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

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Chapter 3: Nagapatnam's political and economic landscape

Introduction

In a period of more than two millennia, port cities of all kinds and sizes along the two long, indented littorals of the Indian subcontinent charted journeys from inchoate entities to thriving hubs in their prime before finally withering away once more into the temporal and geographical landscape. This chapter discusses the politico–economic axes of Nagapatnam, a port city of Coromandel that had a life spanning 800 years marked by fluctuating fortunes, and the structure of this chapter reflects its life history: the first section discusses the ecological conditions around Nagapatnam and in the Kaveri delta; the second section looks at the politico–economic conditions of that region from the tenth century AD to the period of Vijayanagara rule; the third section examines the economy of Nagapatnam under the control of the Portuguese traders and then the VOC; and the fourth and final section wraps up the chapter by discussing the impact of warfare and political instability on the economy of the region.

3.1 Ecology

The wide coastal plains of the Coromandel Coast were formed by the deltas of the Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna and Kaveri. The Kaveri originates in the Brahmagiri near Talakaveri in Coorg (now in Karnataka) and covers a course of 764 kilometres, flowing in a generally south–eastern direction across the Deccan plateau, creating great waterfalls along the way, passing Tiruchchirappalli (Trichinopoly) and Tanjore (Thanjavur) to enter the Bay of Bengal via its distributaries,[1] forming the great Kaveri delta. At the mouth of one of these distributaries stands Nagapatnam (alternate names include Nagapattinam and Negapatnam), a port that straddles the recorded history of the eastern littoral.

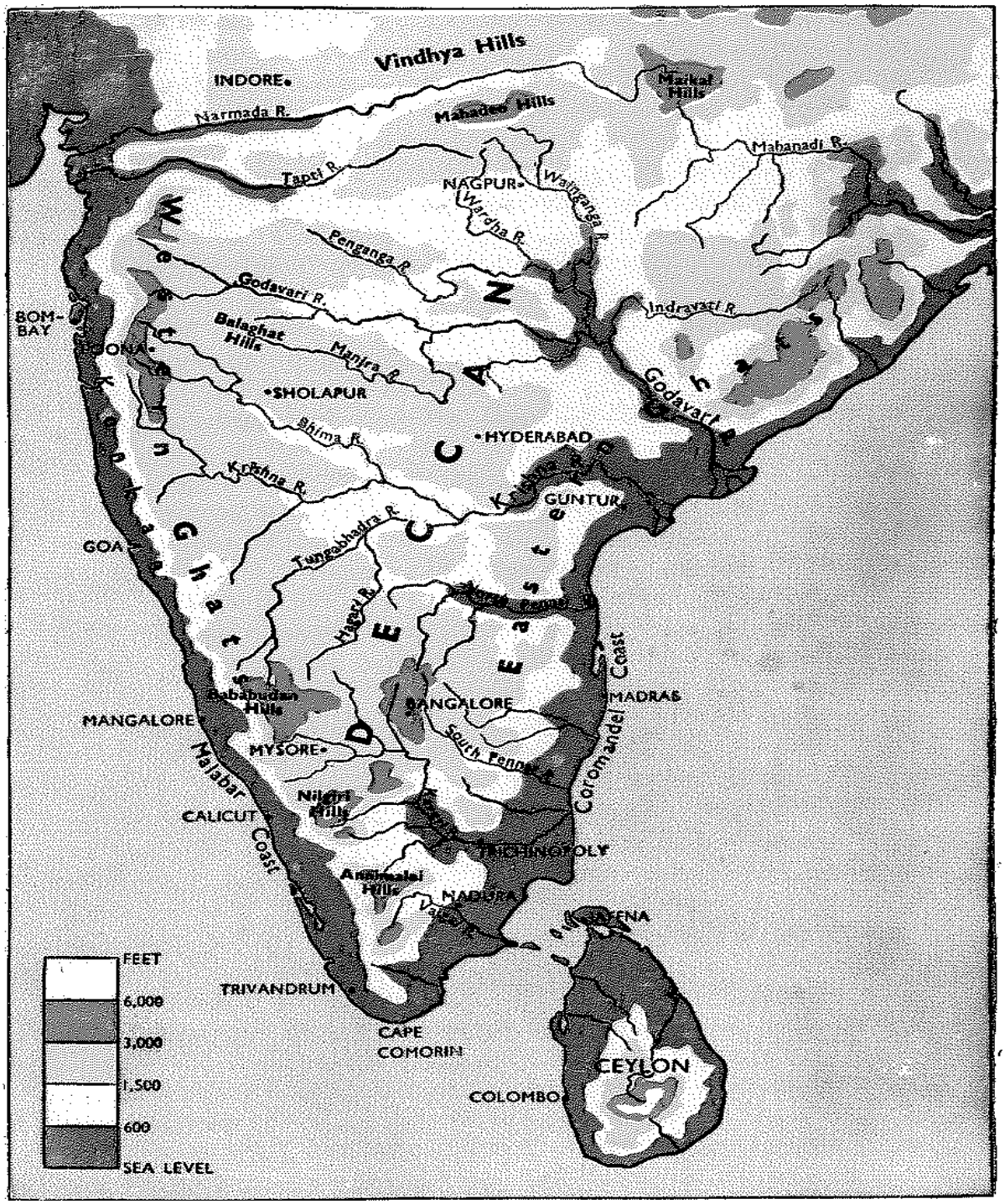
A great coastal plain extends from the Krishna delta all the way to Kanyakumari, at the southernmost tip of the Indian mainland. Nellore at the border of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu is marked by a transitional landscape where lowlands develop that are breached by the Kaveri delta; the area to the north of the delta is quite different from that to its south. Between the Kaveri delta and the Palar river basin to the north stand the hill ranges of Javadi, Shevaroy, Kalrayan and Pachaimalai, which cut across South Pennar, the river valley of the Ponnaiyar, near whose mouth stands Pondicherry. Southwards from here the Vellar river basin acts as a transition to the Kaveri delta. This coastline has an alluvial plain with embayments behind Chennai and Pondicherry while the soil in the Kaveri delta comprises littoral sands and the alluvial sands that extend far to the west of Tiruchchirappalli. Kumbakonam is the most fertile part of the delta; to the south of the Vennar, which runs by Tanjore, calcerous deposits in the soil reduce fertility. Except for the sporadic showers caused by thundery, cyclonic disturbances in May, most rainfall in this delta is concentrated in the

[1] K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India: From Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijaynagar* (Madras: Oxford University Press, Fourth edition 1975): 43.

period from October to December and it diminishes in spatial distribution as it moves inland from the coast: Nagapatnam–Kumbakonam–Tanjore–Tiruchchirappalli constitute a decreasing order. To the south of the Kaveri delta is what Spate and Learmonth call the 'dry southeast', comprising Madurai, Ramnad (Ramanathapuram) and Tirunelveli. Tank irrigation prevails in Madurai and Ramnad along the Vaigai River, while to the south of it black soil tracts are common in Tirunelveli, which also has little rainfall.[2] To the west of Tiruchchirappalli and Karur, the elevation slowly increases leading up to the Kongunad or Coimbatore plateau. Beyond this is the Palghat pass which breaches the Western Ghats and is an age–old conduit of communication between the Malabar and Coromandel Coasts.

[2] Spate and Learmonth, *India and Pakistan*: 739, 741–742, 749–751, 771, 780.

Map 3.1: Land elevation of South India and Ceylon[3]



[3] Sastri, *A History of South India*: map after 34.

3.2 The political economy of Nagapatnam from the eleventh to the sixteenth century; from Chola to Vijayanagara rule

Early days and the premier Chola port

Nagapatnam has a longer history than either Masulipatnam or Pulicat. The earliest mentions of Nagapatnam date back to the first half of the seventh century AD when the Tamil saints Thirugnana Sambandhar and Thirunavukkarasar, a contemporary of Mahendravarman Pallava (604–630CE), describe it as a well–fortified city with wide roads and large ships. At this juncture, however, the major port of Pallava kings was Mamallapuram (near modern Chennai). By the mid–seventh century CE Nagapatnam had possibly become a transit port for travellers and pilgrims bound for Ceylon and South–East Asian countries. Chinese Buddhist pilgrims such as Xuanzang (Hsuen Tsang), Yijing (I–Ching) called it *Na–kia–po–tan–na*. A ninth century Pallava inscription dubs the city Nagai, and Sundarar a contemporary Tamil saint, describes it as being lit through the night, perhaps due to the heavy commercial traffic and the military forces around the fortress.[4] In the tenth and eleventh centuries the Kaveri delta formed the heartland of the Chola Empire, and Nagapatnam became its official port. Strong connections with South–East Asia were celebrated in the form of a Buddhist *vihara* (temple or monastery); the funds for its construction and the land on which it was built were donated by the Srivijaya ruler and the Chola king, respectively.[5] In the early decades of the eleventh century the Cholas were quite active in the Indian Ocean. Their military prowess was demonstrated in the conquest of Ceylon in 1017 CE and raids of port cities on the Malay Peninsula and in Sumatra in 1025 CE. Along with the Fatimid dynasty in Egypt and the Song Empire in China, the Cholas were one of the three great powers of the Indian Ocean of this period, and they were huge and powerful magnets for the maritime trade passing through their respective regions. Chola politico–economic strength undoubtedly helped Nagapatnam emerge as the premier port of the Coromandel Coast in the eleventh century.[6]

Burton Stein argues that in South India of the early twelfth century, core areas of agriculture and settlement configured in a reverse E form (see map 3.2) characterized by an elongated and discontinuous line of settlement, paralleling the Coromandel Coast in three major inward projections. Cholmandalam in the Kaveri basin was the most densely occupied one, followed by Tondaimandalam (now districts of North Arcot, South Arcot and Chingleput), Pandyamandalam (the portions of the peninsula southward from Madurai) and another line of settlement, though not in the immediate vicinity of the Coromandel Coast but important

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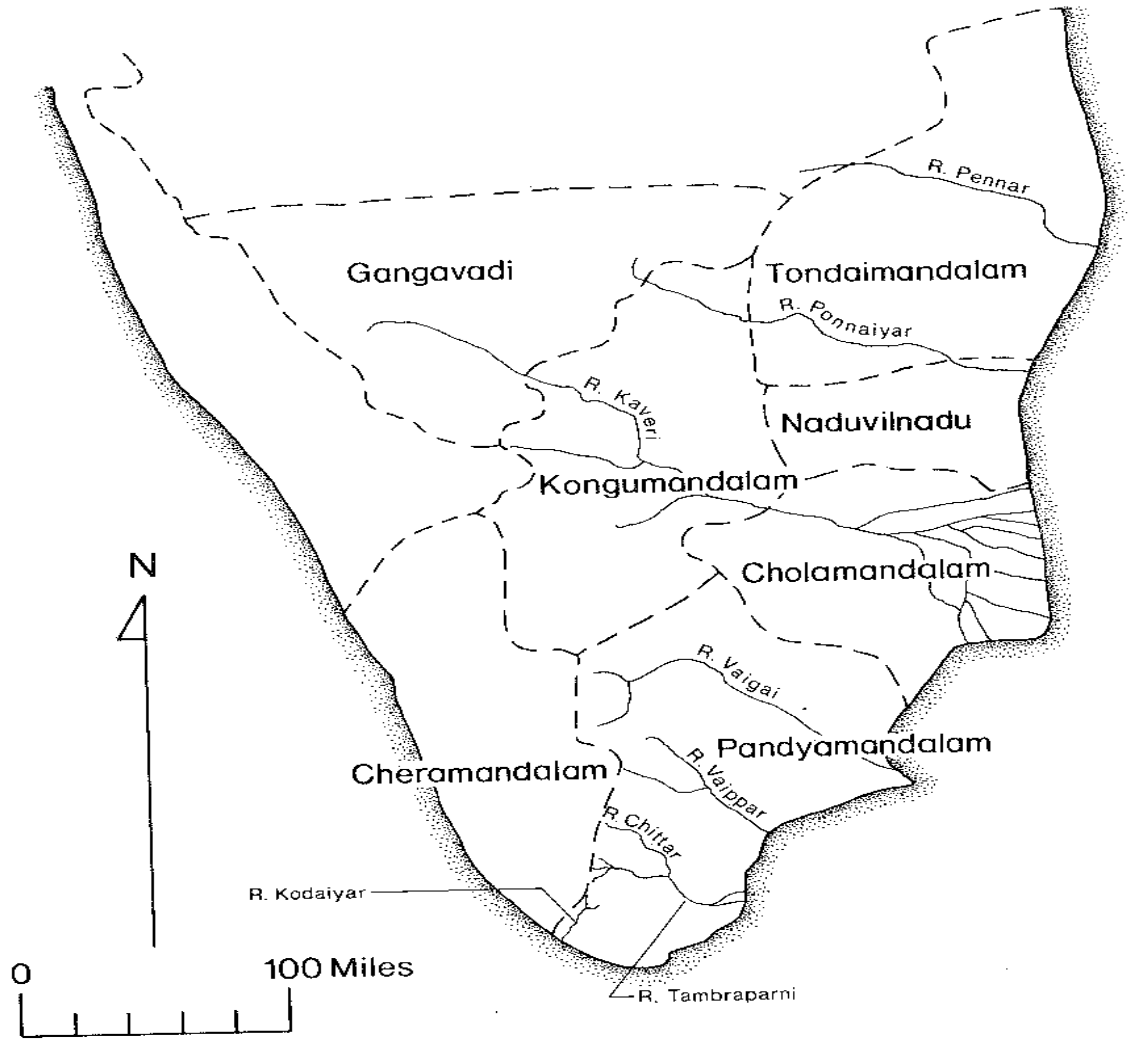
[4] Gokul Seshadri, 'New perspectives on Nagapattinam: The Medieval Port City in the Context of Political, Religious, and Commercial Exchanges between South India, Southeast Asia, and China', in: *Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa: Reflections on the Chola Naval Expeditions to Southeast Asia,* eds Hermann Kulke, K. Kesavapanny and Vijay Sakhuja (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009): 107–109, 118.

[5] Stephen, *The Coromandel Coast and its Hinterland*: 14.

[6] For more on this subject see Hermann Kulke, 'The Naval Expeditions of the Cholas in the context of Asian History', in: *Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa*: 1–19 and Tansen Sen, 'The Military Campaigns of Rajendra Chola and the Chola–Srivijaya–China Triangle', in: ibid: 61–75.

for communications of the Kaveri delta with Malabar, was Kongumandalam (the western portions of the peninsula to the Eastern Ghats, including parts of Mysore).[7] Well–connected to the region of Cholamandalam, Kongumandalam led up to the Palghat pass beyond Coimbatore and facilitated communication with the Malabar Coast. Mandalam, in Tamil Nadu, referred to a large territory, a division of the country. Reproduced in a map by David Ludden, these areas appear as follows.

Map 3.2: South Indian mandalams c. 1000[8]



[7] Burton Stein, 'Integration of the Agrarian System of South India', in: *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History,* ed. Robert Eric Frykenberg (Madison, Milwaukee and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969): 184; for the expansion of Tondaimandalam see page 179.

[8] David Ludden, *Peasant History in South India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985): map 3 after page 67, definition of mandalams 18, 261.

Cholamandalam, the heartland of the Kaveri delta, formed the core of the Chola Empire and later gave us the name 'Coromandel'. The Cholas became active once again in the Bay of Bengal during the reign of Kulottunga I (1070–1118) who maintained friendly relations with Angkor and Pagan, two major states of mainland South–East Asia. This interest was also manifest in his renaming of Vishakhapatnam as Kulottungacolapattanam, a clear hint that the Cholas were eager to trade with Burma and Cambodia via the Isthmus of Kra. Though Chola power declined from the late twelfth century, there was no decrease in south Indian trade with the Bay of Bengal and China. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries two merchant guilds of South India, Ayyavole and Manigramam, were at the peak of their activities. A large south Indian merchant community was present in China in the thirteenth century and so were Chinese traders in South India. A Chinese pagoda was built in Nagapatnam in 1267. This was a phase of intense commercial activity between South India and China, as evidenced by the discovery of hoard of Chinese coins near Nagapatnam which date from 1267 to 1275. The majority of Chinese ceramics found in South India belong to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[9]

How long did this early heyday of Nagapatnam last? Did new political developments affect the maritime landscape of Cholamandalam? Chola power weakened in the thirteenth century as they became embroiled in continual wars with the Hoysalas to the north–west and Pandyas to the south. In 1279, the Pandyan ruler Kulasékhara defeated both the Hoysala king Ramanatha and his Chola counterpart Rajendra III. 'That is the last we hear of Rajendra III and the Cholas,' writes K.A. Nilakanta Sastri. The Pandyas were now the masters of the Kaveri delta.[10] Marco Polo, the Venetian traveller who toured around Asia in the second half of the thirteenth century, does not mention Nagapatnam. Although Polo writes at length about the province of *Ma'bar* (which corresponds to part of the Malabar and Coromandel Coasts, roughly from Quilon in Malabar to Nellore in central Coromandel) but does not offer a single word on Nagapatnam.[11] By this time Nagapatnam had already lost its position as a premier port of the Coromandel, as it happened so often in Coromandel. However, Polo's observation is not the final word. While Nagapatnam may no longer have been an oceanic port, the archaeological findings of coins and ceramics make it apparent that the Kaveri delta still featured as one of the primary maritime zones of the Coromandel Coast, and under Vijayanagara rule Nagapatnam re–emerged as the primary outlet of economic production in the Kaveri delta.

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[9] Kulke, 'The Naval Expeditions of the Cholas': 11–13; Tansen Sen sets the date for this pagoda in 1268, see Tansen Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade: The Realignment of Sino–Indian Relations, 600–1400* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003): 231.

[10] Sastri, *A History of South India*: 211–216.

[11] Ronald Latham transl., *The Travels of Marco Polo* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, Reprint edition 1978): 260–294. 'India' (Chapter 7) covers many aspects but contains no reference to Nagapatnam.

Invasions by the Delhi sultanate

More political changes unfolded in and around the Kaveri delta in the fourteenth century. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, in 1311 an army of the Delhi sultan Alauddin Khalji, led by Malik Kafur, invaded the land controlled by the Hoysalas in Dvarasamudra and the Pandyas in Ma'abar. Though the Pandyan ruler eluded capture, Banarsi Prasad Saksena writes, from the perspective of the invaders the campaigns in the heartland of the Kaveri delta represented Alauddin Khalji's suzerainty.[12] K. A. Nilkanta Sastri disagrees, arguing that the campaigns were nothing more than military raids without any durable impact – in one of these engagements Vikrama Pandya in fact even defeated Malik Kafur. *Ma'bar* is an Arabic word meaning 'passage' or 'ferry' and was used to denote that part of the Indian coastline most frequented by travellers and merchants from Arabia and Persia and which extended in from Quilon (in the modern state of Kerala) to Nellore (at the border of modern–day Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu). In 1323, the heir prince of the Delhi sultanate Muhammed bin Tughlaq conquered *Ma'bar*, imprisoned the Pandyan king and incorporated the area as a province of the Delhi Sultanate when he moved to Daulatabad in 1326 as the sultan. Eventually the Tughlaq governor of *Ma'bar*, Jalaluddin Hasan Shah, successfully rebelled and issued his own coins from Madurai (1333–1334). But between 1365 and 1370 this sultanate was overthrown by Kumara Kampana, son of Bukka who was one of the two founders of the Vijayanagara Empire, and made the Kaveri delta a part of Vijayanagara.[13] What impact did incorporation into the Vijayanagara Empire have on the Kaveri delta?

The Vijayanagara Empire and the Nayakas

Basing her arguments on evidence available from inscriptions, Meera Abraham writes that overseas trade on the Coromandel Coast in the mid–thirteenth and early fourteenth century found outlets and inlets in the Krishna delta, the Penner delta and the stretch of Pandyamandalam between Nagapatnam and Kulashekharapattinam.[14] The *Ma'bar* region in South India continued to be visited by Chinese shipping in the fourteenth century, as Tansen Sen points out. The *Daoyi zhi lüe* (Brief Record of the Barbarian Islands), Wang Dayuan's source on China's trade with the Indian Ocean in the Yuan dynasty from 1279 to about 1350, describes a pagoda at a site called Badan, which is thought to have been Nagapatnam. The commercial relationship between *Ma'bar* and Yuan China continued during the Pandya kingdom which sent missions to the Chinese court. A tributary relationship, Tansen Sen argues, continued until the mid–fifteenth century, particularly with the port of Kayal in *Ma'bar*.[15]

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[12] Saksena, 'Alauddin Khalji', in: *The Delhi Sultanate*: 410–417, especially 414–417 for Malik Kafur's campaigns in Ma'abar.

[13] Sastri, *A History of South India*: description of Ma'abar or Ma'bar on 222; Malik Kafur's campaigns 222–229, Muhammed bin Tughalq's sojourn 233, formation of Madurai Sultanate and its demise 237 and 266.

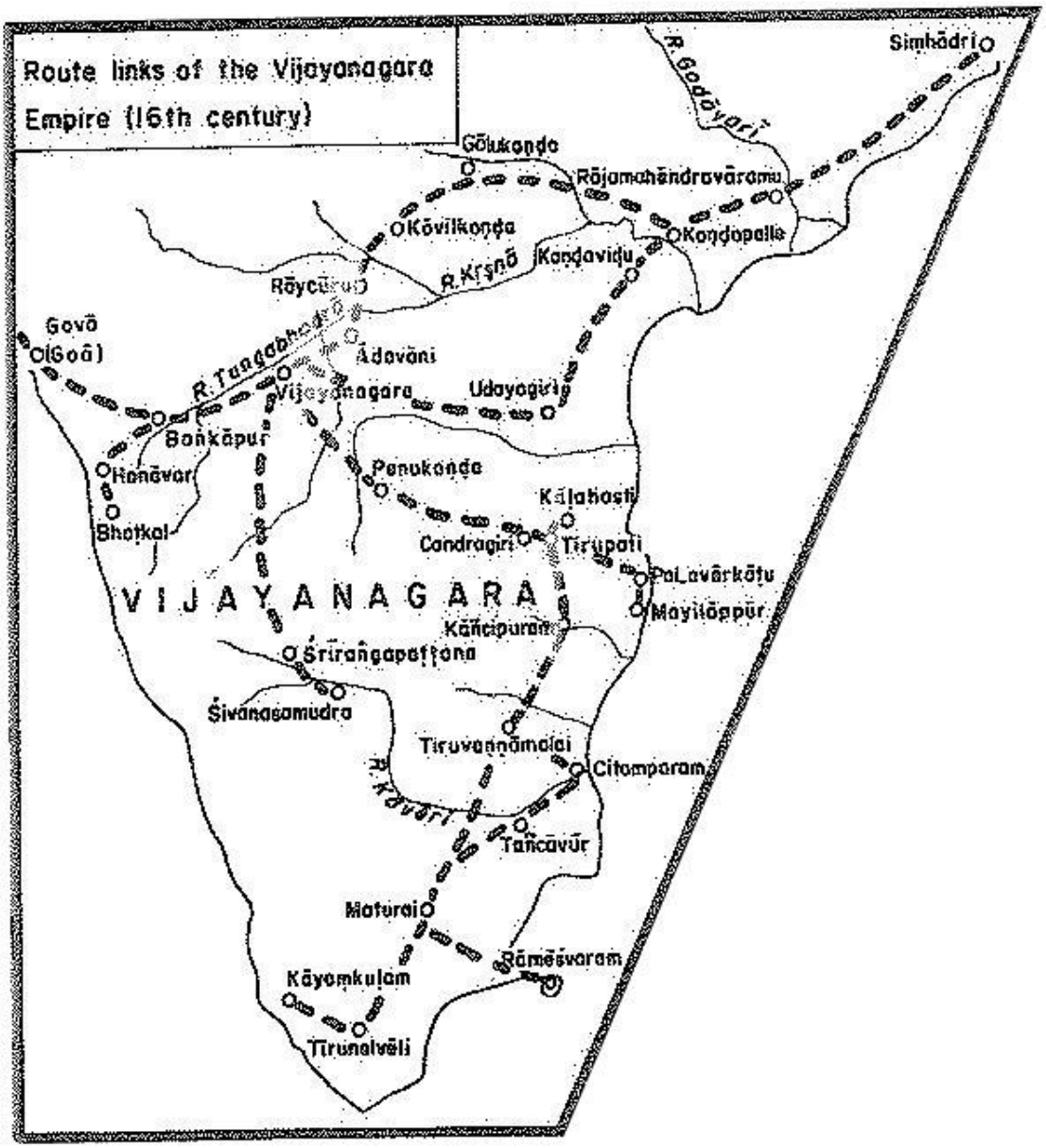
[14] Meera Abraham, *Two Medieval Merchant Guilds of South India (*New Delhi: Manohar, 1988): 145.

[15] Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy and Trade*: 231–232.

S. Jeyaseela Stephen writes that up to and including the thirteenth century Chinese traders favoured Nagapatnam while from the next century they preferred the Malabar ports of Quilon, Cochin and Calicut, a point also made by Tansen Sen. This shift should be seen in the light of the weakening of Chola power in the Kaveri delta. By the fourteenth century Nagapatnam had declined in importance and Muslim traders began to settle at Nagore, north of Nagapatnam. Saluva Tirumalai Devamaharaya, a Vijayanagara governor who ruled the Tanjore region from 1450 to 1486, founded a new port town and named it after himself: Tirumalairayanpattinam. The port city was connected by waterways to the rice cultivating hinterland. It was not until the sixteenth century that Nagapatnam became an international trading centre once again when the Muslim merchants of Nagore began to participate in the overseas commerce at the port, along with the Portuguese.[16] The case of Tirumalairayanpattinam is yet another example of the dynamic affecting port cities of the Coromandel. Discussions in earlier chapters on Masulipatnam and Pulicat have demonstrated how political and commercial patronage, indigenous as well as European, was crucial for any port city hoping to thrive and prosper. A map by Jean Deloche showing the road links of sixteenth–century Vijayanagara shows neither Nagapatnam nor Tirumalairayanpattinam as ports of the Kaveri delta. The coastal town nearest to Kaveri delta and Tanjore, as shown on the map of road links, is Chidambaram and it was no port.

[16] Stephen, *The Coromandel Coast and its Hinterland*: 108–109, 111.

Map 3.3: Route links of Vijayanagara in the sixteenth century[17]



Historical literature on Vijayanagara stresses its connections with the ports of the Kanara coast for importing horses. But Pulicat, too, as noted in Chapter 2, became an important outlet under the Vijayanagara Empire. Tirumalairayanpattinam had not disappeared off the landscape, however, as we will discover later in this chapter. Nagapatnam did not feature for almost two hundred years, but then resurged out of nowhere in the sixteenth century. The sudden disappearance of flourishing cities was not unfamiliar to observers in medieval and early–modern India. What explains the disappearance of Nagapatnam from the commercial

[17] Deloche, *Transport and Communications in India, Land Transport*: the map on 76 shows the land routes of South India in the sixteenth century.

landscape of the Indian Ocean? Was it due to a lack of political patronage, migration of merchant communities or a combination of both?

Often it appeared to contemporary travellers that the cities of pre–colonial South Asia had a shifting nature. As we have noted, the Coromandel Coast was not blessed with natural harbours, and ports facing the sea had a precarious existence. The silting up of rivers or changes in the roadstead or migration of merchant groups could lead to a port city's decline. In this context a port city is described as being 'absent' or 'present' on the maritime landscape only in terms of its coverage in contemporaneous literature. Travellers who visited Vijayanagara in this period – Abdur Razzak, Niccolo Conti in the fifteenth century and Dominigo Paes, Fernando Nunez in the sixteenth century – do not mention Nagapatnam.[18] We had discussed in the previous chapter that after the fall of Vijayanagara in the late sixteenth century Pulicat had probably retrograded to a minor port. A similar development, we may assume, had taken place in Nagapatnam too. We will shortly find in this chapter that it was indeed possible for ports to survive as coastal hamlets in Coromandel until they became visible again as a part of the commercial network of a European trading company. In the case of Nagapatnam, the weakening of Chola power had coincided with the migration of merchants to the neighbouring port of Nagore and the port's former connections with South–East Asia had disappeared as well. However, the economic potential of the Kaveri delta, with its rice–growing hinterland and textile industry, was increasingly tapped by administrators of the Vijayanagara Empire from the fifteenth centuy and in the long run this helped in the resurgence of Nagapatnam as a port of Coromandel.

During Vijayanagara rule there was a steady trickle of migration from the Andhra region to the Tamil country. As early as the late fourteenth century, one group of Telugu migrants may have accompanied Kumara Kampana's Tamil campaigns; it is known that by the end of the 1300s a Telugu warrior named Gandaragulu Marayya Nayaka was present in South Arcot, but not all Telugu migrants were part of a larger military movement and many were independent figures. Accompanied by over a thousand people, mostly soldiers and retainers, Ettapa Nayaka of Chandragiri left his native Chittoor district in 1423 due to changing conditions. This war–band settled around Madurai and in the 1560s their descendants constructed the Ettaiyapuram fort in Tirunelveli district. Over the centuries the warrior–peasants were joined by large numbers of Telugu artisans and merchants as part of a migration that peaked between 1400 and 1550. The Telugu migrants settled primarily in areas which were elevated, dry, and often had black soils. Initially subordinate to the Vijayanagara Empire as *nayakas*, over the longer term they established the *nayaka* kingdoms of Gingee,

[18] R.H. Major ed., *India in the Fifteenth Century: Being a Collection of Narratives of Voyages to India* (Delhi: Deep Publications, 1974) covers the accounts of Razzak and Conti; Robert Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire (Vijayanagar)* (Shannon: Irish University Press, Reprint edition 1972) features the accounts of Paes and Nunez.

Tanjore and Madurai. There was possibly another wave of migration into the Tamil country in the years after 1565.[19]

Noboru Karashima's study of inscriptions reveals how the structure of Vijayanagara rule in the Kaveri delta changed over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the inscriptions on the Srirangam temple, north of Tiruchchirapalli, the king grants villages or remits taxes more frequently in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries than in the later period. The king is mentioned in four of the 29 fifteenth–century inscriptions. Although far more inscriptions date from the sixteenth century, the frequency of grants commissioned by the king decreases; only three inscriptions which record royal grants date from the first half of the sixteenth century. There are no cases of grants by the king in the seventeenth century. Furthermore, the sixteenth–century inscriptions refer to a *nayakattanam*, a clearly defined territory bestowed by the king on *nayakas* for their own management – a phenomenon that seems to have begun in Tamil Nadu at the end of the fifteenth century and Karashima argues it was a turning point in Vijayanagara rule. The sixteenth–century inscriptions reveal that many families who had been assigned a *nayakattanam*, such as the Madurai *nayakas*, continued to act as donors for two generations or more. While the involvement of kings and ministers in commissioning land grants and remitting taxes declined during the sixteenth century, the power of locally entrenched lineages of invading Vijayanagara commanders and administrators increased.[20]

Nagapatnam's re–emergence in the sixteenth century was hardly *sui generis*. Behind it lay the layered geopolitical process of expansion of agricultural tracts, their incorporation within the Vijayanagara administration and the linking of inland territories with the maritime world of the Indian Ocean. Nagapatnam's story has striking resemblances with that of Pulicat: both expanded dramatically in the sixteenth century and their integration with the trading circuits of Bay of Bengal was part of a story of imperial expansion, of the prevailing strategies in South Asia that sought to integrate the heartland of empires with the coastal outlets. Arguably, these dynamics impacted equally on several other ports along the coastal landscape of central and southern Coromandel. Let us now turn to the arrival of European companies in the Kaveri delta.

3.3 The economy of Nagapatnam and Kaveri delta in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

Sixteenth–century observers

Early sixteenth–century European travelogues touch upon Nagapatnam and the Kaveri delta when describing the different regions of the Indian Ocean. The first to do so is thought to be

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[19] Cynthia Talbot, *Precolonial India in Practice: Society, Region, and Identity in Medieval Andhra* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001): 197–198.

[20] Noboru Karashima, *Towards a New Formation: South Indian Society under Vijayanagar Rule* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992): 64–66.

the one written by Italian traveller Ludovico Varthema, who refers to a port *Cioromandel*, which John Winter Jones interprets as Nagapatnam:

> The said city is situated opposite to the island of Zeilon, when you have passed the Cape of Cumerin. In this district they gather a great quantity of rice, and it is the route to very large countries. There are many Moorish merchants here who go and come here for their merchandise.[21]

Varthema does not reflect on what sort of merchandise was traded from and to Nagapatnam. There is no doubt that the district he refers to is the Kaveri delta, which produced vast quantities of rice and was connected to Vijayanagara and Malabar. It is possible that Varthema sailed from either Nagapatnam or Nagore to Pegu (now Bago, Myanmar), backing up with personal experience his assertion that Cioromandel was the 'route to very large countries'. As described earlier in this chapter the coastline around the Kaveri delta was also frequented in this period by Arab merchants and Muslim merchants who had settled in Nagore in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Nagapatnam appears in Tomé Pire's list of famous ports of the Vijayanagara Empire in his *Suma Oriental*. As we will find out later, he does more than merely mention the port.[22]

We will now look at the agricultural pattern of and textile production in the Kaveri delta in the sixteenth century. After all, they provided Nagapatnam with its major items of export: rice and textiles.

Agriculture and textile production in the sixteenth century Kaveri delta

Though rice dominates around Tanjore, the agricultural pattern of the delta and its margins is complex. Rice is also the major crop along the northern margins towards the river Vellar, but the Kaveri and Vellar interfluve (a region of higher land between two rivers that is part of the same drainage system) is marked by dry crops including *cumbu* (pearl millet, a grass grown in Africa and India for grains), groundnuts and sugar. Beyond Tiruchchirappalli agriculture is dominated by the *cholam* (sorghum grain) and *ragi* (millet) food crops and the castor bean cash crop. Gram is the leading crop in Karur, on the border of the Kaveri delta and Coimbatore plateau.[23]

Differences between the two ecological and social milieus of South India – the wet south and the dry south – added another layer of complexity to this agricultural picture. The fertile river valleys and deltas of the wet south were the scenes of intensive rice cultivation, while the areas beyond them formed an unsettled world inhabited by martial predators, forest– and hill–dwelling hunter–gatherers and predatory cattle–keeping plainsmen. Distinct

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[21] John Winter Jones transl., *The Travels of Ludovico di Varthema in Egypt, Syria, Arabia Deserta and Arabia Felix, in Persia, India, and Ethiopia* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1863): 186–187.
[22] Armando Cortesao ed., *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires: An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, Written in Malacca and India in 1512–1515* (Nendeln/Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint Edition, 1967): 91.
[23] Spate and Learmonth, *India and Pakistan*: 764–765.

as these two worlds were, the boundaries between them were porous, particularly in areas such as the Kongunad (dry tracts of modern–day Coimbatore and Salem districts) and the Pudukkottai, which formed a frontier between on the one hand the Pandya and Chola cores, and on the other the plains country of Ramnad and Sivaganga to the north of the Tambraparni river. Exchange between the forest fringes and the wet core had been going for centuries, but they intensified from the middle of the fourteenth century.[24]

Although to the west of Pulicat along the river Araniyar were the Palem range and Periya Puliyur forest, and the landscape was generally arid to its north–west around Cuddapah, Pulicat, just like Nagapatnam, can be characterised as part of the wet south, particularly with regard to agricultural production. Majority of annual rainfall along the stretch from Pulicat to Nagapatnam, as we have noted, was concentrated during the retreating north–east monsoon from October to December. Rice, grown along the littoral, the river valleys and in the interior with the help of tanks, was the staple crop in both central and southern Coromandel. There was an important difference though: while central Coromandel had a delicate balance between the demand for and supply of rice because it could export rice in times of good harvests and had to depend on imports of the same when harvests failed, southern Coromandel, especially the Kaveri delta, was reputed to be a rice–surplus zone. As one moves further west from the Kaveri delta, there is a decrease in rainfall and an increase in elevation finally leading to the Kongunad plateau which acts as a conduit of communication with Malabar through the Palghat pass in the Western Ghats. Southwards from the Kaveri delta is the dry belt of south–eastern India in Tirunelveli that was marked by less rainfall, black soil and production of cotton. Pulicat and Nagapatnam– the two ports taken as vantage points to understand the politico–economic axes of central and southern Coromandel– were very much a part of the wet south whose primary agricultural characteristic was intensive rice cultivation. The pace of interaction between the wet zones of Tamil Nadu, such as Pulicat and Nagapatnam, and the dry zones of forests and hills, we may assume, had quickened with the expansion and consolidation of Vijayanagara rule from the fourteenth century.

But in what ways did these contacts shape the world of South India? David Ludden argues that the expansion of farm territories along the coasts connected the sea and the mountains, while sites along the coast were linked by water routes (mainly near the port for ease of access, the rivers of South India were not so navigable inland). As intensive agriculture expanded inland, coastal territories collected commodities from forests, fisheries and wet and dry farmland. Products from the uplands and mountains included timber, pepper and spices; the timber was used to build ships and the pepper and spices were traded overseas. From the twelfth century, farmers also moved north along the river systems to clear dry lands and build new irrigation systems along the Kaveri, Krishna and Godavari rivers – an example being the Kongu (Kongunad) region in the Kaveri basin. The integration of dry farm societies in the

[24] Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*: 19, 21, 22–23.

interior with their old counterparts along the irrigated coast had two major effects: together they produced all the raw materials required for weaving; and the sites that were convenient to function as weaving centres. The versatility and mobility of many weaving communities in the peninsula originated in their experiences in the dry zones characterized by military competition, trade and agricultural expansion. These communities connected the black cotton soil of the upland interior and the zones of maritime trade. No wonder, David Ludden argues, that commercialism was so deep–seated in the agricultural discourse of many regions. In the Tamil country, all varieties of land and capital assets became known in local parlance for their commercial value; millets, oilseeds, pulses and cotton were produced in dry lands, and their value varied depending on the soil type. The *nayakas* and other Telugus, with their bulls and rich granaries, controlled the best black soils.[25]

The extension of agriculture into drier zones of the Tamil countryside and the growing networks of trade brought in large quantities of cash, and these changing realities of the economic and sociological realms of the *nayaka* world introduced a hedonistic aspect to their cultural expressions and their courts. The social groups that accompanied the nayakas comprised upwardly mobile entrepreneurs who combined martial and commercial skills. They moved to different regions, engaged in new activities and contributed to the commercialization of their political economy. The *nayaka* kingdoms and the Aravidu state (Aravidu is also often the name given to the dynasty which ruled the shrunken Vijayanagara kingdom from Chandragiri after 1565) earned sales tax from the market towns that had sprung up. They levied customs duties on exports from the ports on the Coromandel Coast and charged light duties on imports, making clear their intentions to promote international trade. The king's public displays of consumption and wealth, in the form of feasts and celebrations of royal splendour, were clear signals of the *nayaka*'s grip on this increasingly monetized environment.[26]

The looms that fed Nagapatnam and Nagore were located within the Kaveri delta (see Map 2.2).[27] In this regard, the port's textile industry more closely resembled that of Masulipatnam's than that of Pulicat, where weaving communities were densely concentrated along the coast. This difference was also reflected in the description of roads and villages. The Dutch surveys of the economy in the Godavari delta had echoes in the Kaveri delta, as we will see later in this chapter and in Chapter 5. The number of weaving centres tended to diminish the nearer one was to Tanjore and Tiruchchirapalli (as shown in Map 2.2, about 1500 AD), thus in a way their density corresponded with the fertility of the soil– as we have noted in this chapter. The spatial distribution of rainfall in the Kaveri delta decreases as one moves westwards from the coast: Nagapatnam–Kumbakonam–Tanjore–Tiruchchirapalli constitute a

[25] David Ludden, *An Agrarian History of South Asia, The New Cambridge History of India,* IV.4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 118–119, 152.
[26] Catherine B. Asher and Cynthia Talbot, *India before Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 178–180.
[27] Ramaswamy, *Textiles and Weavers*: map on page 7.

decreasing order. But this does not indicate that Tanjore was less fertile. We had discussed in Chapter 2 that the choice of weaving settlements depended on soil types, availability of dyes and ease of access to transport. Another factor that must have also mattered was food security. Fertility of soil ensured decent production of staple food crop (rice) and this, in addition to the aforementioned reasons, helps explain the proliferation of weaving settlements in the Kaveri delta until Tanjore and Tiruchchirapalli, indirectly reflecting on the food security of the region. As we will find later in this chapter and in Chapter 5, the VOC sources also speak of the concentration of weaving settlements westwards from Nagapatnam and Kumbakonam. Similarly, the decreasing number of weaving settlements west of Tanjore and Tiruchchirapalli reflects the ecological conditions of the region. As we have noted, westwards of the Kaveri delta elevation increased leading to the Palghat pass that connected southern Coromandel with Malabar. In this region intensive rice cultivation of the Kaveri delta was replaced by production of sorghum grains, millets and castor beans as cash crops. So, we may say the weaving settlements of the Kaveri delta were a part of the wet south while cotton, the raw material for the industry, came from Tirunelveli– a region that has been characterised as the dry south.

Temples also supported weaving activities. Professional tailors were attached to the Tanjore temple in the Chola Empire,[28] and weavers must also have been attached to the Srirangam temple, north of Tiruchchirapalli. To the north of the Kaveri delta weaving centres proliferated along the Ponnaiyar river and beyond it towards the Palar in central Coromandel. Around Madurai, south of the delta, weaving centres were few and far between.

Stephen points out that in the Kaveri delta of the sixteenth–century, weaving flourished in Tirupullanam, Tillaisthanam, Konerirajapuram, Tiruvidaimarudur, Achutamangalam, Tripattavellur, Nathamangudi, Kandiraditham, Kamarasavalli, Gangaikondacholapuram, Tiruvaigavur, Tiruvalanjuli, Tiruvenkadu, Tirunaithanam, Tirukannapuram, Tanjore, Kapisthalam and Vedarayam. Moreover, heavy Portuguese demand for exports to South–East Asia led the *nayakas* to reclaim forest lands and encouraged the formation of new weaving settlements. It is relevant to the discussion here of changing political structures to recall Stephen's argument that while in the fifteenth century inscriptions record how temple authorities collected loom taxes, in the sixteenth century only nayakas could collect loom taxes, and his conclusion that by this time the *nayakas* more or less controlled weaving in Coromandel.[29]

Painting on textiles was an integral part of textile production. Jón Ólafsson, an Icelandic traveller to South India in the seventeenth century, describes the process of painting on clothes:

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[28] Ramaswamy, *Textiles and Weavers*: 17.
[29] Stephen, *The Coromandel Coast and its Hinterland*: 70, 73–74, 75.

> They are skilful in every kind of weaving and painting and dyeing their cotton cloth with every kind of colour, for which purpose they have long houses without walls, within which are tables as long as the houses, and on them they have their pots of all colours and their brushes or pens, with which they mark and draw on all the cotton cloth and silk which they intend to dye. Their brushes are made of hog's bristles, and are both large and small; and with these they have great skill and artistry in making all kinds of pictures on the cloth.[30]

Vijaya Ramaswamy points out that Nagore had served as the port for those textiles that were produced in the region around Tanjore in the sixteenth century, while Nagapatnam acquired similar status in the early seventeenth century. The seventeenth century traders of Nagapatnam were Muslims and Chettis who profited from their trade with Aceh, Mocha and the Persian Gulf.[31] In *Suma Oriental* Tomé Pires points out that textiles from the Coromandel Coast, particularly the Kaveri delta region around Nagapatnam, had a good market in Sunda – various kinds of clothes, both printed and white, were sold there. In *Suma Oriental* the Coromandel is referred to as *Bonua Qlim* (or *Bonuaqelim* or *Benuaqelim*) from *Bonua* meaning land in Malay and *Qlim* or *Quelim* being a corruption of the Malayalam 'Kling'. The Portuguese applied this nomenclature to those merchants who came from the Coromandel Coast to trade and settle in Malacca.[32]

The textile industry of the Kaveri delta became increasingly specialized in catering for markets in mainland and maritime South–East Asia. In the sixteenth century, the *nayakas* in Tanjore, Madurai and Gingee hardly had any autonomy and were feudatories of Vijayanagara. However, by the seventeenth century all three became autonomous, though they still acknowledged the suzerainty of Vijayanagara.[33] This resonates with Noboru Karamshima's analysis of the inscriptions in Srirangam temple described earlier in this chapter, which he interprets as pointing to debilitating authority and presence of the Vijayanagara emperor in the Tamil country. Nagapatnam's resurgence in the sixteenth century was, therefore, as much a result of patronage from the Tanjore *nayakas* as it was of the Portuguese presence. While the Portuguese connected the port to South–East Asia and indirectly caused it to be better documented due to the increase in visiting travellers, the patronage of Tanjore *nayakas* was crucial to connecting the disperse regions in a well–knit economy looking out towards the ocean.

In a nutshell, the economy of the region around sixteenth–century Nagapatnam was characterized by cultivation of rice and textile production. Unsurprisingly, both were major

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[30] Dame Bertha Phillpotts transl., *The Life of the Icelander Jón Ólafsson Traveller to India: Written by Himself and Completed about 1661 A.D. with a Continuation, by Another Hand, up to His Death in 1679, vol. II* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1932): 142–144.
[31] Ramaswamy, *Textiles and Weavers*: 79–80, 134.
[32] Cortesao ed., *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*: 169, see 92 for Bonuaqelim.
[33] Mukund, *The Trading World of the Tamil Merchant*: 43, 54.

features of Nagapatnam's overseas trade; in the seventeenth century they were shipped initially from Pulicat and later from Nagapatnam itself. The rice economy can be split into two components: the huge volumes of rice cultivated in the Kaveri delta (the region maintained a surplus even during wars and poor monsoons in other parts of Coromandel); and the associated export of rice from Nagapatnam to Malabar, Ceylon and other parts of Coromandel.

Nagapatnam, Malabar and Ceylon

From a politico–economic standpoint, the connections with Malabar and Ceylon set apart Nagapatnam and the Kaveri delta from the other two port–hinterland complexes discussed in this dissertation, and this difference became quite prominent during Aurangzeb's southern campaigns, as Chapter 5 shows. The geographical proximity of southern Coromandel and Ceylon meant it was easy for larger and smaller vessels to ply trade between these regions. Vessels also sailed from the ports of southern Coromandel, including Nagapatnam, around the southernmost tip of India westwards to Malabar; the Kaveri delta was also linked with Malabar through the passes in the Western Ghats. Good agricultural production here ensured more food security than in other parts of Coromandel: the delta remained a rice–surplus region throughout Aurangzeb's campaigns and rice was a staple item of coastal trade with Ceylon and Malabar. The section on historiography in the introductory chapter characterizes coastal trade as being more immune to political instability and wars in in South India than in other regions of the sub–continent. Chapter 5 shows that the Kaveri delta was relatively resilient during Aurangzeb's military campaigns and that the overland routes between the delta and Malabar, removed as they were from the zones of Mughal military action, also remained unaffected. Controlling the overland and maritime routes from the Kaveri delta to Malabar and Ceylon offered significant politico–military leverage to any state based in southern Coromandel. The Cholas had benefitted from just such a position in the eleventh century; wealth could be tapped from the trade between the eastern and western littorals of India and with Ceylon, as well as from the connections established by merchants trading between the Arabian Sea and the ports of South–East Asia.

Ceylon traded with Malabar and Coromandel along an arc extending from Travancore through Madurai and Tanjore to Madras and Pulicat. The scale and nature of this trade was quite varied, and it was served by everything from substantial ocean–going vessels to single–masted *thonies* (or *toni*, large flat–bottomed boats common to Coromandel and Ceylon, mentioned in Chapter 1). Coromandel–based Chetty and Chulia merchants stopped off at Ceylon on their voyages between the Red Sea and the Indonesian archipelago. The main Muslim players in this commerce were large–scale traders and small–scale pedlars from Quilon, Kayalpatnam, Ramnad, Nagapatnam and Nagore. While the blood relatives of Muslim merchants from the aforementioned ports had settled in the Ceylonese towns of Puttalam, Mannar, Galle and Batticaloa, some other merchants resided dually in Ceylon and India for long periods. Chetty Hindu traders figured in large numbers and Chetty families had settled

for long periods in ports such as Colombo, Galle and Jaffna, with Tamil Hindus in Jaffna acting as their brokers and agents.

This trade was crucial for the peasant economy of Ceylon because it brought from Coromandel textiles of many kinds: coarser varieties for the peasants; dyed and painted varieties for women; and finely woven clothing for the richer sections of the population. Another major commodity exported from the Kaveri delta to Ceylon was rice, which compensated for the shortages of food supplies. In return Ceylon's major export items to India included areca nuts, coconut and its by–products, coir ropes and fibres, palmyrah wood and handicrafts of local artisans. Elephants from Ceylon were also exported in large numbers to South India. The main ports had markets where elephants were sold at auction to Indian merchants operating on behalf of rulers. Though the Portuguese made this trade a state monopoly, they did not engage in it because they found it difficult to transport the large beasts and anyway had no access to the inland markets of India.[34]

The Portuguese began to settle in Nagapatnam in the sixteenth century. Sanjay Subrahmanyam writes that the rice exported from the Kaveri delta ports served as ballast in vessels trading to Aceh. Nagapatnam also supplied rice to the west coast of Ceylon, Jaffna and, for much of the sixteenth century, southern Malabar. This trade was probably oriented primarily towards Ceylon and the profits of the rice trade to Jaffna induced Portuguese *casados* (married Portuguese settlers) to settle in Nagapatnam in the first half of the sixteenth century. A considerable part of this trade supplied the Portuguese garrisons and was hence controlled by the administration, but private traders had a good share too. They exported rice to Ceylon and imported large quantities of areca, cinnamon, timber and elephants from the island. In the early sixteenth century, the Portuguese tended to settle in and around the bustling port of Pulicat, but this pattern changed from the 1530s when two nuclei developed: one was a complex in central Coromandel incorporating Pulicat and San Thomé, and another, in southern Coromandel, encompassed the Kaveri delta around Nagapatnam. The Portuguese were also engaged in the coastal trade to Pulicat in this period. They operated alongside Marakkayars (a subdivision of the Tamil Muslims of Coromandel),[35] the principal commercial group in Nagapatnam, on small profit margins and small individual consignments in trade. By 1600, Nagapatnam was the dominant port in southern Coromandel and was linked to ports in Bengal (mainly Hughli and Chittagong); Martaban; the Malay peninsula ports of Ujangselang, Trang, Kedah and Perak; Aceh; and the ports of the Sunda Strait.[36]

The Portuguese crown did not approve of the settlers in sixteenth–century Nagapatnam. Nevertheless, they continued to trade in rice. Trigo de Almeida, one of the

[34] For the last two paragraphs see Sinnappah Arasaratnam, 'Ceylon in the Indian Ocean Trade: 1500–1800', in: *India and the Indian Ocean 1500–1800,* ed. Ashin Das Gupta and M. N. Pearson (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1987): 225,227 for the elephant trade, 231–232.
[35] See glossary in Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce*: 391.
[36] Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*: 53, 105, 190–191.

captains of Nagapatnam, procured rice from the hinterland and merchants such as Diogo Fernandez Pereira supplied rice regularly in 1586. The profits earned from this trade enabled the Portuguese settlers of Nagapatnam to build houses of stone in 1594. As a part of the trade between the eastern and western coasts of India, Portuguese ships annually carried more than 20,000 measures of rice from Nagapatnam. This port city was also situated at one end of another axis of domestic trade: the overland routes. As explained in the introductory chapter, indigenous merchants defied attempts by the Portuguese and the Dutch to establish a monopoly on the trade of pepper by transporting it overland from Malabar to Coromandel. Pepper was smuggled from Quilon to the Coromandel Coast through Vilinjam, Aryankavu and Puthura. An alternative route crossed the Western Ghats via the Palghat pass and Pudukkottai in Coimbatore district (Kongunad plateau). A lucrative trade, it attracted Portuguese traders in no small measure. A Portuguese resident of Cochin named Antonio Mendes traded with Nagapatnam, while another, Jose Fernandes Correa, left Cochin permanently to settle in Nagapatnam. The efforts of the Estado da India in Goa to blockade the smuggling of pepper into Coromandel failed.[37]

In part, the smuggling of pepper overland across the passes to Nagapatnam was also an act of resistance to the Portuguese monopoly by Muslim merchant groups in Malabar. Muslim merchants from Malabar known as *mappila* moved inland to explore alternative outlets and the route from Calicut to Nagapatnam seems to have been particularly effective, argues Sebastian Prange. Once it had reached the Coromandel Coast, this pepper found its way to Masulipatnam, Bengal and the ports of South–East Asia.[38]

The VOC and Nagapatnam

In what was partly a repetition of Chola military campaigns, in the second half of the seventeenth century the VOC focused on Nagapatnam's connections with Malabar and Ceylon with a view to establishing their control over the southern coastline of India. They traded in the principal export commodities of the Kaveri delta, rice and textiles, to forge commercial links with Ceylon and South–East Asia. Just like the Portuguese, the VOC shipped rice from Nagapatnam to their garrisons in Ceylon, but the primary attraction for the Dutch in southern Coromandel was, as in other regions of this littoral, textiles. Here we will trace the early Dutch expeditions around Nagapatnam, and look at how they established themselves along this coastline and strove to organize production of textiles.

The Dutch arrived on the Coromandel Coast at the turn of the seventeenth century. Their commercial reconnoitres in the early seventeenth century provide us with details of what textiles were produced around Nagapatnam and to where they were shipped. A Dutch report records that cotton textiles from Nagapatnam had a good market in Banda, Amboina

[37] Stephen, *The Coromandel Coast and its Hinterland*: 116–118.

[38] Sebastian R. Prange, '"Measuring by the bushel": reweighing the Indian Ocean pepper trade', *Historical Research* 84, 224 (2011): 231.

(Ambon island) and Siam but only lists the varieties that were shipped to Banda (in this case five in number).[39] The varieties being shipped to Siam were quite possibly omitted from the report because it was written when this country did not feature prominently in the VOC game plan at that point, which sought to link Coromandel with the Indonesian archipelago. After establishing factories in northern and central Coromandel, prominent among which were Masulipatnam and Pulicat, the VOC consolidated their position in the first half of the seventeenth century. By the 1630s, Dutch interests had shifted on a pan–Asian scale from China and Japan to South Asia, where the most important commodities to be procured were cinnamon in Ceylon and pepper in Malabar. Allying with the kingdom of Kandy, the Dutch waged wars against the Portuguese in Ceylon. An inconclusive struggle between the two parties continued for more than two decades, but in 1656 Colombo fell to the Dutch after a successful siege. Two years later the VOC conquered the Portuguese strongholds of Jaffna and Mannar in the north of Ceylon. In a bid to completely secure Ceylon against the Portuguese Estado the Dutch drove their expansion on to Malabar where Quilon (1661), Cranganore (1662) and Cochin (1663) fell in rapid succession.[40] Nagapatnam (1658) had also been captured by the Dutch as a part of this concerted strategy. As mentioned above, this was partly a rerun of the pattern of Chola naval campaigns – securing the coastline of the far south was crucial to controlling Ceylon and dominating the shipping of the Malabar Coast.

It could not be said that the VOC had a peaceful time of it after their victory over the Portuguese. Using the Dutch occupation of Nagapatnam as a pretext to expel all Europeans, the *nayaka* of Tanjore besieged the city. However, the Dutch defeated him and extracted an order which conceded to them the city and the ten neighbouring villages previously held by the Portuguese. At this, the inhabitants of these villages came under the jurisdiction of the Dutch and the nayaka also exempted the Dutch from all customs duties at the port. Occupied mostly by weavers of the *kaikolar* caste (alternate spelling *kaikkolar*) but partly also by members of the *seniar*, *saliar* and *chedar* castes, the villages of Puravachery, Naranamangalam, Sangamangalam and Manjikudi produced cloth for the markets in Bantam and Aceh. The merchants of Nagapatnam and Nagore drew their textiles from villages in the interior such as Sikkal, Aliyur and Tevur. Other settlements in the interior also producing cotton goods included Alivalam, Pulivalam, Kariangudy, Mapilaikuppam and Poondotum. Unlike Masulipatnam, Pulicat and Madras, the southern Coromandel ports had no great markets for local consumption of luxury goods; Tanjore, Madurai and Tirunelveli had no social classes who could afford such items. The major internal markets dealt in textiles as well as raw materials and staples such as metals, rice, other food grains, pepper and spices. The raw cotton was produced in the upper Kaveri region around modern–day Bangalore, Mysore and Kaveripakkam, which along with the black–soil tracts of upper Madurai and Tirunelveli supplied the centres of southern Coromandel. Ariyalur, to the south–west of Porto Novo, had

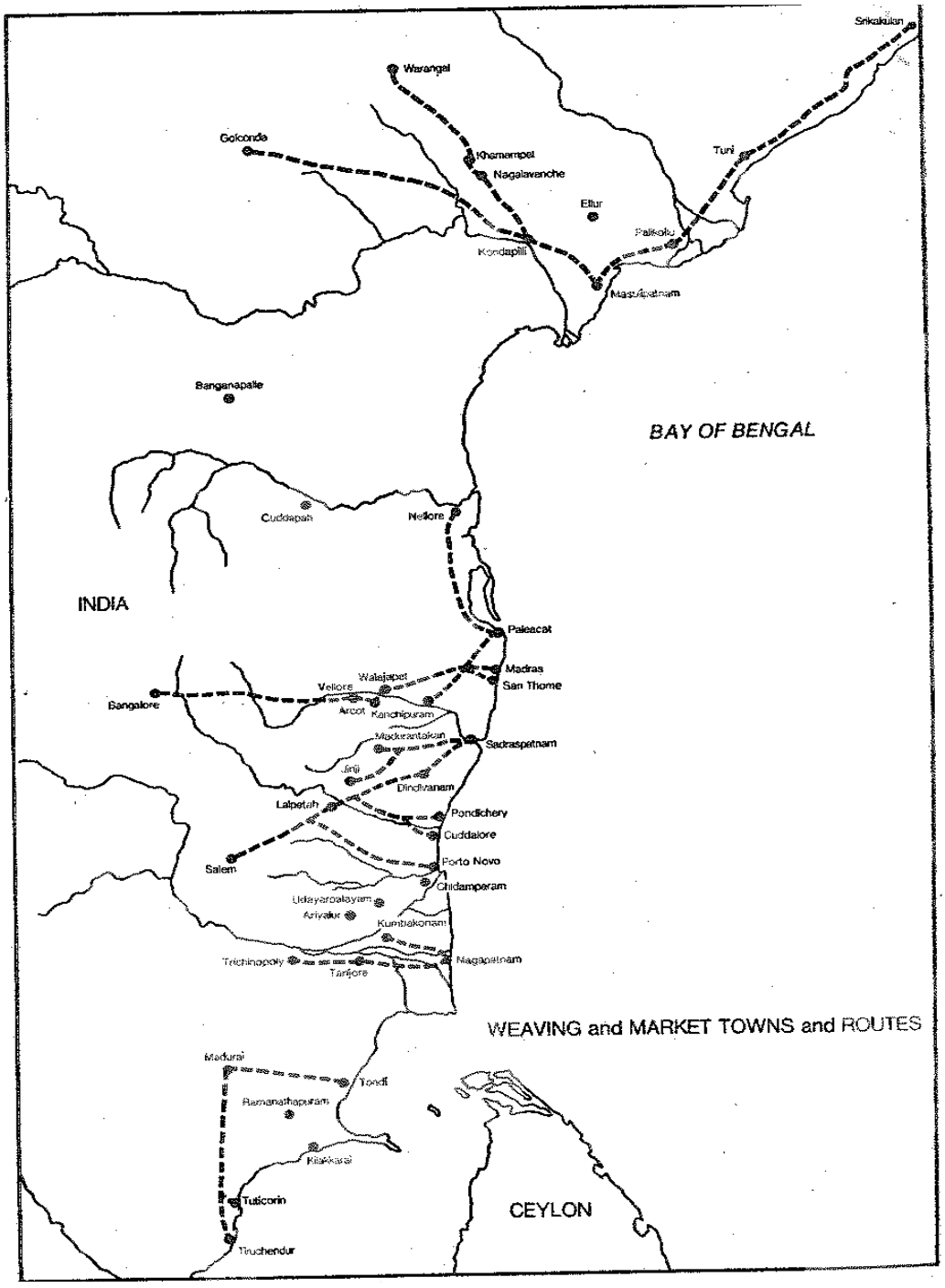
[39] NA VOC 7525, Information on various lands and islands of the East Indies, and on what merchandise was traded there: f. 99r.–f. 100r.
[40] Winius and Vink, *The Merchant–Warrior Pacified*: 27, 30-31, 37–38.

a cotton market which supplied Tanjore. In 1661 the VOC were freed from half of the tolls in all parts of the kingdom and the nayaka also confirmed their right to mint coins in Nagapatnam. Five years later the Dutch were leased the port of Tirumulapatnam, about ten miles (17km) north of Nagapatnam and four neighbouring villages.[41]

The following map shows how routes connected Nagapatnam to the markets inland.

[41] Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce*: 59–63, 71.

Map 3.4 Weaving centres and markets of southern Coromandel[42]



[42] Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce*: 59, 60–61, 62–63, 71; for textile production in the Kaveri delta, the VOC and cotton growing regions, see map on page 62.

The routes to inland markets ran in two axes westwards from Nagapatnam, one through Kumbakonam to Ariyalur and Udayaroalayam and another to Tanjore and Tiruchchirapalli. We encountered Tirumalairayanpattinam earlier in this chapter as a port that was developed by a governor of the Vijayanagara Empire and we speculated whether it had disappeared from the coastline following a weakening of Vijayanagara authority. But, as we this chapter will show, it had not disappeared. In fact the VOC leased the port and the textile–producing villages around it. This case helps us understand how it could be that in certain periods Nagapatnam, too, seemingly vanished from the landscape, as evidenced by its absence from the map of routes in Vijayanagara in the sixteenth century (Map 3.3). Weakening of political authority did not necessarily translate into immediate demise for a port. Unless silting completely blocked the mouth of the river that connected it to the sea, a port could survive despite weakening of political patronage as a minor port. The appearance on the scene of new political patrons and investments by merchants could give these maritime settlements a fresh lease of life. This also aligns with the explanation offered in the case of Pulicat (Chapter 2). Chapter 5 will again demonstrate how indigenous political authorities in central and southern Coromandel would invite in European companies such as the VOC as a strategy to revive stagnant maritime settlements. Let us now resume our discussion of textile production in the Kaveri delta organized by that trading company.

By 1663 the weavers residing in the villages leased to the VOC were producing *ramboutijns* (coarse cotton cloth) and other suppliers too brought this variety to Nagapatnam. The Dutch also procured *chialoups* and *tapesaras* (or *pintadoes* or painted cloth, worn as skirt) for export to South–East Asia. Rice continued to be exported from Nagapatnam and during famines the Dutch transported slaves too, when people sold themselves off to the Dutch to escape death through starvation.[43] The Dutch in Nagapatnam organized the merchants supplying textiles to them into joint–stock companies, just as they had done in Pulicat. In 1665 companies of this type were formed by the dyers of Nagapatnam and Nagore, the weavers of Puravacheri and Tirumalairayanpattinam and the merchants of Nagapatnam and Tevanampattinam.[44]

Surviving contracts concluded over a period of ten days in 1665 give us an insight into how the VOC negotiated with dyers and weavers: they were required to work full time and usually obliged to accept terms that gave the VOC the right to punish them if they violated the contract. On 17 April 1665 the Dutch finalized two contracts, one with the dyers of Nagapatnam and Nagore and one with the weavers of Puravacheri. In return for a guaranteed flow of work the dyers – seventeen from Nagapatnam and three from Nagore – agreed to dye clothes of all kinds brought to them by the VOC's merchants and not to dye clothes for anyone

[43] NA VOC 1242, Memoir of succession from Laurens Pit, governor of Coromandel to Cornelis Speelman: f. 798v.–f. 799r.
[44] Mukund, *The Trading World of the Tamil Merchant*: 73.

else. Any clothes found to have been dyed for other merchants, would be confiscated by the Dutch. The weavers of Puravacheri and Manjikulam were contracted on similar terms and conditions.[45] In each of these three cases the Dutch interpreters in Pulicat and Nagapatnam stood as witnesses while the weavers signed the contracts. On 24 April 1665 the VOC contracted the dyers of Tirumalapattinam (or Tirumalairayanpattinam) to work for them on similar terms.[46]

Two important clauses set out the corresponding terms covering the VOC's duty to the workers, and the workers' duty to the VOC. The weavers' desire for the security of constant work may have had its origins in the abundant availability of skilled labour; weavers, painters and dyers were present in large numbers who could produce clothes for the export markets of mainland and maritime South–East Asia. The English and French East India Companies also had their settlements in central and southern Coromandel and also exported textiles. Given the large pool of skilled labour these markets attracted, producers of textiles would always be keen to be in regular work. For the VOC's part the competition with the English and French to secure as much of the coastline as possible for themselves may have led to fears that the weavers could sell their products to other European companies or even the indigenous merchants who operated at much lower rates of profit.

The Dutch were always on the lookout to tap and map the hinterland of Nagapatnam towards Tanjore. In 1679 the VOC bookkeeper at Nagapatnam Jan Sweers was assigned to collect information on the condition of the weaving industry and draw a map showing the villages where clothes for export to South–East Asia were woven. It is thanks to his report that we have some idea the situation in the hinterland.

[45] NA VOC 1254, Contract dated 27.04.1665 made by Cornelis Speelman, governor of Coromandel, with the weavers of Puravachery: f. 557r.–f. 558r., for the contract with weavers of Manjikulam see f. 559r.
[46] NA VOC 1254, Contract dated 24.04.1665 made by Cornelis Speelman with the dyers of Tirumalapattinam: f. 553r.–f. 554r.

Table 3.1 Weaving villages in the Kaveri delta[47]

Village	Remarks
Puravachery	Held in lease by the VOC, inhabited by weavers
Small villages en route to Kumbakonam	Inhabited by peasants, merchants and weavers; guinea cloth and salempores were woven here
Kumbakonam, Karpur, Marachery, Solawaron, Tirimangalakudi, Tailokse, Adsedori, Kongirirajpuram, Nachiguyi, Valangunal, Malimangalan, Ajapaddi, Trimatsuram, Patrisuram, Mellarduri, Papanasam, Chindripurmalkuyi, Teriparmi	During Jan Sweer's visit, Rangappa, the VOC agent, revealed that earlier these villages used to produce cloth for inland markets, but he (and thus the VOC) had persuaded the weavers to produce guinea cloth and salempores (varieties traded by the VOC in the Indian Ocean). Together these villages had 905 looms that produced cloth for the VOC. Most looms were concentrated in Kumbakonam (250), a village inhabited by 8000–9000 households of merchants, weavers and peasants. Sweers estimated that together these villages could produce about 2715 pieces of guinea cloth.
Pandanalur	Fortified with moats and walls of stone, about 300 households, inhabited mostly by peasants and few weavers
Wiraboge/ Veerabhoga	Inhabited by weavers
Millitopechery	Inhabited by weavers
Goudasoleijwaron (Gujaliwaron?)	Inhabited by weavers
Paliyam	Inhabited by weavers
Udiyur	Inhabited by weavers; at Udiyur Jan Sweers met a textile merchant named Paliappa who revealed that Veerabhoge, Millitopechery, Goudasoleijwaron, Paliyam and Udiyur together housed about 300 weavers households which used to produce cloth earlier for Porto Novo and Trimalavas, but now were willing to weave guinea cloth, i.e., a variety traded by the VOC in the Indian Ocean
Troualapongoil	A village to the west of Trimalavas, about 100 households, mostly weavers

This is a snapshot of limited scale. The area north–west from Nagapatnam towards Kumbakonam was dotted with multiple textile weaving villages, some of which were mentioned but not detailed by Jan Sweers in his itinerary. We only get as far as the travelogues and the archives of the East India companies allow us. Despite their usefulness, for our purposes the letters and reports of the VOC have an inherent flaw: they tend to list only those villages which could offer profits for the textile trade to South–East Asia. This refers to the tendency of VOC surveys to provide details of those villages which wove textiles that the Dutch could trade to South–East Asia and not proffer information on economic conditions of other villages. For instance, while travelling to the west of Nagapatnam, Jan Sweers passed through several villages but there he found nothing worthy of note or interesting for the

[47] NA VOC 1349, Report made by Jan Sweers to Pieter Vorwer, commander of Nagapatnam about his findings in Kumbakonam, Ariyalur etc.: f. 1401v.–f. 1404r.

VOC.[48] Nonetheless, as we found in the chapters on Masulipatnam and Pulicat, the VOC surveys tell us of a hinterland that was closely linked with the economy of the Indian Ocean, a zone of economic production where a degree of specialization had been developed to suit export demands.

We had discussed in Chapter 2 there was a wide pool of resources in Coromandel, in terms of weaving settlements, weavers and dyers, that could be tapped by the VOC (or for that matter any other European trading company); a lot depended on the ability of the VOC officials and their middlemen to successfully forge connections between the coast and the hinterland. Apart from the examples of Rangappa, the VOC agent in Kumbakonam, and Paliappa, the textile merchant whom Jan Sweers had met in Udiyur, Sweers' report of his trip to the Kaveri delta points to another such attempt at integrating textile production inland with the operations of the VOC. At Udiyur, Sweers met five textile merchants who had earlier unsuccessfully sought to supply cloth to Tegenapatnam (a port in southern Coromandel, to the north of Nagapatnam). These merchants, Nilande Chetti, Peritambi Moddaly, Mananada Moddaly, Chimawa Moddaly and Malperumal, gave a written declaration to the VOC that neither did they owe any money to merchants in Tegenapatnam, nor were they bound by any other contract and they were willing to supply textiles to the VOC in Nagapatnam.[49] Above all, Sweers' report tells us of a hinterland where indigenous textile merchants were keen to integrate the weaving industry of the Kaveri delta with the maritime networks of the VOC in the Indian Ocean.

The historiography of European impact on the early–modern Indian Ocean world has moved on a long way from K. M. Panikkar's Vasco da Gama epoch which implied a complete European domination of Asian shipping. Later studies by Ashin Das Gupta, M. N. Pearson, K. N. Chaudhuri, Sinnappah Arasaratnam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam have confuted that idea; Indian merchants did not disappear from the face of the ocean upon the arrival of Europeans. In many cases they actually co–operated with these newcomers and held on to their own business because they could afford to trade on lower profit margins. The latest work to contribute to this argument is a monograph by Ravi Arvind Palat, who argues that the participation of Portuguese and northern European trading companies did not fundamentally alter the emerging networks of trade in the Indian Ocean, or what Palat calls the 'Southern Ocean'.[50]

The Kaveri delta, like other parts of the Coromandel Coast, was a highly monetised environment where textiles had to be paid for in cash. After the arrival of the Portuguese and northern European trading companies, bullion flowed into South Asia from two sources: the

[48] NA VOC 1349, Report made by Jan Sweers to Pieter Vorwer, commander of Nagapatnam about his findings in Kumbakonam, Ariyalur etc.: f. 1402r.
[49] NA VOC 1349, Report made by Jan Sweers to Pieter Vorwer, commander of Nagapatnam about his findings in Kumbakonam, Ariyalur etc.: f. 1404r.–f. 1404v.
[50] Palat*, The Making of an Indian Ocean World–Economy*: 156.

older route was from Europe and Mediterranean via the Levant, while new silver from the Americas arrived via either the Cape of Good Hope or the Pacific Ocean. Production processes, Palat writes, were slowly being integrated within an emerging Indian Ocean world economy. The Europeans were not solely responsible for this. Merchants from the Indian subcontinent, of varying economic capacities, participated in the oceanic commerce and conveyed bullions to the Coromandel Coast. Consequently, textile manufacturing on the Coromandel Coast was restructured to meet demands arising out of increased commercial exchange. The VOC would dish out money to their chief merchants who took care of the orders of clothes. The incessant wars following the decline of Vijayanagara impacted on towns and cities, so textile producers moved to the villages. Eventually, Palat argues, settlements where textiles were manufactured closely hugged the European settlements in Coromandel.[51]

While indigenous shipping continued to thrive in this new environment the arrival of European trading companies did lead to the establishment and development certain ports that were exclusively company preserves where little indigenous shipping was permitted. A case in point, as noted earlier, was Pulicat. Indian traders here had little choice but to shift their operations to other ports. Arasaratnam argues that the same happened to Nagapatnam. As the Dutch clamped down on the presence of commercial rivals in the port, increasing numbers of indigenous merchants moved to neighbouring Nagore, which almost certainly offered incentives to weavers and dyers to produce clothes for markets overseas. In the 1670s a Maratha dynasty took over Tanjore and its new ruler Ekoji attacked the villages around Nagapatnam and besieged the port. Reinforced from Ceylon, the Dutch defeated him and by the treaty of 1676 they had won back all the concessions they had been enjoying before Ekoji's rule. In the wake of Mughal wars in Coromandel, in 1690 the VOC transferred their headquarters of Coromandel from Pulicat to Nagapatnam,[52] a decision that reflected their tendency to move away from zones affected by warfare.

3.4 Regional response to political instability and wars

This section looks at the long–term characteristics of the Kaveri delta and Nagapatnam through the prism of wars and political instability in the region. The first obvious characteristic about Nagapatnam that strikes us is the long but discontinuous 800–year recorded history of the port. What was a premier Chola port in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries was, by the fourteenth century, possibly no more than a fishing village. Its later revival and regeneration was closely associated with the emergence of *nayakas* during Vijayanagara rule, *nayaka* establishment of control over the agrarian resources in the region and the emergence of European settlements – first the Portuguese and then the Dutch. With their dominance, indigenous shipping moved to the neighbouring port of Nagore. At one point in the sixteenth century Nagapatnam straddled the trading worlds of both South–East Asia and the Middle East – the latter thanks to Muslim merchants. So, what information can we glean from the

[51] Palat, *The Making of an Indian Ocean World-Economy*: 185–186, 189, 202–205.
[52] Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce*: 28–29, 71–72.

historical sources that sheds light on the effects of war on the resilience of the political economy in the Kaveri delta?

Two broad patterns of movement can be identified in the regional impact and political reshuffling caused by *nayaka* military campaigns in the Tamil country: some populations filled the vacuum created by military expansion while others fled from areas disrupted by war. The former process had also taken place in the fourteenth century in northern Deccan when Muhammed bin Tughlaq tried to make Daulatabad an administrative centre; the latter process is perhaps one we more readily associate with war. These movements and the establishment of military camps eventually led to the creation of permanent towns, an example being Arcot. Though wars disrupted economic life, the settling of regions by immigrants could also offer fresh economic investments. It was not only the influx of conquering armies or people accompanying them that could slowly cause economic shifts in a region, because the flight of rural population from a disrupted area to a relatively peaceful one could also act as an economic catalyst. The relative food security in the Kaveri delta made it a natural destination for migrants fleeing wars. We can assume that the flight of weaving groups from other parts of Coromandel to the Kaveri delta boosted the weaving industry in southern Coromandel.

Fortified seats of power also acted as commercial centres in the Coromandel and, as detailed in previous chapters, political patronage and trade went hand in glove. The Dutch had captured Nagapatnam from the Portuguese and they had no intention of relinquishing this prized possession. The VOC in Nagapatnam displayed an unambiguous tendency to protect their trade by force – as witnessed by two conflicts in which they defeated the king of Tanjore and then Maratha forces. The port's position close to Ceylon and Malabar was of crucial strategic importance for the VOC in its efforts to control the southern coastline. The transfer of the Dutch capital of Coromandel from Pulicat to Nagapatnam in the wake of Mughal invasion and the repair works of the fort under the supervision of Hendrik Adriaan van Reede reflected a common trend during wars: the movement away from zones of conflict to less affected regions. Ultimately, however, the Mughal siege of Gingee brought war uncomfortably close to Nagapatnam.

To what extent did the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's southern campaigns displace the population of the Kaveri delta? How did Nagapatnam fare when the Mughal campaigns moved south in 1689? Could the Dutch continue to penetrate inland to procure textiles or was the production simply limited to the area in and around the fort? These and other questions will be explored in Chapter 5.