CHAPTER I
Historical outlines

The early historical accounts do not relate themselves with the city which was nonexistent then - but with the group of islands which provided the site for the growth and the development of the city at a later date. The early history of the island can not be mirrored precisely for want of ample evidences. Only a few antiquarian researches throw some light.

The earliest ruler of the territory which is identified with konkan including the island of Bombay seems to be Ashok who reigned between 263 and 229 B. C. This is proved by many inscriptions, which show that in the middle of the 3rd century B. C. the monarch sent Buddhist ministers of religion to the west coast of India. The famous edict of the great Mauryan emperor Ashok at Sopara shows that by the middle of the 3rd century before Christ the western coast had been completely Aryanised and this strip of coastal land was known.

1. 'The early history of our island is sunk deep in the night of time. At intervals the light of antiquarian research costs a faint beam upon the darkness; a coin, an inscription, per chance a copper plate grant or patent is discovered and published as evidence that some old dynasty was permanent is Aparanta (the North Konkan) during remote ages. But lack of material has ever been a stumbling block in the path of him who would give to the world a connected tale of island's expansion'. Scattered notes wherein evidence of prehistoric trade routes is confusedly mingled with the description of events occurring in Christian eras, are all that exist to throw light upon the early circumstances of Bombay" S. M. Edward 'Rise of Bombay p. 1

2. Inscriptions of Ashoka Vol.2 p. 34.
The inscriptions in question were found at Girnar in Kathiawar, Khalsi in the Himalayas and Shahbazgarhi in Afghanistan.

3. Gazetteer of Bombay City and island Vol. 2 p. 4 quoted from Bombay branch of Royal Asiatic Society Vol. XV.
as 'Aparanta or Western border.

After the fall of the Mauryan empire, Western India became the spoil of Satvahanas, whose sovereignty lasted for more than 300 years until 220 A.D. Satvahanas were succeeded by Kshatrapas who also do not seem to have retained their hold on the coast and the Island for a long time. Who were the rulers of the Island in the 5th Century is not clear but during this period, the west coast as far north as Broach owned the sway of the dynasty styled 'Traikutika'.

In the 4th century A.D. Rastrakutas appear to be in possession of the Island and the coast, as is evident from the coins found at Karad (North Satara) and Nasik. It is authoritatively voiced by many authors that the Rastrakutas succeeded Satkarnis, though no exact date and duration of their regime is indicated in this connection. Contradictory opinions have also been expressed which hold that Chalukyas were the rulers of the Island of Bombay and the coastal strip before they were succeeded by the Rastrakutas.

The controvertial point at issue, whether the Rastrakutas succeeded the 'Satkarnis' or 'Chalukyas' - is not very much within the scope of this work and presents a problem to be left over to historians. The author satisfies himself by

quoting some contradictory views in this regard. Silharas who succeeded either Chalukyas or Rastrakutas ruled over the territory of North-Konkan from 810 to 1200 A.D. They are believed to be of Dravidian origin, who fostered colonisation and trade in the highest degree and introduced in the very sparsely peopled Islands of Bombay some social and religious elements which were hitherto unknown to the natives. They were a race of builders and were the first Hindu Kings who left a number of architectural monuments reminiscent of the glory of their reign. To the period of Silharas belong the great temples of Ambarnath and

1. (a) Adequate evidence is not available on any of the views but Edward puts it thus 'At what date the Rastrakutas succeeded the Satkarnis and for how long they ruled over North-Konkan is entirely unknown to us but the presence of the coins of which counterparts have been found at Karad (North-Satara) and also in Nasik shows that from 375-400 A.D., the North-Konkan including our Heptanesia were parts of the dominions of Rastrakuta Krishna S. M. Edward' Rise of Bombay' p.12.

(b) "These Islands formed a part of the Kingdom of Satkarnis and later of 'Rastrakutas'" C. B. Joshi 'Historical Geography of Bombay' Bombay Geographical Magazine Vol.IV. p.5. According to above view Rastrakutas were succeeded by Mauryas and thereafter by Chalukyas and Silharas.

(c) The other view is that "in all probability the Chalukya dynasty continued in possession of the western coast until their mastery of the Deccan was shattered by the Rashtrakutas about 757 A.D. Rastrakutas were succeeded by Silharas who maintained their superiority for more than 4 centuries (810 to 1260 A.D.) as lords of modern Thana District together with Bombay and portions of modern Colaba District" Gazetteer of Bombay Vol. 2. p.10.


Walkeshwar in the City of Bombay (Fig. 1) and many other shrines and tanks in the present Thana District. As a matter of fact, it was the extraordinary sanctity attached to Walkeshwar and its 'Lucky-stone' (Shri Gandi) which first attracted visitors from other part of Western India and raised Bombay to a status higher than that of a sparsely populated fishing hamlet.

Though the Island received the attention of Silhara Kings, the development of Puri - identified with modern Elephanta - was a forerunner to the development of Bombay. Puri was the Capital of Mauryas and 'was described in a Chalukya inscription of the beginning of the 7th century of our era. It is said that the city was attacked by Pulkesi with hundreds of ships. This indicates not only its opulence but also its situation as a coast town.

In the 8th and the following centuries Puri was the Capital of the Feudatory Princes of North-Konkan branch of Silhara family. The city (Puri) maintained its importance till the last King of Silhara dynasty Someswar was invaded by the Yadavas of Deogiri and defeated.

The location of the Capital at Puri seems to have been determined by the strategic significance that the Island

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2. 'By Keen analysis, intelligent inspection and old ruins and copper plates and oval seals of light ruby, coloured cornelian engraved with the word 'Narayan', it has been shown that this remarkable City was built upon the North-Eastern portion of the Island of Gharpuri 'a ilho da Elephanta' the Island of Elephanta. S. M. Edward, Op.cit. p.13.

PROMINENT FEATURES OF HINDU PERIOD (IN BOMBAY)

1. KOLABHAT
2. WOMEN'S ISLAND
3. PALLAV BUNDAR
4. TAMARIND TREES
5. SHRINE OF HANUMAN
6. BHANDARI SETTLEMENT
7. DONKES
8. CHINCH BUNDAR
9. KOLI SETTLEMENT
10. CLUMPS OF BARAS
11. CAVAL VILLAGE
12. JACK TREES ORCHARDS
13. BARAB TREES
14. PLANTAIN GROVES
15. KOLI HOLDINGS
16. GARDEN OF SITARAM JIYARRA
17. GIRGAUM
18. SHRINE OF VILLAGE GODDESS
19. FOUR CHANNELS OF CHAPATI
20. THE LADDER OR SIRI
21. BASUL GROVE
22. VAKRESVAR TEMPLE
23. SHRI GUNDI
24. SHRINE OF MAHAKALI-MAHANANDI
25. GROVE OF KHIND
26. BARAB TREES SHRINE
27. TRIBAL SETTLEMENT
28. CLUMPS OF RHIND
29. PYDHONI OR BOWTASH
30. FIG TREES & BOWTASH
31. CLUMPS OF RHIND
32. TAMARIND DELL
33. PARALI'S VILLAGE
34. PRICKLY PEAR TRACT
35. SHIVDI
36. NAAGON - INHABITED
37. BAHAMAN SETTLEMENT
38. BAHARI TREES
39. BANIIAN TREES
40. CITY OF MAHIKAVATI
41. FOREST OF COCOAPALMS
42. SHRINE OF PRABHADEVI
43. SHRINE OF YALIKAPU
44. KOLI VILLAGE
45. BANIIAN GROVE
46. KHIND OR BREACH
47. PORTION OF THE DISTRICT OF SHAHASTRI OR 66 VILLAGES

I. COLABA
II. OLD WOMEN'S ISLAND
III. BOMBAY
IV. MAZAGAON V. SION
V. MAHIM VI. WORLI
carries. In ancient India it must have certainly been a safe place with easy means of transport. Pieces of sculpture which narrate the story of the culture of ancient India are the embodiment of the impetus that the creative mind of man derived in ancient days from the Island environs marked by the presence of hard basalt on the Indian peninsula. This is a very striking example of location as a geographical factor that has influenced the nature of human activities and the choice of capital to suit the purposes of defence.

The decline of Silharas was marked by the appearance on the scene of a new dynasty which ruled over Bombay and the surrounding North-Konkan during the latter part of the 13th century. It was with Someshwar that the Silhara dynasty ended and "North-Konkan was annexed to the kingdom of Deogiri Yadavas down to at least 1200 A.D."

In the confusion that followed the Mahomedan invasion of Deccan by Alla-ud-din Khilji in 1234 and the defeat of Ramdeo of Deogiri, a certain Bhima or Bhimadeo established himself as a ruler of the North-Konkan and colonised the Islands of Bombay.

Precise identity of Bhimdeo is not very clear. It is reported that he was the second son of Ramdeo of Devgiri,

2. "Historical research proves that, this Bhimdeo was no other than Bhimaraja, the second son of Ramdev of Deogiri. Ramdeo in the battle with Khilji seeing one of his sons Shankar overpowered despatched the second son Bhimdeo to Konkan" S. M. Edward Op. cit. p.23.
but the Portuguese writer Cunha believes him to be a Chalukya prince of the house of Solankis whose Capital was Anhilwada in Gujarat. Whosoever Bhim might have been, he left an ineradicable mark upon Bombay.

After his arrival, Bhim found Mahim a desert Island washed by the waters of the Western Sea and sparsely peopled by families of Koli fishermen. The Island was covered with Babul trees (acacia arabica) with few straggling houses.

With the advent of Bhimdeo and his followers, begins the history of the growth and colonisation of Bombay. He built a City of temples and palaces for himself and his followers which he called 'Mahikavati' from which the present word Mahim is derived. Prior to this Bombay had been merely an appendage of Puri, but it was raised to the status of a Capital in the time of Bhim and Puri was practically deserted. The King (Bhima) also encouraged the cultivation of coconut trees and introduced many fruit bearing plants.

Originally there were only 4 or five classes of settlers who came with Bhima, but they were followed by the repeated waves of immigrants from all over India bringing with them their own dialects along with their creeds and habits which have rendered Bombay an anthropological museum.

1. "It appears that the Solanki Bhima, after the expedition of Mahomed of Ghazni to Somnath and his invasion and capture of Anhilwada in 1026 A.D. fled from his country and to make up for the loss in the north marched with his colony from Patan into South and settled at Mahim" Cunha "origin of Bombay" p.39.

MUSLIM PERIOD.

Prior to the advent of Mahommadans, Bombay and its adjacent land had been for some time under the detached possession of possibly a local Chieftain of Gujarat Kingdom. In 1318 Mubarak Shah I of Gujarat ordered his outposts to be extended to the sea and occupied Mahim and Salsette, but his possession was never firmly established and during the reign of Mahommmed Tughlak Bombay seems to have been reverted again to a Hindu lord till 1348 when Mahim finally passed into the hands of Muslim rulers of Gujarat.

The early history of Bombay during the era of Moslem supremacy is somewhat indefinite. The salient fact of the period is that 'Mahim served purely as a military outpost for the possession of which the forces of the Great mainland monarchies, on several occasions, bared their swords, which only upset the internal administration of this part of the country.

The Muslem occupation of Bombay for over a century did in no way help its development and the sole legacies of Musulman dominion and immigration are, firstly the stone of Saint Makhdum Fakih Ali at Mahim and secondly the Community of half Arab half Hindu Mohammedans who formerly known as Naitias are now styled Konkanis.

1. 'Old Marathi records show that Pratapshah reigned till 1331 and his Kingdom was usurped by his brother-in-law Nagardev, the Chief of Cheul. Nagardev reigned till 1343, when his dominion passed into the hands of the Muslim rulers of Gujarat' S. M. Edward 'Op.cit.p.36.

2. Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island Vol.II. P.23.

PORTUGUESE PERIOD.

The Portuguese period of the history of Bombay commences from 1534 with the cession of the Island of Bombay to the Portuguese from Sultan Bahadur of Gujarat. The Portuguese, however, first paid their visit to Bombay on 21st January 1503 under the command of the Portuguese Viceroy D. Francisco Almeida who was going on a punitive expedition. The Viceroy cast anchor at Bombay where the people seeing the fleet, terrified, fled away. The Portuguese captured some cows and some natives who were found hiding among bushes. The second descent of Portuguese fleet on Bombay was in 1517, when Dom Joao de Mouroyo with seven pinnacles entered Bandra creek and defeated the Commandant of Mahim fort. Thereafter the Portuguese were constantly prowling in the neighbourhood of Bombay for the Mahommedan ships and on one occasion drove Malik Ayaz and his fleet, which took shelter in Bombay harbour. In 1529 the Portuguese made repeated incursions in Bombay, plundered the fort of Bassein and forced the Chieftain at Thana to pay the tribute. In consequence of this success and later the capture of Bassein in January 1533, the Islands of Bombay and Mahim together with Bandra became tributary to the Portuguese. Meanwhile Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat had grown apprehensive of the power of the Mughal emperors and observing the success obtained by the Portuguese arms

1. 'The Viceroy wanted to avenge the death of his son at Chaul caused by the Egyptian fleet assisted by Malik Faiz of Gujarat sent by Mamluk Sultan to expel the Portuguese from India under the command of Admiral Amir Hussein in 1503 " LendasVol.I pp. 926 and 927. quoted from Cunha 'Origin of Bombay' p.71.
determined to enlist their aid. In 1534 Sultan Bahadur Shah offered terms of treaty, which was formally signed on 23rd December 1534 making Bassein an integral part of Portuguese territory in India.

After the Portuguese occupation of Bombay and the neighbouring coastal strip, the tenure system was modelled after the fashion of feudal system prevalent in the middle ages in Europe. The land of Bombay and the neighbouring Islands was allotted in pieces to the Officers for a very nominal quit rent amounting to 4 to 10% of the ordinary rental. The entire group of Islands was granted in estates causing considerable loss to the Portuguese Treasury. The constitution was also feudal in all its resemblances. The King claimed the military services from the tenant. Lack of money may, in some degree, have necessitated the grant of lands as rewards for meritorious actions and given rise to the feudal system of tenure.

Bombay during the period of Portuguese was composed of seven villages subordinate to two Chief stations at which custom duty was levied. These villages were Mahim, Parel, Varella (Vadala), Syva (Sion) under the Cacabe of Mahim and Mazagaon, Bombaim and Varel (Worli) under the cacabe of Bombaim'.

1. According to the treaty Sultan Bahadur Shah gave and bequeathed to the King of Portugal from that day forth and forever the City of Bassein, its territories, Islands and seas with all its revenues in the same way as he, the Sultan Bahadur held them before" Edward 'Rise of Bombay' p.63.


The Island itself was not very populous and in 1634 it contained only eleven Portuguese Cazadors or married settlers and some native blacks, making altogether 70 musketeers able to serve in war. The feudal system which was introduced in Bombay in the first half of the 16th century by the Portuguese, was not solely to raise a militia, but was also a step towards the development of the Island. Compulsory taxation would in all probability have curbed the initiative of the settlers.

The history of the dominion of the Portuguese in western India is to a large extent the history of the foundation and the growth of their religious orders and it was not long before Bombay had its bitter experience. The key note of Portuguese policy is indeed embodied in the historic remark of Vasco da Gama - 'we come to seek christians and spices'. During the short period of Portuguese rule in Bombay, they did not realise that the advancement of trade depended on the widest religious toleration as one of its principal factors. "Had the Portuguese Government been able to restrain the troublesome and wanton acts of oppression which the religious orders practised under the cloak of proslytism the population and

1. The original remark which Vascoda Gamma had made in reply to a question of 2 Tunisian Moors was in Portuguese 'Vimos buscar christaose and especiaria'.

trade of Bombay and surrounding tracts would almost certainly have largely increased.

The Portuguese enthusiasm for the propagation of Christianity led to the social and economic discrimination in the state dealings with the subjects. The missionaries and their friends treated with disrespect those who refused to be converted and all sorts of privileges were showered upon those who easily embraced the Christian faith. The type of intolerance practised by the Portuguese in India was not of local origin, but orders to that effect were received from the Crown of Portugal. In response to the orders received, the bishop D. Joao Affonso da Albuquerque recommended to his clergy to carry out violent measures sanctioned by the King in the Island of Bombay and other dependencies in the Province of Bassein. The result was the aggressive proselytism of the Portuguese in the neighbourhood of Bombay. In addition to the

3. In a letter sent by the King of Portugal to the Viceroy of Goa, the following articles are noteworthy:

(i) It is the duty of the Christian princes to put a stop in their dominion on idol worship.

(ii) He commands the idols to be broken to pieces and the individuals who make the idols to be punished.

(iii) Converts be granted privileges of all sorts and exempted from forced labour.

(iv) New Ch'ristians be well treated in order to gain their affection.
Franciscans who were the first missionary to come in Bombay in 1539, the Jesuits followed in 1548. The monks of Dominica came in the year 1543, who were again followed by the monks of St. Augustine in 1572. The conversion of Jogis, the most stubborn and recalcitrants of the votaries of Hindusim and the transformation of the venerable cave temples of Buddhist and Brahmins into the Christian Churches was the outcome of the Policy of Portuguese.

The Portuguese, therefore, have left behind them historical land marks more in the form of Churches and Cathédrales than by way of economic and social development.

The religious malady was, in fact, heightened to such a point that the intolerance of priesthood seized upon the whole frame of Portuguese supremacy and resulted in the tussel for power in the country. The internal faction that resulted from the conflict between official representative of Lisbon and the Indian priesthood which was tempered with so much intolerance as to challenge the King, paved the way for other European nations.

An appraisal of the Portuguese regime, correctly given by a British historian with which the author largely agrees reads as follows.

The dominion of the Portuguese over Bombay before the Britishers came had lasted one hundred and thirty years a period ample enough to see what stuff they were made of. The world knows that it was not a good dominion. It
produced nothing and has left nothing except the portion of that wreck of humanity that still lies on the shores of Western India".

**EARLY BRITISH PERIOD.**

It was on 22nd September 1599 that an association of merchant adventurers was formed under the presidency of Lord Mayor for the purpose of establishing trade relations between England and India and the queen's sanction was received towards the end of 1600. The British had also obtained 'Firman' - royal order - from the Mughal Emperor authorising an English Minister to reside at his Court and opening to English the trade of Surat.

The East India Co, which was so formed established its trading post at Surat which was a flourishing city from the point of view of trade. Bombay, those days had not attained any prominence. 'Notwithstanding the poverty, however, the immense natural advantages of Bombay aroused the cupidity of the English who recognized its value as a naval base'', and in 1625 the Court of directors of East India Co., proposed that the Co., should take Bombay.

In consequence of this proposal in the beginning of the year 1626, the English in Surat suggested to the Dutch

a joint occupation of the Island, but the Dutch declined to act and the scheme was abandoned. Same year in October a joint force of Dutch and English landed suddenly at Bombay, burnt the house and cattle and withdrew without making any attempts to retain possession of the Island. This was surely a reaction to the refusal of the Portuguese to own Bombay in partnership with the East India Co. Why the Dutch and English left the Island is not clear, but it can be logically explained in the light of a possible disagreement among the allies in the distribution of the Island or it might have resulted out of the fear from the Portuguese navy which had a lasting prestige in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean.

In 1652 the Surat Council urged the purchase of Bombay from the Portuguese and consequently in 1654 the directors of the East India Co. drew the attention of Cromwell to this suggestion laying great stress upon the excellent harbour of Bombay and the latter's natural isolation from land attacks.

By the middle of the 17th century the growing power of the Dutch and the disturbance to which Shah Jahan's death gave rise absolutely forced upon the English Co. both in Surat and London the need of station of their own in Western India, and under orders from the directors the council at Surat made enquiries and finally reported in 1659 that every effort should be made to obtain from the
King of Portugal the cession of either Danda, Rajpur, Versova, or Bombay. Thus the train was laid which culminated in the marriage of Charles II and Infanta Donna catharina of Portugal and the successful execution of the marriage treaty which placed the Island of Bombay under the possession of English Crown.

Through all the various attempts the "Co. was maturing its Projects for the acquisition of a convenient harbour on the Western Coast of India. This was due partly to the comparative insecurity of their position at Surat and partly to the extension of their trade in the East".

The Co. justly foresaw that British trade interests in India could not flourish until it secured fortified stations yielding a revenue equal to their maintenance and maintained at such stations a naval and military force sufficient to render the Co. wholly independent of the intrigues and quarrels carried on between the native powers of the continent. This was all the more necessary because "the Portuguese had closed all the sea routes to India and exercised a monopoly of Indian trade by the simple system of building bases round the Indian Coast from where they patrolled the Indian seas and drove away all those who

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2. Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island of cit. p.46.
claimed the right to sail or trade." Notwithstanding the fact that the East India Co. was struggling hard to oust the Portuguese from the Arabian Sea, any plan to this effect would have failed to materialise had it not been for its coincidence with the political decline of Portugal when the latter's existence was at stake and the peace of Pyrenees had revived the danger of Spanish invasion. She (Portugal) was moreover at war with the Dutch and her devastating war with Spain and the United Netherlands had brought her to the verge of bankruptcy.

In November 1656 Joao IV the King of Portugal died and he was succeeded by his son Affonse VI. The latter being minor, his mother D. Luiza de Gasmao became the sole regent.

On the other hand in England the Stuarts had been the victims of revolution and after 20 years of Civil War and death of Cromwell Charles had just returned to the throne of his father.

Under these circumstances Fr. Domingos the envoy and also the confessor of regent queen proposed to the queen of Portugal a matrimonial and Political alliance with England. The crowns of Portugal and England felt in all probability a sort of kinship towards each other, because of similar experiences. This resulted in an alliance between Portugal

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1. Pannikar K. M. 'Geographical factors in Indian History' p. 84.
and England with a subsidiary phase of marriage of Catherina to Charles II accompanying the transfer of Bombay harbour and Island to the British Crown.

The de jure sovereignty of the British Crown on the Island of Bombay commenced with the marriage treaty dated June 23, 1661 which was later ratified on 23th August 1661.

The English fleet sent by Charles II to take delivery of the Island reached the Arabian Coast of India in September 1662. The British admiral Earl of Marlborough demanded the transfer of the Island of Bombay with the Island of Salsette. The British thought that Bombay also included Salsette, but their contention was declared baseless by the Portuguese who refused to part with any other part of their territory except the Island of Bombay proper. On a reference being made by Charles II, the Portuguese Court replied that the Island of Bombay did not include Salsette. Moreover excuses were found saying that the 'letters patent' issued by the King of England were not genuine. But more important than anything else

1. The marriage took place on 31st May 1662. The eleventh article of the marriage treaty which provides for the transfer of Bombay reads as follows.

"The King of Portugal with the assent and advice of his Council gives, transfers and by these presents grants and confirms unto the King of Great Britain, his heirs and successors for ever, the part and Island of Bombay in the East Indies with all its rights, profits, territories and appurtenances whatsoever there into belonging and together with all income and revenue as also the direct and absolute dominion and sovereignty of the said part and Island of Bombay and premises with all their royalties, freely fully entirely and absolutely"Danvers Portuguese in India quoted from Cunha-Origin of Bombay'Op. cit.,p.24."
was the geographical and strategic value of Bombay of which the Portuguese Governor was fully aware when he wrote 'I confess at the feet of your majesty that the obedience I owe your majesty as a vassal could have forced me to this deed (i.e. cession of Bombay) because I foresee the great troubles that from this neighbourhood will result to the Portuguese and that India will be last on the same day on which the English nation is settled in Bombay, secondly Bombay is the last port which your majesty possesses in India. There is no other place to receive and shelter your majesty's ships. The English once there and the Island fortified, your majesty will lose all the north as they will take away all your majesty's trade'.

The delay in the transfer of the Island further complicated the matter. Sir A. Shipman who was authorised to take delivery of the Island died while the matter was under dispute, and his successor Humphry Cook was not directly authorised by the English Crown to take delivery of the Island. The matter was, therefore, referred to the Supreme Court of Goa and it was finally resolved to handover the Island of Bombay to Humphry Cook according to the decision of the Supreme Court of Goa. Accordingly the

Island and the harbour of Bombay were handed over to the British Crown on 18th March 1665.

After the transfer of the Island, the president and council of East India Co. at Surat recommended to the Court of directors of the Co. to solicit King's permission to build a factory at Bombay. The first definite move, however, towards the transfer of the Island to the Co. seems to have come somewhat unexpectedly from lord Clarendon, who, by 1667 had doubtless discovered that Bombay was nowhere near Brazil. 'It is probable also that he thought, Bombay like Dunkirk which would in time of peace put the King to a great change and in time of war it would not quit the cost of keeping it. There was too the case of Tangier to be remembered. That place which was to be the base of English power in the Medit. had been abandoned to the Moors in 1663, because the King could not afford to defend it and would not appeal to the Parliament for the necessary funds.' The Crown did not seem to be well convinced of the potentiality of Bombay and 'Charles II soon found to his disadvantage that is was a white elephant and readily responded to the petition of the Co. granting the transfer of Bombay by the charter of

1. Lord Clarendon had earlier thought that Bombay was somewhere near Brazil.


27th March 1663, which specifies that the port and the Island of Bombay were to be held by the Co. in free and common socage at 10 £ per annum in gold.

On 23rd September 1668, the Commissioners of the Co. from Surat landed and took over the charge of the Island from the officiating Governor, Capt. Henry Cary. Sir George Oxedan president at Surat took the chair as the Governor of Bombay and full sovereignty of the Island was granted to the Co. expressly providing for legislation, administration and justice in accordance with the law of England.

Thus within a period of less than one and a half century the Island of Bombay underwent 3 successive political changes.

(i) On 23rd December 1534, the Island passed from the Mahommedan Kings of Gujarat to the Portuguese.

(ii) The transfer of the Island from the Portuguese to the British Crown was effected on 18th February 1665 in accordance with the marriage treaty dated 23rd June, 1661.

(iii) Lastly, the Island was transferred to the East India Co. incorporated by queen Elizabeth on 31st December 1600 under the title of 'Governor and Co. of the Merchants of London into East Indies'.

The years that followed the cession of the Island into the British empire and its subsequent transfer to the Co. were the worst in the history of Bombay. For about a
period of 30 years, the city was surrounded by a blazing conflagration, the whole neighbouring continent was in ferment. The political instability was primarily the result of constant threat from the European and native enemies. The peace of Bombay was further jeopardized by the presence of Sidi admiral of the Mughal and his fleet in Bombay, so much so, that in 1639 the Sidi admiral was practically the master of the whole island except the castle. Bombay, however, became of the head quarters of the English in Western India instead of Surat when Maratha raids had upset the commercial life of Gujarat. This was particularly a reaction to the severe blow given by the attack of Shivaji on Surat in 1664. The presidency however, was shifted to Bombay in 1660.

In addition to these political disturbances the physical and social conditions of Bombay at the time of latter's transfer to the British were not congenial to its rapid growth. At the time of its transfer to the British the Island of Bombay was made by inroads of the sea into small islands passable at low water. (the details of the islands to be discussed, in sequel)

A great part of these Islands was utterly worthless being totally unproductive. By some it was called a

1. Doughlas "The Book of Bombay" 1832, p. 43.
barren rock but by others who had explored it, it was described as full of 'drowned lands' upon which the sea made inroads now and again leaving an encrustation of salt. Fryr says that when English took over Bombay they found a pretty well seated but ill fortified house, four brass guns, being the whole defence of the Island and about the house was a delicate garden voiced to be the pleasantest in India intended rather for wanton dalliance love's artillery than to make resistance against an invading foe". The great house of the lord of maynor thus described became the nucleus of the fort.

The Co. arranged for necessary fortifications to meet the threat of aggression from different quarters.

At the time of cession of the Island the land unowned by any private body was vested in the British Crown and later on in the East India Co. but almost all the villages which constituted the Island of Bombay had already been leased for quit rent to various parties. The rest of the ground except the portions built over, such as the fort, the native town, Mazagaon and Mahim, was a mere swamp or covered by the sea in the low part of the Island, or else some barren uncultivated ridges as Malabar Hill, Mazagaon, Parel or Chinchpokli Hill". The so called Crown lands

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consisted of 40,000 acres of soil covered by sea, Malabar hill and some other ridges 'The growth of the land was coconut woods and other palms, miles in length of which Mahim wood was the Chief interspersed with Jack and mango trees, also on low grounds with rice and paddy fields'. The wasteland preponderated in extent greatly over the cultivated lands. The cultivated land was settled by over a hundred proprietors.

Every attempt was made by the Co. not only to let the inhabitants remain on the Island but also to attract people from outside. To propagate their colony the Co. had sent out even English women but usually begot sickly generation and as the Dutch observed they thrive better that come of a European father and Indian mother which may be attributed to their living at large not debarring


2. This is clear from a letter of Aungier, the Governor of Bombay to the Court of directors of the East India Co. "We did every thing we could to attract people to it from other places. Weretained the 'Gentoo soldiers' in our service and assigned lands to them for their maintenance. To English soldiers we offered half pay after seven years of service and land to settle down if they gave their labour in return for the cultivation of it. We did every thing to induce wealthy natives to settle on it and whenever they were to be found in Kachha, may even on the coasts of Persian gulf and the red sea our ships were told to give the immigrants a free passage to the Island of Bombay" James Douglass 'Bombay and Western India' 1893. p. 90.
themselves wine and strong drink which moderately used inflames the blood and spoils the milk in these hot countries".

But more than anything else the development was affected by the progressive policy of Gerald Aungier who became the Governor in 1669. Aungier established a Court of Justice to maintain peace and order and a mint for starting the Currency of the Co. He fortified the city and stimulated the building of a new town within the fortifications. He also made adequate provision for the supply of food. The result was a growing immigration from Surat and Diu of merchants and of other refugees from the Portuguese Cities of the mainland due to Portuguese bigotry. Liberty to trade was granted as a particular privilege to those inhabiting the Island of Bombay not only in the Island but along the entire West Coast. Arrangements were made for strict supervision of the shops and for a system of set prices on all provisions, regulated in weight and measure according to justice, public good and the requirements of the inhabitants.

Till the year 1674 the Island of Colaba was a Portuguese possession, but Portuguese easily agreed to sell it out to

the Co. which acquired the Island and expanded the territorial limits of the area of Bombay.

Bombay was first governed by the deputies from English factory at Surat but the dissensions between the civil and military authorities reached its peak in 1671 so much so that it attained the stage of anarchy. In order to put an end to this disorder the residence of the Governor was transferred to Bombay. This was also desirable in view of the fortification of the Island against the Dutch attack. From this time onward Bombay began to grow in importance and it was decided that all the factories on India's Western Coast and in Persian Gulf will be dependent on the presidency.

In the last quarter of the 17th century the East India Co. realized the hazardous political atmosphere of the Country. Around there was a sway of animosity with the Marathas, Portuguese, Malabar pirates and the Moghuls. The roar of political clouds alarmed the nerves of the Co. and they adopted a policy which was based on the principle of territorial gain and consolidation of political strength.

In 1679 Shivaji took possession of Kanheri one of the twin Islands at the mouth of the harbour. The Island of Bombay also suffered the attack of Siddis who captured Mazagaon but withdrew their forces after they received a 'firman' from the Moghul emperor. The English, however, succeeded in winding up this series of tragic events by
seizing all the land and houses of the Portuguese at Parel, Mahim, and elsewhere on the Island giving the excuse that Portuguese supported the Siddi in their invasion. At this stage, in confirmation of the orders received in previous years Bombay was made the supreme seat of the Government and Surat was reduced to an agency entrusted to Mr. Bartholomew Harris. Bombay was for the first time ascertained to be the key of India and the Court ordered to make it as strong as art and money could make it.

Despite all the attempts made to develop Bombay, the city did not show any rapid growth. The local physical conditions were exercising their pull in the opposite direction. It is reported that Bombay was a very unhealthy spot in the last quarter of the 17th century. John Ovington who visited Bombay at the same time reports- 'Bombay was nought but a charnel house in which two monsoons were the age of the man. Disease and crime immorality and death reigned supreme. The chief reason for most of the diseases was probably the gradual silting up of the creeks which divided the Island of Bombay from its dependencies. At high tide the ocean roared through the breaches overflowed

2. 'Ovington's voyage to Surat edit by Rawlinson Oxford University Press London 1929 p. 90.
the lands and pestilential deposit which at low tide exhaled meaphitic and deadly vapours. Manuring the toddy trees with fish was also in no less measure responsible for the unwholesomeness of the Bombay air.

'Fluxes, dropsy, scurvy or loss of the use of hands and feet, gout stone, malignant and putrid fevers' such according to Fryr were the disorders to which the unfortunate inhabitants of the Island succumbed, and more prevalent and terrible than all was a disease known as 'Chinese death'. In addition to all these, was the great plague which visited Western India between 1636 and 1696. This brought havoc in Bassein, Thana and Chaul and nearly emptied Bombay of its inhabitants. About the end of 1691, Bombay contained only about 30 fishermen many of whom were ill, the five civil servants in 1691 had dwindled to three in the following year and by Oct. 2 1696 only 27 Englishmen were alive.

The tragic events of widespread epidemics and diseases which frequented Bombay in the closing years of 17th century practically depopulated Bombay and more than offset the encouragements provided by the Co. for the development of the city. This seems to have continued till the beginning of the 18th century when Waite wrote mournfully in 1706.

'We are only eight covenant servants including the council but two that write, besides two raw youths taken ashore one of the ships and most of us sick in this unhealthful depopulated and ruined Island.'

The diseases and the unhygienic conditions that were prevalent were further aggravated by a definite decline in the manners and morals in those days. To quote Anderson 'Immorality and dissaluteness were of deepest dye and added force to the assaults of unhealthy climate'.

These conditions reflected themselves apparently in the reduction of population which declined to 16,000 in 1715 from 60,000 in 1673.

The closing years of the 17th and the opening years of the 18th century form indeed a sad chapter in the history of Bombay. The opening of the century witnessed a strange antagonism in Bombay. The formal unification of the two British Cos. in 1702 did not in any way make life agreeable in Bombay. Though hidden from outward view, discord and rivalry continued fresh and active between the two companies

1. Ibid p. 427.

2. Referring to one who had been an eye witness Anderson writes - "I can not without horror mention to what a pitch all vicious enormities were grown in this place. Their miseries had continued to fill the air with those pestilential vapours that seized their vitals and speeded their hasty passage to the other world. Luxury, immodesty and prostitute dissolution of manners found still new matter to work upon" Anderson 'English in Western India' quoted from Da Cunha 'Origin of Bombay' p. 320.
from the private interests of their servants. The formal amalgamation of 1702 did not serve to weld together the opposing interests until 1708 when the two companies became, in fact, United Co. of the merchants of England.

At this time a very important event took place in Western India. Shivaji had his coveted eyes on the west coast and started with launching an offensive against the Portuguese possessions near Bombay. The attitude of non-cooperation shown by the Portuguese earlier in the suppression of the sea pirate Angria did not pay them. The Co. reciprocated by not extending its support to the Portuguese to face Shivaji who knocked away from under the Portuguese feet the territory of galsette with Thana and Bassein in 1733.

Up to the middle of the 18th century the policy of the Co. in Bombay was to temperise with the various native powers in Western India and to utilise the comparative tranquility thus engendered in gradually strengthening its political and commercial position.

After the Marathas were in possession of Bassein and its dependencies the British turned to Court the friendship of Marathas and concluded a treaty with Peshwa in 1739, whereby they were authorised to trade freely in the dominion of Marathas. For about 20 years from after 1740, by the constant exchange of presents and expression of goodwill Bombay continued to avoid open rupture with a power which she knew she was not strong enough to meet on equal terms.
One by one the Siddi, Angria and the Portuguese had succumbed but their capacity for opposition was very small compared with that of Marathas.

A strong neighbour like Peshwa was anything but safe. The potential threat from the Peshwa was not over when the war in Europe was declared between England, France and Spain, which lasted with intervals of comparative peace till 1762. All these factors were responsible for a marked strengthening of Bombay.

The growth of the Co's. political status went hand in hand with the social and economic development of Bombay. By the end of 1764 Bombay had been rendered impregnable and the population reached a figure of 1,00,000. The Co. followed a policy of peaceful negotiations with the Peshwas till 1777 when Mr. William Hornby assumed the Office of the Governor of Bombay. The decade ending 1780 witnessed the debut of Bombay as a military power. The garrison was greatly strengthened on the advice of Lord Clive.

During the confusion that followed the conflict for the throne of Peshwa after the death of Baji Rao, the Co. took advantage of the situation and captured Salsette. The hostilities with the Maratha, however, came to a close in 1782 by the treaty of Salbai, whereby Bombay gained permanent possession of Salsette, Elephanta, Karanja and Hog Islands, but gave back Bassein and all Conquests in Gujarat to Peshwas. Raghunathrao was made prisoner of the Peshwas. The treaty, however, did not have a lasting
effect and the Co. had to meet the Peshwa in open battle at Kirkee in which the latter was finally defeated.

The annexation of the Deccan which followed the battle of Kirkee and the dethronement of Peshwa, was one of the great events which contributed to the making of the modern city of Bombay. Free and uninterrupted trade between the port and the mainland which had suffered greatly in the past from the jealous restrictions of the Maratha Government, was thereby assured. The period that followed the struggle and victory over Peshwas was a period of rapid development of Bombay. Among the Chief military and political events which occurred just before the middle of the 19th century, were the appointment of a British resident at Sawantvadi in 1833, the inclusion of Angria's Colaba in British territory in 1841, the bombardment of Aden in 1839, the assumption of rights to administer the affairs of Kolhapur in 1842, the conquest of Sindh in 1843 and the annexation of Satara in 1843. These actions doubtless served to impress upon the public mind the fact that Bombay was the paramount power in Western India.

The consolidation of power of the Co. in India and its transfer to the crown in 1857 ushered a new age in the life of Bombay city. It became the Capital of Bombay presidency controlling not only the adjoining territory, but the whole of Saurashtra, Gujarat, Maharastra, Karnatak and the coastal strip of land known as Konkan. Ever since Bombay has been enjoying the status of a state Capital in India.
The peaceful development of the city for the last one century has elevated the city to the status of 'Urbs prima in Indis'. The city is now the nucleus of the industrial region of Western India and yields so much of revenue as to make up the budgetary deficit of the state. The city recently became a bone of contest between the two component units of Bombay State viz. Maharashtra and Gujarat during the reorganisation of states on linguistic basis. The formation of a bilingual state of Bombay in 1956 could not satisfy either the Maharastrians or the Gujaratis, and the inevitable had to be done - the bifurcation of Bombay State into Gujarat and Maharashtra, from May 1960. Maharashtra, however, was holding the triumph cards by having a large number of Marathi speaking people in the city of Bombay and therefore could justify its claim for Bombay city. In addition to that, the areas surrounding Bombay are all Marathi speaking.

Bombay to-day is the Capital of Maharashtra, though its importance to the nation is equally great.