INDIAN LUXURIES AND EUROPEANS
CHAPTER VI

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During the period of our study, high value items of trade were replaced by bulk goods yet trade in the former went on unchanged. We shall try to have a better understanding of this trade by paying attention to a number of issues like the chief centres of trade in diamonds, precious stones, pearls and chanks. We shall also study the official and unofficial trade and the role of the Indian and non-Indian merchants involved in it. The mode of procurement, prices, and custom duties will also be attended to. The luxuries were transported from the centres of production to the market centres within India and to centres of trade overseas. Volume of export from India determined the sale and profits in Europe which very much reflected the extent of monopoly held by the Company concerned.

The Portuguese sources are extremely useful for the study of the trading network in the early part of the seventeenth century when bulk of the trade was still in the hands of the Portuguese protected traders. The local merchants had a long standing acquaintance with them and with their predecessors and hence transactions were a matter of continuity than fresh beginnings. For the latter part of the century and into the decades of the next, the other European companies assume importance and hence the Dutch and English sources become vital. Shift in archival sources, shift in the market centres in India and shift in the polishing and marketing centres in Europe attain a logical sequence as one attempts to study the trading patterns that took shape over the decades of the two centuries.

Indian uncut diamond was the only diamond source known upto 1750. Knowledge of the Indian diamonds had circulated much before this time but real
export in bigger quantities began as a result of the intensification of trade between India and Europe in the sixteenth century. Really speaking transport by sea was not such an important boost for diamond trade as it was for heavier goods, but it did reduce the variety of risks the diamond traders and carriers had to face through land route. Tavernier, an expert in diamonds, stated in the seventeenth century that Goa had formerly been the great centre of diamond trade. It does seem clear from this statement that other parts of India by then were emerging as rivals to Goa and much more so because of the presence of other European Companies in India.

Golconda was strongly involved in trade from the king himself to various officials lower down the hierarchy, with Masulipatnam as their base. In the southern region, Bijapur divided its commercial involvements between its western and its eastern coastal ports, with the emphasis more to the west than to the east. The commander in chief of the Bijapur army, Khan-i-khanan, was a ship owner. He asked for a secure pass for his ships from the Dutch. So was his successor, Babullah Khan who controlled the ports of Devanampatnam and Porto Novo and pressurised the Dutch in giving him passes. In Masulipatnam and Golconda the Dutch preferred to be careful with the muslim friends. They found that it was not easy for anyone to remain friends with the muslims and no one favoured the muslims in the hope of making profits. They could just become enemies in place of friends to the detriment of the diamond trade on which they had spent DFL 100708 during that year.

Goa was well located to participate in the diamond trade, its overland routes linking central and southern India with the sultanates of Bijapur, Golconda and the hindu empire of Vijayanagar in the south. Bijapur’s merchants had been intermediaries in the trade between the interior and the Deccan’s major ports.
including Goa, which was a natural terminus for the exchange of Deccan goods. Hindus, Muslims, Gujaratis and native Jews circulated between Goa and the interior of Bijapur. The overland calsa route ran from Golconda through Bijapur and then to Dabhol and Chaul on the coast. Another branch of this route connected the capital of Vijayanagar empire with Goa. Individual traders from Goa, Burhanpur, Surat and Dabhol frequented Vijayanagar to purchase diamonds. Later diamond merchants gathered in Bijapur and Golconda to purchase the diamonds taken from the mines of Udayagiri. Many of these stones found their way into the bizalhos aboard the carracks of Lisbon. Viceroy Jeronimo Azavedo’s estimate that Goa’s merchants invested up to 500,000 cruzados in diamonds each year does indicate the magnitude of the overland trade. Very little of it was subject to custom duties.

Vengurla office in 1637 came in the hands of the Dutch, with the chief purpose of having access to nearby Goa. Till 1673 this factory was directly under Batavia and in the said year it came under Surat. In 1685 the Company gave it up. From here the Dutch conducted some trade as well. Claes Cornelisz. Blocq bought 500 carat diamonds in Vengurla for the value of DFL 34722.12. Johan Maetsuyker on his way to Vengurla by the ship Amboina had offered to the Portuguese Viceroy in Goa a bedstead with jewels and a bag of diamonds for his hat along with a couple of bracelets and three rings. From Vengurla Cornelis the opperkoopman led the Nassau and reported that on February 2, two galleons left for Portugal with pepper, indigo and diamonds following instructions from the new Portuguese Viceroy Don Phillip de Mascarenhas.

Up north of Goa, the ports of Gujarat were famous for their trading activities. Agate stones were found in Limadura in Gujarat. They were used to stop bleeding from any cut. Portuguese doctors used them for arresting the flow
of blood from fresh wounds caused by various accidents. These and other precious stones were carried from here to Goa and Cochin for further sale and exports for enhanced prices. A Dutch ship left from Surat for Holland with goods worth over DFL 5603942 that consisted of indigo, cotton and diamonds. Again another one with cargo of DFL 733469 departed with DFL 28568 being the value of diamonds. The diamonds received from Surat were finer than those from the Golconda market but were more expensive.

Diamond trading activities at the Madras market were intensified by the arrival of the first English merchants between 1680 and 1690 who came from London and settled in Madras. In December 1684 James de Paiva was permitted to proceed to India to settle in Madras. The Directors did not take to this decision well, they hoped for the success of the Company's own diamond trade, and were jealous of the other merchants. As London was rapidly becoming Europe's central market for diamonds, a similar process took place in India. English Madras was taking the place of Portuguese Goa as the chief purchaser of diamonds from the mines. The jewish merchants of London continued to maintain their old connections with Goa, directly or through Surat, but gradually this began to weaken and the merchants directed their business to the English settlement which was better situated geographically: Madras came to be known as Fort Saint George among the Europeans.

Surat in Gujarat in the second half of the seventeenth century served as a link between London and Goa but gradually lost its importance as a diamond market. In the resolutions passed by the Court of Directors of the English East India Company in the 1680s, Surat and Fort Saint George were both mentioned as centres of diamond trade, but the rules adopted by the Company in 1713 speak only of Fort Saint George. Goa was now disappearing from the map as the
important diamond market after the turn of the century. Henceforth Goa had no strength to challenge Madras, and could not command equal importance for its role as a market for high grade stones. In 1703-1704 Sir Stephen Evans could still send silver to Goa for the purchase of diamonds, and in 1734 there were large quantities of second rate diamonds in Goa.  

For about two thirds of the eighteenth century, Madras enjoyed an almost complete monopoly in the diamond export to Europe. It was the receiving point for the stream of silver sent out to the east from London. The position of Madras in the diamond trade was threatened by the activity of the new East India Company from its base at Masulipatnam. The threat ended with the unification of the two. In 1765 the scene changed in India. Madras began to lose its supremacy and Benaras emerged. After 1777 the centre of diamond trade had shifted to Benaras which was closer to the mines of Panna. Jacob Barnet moved from Madras to Benaras in 1778 and continued there till 1785. He bought diamonds on commission taking five per cent for his labour. Joseph Fowke did likewise in Benaras and Calcutta in the 1780s.  

Having paid attention to some of the chief centres of trade in diamonds and precious stones in India let us have a look at the chief centres of trade in pearls and chanks during the period of our study. New Christians of Goa and Cochin increased their share of trade especially on India’s western coast and around Cape Comorin. The Portuguese exported vast varieties of seed pearls for boutique and medicinal use. In 1616, more than thirty bags of aljofar were sent to Portugal. In 1635, ten bags of seed pearls were dispatched on the annual carracks that left Goa for Lisbon. Ruy Lourenço de Tavora declared that he earned a million cruzados from the sale of seed pearls, bezoars and other luxury goods that came to Portugal from South India and Ceylon. In Tuticorin, Punnakayal, Pulicat and
Pondicherry all varieties of pearls were sold. One could exchange the same for diamonds. At a time one could sell here all sorts of pearls worth over 20,000 reals, of competitive sizes smarter profits. Pearls were highly esteemed in these places and well appreciated if they were big and fine. This was stated in a letter prepared at the fort of Tirupapuliyur, on 14th December 1615 and was signed by Willem den Dorst.35

At Bijapur and Goa, one could buy and sell all sorts of pearls for higher profits. These were important markets for pearls of larger sizes.36 The Dutch Company engaged in two types of purchases, the first consisted in buying the best pearls and the next was buying from the divers without properly weighing but just paying them some flat rates. This was done in the hope of providing the Dutch Company a sufficient idea regarding the quality of pearls fished from these fisheries. The second type of purchase was made from the natives so that the Company could judge in Europe if there was any foul play on the way. The pearl fishery used to organize another market which was meant for the army of the fishery, where no foreigners were allowed to purchase. This market was controlled by the natives and was organized at Punnakayal where all the sellers were advised to bring their pearls for the public sale. In all honesty they had to pay the ruler of the place four per cent of the prices they got from selling their pearls. Here the traders were insured, and at the market, law and order prevailed with no accidents and troubles whatsoever. The peaceful climate attracted thousands of traders with their capital and they were only keen to take sufficient risks in this safe and well organized market. The rules allowed only first hand purchases.37

Calcutta, Dacca and Chittagong imported superior chank shells from the Tuticorin fishery.38 The Dacca shell cutters had their representatives in Calcutta
who acted as importers and wholesale merchants in the city. The families of those importers were related to one another and for generations together they controlled the chank trade functioning as middlemen. On the fishery coast the lebbais with their special local knowledge worked as wholesale dealers and maintained direct contact with their partners in Calcutta. Their expertise and knowledge of local affairs assisted them in their transactions at the fishery centres in South India and on the Ceylon coast. A business agreement prevailed among the major Calcutta importers who formed a syndicate and pooled together the chanks they purchased and divided the returns on definite agreed terms. Rallying together as a sort of a company, they were able to maintain a monopoly of the trade and dictate terms to the owners of the chank fisheries and to the retail buyers in the bangle manufacturing.

Laurens Pijl wanted the opperhoofd of Tuticorin to conduct an inspection for chank fishery so that he could send the agreed consignments to Bengal.\textsuperscript{39} The annual export of shells from Tuticorin amounted to about 250,000 DFL, roughly one eighth of the total Bengal consumption. Rameswaram and Ceylon supplies were only next in quantity and importance. The Tuticorin shells were the very best of their type on account of the purity of their colour and the readiness with which they could be polished. A thousand chank pieces from Tuticorin or Rameswaram would be costing the value equivalent to rupees one hundred and sixty.

Indian merchants and their European counterparts were the chief participants in the trade in luxury items that left the shores of India on its way to Europe. Many diamonds from South Central India made up the overwhelming bulk of precious stones of the Cape trade. It included significant quantities of other precious gems, rubies and sapphires. Diamond trading was the most specialised of
all the Asian trades, requiring the greatest skill of its merchants. They had to carefully evaluate the stones to avoid the false and imperfect ones in the markets. Reputable dealers in Goa included Gujaratis and new christians who controlled most of the trade. They passed stones among themselves and to other merchants on the strength of oral assurances as to quality and promises of eventual payment. Some Venetians, Flemings and Germans including Ferdinand Cron, Joseph and his brother Jacques de Coutre participated in the diamond trade in Goa.

Some famous Jewish traders played an important part in Surat. They disturbed the Dutch director and his Council with their goods which they received via England and demanded space to store them in Dutch warehouses and when no great trade was possible they engaged in trade in diamonds and jewels. They received their requirements from south India as well as from Ceylon and then from Surat sent the consignments through Company ships to the Netherlands. The Jews in England corresponded with the jews in Surat. Madras too had its share of jews dealing in diamonds. In Madras besides James de Paiva there were others like Isaac de Porto and Francis Marques as well as three others who had been mentioned in 1683 as ‘interloping jews at Covelon’. They were Bartholomeu Rodrigues, Domingo de Porto and Alvaro da Fonseca.

Indian merchants occupied an important position in the diamond and pearl trade. From these merchants many of the foreigners got their supplies and even money for their trading activities. Coromandel merchants participated in coastal trade of two types. These were the long distance coastal voyages to Orissa and Bengal and in the other direction to Malabar, Canara and even as far as Goa and Surat. There were the short distance hops to the many ports along the east coast along Madura and south Malabar. A characteristic of the trade between Malabar
and Coromandel was that it could be carried out both by land and by sea. Whenever the sea route was obstructed, as it was sometimes by the Dutch, the land route through the lower western ghats was more extensively used through which most of the pearls and precious stones from the hinterland passed. Diamond traders experienced moderate to heavy successes in the business in the Coromandel area. The ups and downs were due to various factors like for example the deaths of Dutch diamond experts Van Cloon, Bruynzeel and Kapitads that brought about a break in the regular purchase of diamonds.44

Various merchant communities of India with a long trading tradition forged business connections with the European trading partners very often on their own terms. Some of them like the chulias were the descendents of the arab settler merchants of the southern ports of Arcot and Tanjore. They had developed distinct arabic-tamil-islamic cultural characteristics that distinguished them from the Golconda muslims of the north and Bijapur muslims of the interior. The sub-groups, the marraikayar and the lebbai developed a speciality in overseas trade. The major ports for their operations were Cuddalore, Porto Novo, Karaikal, Nagore, Adirampatnam, Kilakarai and Tondi. Along with their usual trade in textiles, they also dealt frequently in pearls and precious stones.45

The tamil chetty castes were migrants in the tamil speaking areas of south Coromandel particularly in Tanjore, Madurai and Tirunelveli. There were some beri chetties who had been progressively tamilised over a long stay in tamil speaking areas. Ship owning tamil merchants operated from the ports of Devanapatnam, Cuddalore, Karaikal, Nagapattinam and Adirampatnam. The last two ports provided them with their requirements of pearls and chanks.46

Of the ship owning merchants engaged in overseas voyages on their own behalf, the telugu chetty caste should be considered the most prominent with
komaties, balija chetties and beri chetties. They were from the Krishna Godavari delta regions of Andhra, but had long been settled in the central and southern districts of Chingleput, Arcot and Tanjore. As with other merchant communities of India, ship owning and overseas trading was not for them a specialisation to the exclusion of other forms of trade. Overseas trade was one of the several avenues of commerce they followed and individuals and families moved in and out of India. These telugu merchant castes had remarkable mobility. Raghava Chetty, Mir Kamalaudin, Tudalie Chetty, Aricaltsie Chetty, Komati Chetty, Vendorada Tacendas, Kesara Chetty, Seshadri, Varadappa, Komri Chetty, Malaya, Chinnama, Narasimha, Rathnasamy Mudaliar, Malappa Malo and Beriram Chetty, appear at various times in the Dutch and English documents as partners or foes of the foreigners in the diamond and pearl trading sectors. The company records make it clear that the Europeans faced tough commercial competition from Indian merchants. However many of the native merchants found that it was more profitable and less risky to act on behalf of the companies. The merchants either branched off independently or acted within the frame work of the companies. In a letter written by Pieter Gilles, the Dutch agent at Masulipatnam, to the VOC, all fraudulent hindu and muslim merchants in that region were listed. Among them were Kwaja Nizam, Kwaja Hassan Ali, Mirza Ishaaq Beg, Mir Qasar, and Kwaja Araby, Happa Vora, Rabibdas, Narasimha Rama Chetti, Ganga Chetti, Daughy and Jarem Saba.

The Gaud Sarasvat brahmins of the konkan had spread themselves all along the coast right up to Kerala. They were called konkanis and canarins by the Portuguese and the Dutch. One of them by name Baba Prabhu served the Dutch as merchant, broker and envoy for many years. Rijkloff van Goens trusted him in 1663 as competent merchant, but a year later Hutsaert called him a roguish
In 1691 Hendrick van Rheede commissioned him to do difficult tasks and was granted exceptional privileges. Baba traded with the Dutch, the English and the French with the help of his brother Abuga who lived in Cochin. Van Rheede bestowed honours on Baba no other Indian would ever get from the Company. In the presence of any employee of the Company he was allowed to sit on a chair. When calling on an officer of the Company, he was allowed to be protected by a parasol on a silver stick. Babu Prabhu owed a debt of DFL 45007 to the Company and his uncle Abiga Prabhu another debt of DFL 37391. The first was settled by making a payment through pearls worth 4708 rix dollars to Batavia. This was an unconventional method of making payments and the Dutch welcomed it from the konkani merchant who had diversified his business to such an extent that dealing in pearls and diamonds was not a thing unknown to him.

Ganesh and Rama Camotim, residents of Goa were reported to have been in debt to one Jacob Franco Mendes whose thirty seven uncut diamonds weighing 13,75 carats were entrusted to the two goans for sale, the price of which was to be 281 xeralfins. In all, the two Camotins owed Jacob Mendes 4017 Xeralfins. One Dourkadas contributed 60,000 pagodas for his annual purchase of diamonds, ten percent cheaper than he did at Madras. The wealth of the goan merchants attracted the attention of all types of visitors. In 1739 Goa was under attack from the Marathas. Soldiers and Augustinian priests looted the house of a goan called Phondu Kamat, the wealthiest merchant in Goa, on suspicion that he was harbouring Maratha enemies. His own inventory showed that 130,000 xeralfins were taken in cash, diamonds, gold ornaments and fine cloth. Banyas and brahmins were of the opinion that through them in the previous year diamonds worth 191,000 pagodas were sent to various places such as:
to Goa pagodas 70,000

to Surat pagodas 80,000

to Masulipatnam pagodas 18,000

to Madraspatnam pagodas 23,000

From these no stone had come back, and still many were sold within
Golconda. To the Dutch Company were sold 123 stones, weighing 302 3/4
mangelins or 419 carats worth DFL 14,045.17 which were to go by the next ship
to Europe. And in all cases one found them cheaper on the coast than in Surat.
The Surat merchants had to go to exchange the Pulicat pagodas, for they fetched
better deal there.

During Shivaji's attack on Surat it was found that from the house of Virjee
Vohra were brought twenty eight kilos of large pearls, many jewels, great
diamonds, rubies and emeralds and an incredible quantity of money. These were
all brought in heaps to the tent of Shivaji. The Dagh Register has the tale of
Girdhardas who was a jewel broker who discovered that his precious stones were
missing.

Some Gujaratis brought a letter from Mahfuz Khan stating that a month ago,
a parcel of precious stones belonging to a Gujarati merchant of Madras was being
conveyed to Nagapattinam and this belonged to one Govardhan Das. It was
seized at Karaikal and a request was made for its release. A letter was written
by Mahfuz Khan which read as follows: "When a boat full of rice belonging to
merchants of our town arrived at Cuddalore, the people there seized it. His
Highness the Nawab took no notice of it. If the Madras Government was to
release the property, then the parcel of precious stones would be returned." There
were about ten Gujarati men waiting for the restoration of the packet by
the English.
The Viceroy of Goa made use of the goodwill and services of Rustomji Manockji to get his requirements of diamonds. The Viceroy sent a letter in which it was stated that, "Fernão Manuel Tello is just going to Surat and I recommend you to assist him in every way with his petition. I have also entrusted with Fernão seven diamonds cut into brilliants by a stranger who came in the company of a certain diamond cutter who lived in Surat. These I want to be of uniform weight from one carat to a carat and a half or a little less. I have to mention that the cut brilliant is in the design of a certain diamond which Augustine Riberio here showed us. If you find a good diamond cutter who can execute the work and cut the stones in the designs I want, ask him to make them clear and you may pay his dues. In order to recover this amount, you will draw a hundi upon my name." Further the Viceroy writes, "We have arranged with the representatives of the company to sell ivory from Daman to the merchants of the port of Surat. I have to inform you of this seeing that the sales will be through you." Rustomji's prompt attitude is appreciated and acknowledged by the Viceroy and that can be seen from the next letter wherein he says, "I thank you for the diligence you promise... regarding the stones which I entrusted to Fernão Manuel. Whenever this official diamond cutter finds trade bad in Surat and desires to settle down in Goa, he will be well treated here and he will have every facility and even profitable business. I need not remind you to communicate to me immediately the other news from Mombassa and Muscat."

Moshen Khan for years had become known as Mir Jumla during his stay at Golconda and Masulipatnam on the Coromandel coast and from a position of insignificance, rose to become a great trader. He had flourishing trade with the Dutch and became a wealthy and powerful native ruler and functioned as the chief of Golconda. As the Field Marshall of the king of Golconda, he gave much
trouble to the Dutch. The king of Golconda had given some of the Golconda mines to Mir Jumla and the latter had entrusted them to the management of a certain Brahmin Bimmasie because of which many refugees had returned and had started again the work at the mines. Mir Jumla was involved in commercial transactions with Veira Figueredo, a Portuguese merchant adventurer. He also traded in diamonds with Dom Felipe Mascarenhas, Governor of Portuguese Ceylon in 1640-1645 and Viceroy of Goa from 1646 - 1651. He had trading relations with the factors of the Dutch East India Company in Bengal and Coromandel but on his terms rather than on theirs. Due to intrigues and jealousies of other nobles he was imprisoned towards the close of 1655. As he was in touch with the Mughals, Shahjahan demanded his release. On refusal, Aurangzeb treacherously seized Hyderabad and reduced the fortress of Golconda. Mir Jumla then took service under the Mughals. In Aurangzeb’s time he attained further prominence and was made Governor of Bengal. Mir Jumla was commanded before Aurangzeb whom he presented money and rich jewels of great value. The Mughal Emperor gave him the title of Diwan. Jumla’s presents were worth 15,00,000 rupees and included a diamond weighing 216 ratis. Manucci who was in Delhi at the time gives the weight of the diamond as 360 carats which would be 411 ratis. Tavenier who examined the stone when cut, declared that even after cutting, it weighed 319.5 ratis and that when received from Mir Jumla, its weight was about 900 ratis. To the Dutch Company were sent some packets of pearls by Mir Jumla just before his death on January 6th 1663.

In the middle decades of the seventeenth century Kasi Veeranna, a telugu komati caste merchant sent ships from Pulicat, Madras, Santhome, Devanampatnam and Tanjore to other places. In 1670 he made Madras his base. He was involved in joint investments with senior English officials of Madras, including the English
president Streynsham Master who was known to be secretly involved in diamond trade with Veeranna as one of his native collaborator. His career reveals some of the qualities of merchant entrepreneurship in this period. He took a variety of risks and maintained a high diversity of operations. Adaptability to changing power balances was his strong point that helped him to maintain coastal and hinterland links.

Sunku Muthu Ram was a komati who emerged in the 1690s as one of the most influential merchants in Madras. He was a prominent supplier of diamonds and pearls to the Dutch East India Company in Sadraspatnam and Nagapattinam and either he or close associates of the family dealt with the French in Pondicherry. He controlled a large section of the Sunkum or transit duties of Golconda. This seems to have stayed in the family and earned it the title of Sunkuvar and hence the prefix of sunku to his name.

Among the high profile native merchants whose diversity in trading activities dominated the period of our study was Chikkati of Kilakarai who had vast interest in the pearl fishery. He had several boats on contract diving for pearls and took away a large share of the market of pearls that were fished out. He dominated the market of chanks which was also a valuable trade commodity.

Periathambi Marraikayar of the seventeenth century was chulia merchant from Kilakarai. Periathambi appears to have been a title of endearment given to him by the Thevar of Ramnad to whom he was very close in commercial and administrative matters. Periathambi had difficulties with the Dutch when his activities clashed with the VOC interests. Periathambi tried to check the Dutch monopoly control over such commodities as pearls and chanks, which were important to his own trade. He found the Thevar a good friend and both organised a strategy of challenging the Dutch orders. The Thevar was dependent
on Periathambi, and his family members were appointed to important administrative posts on the coast. The hostility of the Dutch to Periathambi was so great that in 1685 the Dutch stipulated that Periathambi and his relatives were to be removed from office along the coast and should never be appointed in the service of the Thevar. During the pearl fishery of 1705 Periathambi had closed the way for the English at Kilakarai.

Having seen some profiles of the Indian merchants let us have a look at some of the non-Indian counterparts.

European Company officials were involved in diamond trade. Many seventeenth century viceroys made large fortunes during their tenures from trading in diamonds. Dom Martin Afonso de Castro's boat arrived from Goa in Lisbon captained by Estevão Texeira carrying letters of 12th November 1605. In one letter references were made to precious stones and the permission to Bartholomeu de Vasconcellos given by the officials at the Camara de Goa.69

The merchants of the carreira da India in order not to advertise the prosperity of the Cape traffic and invite increased fiscal exactions, maintained a low profile and hence less information is available about them and their activities. Towards the beginning of the seventeenth century, the bulk of the carreira trade was concentrated in the hands of merchants belonging to half a dozen Lisbon-based families. In recognition of the dangers of the voyage to India and life and travel in the tropics and the importance of maintaining the unbroken continuity of the trade, these prudent families sent several young men to the east.70 The private traders of Portugal after 1600 were not pre-occupied with spices and pepper and avoided involvement in the monopoly contracts, they responded flexibly and resourcefully to the challenge of the Dutch and English competition. They dealt in silks, diamonds, pearls, and precious stones, exotic perfumes, porcelains.
available in India, Ceylon and further east. Manuel de Paz, the eldest son of Diogo Fernandes do Brasil, and cousin Francisco Tinoco de Carvalho, second eldest son of Duarte Fernandes do Brasil, were chosen to represent the Tinoco family in Goa and left Lisbon in 1608. On arriving in Goa, the cousins were initiated into the secrets of evaluating and buying diamonds and precious stones. They visited diamond centres on the western coast. Joao Rodrigues specialised in diamonds of Bijapur and Golconda for which trade he had developed important contacts among hindu merchants.

Francisco Tinoco de Carvalho, Fernao Jorge da Silveira and other carreira merchants of Goa and Cochin purchased diamonds, in many markets through a narrow circle of Portuguese, muslim and hindu agents. And they purchased them in large quantities in a reduced number of transactions with greater confidence and with greater knowledge of the market than did the competitors in India, including the Dutch. The same handful of merchants in Goa and Cochin received and sorted valuable shipments on diamonds and other precious stones for sale in Lisbon, Seville and other European markets. Even after returning to Lisbon in 1636 Francisco was receiving cargoes of diamonds from the Tinoco’s latest factors in Goa. Jorge Ribeiro Coresema, Simao Soares Perez and Belchior Vaz Mendes acted as Augustino Pero’s, agents in the Goa Lisbon trade, receiving and disposing consignments of diamonds and other luxury goods that Antonio Vaz Mendes sent from Goa. Alvaro Fernandes was also in the Goa-Lisbon trade in diamonds at the beginning of 1600. He with his sons Duarte and Fernando corresponded with Francisco Mendes de Crasto of Goa, received shipments from India and marketed through agents in Antwerp, Hamburg and Amsterdam. Simao Dias Vaz never traded directly with India but he specialised in the diamond traffic from Lisbon to Antwerp and Amsterdam and in the insurance of cargoes from
Goa to Lisbon and Lisbon to Antwerp or Amsterdam. Valentim and Gines de Barona, Andre Lopes Pinto, and Simão's cousins in Lisbon supplied the diamonds, which they in turn had received from Manuel de Paz, Francisco TMoco de Carvalho, Jorge Ribeiro Coresma and other merchants in Goa. In 1620 Simão Dias Vaz and Diogo Teixeira de Sampaio were the principal suppliers of diamonds and other precious stones for the Briers diamond and jewellery firm in Frankfurt, which supplied to the princes and elite customers in central Europe. Simão eventually brought Gines de Barona, said to be the most famous diamond and lapidary expert in Europe from Lisbon to Antwerp to work at his side.73

Portuguese Manuel de Moraes Supico who died in 1630, and the Flemish De Coutre brothers made large fortunes from the diamond trade. Much of the money earned in India was used for the purchase of diamonds to be brought to Madrid even by the soldiers on the ships to India.76 The Augsburger Ferdinand Cron arrived in Goa in 1587 as agent for the German banking houses of the Welsers and the Fuggers and remained there till 1624. Cron was well connected in Germany, Antwerp, Lisbon and Madrid. He was also in close touch with prominent new christian merchants in Goa in the 1610s and early 1620s. He owned a farm in Goa and was involved in jewel trading.77

Foreign residents of Lisbon were also participants in the diamond trade of the carracks. Flemish merchants Adrião Pedro, Adrião Salemão, João Fltre, the Venetian Francisco Studandoli and German Johan Snell were great diamond merchants of the day.78

The Portuguese made a lot of profit in Mosambique and it was seen that those who served the government there for two to three years returned with enormous wealth and invested in the diamond trade in India. One Senhor de Lima on arrival in Goa from Mosambique invested an unbelievable capital in uncut
diamonds in Goa and was ready for another half that sum for raw gold and 500 pagodas for other precious stones. The merchants of Goa knew well how to make a fortune from those that returned from overseas Mosambique.

Certain priests and religious also showed a liking for trade in diamonds, precious stones, gems and jewels. The Jesuit procurator general of Goa, Eusebio de Matos SJ, Fathers Guilherme de Rois and Felipe de Valadares Sotto Mayor frequently figure on the despatch lists of diamond cargoes in the mid-eighteenth century. According to the seventeenth century traveller Manucci, Gonçalo Martins had appropriated for himself a rare stone which Malik Yakut, a favourite of Adil Shah had only pawned with him in order to borrow money for expenses of his medical treatment in Goa.

In Amsterdam Bento Osorio, Manuel Dias Henriques, Diogo Dias Queirido, Diogo Nunes Belmonte, Afonso Lopes Chillao, Diogo Gomes da Costa and many others dealt in diamonds and precious stones. They associated variously with the Jews in Portugal and their counterparts in India. Around 1620 Gaspar da Costa and Manuel Costa Casseres arrived in India to be apprenticed to Manuel Cardoso and settled in Goa and Cochin. Manuel Cardoso supplied diamonds to the members of the Alvares de Lima family members in Lisbon. In northern Europe João de Casseres represented the family in Antwerp in 1620 whereas Manuel Alvares Cardoso and Diogo Gomes da Costa represented the family in Amsterdam.

By the middle of the seventeenth century the Dutch had already spread their network of factories and posted their personnel in all strategic places from where they could make their purchases of diamonds, precious stones, gems, jewels and pearls. With a view to making profit various methods were employed that ranged from clean deals to outright looting. The Dutch Council at Batavia wrote to the
factors at Masulipatnam that the factors were not to allow any opportunity to buy diamonds to go waste.84 This order was strictly adhered to when for example, the Patane trader of precious stones in Goa who lived in the banya street became the victim of the Dutch aggressive policy. The Dutch who were on the look out to burn the Portuguese ships looted some of the wealthy houses in the city including that of the Patane and carried away diamonds from him.85

Armed with orders for the purchase of luxury items Dutch personnel were regularly unloaded at the various Indian ports from where they proceeded to the centres of trade. On the ship the Witte Beer that sailed on August 17th, 1615 and anchored at Pulicat was Leonard Wolff who was appointed by the Directors as junior merchant at Pulicat and in charge of diamond trade. His knowledge of diamonds was well appreciated by them. The Council of Masulipatnam sent him with junior merchants Huijbert Cnooper and Cornelis Claesz Heda to Bijapur to undertake research in the diamond trade prospects.86 They were also to sell European jewels there. Wolff was content to buy diamonds in the mines that lay near Balagate. In order to get permission from the Sultan of Bijapur, he asked for the help of Heda who had a title from Sultan Ibrahim-Al-Hidel Shah who had already issued a Firman in November of that year. This Firman was not only for diamond trade, but granted a general permission to trade freely without paying toll for loading done by 900 coolies with 900 oxen in all sorts of goods between Masulipatnam and Narasapur. Cornelis Claesz Heda the painter, made himself acceptable to the other ambassadors with him. He played a good and useful role as ambassador of the VOC.87 He took the rubies and emeralds which were brought by Wolff to sell but that did not work well because he was not a trader and moreover the junior merchant Huijbert Cnooper was a drunkard. Wolff the senior merchant could neither do book keeping nor account-
ing. On April 3rd, 1616 Heda wrote to Masulipatnam that he would like to open an office for diamond trade in Golconda. He also mentioned in the letter that nothing positive was achieved by Cnooper Huijbert. On the strength of this news the Council at Masulipatnam sent Pieter Gellisz Van Ravenstein to Bijapur to buy and sell as many diamonds and jewels as possible. The latter was also empowered to send back Wolff and merchant Hendrik Adriansz and to take the place of the former. In May Mr. Wolff returned to Masulipatnam with great depression carrying with him no money or precious stones. He again demonstrated an example of the type of personnel sent by the directors in the initial stages. Leonard Wolff for his extraordinary expenses, bad government and drunkenness was dispatched to Bantam as a disgrace to the Company. He travelled by the ship Acolus.82

On July 31st, 1638 some consignments from Bengal were despatched to the Netherlands. Along these an impressive quantity of diamonds of a particular value were sent to the headquarters of the VOC. A despatch was sent along with the consignment in which it was stated that the factors in India were trying their best to see that diamonds coming from abroad fell into the Dutch hands first.83 It was also reported that the natives did not think highly of buyers from other European countries. They held the Dutch East India Company in high esteem and preferred to sell their diamonds to the servants of the VOC.

Various persons carried small and expensive gifts to important dignitaries in Europe and experienced mixed results. The jewel of Gasper Boudaen, a beautiful antique from the Amsterdam merchant was given to the directors of the VOC as a commission, but its value was lost after the death of the great Moghul.89 A box of jewels of Fernando Mendes Henrique of Surat was sent to Jeronimus da Costa in Amsterdam as a gift.91 Some boxes of jewels of one Jean Gomes Phebos were
shipped for merchant Abraham Pereira in Amsterdam. The late Thomas de Silveira and his companion Custodio da Silveira asked for a consignment of diamonds from Goa for an unknown purpose before their unfortunate and untimely deaths the reasons for which remained an unsolved mystery. Five boxes of jewels of jewel merchants Antonio de Pontes, Pedro Pereyra and Fernandes Mendes Henrique were sent to Portugal from Surat.

From various accounts it can be seen that the Dutch or the other European dealers did not take their requirements at random but made careful selections. In the year 1633 the Dutch earnestly looked for twelve diamonds set in gold, all flat and big, of one, two to three carats. They were all to be pure-six-sided-flat-diamonds. The fleet of General Bouwer contained great quantities of artistic and rare sorts of jewels onboard. A serious concern was expressed by all regarding safety and prompt delivery of the precious stones in the Netherlands.

Diamond trading was not only a monopoly of the male folk but certain women also took part in it either directly or indirectly. Rachel Mocate was the widow of David Franco Mendes alias Jacques Franco Osorio living in the town of Amsterdam. A sum of 5423 DFL was borrowed by her nephew Abraham Franco Mendes for a consignment of diamonds costing 3012.4.24 xerfins. Two uncut diamonds one of twenty six carats and the other of Meen were valued by her nephew Jacob Franco Mendes for 1200 DFL.

The English records mention that the Medenblick was nearly laden in May 1621. Following the invoice of the Medenblick it sailed from Masulipatnam to Holland in May 1621 carrying diamonds of the value of DFL 27,094. According to another invoice the Naerden left from Masulipatnam to Holland in October 1621 carrying diamonds, precious stones and pearls worth DFL 1,170.

The Dutch East India Company in 1666-1667 bought pearls of the value of
DFL 60,000. During this time a number of fisheries were held and the pearls were relatively cheap. The Company could have made still greater profits if the servants of the Company had not cheated and engaged in private trading activities. In 1685, fifty to sixty thousand pearls were fished at Tuticorin worth more than a sum of DFL 2550000. In 1686 when 400 bags of chanks were fished, people were prohibited from tampering the pearl banks. The 1689 pearl fishery was again postponed. On chanks DFL 86700 were made in that year. In a survey conducted in 1690, a warning was issued against expecting much from the enterprise, as most of the oysters were empty at the banks along Mannar.

The merchant Hoogkamer bought pearls worth DFL 74575 and sent these to Holland via Ceylon in 1690. The total purchase of pearls cost him 100,000 DFL. Hendrik Van Rheede in 1692 was reluctant to buy pearls for the price had risen a bit compared to the lower rates in the previous years. The pearl fishery in Mannar in March 1695 fetched DFL 74126 as against DFL 63057 in 1694. The pearl fishery in 1696 gave a net profit of DFL 15982 and only a few Europeans died in comparison to the number in the previous year. Due to the great crowd of buyers the prices of pearls had gone up very high and so the officials of the VOC refrained from making any great purchases of pearls for the Company.

The first phase of the English trade can be studied from the exports of the season 1618-1619 as set out in the invoice of the Royal Anne which left Surat in February with a cargo valued at 720,000 mahmudis (Rs.2,88,000). In it the precious stones were worth 1,750 mahmudis. The mahmudi at this time was worth two and half rupees each. Being aware of the importance of diamond trade, the English East India Company made its intentions clear for getting a
foothold in the regions where diamond was found in India. The Dutch did give the English a stiff fight in the first quarter of the seventeenth century but the English East India Company could still conduct open sales in London. Dutch monopoly over the stones in Masulipatnam prevented the English from making much headway although English agents were issued instructions to buy stones. In April 1632 the English agents reported to London that the Dutch had established themselves at the diamond mine, so that "now the trade of diamonds was mainly and principally followed by them." The English were not aware of the price of diamonds at the mines but the directors of the Company in London persisted in their demand for diamonds. The Council at Batavia, on orders from London instructed the Masulipatnam agents not to miss any opportunity of purchasing diamonds. The agents were asked to invest 10,000 to 20,000 reals.

After 1625 the English Company permitted its servants and officers of the East India ships to carry on trading in diamonds. The rule of 1609 which prohibited private trade in diamonds was no longer observed, and in the period between 1630 and 1660 uncut diamonds figured as an important item in the estates of many Company servants who had died in the East. In 1650 permission was granted to English ship owners and to ship officers to import diamonds on their private accounts and there is no evidence for the existence of regular and organised importation of diamonds into England during this period. Moreover the Company had no ships of its own.

The English in the initial stages due to insufficient knowledge of local conditions and prices were ready to buy diamonds for higher prices in order to attract the sellers to them. The purchase of diamonds was not possible for the Dutch because of lack of knowledgeable buyers and the non peaceful state due to the English rivalry. One plan was to send a part of Nagapattinam's money to Batavia, but it was not done due to the danger around.
Regular directives from various authorities were received regarding the purchase of diamonds for the English requirements. Instructions were received from Englishman Nicholas Offlet for the purchase of uncut diamonds from Vijayanagar. Kerridge from Surat wrote to Biddulph at Ajmer that any money received on account of Mindall’s estate should be passed on to the Company’s account, and Kerridge should be informed of the amount, in order that he may invest it in pearls or diamonds as directed by the Company on account of Messrs. Abbott Leate to whom it belonged. All these were to be arranged in time for the earliest sale of diamonds in London. Frequent requests were made for goods from Surat like pearls, rubies, emeralds, specially large and rich stones.

Sick English officials whilst returning to England preferred not to go back empty handed. Captain Downtown was to leave for London due to ill health and was to carry home with him diamonds to be sold at the next General Court and get Richard Gossen’s opinion of their value. He was also to show them to Alderman Smythes and to others who desired to see them. Back home at a sale a number of diamonds were sold including one of fifteen carats which fetched 535 pounds.

The Jewish traders operating from various bases in Europe carried on their activities without being emotionally attached to any of the big European East India trading Companies. What they valued most was trade and they tried to conduct it by using the existing network of communication and security provided by the rival Companies involved in the Indian Ocean traffic. Thus the existing system was thoroughly used by them and the ships of the various Companies invariably provided them the needed space for their goods. In January 1639 the Maria and the Swaen richly laden in Goa, left for Europe via Surat with diamond consignments mostly belonging to the Jews. Jewels were also sent in special boxes like the one containing thirty five rubies and thirty eight small diamonds.
Jacques do Piado Veira, a merchant of Amsterdam and a partner of João Gusmão resident in Lisbon received a declaration regarding diamonds, almiscar and other items loaded in Goa by Simão de Almeida de Brito and some other persons which was to be for the account of Jacques. The ships São João de Rebeira, Bom Jesus de São Domingo, Nossa Senhora dos Cordaes and some others with people and crew of Casa da India were mentioned. Luis Correia da Vaz and Matheus de Gouvea Sotto Mayor and some others were also referred to. A Jew by name Alvares arrived by one of the four ships that came from Canton with large sums of money meant for the purchase of gold. It was possible that Alvares brought the sum to lend it to the English at higher interests. Estêvão Luís da Costa and Diogo Perez Cavinha, both of Amsterdam gave orders to Manuel de Vega a trader of London, to send diamonds from Goa through João de Prado.

Among the various diamond merchants that came to India there were some who operated from the French territory of Pondicherry. Men like Marcus Moses and Abraham Nathan were first content to buy diamonds arriving in Europe. Earlier they dealt in finished products, selling and buying at fairs and supplying to princely courts rather than doing business of importing uncut stones from overseas. In 1712 Moses went to Paris and met Dullivier, the Governor of Pondicherry, who was then in Paris. The governor suggested to Moses that he should come with him to Pondicherry and engage in diamond business jointly with him. Several people in France and England ordered diamonds through Moses. He remained at Pondicherry for two years and participated in the Indian diamond trade. In 1715 diamond consignments made by him reached France. He had come to Pondicherry in 1713 but having failed went to Madras and grew richer. In 1715 Aaron Franks sailed to Madras and remained till 1727.
second visit to Madras Moses died in 1735. His son Levy Moses came over to Madras and worked like his father for twenty years. Levy invited Samuel his brother to join him in Madras. Samuel invited another brother who came to India when Levy died in 1753. Joseph remained in Madras and died in 1761. Moses de Castro came to Madras in 1740 and remained as diamond dealer till 1786. Diamond imports from India were renewed on a large scale after 1740 and despite a temporary set back caused by the occupation of Madras by the French in 1745, diamond trade reverted gradually to its former proportions.

European officials were frequently involved in clandestine trade either for themselves or as agents to some other important parties. This was due to many reasons. The difficulties faced by the servants of the Companies were many. Their salaries were small and they were forbidden to trade in any commodity. The English suffered at Fort Saint George, where there was no other commodity but cloth. The seamen were also disheartened with regard to the strict course of action that was taken up against them regarding the investing of their money. The poor men had no other avenues to invest except in diamonds, where they were liable to be cheated fifty percent, and they never were wiser and all labour and pain they took in the voyage used to be fruitless.

Duarte Gomes Solis, who dealt in diamonds, reported an additional 400,00 cruzados worth of precious stones onboard the carrack Madre de Deus captured by the English and later three carracks delivered a total of sixty eight bizalhos. The Viceroy of India, Dom Jeronimo d'Oliveira guessed in 1613 that private merchants invested 400,000 to 500,000 cruzados each year in precious stones for shipment to Lisbon. Honesty was not always the hallmark of majority of the diamond merchants. Twelve goan merchants registered a total of seventy bizalhos of diamonds and other jewels. The contents of the bizalhos were worth around
500,000 cruzados in Lisbon, but the merchants claimed to have purchased the contents for about 46,000 cruzados.¹³³

Private traders selling diamonds and jewels under the patronage of the European Companies had to pay a certain percentage to the Company authorities in whose jurisdictions they carried on their trade. A sale of jewels and rubies fetched DFL 35640 at Surat for the jeweller Adrian Van Breen from which the Company enjoyed twenty five per cent. But the said Adrian Van Breen on his own jewels lost forty one percent.¹³⁴

As far as the trade carried on for personal account of the Dutch individual was concerned the employee of the Company could do that only clandestinely since the Company never allowed them to do legally. But the volume of trade carried on by these individuals was not insignificant. In commodities particularly suited to clandestine trade meeting the dual requirement of high value and low bulk, the scale of operation could indeed be very large. Besides there was the category of the vrije burghers, or free citizens who carried on their trade with India legally within a frame work of rules and regulations prescribed on their behalf by the Company.

Smugglers, frauds and deserters played their part in reducing the success of the trading activities of the East India Companies. Since diamonds of impressive quantity were being sent over, the Dutch were using all possible methods to put an end to all sorts of frauds regarding diamonds coming from outside. It was decided to direct the arrival of the diamonds straight in the hands of the Company without a via media or the middlemen. The foreigners were seriously warned not to give diamonds to others except to the Company.¹³⁵ The independent fiscal Arnold Van Alsen had to present himself before the Court of Justice in Batavia. He confessed that he had participated in a foul business, namely that he
had sold a diamond worth 700 DFL to an Armenian merchant by name Marcus Davidzs in an illegal manner. There was an allegation that senior merchant Bergaigne on return from the pearl fishery at Kilakarai after a chat with the chulia Periatambi Marraikayar had changed his mind and gone to the side of the Muslim. Interlopers and private traders posed a series of problems. Every agent in every factory complained about private traders encroaching on Company trade and destroying the market for their goods by selling the same goods in advance. Private traders violated the entire policy of Company trading. But the same agents and factors who at the official level had to grapple with the problem of private trading were themselves not free from the sins of private trade.

Unregistered diamonds were liable for further payment of five per cent. Despite this, the diamond trade was never free from smuggling. The ship captains through whom most of the smuggling was done, used to charge two per cent for their services, which was only a little more than they received for registered diamond consignments on their ships. In war time if anything happened to the ship, there was a much better chance of the diamonds being saved if they were entrusted to the personal care of the captains. Growth of smuggling was also due to the large scale transfers of fortunes from India to Europe, which were partly effected through diamond consignments.

Innumerable fraudulent activities of the English diamond agent at Madras, Nathaniel Cholmley, were a source of worry and discouragement to the English authorities. In 1698 the merchant had been permitted by the Company to deal in diamonds at Golconda. The Commission for Prevention of Private Trade was informed in December 1698 about damage caused by rise of diamond prices. It was discovered that Nathaniel Cholmley employed in making the investment returned who for his own, and the advantage and gain of others, had not performed well according to the trust reposed in him by the Company.
It was suspected that the Portuguese backed Felipe Escude was having a very elusive existence. He was not found in Goa but at Santhome in Mylapore. He passed all his time almost at sea and in trading with the muslims. There were some suspicions regarding his relationship with the Dutch and the English. He was trading in precious stones and was suspected of assisting some members of the two other European Companies without the knowledge of the Portuguese.\(^{140}\)

George Oxenden was in charge of the factory at Surat between 1662 and 1669 and in the collection of his papers there were a number of letters received from merchants in London during the years 1666-1668. These letters show that the merchants employed Oxenden as an agent in India for their business in precious stones. They sent him consignments in silver coins, precious stones (mainly emeralds). Mendes and Alvaro da Costa asked Oxenden to send their emeralds and corals as quickly as possible to their agents at Goa. He was to sell their silver coins at Surat and make the returns in diamonds.\(^{141}\)

Diamonds purchased in a hurry did not always fetch the desired satisfaction to the customer. Once diamonds were bought just before the death of General Antonio Van Diemen and were sent to Holland without proper prior sorting. This escaped the understanding of Maetsuyker and Val Alphen. Some of these had to be used as diamond powder by the diamond cutters and glass makers.\(^{142}\) At certain times in this region if one were to buy diamonds from foreigners, the prices were so high that such costs would have looked exorbitant even to buyers in Holland who would have given up the idea of buying.\(^{143}\)

The diamonds bought at the Indian centres showed a marked superiority over those bought from elsewhere. It was reported that 5475 pieces of diamonds weighing 4845 carats were bought for the Dutch Company at Masulipatnam costing DFL 86143. Part of these diamonds were opened and examined and when
compared to the ones bought in Succadana, the ones bought in Coromandel were found to be a bit dearer and superior. The diamonds and indigo of Coromandel and chiefly from Masulipatnam were much desired in Europe for their reasonable prices and impeccable quality. Succadanese diamonds worth 2500 reals were bought and still more were expected. The quantity and quality of these diamonds affected the prices and the diamonds of Succadana were selling at a loss in Holland. Therefore for some time no orders from Holland for Succadanese diamonds came to Batavia.

Regarding pearls, the ancient Indians had fixed a basic value for pearls which all buyers had to pay. It was a root value from which followed many other values. Depending on the colour, texture and other properties of the pearl, like size, shape and weight the higher values were attached. It was necessary to make known the weight of the pearl as soon as it was earmarked for sale. It was not easy to attach a fixed value to pearls for frequent differences were found with regard to colour and texture. Regarding the quality and real worth of the pearls, it was difficult for the Europeans to extract the correct information from the natives who were not always keen to divulge all secrets to the Europeans who clearly betrayed signs of excessive desire and greed for quick wealth. Therefore half the quantity of pearls were bought with greater risk for there always lay dangers of being cheated. Hence certain amount of inhibitions crept in the minds of prospective buyers from overseas whose expertise and experience in pearls and local conditions was insufficient. Certain luxury items from neighbouring Ceylon were also passing through India for their onward sale and distribution. Seed pearls and rubies from Ceylon were major items of trade to Cochin and on to the Carreira. Since rubies, pearls and seed pearls were unregistered in coastwise as well as in the Cape trade, quantification has posed
difficulties. A royal letter was sent to the Viceroy of India Don João Coutinho regarding precious stones to be sent from Ceylon to Cochin and Goa by the controller of finances of the island for the purpose of dispatching the consignments to Portugal. The revenue officer from Ceylon promptly sent all the precious stones from the island to the officers in Cochin and Goa which became a part of the Fazenda of the Portuguese king.

Diamond trade rose to prominence in the second decade of the seventeenth century. Merchants preferred to invest in precious stones rather than textiles and hence there was a decline in the latter. Precious stones required less space on the ships and practically no custom duties on arrival in Lisbon. The most common containers of precious stones were bizalhos and bocetas, but their precise size and capacity varied. In 1598, some official correspondence indicated that one bizalho ordered for the Crown carried almost 300 stones ranging from quarter carat to a few diamonds of ten carats. This bizalho was worth between 5000 to 10,000 cruzados when delivered in Lisbon. An average was around 7,000 cruzados. Much of the precious stone cargoes were unregistered contraband. The bizalho was a small wooden box sewn up in cotton and sealed with wax and could contain three hundred to four hundred small and large diamonds. Once the Casa da India reported sixty four such bizalhos of diamonds registered on a carrack. The bizalhos remained sealed until they were delivered to their owners in Lisbon. The merchants placed several bizalhos in sacks and entrusted them to agents on board the ships. Manuel de Paz, the Tinoco family’s agent in India in the early seventeenth century, carried with his personal effects aboard a carrack several sacks, each with thirteen to fifteen bizalhos of diamonds and other precious stones. He shipped many sacks of diamonds yearly to relatives in Antwerp,
Hamburg and Amsterdam. He had left India in 1607 and continued to invest in the Goa-Lisbon lucrative trade.

The diamonds of the English were packed in “bulses” or leather purses inside cloth wrapped boxes. Each was accompanied by a bill stating the number and assortments of stones and their value in pagodas. The diamonds sent to London had to be registered at the Company’s offices at Fort Saint George and after the register was closed for the season, it was sent to India House in London. The register served as a basis for calculating the dues which the importers had to pay to the Company. The captain of the ship received one and a quarter percent of their value for providing safe transport. The payment helped the captain to take personal interest in the legal trade and reduced the temptation for smuggling.

The Indian rules regarding jewels brought in the country were stringent and involved strange procedures. It was declared that no one could take out jewels from England, but bringing in had freedom and liberty unlike in India. Diamonds were used in two ways for the transfer of money, they could be purchased in India and taken or sent abroad for sales. Another way was to buy bills of exchange from a European diamond merchant in India, drawn on a diamond merchant abroad. As a security for the payment of the bill a quantity of diamonds was attached, of a value slightly higher than the bill, to be handed over to the merchant on his honouring the bill of exchange. Robert Clive first used diamonds on a large scale as a means for remitting money to England. In 1765 he sent Thomas Motte to the diamond mines, proposing to him to return with the Vakil to the mines to open the diamond trade. It was to be a joint concern in which Motte was to hold one-third and he the rest. Warren Hastings also made extensive use of diamonds as a means of transfer and he claimed that his best and speediest remittance was in diamonds.
The outbreak of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) brought Amsterdam to the fore. It offered religious and civil liberty to anyone who wished to settle there and the city came to exercise a near monopoly not only on the diamond industry but also on the trade in diamonds. In addition to the protestant migrants from Antwerp, Amsterdam received a number of Portuguese Jews experienced in high financial transactions, who were forced to emigrate to escape the persecution of the Inquisition. Amsterdam reserved the first choice of diamonds for its own diamond cutters and it was during these years that real marvels of craftsmanship were performed in transforming small and mediocre stones into finely worked gems. Attempts were made to improve the quality of the cut.

Diamond supplies were dependent on the output of the mines, the state of security in the area of the mines, the safety of the roads, and also on the commercial tactics of the Indian merchants who often brought their stones to the market just before the sailing of the ships, in the hope of creating favourable sale conditions for themselves. To make it impossible for the Indian merchants to open their stones for sale at the last moment, an order was passed for strict prohibition on the registration of diamond consignments to Europe after the register had been formally closed. By this the bargaining power of the Europeans was strengthened. To put a stop to fraud the Portuguese kings tried to encourage voluntary registration of precious stones. Phillip III reduced customs assessed on diamonds from one per cent to half per cent in 1618, but in that year merchants declared just seventy one bizalhos. Most vessels arrived with no bizalhos registered. The king had been advised that precious stones were bought in Goa every year, which were imported to Portugal in great quantities, and the rights of the king were not paid by the importers. The traders who wanted to sell precious stones were required to declare the price on November 25 every
year on the feast of Saint Catherine. By this all inconveniences were expected to be reduced and the royal revenue was to witness a rise.162

An idea of the volume of the diamond trade can be guessed from certain rare but very revealing incidents. From a multiple ship wreck in the Azores in 1615 the Casa da India officials recovered 136 bizalhos and eighteen boçetas of diamonds and other precious stones, forty three pieces of gold and nine chests of bezoar stones.163 Salvage of diamonds and precious stones accounted for about one million cruzados. According to the Archbishop Governor of Lisbon, the Casa da India was able to recover a total of more than 300 bizalhos worth in the excess of 2.25 million cruzados.164 In 1616 Castillian officials seized two vessels registered in the names of Cornelius Jansen and Claes Guerson, meant for the north. Dozens of bizalhos were found belonging to Lisbon’s new Christian merchants. The officials impounded the bizalhos and found out that they were not registered on entry to Lisbon but were concealed for further export defrauding the king of export duties.165 The English court passed a series of rules with the object of preventing the private merchants from competing with the Company in diamond trade and of compensating the Company’s servants in India of the loss of diamond business. This they hoped to achieve by a system of reward and punishment. Ship captains were promised one and a half per cent of the purchase price of all diamonds imported in their ships as a gratuity in diamonds, precious stones, gems and jewels. A prize was offered for any information leading to the discovery of illegal diamond trading. The ship-owners and captains were to pay the Company fines equivalent to the full value of any silver exported or diamonds imported illegally. Captains and other persons serving in East Indiamen were liable to dismissal on a first offence contravening the new rules concerning the diamond trade and the same applied to the Company servants.166 The English Company’s
Committee of the Treasury was empowered to open any parcel of diamonds if there was ground for suspicion that the declared value was not true. It was made obligatory for the merchants to employ the President of the Company’s Council at Surat or Fort Saint George or some other member of the Council, as one of his agents in India.167

Officials of the Casa da India divided the many commodities aboard the carracks into broad categories for assessment of custom duties: (1) drogas, (2) fazendas, (3) miudezas, and (4) pedraria. Drogas included spices, medicinal herbs and drugs. Fazendas were general commodities. Miudezas consisted of special items of furniture. Pedraria comprised of diamonds, rubies, sapphires, pearls, semi-precious stones and jewellery. The miudezas category included writing desks and boxes from India, carved ivory pieces, lapis lazuli, amber, and gold jewellery. Merchants filled scores of writing desks with small quantities of amber, pearls, gold jewellery, consignments of semi-precious stones, seed pearls in small sacks or other containers and loaded in the outgoing ships from Goa. Other consignments designated trouxa contained small quantities of silk and semi-precious stones, writing desks upto one hundred per year. Each trouxa filled with seed pearls and bezoar stones brought as much as 200 cruzados in Lisbon. Sacks or jars of semi-precious stones could be valued at 500 cruzados each. The aggregate value of the miudezas as registered approached 300,000 cruzados annually in Lisbon.168

The Portuguese king collected little more than 1,500 cruzados annually from a one per cent duty on pedraria landed in Lisbon. Contraband trade reduced the customs yield. Merchants wrongly reported the value of their diamonds.169 The secrecy of diamond trade prevented the king’s officers from obtaining reliable estimates of the pedrarias actual value. Skilled lapidaries in Lisbon and on the
staff of Casa da India could not do much. The kings refused to raise customs on precious stones to allow for the unregistered trade. They knew that any increased levy on the trade could only lead to more fraud in registering pedraria and paying the dues.\footnote{170}

The value of diamonds in the market was determined in the first place by their quality, transparency, spots and flaws, possibility of cutting and polishing. The size of stone was an important factor. Diamonds were classified according to their quality and were sorted in India before being sent to Europe, into five groups beginning from fine onwards. The fine stones were usually made into brilliants, the middle sorts were cut into less expensive stones, while the boart served for cutting other diamonds. It was also used for cutting glass. Stones already worked in India were called lasks. Since Indian workmanship differed from the one needed for European tastes, these stones were always recut and polished in Europe. The values of these in Holland ranged between fifteen to forty DFL per carat.\footnote{171}

The Portuguese king decreed that all precious stones that were sent via Ormuz by the Portuguese from India as well as by the foreigners who sold them in Venice, Turkey, France, Italy and in other parts were to follow the orders of the Viceroy of India so that the revenue of the king did not suffer. To follow the rules it was suggested that the Portuguese and the foreigners would not send the precious stones by land. Those who disobeyed this were to be confiscated of their goods.\footnote{172} The king complained that in the previous year the ships returned practically empty and no precious stones were loaded which was a great set back to the operations at home.\footnote{173}

In London the diamond bulses were usually sold unopened, as they arrived from India along with the price tag. The bill was made out in Madras pagodas.
The mutually agreed rate was determined by market conditions, and also reflected the degree of trust which the consigner in India enjoyed in London. The difference could amount to ten per cent. Diamonds were sold from hand to hand but sometimes public sales were conducted.174

There were three kinds of diamond merchants in Amsterdam.175 The importers sold the stones to big dealers, who were the wholesale merchants of the trade. They had the stones cut or polished or sent them to Antwerp. The third group consisted of jewellers, who brought finished stones or polished themselves and prepared jewellery. They were craftsmen and retailers and sold the finished product to the public. Jewellers were the social inferiors of the merchants.

Attempts to transfer diamonds and precious stones did not always meet with easy success especially when it came to any dealings in this regard with the members of the native royal families. It was a common belief among foreigners that no diamonds or precious stones could be had from the native royals save except when they were in dire straits. The rubies of Jacob Reael176 which the Dutchman had arranged to transfer to the Netherlands had to undergo a certain delay due to the enthusiasm shown by a native buyer from the royal house. Through the Governor of Surat it was made known to the Dutch representatives that they would be sold to Sultan Khurram for 30,000 rupees. He had delayed the final act of buying for more than six months. The prince wanted to purchase them for the king and wanted no one to step into Surat with the intention of buying them before him. He only allowed people to visit them and to discuss the price. For weeks and months people were engaged in debates over the prices and offered half the price. Some tried to snatch them from his hands or know some way to succeed in getting them out. People were forgetting the consequences and the risk that was involved in such an enterprise. The Surat Governor was told
that the owner wanted to take back the rubies, but he would not listen to it. He assured them that the king was informed of the matter and his answer was awaited. People were eagerly waiting for the consent to come. The said rubies of Sr. Reael were expected to fetch 40,000 DFL, if not they were to be sent to Holland.177

The Portuguese continued their trade in diamonds right into the eighteenth century even when the other rival European trading Companies assumed greater importance. In January of 1750 the ships Monte Alegre and São Francisco Xavier delivered in Lisbon over 168 bizalhos of diamonds. The stones in the Monte Alegre were worth 260391.0.14 tangas whereas in the São Francisco the value of the stones was 089604.2.00 tangas. Among those who sent the bizalhos majority were of course Europeans but there were some prominent Indians whose consignments were bigger and with more bizalhos. In most cases Indians preferred to send their consignments on joint accounts. Ananta and Lacamida Sinai, Raulu and Krishna Camotim, Dhulia and Vencoba Naique, Pondru, Upea, Suba and Pandu Camotim, Vitoba and Ganesa Naique, Logue, Vithoba and Naraina Saunto, Venku and Narsu Naik are shown as jointly despatching their consignments to Lisbon. Names of individual Indians also figure in the same list but they are much lesser than those of the Europeans who dominate the list of the two ships as individual senders of diamond consignments. 178 The annual production of India was valid upto twenty lakhs rupees.179

From the foregoing discussion it becomes clearer that a vast network of trading activities that developed in the sixteenth century continued on an improved note in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. In fact greater sophistication and organization can be noticed at various levels in the exploitation of Indian resources and the smooth transportation of it to the desired
destinations. As emphasis began to be laid on better supervision and stricter control, more intricate ways were invented to overcome the hurdles by the private traders and smugglers and when efforts failed to materialise, instead of complying with the norms, many preferred to desert the parent companies and offer their services to the rival companies, in a few cases some even joined hands with the local potentates and allowed themselves to be converted to native way of life and religion.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2. Checks and counter checks by legitimate authorities and sometimes even by illegitimate ones all along the land route depleted to some extent the volume and reduced the profit margin in the days of trade through land routes. Through the Cape route it was possible to carry diamonds, precious stones and pearls by unregistered bizalhos and boçetas evading payment of all tolls and taxes. AHU India Cx.1, doc.78, Cx.9, doc.73, Cx.12, doc.19.


5. DR. Entry of 13-12-1626. "The diamond mine was further opened and plenty of diamond began to come from there. Because of the shortage of the capital we could not buy more". See also Goa through the Ages, Vol.II, Rural Economy and Life by T.R. De Souza, p.83, Diamonds from the Deccan were brought overland through the ghat routes to Goa.

7. The Dutch used the pass system 'to control the volume, composition and direction of the Asian merchants trade, with a view to protect and enlarge their own interests in the Euro-Asian and intra-Asian trade'. See Om Prakash, Asian Trade and European Impact, p.45. For Portuguese pass system (Cartazes) M.N. Pearson, Merchants and Rulers, op.cit., pp. 39-56, Also K.S.Mathew, Portuguese Trade with India in the Sixteenth Century, op.cit., pp.61-63.

8. DR. 1641-1642, 22-12-1643, DR. 9-1-1644. ARA. VOC. 1245.

9. Also precious stones like diamonds, rubies, sapphires, cats eyes, topazes were sent from Ceylon to Goa by sea routes. DRI, Tomo II, doc. 195, 10-3-1611.
DRI, Tomo IV, doc. 818. 10-3-1617.
DRI, Tomo VI, doc. 17, 7-3-1619.


11. Mandelslo (in Olearius, Relation. Vol.II, p.241-243) gives the stages of the route from Dabhol to Bijapur and emphasizes the importance of this route which channelled traffic from the Deccan to the Arabian Sea.


16. DR. 1662, 26-12-1662. In Vengurla the diamonds of Coromandel gave a profit of 80 per cent to the Dutch.

17. Ibid., Dangers from the Marathas were mounting in the second half of
the seventeenth century. For example, the famous Konkani merchant Popot Naik, out of fear for Shivaji and his men left Vengurla and returned to Goa with his family. His business being totally ruined. DR. 1673, 31-1-1673.

18. DR. 1641-1642, 30-12-1640.
19. DR. 1645, 18-11-1644.
20. DR. 1643-1646, 21-12-1646. Nicholas Cornelisz Block came and served as opperkoopman at Vengurla. From 1642-1644 he was the commander of the flote to Goa.

21. AHU. India, Cx.4, doc.136, Cx.5, doc. 164.
24. DR. 1649, 18-1-1649
25. DR. 1654, 22-9-1654.
26. DR. 1663, 21-12-1663.
27. CB.34, £74, 10-12-1713.
30. Isaac Abendana dealt in diamond under the protection of the new English East India Company in Masulipatnam. See B.M. Add. Mss. 22852, £155.
32. Letter of Joseph Fowke, Calcutta, 21st September, 1784, I.O.L.
33. AHU, India Cx.4, doc.25.
34. AHU, India Cx.11, doc. 41, 193.

35. P.v. Dam, Beschrijvinge. op.cit., p.196.

36. These markets were as important as the ones at Tuticorin and Punnakayal and received their supplies from Ceylon. ARA. VOC. 1614.

37. P.v. Dam, Beschrijvinge. op.cit., p.430. Quality pearls were sold at the Punnakayal market under the Dutch supervision.

38. ARA. VOC. 1651, fl.105. 30-11-1702. The Dutch supply chanks to Bengal.

ARA. VOC. 1651, fl.129. 1-12-1703.

ARA. VOC. 1696, fl.368, 30-11-1705. The Molenwerf sailed from Ceylon with 2677 quintals of chanks to Bengal.

ARA. VOC. 1781, fl. 397. 29-11-1710. Chanks from Ceylon were also transported to Bengal by the Dutch.

39. ARA. VOC. 1441, 27-12-1688.

40. BNL, Fundo Geral, Codex 8571. fls. 231.

41. HAG. Livros das Moncoes. Livro 12 (1613-17), Dec. 1613.

AGS, Secretarias Provinciales, Portugal, Libro 1479 (1608-1609) fl.341, 22-1-1609.

42. ARA. VOC. 1438, fl.485. 31-1-1692.


44. DR. 1674, fl.945, 17-11-1674.

45. ARA. VOC. 1681, fl.312. 30-11-1704. Periathambi Marraikayar was actively involved in the fishery of that year and had successfully kept the English out from participating in it. Dutch man Bergaigne had close ties with Periathambi during the Kilkaraie pearl fishery of 1695. See ARA. VOC. 1541, fl.495. 4-2-1695.

47. The frequent references to Malabari pirates found in both English and Dutch records were most often applied to these enterprising Indian merchants. EFI. 29-12-1640, 27-1-1644. DR. 1646, 24-4-1646. DR. 1650, 1-10-1650. Beri Ram Chetti is referred to as that pirate by the Dutch and Narasimha and Rama Samy Mudaliyar are said to have come in the Company of Malabar pirates. See DR.1657, 14-12-1652.

48. DR. 1615, 22-11-1615.


51. GAA. NA. 6036, fl.58, 6-7-1707.

52. ARA. VOC. 2018. fl.722, 22-10-1725.


55. B.M. Sloane, Mss. No.1861, 26-1-1664.

56. DR. 1746, 13-6-1746.


59. Ibid., fls. 56. Letter of the Vice Roy to Rustomji, 17-5-1698. Rustomji Manockji was the broker of the Dutch before 1681. For 15 years he was also the broker of the Portuguese in Surat, administrator of Passports and attorney for Portuguese in that city.

60. Pv. Dam, Beschrijvinge, op.cit., pp.8, 119, 126.

61. Ibid., op.cit., p.179.


64. EFI 1655-1660, 10-11-1656.


66. ARA. VOC. 1861 fl.244.

ARA. VOC. 1887 fl.26.

67. ARA. VOC. 1396, fls. 88-89.

68. ARA. VOC. 1396, fls.17-18.


70. ANTT. Registo Geral de Testamentos, liv.2, no.25.

71. Ibid.

72. BNL. Reservados, Codex 203, fls. 307, 562.
73. BNL. Fundo Geral, Codex 8571, fls.231.
74. HAG. Livros das Monções, Livro 13 B (1630) fls. 392-415.
76. BNM. Mss. 2780, 73 fts. La Vida de Jacques de Coutre, Sala de Manuscritos, Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid.
M.N. Pearson, Goa based Sea Borne Trade, op.cit., p.131.
77. AHU. India, Cx.1, doc. 101, 25-2-1611.
AHU. India, Cx.1, doc. 67, 10-12-1612.
AHU. India, Cx.3, doc.9, 7-1-1615.
AHU. India, Cx.7, doc.118, 8-4-1623.
ANTT. As Gavetas, doc.22, 26-2-1622. Ferdinand Cron is suspected to be in league with the Dutch and the English and sentenced to prison by the Portuguese.
78. AHU. India, Cx. 325, doc. 168, (1615).
79. DR. 1664, 13-8-1664.
80. BNL. Fundo Geral. Reservados, doc. 1554-93, fl.16. Invoice of the ships Monte Alegre and São Francisco Xavier arriving in Lisbon during the monsoon of 1750.
82. GAA. NA. 1481, 24-7-1618.
GAA. NA. 1511, 26-8-1618.
83. GAA. NA. 30003/30, £3014, 22-2-1622.
84. DR. 1610-1638, 26=7-1612.
EFI. 1624-1629, 28-3-1624.
85. ACE. doc. 113, 19-4-1631.
86. N. Mac Leod, *De Oost - Indische Compagnie als Zeemogendheid in Azie*, Vol.I, Rijswijk, 1927, p.204

87. Ibid.

88. Ibid., p.205.

89. Dr. 1639, 31-7-1638.

90. ARA. VOC. 1116, 4-1-1636.

91. AGS, E437, fl. 90. ARA. VOC. 1540, 30-11-1694

92. ARA. VOC. 1802, 12-2-1712.

93. AHU. India, Cx. 38 A (1696) Goa, 13-12-1695.

94. ARA. VOC. 1642, fls.11041, 1120, 31-12-1701.

95. ARA. VOC. 2002, 30-11-1724.

ARA. VOC. 2145, 30-11-1730.

ARA. VOC. 2205, 25-11-1735.

In the above documents the Dutch buyers are repeatedly reminded of the need to buy good quality diamonds.

96. GAA. NA. 6036, fl.58, 6-7-1707.

97. EFI, I, p.254.

98. EFI, I, pp.297, 303.

99. ARA. VOC. 1408, fl. 827, 11-12-1685.

100. ARA. VOC. 1418, 13-12-1686.

101. ARA. VOC. 1444, 27-2-1689.

102. ARA. VOC. 1458, 14-3-1690.

103. ARA. VOC. 1488, 30-6-1692.

104. ARA. VOC. 1490, 24-3-1692.

105. ARA. VOC. 1561, 3-11-1695.

106. ARA. VOC. 1567, 8-2-1696.

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107. Ibid.

109. Mahmudi was a currency in Gujarat. It was a silver coin of the value of nearly an English shilling. See EFI. 1618-1621, p.27.

110. EFI. 1622-23, p.221, K. Glamann, Dutch Asiatic Trade, 1620-1740, Copenhagen, 1958, p.18.

111. Glamann, Ibid., pp.12, 25.


115. ARA. VOC. 2145.


117. B.M. Add. Ms.9366, fl. 123.


119. Ibid., p.47.

120. Ibid., p.35.

121. Ibid., p.37.

122. DR. 1692, 31-1-1692.

123. GAA. NA. 3213/6. (1672).

124. DR. 1690, 14-3-1690.

125. GAA. NA. 3003/114, fl.3014.

128. Ibid., p.158.
129. Ibid.
130. EFI, 1661-1664. Letter sent from Masulipatnam to England via Madras by the ship Coronation dated Jan 28th, 1663.
132. HAG. LML. Livro 12 (1613-1617), Dec. 1613.
133. AHU. India, Cx.334 (1636-1637), doc.19, 15-3-1636.
134. DR. 1646, 21-12-1646, fl.292.
135. ARA. VOC. 1129, 18-12-1639.
136. ARA. VOC. 1671, 30-11-1704.
137. ARA. VOC. 1541, 4-2-1695.
139. CCM. 1677-1679, p.234.
   DR. 1678, 21-12-1678.
140. DRI, Tomo VI, doc. 6, Goa, 6-2-1620.
141. CCM. 1668-1669, p.296.
142. DR. 1647. 31-12-1647.
143. DR. 1633, 15-8-1633.
144. DR. 1641-1642, 9-8-1641, fl.225.
145. DR. 1643, 18-3-1643, fl.119.
   DR. 1643, 22-12-1643, fl.200.
146. Pv. Dam, Beschrijvinge, op.cit., p.419.
148. DRI. Tomo II, doc.195, 10-3-1611.

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149. DRI, Tomo VI, doc. 79, 7-3-1619.
150. DRI, Tomo IV, doc. 818. 10-3-1611.
151. Luiz Falcão, Livro em que se contem toda e Fazenda, Real Patrimônio dos Reinos de Portugal, India e Ilhas adjacentes e outras particularidades (1607), Lisbon, 1859. Also see AHU. India, Cx.1, doc.103, 17-3-1611, AHU. India, Cx.2, doc.91, 31-1-1613.
152. AHU. India, Cx.2. doc. 140, 3-12-1614.
          AHU. India, Cx.3. doc. 6. 13-1-1613.
153. AHU. India, Cx.325, no.168, 28-12-1615.
158. Ibid.
161. AHU. India, Cx.31, doc.73, 2-3-1626.
162. DRI, Tomo II, doc.170, 12-2-1611, doc.305, 29-1-1613.
163. AHU, India, Cx.325, doc.168 (1615).
164. AHU. Azores, Cx.1 (1616).
165. AHU, Reino, Cx.2, Doc.201, (1616-1618).
166. CB. 32, f.l.61-62 (22-10-1680).
167. CB. 35, fl.34 (7-9-1689).
168. AHU. India, Cx.326, doc. 25.
169. AHU. India, Cx. 339, doc.70 (1640-1643), 12-8-1641.

170. HAG. LML. Liv.12 (1613-17), DRI. II, doc.31.

171. Sir Mocatta and Goldsmith to Thomas Coults and Company, 5th March 1800 as cited by Gedalia Yogev in Diamonds and Corals, op.cit., p.140.

172. DRI. Tomo III, doc.765, fl.495, 16-3-1616.

173. DRI, Tomo III, doc.483, fl.167, 24-4-1614.


176. Jacob Reael, was the nephew of Governor General Laurens Reael. He was the alderman of Amsterdam and in 1629 because of bankruptcy had to leave the town hall.

177. ARA. VOC. 1104.

178. See Appendix Invoice of Monte Alegre and Sao Francisco Xavier.

179. V. M. Godinho, Mito e Mercadoria Utopia e Pratica de Navegar, op. cit., p. 389.