Chapter VI

IMPACT OF DUTCH TRADE AND COMMERCE

Dutch Administration

In 1610, the Coromandel factories were organised into a directorate with Pulicat as its headquarters. In 1615, the Coromandel directorate was raised to the status of a government. Normally, ‘governments’ were organised only in territories where the Company had sovereign authority, but an exception was made in favour of the Coromandel coast in view of its special importance.1

The relations between the Coromandel government and the authorities at home was, for the most part, indirect, and occasional letters to and from the Heeren XVII and sometimes the different ‘chambers’ (Kamer) constituted the chief point of contact. At times, the Heeren XVII would issue instructions to the coast government concerning matters of internal administration without referring to Batavia. Their increasing concern at the growth of illegal private trade of the Company’s employees in many parts of Asia led to the appointment of Adriaan van Rheede van Meydregt tot Drakensteyn as Superintendent in 1684 with extraordinary powers of supervision, enquiry and punishment which, in Coromandel, caused a great deal of unnecessary suffering among the Dutch factors.2

The coast factories were staffed by officers of several distinct classes chief factors (opperkoopman), factors (koopman), under-factors (onderkoopman), bookkeepers (boekhouder), clerks and assistants. The division of the employees into several

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2 Ibid., pp.199-200.
classes was not strictly hierarchical in nature, nor did it represent any specialisation of functions, except in the case of book-keepers. It was mainly an honorary classification and implied little more than differences in salary. In the later decades of the seventeenth century, the governor of the Coromandel coast had a monthly salary of 200 florins, while the chief factors, factors and under factors were paid 80, 60 and 36 florins respectively per mensem.3

The opperhoofd in each factory generally conducted business with the local merchants, made the necessary arrangements for the manufacture and procurement of cloth and supervised all financial matters. The second officer was responsible, among other things, for drawing up the invoices for the cargo exported from the factory. If there was a third officer, his chief duty was to go out on official tours. The clerks, book-keepers, and assistants were often entrusted with specific functions, and had separate designations such as cashier, keeper of invoices, ledger-keeper etc. The Dutch officer, who collected toll from the outer town of Nagapattinam, was known as the adigar, a local name for revenue officials in Thanjavur. Besides the factors, assistants etc., the Coromandel factories were served by a large body of miscellaneous employees, including a priest, a school-teacher, sacristans, chief surgeons, under-surgeons and trumpeters. The Indian employees of the Company included interpreters, Persian-knowing clerks, blacksmiths, carpenters and a number of menials such as domestic servants, palanquin bearers, stable-boys, torch-bearers etc., many of whom were employed for purposes of display, intended to impress the local people. A garrison of Dutch and Indian soldiers was maintained at Fort Geldria under a Captain.

At other places, the Company chiefly depended on Indian ‘peons’ for the purposes of defence. In 1678, as a part of the general economy drive, the number of

3 Ibid.,p.200.
employees in Coromandel was drastically reduced. The garrison at Fort Geldria was now reduced to 100 Dutch soldiers, besides 13 officers and 30 Indian ‘peons’.4

In Coromandel, the territorial possessions of the Company were of little consequence. Part of Nagapattinam, the area enclosed by the fortifications, fell into their hands after the expulsion of the Portuguese. Besides, the villages of Wansiwake and Erikan near Pulicat, the ten villages near Nagapattinam, formerly in the possession of the Portuguese, places acquired by the Company in course of the seventeenth century. The Nagapattinam villages passed into their hands as a result of their conquest of the Portuguese colony and they were confirmed in their possession by a grant of the Thanjavur nayak. The other villages were obtained as gifts from local rulers. In the administration of these villages, the Company appears to have been generally guided by local customs. In Pulicat, for instance, the peasants had to pay five-eighth of their crop as tax to the Company in accordance with the old rate. Besides, an annual capitation tax was payable by everybody, excepting the Brahmins and prostitutes. The Dutch tried to modify the harshness of this system of heavy taxation by allowing the peasants to sell their crop and pay in cash. In former times, payment in kind was insisted on and often the peasants were forced to buy at exorbitant rates the grains they themselves had paid as taxes. In the villages near Pulicat, the Company appointed some Indian employees to collect taxes in grains, but as they proved to be undependable, the Dutch, following the local custom, leased out the villages to the highest bidder in 1678.5

In the latter half of the century, the Company also occasionally succeeded in securing the lease of important coastal towns like Pulicat and Sadaraspatam and thus acquired temporary administrative authority in some parts of Coromandel. Besides,

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at Nagapattinam the right to collect tolls from the ‘outer town’, i.e., the part which
was outside the area of the fort, was granted to the Company by the Nayak of
Thanjavur.

The contracts with the local potentates in some places like Pulicat gave the
Company the right to arrest and punish any weavers or painters who failed to carry
out their contracts.

**Dutch Society**

The development of Dutch colonies on the coast was helped by the
Company’s policy of permitting marriages with Indian women adopted as early as
1614. The only condition laid down by the Company was that the prospective brides
must first accept Christianity.\(^6\) In 1614, for the first time, a number of Dutch soldiers
married Indian women. Again, in 1622, when the common practice of keeping
concubines was prohibited by orders from Batavia, in one-day 38 persons got
married to their Indian mistresses at Pulicat, and the Governor of the coast factories
arranged a wedding feast to celebrate the nuptials.

The policy of mixed marriages was highly commended by Wemmer van
Berchem, during whose administration it was first introduced. “This is the only
means,” he wrote, “whereby we must hold and maintain our power in India, as the
Portuguese have done before us”. The married soldiers were treated with special
favour and allowed to live in the fort, at least during the rainy season. In the latter
decades of the century, a large proportion of the population at Pulicat consisted of
*mestizos*, i.e., children of mixed Dutch-Indian marriages,\(^7\) and *castizos*, or *quadroons*.\(^8\)

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\(^{6}\) Ahsan Jan Qaisar, *The Indian Response to European Technology and Culture (A.D.1498-
1707)*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1982, p.117.

\(^{7}\) Wil O. Dijk, *Seventeenth-Century Burma and the Dutch East India Company, 1634-1680*,
Nieuhof mentions one particular caste called ‘Thiola’ which frequency inter-married with the Dutch.

A letter from the English factors at Pulicat, written in 1622, thus sums up the manner of living of the Dutch men who were married to Indians. All those that marry here to blacks were bound and tied to everlasting service in India and could not return to their country.

Marriages between Dutch men and women on the coast were not infrequent. In fact, the Coromandel factories were a very good marriage market for Dutch maidens. In 1625, six Dutch girls stopped at Pulicat on their way to Batavia and five of them got engaged to local Dutch employees within a few days. Married employees were given an additional allowance, and many often got married just to be able to claim this allowance and then got rid of their wives. In order to check this practice, Hans de Haze recommended in 1619 that as few persons as possible should be given permission to get married.

At Pulicat, the Dutch quarter of the town had houses built in the Dutch style and even an avenue with three parallel rows of trees. The fort was situated in the middle of the town and surrounded by a wide moat. It had four stone bastions and a stone wall. The houses of the chief officers were inside the fort wall and furnished well. There was also a church within the fort where the Dutch minister used to preach regularly every day. The assistants and soldiers for the most part had their lodings outside the fort.

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The Dutch sector of the town or the colonial urban settlement was generally located close to the sea, except some stray cases. The Dutch merchants lived in the rented houses of the Indians at Tiruppapuliyur temporarily in the beginning of the 17th century.\(^\text{10}\)

Baldaeus, who was the minister on the coast during the ‘sixties, left a detailed account of the daily habits and the manner of living of the Dutch in Coromandel. They had adopted many of the local habits, like washing the mouth after every meal and chewing betel leaves. In Coromandel, the Dutch also commonly took a siesta. The major meal was taken between 3 and 4 in the afternoon. Their diet was on the whole the same as in Holland and a large proportion of the meat and bacon required for the Coromandel factors was supplied from Holland as hopes of procuring victuals cheaply on the coast had proved to be false. The usual drink at midday and in the afternoon was a mixture of water, beer and sugar boiled together. Occasionally some Spanish wine or rum was added. Spanish, *Rhenish* and French wines were sent in limited quantities from Holland. Shiraz wine from Persia and Indian *arak* were also popular. Tea-drinking had recently come into fashion and Chinese tea was considered the best. According to Baldeus, some Dutch people, especially the women, drank too much tea; he also disapproved of the habit of mixing sugar-candy with it. Green tea-leaves were also used as salad in those days on board the Dutch ships.

The economy measures at the end of the seventeenth century came as a great blow to the Dutch employees. Some lost their jobs as being redundant while many others left of their own will as the reduced salaries were no longer sufficiently attractive. A few years later, Superintendent Adriaan van Rheede ordered a further

reduction in the number of officers, and all widows of Dutch officers as well as retired married men, with the exception of the chief factors, were sent to Batavia.

The Dutch community in the greater part of Coromandel was now reduced to a small body of bachelor employees who came to reside there for short periods of service.

The uniqueness of the Dutch Company’s performance in Asia cannot be defined in terms of their feeling of racial, religious or cultural superiority – these were common to all colonizers. The most eye-catching feature of the Dutch case is its ambiguity, which was the outcome of the merchant’s monopolistic mind, balancing groups its productive role in the Company’s system\(^\text{11}\).

**Dutch and ‘Chief Merchants’**

The European enclaves were a characteristic feature of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century European presence in Asia, serving as centers of trade and European society far beyond the frontiers of metropolitan Europe. Despite the protection of fortifications and control of the sea, the enclaves could never be completely isolated from their hinterlands, for not only did they receive their trade goods from the interior, but the changing local political situation frequently threatened their survival. Moreover, the enclaves themselves had their definite non-European character, a population of local merchants, artisans and laborers which outnumbered the Europeans. These resident Asians provided goods, services and often capital for European trade; they were, as Holden Furber has observed, partners in European enterprise.\(^\text{12}\)

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Dutch settlement and trade, a major influence on seventeenth-century Coromandel history, occurred where the production of cotton textiles, the Coast’s chief export article, was most concentrated. Three areas held sufficient concentrations of weavers to qualify as industrial regions. Two of these were associated with river deltas, the Cauvery delta to the south and the Krishna/Godaveri delta to the north. The third, situated in the center of Coromandel, lacked special geographical features, being the thirty or so miles of coast and a narrow belt of the interior between San Thome and Pulicat. Yet despite its undistinguished geography, this region was Coromandel’s major source of those patterned calico varieties in greatest demand in the spice markets of the Indonesian Archipelago.

As early as 1608, Achyutappa (or ‘Malaya’ as he is more frequently referred to by the Dutch) was apparently engaged by Jacob de Bitter as an interpreter in the Gingee area, while negotiating with the Dalavay and Nayaka for a factory site.

Malaya, probably a balija chetty from the Pulicat region, was one of the most outstanding merchants of his time, both in the scale of his commercial operations and in the extent of his political influence. He was a major ship owner and overseas trader to South East Asia and Ceylon, a supplier of textiles to the companies and a wholesale merchant in imported goods. The two main bases for his fleet were Pulicat and Devanampattinam, but he traded from a number of other Coromandel ports from Masulipatnam to Nagapattinam. His ships left Coromandel ports and are known to have sailed to Arakan, Pegu, Tenasserim, Kedah, Acheh and Ceylon.

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13 Ibid. p.323.
A significant part of Malaya’s financial investments was his speculation in revenue farming of coastal territories. Further, Malaya appears to have taken a lease of the Danish fort in Tranquebar at a time when the Danes were unable to prosecute their trade at this port. The Dutch were negotiating with him to get a temporary sub-lease of this port in 1631, but the Nayak of Thanjavur intervened and prevented this deal.16

After arriving in Pulicat, Malaya quickly established himself as the Dutch Company’s most important broker. Yet as important as Malaya was to Dutch trade, by the 1630 he chose to make even greater investments in revenue farming. The first figures revealing the extent of Malaya’s participation in Pulicat’s textile trade, available for the year 1632, show that Malaya received a Dutch contract to supply 23,000 pagodas in textiles while seven other merchants were to supply a total of 9,000 pagodas. The burden which this contract placed on Malaya’s capital resources depended on whether the Dutch supplied any of their capital. Assuming that they did not and the entire capital required for this year came from Malaya’s resources, Malaya would have had to supply local weavers with between one-third and one-half of the total value of the cloth in advance. At a maximum, therefore, he would have had to supply no more than 12,000 pagodas from his own capital resources. This level of investment in cloth brokerage may be compared with Malaya’s subsequent investment in revenue farming. In 1633 Malaya succeeded in persuading the ruler of Chandragiri, whose area of authority encompassed Pulicat, to grant him Pulicat’s revenue farm on payment of 33,000 pagodas, considerably more than twice the investment he had made in Dutch trade a year before.17

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One area of investment in trade requiring more capital than brokerage was shipbuilding and an independent participation in overseas trade. Malaya’s trade with lower Burma (Pegu) was sufficient to require him to maintain an agent there. But the limited available evidence does not suggest that Malaya’s trade with the richer markets of Southeast Asia was great. The Dutch register of ships kept at Batavia mentions only one ship belonging to Malaya. In 1633 it sailed from Coromandel with a cargo of cloth for the Malay Peninsula. Six months later it returned with 60 tons of tin.18

The Malaya’s younger brother, Chinnana,19 was already holding a position of authority in Devanampattinam in the early 1620s. Chinnana in the 1630s participated in the struggle for the throne of Chandragiri, leading an armed force in support of the contender favored by the Nayak of Gingee. When Malaya died in 163420, Chinnana chose to remain in Devanampattinam and in proximity to the court of Gingee. In 1636-37, he continued to extend his influence by acting as the Nayak’s emissary to a peace conference with the Nayaks of Thanjavur and Madurai. At about this time another relation, Chinnana’s brother Sesadra, was a member of the Nayak of Gingee’s council of advisors. A third brother was located in a port a few miles north of Devanampattinam, Pondicherry.

Entrenched on the coast and influential at court, Chinnana’s family in the 1630’s was a major factor in Gingee’s politics. But Chinnana’s strength was not all that it appeared. His family was far from unified behind his leadership.21

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18 Ibid.p.325.
importantly, he lacked the military power to support his exposed political position. The seriousness of this last weakness became clear in 1638, shortly after Chinnana returned to Devanampattinam from the peace conference of the three Nayaks. At this time Chinnana’s nephew, Konara Chetty, a resident of Gingee, quarrelled with the powerful Gingee noble, Tupaki Krishnappa Nayaks. Konara fled to Devanampattinam and his uncle’s protection with Krishnappa Nayak in pursuit. Although he possessed a sturdy house, Chinnana could not withstand a siege. The briefness of his resistance suggests that he was unable to organize a defense. Krishnappa’s terms were costly. He not only demanded Konara Chetty’s person, but also an indemnity of 40,000 pagodas, three elephants and the lands which Chinnana held in the vicinity of Devanampattinam. With this loss and the promise of considerable insecurity in the future, Devanampattinam and Gingee were much less attractive to Chinnana and he made plans to leave. He first sent 200,000 pagodas, his ‘principal means’ the Dutch report, to Pulicat for safe-keeping. Then, after a year of rebuilding Devanampattinam, he took his immediate family to Pulicat, finally assuming his late elder brother’s position as the Dutch Company’s leading broker.22

Chinnana’s arrival in Pulicat in 1639 occurred on the eve of significant developments in the central Coromandel Coast. Chinnana attended Sri Ranga’s court in 1643, offering a large gift and a promise of service, beginning a final phase in his political career. Sri Ranga offered Chinnana an opportunity to control a large section of the coast south of Pulicat and including Madras, if he could displace the rebellious chief who then held the region. With Dutch support and artillery, Chinnana made rapid advances, and at one point the English feared he intended to control no less than the entire southern half of the coast from Pulicat to Nagapattinam in the Cauvery delta. Their fears, however, proved to be unfounded. In 1644 Sri Ranga became involved in a dispute with the Nayak of Gingee, and

because he suspected Chinnana’s ties with Gingee, he had Chinnana imprisoned. When Chinnana gained his release a few months later and was able to become even closer to Sri Ranga.\[23\]

Initially, the Dutch had supported Chinnana’s political ambitions as a means to threaten the English in Madras. But in late 1644 they apparently began to fear losing control over their broker, for they took the extreme measure of imprisoning members of Chinnana’s family still in Pulicat in order to insure Chinnana’s payment of his outstanding debts. Chinnana, angered by what must have appeared a betrayal, used his influence with Sri Ranga to mobilize a force of 50,000 men to blockade Pulicat. The siege was close enough to place the Dutch in serious difficulties by August 1645. But the Dutch were spared the embarrassment of having to make forced concessions to their former broker, for Golconda chose this time to launch its invasion of the south.\[24\]

Late in 1645 Mir Jumla, like Chinnana a merchant with political and military ambitions, but unlike Chinnana completely successful in realizing them, began to move his troops toward Udayagiri, Sri Ranga’s first major fortress guarding the way into his dominions. Sri Ranga ordered Chinnana to lift the siege of Pulicat and take his army to reinforce Udayagiri. There Chinnana joined his nephew, Konara, who on his release from captivity in Gingee in 1644 had evidently followed Chinnana into Sri Ranga’s service and taken charge of Udayagiri’s garrison.\[25\] Mir Jumla brought his army before Udayagiri early in 1646. Perhaps sensing the ability of the general leading Golconda’s forces, Chinnana and Konara decided not to resist; instead they surrendered the fortress in exchange for free passage for themselves and their troops. Mir Jumla went on to take Chandragiri and force Sri Ranga into exile,

But for Chinnana and Konara, defeat at Udayagiri meant a return to trade. Chinnana accepted a Dutch invitation to return to Pulicat where his activities over the next decade remain obscure.  

With the exit of members of the Malaya family from Madras in 1655-56, the dominant role played by these merchants in European trade was virtually over. One final act remained, serving as an epilogue to this family’s history as prominent figures in Coromandel. After leaving Krishnappa’s camp, Konara accepted the invitation of the Nayak of Thanjavur to trade in Nagapattinam, at this time a Portuguese enclave. Then in 1658, the Dutch took Nagapattinam from the Portuguese. This made conditions in Nagapattinam, where his nephew was already established, sufficiently appealing to attract Chinnana from Pulicat. In 1659 Chinnana agreed to farm the revenues of all of Thanjavur’s ports for 47,000 pagodas. He died, however, later the same year, and once again his ambitions were unrealized.

During the first half of the century the Dutch and English traded through members of the Malaya family without giving more than passing consideration to the consequences of permitting one merchant to gain a near monopoly over their respective investments. But following the decline of the Malaya family, the authorities in Pulicat and Madras had an opportunity to examine their policies. The Dutch made good use of this opportunity. Without Chinnana acting as ‘Chief Merchant’, the Dutch experienced difficulties in their relations with various petty merchants who now served as their brokers. Frequently these merchants defaulted on their debts; more seriously, their intramural competition for cloth decreased their power over the market. The Dutch found they were receiving lower quality cloth at

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steadily increasing prices. So it was as a solution to these problems so the VOC established into a small joint-stock company.

**Dutch Joint Stock Companies**

An interesting innovation the VOC tried out on the Coromandel coast with a view to solving or at least minimizing the problem of bad debts was the institution of the so-called ‘joint stock companies’ in the region\(^{28}\). The innovation in this arrangement consisted essentially in the fact that the funds needed for investment in textiles were raised jointly by the intermediary merchants themselves rather than being provided by the Company in the form of advances to the customary extent of 50 to 70 per cent of the value of the contract. Each merchant was supposed to subscribe to the pool of funds in accordance with his share in the total value of the contract given out by the Company. These merchants were also encouraged to operate in different segments of the production areas so as to minimize competition amongst themselves leading to a rise in the cost price of the textiles procured. In many ways the Dutch joint-stock companies were the precursors of the modern multinational, multiproduct business corporations. Their trade was worldwide and the centralized distribution system linked to wholesale marketing arrangements meant that special steps had to be taken to ensure the standardization of the import goods produced in conditions of individual artisan enterprises.\(^{29}\) This was a highly welcome development from the point of view of the Company.

Laurens Pit, the Dutch Governor of Coromandel (1652-63), effected the first recorded formal union of merchants into an association or company in Pulicat\(^{30}\).

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During his tenure, he formed four such companies, two to supply longcloth or Guinea cloth, one for embroidered muslins called betbiles and moris, and another for ternates.

This was the beginning of a process expanded by the Dutch throughout Coromandel and followed about two decades later by the English in their settlements and factories, and finally by the French in Pondichery. 31

Pit, the Dutch Governor of Coromandel, reported immediate improvement in the terms and conditions of trade after the formation of the Companies in Pulicat. Prices tended to steady and the quantity of the goods had improved. There was less difficulty in securing the quantity demanded. Above all, it had enabled the Dutch to dispense entirely with money advances; on the contrary, there was a credit in favour of the merchants of over 10,000 pagodas every month. 32

Pit’s successor, Cornelis Speelman, extended the amalgamation merchants into joint-stock partnerships. Some places responded more favourably than others and certain types of commodities were not susceptible to purchase in this way. The middle Coromandel ports Pulicat, Sadaspatnam and Devanampattinam saw formation of the first associations from 1663 to 1675. 33

In the south was the process even slower to make a beginning. Merchants balked at contributing to a common fund and were reluctant to reveal their credit. Eventually merchant associations were formed in Nagapattinam also to handle the annual order, especially after the Dutch capital shifted there in 1689. It was difficult

to organize through these associations the purchase of goods such as painted muslins that passed through many stages in the manufacture.

The formation of the joint-stock took place in the presence of a senior officer of the Company. Both the merchants and the Company officers had a say in the admission of persons as shareholders. In the case of the merchants, caste considerations and good social relations among them were important factors. There were, no doubt, a number of mixed-caste companies, but these were formed of merchants who had worked together and built up a confidence in business relations. On the foundation of the company and before the signing of the contract cash had to be deposited to form the fund in the presence of the officer of the Company. This was a vital factor for the Companies as they suspected that the merchants would not bring in their contributions and would rely on the cash advances supplied by the Company, thus defeating one of the purposes of the formation of the joint-stocks. The Dutch were tighter in their control of this common fund, which was lodged in the Company’s treasury, from which the merchants drew.

Once the contract had been signed, merchants drew the money and sent it out to the weaving villages to make the first deposits on orders. It was in their interests to have the first deliveries made at the Company’s godowns as quickly as possible. The Companies attempted to maintain a balance between allowing the merchants to get heavily into arrears and the necessity to provide them with the liquidity to make such large investments in the villages.

Thus in the 1760s, the VOC procured textiles both at Nagapattinam and at Porto Novo through six joint stock companies each. At Nagapattinam, one of the partnership companies consisted of Palikonda Kistna Chettiar and Venkatasala Mudaliar, while the other had Kondapilly Venkata Kistna Rama Chetty and
Kondapilly Venkatasalam Chetty as members. The four individual merchants constituting a company each were Tirumani Chetty, Ramalinga Pillay, Muthu Venkatalinga Mudaliar and Godawarti Sadasiva Chetry. In Porto Novo, Tambu Naikar and Rangasay Chetty constituted one of the two partnership companies, while the other consisted of Papa Chetty and Ramalinga Chetty. The four single merchant companies there consisted of Masulimani Mudaliar, Shiva Chidambaram Mudaliar, Vedenada Muthu Chetry and Rama Sama Chetty.34

Putting Out System

One of the main discoveries made by the Dutch company attempting to develop the textiles trade from Coromandel Coast in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the existence of a vertical link between marketing and industrial production. The Coromandel weavers seemed to have adopted two distinct approaches to the problem of adjusting output to demand. There were those who wove traditional and well-known varieties of cloth for the open market. But more often they appeared to work for particular merchants who provided working capital in return for a guaranteed supply of cloth which was frequently of a special type. The functional distinction between the two systems does not necessarily imply that they were mutually exclusive in practice. The same weavers who worked to order during the busy export season might decide to work at their own risk during the slack months. But whichever system was in operation, it was final customers without any intermediaries at all. Irrespective of whether his source of capitalization was mercantile or self-generated, he was strongly dependent on the advances has been described as an Indian version of the Verlagssystem or are some similarities with the

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“putting out” system in Europe\textsuperscript{35}, including, advance financing. The Indian artisan sturdily clung to his independence, his control over his tools and his raw materials. The weaver would accept money from the merchant and kept for himself the freedom to use this money on purchasing and repairing his loom, purchasing his cotton thread, his dyes, alum, wax and the many other things necessary for his craft. In fact, the weavers had a strong bargaining position when dealing with the merchants due to the high demand for their labour, the powerful collective identity and solidarity of weavers in contrast to the competition among merchants, and the assymetries in the contract system, extending far more freedoms to the weavers than to the merchants.

The first contract was made on 17\textsuperscript{th} April 1665 between V.O.C. Governor Cornells Speelman, and 17 painters/printers of Nagapattinam and Nagore. The native artisans professed to make a contract out of their free will with Governor Cornelis Speelman, so that they may paint/print all kinds of cloths, which were contracted out to them by the merchants of the Company and refrain from paint/printing any cloth for anybody without his orders. Further, all the cloths which they might paint/print for others should be confiscated but this was to be on the understanding that they also should get all the works of the company on contract. In return they promised to supply good quality cloths, good chay (colour and decently painted, Printed cloths). In case some bad quality cloths were supplied in return for the advance it was to be brought and shown to the Dutch captian of Nagapattinam. He would first select according to the qualith of the cloths, would be

sold elsewhere outside. It was laid down that it 3 or 4 small holes or darns were found in one packet, it would be taken back by the painters/ printers and it would be seized by the Company. They would along with their whole group /party contract collectively for cloths of merchants of the Company and would remain each other’s security for the money which was advanced to them the company.\textsuperscript{36}

Unlike other port towns, we do not hear of any big merchant operating at Nagapattinam. Perhaps the V.O.C. took advantage of this situation and tried to organise production based on such group contracts. Such arrangements would be more effective in subjecting the greater number of artisans to Dutch control. The contracts involved restrictions imposed on members of a contracting group.\textsuperscript{37}

It was laid down that in case of defiance, the offending member would be ostracised from the group. In case of continuance of quarrel among members their houses and goods were to be confiscated by the Company. And if somebody desired to discontinue work, without fulfilling contract, he would be banned from the Company’s service. Of the Sixtyone persons contracting with the Company, four persons were to be responsible for all the transactions between the Company and the particular group of artisans. It seems that initially these conditions contributed positively in favour of the V.O.C.’s monopoly status at Nagapattinam. Cornelis Speelman wrote in his memoir that these contracts with separate groups of artisans led to a regular flow of cloth to the Comapny. He refers to the supply of ramboetins, tapesarasse with flower work, baby cloths of tape sarasse, tape chindos, ballatios (smooth cotton cloths specially produced Nagapattinam), black and white tafiachelas, blue boelongs (hei scarfs), brandams, tapeturias, sarassa gobar, salabous, drai gobar, dragon tapy and chergien of Nagapattinam. These cloths were not

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid. p.406.
produced at Nagapattinam earlier. These were now exported to Pegu, Macassar, Japan and Batavia. Speelman counselled the establishment of apprentices to weave cloths in the Company weaving villages. In order to ensure quality Speehnan suggested that inspectors of V.O.C. should visit the artisans when they put on the loom.\footnote{Ibid.}

It seems it produced good results at the initial stages. It continued to be an economic liability in the subsequent period.

**Dutch Coinage**

The European Companies, like every substantial merchant, had to secure pagodas for their trade. They could do this in a variety of ways. They could import un-minted gold and take it to the nearest mint to the port where they wanted to make their investment. If, for example, goods were to be purchased in Masulipatnam they would have to secure Golconda pagodas, and Devanampattinam or Porto Novo pagodas if they wished to invest in Cuddalore or Porto Novo. If they did not have gold but only silver, they could sell this silver to the merchants or to the mints at market rates and purchase pagodas for an equivalent amount. Yet a third method was to sell minted coins of foreign origin and purchase pagodas to that value. These could be silver coins such as rix dollars, reals of eight or gold ducats of European origin, silver coins of Asian origin such as the Persian abbasis, or gold coins such as the Japanese koubang. The loss on the transactions when foreign coins were exchanged for local coins could be high.\footnote{Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast 1650-1740*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1986, p.298.}

Under these circumstances, all the Companies desired to secure minting rights in their settlements on the best possible terms from the sovereign. The rulers
were quite receptive to requests for such rights from large investors such as the Companies. The Dutch were among the first to be favoured with these rights in Pulicat, where they were permitted in 1647 to mint *pagodas* of standard weight and fineness. They were also allowed to coin silver and gold *fanams* and copper *nevels* and *kasus*. Out of the minting duty and profits, half accrued to the state and half to the Dutch. To this was later added permission to coin silver rupees, and all these grants were confirmed by the Mughals. This facility of the Dutch had proved of great advantage to their trade over other Companies.\(^40\)

The coinage of Coromandel coast was based on gold for high denominations and a few silver coins and copper coins for small denominations and for circulation among the poor sections of the community. A number of gold coins are known to have been in circulation under the great, ancient, medieval Tamil and Telugu Kingdoms. Under the Vijayanagar Empire the *Pon* or *Varaha*, became a standard coin of high denomination throughout the territory. Large payments in commercial and revenue transactions were made in it. It was the coin widely known to the Europeans as the Pagoda, because of the impression of the temple *gopuramon* the coin. The gold for these coins came from the gold mines of Central Karnataka and Deccan. Large amount of gold could have come from Sumatra, Malacca, Burma, Thailand and the Persian Gulf. The influx of gold was necessary for the steady supply of coins in circulation, in view of the expanding maritime and inland trade of the region. The states minted coins and put them into circulation. In the sixteenth century the Portuguese began to bring in gold to finance their trade in Malabar and Coromandel. Silver was lesser in usage in South India. But copper had an important

\(^40\) *Ibid.* p.299.
place in the coinage of the region, in which coins of lower denominations were minted.\footnote{J.Rajamohamad, ‘Dutch Colonial Coinage and the Maritime Trade of Coromandel Coast in the 17-18 Centuries’, \textit{South Indian History Congress Proceeding} Volume, 30 Annual Session, Kannur, 2010, p.556.}

Besides the coins in higher and lower denominations, there was also a coin of medium value that was current in transaction of moderate scale. This was the \textit{panam}, referred to by the Europeans, as \textit{fanam}, a gold coin with an alloy of silver and copper. It was varied in its gold contents in local areas. Much of the transaction with weavers and cotton merchants was done in \textit{fanam} and they had been minted in large quantities.

During the seventeenth century there was a multiplicity of mints in the interior and along the east coast an index for the increasing trade and demand for money supply. The Europeans added to the profusion of these mints by setting up their own mints in their settlements where they were also able to get minting rights from the ruling houses.

\textit{Pagodas} were minted at Alambaram, Sadraspattanam, Devanampattanam, Porto Novo, Thanjavur and Madurai by the respective states. It was the major currency in large scale commercial transactions. All the merchants dealt with each other in \textit{Pagodas} in overseas and inland trade. All the contracts with the Europeans were made in \textit{pagodas}. The European companies like every substantial merchants had to secure \textit{Pagodas} for their trade. They imported gold and took it to the nearest port where they want to invest. For example, they had to secure Devanampattinam and Porto Novo \textit{Pagodas} if they wished to invest in Cuddalore and Porto Novo. They also sold the minted coins of foreign origin and purchased \textit{Pagodas} to the value.\footnote{Ibid.}
Under these circumstances all the companies desired to secure minting rights in their settlements on the best possible terms. Let the rulers of the region, the Dutch were the first to be favoured with such a right in Pulicat in 1647 to mint pagodas of standard weight. They were also allowed to coin silver and gold panams and copper navels and kasus. The profit out of minting was shared between the Sultan of Golkonda and the Dutch. They also minted, Mughal rupees, later, when Mughals took over that territory. This facility proved to be of great advantage to their trade over the other companies.

The Dutch inherited from the Portuguese Nagappattinam in 1658 where there was a mint. They got the minting rights from the Nayak of Thanjavur, to make gold, silver and copper Coins at Nagapattinam in 1662, the profits of which were to be shared between the company and the Nayak. In 1676 Maratha Ekoji entered into partnership with the Dutch for joint minting of Pagodas at Nagapattinam which became the exclusive currency in the kingdom and further to the north.43

The Dutch invested in Coromandel trade about 3, 00,000 Pagodas and they became the major bullion importers during seventeenth century. By 1670 there was a drop in the price of the gold throughout India. This was due to the Dutch import of the gold into Coromandel from Japan and China. The Dutch had exclusive privilege to trade in Japan ports from 1660 and conducted flourishing trade. The Japan gold coin, the koubangs, the 21 carat gold coin, bought at cheaper rate in Japan and melted in the Coromandel Dutch mints with high profits.44

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43 Ibid.p.557.
44 Gristof Glamann, Dutch-Asiatic Trade 1620-1740, Copenhagen, 1958, pp.62-68.
The Nagappattinam *Pagoda* had a four armed deity on the obverse with a *garuda* on its left. The reverse was convex with granulated surface. The Pulicat *pagoda* had a figure, a Vishnu Standing under a canopy on the obverse and *Nagari* legend in the reverse, a close copy of the Golkonda *Pagoda*. The Dutch *Pagodas* had a standard weight of 52 grains of 21 carat fineness. The gold was mixed with an alloy of silver and copper, melted together in proportion of 4 parts of fine silver to 1 part of copper 13/8 parts of this alloy was mixed to 85/8 parts of pure gold and melted together out of which mixture of *pagodas* were made.\(^45\)

In 1673, Ekoji consented to the Dutch company to mint Nagapattinam *Pagoda* and *fanam* in the fashion and alloy content as in the Thanjavur territory, 20.7 carat for pagoda and 8.4 carat for fanam. To distinguish from the Pulicat *pagoda* the word “N” was inserted in the dye of the coin.

Quality, standard and superior fineness of the Dutch *Pagoda*, gave them a good reputation of wide currency throughout the region. They had extensive factory jurisdictions and the currency of the *pagodas* was wide. For example, the Nagappattinam *Pagoda* was current up to Bimilipattanam in the north. The Dutch paid the revenue to the State in *Pagodas*. The local traders preferred trade with the Dutch and they got great advantage and profit in payment in *pagodas*. The English who were minting their *Pagoda* in Madras could not match the Dutch in this respect. Further the Dutch Pulicat and Nagappattinam *pagodas* passed at a higher exchange rate of 22 % than the English *Pagoda*.\(^46\)

With the decline of Pulicat as a centre of Dutch trade at the last decade of seventeenth century, its mint ceased to be of importance. The Nagappattinam mint


\(^{46}\) *Tamil Nadu Archives, Despatches to England 1681–86*, 6 April, 1683, p.3.
gained more importance and the *pagoda* coin minted here was current in all the textile centers of Coromandel upto *Godavari* Delta and in the interior weaving centres. The Dutch were very vigilant about the standard and fineness of their coinage and the mint masters were taken to task in the event of fraud.

The *ariam* was also an important currency in Coromandel trade, between companies and merchants and among the merchants. It was the coin in gold and silver in varying proportions, weight and diverse value. The *fanam* had always Hindu symbols in them. The *PortoNova fanam* was 18 to a *Pagoda*. In Kunimedu and Devanampattinam it was 16 or 17. In Thanjavur it was 16 or 17 and see also in Madurai. The *fanam* minted by the Dutch at Nagappattinam was 3 V2 to 5 grain weight and 8 carats fineness. Most of the quantity of gold brought by the Dutch into Coromandel was minted as *fanams* with enormous profit. Most of the market transactions were in *fanam*. The Dutch played a vital role in the economic life of the region. Monthly payment to the company servants and local employees was made in *fanam*. Small scale importers sold their goods in small quantities to the retails merchants, were paid in *fanam*. The Madurai *fanam* of the Dutch had a good reputation and widely used in textile trade in Madurai, Tirunelveli and Tiruchirappalli. The Dutch mint of Madurai was located in Thiruvellur and a steady supply of the *fanam* here was assured.47

The main denominations of copper money was *Kasu, Doody or Dabbu, Nvel* and *paisa*, they were minted in the mints stretched throughout the coast. These copper coins were much useful for the payment of daily wages and purchase of goods of smaller value. The Dutch at Pulicat coined copper *Aasuoi* 10,8,6,4,2 and 1 denomination with Persian, Arabic of *Nagari* legends on the reverse, on the model of Golkonda copper coins, and on the obverse a human head with the company

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monogram surmounted of Roman numerals of the value. Similarly the Nagappattinam copper Kasu had a human figure on the obverse and Nagappattaiam in Tamil in the reverse. The value of Nagappattinam Aaswahas 80 for one Nagappattinam fanam.

The currency system of the Dutch began to destabilize because of the inferior quality of their pagodas and fanams, in the second quarter of eighteenth century. Debased fanams were produced in the Nagappattinam mint and passed with good quantity coins, causing hardships to the local traders. The Madurai fanam which had a sound reputation began to be defaced, progressively reducing its intrinsic value and its exchange against Pagodas from 18 to 20, 22, 24 and 27 as years passed. This brought serious repercussions to trade, price and quality of goods; similarly the value of Dutch fanam also went down. The Dutch imported bullions or foreign gold coins and exchanged to the fanams with huge profits because of the reduced value of the fanam. The reduced exchange rate of the fanam meant an increase in prices of in the cost of living. Weavers demanded more for their labour and the price of the export cloth went up. Though the Dutch tried remedial measures it was too late since they were losing ground in the Coromandel trade, because of their own deficiencies and the growing competition of the English.48

In 1766 a new Nagappattinam Pagoda was minted by the Dutch for use in Ceylon. But it was not well received in the local market, since the colour of the coin was not uniform. A mint was opened in Tuticorin in 1764 and a new Tuticorin Pagoda was minted from here in 19 carat fineness. This was diverted for textile trade in the Madura coast but it did not attract the traders. In 1770 the fineness of new Nagappattinam pagoda minted at Tuticorin was cut down from 19 carats to 18 and exported to Ceylon for use in elephant trade. In 1781, Nagappattinam was taken

48 Ibid.p.558.
over by the English and the Nagappattinam mint shifted to Colombo. In 1787 silver alloyed rupee coins were issued from Tuticorin mint. The value of which was 4 to 1 Porto Nova Pagoda. These coins were intended for use in textile trade in Madura coast. About the same period gold coin under the name Porto Nova pagodas were struck from here for use in Ceylon.\textsuperscript{49}

The defacement of the Dutch coinage was an index to the decline of their political and administrative authority and in turn shows a declining spiral in commercial activities in Coromandel. Thus by about the third quarter of the eighteenth century the currency system of the Dutch met with many complications and they could not complete with the strongly emerging power of the English politically and commercially and were pushed back paving way to the English system of currency for the days to come.

However, if we consider an overall view of the monetary system of the Coromandel Coast during 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries, the part played by the Dutch in money supply into the region, is commendable. The Nagappattinam Pagoda and Madurai fanam of the Dutch had an honoured place in the commercial history of the Coromandel coast. Export and import trade increased considerably. The maritime traders of the coast took the Coromandel products to the South East Asian countries, Burma, Ceylon and Japan in large quantities. The Dutch imported into the Coromandel unlimited quantities of Bullion and precious metals and enriched the currency system of the region. The liberal supply of the gold coins was an attraction to the local traders and their economic viability gained prosperity.

\textsuperscript{49} Catalogue of coins in the Colombo Museum, part.I, 1940, p.28.
Dutch Shipbuilding in Coromandel Coast

In the seventeenth century, despite the more intense and diverse presence of European navigators in the Asian waters, there is no corresponding increase in the evidence available on Asian shipping and seafaring. There is of course reference to the abundance of Asian sailing craft from the various regions plying the ocean, but even the extent of curiosity displayed by Portuguese writers of the preceding century on the nature and characteristics of this shipping is not present. The Dutch, who appear to have spent more time than other Europeans in recording Asian shipping movements, do not go beyond the superficial facts of these ships. The English had far fewer personnel and were less spread out in Asia than the Dutch, recording only the skimpiest details of Asian shipping. The terminology used by these Europeans only adds to the confusion. Both the English and the Dutch had acquired from the Portuguese their terminology to describe Asian craft. The Portuguese used European terminology to describe Asian craft that, in their eyes, distantly corresponded to the ships with which they were familiar. Thus, Dutch shipping lists would use a variety of terms to describe Asian ships that called at particular ports, terms which were a mix of recognizable Asian names and obviously European ones. Thus, they would describe ships as *fusts, yachts, sloops, brigs, galliots, frigates and phars.* On the other hand, there was a greater use of Asian dockyards by the Europeans and this generated some evidence on their location as well as the methods used in Asian shipbuilding.50

Shipyards are the prime locus of shipbuilding. They are sites of production where a sizeable work-force constructs, assembles, and outfits ships.51

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Ships in the Indian Ocean built in the Malay tradition could and did find specific tasks and continued through the sixteenth century to be the carriers of goods over the open ocean, though now under the watchful eye of Portuguese tax collectors. That impression of stability in Asian shipbuilding through the sixteenth century may well have to do with the pace of change in Europe and the concentration of contemporary writers as well as later historians on the accomplishments of European sailors, obscuring continuing technical advance in Asian shipyards. The drift was possibly toward more specialization as vessels of European design took over some jobs formerly done by locally built ships. In the New World local shipbuilding continued and Europeans adopted some designs for use on inland waterways. There, though Europeans brought their own ships and shipbuilding methods replacing many previous practices, repair and construction of ships of European design was almost immediately a part of overseas settlements. The same was true, if to a lesser extent, in Asia where the Portuguese and after them the Dutch set up yards which produced ships of European design.  

Dutch shipbuilders produced the relatively long bulk carrier by the end of the sixteenth century. The Dutch in spite of their skill in shipbuilding and first-class seamanship appear to have left no trace on Indian ship designing.

The spread of European shipbuilding to the rest of the world continued and at an increasing pace. The secure colonial positions of certain European states in India and Southeast Asia made possible the establishment of permanent shipyards. In the New World shipbuilding became European.

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52 Ibid.
In the early 16th century, the central Coromandel port of Pulicat dominated the trading scene in south-eastern India. Its principal trading links were with Melaka and lower Burma, besides which there was a minor trade to Mergui and the north Sumatran ports, as well as coastal links to Bengal, Malabar and Sri Lanka. There appears no evidence in 16th century documents of a significant central Coromandel shipbuilding tradition. It thus appears unlikely that the very large ships that traded from Coromandel to Melaka were built in south-eastern India; it seems more probable that these were Jongs built in a Southeast Asian centre, either on north Java, or-more likely- in Burma. Indeed, through the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries, though we have references to trade on Coromandel, no mention exists of ship construction of importance at any single major centre. It is likely that there was construction activity on a small scale though, at Kunimedu, Tarangambadi and Nagapattinam, which were in the 16th and 17th centuries centres of timber trade from Malabar. However, it should be stressed that the vessels constructed would be of considerably smaller dimensions than the Jong or larger dhow, and may be identified with what the Portuguese term a champana, and the Dutch a century later designate by the diminutives scheepye and scheepken. All this makes the rise of Narsapur Peta at the close of the 16th century of great importance, representing as it does the first major shipbuilding centre in south-eastern Coromandel for several centuries at a stretch.54

The Dutch established their own facilities for shipbuilding here, employing Coromandel coast carpenters, shipwrights and smiths under the supervision of master-craftsmen of their own nation. The presence of Dutch craftsmen and the use by Dutch of these dockyards of Coromandel coast would have resulted in the transfer of technology in the designing and construction of ships to Coromandel

craftsmen. The more common use of iron nails and iron anchors may have been the result of such influence.\textsuperscript{55}

A review of Dutch trade in the Coromandel coast gives the impression that it was only in the first half of the eighteenth century that its full impact was felt on the domestic economy.

**Dutch Legal Institution**

In Coromandel in this period a diverse and complex body of mercantile practice, Indian customary law and European law is seen to operate side by side. The evidence from the European settlements shows these different systems coexisting uneasily with each other. Indian merchants were bound by their customary laws and practices, which were given sanction by the regional administrations, both Indian and European.

The administration of justice was a matter in which the Dutch took special pride. Even in those parts of India where they did not possess extensive territorial rights, Courts of Justice were established “to decide and grant executions both in criminal and civil matters” concerning their own countrymen, or Indians and others who had placed themselves under Dutch authority.\textsuperscript{56}

The Dutch set up more regulated legal institutions in the east from an earlier date but these institutions did not concern themselves with disputes among Indians, nor was there opportunity for the rise of disputes between Indians and Dutch in private transactions. So while the *Raad van Justitie* (Court of Justice\textsuperscript{57}) with written procedural codes was set up in Pulicat, as in every regional administrative capital,


and then transferred to Nagapattinam with the transfer of the capital, this body did not hear a large number of cases of disputes on mercantile matters among Indians. Governor Mossel (1738-43) did attempt to codify customary law in a document entitled ‘Heathen law among Vellalas and Chetties.’

A general complaint was the paucity of men who had studied law. There was no proper system of advocacy and pleading, the ‘advocate fiscal’ sometimes having to plead “pro” and “contra.” Proceedings were conducted entirely in Dutch, with the help of interpreters.

The all other branches of their administration, the Dutch judiciary was sound and honest.

Religion

The Dutch were never guilty of religious persecution and strikingly contrast with the Portuguese who placed conversion before commerce. Their tolerant religious policy was most noticeable in the South East Coromandel coast.

The religious policy of the Dutch had one major difference in comparison to that of the Portuguese, and this can be summed up in the words of John Maetsuyker, Governor General of the Dutch East Indies from 1653 to 1678: “the nature of government is such that it cannot suffer two equally controlling powers, any more than a body can endure two heads; for which reason the civil power must always have full and unfettered control over the ecclesiastical”. To Maetsuyker as to all Dutchmen, the nature of government was the furtherance of trade and commerce.

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The Dutch were however mainly Calvinists and though they built several churches in Pulicat, Nagapattinam, Tuticorin, mainly for their own nationals. Most of the Dutch who married local women eventually turned over to the religion of their wives, for the only women whom they could marry were the “Luso-Indians” or women converted to the Roman Catholic faith. The children of such marriages, in spite of all the Dutch authorities tried to do followed the Roman faith. As van Gollenesse observes: “what can the zeal of the reformed preacher whom nobody can understand, do to combat the bustle of the thousand Romish priests on this coast, who are perfectly equipped with the necessary knowledge of the languages.”

Calvinism had no missionary zeal and made little or no impression in South Coromandel coast. It merely served to strengthen and extend the influence of Roman Catholicism.

Although the original charters of the Dutch East India Company made no provision for the maintenance of a Calvinist clergy to spread the light of the “true Christian Reformed religion among the benighted Papists and the blind heathen” the Company soon recognised its obligations and predikants or preachers were sent out from Holland. One of the main difficulties under which these predikants laboured was the short duration of their stay in their parishes. Apart from the personal inconvenience caused by frequent moves if these ministers were married, it also gave them insufficient time to learn the local language. Conversely, if they succeeded in learning the language, a transfer meant that such knowledge was useless. Realising that Calvinism could make no headway; the Dutch adjusted themselves to the people

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of various religions around them. They respected the temples, mosques, synagogues and chaityas, and opposed the slaughter of cows.\footnote{Owen C. Kail, ‘Dutch Commercial and Territorial Influence in India’, \textit{Op.cit.}, pp. 216-219.}

\section*{Dutch Missionary}

The Dutch, the leading European power in Coromandel in the mid of the Seventeenth Century was sending loaded ships to the Coromandel to Ceylon, the VOC hired Protestant priests to create a favourable moral climate in the trade posts. Some inquisitive Company servants in the 17th and 18th centuries contributed to the public interest in Coromandel Coast through their travelogues. Impressed by the learning of the brahmans and their views on life and death, clergyman Abraham Rogerius, who for seventeen years (1630-47) lived at Pulicat on the Coromandel coast, wrote a book on the life, customs, faith and religious practices of Tamil brahmans (\textit{De open-deure tot verborgen heydendom}, 1651). Rogerius was the first to mention the four Vedas, but their description, according to J. Gonda, was more in harmony with the Tamil \textit{Vaisnava hymns} than \textit{Sanskrit} sources.\footnote{Luba Zubkova, ‘Dravidian Studies in the Netherlands Part I (1605-1690s) Pioneers of Orientalism at the VOC’, \textit{International Institute for Asian Studies (hereafterIIAS) News Letter}, (35), 2004, p.14.}

Another missionary who came to Ceylon upon the conquest of Colombo by the Dutch in 1656 was Phillipus Baldaeus (1632-1672\footnote{Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya, ‘Trading on a Thalassic Network: African Migrations Across the Indian Ocean’, \textit{International Social Science Journal}, Vol. 58 (188), 2006, pp.215-225.}). A talented cartographer and writer, the Company appointed him a \textit{predicant} responsible for converting the Tamil communities on the northern part of the island to the Dutch Reformed religion. He lived in and around Jaffna for nine years and sailed around to inspect the Dutch possessions in Coromandel Coast.

Baldaeus moved among the people, mastering the Tamil language in which he could preach and converse. He thought ‘...it is more befitting and seemly that a
teacher or minister masters the language of his congregation, rather than for the congregation to learn the language of their minister’. Baldaeus compiled several manuscripts to be used by native proponents of Protestantism and schoolmasters, and prepared a Tamil Psalter. It was published in book form in 1755, *the earliest vernacular book of music*. The Dutch brought printing to Ceylon in the late 1720s, and the earliest Tamil work printed was a 1741 Tamil Bible by the Hollender Press of the VOC.

Baldaeus’ personal observations of the life and mores of Hindus constituted a monumental work in Dutch, printed in Amsterdam in 1672. In the same year it was translated into German, and in 1703 abridged in English: *A True and Exact Description of the most Celebrated East India Coasts of Malabar and Choromandel. As also the Great Island of Ceylon and the Religion of the Heathens of the East Indies*. The book included maps, engravings illustrating the author’s experiences, and a supplement entitled Introduction to the Malabar Language which contained elements of Tamil grammar followed by the Lord’s Prayer and the Creed in Tamil. Accompanying engravings contained the complete Tamil alphabet. Explaining his reasons for learning the local language, Baldaeus praises its richness and flexibility.

The VOC demanded from personnel a certain expertise in native speech, local culture and political intrigue, which could prove handy in trade transactions. There were more officials and missionaries working on a glossary of ‘Malabaric’ (Tamil/Malayalam) language and Telugu. Others produced detailed accounts of the local conditions, climate and plants, and everyday life of various Hindu castes. To name but a few: Herbert de Jager, a peasant’s son and former theology student at

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68 Ibid.
Leiden University, indulged in comparative study of ‘Malabaric’, Sanskrit and High-Javanese during his ten years’ stay in Coromandel; Wouter Schouten, a surgeon attached to the Dutch fleet, wrote the book *The East Indian Voyages*; Hendrik Adriaan van Reede tot Drakenstein, Malabar Governor in 1671-77 and vice-admiral, prepared the voluminous botanical treatise *Hortus indicus Malabaricus*; while Daniel Havart, the Company’s senior official and a keen observer, published in 1693 a book with the title *The rise and fall of Coromandel.*

The administrative organisation of the Company’s factories in Coromandel and the social life of the Dutch community had hardly any impact on the society or economy of the region. They were significant only in so far as they provided the immediate social and administrative framework for a unit of commercial expansion in an alien setting.

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