CHAPTER I

THE REGION

The study of a region occupies foremost importance for one cannot transverse into the theme without its proper understanding. The region is understood as a geographical entity that has a definable boundary or characteristics. The pursuit to understand a region does not involve the solitary aspect of topography. A wide range of features that can be included under the headings of social, political and economic aspect also discern a region. These facets develop due to particular characteristics of the region as well the availability of the resources within it. Hence the topography of a region nurtures and addresses to a variety of attributes which become mutually exclusive with the region over a period of time. When we consider the theme of our study, the region in consideration that is, the Coromandel Coast and Southeast Asia, gives the impression of being large and ambiguous. But one cannot circumvent it if one has to comprehend the Coromandel-Southeast Asia commercial nexus and the Portuguese retreat in the region in 17th century. The bounty from this commercial nexus in the form of textiles and spices had brought the Europeans to the brim of prosperity.

Most of the itinerants who traveled to the “East Indies” often touched the well-known and accessible ports of Asia. While there were voyagers who wrote a fictive account about places resulting in the development of the notion of the ‘other’, there were only few who did not develop such conception. It is the historian’s job to sieve out such views from the journals, in order to construct a narrative as close to realism as possible. Most of the itinerants who traveled in the sixteenth century generally sailed along the coastline. Hence a vessel that was bound for the “East Indies” would after touching Cape Comorin
navigate through the Palk Straits coming across Ceylon on the right and the Pearl Fishery coast on its left and further doubling on to the Coromandel Coast on the Indian subcontinent. But after the discovery of the Brouwer Route\(^1\), an even smaller number of vessels steered their oars first towards the Coromandel en route to Southeast Asia. Nonetheless, in order to be in rhythm with our premise, a study of the Coromandel region would do justice to it. From the Coromandel Coast we will sail across the Bay to discover the region which was abounding in the potpourri of spices that is, Southeast Asia.

**THE COROMANDAL COAST:**

In the 16\(^{th}\) and 17\(^{th}\) centuries, there were two options of direction which the European itinerants on their way to ‘East Indies’ could chose from, once they were closer to Cape Comorin. The first one was that if the journal travelled especially after 1616, he might sojourn at Ceylon before taking the Brouwer Route again to reach Malacca. In this case, he would not visit the Coromandel. Even before 1616, travelling northwards from Cape Comorin was not so popular on account of the factors which directed the sail in those times. In case the wind was contrary and so violent that a tempest arose, it could even disperse the fleet and in this way many of the vessels would get unhappily lost. The second possibility was that on reaching Cape Comorin, the voyager would pace towards the northern direction along the fringes of the south Indian peninsula. This latter possibility would take the itinerant to the Fishery Coast where he would encounter the Paravas, occupied with fishing activity and culturing of pearls. Side by side he would also encounter the Jesuits involved in various activities along with converting the indigenous populace into Christianity. The Jesuits had come to the land of the Paravas under the aegis of St. Francis Xavier, whose labours saw the

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\(^1\) The Brouwer Route was discovered in 1616. Developed by the Dutch, the vessels that were to travel along this route were supposed to sail directly to Indonesia once they reached Cape of Good Hope. The Dutch vessels made their way along the Indian coast and often touched Ceylon en route.
fishing community converting into the Holy Faith around the mid-16th century. This was the amphitheatre in the southern parts of modern Tamil Nadu which our onlookers noticed on their sojourn to the Coromandel.

If we perceive the region through the eyes of a fictive itinerant, then on crossing the Palk Straits, he would sail into the Coronga Bay from where a distinct landform features could be noticed if he further moved towards the north. Along with the palms that swayed to the tunes of the wind there was a ferocious sea rocking the coast on the right and small vessels trying to glide on the waves to reach back home or striving to catch fishes. This was the broad landscape of the Coromandel. Situated on the south-eastern end of the Indian peninsula, the Coromandel Coast or Cholamandalam\(^2\) as it has also been referred to, attracted attention of the itinerants, Companies, trading groups and last but not the least, the renegades due to various reasons. The unique topography of the coast provided its distinctness. Be it the Ghats or the plains; the cyclones or winter monsoons- these characteristics distinguished it from other geographical entities of the Indian sub-continent. It is no doubt that these very features were responsible for shaping the "world" on the Coromandel. This "world" had its essence in the cotton production in the hinterland. It was this very commodity which brought the Europeans to this coast and made them hold through all odds whether it was the uninviting topography or the politics of the indigenous polities or the contest for hegemony among themselves.

Lying on the Eastern Ghats, nature has created Coromandel with a broader strip of land when compared to the Western Ghats. Described as a "land of open plains"\(^3\), it also encompassed the deltas of the three great rivers [Godavari, Krishna and Kaveri] wherein rice was cultivated. So this terrain

\(^2\) Deriving its name from Colamandalam, this coast came to be known as the Coromandel coast. It meant the circle of the Cholas or more precisely the politico-cultural region of the Cholas.

\(^3\) Dames,M.L.(ed.), The book of Duarte Barbosa, Vol.II, The Hakluyt Society, 1921, pp125
presented an interminable sea of green or golden rice-fields, dotted with villages surrounded by palm trees. The narratives of the contemporaries of the 16th and the 17th centuries are either devoted entirely or at large on Coromandel or as a section while describing their travels in Asia. The coast has generally been described loosely by the itinerants as the region between Point Calimere in the south and the mouths of Godavari river in the north. The different accounts conferred its boundaries according to the knowledge and observation of their perceivers, which were mostly similar. Thomas Bowrey gave one of the most well defined descriptions. He pointed out that the coast, "begineth at Nagapatam...(and)...Extendeth it Selfe to point Godaware, on the South Side of the bay Corango, which by computation is in length 400 miles."\(^4\) Hence in this case our area of study would comprise of the present parts of northern Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. The focal points however would be the settlements of São Thomé and Nagapattinam [Negapatnam] followed subsequently by Pulicat, Masulipatnam and Madras.

If we are to understand Bowrey's description as the most accurate one, then we need to travel from the south to the north with our fictive traveller and encounter places which incited interest in the 16th and 17th centuries not only to the Europeans but also to the pan-Asiatic trader. Thus the first place one would come across would be Negapatnam\(^5\). Seated near the shore, in the Kaveri delta, the city had no convenient harbour. In fact Baldaeus is precise in pointing that the whole of Coromandel was destitute of them\(^6\). But in spite of this major hindrance, Negapatnam turned out to occupy an early attention as a great port town in the European mindset. The bustling commercial activities, both overseas and coastal in the Asian trading network had enabled it to gather an early European attention. Among the overseas products, the calicoes were much in demand. Rice was the

\(^4\) Temple, R.C. (ed.) Thomas Bowrey, A geographical account of the Countries Round the Bay of Bengal, 1669 to 1679, New Delhi, 1997, pp2-3

\(^5\) Negapatnam has also been known as the 'snake town'.

\(^6\) Baldaeus, AES, 2000, p.651
chief commodity it supplied to the other coastal regions\(^7\). These aspects of trade are undoubtedly reflected in the various itineraries. Due to the high commercial attributes of this city, Negapatnam had diverse diasporic flavours which though did not entitle it to be called an entrepôt as Malacca but definitely a 'marine district'\(^8\). Varthema’s statement that “... it is the root to very large countries. There are many Moorish merchants where who go and come for their merchandise”\(^9\) is a self-explanatory statement about the trading activities at Negapatnam. Another attribute which attracted the Europeans to this port were the refreshing sea-winds though the land-winds were hot and stifling. In order to counter, the high humid and hot weather of the tropics, the Europeans planted gardens to get some relief at least in the evenings.

Karikal or Carcal as it was known to our travellers was the next place they encountered. Baldaeus noted trade in certain stuffs called ‘ramboyttns’\(^10\), which were much in demand in Japan. The sail of the ship then took our itinerant to Tranquebar, which was the only Danish settlement in the Bay in the 17\(^{th}\) century. The trade from this place was inconsiderable. Cuddalore or Colderon was the next stop-over. The presence of a dangerous sand-bank did not provide conditions to anchor the vessel. Porto Novo, in the 17\(^{th}\) century gained some significance though the trade from this port consisted of certain kinds of hard wood, coconuts, arck, coir etc. Moving away some paces ahead, one would encounter Tirepoplier. Lying on the bank of a navigable river, this port was observed by Baldaeus as fit for anchorage. It was not only the required fathoms of water it had but also a grey sandy ground. A safe anchorage was possible during the ‘South Monsoon’ but it

\(^7\) Sanjay Subrahmanyam explains in great detail how rice was an important commodity in the intracoastal trade from this region. For more details, refer to Subrahmanyam, Sanjay, the Political Economy of Commerce, CUP, 1990.
\(^9\) ibid
\(^10\) Baldaeus, AES, 2000, p. 652
turned out to be dangerous during the period of the ‘North Monsoon’. Another port, though small in nomenclature rose to prominence due to the Dutch presence. This was Tegenapatnam. Going further ahead along the coast one would reach Pondicherry. Sadraspatnam was another small place that one would encounter. All along the track from Negapatnam, our relater came across various small places which generally rose to prominence in the seventeenth century.

A visit on the Coromandel would not be complete for a European traveler if he did not visit Mylapore. Paying reverence to St. Thomas at this small town was one obligation that was thought necessary by the Europeans of that age. The shrine located on a hillock was indeed an inconsiderable place. But it was only the legend of St. Thomas which brought most of the travelers to this part of the world. Such was its extent that it was well incorporated in the town of Madras in the later period. Known as São Thomé to the Portuguese, Little Mount to the English and as Mylapore to the indigenous population, this small maritime town occupied much attention in the mindset of the Europeans for a long time. So much was this Saint popular that around his persona, various kinds of myths had been developed. Moreover, the increasing interest in relocating St. Thomas and his Christian community was due to the Crusades also. The apostle, who had a shadowy, but glorious career as a missionary and martyr had founded an opulent Christian colony in Southern India around the first century A.D. The saga of St. Thomas was so inherently built among the Portuguese from the very beginning that the official chronicler of the Estado da India, Joao de Barros wrote:

“One of the things that King Dom Manuel used to press on the Governors of India, was that they would be particularly interested in

11 ibid
12 The legend of St. Thomas had existed since the early days of the Catholic Church with its creation as an organized body having religious and administrative structures, of the twelve, two apostles moved away from Palestine-Santiago towards Spain and St Thomas towards India. Even after the headquarters of the Church shifted to Rome, the preoccupation of the Pope, who was the Bishop of Rome and the head of the new faith, was to establish contact with them and also with these two centers of the faith.
getting information about group of Christians in the East and regarding the life of the Apostle St. Thomas and if it was true that this body was buried in these areas; the same sort of interest was prevalent in the instructions given by his son Dom Joao.”

Besides the legend of St. Thomas there were other aspects also though not so obvious which glued the interest of the Europeans. The Abbé Carré, a late 17th century French traveller, who visited the town when it was sandwiched between the wrestling French, Dutch and Golconda powers extolled high praises for it—“This town is the most important on the Coromandel Coast, and has a great reputation for trade and commerce in all sorts of lovely calicoes and the best dyes in all the country.”

On the contrary, John Fryer, the Abbé’s contemporary suggested an abated look of São Thomé while not eclipsing the glory of its past. Thevenot (1664-1667) also noted the finer quality and better variety of colours of chintzes at São Thomé than at Masulipatam. If in the late 17th century this town [when it was constantly under the siege of one or the other power] had so much magnetism that it could make the observant see its good days so obviously, then one can comprehend its opulence in the prior period too. The testimony to this fact is provided by Duarte Barbosa who while describing the ‘Kingdom of Narsingha’ in the 16th century spoke of São Thomé as ‘very great an fair’.

The town of São Thomé had no natural harbour. The trading facet related with this shrine-town and the ever violent and swelling sea hence made the inhabitants develop surf-boats which came to be known as the mussoolas.

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13 Da Asia de Joao de Barros, Decada III, Livro VIII, Edicao Liveraria Sam Carlos, Lisboa, 1973, pp222
15 Fryer [Crooke, William(Edt), A New account of East India and Persia being nine years’ travels, 1672-1681, Vol.I, The Hakluyt Society, 1909, p 115] observed that São Thomé was ‘a city that formerly for riches, pride, and luxury, was second to none in India.’ Alexander Hamilton [Vol. I,198] wrote that ‘the city of St. Thomas was formerly the best mart town on the Choromandel Coast.’
Mussoola was built by sewing planks together with coir-twine, both the materials being locally available. Though these indigenous vessels were used throughout the Coromandel but they could be more often seen at São Thomé where the sea was ruthless. Often the European travellers were amused with this vessel so much so that they termed it as ‘odd boats’. The Venetian, Caesar Frederick gives a fine description of masadie as he calls a mussoola. From the way they are made to the way they are used, Frederick captivates it brilliantly. The celebrated past of the town of São Thomé was not only due to the holy shrine of St Thomas and the trade but also to its pleasant ambience as has been noted by most of the Europeans in their accounts. The adjoining chain of hills according to Fryer intercepted the hot land-winds. But being in the tropics, it seems to be infested with mosquitoes and that too of a particular kind which communicated elephantiasis.

Madras was the next destination on the coast. Founded in 1639 by the English factors on the sandy shores of the Coromandel, Fort St. George was the first proto-colonial enclave in the Indian sub-continent. The importance of Madras lay in the fact that it was a convenient place for the Europeans to buy textiles. Though it was exposed to heavy surf which made the English to construct an artificial harbour later, but it had one advantage as well. This was in the form of a small island on the strip facing the sea which was formed on the land side by river Coum. Prior to the construction of the artificial harbour, the Europeans used the

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17 Cummins, J.S., The Travels of Navarrete... 1962, Vol II, p.295. The Dominican father besides terming the mussoolas as ‘odd boats’ pointed out that ‘they have no Nails or Pins, but the Boards are sew’d together with Ropes made of Coco, and Water enter’d by a thousand Holes’...
20 Up to 1653, the settlement was subordinate to the Chief of Bantam in Java. After this it was then raised to the rank of Presidency.
indigenous vessels, catamarans\textsuperscript{23} to come to the shore and to load and unload their huge ships. An agreeable and flourishing place it was known for the manufacture of variety of piece goods such as cottons, chintz, painted fabrics.\textsuperscript{24} The Fort was divided into 'White Town' and 'Black Town' which as the names suggest was inhabited by the European and indigenous population respectively. Besides this classification which became quite popular in the early days of the establishment of Fort St. George, there were some other features which gave Madras its peculiar and popular character. Making their way through the watery rice fields, our eloquent observer would often notice sun-tanned indigenous populace uprooting the weeds so that their cereal does not get spoilt. Rice, after all was their staple diet. Along with these fields one could also notice the gardens laid by the English. Strewed with all sorts of stews and potage besides gourds and herbs for salads, there were also fruit-bearing trees like cocoas, guavas, jackfruit, mangoes, plums, pomegranates, bananas. And last but not the least were the betel creepers making their presence in the English gardens.

The next significant place in the itinerary of our observer would be Pulicat which was located close to Mylapore. Being a low coast area it still became prominent in the trading world of the 16\textsuperscript{th} as well as of the 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries.\textsuperscript{25} Situated on the south end of an island which separates the lake or lagoon of Pulicat from the sea, the town was known for the abundance of printed cotton cloths which were worth much in Malacca, Pegu and Sumatra as well in Gujarat and Malabar.\textsuperscript{26} Besides this traders from the mainland also ventured to this port to buy goods. Thus Pulicat provided a great diversity of merchandise. If cloth was available here for the overseas as well as the coastal market, so were rubies and

\textsuperscript{23} Catamarans, according to Fryer [Vol. I, p. 74] were 'logs lashed to that advantage that they waft off all their Goods, only having a Sail in the midst, and Paddles to guide them.'

\textsuperscript{24} Burn and Fawcet, Vol. II, 1947, p.360

\textsuperscript{25} Pulicat was the site of the first Dutch settlement on the Indian mainland. The town has the history of being transferred between the Dutch and English several times in succession.

\textsuperscript{26} Dames, Vol. II,1989 p. 132
musk. So there is no doubt that it was a ‘fair sea-haven’\textsuperscript{27} wherein ships of diverse lands took resort to. Like Negapatnam, Pulicat had ‘Moorish merchants’ who were involved in trading from this well-recognized port town. Varthema noted that there was abundance of every possible thing in this town except for grains. Rice was however grown in abundance.\textsuperscript{28} Since Sao Thomé did not have a good harbour, so the Portuguese used Pulicat for their trading activities. The Dutch factory which was established here in 1610 and it came to be known as ‘one of the best they have in the Indies, by reason of the Cotton-cloaths, of which they have great Ware-houses full there.’\textsuperscript{29} Pulicat was also known as the place where refining of salt petre that was brought from Bengal done. This was used for making gun-powder.

Moving further north of Pulicat, one would reach Petapolli. Negotiating the sea further, would lead our itinerant to the town of Masulipatam, a straggling town lying on the sea shore The custom house was the first place he would encounter as soon as he got out of his vessel. It was customary for every visitor to go to the custom house where toll duties were levied. Thevenot who had visited Surat also noticed that though Masulipatam was a small town but it was well-populated. On the streets which are narrow one could notice houses built of wood which were separated from one another. According to Tavernier, it is “only renowned on account of its anchorage, which is the best in the Bay of Bengal and it is the only place from which vessels sail for Pegu, Siam, Arakan, Bengal, Cochinchina, Mecca, and Hormuz, as also for the islands of Madagascar, Sumatra, and the Manillas.”\textsuperscript{30} Known for the fertile land and cheap provisions, this port city was at the rendezvous of overland and overseas route. The areas adjoining it like Pettipolee or Nizampatam, Bimilipatam, Srikakulam, Palakollu, Narsapur\textsuperscript{31} specialised in various processes of textile

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid,p.130
\textsuperscript{28} Jones,J.W. 1928 p.74
\textsuperscript{29} Sen, Surendranath, Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri, National Archives of India, New Delhi, 1949,p148
\textsuperscript{30} Ball, V., Travels in India by Jean Baptiste Tavernier, Macmillan and Co., Vol. I, 1889, p.175
\textsuperscript{31} Narsapur was also the place where ships were built on this coast.
production. So, in a way it was the hub of specialised textile production though the quality could not be superior to the ones marketed from São Thomé.

In the journey from Negapatnam to Masulipatam, one can notice that the coast was dotted with ports. However, the irony was that not even one coastal town had a fine harbour. The great 17th century expert on geography, Thomas Bowrey compared Pulicat with Fort St. George as a port, although the bar at the Pulicat lake caused a hindrance to the ships above 40 tons. He added that “all this coast indeed wanting nothing but some good harbours for shipping.” Peter Floris’s description of Pulicat proves the point—“*We came before Paleacatte att ancker, passing over the (drough the) shallowe, not being a lenghte above a musket shatt, having butt 3 faeem water, which is very dangerous for greate ships*”. This lack of harbours explains why the coast was neglected by the Portuguese although during the south-west monsoon its roadsteads provided a safer anchorage than the Malabar Coast. In reality however, Malabar Coast also did not have harbours which would be fit for an ocean-going vessel. Though the testimony given by the contemporaries is reliable, but still as one progressed towards the north of Madras, the coast was better suited for maritime settlement as Deloche has pointed out. That is why Pulicat and Masulipatnam (which was even better than others provided good shelter to the ships) developed as important European enclaves.

Besides the bad harbours another factor which often made the vessel not to visit the coast was the currents. The torrent waves often carried the ship

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32 Temple, R.C., 1997, p.4
34 Deloche, Jean, *Transport and Communications in India Prior to Steam Locomotion, Vol.II*, OUP, 1994, p. 101. He states that- the coast, extending to the North of the colonial capital, is better suited for maritime settlement; firstly, because there are several deeper lagoons forming good shelter; then because the access to the estuaries is easier. The amplitude of the tide progressively increases as one advances towards Vangal, the mouths and the outlets are not obstructed by sandy bars during the dry seasons and are open throughout the year with a not inconsiderable water depth.
STORM TRACKS IN THE BAY OF BENGAL

FIG. 26.—STORM TRACKS OF MARCH IN THE BAY OF BENGAL.

FIG. 27.—STORM TRACKS OF OCTOBER IN THE BAY OF BENGAL.

FIG. 28.—STORM TRACKS OF NOVEMBER IN THE BAY OF BENGAL.

ADAPTED FROM: Blanford, Henry F., *A practical guide to the climates and weather of India, Ceylon, and Burmah and the storms of the India Sea*, Macmillan & Co., 1889
away from its destination itself. For instance, the Agent and the Council at Fort St. George on 12th November, 1668 remarked: “These two Ships [Rainbow and Loyal Merchant] in going from hence [i.e. Madras] were deceived by the currents and overshot their port of Metchpatam as far as Corongo’s.” It is a well-known fact that the Bay of Bengal is known to be infested with cyclones. Being a common phenomenon, the Coromandel could not but be in the grip of it. They were usually more severe in nature at the changing of the monsoons. The testimony of those yester years is even true for today.

An inhospitable harbour accompanied by strong currents and occasionally by cyclones and storms would nonetheless make a place look averse to the high-tonnage oceanic vessels. Henry F. Blanford who wrote a guide to understand the climate and weather of India, Ceylon and Burma besides the storms of the Indian seas in 1889 drew a chart of the storm tracks in the Bay of Bengal for the months of May, October and November. If we notice the tracks in the figure, we observe that May and November appeared were the hard-hit months. The ships sailed to Southeast Asia in September which was a safer month to move away from this coast. Besides if we closely observe the topographical factors around the Bay of Bengal, one can easily discern the absence of the presence of the Estado in this region. All the settlements were unofficial in nature. So in this sense the Bay can also be termed as a peripheral region. But the irony was that though Coromandel was struck by such forces of nature but was still marked by trading towns in the commercial world of the Indian Ocean. The trade was fostered due to the demand for the textiles. Besides as Barbosa acclaimed, the land was “very fruitful and abounds in rice, flesh-meat, wheat and all vegetables of other kinds are also found there.”

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35 Temple, R.C., 1997, P.3
36 Also refer to “Imperial Gazetteer of Madras, Provincial Series, I, Superintendent of Government printing, Calcutta, 1908, p.14” for more details.
37 Blanford, Henry F., A practical guide to the Climates and Weather of India, Ceylon and Burmah and the storms of the Indian seas, Macmillan and Co., 1889
The trade from this coast was generally carried by chettis who were known for their commercial skills. Besides them, there were Muslim merchants or ‘Moors’ as they are generally classified. The Armenians and balijas were also part of this major section which managed commerce in the coastal towns of Coromandel.

The trading activities could only be endured on the Coromandel due to the two kinds of indigenous small sailing vessels which developed on the coast - *Mussoola* and *Catamaran*. They had been in use for a long time and were widespread on the Coromandel Coast. Both the vessels were used for loading and unloading the goods. Thomas Bowrey gave a comprehensive description of the way these vessels were built by Macoas and how useful they were to combat the rough seas—

> "The boats they doe lade and Unlade Ships or Vessels with are built very slight, haveinge noe timbers in them, Save thafts [thawarts] to hold their Sides together. Their planks are very broad and thinne, sowet together with Cayre [Coir], beings flats bottomed and every way much deformed, as on the other side demonstrated. They are Soe Sleightly built for conveniencies sake, and early are most proper for this coast; for, all long the share the sea runneth high and breaketh, to which they doe buckle and alsoe to the ground, when they Strike. They are called Massoolase, are for little use save carryinge of light goods [as bailes of callicaes or silkes, not exceeding six or eight at one time]. When any great Ordinance Anchors, butts of water or like ponderous ladeninge is carried off or an, they seize four, five, or six large pieces of boyant timber, together and this they cale a Cattamaran. Upon which they can lade three or four tunns weight."

38 Dames, M.L., Vol. II, p 125

The adaptability of the indigenous population of the Coromandel to the sea is remarkable and this gives a clue of how despite of the harsh environs, the coast endeavoured to become a known mart. The country was predominantly agricultural. In the lowlands, the staple crops were rice, millets, and pulses while on a smaller scale, the dye-crops, indigo and chay-root were produced for use in connection with the weaving industry. Besides tobacco was grown largely for export. Cotton was not grown extensively in the lowlands. So it can be assumed that the material required by the weaving industry was brought from the interior. Weaving was the primary occupation of the people. The weavers were independent, in one sense of the word, for they were not brought together in workshops under skilled direction, but worked from his house. The main classification of cloth was into plain and patterned goods. The plain goods could be subdivided into muslin and calico. The latter, a stout cloth, was produced in various qualities, depending on the fitness of the yarn, and the number of threads to the inch. It was sold in three ways—brown, bleached or dyed in the piece. Apart from its local use, it was in demand in most of the markets to which the kingdom had access by sea. Muslin, a thinner cloth, could also be coloured brown, bleached, or dyed. It was made principally woven inland at Warangal, situated about 160 miles north-north-west of Masulipatam.

The patterned goods, described in travel accounts and Company correspondences as ‘prints’, were made of either calico or muslin, with coloured patterns produced by the indigenous processes. The work was done mainly on the coast, where the industry was closely adapted to the needs of the foreign markets, situated principally in Java and further to the East. Each of these markets had its own peculiar tastes. So it was essential for merchants interested in those markets to be in close touch with the centres of supply, where alone they could be certain of procuring exactly what was in demand. The Golconda coast was the best place to buy plain goods, while its superior dye-stuffs, indigo for blue and chay-root for
red, together with various vegetable-yellows, provided a wide range of colour. For patterned goods, on the other hand production centre in the town of Pulicat, 25 miles north of Madras city was popular.

The polities of the region also took a keen interest to develop a congenial atmosphere for growth of commercial activities. In the period prior to the 16th century, we notice that the Cholas and the Pallavas dominated the setting. By the year 1500, the region of our study was already in the sway of the mighty Vijaynagar kingdom. But there were several local centres of power which had sprouted under different nayaks within the kingdom. Later on in the seventeenth century, the Golconda kingdom also catered to the interests of the international commerce. The great port of Masulipatam is the thriving example in this context.

Our fictive character now takes leave from the Coromandel coast and embarks on a ship sailing for Malacca. The ships from the Coromandel generally left in the month of September to reach Malacca in October. It is only after a one month long trail that the ship would reach the Malay straits.

THE WORLD OF SOUTHEAST ASIA:

From the coast that produced a variety of textiles, we transverse across the Bay of Bengal with our fictive spirit to the “The Land below the Winds”. The itinerants have wonderfully captured the picture of the region of Southeast Asia. The mainland fragment also gathers considerable interest though it is poles apart from the insular part. In order to venture to the insular part, one had to cross the

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40 Tomé Pires noted the movement of keling merchants who were from the Coromandel and dominated the trade at Malacca. In this regard he commented: “They generally left Malacca in January and came back again in October.”< Cortesão, Armando (ed.), The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires and the Book of Francisco Rodrigues, vol. II, The Hakluyt Society, 1944, p 272>

41 Anthony Reid has wonderfully connoted this term to explain how Southeast Asia was a vivacious tropical world which was a ‘world’ in itself.
Straits of Malacca which had the busiest and the most important entrepôt of the sixteenth as well of the seventeenth centuries-Malacca. A sojourn at this port becomes essential due to its very significance in the trading world. Heading off from Malacca towards the south, we come across myriad islands of different sizes and extents. These islands comprised the insular part. The frequency of the ports and islands increased as a ship sailed more deep in the archipelago thereby. Being the largest archipelago in the world, it has a characteristic that made this world unique. This is what motivates us to study this effervescent region.

Southeast Asia had come into limelight in the world of commerce much earlier than Coromandel. The region was known for its aromatic spices. The region of Southeast Asia is a large one. However two divisions can be easily discerned based on a simple physiographical examination. These are the mainland and the archipelago. Way back at the beginning of the sixteenth century, an Italian wanderer, Ludovico di Varthema had understood the region in terms of mainland and insular part.42 Since our study pertains to the Portuguese in retreat, it is the insular part which draws our attention. The reason behind this is that except for Malacca there was neither an official or unofficial settlement of the Portuguese in mainland Southeast Asia. Arakan, Pegu and Siam [which are located in the mainland] which are the names often spelt in the travel-accounts and documents were known to have contacts with the trading world of Coromandel. But it is the archipelago which incites more interest.

The insular region was the one which comprised of both official as well as unofficial Portuguese settlements. Ironically, it was here that the Portuguese, Dutch, English and the Spanish had their headquarters in the

42 The pattern of division of the mainland and archipelago has been adopted by Nicholas Tarling in his edited work, “The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia,” vol. I. CUP, 1992. While the mainland includes China (south of Yangtze), Burma, Thailand, Indo-China and peninsular Malaysia; the archipelago comprises of Indonesia, and all the islands further east.
seventeenth century. Therefore, when one studies the retreat of the Portuguese there are many queer facts that line up that make the topic fascinating as well as perplexing. The major share of market for the Coromandel piece goods was in the archipelago. There were varieties of cloths which were in demand. Besides in the mainland, other than Malacca (if we bring Varthema and Tarling's demarcation into use) which was the official Portuguese settlement, there was no other port which fell under this rubric. Malacca also lay in fact in the Malay Straits in the peninsular part of the mainland. Thus the focus is regardless on the archipelago in the thesis. The basic clash of interests of the European powers took place here, as it was the spice-producing region. Pepper, cloves and nutmeg were produced in East Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and the Philippines. The potential of this region was best understood by the sixteenth century contemporary traveller, Tomé Pires who appears to be a very zealous observer too. In his words the description goes on as follows:

"The Malay merchants say that God made Timor for sandalwood and Banda for mace and Maluku for cloves, and that thus merchandise is not known anywhere in the world except in these place."\(^{43}\)

So resuming our swot of the region with our itinerant, we reach Malacca. Located on the Malay straits, it was undoubtedly one of the biggest entrepôt of the times. At the onset of the sixteenth century, Varthema noted that:

"more ships arrive here than any other place in the world, and especially there come here all sorts of spices and an immense quantity of other merchandise."\(^{44}\)

The hinterland of Malacca, which was a tiny sultanate on a bugház\(^{45}\), did not

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\(^{45}\) Bugház meant a strait in Arabic
produce anything substantial rather much of its provisions were bought in. Its richness was not only due to the location but was also based on the fact that the polities created a cohesive atmosphere as Tome Pires has stressed greatly. If we chronologically observe how the various Malaccan kings took keen interest in the growth of trade, then a clear picture would develop on how and why this port city grew so rich. In the contemporary European accounts the best picture has been drawn by Pires.

The second ruler of Malacca, Muhammad Iskandar Shah tried to improve relations with Siam and Java. Due to his diplomacy, trade between Pase and Malacca sprang which made some ‘Moorish’ merchants, Bengalis, parsees and Arabian Muslims moved from thence to Malacca. During the reign of the third king of Malacca, Muzaffar Shah, the port was frequented by a large number of merchants belonging to different lands. Since the merchants had found a good abode, Pase’s glory as a trading centre started diminishing. The merchants also had an advantage in Malacca. This was that they could drop their anchor at the port any time of the year. This was the biggest advantage Malacca had over any other port in Asia. All sorts of commodities were available, which made it a convenient business-related place as well. So the trading class whose living depended on the profits it incurred from commercial practices started getting glued to Malacca due to good returns it got in its profession. The interest of Muzaffar Shah is best observed through Pires statement—"The king of Malacca dealt kindly and reasonably with them, which is a thing that greatly attracts merchants, especially the foreigners. He took pleasure in being in the city much more often than he went on hunting, so that he could hear and decide about the abuses and tyrannies which Malacca creates on account of its great position and trade." \(^{46}\)

\(^{46}\) Cortesão, Armando (ed.), Vol II, 1944, p246
Besides the polity of Malacca imparting a serious role in the development of trade, there was another reason which sprouted commerce at this port so well. Modern scholars indicate to the existence of poly-centered polity. Such polities have been perceived as ‘kingdom’ by Barbara Watson Andaya, who understood it to be a “coalescence of localized power centers, ideally bound together not by force but through complex interweaving of links engendered by blood connections and obligations.” This is very true in the case of Malacca. Kinship ties were of utmost importance and most of the tiny kingdoms in Southeast Asia were inter-related to each other through matrimonial alliances or simply due to trade. King Alauddin, for example always had kings of Pahang, Kampar and Indragiri at Malacca. The reason which Pires noted is: “...the said kings came to be in Malacca,... for all the things and lands and districts were nothing in comparison with Malacca...” This statement explains in part how trade made other neighbouring kings of Malacca to allege towards this port state. It seems that the kinship ties were important and this was the traditional way to rule. Besides there was also a concept of tributary states prevalent much before the establishment of the Malaccan Sultanate. Assuming such titles whose meaning was grand like- Raja Quda which meant King of the horses; Raja Baya alias Sam Agy Jaya Baya which meant Great lord of nations; Sam Agy Jaya Taton meaning Lord of all; Batara Tamarill which stood for Pure king; Batara Tomarjill meaning king of the lands and lords of the islands; Sam Agi Palimbaño meaning Lord of all for explicitly connotes the attitude of the polity.

Another reason can be sorted from the references one comes across in Malay Annals. A case in point is one of the narratives from Sejarah Melayu, which is a collection of anecdotes about Malacca. This pertains to the King

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48 Cortesão, Armando (ed.),Vol II, 1944, p251
of Kedah and the sort of relation he had with the Sultan of Malacca. In it, is referred how the Raja of Kedah went to Malacca to pay homage and ask for the drum of Sovereignty and how it was granted to him.\textsuperscript{49} This was the way traditional kinship ties were maintained. Contrary to this image that we get from Malacca, Anthony Reid has pointed that the rulers in insular Southeast Asia were always ‘in tension with the tenuousness of their power base’\textsuperscript{50}. It is also true that the legal and bureaucratic basis of the polities was still fragile in most of the cases. A Malaccan noble expressed his opinion regarding the difficulties he had to face while being an administrator:

\begin{quote}
"As far us who administer territory, what concern is that of yours? For territory is territory even if it is only the size of a coconut shell. What we think should be done we do, for the ruler is not concerned with the difficulties we administrators encounter, he only takes account of the good results we achieve."
\end{quote}

The bitterness of the Malaccan noble towards the Sultanate can be well-understood. It cannot be disregarded. At the same time one can also discern that the administration of Malacca was very well-knit and was device towards catering commercial activities. It has already been noted how polity and trading activities were interdependent in the case of Malacca since the very early days. In order to maintain such a great commercial traffic there was a hierarchy of officers which administered this tiny kingdom. The foremost place was occupied by \textit{Paduca Raja}, who was the captain-general of Malacca. A sort of viceroy, who came next in the hierarchy to the king in the administration, reverence was paid to him by the mandarins as well as by the \textit{bemdara} and \textit{lasemana}, who were next in the chain of command. In the absence of the aforesaid \textit{Paduca Raja}, it was the

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{50} Reid,vol II,1993,p 83
\textsuperscript{51} Brown,1976,pp76
\end{quote}
Bemdara who acted as the highest official in the kingdom. “The Bemdara is a kind of chief-justice in all civil and criminal affairs. He also has charge of the king’s revenue.”\(^{52}\) Pires noted that he could order a person to death whether it was a nobleman or a foreigner. But before taking any action he informed the king and both of them decided the matter in consultation with the Lasamana and the Tumunguo. Pires observed that Lasemana was a sort of admiral. “Everybody at sea, and junks and lancharas are under this man’s jurisdiction.”\(^{53}\) Besides he was the king’s guard and every knight and mandarin obeyed his orders. Though he was as important as the Bemdara but in matters relating to war his position exceeded and was more feared of. The chief magistrate of the city was known as the Tumungo. Pires noted that the person who occupied this office was the one who had great esteem. Besides taking care of the law and order, he was also entitled to collect the dues on the merchandise.

Besides these officers, there was another major category of representatives of the King who interacted with the various diasporas\(^{54}\) trading at Malacca. These were Xabamdares or the municipal officers. After receiving the captain of a ship, the Xabamdar took them to the Bemdara. Besides this, the Xabamdares were also responsible to allot warehouses to captains, dispatch their merchandise, provide them with lodging if they have the documents and also provide them with elephants. In order to cater to the large trading diaspora, the Xabamdares were four in number. This classification was based on the region from which the merchants came. There was hence a Xabamdar for Gujaratis, who according to

\(^{52}\) Cortesão, Vol II, p 264
\(^{53}\) ibid
\(^{54}\) Tome Pires gives a descriptive list of merchants who traded at Malacca. It is as follows: Moors from Cairo, Mecca, Aden, Abyssinians, men of Kilwa, Malindi, Ormuz, Parsees, Rumes, Turks, Turkomans, Christian Armenians, Gujaratees, men of Chaul, Dabhol, Goa, of the kingdom of Deccan, Malabars and Klings, merchants from Orissa, Ceylon, Bengal, Arakan, Pegu, Siamese, men of Kedah, malays, men of Pahang, Patani, Cambodias, Champa, Cochin China, Chinese, Lequeos, men of Brunei, Luções, men of Tamjompura, Laue, Banka, Linga (they have a thousand other islands), Moluccas, Banda, Bima, Timor, Madura, Java, Sunda, Palembang, Jambi, Tongkal, Indragiri, Kappatta, Menangkabau, Siak, Arqua (Arca?) , Aru, Bata, country of the Tomjano , Pase, Pedir, Maldives.
Pires was the most important of all. Another Xabamdar catered to the needs of Bunuaqjlim\textsuperscript{55} Bengalees and merchants from Pegu and Pase. The Javanese, Moluccans, Lu\c{c}oes and those from Banda, Palembang and Tamjompura were allocated to another Xabamdar. The forth one was appointed to take care of the Chinese merchants and those from Lequeos, Chancheo and Champa.\textsuperscript{56} Besides, there are also cabaees who were noblemen and amoks who were the knights by profession. The much known indigenous source used for studying Melaka, S\'{e}jarah M\'{e}layu, also reasoned a well-structured administration for the prosperity of Malacca\textsuperscript{57} for the polity at Malacca had understood the importance of trade to the city-state.

In such an environment where the administration was so well-knit, a Malaccan noble was suppose to perform his duties with full rigour which unquestionably led to sullen attitude sometimes. The profit at the same time derived from the commercial activities was also immense and in actual it provided subsistence to the port state. Six percent was collected as dues from the merchants who came from the west of Malacca. The ones who came from the mainland like Pegu and Siam paid dues on the merchandize and a present on the provisions. The Malayans paid 3 percent as the dues. Pires noted that:

"They [Malayans] pay three per cent, and besides this a royal due of six per cent in the case of a foreigner, and three in the case of a native. A present is paid to the king, and the Bemdara, and the Tumunguo, and the Xabandar of the nation in question, and these presents will amount to one or two per cent. According

\textsuperscript{55} Under this term, Pires puts the merchants from Malabar and Coromandel. See vol II, p 271
\textsuperscript{56} Cortesao, Vol II, p.265
\textsuperscript{57} Brown, C.C. (Trans.) S\'{e}jarah M\'{e}layu, OUP, 1970 p.181. One of the related anecdote goes on as-"when Sri Maharaja had become Bendahara, the city of Melaka steadily increased in prosperity and in population, for Bendahara Sri Maharaja was exceedingly just and humane, clever in his handling of foreigners and skilled in conciliating the good will of the populace. So much so that in ships bound for Melaka from above the wind it was the custom, as the anchor was being weighed, for the master of the ship, after receiving the usual prayer to say: May we reach Melaka safely and see Pisang Jermain, the stream of Bukit China and Benadahara Sri Maharaja!" And the crew would answer, "Ay, ay, Sir!"
as the Xabandar decides, so the merchants pay, because the xabandares are sympathetic to the merchants and of the same nations as the merchants; and sometimes they give more, according as the xabandares wish to be on good terms with the king and the mandarins. And this done they sell their goods freely." 58

These lines indicate that giving presents was a norm of the day. The position of the Xambander was of immense importance so much so that good presents were endowed to him by the merchants to be in good terms with the higher people in the administrative hierarchy. Pires refers to another mode of the payment of the dues. This was to estimate the worth of commodities the ship had in it. For this purpose, five keling [as the merchants from Tamil coast were known] merchants and five belonging to other regions are called and before a Tumungam and the Bemdara's brother they make the valuation. 59

Of all the trading groups present in Malacca, the keling merchants had assumed immense importance. On an average in a year, there were three or four ships carrying varying amount of cotton bales-some of them just twelve to fifteen thousand cruzados while others twelve to fifteen thousand cruzados. Bringing around thirty varieties of rich cloth, they were in fact the richest lot in the mercantile category. Pires noted that: "These Klings have all the merchandise and more of the Malacca trade than any other nation." 60 On their return journey the kelings carried white sandalwood. This commodity seemed to be in great demand as sometimes there were ten ships in a year which carried it though red sandalwood was produced in the Coromandel hinterland. Besides this they also took camphor, alum, white silk, seed-pearls, pepper, a little of nutmeg, mace and

58 Ibid, p 273
59 Cortesão, Vol. II p. 273
60 Ibid, p. 272
coves. Copper was another commodity which was in great demand though tin was not so much in demand. Beside these items which the kelings procured for the Coromandel, there were Chinese brocades, gold, damasks, calambac and fruseleira of the lowest quality which also were the item of trade. It seems that the kelings were in the good books of the Malaccan polity because sometimes they also travelled from Malacca to Pulicat in Malaccan junks.

Besides Malacca, one also needs to have a cursory glance of the situation in the insular parts. The Majapahit rulers reigned in east Java between 1293 and 1528 A.D. They made every possible effort to provide internal peace and security to smoothen commercial activities. Kenneth Hall pointed that “the relationship between Majapahit’s kings and its merchants grew so close that some sources both local and foreign, considered Java’s spice merchants to be little more than monarch’s trade agents,”61 although this seems to be an exaggeration. This very point shows the proximity of the Majapahit King’s to the activities of trade and helps us to understand that how close were the two related. The Mataram state based in central Java was established by coastal communities that defeated Majapahit.

Thus all these polities gave impetus to economic activities in some way or the other. The trade provided the essential resource base that led to the formation of states along with the development of maritime cities. This is exemplified by the formation of states like Laos, Aceh, Bantam, Banjarmosin, Makassar and Ternate formed themselves into states for the first time in the “age of commerce”, i.e., in the period between fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. The geographical location of the places of the region described till now was such that every place was important in its own way. The growing nature of trade could not ignore them. But the most strategic location was of

the Straits of Melaka. It was an area through which the vessels passed towards the east and also from where goods from its east or west could be procured. The power that could dominate it stood to benefit it enormously from the commerce that passed through it.

Freek Colombijn in his case study of Sumatra has explained the nature of states in Southeast Asia in terms of volatility. According to him, the states were volatile in the sense that the size of the individual states changed quickly. There were cases the ruler moved his state capital forced by circumstances. The death of a ruler sometimes was also followed by a dynastic struggle, which as we have seen was so evident in Malacca of the fifteenth century. In other cases, a local subordinate head either ignored or took over the central state power. So in short the states underwent through short cycles of rise and decline. Another point which Colombijn stressed was that the key to the success of Southeast Asian polities was not control over land but to gain control over the people. The rulers lost control over their subjects relatively easily. The people who generally lived in the royal core domain were slaves, debtors, close family members and villagers who were dependent on the ruler. However this was just a fraction of population. The ruler used the indirect method of alliances with local heads, princes, or state officials to bring the rest of population under his control. These intermediaries enjoyed a great degree of autonomy.

63 Besides Colombijn, there have been array of important scholars who have at various times talked about the nature of chequered polities of Southeast Asia. So for further reference one can refer to: Reid, Anthony, Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce; Expansion and Crisis, 1450-1680, Vol. II, Yale University Press, 1993, p202 and pp 251-52; Ricklefs, M.C., A History of Modern Indonesia since c. 1300, Macmillan, 1991; Andaya, Barbara Watson, “Political Developments between the Sixteenth and Eighteenth centuries” in Tarling, Nicholas (ed) The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Vol I, CUP, 1992.
All the above mentioned points can be understood in the way the state of Malacca arose freeing itself from Palembang. As noted by Pires: “When Sam Agi Palimbaão died, he left a son, a great knight and a very warlike man, whom they called Paramțiura, which means ‘The bravest man’ in the Palembang Javanese tongue. He was married to a niece of Batara Tamarill who was called Paramțiure64, and when he realised how nobly he was married and how great was his power in the neighbouring islands which were under his brother-in-law’s jurisdiction, he rose against the vassalage and obedience and called himself the Great Exempt.”65 Still further if we see how the allegiance to Malacca was maintained, then one cannot miss out certain Sumatran polities. The kingdom of Rokan [or Jrcan. Jrcan corresponds to the Rokan river] had no king for instance. Instead it had a mandarin who was a vassal of the late king of Malacca. He had helped the later in wars. Similarly, the kingdom of Rupat and Purim had the same obligations to Malacca as those of Rokan. In fact all three of them either provided manpower during a war or rowers with their prahus. The irony was that most of the population of these little kingdoms comprised of the celates, who were termed as sea-robbers in Malay. Still the Malaccan polity made use of their manpower. What can be a better example of the scarcity of human muscles which made the polities to take the help of the so-called ‘robbers’?

After this comprehensive but lengthy description of the gateway to insular Southeast Asia and the nature of the polities, one has to travel further in the archipelago to comprehend the polity and commerce of the region in a more cohesive manner. So, we move with our itinerant towards the lands which were the potpourri of spices. Hiring a junk would enable our traveller to sail smoothly because as the sail moves more towards south and south-east, the topography would change. The first island which would be encountered is

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64 Parameswara meant Prince Consort and was the style of one married to a princess of higher rank than himself.
65 Cortesao, 1944, Vol II,p 231
Sumatra. If December is especially the month of travel then one could encounter a thick gusty and rainy weather. Sumatra has generally been described as the great, rich and populous island. It comprised of many kingdoms. The prominent among those were- the kingdom of Achin (Achei) and Biar Lambry, the kingdom of Pedir, the kingdom of Pirada, the kingdom of Pase (Paçee), the kingdom of Bata, the kingdom of Aru, the kingdom of Arcat, kingdom of Jambi, Kingdom of Palembang. A popular saying about the Sumatran polities and the mainland polities exposed long standing quarrels amongst them. According to it: ‘Aru against Malacca, Achin against Pedir, Pedir against Kedah and Siam, Pahang against Siam on the other side, Palembang against Linga, Celates against Bugis (Bajus), etc’, and all these nations fight one against the other and they are very rarely friends.\(^{66}\) So though the polities were chequered in nature but the binding factor amongst was nonetheless but commerce. Almost all of the kingdoms carried the products of the land to Malacca and in return generally brought the ‘kling cloth’. The cloth from the Coromandel that was disembarked at Malacca was a popular item of exchange in Tapobrana or Sumatra.

The island as a whole was rich in resources of which the tradable ones can be listed. These were gold which was earthed in great quantities, two kinds of edible camphor, pepper, silk, benzoin, honey, wax, pitch, sulphur and cotton. Besides there was abundance of rattans\(^ {67}\), which were canes used to make mats. It was also used like coir or esparto and served as a string to tie up things. There was also plenty of rice, meat, wine and fruits. But pepper from Pedir\(^ {68}\) was the most dominant product. This was the long pepper which was calledmolaga. Varthema noted in Pedir that business was at its brim due to trade in pepper. His statement that: “I saw here in one street about five hundred money-changers, and these


\(^{67}\) The Malay word is rotan, which means a cane.

\(^{68}\) Pedir was the name of a port as well as of a kingdom. It was located on the north coast of Sumatra.
because a very great number of merchants come to this city, where they carry on a very extensive traffic. ..." 69 The number of money-changers seems to be an exaggerated figure nevertheless one can discern that were quite many of them involved in this business. Varthema’s statement is complemented by his contemporary, Barbosa, who noted pepper cultivation in this land. Further he pointed that it was the principal kingdom of the Moors. 70 This meant that the most established trading community could have belonged to the Islamic section.

Prior to the rise of Malacca, it was Pacem 71 which dominated as the port near this funnel shaped straits. The keling merchants were present in this port as well. Pacem had the right to one maz 72 on every bahar of merchandise that was exported. Unlike any other port, it levied on anchorage but it depended on whether it was a ship or a junk. However as far as foodstuffs were concerned, nothing was paid. Only a present was given. On the other merchandise that comes from the western parts, six per cent was levied. The practice of selling and buying slaves was also known in this part of the world. So on every slave that was brought there to sell five mazes of gold was paid. The merchandise that was taken out, whether it was pepper or anything else, one maz per bahar was the levy that had to be paid. Though it was a great trading centre but it could not cater to the building of great junks. This was due to the resource crunch factor. In fact, neither Pase nor Pedir had a single junk; they had lancharas. They used to go to Malacca to buy junks. The merchants of Pase also bought junks from other merchants who visited this port from other places to trade. The scarcity in the country of jaty wood [teak wood], which was used to make strong junks was the reason which hampered the construction of cargo vessels.

69 Jones, 1928, p. 86
70 Dames, Vol. II, 1989, p. 196
71 Pacem or Pasei was a Malay state near the north eastern point of Sumatra.
72 Maz is a gold weight used in Sumatra, equivalent to one sixteeth of a tael or ounce.
Another category of vessels which dominated the trading as well pillaging world of Sumatra were the *parãos*. More adapted for speed rather than carrying cargoes, these were small vessels which could even transverse through small river inlets. Used by the population of the kingdom of Aru, Ropat these vessels were helpful as they made their livelihood through robbery. *Celates* were another class of people who were known for sea robberies. From the picture that can be drawn from the contemporary accounts, it seems that they did not owe allegiance to any power rather acted as substitute force according to the circumstances. Making their livelihood from the sea, they usually coasted around the Malay straits. In the case of Malacca for example, they helped Paramesvara, to settle this entrepôt. When Paramesvara fled from Palembang, the celates followed his company and thirty of them went along protecting his life. While Paramesvara was in Palembang they served as fishermen; after that they came to Singapore, where they stayed at Karimun (*Carjmam*), an island near the channel. At the time when Parmesvara came to Muar, again some of them came to live in the place which is now known as Malacca; the place being five leagues from Muar.73

Not calling on at Aceh or Achin, the greatest indigenous power of the island during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries would be inexcusable for many a reasons. Located on the north western tip of Sumatra, this place acquired a great resonance when we study the history of the retreat of the Portuguese in Southeast Asia. Another port which became the headquarters of the English in Southeast Asia was Bencoolen. After the appraisal of the various kingdoms of Sumatra, our voyager sets for sail towards Java. Any traveller who wished to further steer his oars on the road to the insular part had to be wary of corsairs. But he had to be more aware of the sea. Both Pires and Varthema indicated it in their travelogues. Varthema along with his company, for instance wanted to visit the Spice Islands. An interrogation at Pedir

73 Cortesão, Vol II, 1944, p233
whether they could venture safely i.e. was it secure from robbers and corsairs and the subsequent conversation between him and his conversant are worth noting. The reply to Varthema’s query goes as follows: “That secure from robbers we might go, but not from the chances of the sea”; and they said that we could not go to the said island with that large ship. My companion said: “What means then might there be for going to this island?” They answered: “That it was necessary to purchase a chiampana [sampan, junk],” that is, a small vessel, of which many are found there…”74 This dialogue indicates that more than the people who looted at the sea, it was the sea which was the source of anxiety. There was a need, hence, to sail in indigenous crafts which had been built to adapt to the waters.

The insular part was known for its tropical climate and vegetation. A sort of skill and technique were required to transverse through such a tropical area. Like the Coromandel Coast where due to bad harbours there had developed a distinct vessel for sail, it was the case with Southeast Asia also. This vessel was sometimes called, Austronesian or Malayo-Polynesian or simply prohu, has been well delineated in the nautical literature. Its most abiding features were—a keel, a hull built by joining planks to the keel, and then to each other by means of wooden dowels. Iron nails were not used. This was a practical small freight vessel, which had been in use for many years in many parts of Indonesia. In the age of sail, these vessels carried cargoes from anything between 4 to 40 tonnes across the seas of Southeast Asia. However in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, it was not this vessel that dominated the trading routes. Much larger vessels with two or three masts and with many features of the prohu like dowelled hulls, double rudders, keels continued most of the longer distance tonnage. These have been unanimously described as junks.75

74 Jones, 1928, p 87
75 Reid, vol. II, 1993, pp36
On crossing the Sunda straits, our narrator would notice the Dutch banner swaying with the breeze. This was Batavia or Calapa as it was known to the indigenous populace; headquarter of the Dutch East India Company which occupied the site of the old city of Jakarta [the seat of a Javanese kingdom] since 1619. It was a magnificent port where according to Pires “trade is greatest and whither they all sail from Sumatra, and Palembang, Laue, Tanjompura, Malacca, Macassar, Java and Madura and many other places.”

Located on the island of Java, south of equator, this isle had also been known for a number of kingdoms. On the western side of the island lay another place called Bantam. It was an independent kingdom at the beginning of the seventeenth century and was famous for pepper production. Alexander Hamilton noted as late in 1727 that “the only Product of Bantam is Pepper, wherein it abounds so much that they can export 10,000 Tuns per annum.”

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76 Cortesão, vol. I, p 172
77 The western part of the island of Java was termed as Sunda. Often differentiated in the 16th century, an impression grew among the European travelers that they were two different islands. The Sunda was considered to extend from the extreme western part of the island to Cheribon, which meant that it embraced one-third of the island of Java. Joao de Barros < Barros, Lisboa, 1973, IV, I, p. 12> in his chronicle in 1553 wrote: “Of the island of Jaiia we make two islands, one before the other, lying west and east as if both on one parallel.... But the Jaos themselves do not reckon two islands of Jaoa, but only one, of the length that has been stated... about a third in lengthof this island towards the west constitutes Sunda, of which we have now to speak. The natives of that part consider their country to be an island divided from Jaiia by a river, little known to our navigators, called by them Chiamo or Chenano, which cuts off right from the sea, all that third part of the land in such a way that when these natives define the limits of Jaiia they say that on the west it is bounded by the island of Sunda, and separated from it by river Chiamo, and on the east by the island of Bali, and that on the north they have the island of Madura, and on the south the unexplored sea...”
78 Pires <Cortesao, vol. I, p 166> gives a comprehensive list of the kingdoms in the island of Java. These were: Cherimon(Sheriboonam), Japara, Losari (Locarj), Tegal(Teguall), Samarang (Camaram), Demak (Dema), Tidanun (Tidumar), Rembang (Ramee), Tuban (Tobam), Sidayu (Cedayo), Grisee (Agacij), Surabaya (Curubaya), Gamda, Blambangan (Bulambuam), Pajarakan (Pajarucam), Camto, Panarukan (Panarunca), Chamdy, and Madura
79 Pyrard de Laval <The Voyage of François Pyrard de Laval to the East Indies, The Maldives, The Moluccas and Brazil, The Hakluyt Society, 1888, Vol II, Part I, P 161 > noted about Bantam that : “The town is situate on low and marshy ground, being between two arms of the river, so that for the most part of the winter the river is overflowed throughout the town, and one cannot go through the streets but by boats. The streets are not paved: in nearly all parts of the town there are quantities of coco-trees. Outside the walled enclosure are a great number of houses for the foreigners”
creppers. The place has been marked as Sunda Calapa, which lay to the east of Bantam. An English factory was established here in 1603 which was in existence till 1682 when the Dutch interlopers ousted the English. Like most of the places in this part of the world, the revenues of Bantam were dependent on shipping. Peter Floris who was a merchant, for instance noted that even upon the insistence of his Company, the Pangaran of Bantam did not exempt them from duties. The reason the latter cited was that ‘the King was att greate charges and his revenewes butt little, and yf hee shoulde receythe nothing of suche shipps, who then woulde bee able to doe it?’

Besides pepper there were other products for which the island of Java was known. Rice, along with various kinds of foul and vegetables were abundant. There was also a known trade of slaves. Pires noted that “two or three junks come from Malacca to Sunda every year for slaves, rice and pepper”.

Like other people in Southeast Asia, the Javanese also very often came to Malacca to trade. They brought cargo in lancharas, and also in ships of a hundred and fifty tons. The kingdom also had junks. Other commodities which fetched good prices in the market were mace, cloves, nutmegs, black as well as white benioin and camphor. These products were bartered with assorted cloths from India of which the bales from Coromandel also figured in the list. Besides the linen from this south-eastern coast of India, a special reference was made to the painted Tapen from S. Thomas. The clothes brought by the keling merchants-balachos and atobalachos- also figure in their list.

81 According to Linschoten <Burnell and Tiele (ed) The Voyage of John Huyghen Van Linschoten to the East Indies, Vol I, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt Ltd,1997,p 112>: “The principall haven in the Island is Sunda Calapa...in this place of Sunda there is much Pepper, and is better then that of India or Malabar, whereof there is so great quantitie, that they could lade yearlie from thence 4 or 5 thousand kintales Portingales weight...”
82 Pangeran is the Malay word for governor
84 Cortesão, Vol. I, p 169
85 Burnell and Tiele, vol I, 1997, p 114
Pires unlike Barros does not seem to compartmentalize between Sunda and Java. Giving a general account of the people and mannerisms of Sunda [Java], he observed that: “Sunda is [land of] chivalrous, seafaring warriors—they say more so than the Javanese, taking them all in all.... The people on the sea coast get on well with the merchants in the land. They are accustomed to trade.” So it was trade again which integrated this island largely. Another noticeable characteristic of the island was the practise of Islam. According to Duarte Barbosa, the inhabitants of the hinterland are “Heathens” but the ones who dominate the sea-haven are “Moors.” Tome Pires also attested to this fact and wrote in great detail how Java was Islamized.

After leaving Java Major one would encounter an array of islands of various sizes. Travelling further along the coast south-east, our exponent would reach Bali, Lombok and Java Minor, in that order. Java Minor was also known as Sumbava in the contemporary nautical literature and was known to be a place well-furnished with victuals. All these lands brought slaves and horses to sell in Java from where in return they took cloth. Beyond these islands there lay the island of Bima. Known for its brazil-wood, this was taken to Malacca to be sold in the mart. From Malacca, this wood was further loaded in the ships going to China. Besides, slaves and horses were meant for the market of Java. It was normal for the people travelling to Banda and the Moluccas to call here for they bought clothes here which sold well further east. Continuing our journey further east in the archipelago with our exponent, we would arrive at Solor. Flores and Timor which were collectively known as the Lesser Sunda islands. A small village of Larantuka on Flores also occupied the Portuguese interest later.

86 Cortesão, Vol I, p 167
87 Dames, M.L., Vol. II, p 190
88 Cortesão, vol I, p 203
Solor supplied foodstuffs to Malacca. Sulphur which according to Pires was found in abundance was also supplied to Malacca and from there it was re-exported to Cochin China. Timor occupied a great importance in micro-regional as well as macro-regional commerce. It was one of the few official settlements of the Portuguese in Southeast Asia. The white sandalwood was the specific product of the island which made it assume a place of significance in the world of commerce. It was of great value in India and Persia. In exchange for this product, they procured varieties of cloth at Malacca among which the cloth from ‘Paleacate’ which was balachos and cotabalachos figured prominently. Antonio Bocarro, the contemporary Portuguese chronicler wrote in 1635 about the prosperity of Solor and the flourishing sandalwood trade from Timor with Macao. The Europeans generally visited the island periodically for sandalwood but trade and later conversions were centred on Solor. In these Lesser Sunda islands, the Dominican missionaries preached Christianity in the sixteenth as well as the seventeenth centuries.

Most of the contemporary travellers found the voyage to Timor remunerative and unhealthy. Sailing in the narrow seas, which had at certain parts reefs and shoals caused problems in navigation. Only the skilled indigenous sailors were equipped to handle a vessel. That is why we notice that the Europeans hired the indigenous pilots to navigate in these parts. Another factor which ruled was the system of winds. For instance, the vessels which were bound for Banda left Malacca in the monsoon. Between the islands of Bima and Solor, the sea was said to be full of reefs which caused many accidents to occur. So in order to avert such miseries, the ships started passing through the channel where the risk was less. The

90 Bragança Pereira, A.B. de,(anotado), Arquivo Português Oriental, Tomo IV, História Administrativa, Vol II, 1600-1699, Parte II (Livro das plantas de tôdas as fortalezas, cidades e povoações do Estado da India Oriental) por António Bocarro, Tipografia Rangel, Bastorá,1938, pp 53-55
ships which were destined from Malacca to the Spice Islands took the following course: Malacca-Java- Batu Tara-Buru- thence either to Banda or to the Moluccas. Our fictive character has already voyaged till Solor and Timor and is now ordained to enter the world of the land of spices.

Making a sojourn at Batutara [Komba island] would be better before taking the route to Banda or Amboina [Amboyna]. The Banda Isles were known for the production of nutmeg and mace. Being six in number- Lontar, Ai, Run, Rozengain, Nailaka and Gunong Api- they attracted considerable attraction because of its products as well as good anchorage. A great quantity of mace was produced in the above-mentioned five islands respectively. Describing nutmeg and how from it mace was derived, Linschoten noted that:

"The fruite is altogether like great round Peaches, the inward part whereof is the Nutmegge. This hath about it a hard shell like wood, wherein the Nut lyeth loose: and this wooden shiel or huske is covered over with Nutmeg flower, which is called Mace, and over it is the fruit e...When it is ripe it is a verie costly meate, and of a pleasant savor." 91

The nutmeg was known to the indigenous populace as Palla and the mace was known as Buna Palla. There were two varieties of nutmegs that were produced-a long variety which was called Males and the other one round which was considered better and stronger. Considered good for cold and digestion, the people of Banda also made oil from this fruit and preserved it in sugar for its use year round. The Javanese and the Malays used to procure cloth to sell in Banda which was a novelty besides nutmeg and mace being the main production of the

91 Burnell, Arthur Coke and Tiele, P.A., (ed), The Voyage of John Huyghen Van Linschoten to the East Indies, Vol II, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt Ltd, 1997, p 84. Barbosa(Dames,vol.II,1989,pp97) also reported the nutmeg and mace production as: “And in three of them grows abundance of nutmeg and mace on certain trees like unto bay trees, whereof the fruits is the nut; over it spreads the mace like a flower, and above that again another thick rind. One quintal of mace is worth here as much as seven of nutmeg. The abundance is such that they burn it, and it may be had almost for the asking.”
isle, clove was also sold. Loads of cloves were brought from the Moluccas to Amboyna and from Amboyna to Banda.

Travelling further from Banda in search of more spices, our itinerant would reach Ceram and from there he would advance on to Amboyna. The island of Amboyna did not produce much quantity of spice. Clove\(^\text{92}\) was the main product of the island. The ships which were enroute to the Moluccas from Malacca did stop here for refreshments and fresh water. From here our narrator travels further towards the northern side in order to search for more cloves which he finds on reaching the Moluccas. Though the name Moluccas or Maluku, has been used over the years in a larger sense, but geographically it was a collective name that was given to five small islands producing cloves. These islands are: Ternate, Tidore, Motir, Makian and Bacan. Of these only Ternate was the official realm of the Portuguese while Tidore constituted the unofficial part.

Among these islands, Ternate was the chief one. Being a good site for anchorage as well as having a healthy air and a good product to buy, Ternate

\(^\text{92}\) The clove ‘nail’ as traded was the dried flower bud of the tropical evergreen tree, Szygium aromaticum or Caryophyllus aromaticus. There are several descriptions of these clove producing islands of which Pires’s is notable. Tomé Pires(The Suma oriental, Vol.I,1944,pp213-214). While giving a description of the Moluccas, he noted the clove production—“The Molucca islands which produce cloves are five, to wit, the chief one is called Ternate and another Tidore and another Motir(Motes) and another Makyan(Maqujen) and another Bachian (Pachan). And there is also a great deal of wild cloves in the part of Gillolo(Jeilolo) in the land of the island of Gilloslo(Bato China) ... There five islands must produce about six hundred bahars of cloves a year—sometimes a thousands more, or a thousand less. It is true that merchandise brought in Malacca for five hundred reis will buy a bahar of clove in the Moluccas. The bahar is by Malacca weight, because they weigh it in accordance with that, and the merchants take the scales, as it is sometimes worth more, sometimes less, just a little. There are six crops of cloves every year ... cloves were always worth nine or ten cruzados a bahar in Malacca when they were plentiful, and twelve cruzados a bahar when they were scarce.” Though it is doubtful that Varthema (Jones,J.W., The itinerary of Ludovico di Varthema of Bologna from 1502 to 1508, The Argonaut Press, 1928, pp89) ever visited the Moluccas, but his clear description of the clove production is noteworthy—

“... The tree of the cloves is exactly like the box tree, that is thick, and the leaf is like that of Cinnamon, but it is a little more round, and is of that colour which I have already mentioned to you... when these cloves are ripe, the said men beat them down with canes, and place some mats under the said tree to catch them. The place where these trees are is like sand... We found that they [Cloves] were sold for twice as much as the nutmegs, but by measure, because these people do not understand weights.”
attracted Europeans greatly. There were merchants of other diaspora also who came to trade in this island. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, this island had already converted into Islam. Besides an enormous clove production which was harvested generally six times in a year, it also produced some coarse cloth. But it was supplemented by the one brought from Cambay along with patterned clothes from other places which were of great value. Travelling further with our eloquent narrator we would reach Tidore. The people of this isle had first understood the value of the cloves from the Chinese traders. A sixteenth century Spanish traveler, Antonio Pigafetta who visited Tidore pointed that the Moluccans “did not care for the cloves” until Muslims began visiting Tidore and Ternate in 1470.93 Though this island also practised Islam, but the polities of Ternate and Tidore were at loggerheads. Half of the island of Motir according to Pires was subject to Tidore.94 The king of Tidore and Motir bring their cloves of their land to the island of Makian to be sold there. This was because the latter island had a very good port. So these three islands were inter-dependent on each other. The last of these islands, Bacan produced cloves which was very distinct as compared to that produced in other islands in the group. Having a good port as well, it made the commerce easy and sustainable. Besides it also produced a great amount of pitch.

Travelling from Bacan towards the south, one would reach Seram which is located opposite to Amboyna. Steering the sail in a westerly direction would make our navigator land at the Celebes. Situated on the extreme south-western peninsula of Celebes was Macasser. This port had trading contacts with Borneo, Java, and Malacca and reached as far as Siam. After crossing Macasser, one would reach the great island of Borneo. Known as the great store-house of camphor, this was a trading commodity also across

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93 Reid, II, 1993, pp.6
94 Cortesão, 1944, Vol I, p 217
the Bay of Bengal. Barbosa noted that the camphor was edible and worth its weight in silver. He commented that the merchants "carry in powder in cane tubes to Narsyngua, Malabar and Daquem."95 Besides, there was trading with Malacca, the Chinese, Siamese and other merchants also frequented the mart of Borneo. The cloth brought by the keling merchants had a great market here. Our fictive itinerant having travelled through the greatest archipelago of the world now commences his return voyage to the straits of Malacca. The sea being rough between Borneo and Java, travellers were often suggested to take a larger vessel at Borneo. It would take a month to reach Malacca from thence.

In all these places located from and beyond the Lesser Sunda islands, spice production and trading is a common occurrence. Besides this there is some kind of commonality that can be observed in the food habits. Rice, sago and fish comprised their staple diet. In fact the observation of Pyrard de Laval is accurate in this sense. He commented regarding Banda, Borneo, Sumatra, Java and the Moluccas that: "I content myself with speaking of them altogether, because they are inhabited by the same people, and lie under the same parallel and climate, with the same temperature or in temperature. The air is not very healthy, but rather the reverse; and food is very dear- nay, very frequently cannot be got for money; for the supply by sea is not to be depended on."96

Thus a cursory glance at the world of Coromandel and insular Southeast Asia with our fictive traveller enabled us to understand the region of our study. The so-called mysterious world of the land of spices and the wide circulation of the varieties of cloth procured by the 'klings' from the Coromandel in the nooks and corners of Southeast Asia has enabled us to see how this whole macro-region was united in a world of its own. This was the world which the Portuguese tried to monopolize in the sixteenth century and for which they had to witness immense competition in the succeeding hundred years.

95 Dames, 1921, Vol II, pp 207-208
96 Gray, Albert, 1888 Vol II, Part I, p169