From Camp to Port: Mughal Warfare and the economy of Coromandel, 1682-1707

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Introduction

This introductory chapter sets the scene for my dissertation with a prelude to its major themes. We start our story against the broader canvas of the global phenomena in which the Mughal Empire and the VOC (the Dutch East India Company) played their part. We then reflect on how historians have discussed the primary concerns of this dissertation and provide the readers with an insight into its hypothesis. Finally, we bring to the table the various connective ingredients in this dissertation.

The Indian Ocean world from 1500 to 1700: Linking the inland empire to the coasts

After a century–long exploration of the Atlantic Ocean, in the late–fifteenth century the Iberian powers of Spain and Portugal made two breakthroughs: Columbus reached the Americas (1492) and Vasco da Gama disembarked in Malabar, southern India (1498). From the start of the seventeenth century Spain and Portugal were followed by their neighbours from the north, the Netherlands and England, in this maritime exploration of the world. Commercial traffic had existed in the Indian Ocean for centuries and the presence of foreign merchants across South Asia was not a novelty. The arrival of European trading companies had simply added new players to the many foreign merchant groups already thronging South Asia. In the Americas Europeans wiped out the indigenous powers, but in Asia their expansion tells a very different story.

In a time when European maritime powers were slowly establishing their empires in the Americas, large imperial states stretched from Turkey to South Asia along the southern rim of the 'arid zone'. By and large, European powers had to accommodate themselves within the imperial frameworks of Ottoman Turkey, Safavid Persia, Mughal India, Qing (Manchu) China and Tokugawa Japan. This was an Afro–Asian age of commerce which saw European expansion coinciding with state–formation by imperial Asian powers. For the imperial powers it was important to connect the empire to the booming coasts. Europeans found it difficult to establish political autonomy in coastal Persia, India and China because cavalry forces could easily reach the littorals and repel them. Consequently, in these regions Europeans restricted themselves to trade, benefiting from the imperial infrastructure that connected the hinterlands to the coasts and occasionally indulging in piracy.[1]

European efforts to control maritime trade in the region through piracy and threats of violence did not have the desired effects. Neither did they have much success in achieving their much–coveted monopoly on violence and on trade in commodities such as spices. The system of passes introduced by the Europeans never kept indigenous merchants away from the Indian Ocean. For example, merchants in Malabar smuggled pepper across the Western

[1] Jos Gommans, 'Continuity and change in the Indian Ocean basin', in: *The Construction of a Global World, 1400–1800 CE, Part 1: Foundations. The Cambridge World History, vol. 6*., eds Jerry H. Bentley, Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Merry E. Wiesner–Hanks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015): 186–187.

Ghats into Coromandel, in defiance of first the Portuguese and later the Dutch. Asian powers were also able to develop European–style navies and defeat the European powers; the Yarubi dynasty of Oman, the Zheng Empire in China and the Marathas in western India are cases in point during the seventeenth and eighteenth century.[2] But perhaps the most notable of them all, in this respect, were the Ottomans.

In the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire developed a robust military machine: its navy and artillery rivalled that of the Europeans. The Ottomans conquered and expanded to Syria, Egypt, Yemen, Sudan and the Horn of Africa. Ottoman fleets patrolled the Indian Ocean from these bases and could send military assistance to their allies in Hormuz, Gujarat, the Swahili Coast and even Indonesia. The Ottoman exploration of the Indian Ocean shared, to varying degrees, many characteristics of European expansion: improvements in military technology, developing a political ideology to support their ventures, and a cultural and intellectual transformation that found expression in their own maps, atlases and geographical treatises on the east.[3] Moving to the east of the Ottoman domains, historiography has traditionally characterized Safavid Iran as an empire in decline after the death of its most powerful ruler Shah Abbas the Great (1587–1629). Rudolph Matthee's researches have helped revise this notion through a study of Iran's silk industry. For much of the seventeenth century, the Safavid state remained an active mediator between the Iranian silk producers and their markets. The flow of silk and the income deriving from it was regulated by the Safavid administration. Private merchants, particularly Armenians working under state auspices, explored new markets for silk and were instrumental in forging economic links with Russia.[4] To the east of Iran was Mughal India, the setting for our story.

This dissertation studies the economic impact of an imperial campaign for expansion in Mughal India that strove to link the empire with the coasts. By the end of the sixteenth century, the Mughal Empire had developed a strong politico–military and administrative apparatus that could successfully tap the rich agrarian resources of northern India and connect the heartland of the empire – Agra and Delhi – with the coastal provinces of Bengal and Gujarat which acted as outlets for maritime trade. The Mughals were poised for another round of military expansion in northern Deccan when Akbar died in 1605. The Mughal expansion in the Deccan and South India continued in distinct phases until the late seventeenth century. The last phase was marked by Aurangzeb's military campaigns (1682–1707), the focus of this dissertation, which will examine the economic impact of Aurangzeb's southern campaigns in Coromandel.

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[2] See Tonio Andrade, 'Beyond Guns, Germs and Steel: European Expansion and Maritime Asia, 1400–1750.' *Journal of Early Modern History* 14 (2010): 165–186.

[3] Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010): 3–8.

[4] Rudolph P. Matthee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600–1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 11.

Before we look at how other historians have interpreted the effects of these wars and explore the other major themes in this dissertation, let us briefly look at the basics of Aurangzeb's campaigns: when did they start and what kind of warfare took place?

Aurangzeb's southern campaigns

When and how did the campaigns unfold?

Taking place almost a century after his great–grandfather Emperor Akbar had begun the first Mughal incursions into the Deccan in the late sixteenth century (we will deal with the pre–Aurangzeb phase of Mughal expansion in the Deccan later in this introduction), Aurangzeb's southern campaigns lasted from 1682 to 1707 and represented the final Mughal effort to settle the southern frontier of the empire. The immediate trigger for Aurangzeb's march to the Deccan was that in 1681 one of his sons, Prince Akbar, had formed an alliance with a section of discontented Rajput nobility and rebelled against his father. As the rebellion failed, Akbar, with help from his Rajput allies, escaped and found asylum at the court of Sambhaji who had been crowned the Maratha king after Shivaji.[5] For Aurangzeb, this might have seemed the ideal opportunity to conquer the Deccan for once and all. *Tarikh–i–Dilkasha*, a contemporary Persian chronicle of the southern wars, was written by Bhimsen, who had accompanied his employer Rao Dalpat Bundela, one of Aurangzeb's nobles, to the Deccan. It reads: 'The Emperor in order to eradicate the element of mischief-mongers personally came to the dakhan from Ajmer.'[6]

Akbar eventually managed to flee to Persia, but Sambhaji was captured and executed, and the sultanates of Bijapur and Golconda were conquered and annexed by the Mughal Empire. Nonetheless, Aurangzeb could never fully negate the challenge posed by the Marathas, and what Aurangzeb had possibly planned (and begun) as a pursuit of a rebel prince and a march to conquer the Deccan snowballed into a protracted campaign that lasted until his death in 1707. All this kept the emperor engaged in the Deccan for twenty-five years as theatres of war shifted from the west and east of the Deccan to central Coromandel.

What forms of warfare took place?

Aurangzeb's southern campaigns can be divided into four phases: 1682–1684, when the Mughals attacked the Maratha forts in the Konkan and west of the Deccan; 1685–1687, when the Mughals successfully besieged and captured Bijapur and Golconda; 1689–1698, when the scene of action shifted to central Coromandel for the siege of Gingee; and 1699–1707, when Aurangzeb spent his energies in capturing the Maratha forts in the west of the Deccan.

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[5] John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire*. *The New Cambridge History of India*, I.5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Reprint edition 1995): 182–183.

[6] Jadunath Sarkar transl., *Tarikh–i–Dilkasha*, with an introduction by V. G. Khobrekar (Bombay: Department of Archives, Sir Jadunath Sarkar Birth Centenary Commemoration Volume, Government of Maharashtra, 1972):134.

Aurangzeb's southern campaigns were characterized by siege warfare and at times sieges were very long indeed. The siege of Bijapur lasted from June 1685 to September 1686, the siege of Golconda lasted from January to September 1687 and the siege of Gingee, the longest of all, lasted almost a decade (at the beginning of the siege the Mughal army comprised of 26,000 men and about 100 elephants; 2,000–4,000 dromedaries and 200,000 cattle were used to transport the army's supplies and possibly as a source of milk). Another major component was guerrilla warfare, a strategy used by the Marathas as they sought to avoid pitched battles in which the Mughals could engage them in a decisive encounter. This forced Aurangzeb to concentrate on capturing the Maratha hill forts in the Western Ghats. The Marathas had some success ambushing supply units of the Mughal army and then retreating, but both they and the Mughals plundered villages to deprive one another of possible sources of food and fodder.

Historiography

Though discussion on Aurangzeb's southern campaigns has featured in works published from as early as 1857 to as recently as 2009, as yet no monograph exists which thoroughly researches the economic impact of these wars in Coromandel. My dissertation is a venture in this regard. At the risk of discounting the historiographical peculiarities of previous works which have discussed this question, either tangentially or in some detail, based on similarities in arguments made and the conclusions drawn we may tentatively categorize their results under three rubrics: the southern campaigns and the decline of the empire; revisionism; and regional centralization in Coromandel.

The southern campaigns and the decline of the empire

The idea that Aurangzeb's southern campaigns devastated the economy of the Deccan and led to the decline of the Mughal Empire first appeared in 1857, when Mountstuart Elphinstone argued that the wars that ravaged the Deccan, strengthened the Marathas and weakened the Mughals, who were unable to replenish sufficient cattle or provisions from their rural territory, and dwindling financial resources meant they failed to procure supplies from elsewhere. Echoes of this idea are found in later works that appeared in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. Stanley Lane–Poole extended this theory of decline to argue that the political changes effected by Aurangzeb's wars were felt for more than a century. The anarchy created by the Deccan wars was a direct forerunner of the disturbances created by the Marathas in eighteenth-century Delhi involving Shah Alam and Wellesley. In his magnum opus, the five–volume *History of Aurangzib*, Jadunath Sarkar argued in similar terms: the economic drain caused by Aurangzeb's wars was far-reaching and durable in its impact; destruction of forests and grass due to military operations, particularly sieges, exerted immense pressure on the environment. Agriculture and livestock were badly hit, and the financial depletion caused by the wars meant repair works were not possible. Aurangzeb's

southern wars, Sarkar concluded, reduced national stock and lowered the standards of civilization.[7]

The most cogent expression of this idea appeared from the Aligarh school. The term Aligarh is often used to characterize historians associated with Aligarh Muslim University, such as Mohammed Habib, his son Irfan Habib, S. Nurul Hasan, M. Athar Ali, Iqtidar Alam Khan and Shireen Moosvi. They produced several monographs on the history of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire. On the matter of Aurangzeb's campaigns, the classic Aligarh position is Irfan Habib's. He explains the downfall of the Mughal Empire in terms of peasant rebellions by the Jats around Agra, the Satnamis (a Hindu mendicant sect), the Sikhs and, most impactfully of all, the Marathas. The rise of the Marathas was connected to the oppression of the peasantry under a repressive Mughal revenue regime and the role of Aurangzeb's campaigns in this was substantial. Since *jagirs* were transferable every three or four years, the Mughal jagirdars and their amils (agents who collected revenue) paid little attention to the welfare of the peasantry and were harsh with their collections. This caused the peasantry to collaborate with the Marathas (in the Deccan). When the Mughals learned of this they confiscated horses and weapons from every village, which in turn prompted peasants in most villages to take up arms and join the Marathas, and so on. Like the Mughals, the Maratha troops were repressive too and they plundered the countryside. When Aurangzeb captured many of the Maratha forts, the only means of survival available to the peasantry was to plunder, and they joined ranks with the Marathas. Finally, given that the Mughals had limited success in consolidating their conquests during the Mughal wars, both Mughal and Maratha armies continued to ravage villages, forcing peasants to flee and desolating the Deccan even further. Though peasant distress shook the foundations of the Mughal Empire, it did not produce a new (socio–political) order. Rather it eventually led to anarchy and (English) colonial conquest.[8]

The most recent exposition of the connection between Aurangzeb's southern campaigns and the decline of the Mughal Empire was done by Gijs Kruijtzer. Referring to Aurangzeb's own perception of the empire as a ruin by the end of his reign, Kruijtzer argues that the troubles generated by the wars ricocheted off to the north and contributed to ruination of the empire.[9] In other words, the southern wars not only produced a socio–economic crisis, but they also unleashed developments that caused more instability in the eighteenth century.

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[7] Mountstuart Elphinstone, *The History of India: The Hindu and Mahometan Periods* (London: John Murray, 1857): 575, 588. Stanley Lane–Poole, *Aurangzib* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893): 5, 188–189. Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib*, *Vol. V* (Calcutta: M. C. Sarkar& Sons Ltd., 1952): 360–366.

[8] Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556–1707*. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, Second, revised edition 1999): 390–405.

[9] Gijs Kruijtzer, *Xenophobia in Seventeenth–Century India* (Leiden: Leiden University Press 2009): 272–274.

In my opinion such analyses have two major drawbacks. Firstly, they overreach themselves in assuming a direct connection between events separated by decades without establishing a causal relationship between them. Secondly, they straitjacket the entire phase of warfare as decline and do not leave room for exploring any other explanation. The idea of the wars ruining the Mughal Empire and setting off forces that eventually led to English colonization of South Asia indirectly feeds into the notion of an eighteenth–century decline: the Mughal Empire declined and the weakness of its successor states paved the way for colonization of South Asia by the English (later British) East India Company.[10] This notion has been negated and revised in favour of strong regional centralization in eighteenth–century India and a concomitant impressive economic growth. Streaks of revisionism appeared in the historiography on Aurangzeb's southern wars in the 1970s.

Revisionism

While John F. Richards acknowledged the havoc wreaked by the wars in eastern Deccan, he made two significant interventions in the debate. Firstly, Richards argued that agriculture in Hyderabad improved from 1688 and that stability slowly returned to the province around 1692, and by 1697 the records show improved revenues, signifying that Mughal administration had been able to restore the links between rural production in fertile parts of the province and state infrastructure in Hyderabad, as well as tap the salt works near Masulipatnam. In fact, Richards argued that the revenue returns from Masulipatnam and Nagapatnam during 1690–1704 were even better than other parts, a feat that would have been impossible without the salt works. Though Hyderabad lost its position as the premier economic centre of the south, it was wealthy enough to be attacked by the Marathas after 1700. Two new economic centres developed to replace Hyderabad: Madras and Aurangzeb's camp. Secondly, Richards argued that as Mughal power declined, the European city states of Madras, Pulicat and Pondicherry in Coromandel became increasingly autonomous, acquired wealth and power, and acted as safe havens for non–combatants fleeing the turmoil created by the wars. Merchant groups, Armenians among them, moved from Masulipatnam to Madras.[11]

The economic pull of Aurangzeb's mobile camp illustrates how while wars cause economic disruption, they also generate their own particular forms of demand. In his study of military entrepreneurship in Europe, David Parrott argues that in long campaigns,

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[10] Great Britain was formed by the political union of 1707 that merged the Kingdom of England (comprising England and Wales) and the Kingdom of Scotland. British colonization of South Asia took place from the second half of the eighteenth century, and by this point this European power's trading company was referred to as the *British* East India Company. However, during the period of focus for this dissertation (1682–1707), it was still known as the *English* East India Company (EIC).

[11] John F. Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda* (Oxford: Oxford University, Clarendon Press, 1975): 51–52, 69–70, 72, 110–111, 181–183, 185–186, 189, 211, 215, 218, 220–221, 232–233, 243. John F. Richards, 'European City-States on the Coromandel Coast', in: *Studies in the Foreign Relations of India (From the Earliest Times to 1947)*, ed. P. M. Joshi (Hyderabad: Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1975): 508–509.

delegation of responsibility by states to private contractors helped maintain the vitality of well–coordinated supply lines. Large scale networks of specialist suppliers of military equipment who worked in tandem with the state or more often military commanders provided much of the support for armies and navies. By the start of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), merchants were aware that substantial profits could be made from supplying military equipment to armed forces. This economic dynamic sustained the expansion of three cities as military provisioning centres: Genoa, Hamburg and Amsterdam.[12] Stewart Gordon, whose study of Burhanpur as an entrepot stressed on the pull generated by Aurangzeb's camp, takes a similar standpoint on Aurangzeb's southern campaigns. Gordon argues that in the late seventeenth century there was demand in the area to the south of Burhanpur (towards Bijapur and Golconda) created by the Mughal camp and army, with supplies being transhipped to the army from northern India via Burhanpur.[13]

Apart from leading to a reorientation of economic networks and creating new zones of demand that could boost production and marketing, networks in the Deccan and South India outside the immediate sphere of influence of wars and political instability remained relatively unaffected. Sanjay Subrahmanyam argues that in South India coastal trade generally fared better than overseas trade against the backdrop of the aleatoric life–cycles of ports and a changing political landscape. He points out that while Masulipatnam's international trade saw a dip in the 1670s, its coastal trade continued to be high for two reasons: the depopulation of Masulipatnam had not been as high as the loss of its overseas commerce and Masulipatnam was slow to lose its importance as a grain market.[14] As we will see later in this dissertation, coastal trade in agricultural products from Bengal and Orissa to Coromandel ports continued throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This trade persisted even during Aurangzeb's southern campaigns, as is evidenced by the shipping lists cited in Chapter 4. They point out that most of the ships which arrived in Masulipatnam in the late seventeenth century originated from Bengal. In their co–authored work *Symbols of Substance* David Shulman, Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Velcheru Narayan Rao argue that the effects of warfare in eighteenth–century Tamil Nadu differed from those of the preceding two centuries in one crucial regard: in the eighteenth century, warfare damaged the economy of Tamil Nadu. This was not the case during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when the high frequency of military campaigns did not render any proportionate damage to production, trade or welfare. In the seventeenth century war meant taking over the economic machine of the opponent, an example being the attacks by the Madurai *nayakas* and Marava *setupatis* on Tanjore in the 1670s. In the eighteenth century, however, wars in Tamil Nadu became more ferocious with

[12] David Parrott, *The Business of War: Military Enterprise and Military Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 1, 196–197, 208–209, 211–219.
[13] Stewart Gordon, 'Burhanpur: entrepot and hinterland, 1650–1750' *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 25, 4 (1988): 433–434.
[14] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce Southern India 1500–1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990): 61–62.

opposing forces endeavouring to destroy one another's economic machinery, such as during the Anglo–Mysore wars of the 1780s, when the EIC and Mysore rulers attacked the irrigation system and deported men and cattle in large numbers.[15] Shulman, Subrahmanyam and Rao's arguments therefore hint at the survival through reorientation of trade, rather than decline, after wars in the seventeenth century.

Economic growth and revenue returns from Hyderabad showed brief improvement between 1692 and 1697. This had happened not only due to a consolidation of Mughal rule, but also a shift in the theatre of war from northern to central Coromandel. Gingee was the primary site of contest between the Mughals and the Marathas from 1689 to 1698. In fact, as we will see in Chapters 4 and 5, the VOC contrasted the relative peace in northern Coromandel at this point with the disturbed conditions in central Coromandel. Here, we have an important insight: Coromandel's heterogeneity or different impact of the Mughal campaigns in different parts of Coromandel, with respect to changes in the theatres of war. The idea that the regions of Coromandel had experienced different economic impact caused by the wars was pushed further in the 1980s.

Regional centralization in Coromandel

Historians of the VOC and of northern Coromandel's textile industry, including Tapan Raychaudhuri and Joseph Brennig, concluded that the Mughal wars disrupted the economy and the textile industry of Coromandel, both in the north and south. According to this interpretation of events, northern Coromandel's textile industry would never recover from these setbacks, and the siege of Gingee forced peasants and weavers to migrate from central Coromandel.[16] A new component in the idea of regional specialization was introduced by Sinnappah Arasaratnam who argued that an economic crisis following the Mughal conquest forced people to move from northern Coromandel to the south towards Tanjore, where crop failures had been less severe. The VOC's exports fell in the period from 1688 to 1691 due to troubles with the Mughal Empire over piracy on the seas and the destabilizing effects of Mughal expansion around Masulipatnam and the Godavari delta. With the supply of textiles from northern Coromandel in decline during the 1690s, much of the demand from Europe was met by the districts of Cuddalore, Salem, Tanjore, Madurai and Tirunelveli. VOC exports improved after 1691 mainly due to their southern factories; although VOC import trade also fluctuated in the wake of Mughal campaigns, it fared better than their export trade. Arasaratnam added that not all European settlements were growing: while Madras and

[15] Velcheru Narayan Rao, David Shulman and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance: Court and State in Nayaka Period Tamilnadu* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992): 240–241.

[16] Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in Coromandel 1605–1690: A Study in the Interrelations of European Commerce and Traditional Economies* (The Hague: Marinus Nijhoff, 1962): 72–74, 127–128. Joseph Jerome Brennig, 'The Textile Trade of Seventeenth Century Northern Coromandel: A Study of a Pre–Modern Export Industry' (Unpublished PhD thesis: University of Wisconsin, 1975): 276.

Pondicherry did prosper, the Dutch settlements generally witnessed a decline.[17] Arasaratnam's argument echoes that of Richards in terms of pointing out the shift towards the south, but his formulation leaves a crucial question unanswered: How did the weaving villages in the Kaveri delta fare during the 1690s when the theatre of war had shifted in Gingee in central Coromandel?

Historians of Dutch expansion in the Indian Ocean also stress the southward shift in Coromandel, but they differ in their interpretations of the long–term impact of this change. George Winius and Markus Vink argued that Coromandel's vibrant economy and the position of the Dutch received blows in the late seventeenth century not just from the Mughal wars, but also from changes in consumer tastes in Europe and diminishing resources to generate enough of the bullion that the VOC depended on for its trade within Asia. The general turmoil resulting from Mughal campaigns in South India disrupted operations and pushed up inflation. In the wake of this, the VOC decided to shift their Coromandel headquarter from Pulicat to Nagapatnam to escape the conflict–ridden areas. But this move was to little avail because after 1690 the siege of Gingee disturbed the economy in the region surrounding Nagapatnam. Coromandel was a heavily monetized region where barter had been squeezed out and precious metals – gold and silver – were essential for trade. Japan was the main supplier of bullions for the VOC in Asia. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the Japanese *shogunate* had begun to restrict the flow of gold and silver out of the country. This affected the Dutch export of gold and silver from Japan, and there came a point when copper was introduced as a substitute. Despite the increasing volume of bullion being sent from Europe after 1695, it still could not cover the VOC's orders for textiles. Meanwhile European markets had developed a craze for Indian textiles. The clothes from Coromandel were used to get spices from South–East Asia, but the changes in tastes in European markets transformed the VOC from a spice merchant to a textile merchant. Though it is unclear what role Aurangzeb's campaigns had played, by the end of the seventeenth century the Gentlemen Seventeen instructed Batavia that Bengal (another region in South Asia that produced abundant textiles) should not suffer even when cash was short.[18]

However, the idea of decline of the VOC and by extension, that of Coromandel, was revised later in another study of Dutch expansion across the world. The continuity of the VOC in Coromandel, Jos Gommans argues, is more interesting than the question of decline resulting from political instability. The eighteenth–century in Coromandel was, in fact, politically more unstable and vulnerable to climatic vagaries caused by El Nino than the seventeenth century. The 'Coromandel miracle' came about for two fundamental reasons. Firstly, the VOC acquired direct control over the means of production in Coromandel. In

[17] Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast 1650–1740* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986): 46, 142, 150–151, 163.
[18] George Winius and Marcus Vink*, The Merchant–Warrior Pacified: The VOC (The Dutch East India Company) and its Changing Political Economy in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991): 50–53.

Golconda, the VOC was effectively conferred ownership of textile weaving villages such as Palakollu, Contera, Draksharama, Golepalam and Godavaram, to the north of Masulipatnam (the Qutb Shahi rulers of Golconda were the first to confer rights to these villages on the VOC, but later, after having conquered Golconda during his southern campaigns, Aurangzeb issued a firman (royal order) reinstating these privileges). The Dutch also 'owned' several villages around Nagapatnam. In addition, they had the right to mint coins in these areas, a privilege that would have been inconceivable in the Mughal provinces. Though the Dutch lost their grip on the production process in the north in the eighteenth century, they acquired control over it in the southernmost part of India thanks to the rivalries between the kingdoms of Tanjore, Madurai and Ramnad. While the conflicts here were no less frequent, their effects appear to have been less disruptive than those in Masulipatnam or Pulicat. Increasingly, Dutch and also indigenous merchants migrated to the more stable south, leading to the growth of the ports Porto Novo and Nagore. Secondly, the continuity of Dutch operations in Coromandel owed much to the close relations forged between the Dutch officials and their middlemen. In this respect, the role played by portfolio capitalists (dynamic figures who farmed revenues through bids at courts and invested their wealth in trade) was crucial. During turbulent times these individuals offered the VOC the stability it required and given the portfolio capitalists' stakes in maritime trade, it was important for them to have good relations with the Dutch (both sides stood to gain from good relations). Just such a trader cum political entrepreneur in eighteenth–century Ramnad was Shaikh Abd al–Qadir, whose family acted as Dutch middlemen in the production of textiles, while at the same time competing with the VOC as managers of the pearl fisheries.[19]

According to the existing historiography, therefore, the most significant impact of the Mughal campaigns was the shift of Coromandel's most important export industry (the textile industry) from the north to the south. So, what should readers expect from this dissertation? Aligning itself with the arguments of revisionism and regional centralization, this dissertation builds on them to construct a hypothesis. But how? Let us first explore the connections this dissertation seeks to establish with the revisionist position. Firstly, it stresses on the importance of examining the heterogeneity in northern and southern Coromandel to understand the differential impact of the Mughal campaigns. We do so by (1) developing a grid-like pattern to study the pre–Mughal history of three port–hinterland complexes across Coromandel, with reference to how these regions responded to wars, and (2) analysing the performance of these economies in the years of the Mughal campaigns, with a focus on the frequency and intensity of fighting in the surrounding regions. Secondly, and though this has rather minor presence in the chapters which analyse the impact of wars, the dissertation questions the idea of decline associated with wars by pointing out instances of trade to Mughal camp, involvement of Mughal officials in trade, and the survival of indigenous

[19] Piet Emmer and Jos Gommans, *Rijk aan de rand van de wereld: De geschiedenis van Nederland overzee 1600–1800* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2012): 347–351.

merchants. Thirdly, this dissertation argues the Mughals were quite keen to promote maritime trade and rehabilitate the regions they had conquered in Coromandel. In this context, it is instructive to look at how they reinstated the various European companies and – specifically in the case of the VOC – the terms under which they did so.

How does this dissertation build on the arguments surrounding how regional centralization developed in South India? Arasaratnam's formulation of the southern shift does not explain how the Dutch factories organized textile production in southern Coromandel during the siege of Gingee. Chapter 5 of this dissertation attempts to answer that question by analysing the condition of textile weaving villages in the Kaveri delta towards the end of the seventeenth century. This dissertation argues that although the wars did indeed disrupt textile production, they could not completely undermine the underlying resilience of an export–oriented industry which could adapt itself to a changing political landscape. Patronage played a crucial role in this respect. Here my dissertation explores the connection between the rural economy and the control that the VOC had come to exert over the production process, the first element of the Coromandel miracle. As we have discussed, the VOC lost their grip over this process in northern Coromandel in the eighteenth century. Chapter 4 studies the performance of two villages owned by the VOC near Masulipatnam and reveals the extent to which European control over production processes ensured a steady output in the years of war. In other words, it elaborates on the strength or otherwise of the Dutch grip on this region. Chapter 5 explores this phenomenon in the context of the Kaveri delta. Richards argued that the Mughal wars eventually resulted in greater autonomy for the European enclaves when non–combatants flocked to the relative security they offered. Although it is true that non–combatants sought the security of European settlements during Aurangzeb's southern campaigns, it is equally important to recognize that throughout the seventeenth century artisans and weavers were always attracted by the security of fortified settlements. From the very beginning of their presence in Coromandel, European companies had been allowed to erect walls and keep artillery. Despite the rigid terms under which the European companies (in this case the VOC) contracted weavers, the patronage and security that they offered made the weavers see them simply as another new patron – after all, European companies contracted the weavers to ship textiles abroad and this offered employment. Migration to fortified settlements or regions that had escaped the disastrous consequences of warfare was therefore not a novel phenomenon caused by the Mughal wars. As Chapter 2 of this dissertation shows, the Dutch port city of Pulicat had attracted indigenous settlers in the second half of the seventeenth century.

To study the economic impact of Aurangzeb's campaigns in Coromandel this dissertation explores several themes: ecology, economy, politics and the discourse of primary sources. We will now take a closer look at these themes, the connecting blocks of this dissertation.

Ecology: Geography and the Dakshinapatha

Two of the themes that this dissertation explores are the ecology of South India and the *Dakshinapatha*. Ecology determines soil patterns, agriculture rhythms, crop types, the effects of precipitation and – particularly relevant in the context of this dissertation – the movements of the Mughal army. From the north, the Arid Zone extends into South India in two directions, forming two distinct strips. The first runs along the arid tracts of Central India through Malwa to the northern Coromandel Coast, north of the mouth of the river Godavari. The second is mainly the rain shadow zone of the Western Ghats (the mountain ranges near the western coast of India which starts at the border of the Indian states of Gujarat and Maharashtra, and then runs through Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and ends in Tamil Nadu) which follows these mountains and turns east towards southeast India in southern Coromandel. We may argue the Deccan campaigns of Aurangzeb were bound by frontiers of the Arid Zone: the starting point of the wars was Daulatabad in northern Deccan and the Kaveri delta was the farthest point in southern India that the Mughals reached; beyond the Kaveri delta lie the dry tracts of Tirunelveli. The primary reason for this effect was the fine balance Mughal armies had to maintain while marching between pastures where their draught animals could graze and the towns and villages that could feed their men.

The impact of the monsoon and the Arid Zone divided the Deccan and South India into two distinct ecological regions: the dry south and the wet south. We will find more references to this categorization in Chapters 2 and 3. Broadly speaking, the drier zones often acted as a natural frontier area for states based in the wetter parts. The western littoral of India primarily receives rainfall from the south–west monsoon that lasts from June to August, this is Malabar's main monsoon season while it also receives some more rain during the north–east monsoon, October to December. The eastern littoral, the Coromandel Coast, receives less rainfall in the south–west monsoon season and more rainfall in the retreating north–east monsoon from October to December. During the south–west monsoon, the winds enter India through the Malabar Coast. They cause heavy rainfall there and along the Kanara and Konkan Coasts. However, as they cross the Western Ghats and blow across the Deccan to the east, they begin to lose moisture. So, the south–west monsoon causes less rainfall in Coromandel. But during the retreating north–east monsoon season, the winds blow from north to south and gain moisture as they cross the Bay of Bengal, which causes heavy rainfall in Coromandel from October to December. Among the major rivers of the Deccan, it is only the Tapti that flows to the west; the Godavari and the Krishna flow to the east. The aridness was neutralized by means of extensive tank irrigation that utilized the two monsoons of the Coromandel Coast.

What was the relationship between the ecology of South India and the *Dakshinapatha* (Southern Road)? Rather than a single artery, it comprised multiple lines of long–distance communication between northern and southern India intersected by routes to the eastern and western littorals. Jos Gommans's 'high roads controlling the empire' hypothesis for explaining the success of the Mughal military stresses the connections that states established

between different geographic zones by controlling the highways. States chose such sites for capitals that were close to rivers and could command the highways of commerce, and this was the key to Mughal success in northern India. In this respect, the argument could be extended to also explain state–formation strategies in South India. For instance, Hyderabad, the Qutb Shahi capital located near the river Musi, linked Surat and the cotton–growing tracts of Maharashtra with Masulipatnam, the most important port in the Bay of Bengal. Similarly, the Vijayanagara Empire with its capital at modern–day Hampi off the river Tungabhadra connected two very different types of ecological zone: the dry plateaus of Karnataka and Goa and central Coromandel ports such as Pulicat. We will find more references to this politico–military success in Chapters 2 and 3.

Kingdoms in Maharashtra also had to successfully connect its three geographical regions: the Konkan (Fertile Coast), the Ghats and the Desh (the plateau widest at the Ghats and narrowing to the east). The region closest to the ghats was in the rain shadow region of the mountains. Further east, however, the plain is fed by the rivers Tapti, Godavari and Krishna and was therefore fertile. Any kingdom based in the desh had to expand westwards to control the productive agriculture and the trade routes to the Konkan. The Ghats could not support even a small army, but they formed a natural retreat for rebels who raided the Konkan and the Desh and had many hill forts that were not so easy to control – as the Mughals learned the hard way in the late seventeenth century.[20] Relative latecomers in the politics of South India, the Mughals had to respond to these and other ecological realities. Located off the river Bhima, Aurangzeb's camps in Islampuri and Galgala acted as the temporary capitals of the empire. From there, the Mughals directed campaigns to conquer the Konkan in the west, Golconda in the east and Gingee in the southeast, effectively trying to gain control of two coasts, Konkan and Coromandel. Following their conquest of Golconda, the Mughals sought to integrate the workings of the coastal economy with the empire (Chapter 4). Much as the Mughals could not always decide the sites of conflicts, Aurangzeb's camp, due to its huge entourage of nobles, merchants and servants who had accompanied the emperor, effectively turned into a city and acted as an important nodal point in the arterial connections of the *Dakshinapatha*.

The economy and the seventeenth–century climate crisis

How was the economy of the Deccan and South India related to its ecology and the *Dakshinapatha*? To start with, ecological conditions affected agriculture. The annual agricultural cycle of Coromandel had two major cropping seasons: crops sown in the first season during the south–west monsoon (June–August) were harvested around September, while the harvest of the second season, during the north–east monsoon (October–December/

[20] See Jos Gommans, *Mughal Warfare: Indian Frontiers and High Roads to Empire, 1500–1700* (London: Routledge, 2002): 7–37. For an analysis of the geographical features of Maharashtra, see Stewart Gordon, *The Marathas 1600–1818. The New Cambridge History of India*, II. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 12–13.

January), took place in January and was followed in Tamil Nadu by the festival of Pongal, which was and remains part of the broader calendar of winter harvest festivals across India. The principal subsistence crop was rice, produced in the coastal plains of both the Konkan and Coromandel as well as in the river valleys. Away from these zones, agriculture was mainly supported by tank irrigation. Some wheat was grown near Junnar in western Deccan, while millets were cultivated along with rice to the southeast of Hyderabad and jowar near Nellore. The black soil tracts of western Deccan produced a major commercial crop: cotton. Parts of eastern Deccan also grew cotton, but it was not a source for the weaving industry of northern Coromandel (Chapter 1). The two principal areas of cotton cultivation were: the area to the south of Daulatabad and north of the Godavari River where Paithan was an important textile weaving centre; and the area extending from Kolhapur in the west across Bijapur to Gulbarga in the east between the rivers Bhima and Krishna. Another commercial crop grown in the Coromandel and bought by the European companies was indigo.[21]

The Deccan and South India were natural trading regions, thanks to the tapered coastline that provided access to the Indian Ocean and overland routes which linked the coasts. South India's agricultural produce was also a part of its maritime economy, with the rice trade between Coromandel, Malabar and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) an age–old feature of it. Moreover, the coveted textiles of Coromandel were of course also a by–product of commercial farming. This meant that poor agricultural season could affect textile production, too, as we will see. Since the ports of the Coromandel hardly engaged in any economic production of their own except for the salt works, they depended on supplies from outside. More importantly, although Coromandel ports could be and were supplied by sea, the true source of their prosperity was their overland connection with patron capital cities, subsidiary zones of economic production and other markets in the Deccan and South India. The effects of warfare on the connections forged by the *Dakshinapatha* between ports and the inland economy were therefore quite telling, as this dissertation shows. Finally, the effects of warfare on the connections forged by the *Dakshinapatha* also affected the performance of an invading army over a long period of time since a devastated economy could not keep a military machine as large as that of the Mughals well–oiled and well–fuelled.

Geoffrey Parker writes that the seventeenth-century climate crisis was an episode of global cooling marked by a series of revolutions and a breakdown in state structures across the world. Throughout the northern hemisphere, war became the norm for settling domestic and international disputes. The Chinese and Mughal empires fought wars almost continuously, while the Ottoman Empire experienced only ten years of peace. South Asia had four instances of monsoon failures in 1613–1615, 1630–1632, 1658–1660 and 1685—1687,

[21] For illustrative maps with indexes on the economy of the Deccan and South India see Irfan Habib, *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire: Political and Economic Maps with Detailed Notes, Bibliography and Index* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982): 14B, 15B, 16B.

and each was followed by famine. However, war could bring famine even in a year of good harvest. The crucial factor, then, was not the weather, but the ability of states and societies to adapt to natural climate changes and artificial, man–made scarcities.[22] In this regard, Geoffrey Parker and Lesley Smith point out that while natural disasters resulted in high food prices in the seventeenth century, they did not always produce famines– for example in Indonesia which had abundant, alternative supplies of food.[23]

In the context of South Asia, especially within the Mughal Empire, John F. Richards has considerably modified the idea of a seventeenth–century crisis. While a general crisis seems to have occurred in the first half of the seventeenth century in several parts of the world, Richards argued that symptoms pointing to a crisis are not apparent in the Indian subcontinent for the greater part of the seventeenth century. Instead it was a period of moderate but steady population growth and rising productivity. Political crises, warfare, disease and economic disruption accompanying Mughal imperial decline appeared towards the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century. Signs of economic distress too, Richards argued, are difficult to detect in the seventeenth century. Although Gujarat and the Deccan experienced several years of dearth and famine in the early 1630s, a wider pattern of recurring shortage and mortality is not readily apparent.[24]

So, if there was no general crisis what connection did the changes in climate have with the Mughal wars and their impact on the economy of Coromandel in the late seventeenth century? Two instances of monsoon failures – those in 1630–1632 and 1685–1687 – coincided with Mughal campaigns in the Deccan. The first saw Shah Jahan fighting the Nizam Shahis for conquest of Ahmadnagar and the second witnessed Aurangzeb's conquest of Bijapur and Golconda. Although there were other instances of poor monsoon in Coromandel apart from 1685–1687, as Chapters 4 and 5 show, we should not characterize each and every of these failures as an El Nino episode. Monsoon failures in South India usually caused a chain reaction affecting both the agrarian and the industrial sectors. The agrarian base was the first to be struck, resulting in loss of employment: when land could not be cultivated and as stocks of rice from previous years ran out, inflation followed, pushing up prices of food grains and fodder for livestock. The tendency to hoard whatever was still available only made things worse. Other sectors of the economy also suffered in years of bad monsoons, such as those involved in the washing and bleaching of textiles leading to en–masse depopulation of villages as people moved to areas that had fared better in terms of crop security. All of these factors could contribute to a social crisis marked by a lack of access to sustenance, from which banditry emerged. To make matters worse – even when the monsoon was good – wars

[22] Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013): xvii, xix–xx, 403.
[23] Geoffrey Parker and Lesley M. Smith, ''Introduction'' in: *The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century* ed. Geoffrey Parker and Lesley M. Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 1997): 8
[24] John F. Richards, 'The Seventeenth–Century Crisis in South Asia' *Modern Asian Studies* 24, 4 (1990): 625, 629–630

created artificial scarcity because land could not be cultivated due to the movement of armies. During the southern campaigns when monsoons were poor climatic factors posed logistical challenges that the Mughals had to resolve in South India, particularly with regard to securing food and fodder as supply lines became vulnerable. All these features can be identified in the economy of Coromandel during Aurangzeb's campaigns. What impact they had, will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Politics

States used a variety of mechanisms to establish links with the economy of the regions they controlled. One of these, as we have already noted, was to capitalize on the arterial nature of roads to connect different ecological zones. Apart from this, states developed infrastructure to support trade and used their administrative apparatus to bring rural wealth within its reach for the purpose of revenue collection. A peculiar feature that developed in South India was portfolio–capitalism, a system whereby offices could be contracted out to the highest bidder and state officials would invest their wealth in commerce (Chapter 1). Masulipatnam's port officials and governors of Golconda's regional towns were part of this system. State support to mercantile activities encouraged foreign traders, whether in the form of European companies or their non–European counterparts. This policy of active encouragement was also manifest in the way the Vijayanagara Empire extended cultivation and provided a boost to industrial production in the Tamil country (Chapter 2 and 3). The *nayaka* states that succeeded Vijayanagara were no exception in this respect. We will introduce three sub–themes while discussing politics: why did the Mughals expand into the Deccan, and how did they incorporate the Europeans within the imperial framework and the logistics of warfare.

The Deccan and the Mughals: The struggle to control the coasts

When considering Mughal expansion in the Deccan, one fundamental question strikes us: What was at stake in the Deccan? In other words, why did the Mughals expand into the Deccan? We may argue that the major pulls for a southward expansion were the need to incorporate the maritime power of the Europeans within the Mughal imperial framework and tap the wealth that was generated in the Deccan states via agriculture and oceanic commerce. In the seventeenth century, the sultan of Golconda was reputed to be second only to the Mughal emperor in terms of wealth.[25] The idea that northern kingdoms were attracted by the Deccan's riches has its pre–Mughal roots in the career of Alauddin Khalji, the Delhi sultan (r. 1296-1316) of the Khalji dynasty.

When Alaudduin was still the nephew, son–in–law and a high–ranking noble of the previous ruler Jalaluddin Khalji, he had raided the kingdoms of Bhilsa and Malwa in central India. Not only did these raids help him amass great wealth that he eventually invested in his revolt against Jalaluddin Khalji, but they also offered him an insight into the routes to other rich kingdoms of the Deccan. After Alauddin became ruler himself he launched another

[25] Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda*: 2.

expedition to the Deccan and South India, led by his general Malik Kafur. It reached the Tamil country and was nothing more than a military raid planned to make money with hardly any durable effects.[26] The Mughals were aware of the need to link the landlocked plains of northern India with the western and eastern littorals even during the nascent days of the empire in the 1530s under Humayun. This drive towards the coast was manifest in his unsuccessful attempts to conquer Bengal and Gujarat. The dissertation argues that Humayun's failures were bound up with the historical memory with which his son and successor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) grew up. Both Bengal and Gujarat were rich in agricultural output and gateways to the Indian Ocean. We can detect a clear long-term strategy in Akbar's actions: first he took Rajputana, whose kingdoms controlled the road towards Gujarat, and then, when he had at last conquered Gujarat in the 1570s, he held dominion over a long coastline stretching from Sind to Gujarat. He followed this up with campaigns in Bengal before turning to the Deccan. As we will see again in Chapter 5, the seventeenth–century Mughal chronicler, Bhimsen, also wrote about the riches and prosperity of South India in *Tarikh–i–Dilkasha*:

> In the whole world nowhere else are there so many temples. The cause of the building of these temples is that the country is very wealth producing, every year it yields four crops, and a large revenue is raised, the amount of which is known only to the Recording Angel.[27]

The first steps taken by the Mughals to extend their sphere of influence into the Deccan took the form of diplomatic manoeuvres involving them in the politics of the Deccan sultanates. To understand what happened, we must first look at the concept of *fitna*, as explained by Andre Wink.

Fitna refers to the political disruption of the *umma* or Islamic community in the early Islamic state in Arabia. In the classical Muslim version, there was a caliph chosen through consultation who represented the prophet Muhammed as 'the leader of the faithful' on earth. Under the leadership of the caliph, Muslims were united in the great brotherhood of the umma through a supra–tribal contract which made them equals. The classical Muslim state coincided with the number of Muslims and had no territorial references except the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. A product of accumulation of lands and fortunes in the wake of Arabian expansion, fitna dates back to the schism of 657 CE which marked the end of the reign of the first four pious caliphs. The schism led to three major political and doctrinal divisions in Islam: the *khawarij* or seceders who represented the forces of nomadism; the *Shia* or the supporters

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[26] For the career of Alauddin Khalji, see Banarsi Prasad Saksena, 'Alauddin Khalji', in: *The Delhi Sultanate (A.D. 1206–1526)*, *A Comprehensive History of India, Volume Five,* eds Mohammad Habib and Khaliq Ahmed Nizami (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1970): 326–427.

[27] Sarkar transl., *Tarikh–i–Dilkasha*: 193.

of Ali who introduced the hereditary principle in the caliphate; and the *Sunni*, orthodox Muslims who had rejected the idea of hereditary principle.

The concept of *fitna* as defined in Islamic law books, religious manuals and political historiography (rebellion or disorder) appears to correspond with the various translations of the word incorporated into Arabic, Persian, Turkish and the Indian languages (including Marathi), meaning 'sedition', 'insurrection caused by factionalism', 'chaos', 'revolt', 'dissension', 'civil war', 'defection', 'withdrawing from allegiance', and so on. In the Islamic world, *fitna* was the normal political mechanism of state–formation or annexation and fitna is never–ending.

Fitna implies no more than forging of alliances (and no revolt or insurrection could succeed without allies), but unlike state formation in modern Europe, in the Islamic world *fitna* was not primarily determined by use of military power. A component of the *fitna* mechanism was 'political use of military power.' *Fitna* was a mixture of coercion, conciliation and implied exploitation of, and intervention in, local conflicts, while avoiding a purely military encounter. It can be equated with the concept of *upajapa* in the ancient Indian political treatise *Arthashastra*, which advocated conciliation, gift–giving, sowing dissension among and winning over the enemy's local supporters, and the use of force only as a last resort. In India (Wink's use implies modern–day India, Pakistan and Bangladesh), sovereignty was based on allegiance and the state was open–ended, rather than territorially circumscribed. It is through *fitna*, Andre Wink argues, that the Mughals began to expand beyond the river Narmada in the Deccan. They did so by forming local alliances and intervening in local conflicts. The rise of the Marathas, Wink concludes, was the result of *fitna*. As the Mughals began to expand into the Deccan, a succession of Muslim rulers had to co–opt the autochthonous Hindu gentry or *zamindars* (literally landholders, see glossary) to keep competitors at bay. The Marathas rose to prominence as a part of this process in the Deccan Muslim polities which were under pressure from the Mughals.[28] Let us look at how *fitna* operated in the pre–Aurangzeb phase of Mughal expansion in the Deccan.

In 1591, Akbar demanded submission from the Deccan sultanates: Khandesh, Ahmadnagar, Berar, Bijapur and Golconda. Initially, none of them acceded but for Khandesh, which paid occasional tribute. Conflicts continued, however, and in 1600–1601 the sultanates of Ahmadnagar and Khandesh surrendered to the Mughals. During these conflicts, the Mughals, as we have noted, relied on *fitna*. For instance, Akbar decided to invade Ahmadnagar in 1595, when it had been going through a succession crisis, and he coerced the ruler of Khandesh to be an ally. The Mughals then besieged Ahmednagar fort, but its temporary ruler Sultan Chand Bibi managed to hold out until reinforcements arrived from Bijapur and Golconda. After being ceded some territory the Mughals pulled back. Finally,

[28] For the connotations of fitna, see Andre Wink, *Land and Sovereignty in India: Agrarian Society and Politics under the Eighteenth–Century Maratha Svarajya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986): 23–31.

under Akbar's command both Ahmadnagar (1600) and Khandesh (1601) fell to the Mughals. After this phase of warfare, Berar, Khandesh and a large part of Ahmadnagar were added to the Mughal territories in the Deccan.

It brought under the purview of Mughal influence three places: Ahmadnagar, Burhanpur and Asirgarh. Ahmadnagar and particularly Burhanpur were, as we will see, transit points for commerce that passed from Coromandel to western and central India, while Asirgarh was a strong fortress on the routes towards the north from Deccan. The Mughals could now deploy their mechanism for state–formation, using their strategic citadels and commercial entrepots to control the highways that connected ecologically diverse regions. As mentioned in the section on historiography in this introduction, Burhanpur became a conduit for sending military supplies to Aurangzeb during his southern campaigns.

Akbar's son and successor Jahangir (r. 1605–1627) found a formidable rival in Malik Ambar, the Abyssinian minister of Ahmadnagar who fought a guerrilla war and was eventually defeated in the 1620s, when the Mughals established control over this region and compelled Bijapur and Golconda to pay indemnities for their assistance to Ambar. We find *fitna* used as a strategy in the context of Jahangir's wars too. Ambar received the support of aristocratic Maratha families of the region, as part of the process of incorporating local landed elites that we have discussed. In 1616 the Mughals defeated Ambar in a battle and razed his capital, Khirki. After the Mughals had withdrawn to North India, Ambar, who had retreated to the fort of Daulatabad, resumed guerrilla operations, repudiated the treaty that the Mughals had imposed on his kingdom and sought assistance from Bijapur and Golconda to drive out the Mughals. Eventually Prince Khurram (the future Shah Jahan) restored Mughal control over Ahmadnagar in a six-month long campaign (1620–1621).

Arguably, the manifestations of *fitna* in Mughal wars and diplomacy in the Deccan became more prominent during Shah Jahan's reign (1627–1657), which saw Bijapur and Golconda turning into tributary states of the Mughals. Politics in the Deccan also became caught up in factional rivalries at the Mughal court in this period. After having been enthroned, Shah Jahan had marched to the Deccan in pursuit of Khan Jahan Lodi (1630–1631), an Afghan nobleman under Jahangir who had not supported Shah Jahan during the war of succession before he became emperor, eventually rebelled, found refuge in Ahmadnagar and was made the commander of its armies. Campaigns by the Mughal and Ahmadnagar armies at this point coincided with a terrible famine in the Deccan and Gujarat. The rebellion was duly suppressed and soon after the Mughals successfully besieged the fort of Daulatabad (1632).

Then Shah Jahan asked Bijapur and Golconda to accept Mughal hegemony, which required paying annual tribute, minting coins struck with the name of the Mughal emperor, having the khutba read in his name during Friday prayers and having a Mughal diplomat at the court. While Golconda immediately agreed, Bijapur accepted tributary status only after it had been threatened with an invasion (1635). Here we find the basic mechanism of *fitna* at

work: political use of military power. This mechanism, combined with shifting allegiances and lobbying at the Mughal court, became the trademark of Mughal relations with the Deccan states, particularly during the second of Aurangzeb's two tenures as the governor of the Deccan under Shah Jahan, 1636–1644 and 1653–1657. The latter was followed by the war of succession between Aurangzeb, Murad, Shuja and Dara Shukoh, the heir–apparent of Shah Jahan. In the second of these two periods, confronted by budgetary deficit in the Deccan, Aurangzeb had unsuccessfully sought permission to annex Golconda. An ally of Aurangzeb in this venture was the premier of the Golconda sultanate Mir Muhammad Said (a.k.a Mir Jumla), who was primarily responsible for expanding the Golconda state between the rivers Krishna and Palar in Coromandel. He defected to the Mughal service and Aurangzeb used the incarceration of Mir Jumla's son by the Qutb Shahi sultan as a pretext to annex Golconda: Aurangzeb was to invade the state from the north and Mir Jumla would back him up from the south. Around the same time, Aurangzeb intervened in a succession crisis in Bijapur with a view to annexing that sultanate. In both cases, as the sultanates were invaded and the Mughals about to take them, Bijapur and Golconda escaped annexation by lobbying at the Mughal court with the help of Dara Shukoh (Aurangzeb's principal rival for the throne) and paying war indemnities.[29]

In other words, the forging of alliances at one level was countered by the forging of other alliances at another; *fitna* opposed *fitna*. This strategy had been used by the Deccan sultanates since the late sixteenth century. When he had been campaigning in Burhanpur, Akbar sent an Iranian noble, Mir Jamal–ud–Din Husain Inju Shirazi, as an envoy to Bijapur to forge a matrimonial alliance. However, Jamal–ud–Din's rather long stay at the Bijapur court made the restive Akbar send another envoy, Asad Beg Qazwini, (1603) to bring Jamal–ud–Din back and offer goods and wealth from the Deccan as tribute. The Bijapur court greeted Asad Beg with precious gifts and used monetary offers to induce him to stay longer. It turned out that Jamal–ud–Din had been annually receiving money from Bijapur and Golconda to stay on, and he had done so. Asad Beg made similar claims about Abdur Rahim Khan–i Khanan, the Mughal general in the Deccan.[30]

As mentioned above, the rise of Marathas was a result of *fitna*, of attempts by Deccan sultanates to find allies among the local landed elites against the expanding Mughal state. Like Akbar, who had taken advantage of a succession crisis to intervene in Ahmadnagar, the Maratha leader Shivaji availed of a crisis in Bijapur to establish his authority. Khafi Khan, the author of *Muntakhabu–l Lubab*, sets Shivaji's rise against the backdrop of weak governance and successful raids that he conducted in Bijapur:

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[29] For an overview of Mughal expansion in the Deccan before Aurangzeb became the ruler, see Richards, *The Mughal Empire*: 52–54, 112–113, 120–121, 137–138, 154–158.

[30] Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'The Deccan Frontier and Mughal Expansion, ca.1600: Contemporary Perspectives.' *JESHO* 47, 3: 380–382.

> Adil Khan of Bijapur was attacked by sickness, under which he suffered for a long time, and great confusion arose in his territory. At this time Mulla Ahmad went with his followers to wait upon the emperor Shah Jahan, and Sivaji, seeing his country left without a ruler, boldly and wickedly stepped in and seized it, with the possessions of some other jagirdars. This was the beginning of that system of violence which he and his descendants have spread over the rest of the Kokan and the territory of the Dakhin. Whenever he heard of a district or town inhabited by thriving cultivators he plundered it and took possession of it.[31]

Raids often represented attempts by martial groups or rulers to stake claims over the economic produce of regions and use the wealth thus acquired as investments for political careers (in this respect we may recall Alauddin Khalji's raids in Bhilsa and Malwa and his investment of the wealth acquired through raids in his successful revolt to dethrone Jalaluddin Khalji). Later Shivaji extended his radius of action to raid the Mughal territories in Ahmadnagar and, more than once, Surat, the premier Mughal port. Most importantly, it signified Shivaji's ability to successfully defy the Mughal emperor and extort the principal port of the empire. His success and the failure of Mughal governor in Surat to protect the city's residents prompted a long–term change in the Mughal Empire, as we will find in the conclusion to the dissertation. Karen Leonard argued that Shivaji's raids forced bankers to migrate from Surat to other relatively safer and more stable parts of the erstwhile empire. Eventually, in the eighteenth century, they started backing non–Mughal political actors. This phenomenon played a significant part in the waning of Mughal power.[32]

In the context of acquiring control over the political economy, Aurangzeb's insistence on the annexation of Golconda makes sense. Golconda was a lucrative asset with its rich agriculture, diamond mines and thriving maritime trade that found an outlet in Masulipatnam. Annexing Golconda would have allowed the Mughals to control west–east trade routes in the Deccan– routes that ran east and south–eastwards from Surat in Gujarat to the cotton growing region of northern Deccan, and from the cotton growing region to Masulipatnam via Hyderabad/ Golconda (more on this in Chapter 1) – and thereby connect two of the richest ports in the erstwhile Indian Ocean world under Mughal authority. A second reason for annexation, it may be argued in retrospect, was the advantage that it could lend to Aurangzeb's political career: supported by the fiscal and military resources of Golconda and Bijapur Aurangzeb could ensure himself of a head start in the impending war of succession which was likely to occur after Shah Jahan's death.

As we will see in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, the basic mechanism of *fitna*, the political use of military power, became commonplace in the second half of the seventeenth century

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[31] John Dowson ed., Muhammad Hashim Khafi Khan, *Muntakhabu–l Lubab, The History of India as Told by its Own Historians: The Muhammadan Period* (Calcutta: Susil Gupta Private Ltd, Third Edition, 1960): 48.
[32] Karen Leonard, 'The Great Firm Theory of the Decline of the Mughal Empire.' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 21, 2 (1979): 151–167.

and perhaps reached its climax in the early 1680s in the context of Mughal policy towards Golconda. After having been reduced to tributaries of the Mughals, the sultanates of Bijapur and Golconda were raided in the 1650s, 1670s and finally in the 1680s before being conquered. In these cases, the Mughal army withdrew after they had been paid money. Parts of Chapters 1 and 4 explore the repetition of this pattern and its effects on the economy of the region. While engaged in the war against the Marathas in the early 1680s, Aurangzeb repeatedly threatened Golconda with invasions to ensure his demands for payment of money were met. The pretext for these demands was familiar: Golconda had helped the Maratha war efforts against the Mughals. While the claim was not entirely false (as we will find in Chapter 4), the ulterior motive for deploying this mechanism at that point was the desire to secure the funds which Aurangzeb required to finance the sieges. Hyderabad, the capital of Qutb Shahi sultanate and a primary economic centre of the Deccan, was not defended by a fortress. In this respect, it was similar to Surat which had been raided more than once by Shivaji, the Maratha king, in the second half of the seventeenth century. An invasion of Golconda would have left Hyderabad vulnerable to plunder by invading troops and the Mughals kept on securing funds from Golconda in the early 1680s by threatening invasions. As we will find in Chapters 1 and 4, when Mughals invaded Golconda the Qutb Shahi sultan retreated into the Golconda fort and left Hyderabad open for plunder by Mughal troops. From the Mughal perspective, the Deccan states would have appeared as soft targets who were not so capable in military prowess and from whom funds could be extorted by threatening an invasion or a raid. Let us now turn to the second sub–theme of this dissertation.

Co–opting the European companies within the imperial framework

Mughal expansion evoked fear among contemporaries in the Deccan. Since the 1570s, official circles in Portuguese Goa were apprehensive about the vacuum that had been created in south–western Deccan by the fall of Vijayanagara (1565). They were afraid it would result in a Mughal invasion in the region of Goa.[33] Their apprehension would only have been exacerbated by the Mughal conquest of Gujarat. Mughal–Portuguese relations were shaped by economic and religious factors at this point. The Mughal *subah* (province) of Gujarat had trading links with the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, while the Portuguese in Goa and Hormuz traded with Gujarat. An accommodation was necessary for the coastal vessels and annual fleets to the Persian Gulf to sail properly. The Mughals needed the silver pumped into the coastal economy by the Portuguese and the Portuguese needed the textiles produced in Gujarat to come from there to Goa before the clothes were shipped to Europe. The Mughal ships bound for the annual Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca sailed from Surat and the Portuguese issued *cartazes* or safe–conduct passes (in lieu of money) for ships in the Arabian Sea. The Mughals were not happy about his arrangement and the Portuguese had no intention of losing an opportunity to make money. The Mughal–Portuguese relations, argue Alam and

[33] Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'The Deccan Frontier and Mughal Expansion': 360.

Subrahmanyam, were as much a result of collaboration as of conflict, a consequence of the imbalance in the realities of maritime (and territorial) power.[34] Similar concerns in the form of co–opting the maritime forces of the Dutch, the English and the French East India companies also shaped Aurangzeb's decision-making in the late seventeenth-century, as we will see in Chapters 4 and 5.

Portuguese apprehension at looming Mughal expansion was not much different from the Dutch discourse on wars and invasions in South India in the seventeenth century, as we will find in this dissertation. As a rule, the European trading companies used to be wary of and jittery about Mughal wars, which could disrupt their normal commercial life and relative autonomy. My dissertation argues that Aurangzeb saw the VOC (and other Europeans) as a means of gaining access to the coast and resettling the economy of a region following wars of conquest. Finally, during long campaigns the European ports could also act as sources of military supplies, which brings us to the last sub–theme.

The logistics of war

During the seventeenth century a Mughal army on the march was nothing less than a city on the move. The emperor's huge entourage included his commanders, soldiers, court, performers and a mobile market comprising merchants and others who supplied basic commodities to the army. The Mughal army also tried to secure food and fodder from the areas that it marched across. Usually it maintained a balance between pastures that offered ample space for grazing for the animals and towns and villages that provided food. During his rebellion against the Mughal Empire, Malik Ambar of Ahmadnagar successfully used guerrilla warfare tactics such as destroying supply lines, plundering villages to reduce the chance of the enemy procuring food, and ambushing and harassing the opposing Mughal forces at a position that was most disadvantageous for them. This style of warfare, known as *bargir giri* in the Deccan,[35] was put into greater use by the Maratha leader Shivaji in the 1660s and later by his successors during Aurangzeb's campaigns. Its effects were greatest in the case of sieges, because such attacks could practically bring a besieging army on the brink of starvation. During Shah Jahan's campaigns both the Mughal and Ahmadnagar armies plundered the countryside – drought and a disastrous famine followed soon afterwards in the Gujarat and the Deccan, in 1630.

Crucially in the context of this study this style of warfare, could have devastating consequences for the combatants as well as the non–combatant population, particularly for agricultural centres and transit points for commerce, as we will see in Chapters 4 and 5. We now turn to the final theme in this introductory chapter.

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[34] Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'The Deccan Frontier and Mughal Expansion': 358, 360–361.

[35] For an overview of bargir giri and its use, see Gordon, *The Marathas 1600–1818*: 37–41, 44–45.

Discourse

The main genre of sources interrogated by this dissertation to research the economic impact of Aurangzeb's campaigns is the archive of the VOC, alongside translated Mughal chronicles, memoirs of a director of the French East India Company, and the records of the English East India Company (EIC). Broadly speaking the sources fall into two categories: European and indigenous. Their creations emerged from different concerns and were shaped by contrasting worldviews; they represent, in short, two very different kinds of archive. This is not to suggest that there were no nuances within either the European or Mughal sources. These were no monoliths or completely homogeneous productions. These two genres also differ in terms of contemporaneity. Viewed as a whole, the Dutch letters, reports on inspections of villages and visits to the Mughal court, figures on textiles shipped, prices, and appraisals of politico–military conditions amount to a running commentary on Aurangzeb's wars in the Deccan and South India. Conversely, the Mughal chronicles were mostly written after Aurangzeb's demise, and therefore somewhat anachronistic. First, let us briefly discuss these worldviews.

Contrasting worldviews: The Dutch versus the Mughals

The Dutch mindset towards 'Indians' (a malleable term) drew from a mishmash of ideas that they for the most part shared with their fellow Europeans: Eurocentrism, Christ–centricism (shaped in the case of the VOC by Dutch Reformed Protestantism), climatic determinism and proto–Orientalism. The Dutch Republic served as the reference point of all comparisons, including physical features of a land, and Christian western Europe was the yardstick for civilization.[36] Their narrow perspective is powerfully illustrated by the Dutch records, which contain multiple evaluations of governance in the Deccan and South India, with each example judged as either 'good' or 'bad', assessed exclusively in terms of their usefulness for VOC trade, and accompanied by rich hyperbole on the benefits of a Christian government and the despotic nature of rulers in India. Such observations were unarguably embryonic manifestations of the Orientalism which gained more currency in the nineteenth century, a fact that should always be borne in mind while reading Dutch representations of indigenous society. Another crucial feature of the Dutch discourse on South Asia, as James Tracy also argues, was the tendency of VOC officials to blame their own failure to achieve good trade results on Asian despotism in the person of Mughal officials or the emperor himself. The trope of the despot and its connections with trade is a common thread running throughout the VOC records.[37] This, too, is a point to bear in mind when analysing the economic impact of wars with the help of Dutch sources. However common these tropes are in the VOC archives, they are not ubiquitous, as evidenced by favourable opinions expressed by the Dutch about times

[36] For a summary of Dutch perceptions of India, see Markus Vink, *Mission to Madurai: Dutch Embassies to the Nayaka Court in the Seventeenth Century. Dutch Sources on South Asia, 1600–1825*, vol. 4 (New Delhi: Manohar, 2012): 35–37, 86–87, 89, 92. For a similar perspective, see Om Prakash, 'Dutch source material on Indian maritime history in the early modern period: an evaluation.' *Indian Historical Review* 8, 1–2 (1981–1982): 35–43.

[37] James Tracy, 'Asian despotism? Mughal government as seen from the Dutch East India Company factory in Surat.' *Journal of Early Modern History* 3, 3 (1999): 256–280.

that were not marked by wars or political instability and in which trade was good (as in Golconda in 1679, Chapter 4). Ultimately, the most important consideration shaping the discourse of the VOC was what they stood to gain or lose from any politico–military and economic development.

Indigenous perceptions of the Europeans were, in turn, also shaped by cultural prisms. Responses ranged from fear and love to disgust, reticence, suspicion and wonder. The European was viewed principally as a supplier of curious objects who was brave on water and cowardly on land, untrustworthy, devious, dirty and lacking in proper toilet training.[38] In accordance with the Mughal worldview, the rulers wished to represent themselves as emperors or literally 'master–kings' (*padshah*) with a divine mandate to rule fairly and justly, a stance that found expression in the Mughal policy that portrayed the state as a haven for immigrants from the Islamic world.[39] This worldview also shaped the general outlook of Mughal chronicles such as *Muntakhabu–l–Lubab*, *Maasir–i–Alamgiri* and *Tarikh–i–Dilkasha*, all of which were written as celebrations of Aurangzeb's reign. Even when an author chose to be less partisan, any work within this genre ultimately remained a creation which viewed the world from the foot of the throne. That was a fundamental point of distinction between Mughal chronicles and archives of European companies (in this case the VOC), the latter having been created, maintained and regularly updated with primary purpose of ensuring the smooth functioning of business operations.

Before wrapping up this introductory chapter, let us look at two examples from the sources during Aurangzeb's wars that illustrate the differences between genres and world–views: events of considerable importance to Europeans that the Mughals chose not to refer to in their chronicles, namely European embassies to Aurangzeb's camp after the Mughals had conquered Golconda in 1687; and a comparison of the ways in which Aurangzeb and a VOC official discussed similar phenomena but drew very different conclusions.

Johannes Bacherus's embassy: Missing from Mughal chronicles

The Dutch embassy of Johannes Bacherus to Aurangzeb in 1689 is, quite naturally, widely reported in the VOC correspondence from that year. However, Mughal chronicles such as *Maasir–i–Alamgiri* and *Tarikh–i–Dilkasha* are silent on this event. Aurangzeb's last secretary Inayatullah Khan Kashmiri urged Saqi Mustaid Khan to write the *Maasir–i–Alamagiri* after the emperor's demise in 1707. The author used the Mughal archives to prepare extracts of important events and finished his work in 1710.[40] This is an important point because the Mughal state archives would have kept copies of the firmans that they had issued to the

[38] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Taking Stock of the Franks: South Asian views of Europeans and Europe, 1500–1800.' *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 42, 1 (2005): 86–87, 96–97.

[39] Ali Anooshahr, 'On the Imperial Discourse of the Delhi Sultanate and Early Mughal India.' *Journal of Persianate Studies* 7 (2014): 157–176.

[40] Jadunath Sarkar transl., *Maasir–i–Alamgiri: A History of the Emperor Aurangzib-Alamgir (reign 1658–1707 A.D.)* (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, Reprint Edition 1990): v.

European companies. Bhimsen, the author of *Tarikh–i–Dilkasha*, was well–aware of the European presence in Coromandel, but he too chose to omit the visits made by European envoys to Aurangzeb's camp from the memoirs that he wrote. The absence of Europeans from Mughal chronicles is in line with the literary model that such 'foot of the throne' histories followed. An earlier example of this can be seen in the autobiography of the Mughal emperor Jahangir. The English ambassador Thomas Roe had visited his court and secured for the English East India Company (EIC) the right to trade in Surat. Although Jahangir mentioned the embassies that came to his court from the Safavid ruler of Persia, he never spoke of Thomas Roe.[41] In terms of representation in a celebratory Mughal chronicle, Europeans had almost no importance, while the Dutch records point out the significance that Europeans held in Aurangzeb's scheme of things during the wars, as we will see in chapter 4. In other words, the Europeans were important from a commercial perspective, but too insignificant from the perspective of Mughal chronicling of events.

The Deccan campaigns as a moment of decline: the Mughals versus the VOC

Both Mughal and Dutch sources describe the impact of Aurangzeb's campaigns, but they draw different conclusions. One of Aurangzeb's last letters, quoted by Gijs Kruijtzer, captures the sense of ruin that had gripped him at the end: 'There is no province or district where the grovelling infidels have not raised a tumult and since they are not chastised, they have established themselves everywhere. Most of the country has been rendered desolate and if any place is inhabited, the peasants there have probably come to terms with the "robbers".'[42] By the end of Aurangzeb's reign, the Dutch echoed a similar view: in a memoir addressed to his successor at the VOC, the departing director of the Dutch factory in Masulipatnam Hendrik van Oudshoorn van Zonnevelt writes that the current state of affairs was 'difficult, dangerous and changing'.[43]

Though these two different individuals speak of similar phenomena, we should try to understand what their statements meant and conveyed. For Aurangzeb, first and foremost, it implied a political defeat, a conceding of ground to opponents. Though he might have been genuinely affected by the terrible situation the peasantry found themselves in, he nonetheless identifies them as having acknowledged the authority of the 'robbers', the Marathas. For the VOC director in Masulipatnam, it meant unsafe roads, slack commerce in terms of poor sales of their imports and disturbances in the villages that produced textiles, uncertainty over the changing political dispensation in Hyderabad and a wait for conditions to improve again for their trade in northern Coromandel.

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[41] Richmond Barbour, 'Power and Distant Display: Early English 'Ambassadors' in Moghul India.' *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 61, ¾ (1998): 345–347, 349, 354–356, 361, 364, 366.

[42] Kruijtzer, *Xenophobia in Seventeenth–Century India*: 273.

[43] National Archives (NA) VOC 8826, Memoir of succession dated 11.08.1708 from Hendrik van Oudshoorn van Zonnevelt to Hendrik Grousius: f. 516.

Organization of the dissertation

This dissertation is divided into two parts. The first part, comprising three chapters, explores the features of port–hinterland complexes in northern, central and southern Coromandel. The second part, comprising two chapters, analyses the impact of Aurangzeb's campaigns in those regions.

In the first part we follow a schematic, grid–like pattern of connections between these ports and the inland regions to study the politico-economic landscapes of three port cities: Masulipatnam, Pulicat and Nagapatnam. The two fundamental reasons for choosing these locations are that these ports had a strong Dutch presence and that the archives of the VOC provide the major primary sources interrogated for this dissertation. Put simply, we use the Dutch narrative available for these ports as the lens and barometer to understand the port–hinterland complexes: Masulipatnam for northern Coromandel, Pulicat for central Coromandel and Nagapatnam for southern Coromandel. The conclusion to Part I analyses the differences in the features of these regions with respect to their ecology and political economy (particularly textile production), before developing a hypothesis on how each of these regions responded to wars and political instability and then closing with a few remarks on how they would react during long military campaigns in their respective regions.

The two chapters in Part II study the economic impact of the Mughal wars on Masulipatnam (Chapter 4) and Pulicat and Nagapatnam (Chapter 5). Both chapters start with an overview of the Mughal campaigns in the respective regions, before moving on to analyses of how the economy (particularly as it pertained to textile production) and agriculture fared during the years of the wars. Each of the chapters in Part II ends by putting to the test the hypothesis formulated in Part 1. Part II analyses the impact around Pulicat and Nagapatnam in a single chapter for two reasons: the siege of Gingee (1689–1698) placed both these ports within the radius of a Mughal army that mainly operated from central Coromandel, and the Dutch sources do not seem to offer enough information to justify separate chapters for these regions. Part II closes with a conclusion that summarizes the findings of this dissertation and makes proposals for what should come next, i.e. for the development of the research conducted thus far into a book.

Finally, due to the fact that throughout the five years of writing this thesis I had to learn the Dutch language, including its seventeenth–century palaeography, as well as to reconnoitre the layered structure of the VOC archive, this can only but offer a hopefully heartening start of research for future scholars (including myself). Indeed, I am very much aware that although much of this dissertation is based on unpublished archival material, the latter is just the tip of a huge iceberg – i.e. the top–layer of the decision–making process. As such, this dissertation should at least demonstrate the huge potentialities of the Dutch archive for the early–modern history of South Asia.