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

Chaudhuri, A.

# Part I
# Political and economic landscapes

# Chapter 1: Masulipatnam's political and economic landscape

This chapter discusses the political and economic landscape of Masulipatnam in four sections: ecology; the economy; politics; and response to political instability and wars. The focus is on the port city and the region's spatial axes, through the prism of the ecological conditions of the port, its maritime and overland connections, an analysis of the textile industry that sustained exports from the port, the way in which political authorities in the Golconda sultanate tried to tap the wealth generated by the trade into the kingdom, and the response of the region's political economy to political instability and wars. The last section of this chapter should be seen as a building block in an attempt to develop a hypothesis on how the economic centres in the Deccan and South India behaved during wars.

## 1.1 Ecology

Traffic of people, goods and commodities has continued since time immemorial across the Indian Ocean to and from the many ports studding the long and indented coastline of South Asia.[1] This dissertation deals with the Coromandel Coast, which forms a large part of the eastern littoral of the Indian subcontinent. Wide plains formed by the rivers Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna and Kaveri, intersperse the greater coastline and the stretch of this littoral from south of the Godavari was known as the Coromandel Coast; the region to the north was denoted by the rubric Gingelly coast.[2] Though the northern part of the eastern coast in Orissa receives good rainfall from the summer monsoon, around southern Orissa fluctuations mark a departure and lead us further south to the largest area of anomalous rainfall in the subcontinent: the dry south–east where rains grace the land from October to December, the months of the retreating north–east monsoon that predominates south of the Krishna delta.[3] The Coromandel was a generally inhospitable coast for shipping: its ports were either exposed to the full wrath of the ocean or sheltered behind the mouths of rivers and creeks where shifting channels and sandbars made navigation impossible for large vessels; small native oceanic crafts ferried goods to and from the vessels. Typical of the entire coastline, such characteristics ensured parity and precluded one port from having advantage over others, concludes Sinnappah Arasaratnam.[4]

If Surat grew to be the blessed port of the Mughal Empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Masulipatnam was its counterpart for the Qutb Shahi sultanate of Golconda. Located at the mouth of the river Krishna, Masulipatnam was part of a climatic transition zone. Around the Krishna delta one third of the rain falls in the last quarter of the

[1] The coastline of South Asia is defined in this dissertation as the long littoral that extends from modern–day south–western Pakistan across the Indian landmass to south–eastern Bangladesh.

[2] For these namings and their connotations see Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in Coromandel*: 1 and Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce*: 7.

[3] O.H.K. Spate and A.T.A. Learmonth, *India and Pakistan: A General and Regional Geography* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, First Indian Edition 1984): 728.

[4] Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce*: 7–8.

year while to the south of it rainfall is even less reliable. The deltas of Godavari and Krishna were (and remain) vulnerable to occasional severe floods and cyclones.[5] As Jos Gommans points out, the arid zone extends along the Eastern Ghats to the more humid Coromandel Coast and the extreme southern end of the subcontinent.[6] Intensive rice cultivation in the deltas, helped by tank irrigation, sought to neutralize the vagaries of the monsoon climate in this region. As we will see in detail in this chapter, the densely populated delta of the Godavari supported most of the textile production in the Golconda sultanate. So, what were the environs of Masulipatnam like in the seventeenth century?

A Dutch traveller named Wouter Schouten described it in the following manner:

> The city lies along the coast into a bay; a river flows landward which is very shallow during the dry season. Therefore tonis[7]and other vessels of shallow water make use of high water. The river flows considerably inland till the kingdom of Vijayanagara [see next footnote]. Many crocodiles swim in it, but there is also a dominance of fish. The ships are forced to anchor themselves about half a mile away from the coast in three or four fathoms of water. The city lies along a pretty area on a beautiful plain. To the west one looks at a low sand plain; to the northeast lies the Sury village with a great number of palm trees. It is a great city with many houses and they prosper through the rich trade, which is conducted there every day by all kinds of nations.[8]

Daniel Havart, a VOC official who served in northern Coromandel for 14 years, described Masulipatnam in the following manner:

> The city Masulipatnam is reasonably large, has some broad and many narrow streets, it is well–populated, the houses do not stand very close to each other… the city has two gates, one toll–plaza, many cotton fabrics, various prominent buildings, not many temples, it is inhabited by people of many nations … there is an unbearable heat from April to August, there are many marshes around, which at times produce an unpleasant smell and cause many diseases.[9]

---

[5] Spate and Learmonth, *India and Pakistan*: 735–736.

[6] Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*: 10–11, see map on page 11 which elucidates the argument that Masulipatnam was in a climate transition zone.

[7] For more on these traditional, two–mast vessels found on the coasts of Coromandel and Ceylon, see Jean Deloche, *Transport and Communications in India Prior to Steam Locomotion, vol. 2: Water Transport* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994): 185–186.

[8] Michael Breet and Marijke Barend–van Haeften, *De Oost–Indische voyagie van Wouter Schouten* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2003): 273. Seventeenth–century travellers tended to describe the domains in South India often after the Vijayanagara Empire, though this was anachronistic as the empire had considerably shrunk since the Battle of Talikota in 1565 and had been replaced by successor nayaka states (more on them in the following chapters).

[9] Daniel Havart, *Op–en ondergangh van Cormandel, Eerste deel* (Amsterdam: Jan Ten Hoorn, 1693): 12, 142.

*Floods, cyclones and fires*

Built on low–lying land in the middle of swamps, the port city was quite vulnerable to natural hazards, particularly cyclones in the Bay of Bengal during the north–east monsoon from October to January. The Batavia daily register records on 31 January 1633 how a flood in Masulipatnam and surrounding villages caused pestilence, and extraordinary drought and recurrent rains hindered VOC affairs (trade) in and around Masulipatnam.[10] This probably meant merchandise could not be sold or textiles could not be woven and brought to the port. At times raging fire also caused damage in Masulipatnam's hinterland. The Batavia daily register notes on 31 July 1663 that in May 1663 a fire destroyed 2000 houses in Golconda including one half of the castle where the king himself resided. A large part of Nagulvancha, a settlement situated between Masulipatnam and Golconda where the Dutch had a lodge, was similarly gutted, while in Narsapore, close to Palakollu, fire razed to the ground rice warehouses and other buildings.[11] In 1666 a severe fire broke out that destroyed property across more than half of Masulipatnam.[12] A storm in November 1670 grounded three of the four ships anchored at the Masulipatnam roadstead.[13] However, this was nothing compared to the havoc wreaked by another cyclone in October 1679.

Writing to his superior, the Dutch governor of Coromandel in Pulicat, Hendrik van Outhoorn, President of the Masulipatnam board, graphically captured its wrath. The Dutch in Masulipatnam evidently doubted they would live to see another day. Strong winds and rain put the Dutch lodge under nine feet water: pepper in the warehouses swelled to bursting point, the wall around the lodge collapsed, tiles and roofs were blown away, letters, account books were destroyed and furniture, cutlery, and sundry other items were lost. In short, the lodge was totally devastated. The whole city was gripped by a pestilential odour capable of causing sickness. Labourers were no longer present. Snapped from their anchors, some ships were lost on the sea, others were capsized and swept inland. With the sand dunes gone, the Dutch lodge was in danger of being inundated during high tide. The city's three bridges disappeared while the bankshall warehouses to the north–east and south of the Dutch lodge were washed away by the sea. Further inland in the village on the river Wintera and the island of Eiduw, man and beast alike were washed away and the dead were spread all across the land. Gardens were stripped of trees. The English lodge, sheltered as it was by surrounding houses, suffered less damage, writes Outhoorn.[14] A little more than eight years later, in 1687,

---

[10] H.T. Colenbrander ed., *Dagh–Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandts-India Anno 1631–1634* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1898): 144.

[11] M.A. van der Chijs ed., *Dagh–Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandts–India Anno 1663* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff; Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1891): 367.

[12] Havart, *Op–en ondergangh van Cormandel*, *Eerste deel*: 194.

[13] Lotika Varadarajan transl., *India in the 17th Century (Social, Economic and Political) Memoirs of Francois Martin (1670–1674), Volume I, Part I* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1981): 1–2.

[14] NA VOC 1343, Letter dated 28.10.1679 from Hendrik van Outhoorn in Masulipatnam to Jacques Caulier, governor and director of the Coromandel Coast in Pulicat: f. 492r.–f. 493v.

tragedy struck Masulipatnam yet again. A fire started between the big and small gates of the city. Fanned by a fierce, hot wind from the north–west it spread along the market to the small gate in front of it and the beach, affecting the nearby Dutch lodge. The blaze engulfed most of the city, including the wealthiest parts where the foremost merchants lived, destroying their houses and merchandise. The house of the interpreter of the sultan of Golconda was also razed to the ground. The damage was 'not at all small', writes Havart.[15]

In sum: Masulipatnam was not a natural harbour, it suffered from an unhealthy climate that caused sickness and was prone to occasional but terrible fires and the vagaries of monsoon cyclones. Yet it was one of the principal marts of the Indian Ocean world in the seventeenth century. Why? An analysis of the economic and political frameworks that sustained the port city might give us clues. Let us now turn to that.

### 1.2 The economy

*Masulipatnam and the Dakshinapatha*

Masulipatnam was located at one end of the *Dakshinapatha*, one of India's main long-distance arteries connecting northern India through Malwa and the Deccan plateau to the Carnatic towards the Bay of Bengal and via its side roads the eastern littoral with its western counterpart. This connection took the form of roads from the political capitals to the ports, such as the Chaul–Ahmadnagar, Dabhol–Bijapur, Goa–Vijayanagara and of course, Golconda–Masulipatnam routes.[16] From ancient times, ports along the western and eastern littorals were the terminal points of overland routes that ran through the Deccan. These commercial arteries connected ecologically diverse regions and their economic produce with maritime outlets of the Indian Ocean. Agriculture, religious places and political centres helped stabilize the networks of routes in the Deccan.

Agriculture was a crucial connector. Crops such as cotton and rice could be grown best in specific regions because of local ecological conditions. Cotton was grown in the west of the Deccan, to the south of Aurangabad and from Kolhapur to Gulbarga via Bijapur. Rice was a major crop on the fertile coastal plains of Konkan, Kanara and Malabar in the west, and the riverine deltas of Godavari, Krishna and Kaveri in the east. We can reasonably assume that inland trade in these agricultural products had long been a feature of the Deccan economy. Cotton had to be transported to the weaving villages from where they were grown. Once woven, the textiles were taken to the nearest port or ports for export. As we shall see in this chapter, raw cotton was transported from the west of the Deccan to the Godavari delta, while salt from mines near the coast was taken to central and northern India. This was one of the principal connections that supported Masulipatnam. In times of low supplies, rice was bought in areas that had not experienced crop failures. Chapters 3 and 5 of this dissertation show that the Kaveri delta was known for its high food security, a factor that became increasingly

[15] Havart, *Op–en ondergangh van Cormandel*, *Eerste deel*: 221.
[16] Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*: 17–20, the maps on 18 and 19 point out the arterial nature of the Dakshinapatha.

important during Aurangzeb's southern campaigns when scarcity was created by wars and poor monsoons.

Religious establishments and places of pilgrimage also served as nodal points for routes in the Deccan. In his archaeological analysis of the routes of the Deccan and southern peninsula, Dilip K. Chakravarti draws on data on the density of Buddhist religious settlements to argue that in ancient times the Andhra coast was the terminal point of several trade routes, particularly the ones coming from the direction of Paithan on the upper reaches of the river Godavari and the Ganga plain through Vidarbha (modern Nagpur) and South Kosala (also known as Gondwana, an area which roughly corresponds with the western part of Chhattisgarh and areas of Madhya Pradesh that adjoin it). Unsurprisingly these routes endowed the Andhra coastline with ancient ports.[17] As we will see in Chapters 2 and 3, temple towns were important junctions in central and southern Coromandel. Being religious centres, they drew visitors throughout the year as well as on special occasions. Temple towns, as Chapter 2 shows, also supported textile production by housing weavers.

Political centres, either state capitals or forts that were seats of provincial governors, also acted as nodal points and stabilized overland commercial networks. Jean Deloche argues that a trade route existed that stretched from Bharuch in western India to the deltas of Godavari and Krishna, by way of Paithan and Ter. It is uncertain what happened to this route through the ages. However, certain nodal points helped stabilize this network from the fourteenth century onwards: the fort of Daulatabad, which became the capital of the Delhi Sultanate in 1339 (replaced by Aurangabad in the seventeenth century under the Mughals); and Golconda, which became the seat of the Qutb Shahi sultanate in 1512 (replaced as capital later that century by Hyderabad, across the river Musi). The main traversal route terminated in Masulipatnam, which emerged as the principal outlet of the Deccan, argues Deloche.[18] In this context, let us recall two points introduced in the introduction. During the southern campaigns Aurangzeb's camp resembled a city, and it had all the demands of a city. That meant a regular presence of merchants in the royal camp. We can only conjecture about the extent to which Aurangzeb's camp functioned as a nodal point for commercial routes in the west of the Deccan, because the primary sources interrogated for the dissertation offer incomplete information on this matter. The need to control the Masulipatnam–Hyderabad commercial arc and connect it with trade routes to Surat under Mughal authority was one of the reasons behind Aurangzeb's determination to annex Golconda. This overland arc, as we will see, was particularly vulnerable to warfare and political instability.

Masulipatnam's connections with Hyderabad and the west of the Deccan were important for its growth. We will look in some detail at this commercial arc later in this

[17] Dilip K. Chakrabarti, *The Ancient Routes of the Deccan and the Southern Peninsula* (New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2010): 126.
[18] Jean Deloche, *Transport and Communications in India Prior to Steam Locomotion, vol. 1, Land Transport* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993): 62–65.

chapter. Let us now look at land and water transport in this part of the Deccan and Coromandel.

*Means of transport along the Dakshinapatha*

*Land transport*

Jean Deloche argues that in the Indian subcontinent natural obstacles forced land transit to move along zones of least resistance and that certain valleys channelled trade from an early date and have retained their importance. However, the problems for land transport multiplied in low–lying areas crossed by rivers such as the deltas of the Godavari, the Krishna, the Kaveri and the Indus, with their innumerable distributaries. Oxen were the primary mode of transport on the plateaus and plains, including the deltas of Godavari and Krishna. Their qualities, requirements and efficiency differed from region to region. In the rice–growing deltaic plains (western coast, Bengal or Assam) only mediocre animals were raised since pastures were inadequate. In areas of low rainfall, good breeds were needed for draught and porterage. Oxen from Ongole and Nellore in the south were powerful and could pull heavy loads, while those originating in Mysore were hardy and capable of making long journeys with moderate loads. The banjaras or grain carriers who traded with the Deccan preferred the oxen from Malwa which were sturdy and tough but not swift.

*Banjaras* (also known as *Birinjari*, *Lambadi* and *Lambani*, depending on the region) were translocal and regional groups of itinerant cattle breeders whose livelihood depended on transporting goods from one place to another. During wars *banjaras* were the suppliers to armies because they could transport basic food products such as grain, salt and sugar over long distances from centres of production to those of consumption. They ensured the transport of indispensable goods throughout the subcontinent, among different and complementary economic zones (for instance, cotton from the west of the Deccan to the Godavari delta). They brought salt from the coast to the interior and returned with grains. These traders also transported more diversified products such as processed foodstuffs and manufactured goods.[19]

Jean–Baptiste Tavernier, a French traveller who visited India in the seventeenth century, wrote that wheeled carriages did not run between Masulipatnam and Golconda since the roads were too much interrupted by high mountains, tanks (irrigation reservoirs) and rivers, and there were many narrow and unnavigable passes. With great difficulty Tavernier took just such a carriage to the diamond mines, but having to disassemble it when conditions required it. Tavernier wrote that wheeled carriages did not travel between Golconda and Cape Comorin either. While chariots were a common mode of transport elsewhere in the subcontinent, in the Deccan and south India palanquins were used to carry men easily, quickly and cheaply. Having sailed to Masulipatnam from Hormuz, Tavernier and

[19] Deloche, *Transport and Communications in India, Land Transport*: 5, 7, 204, 241, 243, 248–249, 252, 257–258.

his party bought a palanquin, three horses and six oxen to carry themselves, while their servants travelled on foot.[20] Products meant for long–distance commerce were transported on pack animals to the nearest port and then conveyed to their destinations via boat. The pace of commercial land traffic rarely exceeded 20 km a day, regardless of the mode of transport. Using accounts of seventeenth–century travellers, Deloche estimates how long it would have taken to travel some distances, e.g., at a daily rough range of 25 km travellers would travel the distance of 920 km from Hyderabad to Surat in about 36 days and they would take 22 days to cover 665 km from Hyderabad to Goa at a rate of roughly 30 km per day.[21] Pieter van Den Broecke, a Dutchman who travelled by land from Surat to Hyderabad in 1617, started his journey from Surat on 31 October, 1617 and reached Golconda on 8 December, 1617. He rested for a day and went to Hyderabad on 10 December, 1617.[22] So, it took him about forty days to travel between Surat and Hyderabad.

*Water transport*

Goods were transported on pack animals to near the ports and then taken on by boat to their shipment centres, because apart from on the littoral plains the rivers of the Deccan were unsuitable for communication. The upper reaches of the rivers Godavari and Krishna were unnavigable, but flat–bottomed barges could sail on the lower courses of these rivers, and although large deposits of sand and silt at the mouth of the Krishna made its deltas difficult navigation, one of its branches was less threatened by siltation and it became the site for Masulipatnam. Low–tonnage crafts could ply to and from the port to the sea where the ocean-going vessels were anchored. The river Godavari offered better geographical conditions than the Krishna, and the deltas of the Godavari were navigable until silting destroyed them in the nineteenth century. The first trading settlements that the English East India Company established in northern Coromandel were situated in the deltas of the Godavari–Madapollam, the Bendamurlanka and the Injaramu. The shipyard at Narsapore was yet more evidence of the navigability of the Godavari's lower reaches. Located 12 km inland, Narsapore was an important centre for building and repairing ships 300 to 400 tonnes in weight.[23]

Nevertheless, water transport was not a feasible option in all parts of the Godavari delta: Palakollu and Draksharama, two villages in the Godavari delta that supplied textiles to the VOC in Masulipatnam would first transport their goods on flat–bottomed boats to nearby villages, where they would be loaded onto bullocks which carried them on to Masulipatnam.

---

[20] Valentine Ball transl., and William Crooke ed., *Travels in India by Jean–Baptiste Tavernier, vol. 1*. Second Edition (London: Humphrey Milford, 1925): 141–142, 207.

[21] Deloche, *Transport and Communications in India, Land Transport*: 261–262, 285.

[22] W. Ph. Coolhas ed., *Pieter van Den Broecke in Azie, vol. 1* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962): 136, 156. A few places have still survived on the routes sustained by the eastern road from Hyderabad to Masulipatnam. Vijaywada, for example, is now the capital city of Andhra Pradesh and an important link in the railway network to Chennai (Madras). Travellers from northern or southern India can board trains to Masulipatnam from there.

[23] Deloche, *Transport and Communications in India*, *Water Transport*: 32–33, 35, 106–107.

Inland, those wishing to transport of goods depended on pack animals managed by *banjaras* and other merchants in the commercial arc to the west of Masulipatnam.

Control of the highways of communication was crucial to the Mughal success story that connected the heartlands of the empire with Central Asia and the Indian Ocean. The rise of the Qutb Shahi dynasty and Masulipatnam had similar characteristics.

*Golconda–Hyderabad and Masulipatnam: Their origins and rise*

The Qutb Shahi dynasty of Golconda was founded by Quli Qutb–ul Mulk, who had come to India with traders of horses in the fifteenth century. He had been employed in the administration of the Bahmani sultanate in northern Deccan as the *tarafdar* (governor) of Telangana and the fort of Golconda had been added to his jagirs. Like his other counterparts in the Bahmani administration at this juncture, Qutb–ul Mulk had a free hand, and by the time he died in 1543, the kingdom of Golconda had become independent of Bahmani control. Nonetheless, Qutb–ul Mulk did not formally declare his kingship. A royal genealogy of the Qutb Shahi sultans does not use the term 'Qutb Shah' for Qutb–ul Mulk. The rulers who followed him were Jamshid (1543–1550), Subhan (1550), Ibrahim Qutb Shah (1550–1580), Muhammed Quli Qutb Shah (1580–1612), Muhammed Qutb Shah (1612–1626), Abdullah Qutb Shah (1626–1672) and lastly Abul Hasan Qutb Shah (1672–1687), whose reign saw the annexation of Golconda by the Mughal Empire. Under Ibrahim Qutb Shah, Golconda witnessed a continual influx of people from Turkestan, Arabia, Khurasan and adjacent lands. They included travellers, traders, calligraphers, architects, *ulema* (Muslim theologians, literally 'learned in Arabic') and adventurers. The fort of Golconda did not have enough space to accommodate the new arrivals and it became necessary to expand its fortifications beyond the walls. The need for living space forced Ibrahim to plan a new city, Hyderabad, across the river Musi. It was completed by Ibrahim Qutb Shah's son Muhammed Quli Qutb Shah. [24]

Founded as a settlement by Arab traders in the fourteenth century, Masulipatnam was occupied by the Bahmani sultans in the late fifteenth–century. Until the mid–sixteenth century the region between the mouths of Godavari and Krishna, where Masulipatnam was situated, changing hands several times between the Vijayanagara Empire, the Golconda sultanate and the Gajapati kingdom of Orissa. There is hardly any evidence of oceanic trade directly from Masulipatnam in the early sixteenth century, and as late as the mid–sixteenth century Masulipatnam supplied textiles to other ports along the coast to be shipped across the sea. Portuguese records from 1540s refer to the port as a haven for 'renegade' Portuguese (meaning those traders who operated on their own outside the authority of the Estado da India in Goa). The Portuguese chronicler Barros described it as a source of white and painted textiles. Ibrahim Qutb Shah (1550–1580) brought it under his rule in the 1560s and forged close links between Golconda and Masulipatnam which endured for the next century and a

[24] H. K. Sherwani, *History of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1974): vii–xiii, 2–3, 6–9, 14–16, 199–202.

half. Contemporaneous Portuguese records point to the rapid rise of Masulipatnam from the 1560s. In the 1570s and 1580s ships from Masulipatnam sailed to Aceh, the ports in the Malay Peninsula, Pegu, Arakan, and along the coast to Orissa. Regulations governing the Goa customs house mention the textiles coming from Masulipatnam and the duties to be charged on them. Around 1590 Masulipatnam started exploring links with the Red Sea and Mecca and the Estado da India and Golconda began to negotiate to prevent any possible Portuguese offensive against Golconda shipping in the Arabian Sea. An agreement reached around 1600 allowed a Portuguese captain to stay in Masulipatnam and collect passes for the vessels sailing to the Red Sea. Textiles from northern Coromandel had a market in the Middle East. Annually in late–December or early January a ship would set sail from here to the Red Sea, which carried goods of the sultan, his nobles and major merchants, rice to be distributed as alms in Mecca as well as large numbers of Hajj pilgrims who carried their own wares to fund their journeys.[25] The stability and prosperity in the Qutb Shahi sultanate of Golconda had provided Masulipatnam with a powerful springboard from which to expand, we may argue that architectural expression in the Golconda sultanate celebrated this connection with Masulipatnam. The main attraction of Hyderabad was the Char Minar and four roads jutted out of it. The eastern road from it led to the ports of the eastern coast, including Masulipatnam.

*The road from Masulipatnam to Golconda and rural settlements*

The location of human settlements and the routes taken by roads have a close correlation. In the seventeenth century the main route between Hyderabad and Masulipatnam, particularly the deltas of the Godavari and Krishna, passed through one of the most densely populated regions of the Indian subcontinent. Production centres for the textile industry – a major source of exports – surrounded Masulipatnam and fed into it (textile production in northern Coromandel will be explored more thoroughly later in this chapter). Descriptions of routes have survived in the itineraries of seventeenth-century travellers who visited Golconda. By far the most detailed description of roads from Masulipatnam to Golconda and Hyderabad is provided by Daniel Havart in his *Op–en Ondergangh van Cormandel*. Havart enlists about 73 settlements en route from Masulipatnam to Golconda/Hyderabad. We must bear in mind that these were only those places that featured on a route thronging with travellers from Masulipatnam. Off the beaten track there were more, about which we only have very limited knowledge. The road from Masulipatnam to Golconda passed the Eastern Ghats near Vijayawada and further east bypassing Kondapalli and Nagulvancha, where the Dutch had a factory, towards Hyderabad and Golconda.

Extensive tank irrigation and dikes facilitated agriculture in the countryside. The rural landscape was dominated by the cultivation of *nely* rice, followed by millets, cotton and some tobacco. There were also orchards and *suri*, a drink extracted from palm trees, was produced.

[25] Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*: 148–151, 154, 157–158.

The cotton grown in this region, was not used for weaving textiles that were exported from Masulipatnam, as explored in greater detail later in this chapter. The settlements that a seventeenth-century traveller would encounter along this route were mainly small villages, some of which had weekly or bi–weekly markets and some of which had inns that served as rest houses for travellers and merchants. In addition, there were settlements known as a *groot dorp* (Dutch: literally 'large village') mentioned in Havart's travelogue between Masulipatnam and Hyderabad and Golconda. The *groot dorp* (the term is a typical feature of VOC discourse on the rural landscape and its economic functions) was a village that could be said to have had a small, fixed and regulated market which served as a nodal point for marketing economic produce from nearby villages. Havart mentions three settlements along this route that qualified as a *groot dorp*: Vijaywada, Pennegentspoel and Nagulvancha. The second and third served as markets for textiles woven in the surrounding villages around. [26] Although the aforementioned places were just villages, they were slightly more sophisticated than other villages as markets for textiles produced in the surrounding region and we may guess it was this economic function which led to the adjective 'large' being used in their case. A related term from the VOC vocabulary can be seen later in the context of central and southern Coromandel: there we come across not only the *groot dorp*, but also the *grote coopstadt*, a large market town where the Dutch could procure textiles.

As the chief factory of the VOC in northern Coromandel, Masulipatnam enjoyed a special status and in terms of authority on the coast the president of the Masulipatnam board was second only to the governor in Pulicat and later in Nagapatnam. Palakollu, Narsapur, Madapallam, Draksharama, Golepalam were other places in the Godavari delta that had a Dutch lodge. Moving further inland, the VOC had a factory in Nagulvancha, located off the river Musi, and in 1662 they established a lodge in Golconda itself to look after its trade there. The VOC's trading interests in the Masulipatnam–Golconda hinterland were clearly quite extensive. Except on the subcontinent's south–western coast Malabar, the Dutch were, Winius and Vink argue, a pacified merchant–warrior in India. Nonetheless, the Dutch tended to jealously protect the trading interests which they had won over the course of the seventeenth century in the Masulipatnam–Golconda hinterland. The occasional clashes of the VOC with local powers, machinations at the Golconda court, their insistence and efforts, whenever possible, to dissuade the indigenous authorities from awarding concessions to their European rivals, were all part of their strategy to stay ahead in the commercial race.

*Seventeenth–century Masulipatnam: A regional entrepot*

Seventeenth–century Masulipatnam must have been something of a 'celebrity port', given that both travelogues and records of the European companies discuss it at length. The Qutb Shahi sultanate helped Masulipatnam acquire an attribute of inter–regional linkage, a feature

[26] For a description of the roads and rural landscape along the route from Masulipatnam to Golconda, see Havart, *Op–en ondergangh van Cormandel*, *Twede deel*: 4–8, 11–19, 65–84, 91–95.

reflected in the trading connections with Mokha, Muscat, Basra, Bandar Abbas, Malabar, Ceylon, Maldives, Bengal, Arakan, Pegu, Tenasserim, the Malay coast, Aceh and Bantam. Europeans, argues Arasaratnam, found this feature of the port quite attractive.[27] The operations of the VOC also bore the mark of Masulipatnam's inter–regional character. Masulipatnam was not only a premier export outlet for the textiles of the Coromandel Coast that the Dutch bartered for spices in South–East Asia, but also a redistributive outlet for imports by Dutch and non–Dutch merchants into the coast. Observations made by the Dutchman Pieter van Den Broecke in the early seventeenth century provide a case in point. Travelling from Surat to Masulipatnam, Van Den Broecke encountered a caravan of Arab and Armenian merchants near a village named Rasuidi (perhaps Rajarur). Laden with spices, porcelain and other goods, the caravan was coming from Hyderabad and travelling to Surat.[28] The commodities shipped by this caravan must have been brought to Hyderabad from Masulipatnam. Although we will see more instances of such overland trade westwards from Masulipatnam later in this chapter that point to Masulipatnam's role of a regional emporium, it is extremely difficult to calculate the volume of trade that passed westwards from Masulipatnam via Hyderabad.

The Dutch lodge stood close to the sultan's toll–plaza in Masulipatnam. Built of thin palm–tree planks and coated with lime, its outward appearance was unremarkable although the residences of the president and his deputy were well–constructed, strong and beautiful in the manner of the land (Deccan). Daniel Havart describes the lodge as being unable to accommodate all its servants since many of them were married, so eight to ten families lived outside. The lodge had separate warehouses for storing textiles, oil, spices, copper, tin, lead and other goods. Once they were ready to be shipped, textiles were kept in three big warehouses. The lodge also had separate living quarters for other VOC servants such as the doctor and surgeons. Lodge security was handled by a corporal and his men. The soldiers were housed in two rooms, and one room was earmarked for the corporal. Soldiers hired inland had separate places inside the lodge, as Havart writes,[29] though we have no idea where soldiers hired from elsewhere in Asia were housed. In a letter to the governor-general Joannes Camphuis in Batavia, Laurens Pit writes from Masulipatnam in 1686 that the employees included Macassarese, Buginese and Baliers soldiers.[30]

As second–in–command to the Dutch governor of the Coromandel Coast, the president of the Masulipatnam board was the chief of Dutch factories in northern Coromandel and had the responsibility of managing the departure of laden ships at the right

---

[27] Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce*: 15–16.
[28] W. Ph. Coolhas ed., *Pieter van Den Broecke in Azie, vol. 1* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962): 152.
[29] Havart, *Op–en ondergangh van Cormandel*, *Eerste deel:* 143–145.
[30] NA VOC 1423, Letter dated 07.09.1686 from Laurens Pit in Masulipatnam to Joannes Camphuis, governor–general in Batavia: f. 218r.

time for Batavia, Ceylon, Surat, Persia and the Netherlands.[31] Shipping in the Indian Ocean depended on the season of monsoon winds, the south–west monsoon (June, July and August) and the north–east monsoon (October, November, December). Ships could sail the year round in the Bay of Bengal. Dutch ships that departed from Batavia early in the year could make a return trip by November, and sailings between Coromandel, Ceylon and Batavia were possible throughout the year. The reason behind this was the cargo – cinnamon and textiles – were almost always available.[32] The production of textiles, as we will see in this chapter, was a full–time occupation in Coromandel and they were available in profusion – as long as the producing regions had not been ravaged by warfare or political disturbance.

By the 1660s the VOC had systematized their knowledge of sailing conditions in the Bay of Bengal and developed a definitive schedule for their factories in Coromandel. Ships travelling from Coromandel to Batavia sailed no later than 7 October and avoided sailing from that date to the middle of January (this was due to the weather conditions, the onset of north–east monsoon in October was often accompanied by cyclones in the Bay of Bengal). Ships sailing to Pegu and Siriam in mainland South-East Asia usually departed from Pulicat between 15 August and 1 September, and at the latest by 10 September. They returned to Coromandel by 10 or 15 October. Usually, the VOC did not leave their ships in the roadstead of Coromandel after the first week of October. They were sent to either Colombo or Batavia. Ships sailed to Pegu (and Siriam) again at the end of the north–east monsoon, from mid–January to mid–February. The return voyage from Siriam had to begin before 22 March. Mid–January was the time of year when ships sailed to Persia.[33]

The rhythm of correspondence between VOC establishments in Coromandel and Batavia substantiates the argument that there was year–round shipping between these regions. Letters from Masulipatnam, Pulicat and Nagapatnam in May usually reached Batavia in July, while those sent in July arrived in September. Letters written and sent earlier or later in the year spent similar periods in transit. The annual fleet for the Netherlands departed Coromandel either in late December or early January. This, of course, was a particularly long voyage.

Shipping lists from 1680–1685 and prepared by the VOC provide an idea of the sailings to and from this port – these are the earliest shipping lists available. They only include non–Dutch European and indigenous ships. Despite the absence of Dutch sailings, the lists provide us with an insight into the connections and trade of Masulipatnam.

---

[31] Havart, *Op–en ondergangh van Cormandel*, *Eerste deel*: 146–147.
[32] Robert Parthesius, *Dutch Ships in Tropical Waters: The Development of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) Shipping Network in Asia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010): 118–119.
[33] Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce*: 36.

Table 1.1 Arrivals at and departures from Masulipatnam, 1681–1686[34]

| Year | Arrivals | Departures |
|---|---|---|
| 1681–1682 | Bengal, Malacca, Arakan, Tenasserim, Madras, Manila, Mocha | Mecca, Arakan, Persia, Aceh, Pegu, Tenasserim, Bengal |
| 1683–1684 | Aceh, Bengal, Arakan, Siam, Pegu, Madras, Tenasserim, Borneo via Batavia | Tenasserim, England, Goa, Madras, Arakan, Aceh, Persia, Bengal, Siam |
| 1685–1686 | Bengal, Aceh, Pegu, Malacca, Siam, Surat, Bimilipatnam, Vishakhapatnam, Conare, Puremarka, | Persia, Madras, England (possibly), Aceh, Siam, Tenasserim, Vishakhapatnam, Bengal, Arakan |

The most frequent departure points or destinations are Bengal, Pegu, Siam and Tenasserim. The trade to and from Bengal was most significant, and ships owned by the English East India Company, private English traders, and Hindu and Muslim merchants all sailed to and from Bengal. While rice, sugar and silk were principal imports from Bengal, we find only limited evidence of exports to Bengal – tin and textiles are occasionally listed as export goods to the region. Imports from Pegu, Siam and Tenasserim mainly comprised elephants, ivory, wax, pickles, red pots, tin, porcelain and rice. Exports to these regions of mainland South–East Asia were mainly textiles and yarn, and at times asafetida, *paposh* (foot mats / doormats), rosewater and wine. Ships belonging to the Qutb Shahi sultan, the kings of Siam and Tenasserim as well as private traders sailed on this route.

Masulipatnam's principal trading partner in maritime South–East Asia was Aceh. The major exports from Masulipatnam were iron, steel, rice, spices, pots and clothes, and returning ships from Aceh would mainly carry gold and *harpuijs* (a mixture of resins, linseed oil and fat that guarded the masts of ships against termites and rot). The trade with Manila does not appear to have been significant: only one merchant operated on this route in this period. As these lists show, in the 1681–1684 period most sailings along the Coromandel Coast were to and from Madras, although from time to time a Danish ship features as having either departed from or being en route to Tranquebar. Sporadic shipping from western India suggests that the overland route from Masulipatnam was more useful in this context. A single Portuguese merchant operated on the route to Goa and one other ship arrived from Surat during this five–year period (1681–1686). Masulipatnam shipping sailed to Persia, Mocha and Mecca in the Middle East. The ships of the Qutb Shahi sultan used to sail to and from Mecca. Exports to Persia consisted of clothes, iron, steel and sugar, while imports included horses,

[34] Shipping lists tabulated by the author from the following: NA VOC 1378, f. 1801r.–f. 1806r., NA VOC 1398, f. 379r.–f. 383r., NA VOC 1429, f. 1175r.–f. 1177v.

rosewater, wine, raisins, dates, coffee and tobacco. Imports from Mocha included clothing, horses, tobacco and rosewater. Exports to Mecca included iron, spiaulter (an alloy of lead and tin), tin and clothing.

Of European traders whose ships feature in these lists, the English dominated. English East India Company ships mostly carried precious metals, ivory and sandalwood from South–East Asia to Masulipatnam, while private English merchant ships brought mainly rice, sugar and silk from Bengal. A major component of the coastal traffic from other parts of the Coromandel Coast in 1686 was rice. In times of inflation caused by a poor monsoon or wars, the trade in rice along the Coromandel Coast assumed a greater importance in keeping the Coromandel ports well–stocked (for more on rice trade in Bay of Bengal, see Chapter 2). In 1686, the Dutch governor of Coromandel, Laurens Pit, wrote to the governor–general Joannes Camphuis in Batavia telling him that due to a Mughal invasion and high prices imposed by the head of the army, the price for eight pounds of rice had risen to one rupee in and around Golconda. Commodities had become very expensive.[35] The total number of ships that arrived at and departed from Masulipatnam shows a progressive decline during these five years. While in 1681–1682, 41 ships called in at the Masulipatnam roads and 42 departed from the port, in 1683–1684 those numbers had declined to 36 and 32 respectively. By 1685–1686 they had dropped even further, to 33 arriving and just 15 departing. Nevertheless, these itineraries give us some idea of the kind of trade passing through Masulipatnam.

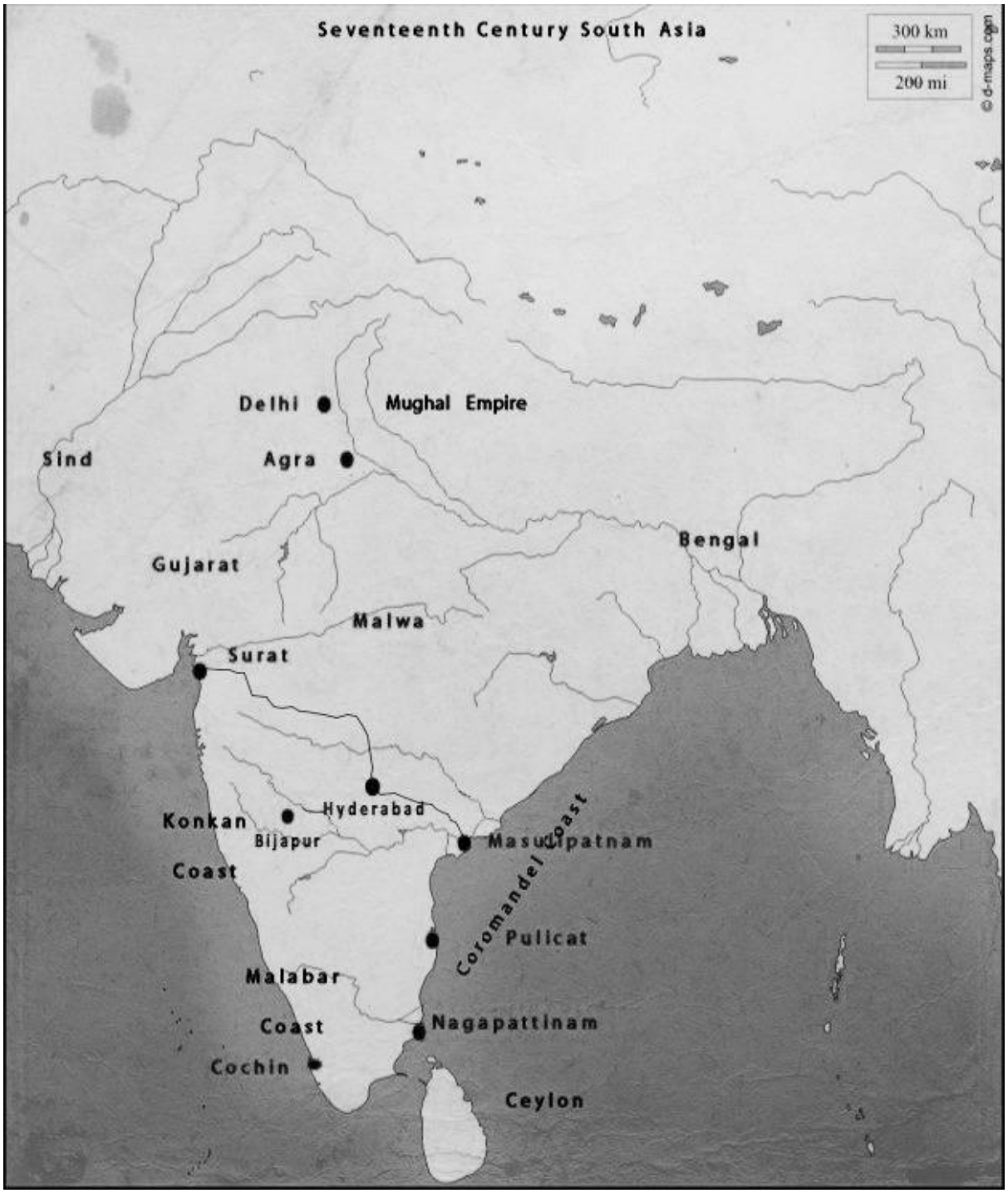
So far, we have focused our attention on the port city of Masulipatnam, detailing its climate and economic connections across the sea and even hinting at is connections overland to western and central India. The fact that this zone had such a redistributive character is bound to make us curious about the economic picture of the rural area between Masulipatnam and Golconda, the primary source of that major export commodity, textiles.

[35] NA VOC 1423, Letter dated 07.09.1686 from Laurens Pit in Masulipatnam to Joannes Camphuis, governor–general in Batavia: f. 216r.

Figure 1.1: Seventeenth–century Masulipatnam[36]


[36] Original of this view of Masulipatnam and its environs from Philippus Baldaeus, *Nauwkeurige beschryving van Malabar en Choromandel* (Amsterdam: Johannes Janssonius van Waasberge en Johannes van Someren, 1672). It was also reproduced in K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 117.

Map 1.1 The major inland commercial arc of Masulipatnam in the seventeenth century which stretched from the port–city through Hyderabad to Surat on the west coast of the Deccan[37]




[37] Map drawn by Saikat Mukherjee with inputs from the author.

*Textile production process in northern Coromandel*

A problem that we will encounter in this chapter and others when while discussing the production line of textiles in Coromandel is the paucity of information for each stage of production of textiles. Nonetheless, let us now explore some aspects of this process in the context of northern Coromandel as far as is possible. We will discuss the following: Why cotton grown in the Andhra delta was not used; what were the sources of cotton that fed the looms of northern Coromandel; what were the major varieties of textiles woven in North Coromandel; what was the composition of the population in the textile-weaving villages of the Godavari delta?

As noted in the introduction, cotton was grown along two belts in the west of the Deccan: in the region to the south of Aurangabad and north of the river Godavari, and from Kolhapur across Bijapur to Gulbarga. After harvest, cotton was thoroughly cleaned to make it ready for transportation and weaving. This comprised two stages: first the cotton lint was separated from the seed and then the lint was cleaned once more to remove dirt, twigs, leaves and other foreign matter. Seeds were always removed to make the cotton as light as possible before it was transported. Often women in peasant families (or cotton cultivating families) separated the lint from the seed during lull periods of the day, week or year, but cotton pickers also cleaned the cotton which they had received as wages for picking cotton. Both these groups sold the cleaned cotton to merchants and ocassionally they performed the second, finer cleaning and spun it into yarn themselves. Then the yarn was sold to merchants or given to weavers for being manufactured into cloth. Cotton was also sold raw to merchants who employed women to have it cleaned or sold it in uncleaned state to the spinners of yarn.[38]

Dirt, twigs and other foreign matter often stuck to cotton during picking, the first stage of cleaning and even transport. Therefore, the second and finer cleaning which involved removing dirt, twigs and leaves was usually done at a place as close as possible to where spinning took place because cotton tended to attract dirt during handling.[39] As we will see, the most probable source of cotton for the textile industry of the Godavari delta in the seventeenth century was the region between Aurangabad and Nanded in the west of the Deccan (see Map 1.2 later in this chapter). So, we may safely assume that after the first stage of cleaning cotton was transported by *banjaras* from the aforementioned region to the Godavari delta and the second stage of finer cleaning was done there after cotton had been bought by merchants.

*Why was Andhra cotton not used?*

---

[38] Prasannan Parthasarathi, *The Transition to a Colonial Economy: Weavers, Merchants and Kings in South India 1720–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 54.
[39] Parthasarathi, *The Transition to a Colonial Economy*: 55.

Sanjay Subrahmanyam argues that cotton was grown across South India from Tirunelveli in the south–east to the Godavari–Krishna delta in the north. This cotton cultivation seems to have been used to feed the local looms until the demand for textiles exceeded what could be locally produced.[40] As Daniel Havart's description of the routes from Masulipatnam to Golconda points out, cotton was grown in the east of the Deccan. We have noted earlier in this chapter that until the late sixteenth century Masulipatnam hardly had any international trade and functioned as a supplier of textiles to other ports of Coromandel. Although there is a lack of evidence, it is likely that during the sixteenth century locally grown cotton supported the looms of the Godavari delta. With the emergence of Masulipatnam as an international port from the late sixteenth century, locally grown cotton might no longer have been able to meet the demands of the textile industry of the Godavari delta and producers had had to look for supplies of cotton from the west of the Deccan.

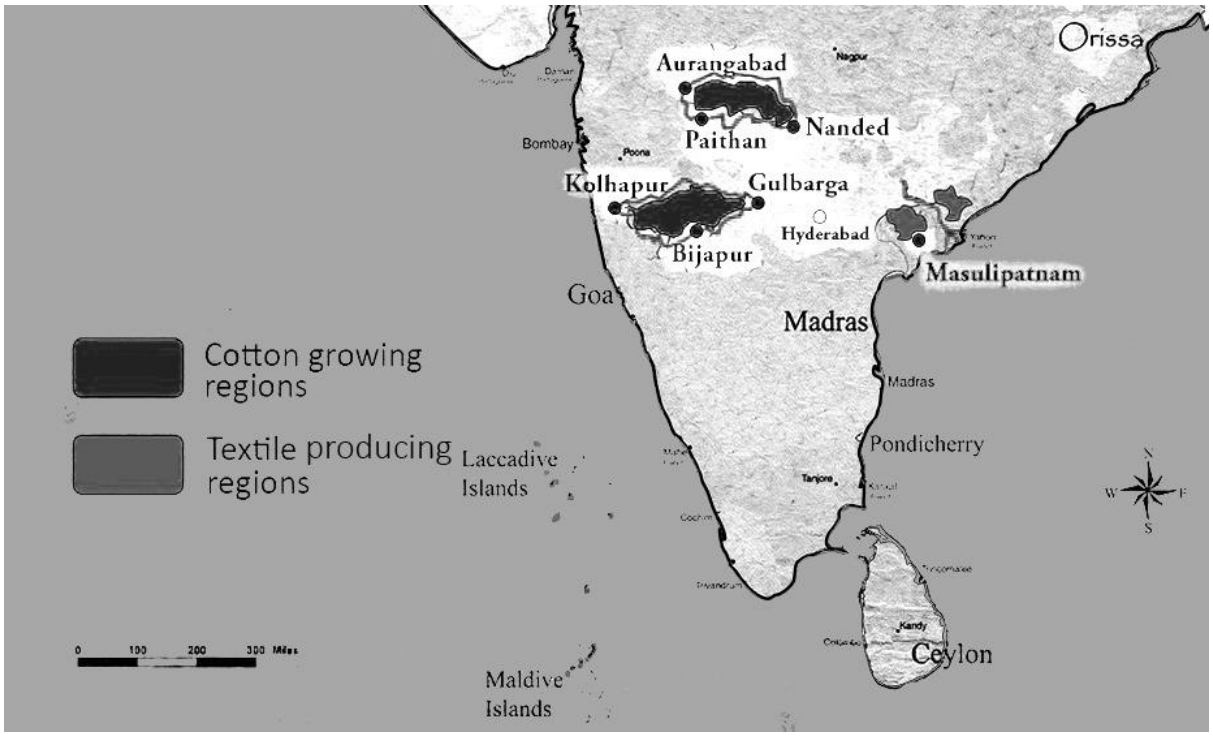
The reasons behind not using the cotton grown in northern Coromandel for the textile industry were the ecological conditions of the region and the demands of maritime trade. Dependency on imported supplies of raw cotton was identified by Joseph Brennig as a primary feature of the textile industry in northern Coromandel in the seventeenth century. The agriculture of northern Coromandel was unsuited to cotton, and high humidity and frequent flooding of the low delta during monsoons further hampered its cultivation. Brennig points out that if a season was favourable for paddy, hardly any cotton was harvested, and if the rains were seasonal they could be destructive to cotton. Though Sikakol (Srikakulam) to the north of the Godavari delta produced cotton of a coarse, white kind, it was unsuitable for weaving textiles of finer quality. For these reasons, northern Coromandel depended on imports of raw cotton for its textile industry. The *banjaras* transported the raw cotton and conducted their migrations in the Deccan cotton trade on a regular, annual basis. Water and fodder were the most important determinants of the routes taken by the banjaras. Most likely they moved along the valley of the Godavari river which extended from the cotton tracts in the west of the Deccan to the heavily populated and industrialized Godavari delta and provided them with water and fodder. Rajahmundry was the easternmost market in the cotton trade in the Godavari delta but two other centres, Dulla and Vemagiri, also on the eastern bank of the Godavari, supplied the Dutch factory in Draksharama with cloth[41] Let us now look at the origins of the cotton on which the textile industry of northern Coromandel relied.

*Sources of cotton used for the textile industry of the Godavari delta in the seventeenth century*
The textile–weaving villages that supplied Masulipatnam were mainly located in the Godavari delta. The cotton used for weaving textiles in these villages, Daniel Havart writes, came from northern Deccan, Bijapur and the regions to the north of Golconda. *Banjaras* who transported

[40] Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*: 71.
[41] Joseph Jerome Brennig, 'The Textile Trade of Seventeenth Century Northern Coromandel':229–230, 234–236.

salt from the coast brought cotton back on their return journey to the Coromandel Coast. The main merchants in the villages of the Godavari delta bought raw cotton from the *banjaras* and gave it to women (possibly by means of a contract) who turned it into yarn. This was later sold in the markets to weavers who eventually turned the yarn into clothes.[42] Sanjay Subrahmanyam offers a more precise location for the origin of the cotton that fed the looms of the Godavari delta. Based on the radius of *banjara* activity, he argues, the region from Aurangabad to Nanded in western Deccan was the most probable source of cotton used in the villages of the Godavari delta (see Map 1.2).[43]

Map 1.2 Cotton growing regions in the west of the Deccan and the textile industry of northern Coromandel which supplied Masulipatnam in the seventeenth century[44]




*Major varieties*

Joseph Brennig writes northern Coromandel produced two types of plain cloth, muslin and calico.[45] As we will find later in this chapter, Daniel Havart and other VOC officials usually distinguished between *muslin* and different varieties of calicos while describing the textile production of the Godavari delta. Being of a finer quality and open weave the *muslin* was used for turbans and veiling cloths, the latter function earning them the Portuguese term *bethilles*

[42] Havart, *Op–en ondergangh van Cormandel*, *Eerste deel*: 148.

[43] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Rural Industry and Commercial Agriculture in Late Seventeenth–Century South–Eastern India.' *Past and Present* 126 (1999): 85.

[44] Map drawn by Saikat Mukherjee with inputs from the author.

[45] Brennig, 'The Textile Trade of Seveneteenth Century Northern Coromandel': 227.

(veiling), which was common among European exporters from the region. *Bethilles* from Warangal were especially valued. Though *muslins* were exported by both the Dutch and the English, this cloth was more important for local exporters who sold it in the markets of the Persian Gulf. The calicos were sold in in varying lengths and quality, guinea or long cloth was 35 yards long, while *salempores* and *parcalles* were 16 and 8 yards long, respectively. All these calico varieties were produced in fine and ordinary grades. *Dongri*, also known as sailcloth, was the coarsest type of calico. It was produced in lengths of 12 yards and exported in large quantities. Most calicos were washed and bleached, but a few of the *salempores* and *parcalles* were printed.[46]

In his descriptions of Masulipatnam and its to–and–fro trade, Daniel Havart lists different textiles and their origins in the Godavari–Krishna delta. The town of Oragel (Warangal), about 72 miles north–west of Masulipatnam, and 12 villages around it produced *bethilles*, general *chiavonis* and finer varieties. Ellore and eight villages around it yielded fine *salempores*, *parcalles* and raw *bethilles*. Blue *taffachelas*, *boelangs*, negro–cloth, *madafons* and all kinds of blue cloth came from Muftabad and its ten surrounding villages. Linga and its surrounding ten villages produced fine *madafons*, *madops* and *taffachelas*. Mangalgiri and 14 surrounding villages provided *allegias* (striped and checked cotton cloth of red and white, or blue and white) and all kinds of red cloth. Located to the south across the river Krishna, Wattipore produced *Poelang–gobers* (cotton fabric with brownish blue and white blue stripes), Calewafoe and Sesterganty produced *bethilles*. Doerepindy and fourteen other villages manufactured painted clothing, *salempores* and red and white *parcalles*. About thirty miles from Masulipatnam, in Weentapalem and twenty-four villages around it, weavers produced fine guinea cloth, *salempores*, *parcalles*, *ginghams* and all kinds of fine cloth.[47]

*Palakollu and Draksharama*

The Qutb Shahis leased to the VOC two villages in the delta near Masulipatnam named Palakollu and Draksharama, which feature quite prominently in Chapter 4. Travelling north along the coast from Masulipatnam, the first village one would encounter was Suri, followed by Mordepalam, Wintera, Golepalam, Moggoltur, Pedddapatam and then Palakollu, where the VOC had a factory. The village had been leased to the Dutch by Abdulla Qutb Shah in 1653 for an annual payment of 5,000 Dutch guilders. Continuing firmans from the Qutb Shahi sultan kept on sanctioning the lease during the 1670s and later, until the conquest of Golconda by the Mughals in 1687. The VOC used their factory in Palakollu to buy textiles. Havart writes that trade here increased in the years after the VOC set up the factory. Guinea cloth, *parcalles*, *salempores* and chintz were all dyed in this village. For this the VOC had access to a workshop outside the village near Narsapore. The VOC paid 12 cents for a fine guinea cloth, 3 cents for ordinary guinea cloth and bethilles, and 2 cents for salempores and parcalles. Once the textiles had been dyed they were transported in flat–bottomed boats first to Gondy and then

[46] Brennig, 'The Textile Trade of Seventeenth Century Northern Coromandel': 227–228.
[47] Havart, *Op–sen ondergangh van Cormandel*, *Eerste deel*: 148.

Wintera. From there they were loaded onto bullocks and sent to Masulipatnam. Palakollu was not an outlet for selling the merchandise the VOC had imported in Masulipatnam, and it was only in on the rare occasions that the factory in Masulipatnam was under financial pressure that Dutch factors in Palakollu were asked to sell imported goods there.

The other major economic activity in the village was cultivation of nely rice. Some land in the village were demarcated for the maintenance of Brahmins, actors, dancing girls and priests of mosques. The crop was sown in May and harvested in July, then sown again in August and September and harvested in January. The Dutch forced the inhabitants of the village to buy rice at 9 guilders more than the market price. Havart's remarks on this system also reveals the mindset of Dutch observers and officials posted in Asia, one that that smacked of proto–Orientalism (as noted in the introduction). Havart writes that the VOC's share on a *khandi* (520 pounds, about 236 kilos) of rice was five–eighths, to the peasant farmer's three–eighths – although the farmer did sometimes receive a higher proportion of his crop. On top of this the state took three–quarters of the peasant's share, leaving and left him with just a quarter. Havart uses this as a pretext to differentiate between Christian rule and Hindu or Muslim rule; the former makes the land prosperous, while the latter robs it, he concluded. [48]

What to make of Daniel Havart's remark? Although the state's share of the peasant's crop does appear to be harsh, we will see later in this chapter there was a limit beyond which payments could not be made to the tax collectors and a number of checks in the revenue system ensured some protection for peasants despite the high rate of taxation in the Golconda sultanate.

In Ponnapalli, near Palakollu, blacksmiths made nails from the iron imported from Singaraina or Santomannam.[49] The products from the blacksmiths' shops would have been much in demand from the shipyard in nearby Narsapore. Iron and steel produced within the Golconda sultanate was also exported via Masulipatnam to Pegu, Tenasserim, Arakan and Acheh.[50] In a VOC memoir of succession written in 1679, Willem Carel Hartsink, the president of the Masulipatnam board, wrote to his successor Hendrik van Outhoorn that the iron and steel which had been bought in Samsoedepect by the company's inland servants were almost one and half years old. The price had risen by almost 50 percent due to demand from Mughal and Bijapuri merchants.[51] The latter probably intended to export it to mainland South–East Asia.

Even further north from Palakollu, in Draksharama, the VOC had another factory. This, too was not generally a destination for imports, although Japanese bar–copper, spiaulter,

---

[48] For a descritption of Palakollu see Havart, *Op–en ondergangh van Cormandel*, *Derde deel*: 3–4, 6–17.
[49] Havart, *Op–en ondergangh van Cormandel*, *Derde deel*: 18.
[50] Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce*: 54, 104.
[51] NA VOC 1348, Memoir of succession from Willem Carel Hartsink in Masulipatnam to Hendrik van Outhoorn: f. 1204v.

vermilion, and round and long pepper were sold there in 1677 and 1678. The factory here carried out the washing and cleaning of several varieties cloth, including fine and ordinary guinea cloth, fine and ordinary *salempores*, raw *bethilles*, *chiavonis*, sailcloth and *dongris*. Textiles were woven in the villages of Ronara, Upara and Thuny, located four miles away to the south–west of Draksharama. Then these were dyed in Draksharama, whose dyers were unmatched in all Coromandel in terms of excellence, writes Havart. After having been dyed, textiles were transported to Golepalam and Godavaram, two other villages belonging to the VOC, to be painted. These villages had been leased by the Golconda sultanate to the Dutch for 750 Dutch guilders per year. Both villages were equipped with tanks for washing and dyeing textiles. They had about 200 'washer households' devoted to this profession. The textiles were first transported to Dangera, then to Wintera and from there to Masulipatnam.[52]

Both Palakollu and Draksharama were mainly dyeing villages. As we will find in Table 1.2 in this chapter, several villages in the Godavari delta supplied textiles to Palakollu where they were dyed. The chain of production that passed through these villages seems to have been the following: after the first stage of cleaning raw cotton was transported by banjaras from the west of the Deccan to the Godavari delta, this cotton was bought by merchants and given to women who spun it into yarn, then it was woven into textiles, after textiles had been woven they were transported to Palakollu and Draksharam for being dyed, then they were painted, transported to Masulipatnam, and finally shipped to different markets in the Indian Ocean.

The villages in the Godavari delta had similar economic profiles marked by specialization within the weaving profession. This is the zone of northern Coromandel about which we have by far the most detailed information. It is thanks to reports produced during an inspection of the area in 1682 at the behest of Jacob Jorisz Pit, the then Dutch governor of the Coromandel Coast, that we have at least some idea of the economic condition of rural settlements in the Godavari delta, some of which supplied the Dutch factory in Palakollu. A deal of the information these inspection reports contain tallies with what Havart wrote about the areas around Masulipatnam and it is quite possible that Havart used these reports for his own book.

*Rural economy in the Godavari–Krishna delta: textile varieties and population groups, 1682*

Journeying westwards from the Dutch lodge in Palakollu to its counterpart in Nagulvancha, Johannes Huijsman and Adriaen Verbruggen recorded their observations of the economic character of the villages along the way. In their surveys of the rural settlements, the VOC observers differentiate between brahmins, peasants and weavers while describing population groups. Their findings are tabulated below.[53]

---

[52] Havart, *Op–en ondergangh van Cormandel*, *Derde deel*: 47–51, 54–55.

[53] NA VOC 1378, Report dated 27.04.1682 by Joannes Huijsman and Adriaen Verbruggen, Masulipatnam to Jacob Jorisz Pit, governor in Pulicat: f. 1925r.–f. 1930r.

Table 1.2 Weaving villages between Palakollu and Nagulvancha

| Village | Textile varieties | Population groups |
|---|---|---|
| Pollipalli | No information available | Brahmins, peasants and weavers |
| Bagelseram | No information available | Brahmins, peasants and weavers |
| Utbruram | *Salempores* | Brahmins, peasants and 10 weaver households. The weavers produced for the VOC merchants in Palakollu |
| Dagguluru, Ballipadu, Chikkala | Not inhabited by weavers | Peasants (no weavers lived here) |
| Veeravasaram | Guinea cloth, *salempores*, *parcalles* and *bethilles* | Brahmins, peasants and 40 weaver households. The weavers supplied the EIC which had a lodge here. |
| Singawissam | Guinea cloth, *salempores*, *parcalles* and *bethilles* | Brahmins, peasants and weavers |
| Goragula, Sennara, Wissakuluru and Golnolsudi | Not inhabited by weavers | Peasants (no weavers lived here) |
| Bhimavaram | Guinea cloth, *salempores* and *bethilles* | Brahmins and 60 weaver households. The weavers supplied the VOC merchants in Palakollu. |
| Raijallam, Pemmaramaram and Bondaramaram | Not inhabited by weavers | Peasants (no weavers lived here) |
| Dudapuni | Guinea cloth | Brahmins and 15 weaver households. The weavers produced for the VOC merchants in Palakollu and for domestic consumption. |
| Jakkawaram and Pimpolbrol | Not inhabited by weavers | Peasants (no weavers lived here) |
| Sintsali | Uncertain, but perhaps guinea cloth and *salempores*. | Brahmins, peasants and 20 weaver households that produced cloth for domestic consumption and the VOC merchants in Palakollu. |
| Kala | Guinea cloth and *salempores* | 10 weaver households produced cloth for the VOC merchants in Palakollu |
| Kulakuru | Guinea cloth and *salempores* | 16 weaver households supplied the VOC merchants in Palakollu |
| Elursadol | Guinea cloth, *salempores* and *bethilles* | Brahmins, peasants and 10 weaver households that supplied the merchants of Palakollu |
| Kalidindi | Information not available | Peasants and weavers |
| Laranamanduripeenta | Blue-striped *allegias*, *madaphons* and *patamarpha* | Oil-pressers and 50 weaver households whose products were sold in Masulipatnam |
| Wamawarom | Not inhabited by weavers | Peasants |
| Bommenimpadu | Blue-checked *madaphons*, *allegias*, *pathaparmol* | Brahmins and 10 weaver households |
| Korreguntapalam | *Allegias*, *madaphons* and *natannorpha* | Brahmins and 50 weaver households |
| Radali | *Allegias*, *madaphons* and *pathamarpha* | Brahmins and 5 weaver households |
| Bamalapalayam | No information available | Weavers |
| Purerupalapalayam | *Allegias*, *madaphons* and *parthamarpha* | 30 weaver households |
| Saniwaripalayam, Gudawaraplayam, | Not inhabited by weavers | Peasants |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Beetaoleopalayam and Bolssaragundla | | |
| Seenstrapeggela | Blue *allegias*, *madaphons*, *pathamarpha* and raw cloth | Brahmins, peasants and 20 weaver households producing for domestic consumption |
| Khalapwola | Not inhabited by weavers | Peasants |
| Katolrupawola | Domestic consumption | Peasants and 5 weaver households |
| Kanpipare | Not available | Weavers |
| Paranki and Patamatha | Not inhabited by weavers | Brahmins and peasants (no weavers) |
| Vijaywada | Not available | 200 brahmin households, 200 peasant households and 50 weaver households. Possibly producing for export from Masulipatnam. |
| Bawanipuram | Not inhabited by weavers | Brahmins and peasants |
| Gulsapundi | Domestic consumption | Brahmins, peasants and weavers. The weavers produced for domestic consumption. |
| Ibrahimpatnam | Not inhabited by weavers | Brahmins and peasants |
| Pennegentspul (the last major village before the Dutch factors reached Nagulvancha) | *Ginghams* and *bethilles* | 150 brahmin households, 300 peasant households and 50 weaver households. |

In Nagulvancha and three surrounding small villages were home to a total of around 200 families of cloth–sellers, 150 weavers, 100 cultivators, 20 coppersmiths, 15 smiths, 20 goldsmiths, 20 washers, 150 brahmins, about 20 account–keepers, 15 ox–cart drivers, a good number of bricklayers, leather–workers and parias (members or lower castes who performed menial tasks) who cleared up garbage. Havart lists Kankagiery, Khammam, Nella, Kondapilly, Chellapilly, Anantagiri, Kandiconda, Palevancha and Warangal as settlements around Nagulvancha that provided a steady supply of textiles such as guineas, *salempores*, *parcalles*, *ginghams*, table cloths, sailcloth, negro-cloth, *dongris*, *kalamkari*, *chiavoni* and *bethilles*.[54]

Although there are some matches on the itineraries of Havart's journey from Masulipatnam to Nagulvancha and Huijsman and Verbruggen's journey from Palakollu to Nagulvancha, most of the settlements they visited were different. Their records reveal to us the economic picture of two strands of the Masulipatnam–Hyderabad/Golconda hinterland that come together at Nagulvancha. Most of these villages produced textiles for markets in the Indian Ocean, but some focused on production for domestic consumption. It is difficult to ascertain whether this concerned consumption within that village itself or inland trade. Most of small villages had about 10 weaver households, while their moderately while there moderately sized counterparts had perhaps 50 or 60 weaver households. The largest concentration of weavers was in Pennegentspul (150 weaver households) and Vijaywada (200). Weaving seems to have been a full–time profession that apparently did not clash with agricultural activities (carried out by peasants). Some villages were inhabited only by peasants. The VOC observers may have used the term 'brahmin' as a generic reference that

[54] Havart, *Op–en ondergangh van Cormandel*, *Twede deel*: 15–17.

included not only the priestly groups who performed Hindu religious rites, but also those who worked as scribes or clerks.

Initially in the seventeenth century the VOC shipped their Coromandel textiles to South–East Asia and later in the seventeenth century also to Europe. The Dutch exported textiles mainly to South–East Asian markets in the Spice Islands of the Moluccas, Banda and Celebes, and in Java, Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula, Siam and Burma. In Indonesia, the textiles were used to procure spices and as payment to soldiers serving with the VOC. Coromandel textiles were shipped to Taiwan and Japan, but in limited quantities. Other markets where Coromandel textiles were shipped to included Ceylon and Persia. The volume of VOC trade on the Coromandel Coast increased from 1640s throughout the seventeenth century, and this region was the chief supplier of textiles to the South–East Asian market until the 1680s. Towards the end of the seventeenth century the VOC faced competition from Java in the form of locally produced and cheaper supplies of painted textiles. In the first half of the seventeenth century, indigo, cotton yarn and saltpetre were regularly exported to Europe from the Coromandel Coast. Textile exports increased in importance as the seventeenth century progressed, and by 1652 Coromandel textiles accounted for 30 percent of the orders of textiles from India. European orders for Coromandel textiles increased even more in the 1670s.[55]

The picture emerging is of a densely populated and highly commercialized economic zone stretching from Masulipatnam to Hyderabad and more widely through overland and maritime networks. A combination of the economic infrastructure put into place by the Qutb Shahi sultans in Masulipatnam, the vibrant presence of European trading companies and indigenous merchants, and the investment of indigenous and European merchants in textile production in the Godavari delta helped to turn the Golconda sultanate into an extremely rich kingdom. Masulipatnam's success lay in its ability, as a regional entrepot, to connect remote markets; those of the interior beyond Golconda and the maritime centres around the Indian Ocean. How did the political authorities of Golconda try to tap the economic resources generated in this wealthy region of the Deccan? We turn to that question now.

**1.3 Politics**

H.K. Sherwani points out that a province in the Golconda sultanate was described by the term *simt* or *samt* (or *samet*) and the chief civil representative in a *simt*/ *samt* was called a *sarsimt*. But in effect the term denoted a district, rather than a province. Belamkonda, Venukonda, Nizamapatnam (also known as Petapoly), Kondapalli, Masulipatnam, Ellore and Rajahmundry were the seats of a *sarsimt* or *sarsamt* appointed by the sultan. The *havaldar* of Masulipatnam

[55] Om Prakash, *European Commercial Enterprise in Pre–Colonial India, The New Cambridge History of India*, II.5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 175, 178, 180, 182–184.

(the revenue collector as we will find) was mistakenly referred to as the governor in the records of the VOC and the EIC and he was subordinate to the *sarsamt*.[56]

Daniel Havart writes that the port city of Masulipatnam was administered on behalf of the sultan by the following officials (definitions to follow): the *havaldar*, the *qazi* (the judge), the *shahbandar*, the *sarsamet* and the *kotwal*. The *havaldar* (Havart calls him *opperste*, the topmost/ uppermost/ highest) farmed the revenues of Masulipatnam and lands subordinate to it for 150000 ducats annually. He could be pestered, beaten and even killed in case of a failure to pay this amount. Apart from collecting land revenue, the *havaldar* of Masulipatnam worked the salt mines near the port which yielded good profits, for instance 180000 ducats in 1684 and 1685.[57]

Havart adds that *shahbandar* was the king of a port or a roadstead (the chief port officer or harbour master). In the early part of the seventeenth century, Havart writes, the *shahbandar* increased or decreased customs duties in Masulipatnam at will, protected the merchants and evaluated whether their merchandise was good or bad. But in the later part of the seventeenth century the prestige of *shahbandar* had declined and he had become dependent on the *havaldar*. The *kotwal* was the chief of police, responsible for the security of a town, preventing crimes, imprisoning miscreants and punishing them. He was subordinate to the governor of a district or province, or to the sultan in Golconda.[58]

Although the *havaldar*'s primary task was to collect the revenues of Masulipatnam, by the later half of the seventeenth century he seems to have become the most powerful figure in the administration of Masulipatnam. There are two reasons for this assertion. One, it does not appear from Daniel Havart's account that the *sarsamt* played any significant role in the daily administration of Masulipatnam. Two, despite there being a separation between revenue and policing functions in Masulipatnam (similar to the division of power in the provincial administration of the Mughal Empire), as is evidenced by the presence of both the *havaldar* and the *kotwal*, Havart writes that the *shahbandar*, the *qazi* and the *kotwal* were dependent on the *havaldar* who was not answerable to anyone in Masulipatnam.[59] Nonetheless, there were a few checks on the *havaldar*'s authority– he could not overrule the *qazi*'s court in the port city, nor could he impose new taxes beyond the ones that had been sanctioned by the sultan.[60]

---

[56] Sherwani, *History of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty*: 511.
[57] Havart, *Op–en ondergangh van Cormandel*, *Eerste deel*: 225–226.
[58] Havart, *Op–en ondergangh van Cormandel*, *Twede deel*: 118, 239.
[59] Havart, *Op–en ondergangh van Cormandel*, *Eerste deel*: 228.
[60] Sinnappah Arasaratnam and Aniruddha Ray, *Masulipatnam and Cambay: A History of Two Port–Towns 1500–1800* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1994): 36.

The hierarchical relationship between the *havaldar*, a revenue farmer, and his immediate superior, a provincial/ district governor, was replicated in coastal districts further to the south of Masulipatnam. In 1679 Streynsham Master, an official of the EIC who had visited India to inspect the EIC factories, described the administration of Karedu, a small port near Nellore. The town was under the command of Mahmud Ibrahim, the *sarkhail* (head of the army) and he had in turn appointed a Brahmin as its governor (revenue collector).[61] This was similar to the *sarsamt–havaldar* relationship in the case of Masulipatnam, although– as we have noted– the *sarsamt* did not play any significant role in the administration of Masulipatnam.

So, while there was technically a separation of revenue, judicial and policing functions in Masulipatnam, by the latter half of the seventeenth century (when Daniel Havart wrote his account) the *havaldar* had become the most important official in the daily administration of the port in terms of collecting revenue and taking charge of law and order.

*Revenue system in Golconda*

The Golconda sultanate operated a system known as revenue farming, through which revenue officials leased out their lands to local entrepreneurs who would bid for the office, and the position went to the highest bidder. They were then entrusted with the organization and administration of revenue collection in villages and cities before crediting an annual figure to the treasury in Golconda.

The sultan's claim to a share of agricultural production was the greatest single source of revenue for the Golconda sultanate. The Qutb Shahs appropriated a large share of every harvest. The *jam–i–kamil* or perfect assessment in Golconda specified a normative land–tax figure for each village, sub-district and district in the kingdom. However, what we must remember is there would have been differences between what was assessed and what was collected (or expected to be collected). One of the secondary sources which John F. Richards studied to research the revenue system in Qutb Shahi and Mughal Golconda refers to a late eighteenth-century chronicle that in turn speaks of *hasil* or collection figures which were expected, rather than an accurate statement of the *jam–i–kamil* or 'perfect assessment'. At the time of the formulation of the perfect assessment, state demand was calculated on the basis of the equivalent of one–half share of production. Although this demand might have been initially severe, it was mitigated. The Qutb Shahi rulers did not interfere with land grants to temples, *brahmins* and mosques, or with the internal revenue settlements in villages. The Qutb Shahi state insisted on assessment and collection of tax in cash rather than in kind. As described earlier, the usual approach to revenue collection in Golconda was tax–farming through an elaborate series of lessees and sub–lessees. This system operated at the port towns and their hinterland with export centres along the coast. Similar farming terms were

[61] Richard Carnac Temple ed. *The Diaries of Streynsham Master 1675–1680*, vol. II (London: John Murray, 1911): 179.

imposed on the governors of the coastal districts north of the river Krishna and on the governor of Karnatik (districts to the south of the river Krishna). Before governors secured their appointments, they had to agree to pay an annually determined fixed sum to the central treasury which represented the normal land–tax collections for their district. Some governors were speculators who immediately sublet their entire districts at profitable rates, or commonly sublet tax collection in their districts to smaller entrepreneurs by means of an annual auction. These are the havaldars that European sources (for instance the VOC) refer to. Their primary concern was to successfully make payments three times a year to the district governor who in turn had to make annual payments to the central treasury in Golconda. Although undoubtedly harsh, this system did not halt or slow agricultural production. Contemporary observers simultaneously deplored the severe tax system in Golconda and marveled at the great prosperity in the countryside. Tank irrigation in Telangana and the fertility of the deltas in Andhra were partly responsible for this, as was the state's practice of placing a few agricultural lands beyond the reach of tax–farmers, such as by issuing grants to temples, Brahmins and mosques. Finally, the perfect assessment itself, John F. Richards argued, might have acted as a check on the revenue system. On the surface, however, it was an anomaly in the system of tax-farming. The *jam–i–kamil* could have been a bargaining point for all parties involved in the collection of revenue: the central treasury and amildars, district governors, tax–farmers and the hereditary local officials in each village or sub–district. For the local officials, the perfect assessment was probably the ceiling beyond which payments could not be made to the tax farmer.[62]

The relationship between political power and commerce was complex. Sinnappah Arasaratnam argues that in the sultanates of Golconda and Bijapur the prevailing system was one of political capitalism, and that all political figures – from royalty to the lowliest district official – invested in trade. Arasaratnam suggests that this system became increasingly dominant with the boom in trade of the Indian Ocean in the seventeenth century.[63] Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Chris Bayly have detailed the careers of figures in early–modern India who straddled the worlds of politics and commerce; described as 'portfolio capitalists', these large–scale entrepreneurs could leverage not only their own capital but also that of smaller–scale operators. Subrahmanyam and Bayly argue that the existence of portfolio capitalists depended both on the system of revenue farming which was symptomatic of the commercialization of the state and political power and on the need to link ecologically disparate regions, push back the agrarian frontier and organize commercial production.[64] An exemplary manifestation of this phenomenon can be found in the workings of the administration of Masulipatnam. Daniel Havart writes that in 1684 and 1685 the *havaldar* of

[62] Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda*: 21–23, 25–26.
[63] Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce*: 224.
[64] Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Chris Bayly, 'Portfolio capitalists and the political economy of early modern India' *IESHR* 25, 4 (1988): 401–402, 412.

the port earned 180,000 ducats from the salt works near the port. The salt was transported from Masulipatnam to northern India in return for wheat, barley, dates, opium and tamarind.[65]

And we should not forget the connections the salt trade had with the trade in cotton from the west of the Deccan to the Godavari delta: the *banjaras* transported salt from the coast and brought cotton on their return journey. Havart's remarks on the profits earned in the salt trade date from the late seventeenth century. Returning briefly to the discussion of historiography in the introduction, John F. Richards argued that after the Mughal conquest of Golconda, Mughal revenue administration profited from the salt mines in Masulipatnam and Nagapatnam. We may reasonably argue, therefore, that the establishment of the Mughal administration did not snap this crucial link between the coast and the interior.

In seventeenth–century Deccan and South India, many men made fortunes out of farming revenues and engaging in commerce. As the presence of European companies boosted economic production (mainly through textiles) and trade in the Masulipatnam–Golconda hinterland, there was commercial territory to be won and neither the European companies, nor others (merchants and portfolio–capitalists alike) were about to sacrifice their advantage. Commercial conflicts between the *havaldars* of Masulipatnam and the European companies did indeed surface every now and then throughout the seventeenth century, due in part to the involvement of the Masulipatnam governors in trade. For example, in 1617 Adolff Thomasz wrote from Pulicat to the VOC directors in Amsterdam to tell them that local officials along the Coromandel Coast were involved in trade with the Portuguese (private traders) and that these officials had seen their earnings fall off due to the Dutch disruption of Portuguese trading operations. In the same year problems created by the *havaldar* forced the VOC to shut down their factory in Petapuli or Nizamapatnam. Later, however, when the Dutch turned down requests to reopen the factory the *havaldar* befriended them.[66] Often such conflicts sprang from the following reasons: the portfolio–capitalists running into large debts with the European companies and not crediting the same, the *havaldar*'s involvement in trade from Masulipatnam, the insistence of portfolio–capitalists on being the sole supplier to the European companies and pre–emptive buying of imports. Occasionally the European companies resorted to violence to settle scores when official high-handedness paid no heed to repeated overtures.

In 1613 and 1614 Dutch successfully reclaimed money owed to them by abducting the son of one of the two *havaldars* of Masulipatnam. The Dutch protested the extortion by Masulipatnam officials and blockaded the port from 1628 to 1629 and seized ships off the coast. The port had been unsettled by the Dutch blockade and the merchants were the first

[65] Havart, *Op–en ondergangh van Cormandel*, *Eerste deel*: 225–226.
[66] Om Prakash, *The Dutch Factories in India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1984): 23–24. Letter from Adollf Thomasz in Pulicat to the directors in Amsterdam 08.05.1617: 27; Letter from Hans de Haze in Masulipatnam to Jan Pieterszoon Coen in Bantam 05.01.1617: 27.

to initiate peace with the VOC. In the end a settlement was agreed upon and the Dutch factor Jacob de Wit returned from Golconda with a set of firmans in May 1630. Mir Muhammed Said Ardestani, the most well–known of the portfolio–capitalists and the Mir Jumla of the sultanate (second only to the sultan in terms of authority), began his ascendancy in Golconda during the 1640s. After successfully farming revenues and occupying various official positions, he made his fortune many times over and increased his clout to such an extent that at one juncture the Masulipatnam havaldars were his dependents. His participation in overseas trade often led to disputes with the Dutch over refusal of passes to certain ports which the Dutch claimed fell under their jurisdiction. The Dutch often had to compromise since they were dependent on Mir Jumla on the land, in other words for their business in Golconda.[67]

The Dutch write of such confrontations from time to time. The daily register maintained in Batavia notes on 11 March, 1624 that following the payment of a substantial sum of money Van Uffelen, the Dutch factor of Masulipatnam who had been imprisoned by the Golconda authorities in 1623, was released from the prison and returned sick and indisposed to Masulipatnam. Little over a year on 8 September, 1625 the daily register noted how the factors in Masulipatnam had complained of the city governor's extortion practices.[68] A 19 February, 1641 litany of similar complaints regarding harassment and ill–mannered behaviour on the part of the *havaldar* of Masulipatnam suggests tensions and conflicts were a part of the general picture.[69] For the Europeans strong–arm tactics on the sea always remained an answer. The Dutch noted in the Batavia daily register on 31 March 1663 that their refusal of passes to Muslim shipping had helped protect their trade in Golconda: the *havaldar* of Masulipatnam had penned a request to the Dutch that henceforth they could bring their merchandise to markets unhindered and that he would continue to issue permits for these activities.[70] However, when by the 1670s clashes with the *havaldar* had become more frequent the Dutch were able, as they did in 1672, to defend themselves and prevail against the *havaldar* within the city itself.[71]

We must adopt a somewhat sceptical attitude with respect to descriptions of local functionaries in the VOC records; the Dutch discourse often deliberately presented a negative image of these officials. A common trope is the 'greedy moor' who had to be kept on good terms with the VOC through regular gifts. At times the private trade of Dutch officials was allied with the commercial interests the company's brokers in Golconda who, in turn, had connections with Qutb Shahi officials. This encouraged them to cast their own failures in the

---

[67] For an overview of such conflicts see Arasaratnam and Ray, *Masulipatnam and Cambay*: 38–46, 49–50.
[68] J.E. Heeres ed., *Dagh–Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandts–India Anno 1624–1629* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1896): 33, 190.
[69] J.A. van der Chijs ed., *Dagh–Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlndts–India Anno 1640–1641* (Batavia and The Hague: Landsdrukkerij and Martinus Nijhoff, 1887): 187.
[70] J.A. van der Chijs ed., *Dagh–Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandts–India Anno 1663* (Batavia and The Hague: Landsdrukkerij and Martinus Nijhoff, 1891): 112.
[71] Arasaratnam and Ray, *Masulipatnam and Cambay*: 56–58.

guise of political despotism. This recalls Tracy's analysis, as noted in the introductory chapter. The following incident from the 1680s would support this reading: In 1685 the VOC officials in Hyderabad accused Akkanna – a minister of the sultanate, head of the army and chief bookkeeper of the crown's estate – of having embezzled goods worth 145,030 huns, and the VOC sent an embassy to the Golconda court to retrieve the goods, without success. Chirum Chodenda, a Hyderabad-based merchant and a broker for the VOC, had played a significant role in the whole affair. Documents discovered later at his house in fact implicated the Dutch factors of Hyderabad (Jan van Nijendaal, Theunis Carstensz and Michiel Janzoon) of having lost money in private trade enterprises. To save themselves from even greater embarrassment and to conceal the fact that Akkanna was not to blame the VOC went to war with Golconda. Akkanna and Madanna, both of whom had started careers as revenue farmers and went on to call the shots in the sultan's government by the 1680s, are two more examples of portfolio–capitalists in Golconda. In this role they were by far the most remarkable figures in the sultanate since Mir Jumla had defected to Mughal service in the 1650s.[72] These snapshots of confrontations demonstrate the vitality of the complex relationships involved in politics, economics and trade: it began with the system of revenue farming that commercialized revenue collection by selling positions to the highest bidder, and the tax–farmers' investment in trade leading to the expansion of European companies, trade and commerce into the Masulipatnam–Golconda hinterland. Before we wrap up this section, let us look at an instance of how tax–farmers in the Golconda sultanate invited European companies.

In 1681, Francois Martin, the director of the French East India Company in Pondicherry, travelled by land from Pondicherry to Surat. At the village of Vetapalem near the port of Nizamapatnam (located to the south of Masulipatnam), four local merchants spoke to Francois Martin who described his conversation with them in the following manner:

> They told me that 4,000 weavers specialising in the weaving of different kinds of cloth were to be found at Vetapalem and the three neighbouring villages. The English had a counter at Petapoly (Nizamapatnam) three leagues from Vetapalem, and in previous times both the English and the Dutch used to buy substantial quantities of cloth from here. Now they were drawing very little and it would be of advantage to our company to set up a counter at Petapoly to which all the cloth would be brought…. [the merchants] said that Idal Khan, governor of Bapatla, a town five miles to the north through which we would have to pass, was very anxious that we should establish ourselves on his territory.[73]

---

[72] See Gijs Kruijtzer, 'Madanna, Akkanna and the Brahmin Revolution: A study of mentality, group behaviour and personality in Seventeenth–Century India' *JESHO* 45, 2 (2002): 231–267, for this incident and the careers of the Akkanna and Madanna. Also see Kruijtzer, *Xenophobia in Seventeenth–Century India*: 224–255.

[73] Lotika Varadarajan transl., *India in the 17th Century (Social, Economic and Political): Memoirs of Francois Martin (1670–1694), Volume I, Part II* (Manohar: New Delhi, 1983): 748–749.

### 1.4 Regional response to political instability and wars

This section should be considered as an element in a hypothesis on how the economy of the Deccan and South India reacted to wars. Each chapter will draw from different aspects of the economy to build this hypothesis. As we have seen, the success of Masulipatnam depended on its character as a regional entrepot, often manifested in its connecting of the cotton growing belt of western Deccan with the textile industry of the Godavari and Krishna delta and finally, the markets of the Indian Ocean. The pattern was well–established: raw cotton was brought to the villages in the deltas, woven into textiles and shipped abroad from Masulipatnam; and commodities imported into Masulipatnam were bought by merchants and transported to Hyderabad/Golconda and western India. If warfare were to threaten any part of this network, the fundamental strength of Masulipatnam as a port city would be hit.

As in other parts of India, a feature of northern Coromandel was the mobility of rural villages and populations. Quite often the rural population's response to wars, political instability or natural disaster was to desert or migrate to a less disrupted region. This phenomenon formed the crux of the Mughal emperor Babur's observation of villages in the plains of northern India in the sixteenth century:

> In Hindustan hamlets and villages, towns indeed, are depopulated and set up in a moment! If the people of a large town, one inhabited for years even, flee from it, they do it in such a way that not a sign or trace of them remains in a day or a day and a half. On the other hand, if they fix their eyes on a place in which to settle, they need not dig water-courses or construct dams because their crops are all rain–grown, and as the population of Hindustan is unlimited, it swarms in. They make a tank or dig a well; they need not build houses or set up walls – *khas*-grass abounds, wood is unlimited, huts are made, and straightway there is a village or a town![74]

Evidence provided by Francois Martin, whose observations on Bapatla we have referred to in the previous section, points to depopulation of textile weaving villages in the Qutb Shahi sultanate caused by maladministration of Brahmins, i.e., revenue farmers. In 1681 he described Mangalgiri: 'This used to be a large thickly populated town where many weavers and painters used to have their houses but it had been completely ruined by the bad government of the Brahmins.'[75]

Martin also spoke of Hulebi (a village near Nagulvancha where the VOC had a lodge) in similar terms:

---

[74] Annette Susannah Beveridge transl., *The Babur–nama (Memoirs of Babur),* vol. II (London: Luzac& Co., 1922): 487–488.

[75] Varadarajan transl., *India in the 17th Century*, *Volume I*, *Part II*: 750.

> …(Hulebi), which used to be the centre of a flourishing manufacture of printed chintz. Wheras before as many as 2000 painters lived here, now there were only 20 of them. This diminution is a result of the Brahmin rule.[76]

Although these villages had not been depopulated due to warfare or political instability, Martin's evidence, nonetheless, hints at how rural populations might have responded to disturbances in textile–weaving villages that resulted from wars or political instability.

Such mobility was not restricted to villages. South Asian cities too, André Wink argues, had a long tradition of internal migration caused by military invasions and raids, famines, epidemics and droughts. Peripatetic political elites created numerous new towns and cities.[77] Many north Indian cities originated as military encampments in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Arcot in central Coromandel is an example: it was the site of a Mughal army camp during Aurangzeb's southern campaigns. Migration propelled by political disturbance did occur in the context of the Deccan, as we will see in Chapter 5. The introductory chapter alluded to the fact that that ports in Coromandel had aleatoric life–cycles, and typically moved up and down the hierarchy of networks over time. For example, Masulipatnam was first established as a supplier of commodities to other Coromandel ports and then it went on to become a major international port in the seventeenth–century Indian Ocean. As we will find in Chapter 2, Pulicat retrograded from an international port in the sixteenth century to a subsidiary port in the seventeenth century when it lost much of its former sheen and was sustained by the patronage of the VOC. Such changes in the life–cycles of ports were accompanied by the migration of merchant groups.

The 1620s were marked by expansion of the Mughal Empire and consolidation of Mughal control in northern Deccan. The main antagonist of Emperor Jahangir was Malik Amber, the Abyssinian minister of the sultanate of Ahmednagar. This phase of warfare affected Masulipatnam's commercial operations along the arc that ran westwards from Masulipatnam via Hyderabad. In 1621, Andries Soury, a Dutch factor at Masulipatnam, wrote to the VOC's directors in Amsterdam, saying that fear and apprehension resulting from the anticipation of war between the Mughals and Malik Amber of Ahmadnagar had brought trade to a stop; Burhanpur in the northern Deccan lay besieged and the spices in the Dutch warehouse in Masulipatnam remained unsold due to unsafe roads.[78] In VOC discourse of the outbreak of a war was usually associated with a sense of panic regarding its potential effects on commerce. Unsafe highways meant that merchants would be cautious about doing business.

---

[76] Varadarajan transl., *India in the 17th Century*, *Volume I*, *Part II*: 754.
[77] André Wink, *Al–Hind: The Making of the Indo–Islamic World, vol. 3. Indo–Islamic Society 14th–15th Centuries* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004): 73.
[78] Prakash, *The Dutch Factories in India*: 147–149.

Hyderabad, another important connecting link in this hinterland, was also vulnerable to wars: this Qutb Shahi city had barely any serious defence works and was looted by Mughal troops in 1656, in a period when Aurangzeb was serving as the governor of the Deccan under his father, the emperor Shah Jahan. Mir Alam writes in his book *Haqiqat–ul–Alam* that royal workshops were ransacked by the Mughals, who took away many books and much fine chinaware. The plunder continued for a few days, but the inhabitants of the city were still wealthy after the looting had stopped, writes Mir Alam.[79] The absence of defence works in Hyderabad was typical of many Indian cities, and Surat, the principal commercial city of the Mughal Empire, was looted and sacked by the Marathas more than once in the second half of the seventeenth century.

By the 1670s, Mughal expansion in the Deccan found a serious antagonist in the Marathas under Shivaji. But Aurangzeb's general Jai Singh forced Shivaji to surrender, Shivaji was made a Mughal mansabdar and an ally in a campaign against Bijapur. A letter written by the Dutch factors from Golconda to Masulipatnam in 1674 asserted that due to the war between the Mughals, Shivaji and Bijapur, the VOC had been experiencing trade–related troubles and they did not expect the situation to change anytime soon. The VOCs primary concern was the inland trade that passed from Masulipatnam to western India through Golconda and Hyderabad. However, despite some slowdown in trade due to the war, the VOC factory in Golconda requested the following commodities from Masulipatnam: cloves, mace, Ceylonese cinnamon, Malaccan tin, Japanese bar–copper, Japanese camphor, Chinese pit (a currency made from poorly purified tin), spiaulter, long pepper, benzine, hitch silver, vermilion, gross tea, agilwood, ivory, Bengal silk, fine tea etc.[80]

It is clear from the account of the plundering of Hyderabad by the Mughals that the major connecting nodes in the hinterland of Masulipatnam were vulnerable to considerable damage, both in the capital city and along the long–distance overland routes. All the anecdotes of war discussed so far refer to the overland connections and the disruption to trade here was not durable – this applies also to the attack on Hyderabad. However, a long–drawn war would render the highways unsafe and cripple these connections. To sum up: trading activity in Masulipatnam was highly sensitive to crises that affected or threatened the political configuration of eastern and western Deccan. And as we shall see in Chapter 4, when war broke out in the late–seventeenth century Masulipatnam's fortunes changed for the worse.

---

[79] B.D. Verma transl., 'Mir Alam, Haqiqat–ul Alam' in: *Gowalkondyachi Qutb Shahi* ed. V. C. Bendre (Pune: Bharat Itihas Sanshodhak Mandal): 72. This is a lesser known translated primary source on the history of the Qutb Shahis. A copy of the book is available at the Centre for Advanced Studies library in Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

[80] NA VOC 1302, Letter dated 26.01.1674 from Willem Hartsink and J.E. Nijendaal in Golconda to Jacques Caulier in Masulipatnam: f. 426v., f. 429r.–f. 429v.

There is one more inference that we may draw from the Mughal campaigns against Shivaji in the second half of the seventeenth century, one that is relevant for our discussion of the economic impact of Aurangzeb's southern campaigns examined in Part II of the dissertation. In the war against Shivaji in the 1660s, Jai Singh, Aurangzeb's general, instructed the European settlements to obstruct the activities of the Maratha fleet.[81] Such co–opting of the European companies demonstrated not only military necessities, but also had a politico–economic aspect. The ports were outlets of trade and could act as conduits of supplies for an army on the march, a fact that also shaped the Mughal strategy in the Golconda region in the late–seventeenth century. This subject is covered in more detail in Chapter 4, which analyses the impact of Aurangzeb's campaigns on Masulipatnam and its hinterland.

[81] Richards, *The Mughal Empire*: 210.