca} out of every Pagoda for Custome, & formerly was allowed you 12 ^{ca} per Pagoda, now shall be given you 16 ^{ca} per Pagoda.

"That for what Paddy & Rice shall be brought into the Town on Oxen, that out of every great bagg, Shall be allowed you ¾ of a Small measure, & out of every Small bagg ½ a Small measure.

"That out of every Small bagg, Rice or Paddy that shall bee brought by any Cooley into the Town, you shall be allowed 1/6 part of a Small measure.

"That the Oyle men shall allow you every time they fill their Mill 1/6 part of a Small measure of Oyle.

"That out of every 20000 Bettle Nuts you shall be allowed 30.

"That out every Maund Pepper you shall be allowed 4 [?].

"That out of every Shop that sells Betle shall be allowed you dayly 1 Bettle Nut 3 Leaves 1 Bunco Tobacco.

"That every Vessell that arrives shall allow you 5 fanams.

"That every Boat laden with Wood shall allow you 2 fans.

"That whereas formerly was allowed you 4 ^{ca} per Pago. for Custome of Cloth, that now shall be allowed you for all Sorts of goods, brought into the Town, or carried out of Town, 6 ^{ca} per Pag^{o}. the Compas. goods excepted.

"That all the Inhabitants of the Town, excepting Christians, & the old Servants belonging to the Compa. shall pay you per Ann 3 fanams

for every great house, 2 fa[s]. for a Smaler, & 1 fan. for the Smalest of all.

"But for what Rice or Paddy shall be delivered by us to any Merchant you are not to receive any Custome, for that, According two which agreement we give you this our Cowle, Also that the 50 Peons aforesaid, Shall be imployed about the Town, as he that hath the charge of the Choultree, shall think fitting, And if any man shall be delivered by us into your Custody, and shall make his escape, that you Shall pay the debt, the person escaped owed. Also that if we should go abroad att any time, to take our pleasure, you shall procure 100 or 150 Peons to accompany us. And if occation shall require 150 or 200 Peons, your Timmapa, with the Said Peons shall go, upon what imployment we shall send him, & also allow them 4 dayes batty, but if we Should detain them longer, that then we are to give them batty, Also if any House is robbed, that you shall make satisfaction for what is lost, And if any Merchant or Inhabitant of this Towne shall run away, and any of your people having knowledge thereof, shall conceal itt, that then you are to bring that party run away againe, & correct him that knew of his departure...."

Ref.: RFSG Diary, 1686.

TABLE I

COMPARATIVE LAND CUSTOMS RATES 1711 AND 1720

	1711						1720					
	FEBRUARY			JUNE			FEBRUARY			JUNE		
	p	f	c	p	f	c	p	f	c	p	f	c
CHOULTRY CUSTOM	165	4	36	339	27	36	240	32	57	563	16	62
RUBYE BROKERS	2	10	55	102	12	25	9	14	14	51	13	67
REGISTERING SLAVES	1	4	--	1	12	--	2	16	--	4	--	--
GRAND TOTAL	168	19	11	433	15	61	252	26	71	617*	30	40

COMPARATIVE SEA CUSTOMS RATES 1711 AND 1720

	1711						1720					
	DECEMBER			FEBRUARY			DECEMBER			FEBRUARY		
	p	f	c	p	f	c	p	f	c	p	f	c
GOODS IMPORTED & EXPORTED	640	35	28	2952	27	72	416	12	42	2392	34	48
GRAIN	48	5	24	187	35	0	--	--	--	1234	2	52
ANCHORAGE	3	0	0	40	0	0	5	0	0	31	18	0
GRAND TOTAL	692	4	52	3718*	26	72	421	12	42	3708*	19	20

80 cash = 1 fanam; 36 fanams = 1 pagoda.
*Mistakes in the records: the totals should actually be 618, 3180 and 3658 respectively.

Ref.- RFSG – Diary, 1711 and 1720.

TABLE II

NAME OF TEXTILE	YEAR	MEASUREMENT COVED	MEASUREMENT COVED	NO. OF PIECES REQUIRED	PRICE (PER CORGE OF 20 PIECES) p	f	c
LONGCLOTH (ORDINARY)	1688	--	--	--	22	--	--
	1699	72 long	2¼ broad	15,000	34	--	--
	1700	72 "	2¼ "	30,000	34	--	--
	1701	72 "	2¼ "	20,000	36	1	--
SALEMPORES (ORDINARY)	1688	--	--	--	10	25	--
	1699	32 "	2-1/8 "	10,000	16	18	--
	1700	32 "	2-1/8 "	4,000	29	--	--
	1701	32 "	2⅓ "	4,000	30	26	--
MOREES (ORDINARY)	1688	--	--	--	--	--	--
	1699	20 "	2½ "	8,000	20	--	--
	1700	--	--	--	--	--	--
	1701	--	--	--	--	--	--
BETELLAS ORINGAL (WARANGAL)	1688	--	--	--	--	--	--
	1699	32 "	2 "	5,000	70	--	--
	1700	32 "	2 "	6,000	70	--	--
	1701	32 "	2 "	7,000	74	7	--
GINGHAM	1688	16 "	2 "	--	23	--	--
	1699	16 "	1-7/8 "	1,000	32	--	--
	1700	--	--	--	--	--	--
	1701	--	--	--	--	--	--

Ref.- RFSG – Diary, 6 Sept. 1688, 14 Apr. 1699, 16 Aug. 1700, 11 Nov. 1701.

TABLE III

EUROPEAN GOODS DELIVERED TO INDIAN MERCHANTS FOR CONTRACT, SEPTEMBER 1688

SPECIFICATIONS	PIECES	PRICE IN PAGODAS
BROAD CLOTH (FINE)	12	@ 52 per ½ piece
AURORA	48	@ 52 per ½ piece
BROAD CLOTH (ORDINARY)	120	@ 22 per ½ peice (*sic*)
PERPETUANOES (FINE)	50	@ 12 per peice (*sic*)
-do- (ORDINARY)	250	@ 07 per peice (*sic*)
LEAD FOR CANDYES	-	paid for in pagodas 10 per candy
SILVER	-	£17¼ per 10 pagodas

Ref.- RFSG - diary, 6 Sept. 1688

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