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THE PORT-OF-TRADE IN PRE-EUROPEAN INDIA AS AN ECOLOGICAL AND EVOLUTIONARY TYPE\*

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SEVERAL WRITERS have recently pointed to the port-of-trade, or administered trade, as a central institution associated with the economies and politics of significant world areas or states such as Pre-Spanish Meso-America, West Coast Africa before and during early European contact, Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, the Hittite and Persian Empires, the Phoenician, Philistine, Ionian, and mainland Greek ports.<sup>1</sup> Since each writer was concerned with the description of his area of interest, there is but passing suggestion of the near universality of the port-of-trade,<sup>2</sup> whose existence has not yet been demonstrated for significant world areas.

The first purpose of this paper, then, is to demonstrate in detail the occurrence of the port-of-trade in yet one more area, India and Ceylon, over a period of at least 1,500 years. Also, as the data may suggest, its presence will be indicated in Southeast Asia, Indonesia, and China in the east, and Persia, Arabia, and the East Coast of Africa in the west, for indeterminate periods which begin with the Portuguese conquests at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

In discussing the viability and effectiveness of the port-of-trade as a socioeconomic institution, previous writers have suggested some general functions it performed in what have been called "archaic" societies: relating different ecological zones to each other,<sup>3</sup> facilitating military statecraft,<sup>4</sup> barring undesired foreign contacts,<sup>5</sup> and so forth. In view of its near universality, ranging from China through the Near East and Africa to the New World, and its remarkable viability in time, from the third millenium, B. C., in Egypt, to the late nineteenth century, A. D., in the Central Sudan, the problem of identifying those factors which give rise to the port-of-trade, and the changes from which eliminate it, emerges forcefully. This involves the broader problem of specifying what sort of sociocultural features are to be designated "archaic" society, as opposed to other kinds of society in which ports-of-trade do *not* occur.

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The second purpose of this paper is to present briefly some preliminary suggestions for the solution to these problems.

## II

A clearly defined complex of institutions and personnel collectively constitutes a type which has been designated the port-of-trade.<sup>6</sup> The term refers to a geopolitical unit in which trade was an affair of state, a function of the polity rather than of the economy. The general characteristics of the port-of-trade follow: 1. It was an autonomous, specialized town, city, or small state, intended by policy<sup>7</sup> to serve as a meeting place for various groups of traders, usually foreigners. 2. It was usually a point of transshipment between distinct ecological regions. 3. Often it was in a state separate from the major trading states meeting in it, constituting a kind of buffer zone, protected in its sovereignty by the mutual self-interest of the major trading states operating in it. It was at the same time a deliberately neutral zone, protecting the "stranger," the traders, and had an international status which might vary from that of a free port in "weak" border states to port towns of inland powers, administered from distant capitals. 4. Often the port-of-trade itself had no indigenous group involved in the actual exchange of goods other than the port officers who administered the transactions without themselves being party to them. 5. There were often groups of foreign merchants resident in the port-of-trade.<sup>8</sup>

The port-of-trade constituted the main organ of long-distance trade for the trading states. As such, it had a characteristic institutional organization. First, all operations of trading, as well as the personnel involved, were subject to a special and severe code of laws for the maintenance of peace and security of port, property, and personnel. This code was equally administered for all arrivals. Any breach of the peace and security was likely to drive traders away, breaking down exchange between the trading states and bringing economic loss to the port-of-trade itself. Punishment was rigorously enforced and often extreme.

Second, the port-of-trade was administered by agencies of the port under native authority, special officials, and professional organizations. Administration included the supervised disembarkation, organization of transport (both under armed guard and with great fanfare), and storage of commodities by the official port authorities. The goods were placed in port warehouses under port guards. Port authorities put traders into special wards and houses of the town under guarded supervision, cared for them, fed them, but did not, as a rule, allow them the freedom of the city or access to markets. When liberty was allowed, it was always extremely limited and usually under supervision. It is important to note that ordinary local inhabitants had no connection with the strangers at any point in this whole sequence of events. Traders were suspected of being spies for the states from which they came and consequently were kept from the people at large as well as from the hinterland polities which the port-of-trade represented. Hence, also, the strict control exercised over the trader. The administrative personnel and professional organizations of the port-of-trade were often so powerful that they effectively ruled the city even where there was a properly constituted monarch.

Third, all prices were administered and arranged by treaty. Prices established by free competition of wares in a price-making market did not exist, nor did any form of free selling. Prices were often fixed for long-term periods, sometimes even by general administrative regulation. Equivalencies and prices were fixed by law, not by supply and demand price fluctuations. In contrast to markets, the trade treaties juxtaposed spatially

separate polities in legal, but not face-to-face confrontations. Once prices were set by the appropriate persons, the trading could take place; there was no movement of goods till the terms of trade were set.<sup>9</sup>

Fourth, the objects entering into trade, including items of luxury consumption, were important to statecraft since they were used as part of the reward system for the élite class in these societies. The goods circulated among the dignitaries of state, and this circulation was reinforced by such sanctions as sumptuary laws. The port-of-trade was a way of moving goods necessary for military needs, élite consumption, public works or public payments, and, at the same time, of protecting the state from foreign contact. Thus the port-of-trade was an organ operated for ends of state.

Finally, the port-of-trade was quite distinct from markets. No commoners took part in the port-of-trade exchanges which were even spatially separated from the markets. The port-of-trade contrasted sharply with the "democratic" exchange which occurred in the market place, which was accompanied by the use of money, money surrogates, swapping, bartering, and so forth. The market, unlike the port-of-trade, had foodstalls, peddlers, stores, and the like to supply the daily needs of the citizens, who engaged in that haggling about price so notably absent in the price-making arrangements of the port-of-trade. The Indian material unequivocally shows that the ports of call along the Indian coast, as well as those of Ceylon and the islands of the Indian Ocean, were ports-of-trade. We may turn to the evidence.<sup>10</sup>

### III

India has been in active commercial contact with the lands to the west for well over 2,000 years, excluding Mesopotamian-Indus contacts in the third millenium, B. C. A number of Romans and Greeks refer to India, or, at least, to its west coast—Diodorus Siculus (first century, B. C.), Strabo (63 B. C. -24 A. D.), and Pliny the Elder (23-79, A. D.),<sup>11</sup> for example, as do also a great number of the Arabic geographers and travelers some centuries later.<sup>12</sup> Panikkar mentions the discovery of large quantities of Roman coins in Malabar and says "Roman money was practically in current use, as hoards of coins have been found all over Malabar. . . ." Roman merchants came to Malabar, and Malabari embassies went to Rome.<sup>13</sup> Throughout the Islamic period, too, a vast trade between Arabia, Persia, and other states to the west of the Indian Ocean was carried on. Further, though trade between Christian and Islamic countries was supposedly illegal, the Islamic countries of Southwest Asia served as illicit trade routes between India and the great trading states, Venice and Byzantium.

Trade with the East was, if anything, greater still. Intensive shipping and commerce occurred with China, the Indies, Southeast Asia, and to a lesser extent, with Japan. Hudson points out that these areas jointly constituted "one continuous maritime trade area."<sup>14</sup> India was the entrepot between East and West, as Chinese and eastern merchants rarely traveled to the lands of the Near East and Africa, and those of the latter places did not usually travel beyond India. To the east, the Chinese were the most active in shipping,<sup>15</sup> though Indian shipping was important here as well as to the west. Indian ports therefore became the points of exchange where Chinese left goods and picked up others, on one hand, while, on the other, merchants from the west came both for Chinese and Indian goods at these same ports, bringing western wares.

Most of the ports were located along the west coast of India as far north as Sind, although there were some on the east coast as well. Some ports appeared to concentrate on western exchange—Cambay, for instance—while others like Calicut and Quilon focused more on the eastern trade. There were also ports in the Maldive and Laccadive Islands and in

Ceylon. Economically these areas comprised systems far more extensive than the political entities entering into them. The operations of the ports were on such a scale and so complex that an intricate system of regulations and institutions was needed to run them, a system clearly corresponding to what is called the port-of-trade.

The regulations enforced upon ships entering the ports and upon their personnel clearly indicate the total attempt at protection and control of the traveling trader and of his goods. Barbosa, for example, says:

1. [Goa] was a place of great trade in merchandise. It has a very good port, to which flocked many ships from Mekkah, Aden, Ormuz, Cambay, and the Malabar country. And the . . . Sabaym Delcani resided much in this place, and he kept there his captains and men-at-arms, and no one entered or went out of this island and city, either by sea or by land, without his permission; and all those who entered there were registered with all their signs and particulars, and from whence they came; and so, with this precaution and arrangement, they allowed them to return (p. 75).

Batuta observes that

2. It is a custom of theirs that every ship that passes by a town must needs anchor at it and give a present to the ruler. This they call the "right of *bandar*." If any one omits to do this, they sail out in pursuit of him, bring him into the port by force, double the tax on him, and prevent him from proceeding on his journey for as long as they wish (p. 231).

It is clear that control of the port extended some distance offshore and that this control was rigorously enforced. All ships passing along the coast of Malabar were expected to obey the conditions set forth in Quotation 1 and to pay the right of the *bandar* (port), obviously a port duty, registration fee, and purchase of safe-conduct. If they failed to do so, they were subject to legalized sanctions of seizure and fine. Major (p. 1vi) cites Batuta as saying that "corsairs" from each port captured only those vessels that attempted to pass their ports without payments of these tolls. As a further right, Polo (p. 293) and Razzak (p. 14) report that at all Indian ports other than Calicut in central Malabar, ships driven out of their ways or entering ports by accident could legally be plundered.<sup>16</sup>

Upon arriving in port, and formally declaring intention to land, port officials, variously called *bale*, *xumbandar*, or possibly *zemindar* (cf. note 21), at once took over the management of affairs, from first to last. In da Gama, we read that

3. [The *bale* (a civil intendant of the Rajah and head of the police) and other gentlemen] told the captain that as he had informed the king that he intended to land his merchandise, he should now give orders to have this done, as it was the custom of the country that every ship on its arrival should at once land the merchandise it brought, as also the crews, and that the vendors should not return on board until the whole of it had been sold (p. 67).

During this time, the ship was ordered to go to prescribed anchorage. Once there, it could "abide at will for a greater or longer space . . ." as Razzak (p. 13) remarks.

Once inside the port, ships and merchandise alike were subject to officialdom. First, the *bale* received the "gift," the fee which formally opened trading relations, and set the visiting stranger under the protection of the king. At the end of negotiations, he also received a departure duty: "The Zamorin required customs to be paid according to the regulations of the port . . ." says Panikkar (p. 37). That these dealings followed a standard pattern is clear from the following passage from da Gama:

4. The king said that what [da Gama] brought [as a present *directly* to the king] ought to have been sent to his factor, and that he did not want to look at it. He then desired the captain to be informed that as he wished to depart he should pay him 600 xerafins

and that he might go: this was the custom of the country and of those who came to it (pp. 70-71).

Next, the *bale* received the personnel of the ship, apparently giving different treatment to officers and men. Both, however, were led with great publicity and under armed guard to specially appointed lodgings where they were kept till they left. During this time, their life necessities were supplied. In da Gama it is reported that,

5. At the same time, the king sent a *bale* with other men of distinction to Pandarani to conduct the captain-major to where the king awaited him. This *bale* . . . is always attended by two hundred men armed with swords and bucklers. . . . On landing the captain-major was received [with trumpets!] by the [*bale*] with whom were many men, armed and unarmed. . . . A palanquin was provided for the captain-major, such as is used by men of distinction in that country, as also by some of the merchants, who pay something to the king for this privilege (pp. 51-52).<sup>17</sup>

At another time,

6. The king sent a brother of the *bale*, who was a lord of this country, to accompany the captain, and he was attended by men beating drums, blowing *anafils* and bagpipes, and firing off matchlocks. In conducting the captain they showed us much respect, more than is shown in Spain to a king (p. 55).

Da Gama was provided lodgings and food as were his men, separately:

7. [After the walk] the captain-major was there deposited at the house of a man of rank, whilst we others were provided with food, consisting of rice, with much butter and excellent boiled fish.

Da Gama was lodged with the king's factor, "a Moor of distinction" (p. 59), a fact confirmed in letters by a member of the expedition, Girolamo Sernigi, to a Florentine friend.<sup>18</sup> Later da Gama asked to be lodged away from either Hindu or Moor, a favor the king granted. The strangers were constantly kept under surveillance and their movements closely controlled:

8. They agreed that [da Gama] should be permitted to go [to the king], but afforded him no opportunity for doing so, for they immediately closed all the doors, and many armed men entered to guard us, none of us being allowed to go outside without being accompanied by several of these guards (p. 65).

In sum, da Gama was lodged and maintained in that part of town designated for the residence of foreign merchant groups, Moorish or otherwise, a situation which seems to have been prevalent among the Indian ports (see page 35 below).

Concurrently the *bale* supervised the merchandise, seeing to it that it was properly cared for, not only from the point of view of protecting it, but with the aim of maintaining the conventions of exchange to which foreign merchants had to adhere. All reports agree on the protection and notable degree of security found at these ports. Hiuen Tsian, between 629 and 645 A. D., remarks on the "honest and upright" men of Sind in the course of a discussion of commodities, and on the "honest and sincere" king of Sind.<sup>19</sup> Hasan, about 865 A. D., notes the friendliness and order prevailing in the ports.<sup>20</sup> Benjamin of Tudela, a Jewish traveler or trader, about 1160 A. D., states

9. This nation [Malabar] is very trustworthy in matters of trade and whenever foreign merchants enter the port, three secretaries of the king immediately repair on board their vessels, write down their names and report them to him. The king thereupon grants them security for their property, which they may even leave in the open fields without a guard (Major, p. xlvii).

In 1442, three centuries after Benjamin, Razzak makes similar comments:

10. Security and justice are so firmly established in [Calicut] that the most wealthy merchants bring thither from maritime countries considerable cargoes which they

unload and unhesitatingly send into the markets and the bazaars without thinking in the meantime of any necessity of checking the account or of keeping watch over the goods. The officers of the custom-house take upon themselves the charge of looking after the merchandise over which they keep watch day and night (p. 14).

It is plain not only that the port-of-trade officials took over from the merchants as soon as they landed, but also that this was known and favorably anticipated by merchants from the most distant places.

The other side of protection is control and handling, and this, too, is an evident function of the *bale*. The control function is not to be doubted since,

11. When [da Gama] left [the palace], certain men followed him, and when he arrived at the house in Calicut where the merchandise was deposited, they put a number of men inside with him to watch that none of it was sent away . . . [to da Gama's ships without authorization] (p. 71).

Other control and handling functions of the *bale* are indicated in the following passage, also from da Gama:

12. When the captain found that the merchandise found no buyers at [Pandarani], he applied to the king for permission to forward it to Calicut. The king at once ordered the *bale* to get a sufficient number of men who were to carry the whole on their backs to Calicut, this to be done at his expense, as nothing belonging to the King of Portugal was to be burdened with expenses whilst in this country. But [the Portuguese felt] all this was done because it was intended to do us some ill-turn for it had been reported to the king that we were thieves and went about to steal (p. 68).

In other words, the commodities were to be kept under strict control so there could be no changes made by any party in quality or quantity (thieving?). It is also apparent that transportation was carried out by the port officials and all expenses were handled by the port-of-trade which thus tended to isolate merchants from contact with its own population since they could not make expenditures either for persons or things.

Handling also involves care of the goods. That this also seems to have been part of the port officials' duties, when needed, is indicated in Albuquerque's comments:

13. . . . the horses . . . were placed in . . . stables which the Çabaio (pre-Portuguese Moslem ruler of Goa) had erected in the fortress, wherein formerly they used to place the horses which the dealers brought from Ormuz to sell. And for this purpose, the Çabaio used to have a *Xabandur* (sic), whose office corresponds to that of [the Portuguese superintendent receiver of the royal import dues], whose duty it was to look to the care of the horses, and the people were obliged to bring hay, and corn, and *mungo*, which is a certain species of seed that they feed the horses with, in abundance (II, p. 132).<sup>21</sup>

Protection and control involve legal sanctions. Girolamo Sernigi, in his first letter, shows that these were not lacking:

14. Justice is strictly administered in this city. Robbers, murderers, and other malefactors are incontinently impaled in the Turkish fashion; and whoever defrauds the king's excise [customs] is punished by having his merchandise confiscated (p. 135).

At another point the king is quoted as having said to his factor that he should be reminded that his predecessor had been executed for extorting money from foreign merchants. The one addressed had, it seems, been trying the same with the Portuguese.

Once the merchandise was impounded on land, port-of-call officials carried out the mechanics of the transactions for both parties until an agreement had been reached, at which time the exchange actually took place. The first step, settling on the goods, appears to have been handled with the king's treasurer by means of an intermediary, according to Panikkar:

15. The Zamorin's [raja of Calicut's] answer to the request for commercial facilities was vague, and da Gama was asked to communicate to the Treasurer of the King what commodities he wanted (p. 36).

Treasurers are mentioned now and then in passing, but not in connection with trade.

The merchandise for exchange was opened to the inspection of buyers under conventionalized procedures. In da Gama it is stated that

16. . . . [da Gama] landed his merchandise as he had been ordered, but . . . the Moors only came to depreciate it; and . . . for these reasons he looked forward to what [the king] would order. . . . [The king] . . . sent seven or eight merchants to inspect the merchandise, and to become purchasers if they felt inclined. He also sent a man of quality to remain with the factor already there, and authorized them to kill any Moor who might go there, without fear of punishment. . . . The merchants whom the king had sent remained about eight days, but instead of buying they depreciated the merchandise. The Moors no longer visited the house where the merchandise was, but they bore us no good-will (p. 68).

In other words, various merchant groups came to inspect the Portuguese goods, most of which happened not to be of the kind or quality interesting to any of them, under the supervision of port-of-trade factors. One may suspect that the depreciating and lingering of the merchants may have been part of an attempt to arrange more favorable exchange equivalencies.<sup>22</sup> The significance of the threat against the Moors is not clear from the text, but again shows the sanctioning power of the port-of-trade officials.

To resident merchants, and possibly to visiting ones as well, though no unambiguous reference was found to this effect, the king attached three officials.<sup>23</sup> According to Barbosa:

17. The king gave to each one a nair (Nayar) to guard and serve him, a Chety [see below] scribe for his accounts, and to take care of his property, and a broker for his trade. To these three persons such a merchant would pay something for their maintenance and all of them would serve very well, and when the merchant bought spices the sellers gave him [apparently as part of the rate of exchange] for each farazola of ginger, which is of twenty-five pounds, three or four pounds of it for them; and so of some other goods, which duties the merchant collects to pay these officials of his (p. 148).

Barbosa says of these same Chetties (cf. p. 19) of the Coromandel Coast:

18. These people are considerable merchants and changers, they deal in precious stones of all sorts, and in seed pearl, coral, and other valuable merchandise; and in gold, silver, either bullion or coined, which is a great article of trade amongst them, because they rise and fall many times. They are rich and respected, and live very decently; they have very good houses in streets set apart for themselves. . . . They also carry with them continually large bags in which their scales and weights are kept, and their money, and jewels and pearls [which could be used in payments] (pp. 144-45).

Besides confirming the residential pattern for merchants mentioned in Quotation 7, ff., the passage points to the function of this caste as measurers, weighers, and setters of equivalencies since they were the changers, and dealt with jewels, precious metals, and coin, all of which were used as means of exchange. They appear to have been merchants in their own right. Barbosa (p. 134) mentions other castes, such as the *brabares*, involved in money-changing, from which much gain was said to have been made. The fact that these trading guilds or castes were so widespread suggests also that there was widespread standardization of weights and measures, or at least translatability into equivalent systems.

How the brokers actually arrived at agreements about what goods, how many items,

what quality and bulk of items were to enter into exchange, I have not been able to find out. It is vital to note, however, that no mention of prices as measures of market conditions was encountered. Rather, there are constant references to to-and-fro exchanges of goods usually involving entire lots of varied commodities. Says Batuta:

19. . . . [Quilon's] merchants are called Súlís. They are immensely wealthy; a single merchant will buy a vessel with all that is in it and load it with goods from his own house (p. 238).

Barbosa, speaking of the *brabares* mentioned above, says

20. These still deal, especially from the interior, in all sorts of goods, and collect all the pepper and ginger from the nayrs (Nayars) and cultivators, and frequently buy them in advance in exchange for cotton stuffs, and other goods which come from beyond the sea. These people are also great changers, and gain much from coin (pp. 133-34).

The method by which *brabares* bought suggests that regular equivalencies existed. Further evidence on to-and-fro movement of goods is supplied by Albuquerque:

21. These [Moorish merchants] used to come from Çufim (Safie in Barbary), from Ourão (Oran), from Tramecim, and from Tripoli, with their wares to Cairo, and from Cairo, they used to make their way to Judá and from Judá to Calicut, with ready money, and there they used to build new ships, and load them with spiceries, and so returned to their own lands (II, 34).

The following passage is again interesting since it also makes no reference to prices or price-making conditions, but refers to money only as an auxiliary in making exchanges of goods:

22. . . . [a native prince] begged earnestly that Afonso Dalboquerque would either give orders for the coinage of some money, because everything was going to ruin from want of it, and barter of merchandise could not be affected, or at least that he would permit the coinage of the Çabaio to pass current (II, 127-28).

It would seem that once the brokers had reached agreements and the scribes had measured and weighed and checked on quality, the actual transfer of goods took place. Thereupon the final official act, reported by Razzak, followed:

23. When a sale is effected, [the officers of the customhouse] levy a duty on the goods of one fortieth part; if they are not sold, they make no charge on them whatsoever (p. 14).

Other references to levies are also made for Ceylon and elsewhere.<sup>24</sup>

In sum, the merchant appears to have had an official position in the social and economic structure, either temporary or permanent. Temporary incumbents initiated their tenure of the position by a payment to the king in gold, permitting him to trade. Failure to pay this imperiled the stranger merchant.<sup>25</sup> The merchant's formal position was stressed by the official attachment of the subordinate personnel: the guard, the scribe, and the broker. In short, a kind of temporary firm was established by covenant between the foreign merchant and the king through the agency of the port officials and other public figures. The merchants were then empowered to deal in all goods considered most important in the élite trade (see below) through the agency of the factor. Payments were apparently mainly carried out by the direct exchange of goods, sometimes with auxiliary payments of money, and apparently occasionally entirely in money. Panikkar says

24. [João da] Nova found that at Cochin the merchants refused to exchange goods and insisted on cash (p. 48).

Ready money might be used in exchange for ships, for cargoes (cf. Quotation 19), and for usury.<sup>26</sup>

With respect to profits, though they seem to have been beloved of all, the evidence is not definitive that supply-demand price fluctuations were not involved. Nevertheless,



the impression from the literature is that this was in fact the case, and that profits were made, rather, by other manipulations such as those suggested by Polanyi.<sup>27</sup> This single suggestive passage, describing da Gama's negotiations with the King of Chirakkal in north Malabar, was found. It indicates that the king was arguing his right also to fix prices:

25. A commercial treaty was discussed, but it was not possible to settle prices as the [apparently Portuguese] merchants said the king had only the rights to the duties (p. 50).

The following passage is interesting because it suggests administered prices that were used not only for profit-making by the port-of-trade itself, but for political ends as well. Alboquerque remarks:

26. And because [the Çabaio] used to give a greater payment to foreigners than any king of India, there immediately flocked to Goa many Rumes, Turks, Arabs, and Persians, and by assistance of these people he wrested many places from the king of Narsinga and made himself the great lord of the kingdom of Daquem (II, 96).

Noteworthy in this passage is the use of port-of-trade advantages for competition for various land areas with Narsinga, one of the great kingdoms of the Deccan plateau which made use of the port-of-trade. This suggests that the port-of-trade was beginning to decline in the manner suggested by Revere.<sup>28</sup> There are other suggestions of this which at the same time indicate political and economic competition between ports-of-trade for profits. Panikkar states that

27. The Zamorin's interference in [the Raja of Cochin's] affairs [consisted, among other things, of] compelling all Cochin products to be sold through the port of Calicut (p. 46).

Like the ideal port-of-trade, Indian ports-of-trade appear to have been characterized by specialization and even separateness. Thus, Barbosa reports of Palecate on the Coromandel coast that

28. It also has much trade with the interior of the kingdom, and they sell there many jewels which are brought from Peygu (Burma). . . . These jewels may be had for very little there, by whomever knows how to buy well. The King of Narsinga keeps his governors in this city, and collectors of his revenue (p. 177).

It may be noted that Palecate had special officials, that it *sold* to the interior to which it was politically attached, and that it was in close contact with outside ecological areas, both overseas and inland. All of these characteristics correspond with the model port-of-trade. It was that type of port-of-trade which was a port town of an inland power, administered from a distant capital, but having a degree of autonomy. Other comments mention various towns as being remarkable for their trade and for being specialized as places of exchange for a number of external polities. For example, Alboquerque says

29. Through this harbour of Goa was always the principal passage to the kingdom of Narsinga and of Daquem; and for this reason it contained much merchandise, and large caravans of merchants came from the interior country in quest of it, and brought other commodities in exchange. And from this commerce which they had one with another, the inhabitants of Goa grew so prosperous that it was said that Goa alone in those days had a revenue of two hundred thousand pardaos [1 p. = 370 Portuguese reils] (II, 95).

Some towns appeared to specialize their trade with only one inland kingdom, a pattern Revere has mentioned for the Near East. In one place Barbosa states that

30. There is another city of Moors, very large, rich, and of much trade, which deals with the people of Narsinga by land, and is called Cotaogato (p. 151).

At another point he reports that

31. At four leagues from [Balapatan city] is a city of Moors and Gentiles; very large

and of much trade with the merchants of the Kingdom of Narsinga; this town is called eah paranco, in which much copper is expended (p. 149).

One may refer to Quotations 28 and 29 in this regard.

Autonomy of the ports-of-trade is also indicated. Goshal cites a case in which two independent territorial units gathered together to produce an agreement converting a village granted by them into a coastal mercantile town, which then possessed an autonomy from either.<sup>29</sup> Reactions to threats to the legal predominance or independence of such towns also suggest that this autonomy was at least in some degree a fact. Notice this lively reaction from the head of state of the inland Deccani kingdom of Narsinga, reported by Albuquerque:

32. . . . and the King of Narsinga used to declare, when he heard of it, that since the Çamorim [raja] of Calicut had assented to the building of a fortress in his land by the Portuguese, the Captain-General of India might as well build another in Bisnaga (Vijayanagara) if he please (IV, 74).

Autonomy of the port-of-trade is further indicated by a number of statements asserting that the merchant residents, castes, and professional organizations such as guilds and corporations were so powerful in these ports that they in fact governed themselves and even the ports, regardless of the actual political relationship of the port to the interior or to its own legal king. Batuta comments about Quilon that

33. There is a colony of Muslim merchants [there]. . . . This city is the nearest of the Mulayabar towns to China and it is to it that most of the merchants [from China] come. Muslims are honored and respected in it. The sultan of Quilon is an infidel [i. e. Hindu] called the Tirawari; he respects the Muslims and has severe laws against thieves and profligates (p. 238).

Plainly the Muslims are important members of the community. One may note, in passing, the reference to the strictness of public order. Again, Barbosa reports that

34. They [foreign Moors, called Pardesy, living in Calicut, cf. Quotation 45] have among them a Moorish governor who rules over and chastises them, without the king meddling with them (p. 147).

These Pardesy reportedly built ships considered large even by European standards.

Batuta indicates the reason why foreign resident merchants had such powers:

35. [At Mangalore] There is a colony of about four thousand Muslims . . . living in a suburb alongside the town. Conflicts frequently break out between them and the [Hindu] townspeople, but the sultan makes peace between them on account of his need of the merchants.

But the strongest statement as to the power of such merchant groups is made by Sernigi when he says of Calicut that

36. In this city there reside many very wealthy Moorish merchants, and all the trade is in their hands [or carried on their vessels, in another version of the letter]. They have a fine mosque in the square of the town. The king is, as it were, governed by these Moors, because of the presents which they give him; and owing to their industry [intelligence?] the government is wholly in their hands, for these Christians (i. e. Hindus) are coarse people.

With respect to the Indian ports being ports of transshipment, it is abundantly clear not only from numerous quotations above, but from the record of the movement, direction, and inventory of goods involved in this vast trade that these ports were intended as clearinghouses for goods passing from different politicoeconomic units through the port-of-trade, or, sometimes, if the port-of-trade was itself a producing area, between it and an external unit. We turn first to the inventory of goods itself.

There is no doubt at all that, in the main, the goods involved were directed to state

and élite consumption. Among the most important classes of commodities were precious metals, precious stones, precious animals like elephants and horses, slaves, prized cloths, scents, dyes, and condiments, and so on. The only foodstuff mentioned is rice, except at a very late date when coconuts appear too. Several commodities—precious stones, horses, elephants, and some others—were generally royal monopolies, though less precious jewels and small specimens of very precious ones were released for wider exchange among merchants. Jewels, precious metals, elephants, and horses were crucial in affairs of state, especially in warfare and, as gifts, in diplomacy—a gift of horses precluded willingness to carry on peaceful negotiation.<sup>30</sup> A wondrous description of these uses is given by Barbosa for Narsynga:

37. . . . and the king keeps at all times nine hundred elephants and more than twenty thousand horses, all which elephants and horses are bought with his money; the elephants at the price of fifteen hundred to two thousand ducats each, because they are very great and well-fitted for war, and for taking about with him continually for state. And the horses cost from three to six hundred ducats. These horses are distributed amongst the great lords who are responsible for them, and keep them for the gentry and knights to whom the king bids them be given: and he gives to each knight a horse and a groom and a slave girl, and for his personal expenses four or five pardaos of gold per month, according to who he is; and, besides that, each day's provisions for the horse and groom; and they send to the kitchen for the rations both for the elephants and horses. . . . And thus all the king's horses and elephants are well fed and cared for at his cost. . . . This king has more than a hundred thousand men, both horse and foot, to whom he gives pay: and fully five or six thousand women, to whom he also gives pay (pp. 89-90).

Those commodities which were royal monopolies were plainly central to the maintenance of the state itself since they were used in the maintenance of the army. Even a momentary consideration of the almost constant hostilities among kingdoms on the Indian plateau shows that the problem of state maintenance was vast and continuous. Therefore chiefs of state kept, or tried to achieve, control over the sources of those goods which could, like horses, be used directly, or, like gold and jewels, indirectly, in maintaining the state. This fact clarifies all the efforts at controlling the elephant and horse trades;<sup>31</sup> the actual control over jewel production and trade; the use of human porters instead of animals, since horses and elephants were kept, as Batuta reports (p. 232) only for the use of the "sultan" in state affairs. In this connection, Polo reported in 1288 that Guzerati corsairmen, "plundering" merchants at sea with royal permission, agreed with the king that they were to keep everything on board *except* the horses which went to the king. "No ship," says Polo, "ever goes [to India] without horses plus other cargo" (p. 294).<sup>32</sup> The need to control these resources also explains the insistence on "gifts," or duties, of gold to the kings at the ports-of-trade.<sup>33</sup> The importance of gold is shown in the following letter addressed to the King of Portugal from the King of Calicut, paraphrased in da Gama as follows:

38. Vasco da Gama, a gentleman of your household came to my country, whereat I was pleased. My country is rich in cinnamon, cloves, ginger, pepper, and precious stones. That which I ask of you in exchange is gold, silver, corals, and scarlet cloth (p. 75). Gold could be used in paying élite armies, as rewards, and in exchange for horses, elephants, and other basic statecraft commodities. In passing, it may be noted that Niccoló Conti,<sup>34</sup> traveling in 1425, mentions that Venetian ducats were circulating in parts of India—apparently utilized as hordes of precious metal for the uses just mentioned. Cloth, too, was often used as reward or payment for services rendered by what is often referred to in the sources as the "nobility." The military animals, however, were only given

to the nobility conditionally in that they could be taken back if improperly cared for or if the services rendered by the nobility proved inadequate. Like all goods to be discussed below, none of these appeared to be distributed to lower castes or classes, that is, to commoners at large. In fact, the military and social structure of the Kingdom of Narsynga revolved about the king's control over the allocation of these resources.<sup>35</sup>

The passage from Barbosa which follows is most illuminating as to how the royal establishments controlled and allocated these and other resources. He reports of Ceylon 39. All the good cinnamon grows in this island upon the mountains, on trees which are like laurels. And the king of the country . . . *sells it himself* to the merchants who go there to buy it, because no one can gather it except the king. There are likewise in this island many wild elephants which the king orders to be caught and tamed; and they sell them to merchants of Cholmendel, Narsynga, and Malabar, and those of the kingdoms of Decan and Cambay go to those places to buy them. . . . They make great merchandise of them, and they are worth much, because they are much valued by the kings of India for war and for labor, and they become as domestic and quick at understanding as men. [Prices as in Quotation 37 are given], but in the island, they are to be had for a small price. And all have to be brought and presented to the king. There are many jewels in this island, rubies, which they call manica, sapphires, jacinths, topazes, jagonzas (zircon), chrysoliths, and cat's eyes, which are as much esteemed amongst the Indians as rubies. And all these stones are all *gathered in by the king, and sold by himself*. And he has men who go and dig for them . . . who are great lapidaries and who are good judges in those matters. . . . And the king sends them to look there, and after they have brought them he orders to set aside each kind, and pick out the good ones, and he has them worked *to have them sold* when cut, *which he does himself to foreigners*; and the other inferior ones he sells at once to the country merchants. . . . The king has a great treasure of these jewels, for whenever he meets with any very good stone he puts it in his treasure (pp. 167-69, emphases mine).

First, it is important to note the connection between affairs of state and the royal monopolies or royal control of those resources, elephants and jewels, which were ecologically indigenous and, at the same time, critical to the management of state.<sup>36</sup> These goods were entered into long-distance trade directed, as we know from Quotation 37, to other kings through the agency of the merchant groups. The only other full royal monopoly appears to have been horses, also crucial in state affairs. Since, however, they were ecologically exogenous, it was necessary to maintain a complex series of institutions, including treaties, embassies, spying, diplomatic gift-giving, and the port-of-trade itself, in order to get horses in competition with other kings who were also in search of the animals. The literature abounds in examples of all these institutions. The neutral and separate port-of-trade was plainly adaptive to this situation as it was for those cases in which elephants and jewels, in particular, and all the other goods for elite circulation had to be imported. Second, it should be noted that merchants appear to have been permitted a high level of living, but only up to a point. They were allowed certain types of jewels<sup>37</sup> and other goods, but, with respect to larger jewels, which were "esteemed as treasure by the king and also by the rich,"<sup>38</sup> crucial beasts, and export goods to be used in state trade, they were merely agents of transshipment. At the same time, they appear to have been the bottommost stratum to which elite goods, of any quality, could circulate. Lower castes and classes had no access to them.

Further information on goods traded is given in the passage which follows. Barbosa reports of Malabar that

40. . . . [They] stow much pepper, ginger, cloves, cinnamon, mace, nutmeg, long pepper, sandal and brazil wood, lac, cardamons, myrabolands, tamarinds, bamboos,

and all sorts of jewels and pearls, musk, amber, rhubarb, aloes-wood, many fine cotton stuffs, and much porcelain. . . . And these ships return laden with copper, quicksilver, vermilion, coral, saffron, coloured velvets, rose-water, knives, coloured camlets, scarlet and other coloured cloths, gold and silver . . . (pp. 147-48).

Such passages also show that these Indian ports were centers for long-distance, rather than for local, trade, as we should expect of a port-of-trade. Duarte Barbosa, speaking of Coromandel, comments that

41. . . . many ships of Malabar come here to load rice, and they bring goods from Cambay to this country, that is to say, copper, quicksilver, vermilion, pepper, and other goods. And throughout all this Cholmender much spice and drugs, and goods of Malaca, China, and Bengal are to be met with, which the Moorish ships bring here from those parts. . . . And in these times [post-Portuguese] the Malabars carry rice and cocoa nuts to them, and return with their ships laden with slaves . . . (p. 174).

At another point he reports that

42. [At Colombo, Ceylon] . . . many ships touch from various parts to take on board cinnamon and elephants. And they bring gold and silver, cotton and silk stuffs from Cambay [at which port these goods had arrived from the Near East], and many other goods which are saffron, coral, quicksilver, vermilion which here is worth a good deal; and there is much profit on gold and silver, because it is worth more than in other parts (p. 170).

And still again he says

43. In this place they make many good coloured cotton stuffs which are worth much in Malaca, Peigu, and Samatra, also in the kingdom of Guzurate and Malabar they are much valued for the clothing both of Moors and Gentiles. Copper, [etc.] opium, and many Cambay goods fetch a good price, so also scarlet cloth, . . . velvets from Mekkah, and rose water.

Da Gama confirms these observations, mentioning yet other goods and proveniences:

44. Various kinds of spices are brought from distant islands [Maldives, Ceylon] to Colokutt. Pepper, brazil-wood, grão, cinnamon, frankincense, lac, are to be found there. These things abound and are worth next to nothing. . . . There are likewise many ivory tusks and various other kinds of merchandise, such as variously-coloured silk-stuffs, costly cloth worked in gold, fine white linen, and woollen-stuffs, such as bocassins of various colours, and also much cotton. It is thought that the silver stuffs and cloths, as also the linens, come from [Cairo]. . . . Most of the spices brought to Kalikut are said to come from the island of [Ceylon] (p. 142).

In passing we may note that one of the main exports exchanged for goods from the west was spices. If it is true that much of the spice supply came from Ceylon, it again confirms that these ports were points of transshipment and exchange for élite goods only.

The passages above, and many others as well,<sup>39</sup> clearly show the wide variety of commodities entering into trade and, as clearly, show the equally wide provenience of these goods. They came from China, Malaca, Bengal, Ceylon, Maldives, Cambay, the Near East, and Cairo, and they went to such ports as Cambay, Calicut, Cananor, Quilon, Colombo, Coromandel, and many others in India, and were shipped to such ports as Ormuz, Muscat, Socotra, Aden, Oran, even Mekka and Cairo, and to ports in Burma and China.<sup>40</sup> Thus the entire Indian Ocean and neighboring inland areas constituted an area of long-distance trade, extending even to the China Sea.

It is quite evident that this interportal trade was not only continual but also highly organized, though whether this organization was a constant feature is not sure. A vital aspect of the organization appears to have been professional trading corporations or trading castes which operated in Burma, Sumatra, Cambodia, Nepal, Malaya, and so on.<sup>41</sup>

Such a corporation was the Chetti caste, mentioned on p. 32, that, according to Panikkar, was a "powerful trade guild which carried on commerce with Arabia and Egypt as well as with the Far East." They also had a subgroup called Manigranam, likewise a trade guild, "a powerful trading association whose activities extended all over Malabar," apparently from as early as Roman times.<sup>42</sup> Corporation representatives traveled by land and sea routes and were accompanied by fanfare and companies of swordsmen and foot soldiers. The *brabares* mentioned in Quotation 20 appear to have been another trading caste or corporation. Panikkar (p. 4) states that much of Malabar trade had passed into the hands of Muslim merchants, with Calicut as their center, by medieval times. The Moors are mentioned by Alboquerque as "mercantile and seafaring men, who live in the seaports" (p. 174). Barbosa says

45. There were other foreign Moors in Calicut, whom they call Pardesy. These are Arabs, Persians, Guzerates, Khorasanys, and Decanys: they are great merchants, and possess . . . ships for sailing to all parts with all kinds of goods (p. 147).

Apparently various Moorish groups, both foreign and native, were recognized as trading groups, even perhaps quartered separately in the towns, and treated as castelike units by the Hindu governments of the ports-of-trade. It seems there were also organizations (*samgha*) of persons in the same calling, merchants, for example, whose members belonged to different castes (*jāti*) and also regions (*desa*).<sup>43</sup>

In the Indian situation, there may be features of exchange which do not fully correspond with the picture of the ideal port-of-trade given at the beginning, but the evidence is too thin to decide definitively. In several of the sources, for example, bazaars are mentioned. Some sort of competitive buying seems to have been carried on. Whether the competition involved price fluctuations or administered prices with competition by haggling is unknown. We also do not yet know who the parties to bazaar trading were. It seems that in some cases one of the parties might be a foreign merchant, selling with the permission of state officials; the other party either some indigenous specialized trading corporation or caste or a representative of the state itself. This is perhaps suggested by Polo's comment:

46. Many cities and countries sell at Kayal. People from all around come to buy. The king extends great receptivity to merchants and foreigners. They are glad to visit here (p. 289).

That the bazaar was so constituted seems particularly likely with respect to such items as gold, silver, horses, sumptuary goods, and so forth. In general, it would seem that bazaars were devoted to the exchange of what might be termed "upper stratum commodities" even though Athanasius Nikitin of Twer, a traveling merchant from Russia, mentions eatables for sale at one bazaar (p. 12). One cannot tell whether he meant that there was a food market attached to the bazaar or whether these were merely foods for buyers and sellers. Nikitin, traveling in the mid-1400's, mentions a great fair at Beder (Bidur) in north-central Deccan. Here there was a stupendous trade in horses, in other goods such as silks, and in "black people." He claims that only Indian goods were sold—obviously untrue, since horses came from abroad. This was the bazaar with food for sale. He mentions another bazaar at Aladinand which occurred once a year and was attended by people from all India coming to trade for a period of ten days. Nikitin says that 20,000 horses were brought here for sale.

Razzak, the Persian ambassador to Narsynga, at about the same time, also mentions bazaars. "The jewellers sell publically in the bazaars, pearls, rubies, emeralds, and diamonds" (p. 24). It is quite plain this bazaar (at Narsynga) was devoted to the élite. One of its major features were the courtesans who offered themselves "for hire" and who were expensively clothed and housed, had slaves and guards to protect both them and

their customers. It is interesting to note that the user was protected against theft or any other form of loss. If such occurred, the guards, part of the royal army, were held accountable and had to pay out their salaries which were ultimately derived from the activities of the courtesans, *through the royal treasuries*. I mention these details because the courtesans themselves, and perhaps the bazaar of which they were a part, was controlled very much like the port-of-trade. The courtesans were elite commodities; bazaars were kept secure and orderly: trade was controlled, and ultimate control lay with the king. Furthermore they seemed to have taken place in cities which were primarily significant administrative centers, inhabited by elite classes and castes, not by lower strata of society who lived in the villages and on the land.<sup>44</sup> In sum, I would hypothesize that the bazaars mentioned in the literature were versions of the port-of-trade, probably internal to polities, possibly with international status. The bazaars do not seem to have been markets of the type described (Razzak, pp. 3, 4).

Very few data have been found on markets for everyday foodstuffs. A great number of castes are mentioned in the sources which are specialized for subsistence activities such as fishing, saltmaking, rice raising, and so on.<sup>45</sup> But no mention is made of their connection with the professional trading castes or associations. Most of them seem to be located outside the confines of the port-of-trade towns and to associate with each other. There are suggestions in the sources, on the other hand, that there were laborer castes working on properties of higher castes, the Brahmins and Nayars in particular, though probably also on lands of some of the great merchant castes which were reported as owning properties. Barbosa, for example, says that the Moorish *Maupler* in the interior of the country were very well provided with estates and farms. Furthermore, Goshal ([b], 526) mentions partnerships between capitalists and laborers consisting of six classes: trade, agriculture, crafts, sacrifices, singing, and the "theft" (for the king in foreign lands). The partnerships crossed "class" lines, e. g., artisans with cultivators, and were profit- and loss-sharing arrangements. Finally, there were the slaves which were mentioned as one of the elite trade goods above. It seems most likely that the elite groups, then, were supplied directly from their own lands, and did not need to enter into the market system, if any, of the lower strata. It would appear that visiting foreign traders were also supplied from the same sources by virtue of the fact that they were quartered with wealthy traders who either owned lands or had direct access to subsistence goods by trade with members of their own stratum. Presumably this must also have been the case with nonlandowning resident foreigners as well. Since the writers of the sources, by definition of the situation, dealt almost exclusively with the upper strata, it is not surprising that there is virtually no description of markets.<sup>46</sup>

In summary, the data from India clearly point to that organization of international exchange which has been called the port-of-trade. The sources suggest that the port-of-trade was characteristic not only of India and Ceylon, but quite probably also of the great majority of the countries with which they dealt on both sides of the Indian Ocean and beyond, although more evidence is needed to establish this.

#### IV

Why was the port-of-trade, with its characteristic exclusion of subsistence interests, so widespread? Its occurrence in so many areas, some of them indubitably quite independent of each other historically, rules out diffusion. The universality of the phenomenon rules out explanations in terms of unique historical sequences. One must conclude that the port-of-trade is a functional adaptation of a certain kind of society. Its appearance at quite different times, in different places, and its long-term viability suggest that

the kind of society involved is itself a stage in social development, an evolutionary level of socioeconomic development. What type of society was it that developed the port-of-trade? I do not think we have a full answer to this question yet, but, in a preliminary way, the following suggestions, inspired by Arnold's reference to "archaic societies" and Chapman's to the tangency of ecological areas may be presented.<sup>47</sup>

Administered trade appears to be associated with societies having certain broad characteristics which mark them off from societies preceding and succeeding those displaying the port-of-trade syndrome.

Each of the societies entering into port-of-trade relations occupied ecologically relatively homogeneous areas, while the port-of-trade was in an area ecologically distinct from the areas of any of the participating societies. Between the latter and the port-of-trade area were to be found barriers such as mountain chains, rugged escarpments, or oceans. Wydah, in Africa, is on a coastal plain separated from the European complex ecological area by oceans and from Dahomey by a plateau escarpment. The same is true of coastal Phoenicia and its plateau hinterland countries, Hatti, Assyria, and so on, as also of India where the Malabar coast, for example, is an enclave between the ocean and the Western Ghats, the hills which enclose the Deccan plateau. The port-of-trade areas in Meso-America were in ecological areas different from those of either the relatively homogeneous highlands of Aztec Mexico or the great limestone Yucatan peninsula of the Maya, and peripheral to both.<sup>48</sup>

Thus it would seem that the societies in question were in some special way connected with the land areas in which they occurred. It seems evident that this connection specifically involved the relationship between the technologies of these cultures and the lands upon which the technologies were operative. Impressionistically, it would seem that, however complex the technologies which were actually present, the total variety of technological categories was limited either by nonintroduction of other technological activities,<sup>49</sup> whether by diffusion or innovation, or because they were ecologically unfeasible. In the Indian case, for example, rainfall agriculture<sup>50</sup> pastoralism, and stockbreeding, as of horses, were virtually absent.<sup>51</sup> I would generalize to say that each of our cases displayed relatively homogeneous technologies and hence homogeneous ecologies. They had not yet evolved the technological and concomitant organizational arrangements for joining varied ecologies into an ecologically multiplex unit.

Included in such means would be not only multiple means for dealing with the agrarian basis of life, but the means for dealing with nonagrarian ecological areas and of transboarding from one ecological area to another. Such means include the development of transport and communications, and most especially the development of sea transport and power. It is to be noted that none of our examples was a sea power. Rather, over long periods of time, it was the port-of-trade which developed sea power and began to assume control over a number of ecological areas and their concomitant societies, instead of being merely at their service. At this point, the societies operating through the ports-of-trade began limited operations against the port-of-trade to attempt to maintain the earlier status quo. The ultimate result was either the absorption of the port-of-trade or pre-eminence and control by what had been the port-of-trade.<sup>52</sup>

Until such technological changes were made our case societies were necessarily restricted to relatively homogeneous ecological areas. Such areas were characterized by polities tending towards coterminousness with the area. In Egypt and, to some extent in Mesopotamia, unity was achieved, probably because of the central importance of the great river systems. In the Indian Deccan, Asia Minor, and Aztec Mexico, which were ecologically more dispersive,<sup>53</sup> not having major river systems, dispersed centers of power, ecologically internally homogeneous and each equivalent to the others, rivaled each other for control of the agrarian foundations of their own power, and full unity was



never achieved. It was on the basis of the constant effort to maintain, if not extend, power, that the élite militarism which characterized all these societies was built, since, apparently, it was not possible to maintain a commoner-army given the nature of the agrarian technologies. Rome solved this problem by getting access to many ecological areas of great technological diversity, having itself been, from the beginning, somewhat diversified ecologically and technologically, as all Europe was to be in later ages.

Derived from the separation of state-military and agrarian functions of these societies was a class (or caste) structure, often legalized, with the associated symbols of status such as dress, jewelry, palaces, and many rights and privileges, which were frequently given as rewards for the military service to the state. Herein lay the necessity for a constant inflow of élite goods, just as the militarism in essentially nonpastoral technologies required the constant supply of new horses and the necessity for an agency which could negotiate the acquisition of these goods without itself becoming involved in the power-operations of the state: in short, the port-of-trade. When the port-of-trade began to get involved in the power-operations, its end was in sight, and a new stage of development began to appear.

I would hypothesize that an institution like the port-of-trade appears when agrarian developments of an emerging polity have developed to the point that the polity has begun to expand into an entire homogeneous ecological area or has run into another polity which is also expanding. In either expansion or competition, the polity requires constant supplies of certain kinds of goods which it does not have or cannot sufficiently produce. It acquires these from external sources from, or through, polities with which it is not in competition, but, rather in symbiosis.<sup>54</sup> When, in particular, the polities or ports-of-trade *through* which the commodities travel expand because of their strategic position and profit-making advantages, as well as through technical innovation, then conditions have appeared which foreshadow the passing of the port-of-trade syndrome.

#### Pan American Union

#### NOTES

1. Arnold (1957, a); Chapman (1957); Revere (1957). On Greece, cf. Arnold (1957, a), p. 162. Though all the areas or polities mentioned involve what politically were states, Hickerson has suggested that a phenomenon somewhat like the port-of-trade was found associated even with nonstate societies such as those of the eastern woodlands of the United States, though plainly at a much less formalized level of organization. The latter will not be considered here.

2. Polanyi (1957), pp. 262-63; Polanyi, Arensberg, and Pearson (1957), p. 374.

3. Chapman (1957), p. 116.

4. Arnold (1957, a), pp. 154, 156, 157-58, *passim*; Revere (1957), pp. 42-43, 43 ff., *passim*.

5. Arnold (1957, a), p. 154, *passim*.

6. The description here given is a composite of those given by Arnold, Chapman, and Revere, with some emphasis on the socioecological aspects. The more purely economic aspects are summarized from Polanyi in Note 9.

7. Cf. Revere (1957), pp. 44, 44-52, concerning Hittite policy which was explicitly formulated so as to retain the autonomy and separateness of the port-of-trade.

8. Cf. Arnold (1957, a), pp. 164-66, 183; Revere (1957), e.g., pp. 53-54, 61.

9. Cf. Polanyi (1957), pp. 262-63. We may summarize his characterization of administered trade, whose main institution is the port-of-trade, as follows: It involves more

or less formal treaty relationships. The whole trade is government-channeled and administered since import interests are determinative, though exports are also important. Administration is extended to arrangements concerning "rates," proportions of exchanged units, port facilities, weights, quality of control, physical transfer of goods, storage and care; control of trading personnel, regulation of "payments," credits, price differentials. Some of these matters are tied with the collection of the goods for export from, and the distribution of import goods into, the domestic economy. Goods mutually imported are standardized as to quality, weight, and so forth, and trade is *limited* to these types of goods, with equivalencies in simple unit relations. Equivalencies are set once only, and haggling to accommodate changed circumstances is not about price but, e.g., measures, means of payment, quality, proportions of currencies. Even "profits" may be bargained, price remaining stable. Involved are permanent trading bodies. If between governments, trade usually formalized by treaty. Port-of-trade handles mechanics of trade and its exchange aspects.

10. I have used mainly reports of foreign travelers since they, and particularly Europeans, encountered trade and treaty conditions which they consistently misunderstood and often reported as oddities or scandalous behavior. Often the foreign visitor is forced into a mold of behavior unfamiliar to him, which he describes. On the whole Indian sources themselves, including economic histories, do not give insight into the phenomenon examined here; their approach is chiefly through market economics and price-making institutions which obscure the port-of-trade. Panikkar, for example, constantly interprets the data in market terms. Cf. Polanyi, Arensberg, and Pearson (1957), p. 374. In chronological order, the major sources are: Hiouen-Thsang, *ca.* 629-645; Hasan (Soleyman), *ca.* 865; Benjamin of Tudela, *ca.* 1160; Marco Polo, *ca.* 1288; Ibn Batuta, *ca.* 1325-50; Abd-er Razzak, *ca.* 1442; Athanasius Nikitin of Twer, *ca.* 1450; Vasco da Gama, 1497-99; Girolamo Sernigi, 1497-99; Afonso d'Albuquerque, 1500-9; Duarte Barbosa, *ca.* 1515.

11. Warmington, cf. "Notes" (1928), pp. 330-94.

12. Warmington, chaps. i, ii, *passim*. Cf. also Nainar.

13. Panikkar (1929), pp. 3-4.

14. Hudson (1931), p. 141.

15. Batuta, p. 235. He mentions that Chinese merchants entered only the ports of Kulom, Calicut, and Eli near Mount Delly. He says, "On the Sea of China, travelling is done in Chinese ships only." The importance of Indian shipping is suggested in his remark that in Calicut "too lives the famous shipowner Mithqál who possesses vast wealth and many ships for his trade with India, China, Yemen, and Fars. On p. 236 he notes that "Some of the Chinese own large numbers of ships on which their factors are sent to foreign countries." He arrived at Calicut at a time when 13 Chinese ships were in port at once. The large Chinese ships carried 1,000 men, had four decks, cabins, saloons, lavatories, etc. Slave girls, children, etc. went along with the passengers, and sailors raised "green stuffs . . . in wooden tanks" on ship-board.

16. It is plain that such "plundering" was either simply legal or even an affair of state. Pedro Cabral decided it was easier to seize a ship than to go through all the legal red-tape of the port-of-trade. That this was considered an act of piracy, as opposed to rightful "plunder," is clear since the act ". . . caused anger and consternation, as the people of Calicut had, for many centuries, been accustomed to complete security of property and person." (Panikkar, 42). That regular legal norms existed for "plundering" generally is evident also from the following exception, which itself indicates the power of the merchants discussed on p. 3: "[The "sultan" of Calicut's] police officers were beating the people to prevent them from plundering what the sea cast up. In all the lands of Mulyabár,

except in this one land alone, it is the custom that whenever a ship is wrecked all that is taken from it belongs to the treasury. At Calicut, however, it is retained by its owners and for that reason Calicut has become a flourishing city and attracts large numbers of merchants" (Batuta, p. 237).

17. Pandarani seems to have been a fore-port for Calicut, separate from the administrative center of Calicut itself, where all important port-of-trade decisions were made. There were warehouses, factors, and other officials here. I would suppose that only special visiting dignitaries actually negotiated at Calicut itself. This seems generally confirmed by the events surrounding the arrival and reception of the Portuguese.

18. Reproduced in da Gama.

19. Beal (1958), IV, 461-62.

20. Hasan, p. 15.

21. The note indicated in the text of the Quotation reads: "*Xabandar*, a consul for merchants, a resident for affairs relating to commerce and trade (Vieyra). From the text it is evident that this officer is the *Zemindar* of the Indian continent, in his more ordinary capacity of responsible collector only of the revenues on behalf of the Government under the Mohammedan administration rather than as hereditary owner of the land he occupies.

22. Polanyi (1957, pp. 262-63), cf. Note 9.

23. Marco Polo, p. 285, mentions that Brahmans helped foreign merchants unfamiliar with the customs. The latter entrusted their goods to the good men, who, as merchants, were asserted not to lie, and who set forth to sell the goods for the visitors at the best possible profit, asking no commission except what the stranger wished to give.

24. Polo, p. 272, mentions that in Ceylon the king was paid one tenth on produce. Razzak, p. 7, states that one tenth of the value of gold and silver was paid in duty at Ormuz in Persia, as well as on goods from Malabar and the Deccan.

25. Ostensibly friendly persons informed da Gama "that if the captains went ashore their heads would be cut off, as this was the way the king dealt with those who came to his country without giving gold" (da Gama, p. 72).

26. Barbosa, p. 145; Polo, p. 279.

27. Polanyi, cf. Note 9.

28. Revere (1957), pp. 55-61.

29. Goshal (1957), p. 516.

30. Gifts of horses were most important in opening ambassadorial contact. Razzak mentions giving horses several times (pp. 15, 30), one time five at once. Albuquerque mentions that the Persian ambassador to the "Hidalcão" arrived (to his sorrow) at Goa, recently seized by the Portuguese, with a number of horses as a gift for latter dignitary, but "gave" them to Albuquerque instead (II, 107).

31. That controlling the horse trade was vital to statecraft is apparent by the near hysteria which reigned once the port-of-trade disappeared after the Portuguese seizures. Subsequent events contain a long list of embassies, delegations, entreaties, and supplications by heads of state from the interior. Albuquerque realized his position of power, achieved by denaturalizing a port-of-trade and using it, instead, as an instrument of policy. Cf. Albuquerque, II, 21, 38, 39, 76, 77; IV, 123, 124.

32. Polo, pp. 274-75, mentions that western horse merchants did not bring farriers with them so that better horse care should not be introduced into India, thus perhaps reducing the horse trade. Barbosa, p. 90, says horses lived but a short while in India and were not bred there; they had to be imported from Persia and Arabia.

33. Cf. Note 24.

34. Major, p. 30.

35. Ramanayya, Part II, chap. iii, "Military Organization and the Kandãcãra Depart-

ment"; *ibid.*, chap. vii, "Revenues and Taxation"; *ibid.*, chap. x, "Trade and Commerce."

36. Royal prerogatives are clear from this statement (Batuta, p. 257): "In the island of Ceylon, rubies are found in all parts. The land is private property, and a man buys a parcel of it and digs for rubies. Some of them are red, some yellow [topazes], and some blue [sapphires]. Their custom is that all rubies of the value of a hundred *fanams* belong to the sultan, who pays their price and takes them; those of less value belong to the finders. . . ." Polo confirms this, speaking of pearls, which if over half a *saggio* (a weight) were not to be taken from the island. If they were much larger than that, they went to the king.

37. Cf. Note 36, and Quotation 38.

38. Barbosa, p. 98.

39. Such passages appear virtually with each new place visited by a traveler.

40. Tiedemann reports that Canton, at this time, appears to have had the traits of a port-of-trade and served to separate stranger merchants from the Chinese hinterland.

41. Goshal (1955), pp. 404-5; (1957), pp. 524-26; Panikkar (1929), p. 4; cf., *ibid.*, p. 10.

42. Panikkar (1929), pp. 4-5; cf. also Goshal (1955), p. 405, who says it was a "non-denominational institution open to Hindus as well as Christian settlers" and it operated on the coast and inland.

43. Goshal (1955), p. 404.

44. Arensberg, personal communication.

45. Barbosa, pp. 135-44, discusses several castes which are involved in subsistence activities, some of them appear to have been active in other ways also. The *zevil tver* gathered palm fruits, tilled trees, were porters for hire, hewed stones, worked manually. The *moguer* were also porters for kings, mariners, and fishermen. Some of them were rich from shipping, gaining money from the Moors. The *mucoa* were fishermen and mariners (fish, along with rice, coconuts, etc., was an important item of diet in Malabar). They did not pay duty on fresh fish sold (unlike many other producers who paid duties to the royal treasuries), but paid 4 per cent on dried fish. Fresh fish was cheap and "the chief food among the Indians." Some *mucoa*, too, were rich and well-supplied, having large houses and property. The *betua* made salt, ploughed, and sowed rice. The *puler* also ploughed and sowed rice, using buffalo and oxen (though Barbosa had said there were no beasts of burden). He also mentions several craft-specialized castes not involved in production or distribution.

46. The only passage which even remotely suggested a marketlike institution was the following from da Gama, p. 69: "In this manner all on board ship went on land by twos and threes taking with them bracelets, clothes, new shirts, and other articles, which they desired to sell. We did not, however, effect these sales at the prices hoped for [as at Mozambique] . . . for a very fine shirt . . . was worth here only . . . 30 reis [300 in Portugal], for [p. 70] 30 reis in this country is a big sum. And just as we sold shirts cheaply so we sold other things, in order to take some things away from this country, if only for samples. Those who visited the city bought there cloves, cinnamon, and precious stones: and having bought what they desired they came back to the ships without any one speaking to them. When the captain found the people of the country so well disposed, he left a factor with the merchandise, together with a clerk and some other men." It is to be noted that the ship's men bought no foodstuffs. Also they were exchanging materials which our quotations suggest were elite goods but of relatively little value. Selling such, they would have been acting in the capacity of lesser indigenous merchants, and, in fact, in that status, receive appropriate goods in return. As to their foreigner status, it must be

recalled (a) that da Gama had already forced several special accommodations by the local inhabitants, and (b) that Calicut had several unusual concessions to foreigners as suggested in Note 16.

47. Arnold (1957), p. 154, *passim*; Chapman (1957), p. 116.
48. Chapman (1957), p. 118, map.
49. Technological activities, their varieties, and their implications for social orders are discussed in Leeds, b.
50. Wittfogel, *passim*.
51. Cf. Note 32.
52. Revere (1957), pp. 55-61; cf. also Note 31.
53. The concept of dispersive ecologies is discussed in Leeds, a.
54. Revere (1957), pp. 55 ff., uses the concept of symbiosis.

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[ Antony Leeds ]

THE PORT-OF-TRADE IN PRE-EUROPEAN INDIA AND  
AS AN ECOLOGICAL AND EVOLUTIONARY TYPE\*

I

Several writers have recently pointed to the port-of-trade, or administered trade, as a central institution associated with the economies and politics of significant world areas or states such as Pre-Spanish Meso-America, West-Coast Africa before and during early European contact, Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, the Hittite and Persian Empires, the Phoenecian, Philistine, Ionian and mainland Greek ports.<sup>1</sup> Since each writer was concerned with the description of his area of interest, there is but passing suggestion of the near universality of the port-of-trade,<sup>2</sup> whose existence has not yet been demonstrated for significant world areas.

The first purpose of this paper, then, is to demonstrate in detail the occurrence of the port-of-trade in yet one more area, India and Ceylon, probably over a period of minimally 1500 years. Also, according as the data may suggest, its presence will be indicated for still other areas such as Southeast Asia, Indonesia, China, in the east, and Persia, Arabia, and the East Coast of Africa, in the west, for indeterminate periods back from the Portuguese conquests around the beginning of the sixteenth Century.

In discussing the viability and effectiveness of the port-of-trade as a socio-economic institution, previous writers have suggested some general functions it performed in what have been called "archaic" societies; functions of relating different ecological zones to each other,<sup>3</sup> of facilitating military state-craft,<sup>4</sup> of barring undesired foreign contacts,<sup>5</sup> etc. In view of its near universality in space, ranging from China, through the Near East and Africa, to the New World, and its remarkable viability in time, from the third millenium, B.C., in Egypt to the late Nineteenth Century, A.D., in the Central Sudan, the problem of identifying those conditions of significant factors which give rise to the port-of-trade, and changes from which eliminate it, emerges forcefully. This involves the broader problem of specifying what sort of socio-cultural features are to be designated "archaic" society, as opposed to other kinds of society in which port-of-trade do not occur.

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The second purpose of this paper is to present briefly some preliminary suggestions as to the solution to these problems.

## II

A clearly-defined complex of institutions and personnel collectively constitutes a type which has been designated the port-of-trade.<sup>6</sup> The term refers to a geo-political unit in which trade was an affair of state, a function of the polity rather than of the economy. The general characteristics of the port-of-trade follow. It was an autonomous, specialized town, city, or small state, intended by policy<sup>7</sup> to serve as a meeting place for various groups of traders, usually foreigners. It was usually a point of trans-shipment between distinct ecological regions. Often it was to be found in a state separate from the major trading states meeting in it. It constituted a kind of buffer zone, protected in its sovereignty by the mutual self-interest of the major trading states operating in it. It was at the same time a deliberately neutral zone, protecting the "stranger", the traders, and had an international status which might vary from that of a free port in "weak" border states to port-towns of inland powers, administered from distant capitals. Often the port-of-trade itself had no indigenous group involved in the actual exchange of goods other than the port officers who administered the transactions without themselves being party to them. There were often groups of foreign merchants resident in the port-of-trade.<sup>8</sup>

The port-of-trade constituted the main organ of long-distance trade for the trading states. As such, it had a characteristic institutional organization. First, all operations of trading, as well as the personnel involved, were subject to a special and severe code of laws for the maintenance of peace and security of port, property, and personnel. This code was equally administered for all arrivals. Any breach of the peace and security was likely to drive traders away, breaking down exchange between the trading states and bringing economic loss to the port-of-trade itself. Punishments were rigorously enforced and often extreme.

Second, the port-of-trade was administered by agencies of the port under native authority, special officials, and professional organizations. Administration included the supervised disembarkation, organization of transport (both under armed guard and

with great fanfare), and storage of commodities by the official port authorities. The goods were placed in port warehouses under port guards. Port authorities put traders into special wards and houses of the town under guarded supervision, cared for them, fed them, but did not, as a rule, allow them the freedom of the city or access to markets. When liberty was allowed, it was always extremely limited and usually under supervision. It is important to note that ordinary local inhabitants had no connection with the strangers at any point in this whole sequence of events. Traders were suspected of being spies for the states from which they came, consequently, they were to be kept from the people at large as well as from the hinterland polities which the port-of-trade represented. Hence, also, the strict control exercised over the trader. The administrative personnel and professional organizations of the port-of-trade were often so powerful that they effectively ruled the city even where there was a properly constituted monarch.

Third, all prices were administered and arranged by treaty. Prices established by free competition of wares in a price-making market did not exist, nor did any form of free selling. Prices were often fixed for long-term periods, sometimes even by general administrative regulation. Equivalencies and prices were fixed by law, not by supply and demand price fluctuations. In contrast to markets, the trade treaties juxtaposed spatially separate polities in legal, but not face-to-face confrontations. Once prices were set by the appropriate persons, the trading could take place; there was no movement of goods till the terms of trade were set.<sup>9</sup>

Fourth, the objects entering into trade were important to state-craft, including items of luxury consumption, since these were used as part of the reward system of elite class status in these societies. The goods circulated among the dignitaries of state, and this circulation was reinforced by such sanctions as sumptuary laws. The port-of-trade was a way of moving goods necessary for military needs, elite consumption, public works or public payments, and, at the same time, of protecting the state from foreign contact. Thus the port-of-trade was an organ operated for ends of state.

Finally, the port-of-trade was quite distinct from markets. No commoners took part in the port-of-trade exchanges which were even spatially separated from the mar-

kets. The port-of-trade contrasted sharply with the "democratic" exchange which occurred in the market place, accompanied by the use of money, money surrogates, swapping, bartering, etc. The market, unlike the port-of-trade, had foodstalls, peddlers, stores, and the like, to supply the daily needs of the citizens, who, meeting face-to-face with the sellers, engaged in that higgling and haggling about price so notably absent in the price-making arrangements of the port-of-trade, which was typically not concerned with the mundane necessities of life. The Indian material unequivocally shows that the ports of call along the Indian coast, as well as those of Ceylon and the islands of the Indian Ocean, were ports-of-trade. We may turn to the evidence.<sup>10</sup>

### III

India has been in active commercial contact with the lands to the west for well over 2000 years, excluding Mesopotamian-Indus contacts in the third millenium, B.C. A number of Romans and Greeks refer to India, or, at least, its west coast - Diodorus Siculus (1st Century, B.C.), Strabo (63 B.C. - 24 A.D.), and Pliny the Elder (23-79, A.D.),<sup>11</sup> for example, as do also a great number of the Arabic geographers and travelers some centuries later.<sup>12</sup> Panikkar mentions the discovery of large quantities of Roman coins in Malabar and says "Roman money was practically in current use, as hoards of coins have been found all over Malabar...". Roman merchants came to Malabar, and Malabari embassies went to Rome.<sup>13</sup> Throughout the Islamic period, too, a vast trade between Arabia, Persia, and other states to the west of the Indian Ocean was carried on. Further, though trade between Christian and Islamic countries was supposedly illegal, the Islamic countries of Southwest Asia served as illicit trade routes between India and the great trading states, Venice and Byzantium.

Trade with the East was, if anything, greater still. Intensive shipping and commerce occurred among China, the Indies, Southeast Asia, to a lesser extent Japan, and, of course, India. Hudson points out that these areas jointly constituted "one continuous maritime trade area".<sup>14</sup> India was the entrepot between East and West, as Chinese and eastern merchants rarely travelled to the lands of the Near East and Africa, and those of the latter places did not usually travel beyond India. To the

east, the Chinese were the most active in shipping,<sup>15</sup> though Indian shipping was important here as well as to the west. Indian ports therefore became the points of exchange where Chinese left goods and picked up others, on one hand, while, on the other, merchants from the west came both for Chinese and Indian goods at these same ports, bringing western wares.

The ports were located especially along the entire west coast of India as far north as Sind, although there were some on the east coast as well. Some ports appeared to concentrate on western exchange - Cambay, for instance - while others like Calicut and Quilon focussed more on the eastern trade. There were also ports in the Maldiva and Laccadive Islands and in Ceylon. Economically these areas comprised systems far more extensive than the political entities entering into them. The operations of the ports were on such a scale and so complex that an intricate system of regulations and institutions was needed to run them, a system clearly corresponding to what is called the port-of-trade.

The regulations enforced upon ships entering the ports and upon their personnel clearly indicate the total attempt at protection and control of the travelling trader and of his goods. Barbosa, for example, says:

3. [Goa] was a place of great trade in merchandise. It has a very good port, to which flocked many ships from Makkah, Aden, Ormuz, Cambay, and the Malabar country. And the... Sabaym Delcani resided much in this place, and he kept there his captains and men-at-arms, and no one entered or went out of this island and city, either by sea or by land, without his permission; and all those who entered there were registered with all their signs and particulars, and from whence they came; and so, with this precaution and arrangement, they allowed them to return. (p. 75).

Nabata observes that

2. It is a custom of theirs that every ship that passes by a town must needs anchor at it and give a present to the ruler. This they call the "right of bandar". If any one omits to do this, they sail out in pursuit of him, bring him into the port by force, double the tax on him, and prevent him from proceeding on his journey for as long as they wish. (p. 231).

It is clear that control of the port extended some distance off-shore and that this control was rigorously enforced. All ships passing along the coast of Malabar were expected to obey the conditions set forth in Quotation 1 and to pay the bandar, obviously a port duty, registration fee, and purchase of safe conduct. If they failed

to do so, they were subject to legalized sanctions of seizure and fine. Major (p. 1vi) cites Batuta as saying that "corsairs" from each port captured only those vessels that attempted to pass their ports without payments of these tolls. As a further right, Polo (p. 293) and Razzak (p. 14) report that at all Indian ports other than Calicut in central Malabar, ships driven out of their ways or entering ports by accident could legally be plundered.<sup>16</sup>

Upon arriving in port, and formally declaring intention to land, port officials, variously called bale, xambandar, or zemindar, at once took over the management of affairs, from first to last. In da Gama, we read that

3. /The bale (a civil intendant of the Rajah and head of the police) and other gentlemen/ told the captain that as he had informed the king that he intended to land his merchandise, he should now give orders to have this done, as it was the custom of the country that every ship on its arrival should at once land the merchandise it brought, as also the crews, and that the vendors should not return on board until the whole of it had been sold. (p. 67).

During this time, the ship was ordered to go to prescribed anchorage. Once there, it could "abide at will for a greater or longer space..." as Razzak (p. 13) remarks.

Once inside the port, ships and merchandise alike were subject to officialdom. First, the bale received the "gift", the fee which formally opened trading relations, and set the visiting stranger under the protection of the king. At the end of negotiations, he also received a departure duty: "...The Zamorin required customs to be paid according to the regulations of the port...", says Panikkar (p. 37). That these dealings followed a standard pattern is clear from the following passage from da Gama:

4. The king said that what /da Gama/ brought /as a present directly to the king/ ought to have been sent to his factor, and that he did not want to look at it. He then desired the captain to be informed that as he wished to depart he should pay him 600 xerafins and that he might go: this was the custom of the country and of those who came to it. (pp. 70-71).

Next, the bale received the personnel of the ship, apparently giving different treatment to officers and men. Both, however, were led with great publicity and under armed guard to specially appointed lodgings where they were kept till they left. During this time, their life necessities were supplied. In da Gama it is reported that,

5. At the same time, the king sent a bale with other men of distinction to Pandarani to conduct the captain-major to where the king awaited him. This bale... is always attended by two hundred men armed with swords and bucklers... On landing the captain-major was received /with trumpets!/ by the /bale/ with whom were

many men, armed and unarmed. ... A palanquin was provided for the captain-major, such as is used by men of distinction in that country, as also by some of the merchants, who pay something to the king for this privilege. (pp. 51-52).<sup>17</sup>

At another time,

6. The king sent a brother of the bale, who was a lord of this country, to accompany the captain, and he was attended by men beating drums, blowing anafils and bagpipes, and firing off matchlocks. In conducting the captain they showed us much respect, more than is shown in Spain to a king. (p. 55).

Da Gama was provided lodgings and food as were his men, separately:

7. /After the walk/ The captain-major was there deposited at the house of a man of rank, whilst we others were provided with food, consisting of rice, with much butter and excellent boiled fish.

Da Gama was lodged with the king's factor, "a Moor of distinction" (p. 59), a fact confirmed in letters by a member of the expedition, Girolamo Sernigi, to a Florentine friend.<sup>18</sup> Later da Gama asked to be lodged away from either Hindu or Moor, a favor the king granted. The strangers were constantly kept under surveillance and their movements closely controlled:

8. They agreed that /da Gama/ should be permitted to go to the king/, but afforded him no opportunity for doing so, for they immediately closed all the doors, and many armed men entered to guard us, none of us being allowed to go outside without being accompanied by several of these guards. (p. 65).

In sum, da Gama was lodged and maintained in that part of town designated for the residence of foreign merchant groups, Moorish or otherwise, a situation which seems to have been prevalent among the Indian ports (see p. 14 below).

Concurrently the bale supervised the merchandise, seeing to it that it was properly cared for, not only from the point of view of protecting it, but with the aim of maintaining the conventions of exchange to which foreign merchants had to adhere. All reports agree on the protection and notable degree of security found at these ports. Hiuen Tsian, between 629 and 645 A.D., remarks on the "honest and upright" men of Sind in the course of a discussion of commodities, and on the "honest and sincere" king of Sind.<sup>19</sup> Hasan, about 865 A.D., notes the friendliness and order prevailing in the ports.<sup>20</sup> Benjamin of Tudela, a Jewish traveller or trader, about 1160, states

9. This nation /Malabar/ is very trustworthy in matters of trade and whenever foreign merchants enter the port, three secretaries of the king immediately repair on board their vessels, write down their names and report them to him. The king thereupon grants them security for their property, which they may even leave in the open fields without a guard. (Major, p. xlvi).

In 1442, three centuries after Benjamin, Razzak makes similar comments:

10. Security and justice are so firmly established in Calicut that the most wealthy merchants bring thither from maritime countries considerable cargoes which they unload and unhesitatingly send into the markets and the bazaars without thinking in the meantime of any necessity of checking the account or of keeping watch over the goods. The officers of the custom-house take upon themselves the charge of looking after the merchandise over which they keep watch day and night. (p. 14).

It is plain not only that the port-of-trade officials took over from the merchants as soon as they landed, but also that this was known and favorably anticipated by merchants from the most distant places.

The other side of protection is control and handling, and this, too, is an evident function of the bale. The control function is not to be doubted since,

11. When da Gama left the palace, certain men followed him, and when he arrived at the house in Calicut where the merchandise was deposited, they put a number of men inside with him to watch that none of it was sent away... (p. 71).

to da Gama's ships without authorization. Other control and handling functions of the bale are indicated in the following passage, also from da Gama:

12. When the captain found that the merchandise found no buyers at Pandarani, he applied to the king for permission to forward it to Calicut. The king at once ordered the bale to get a sufficient number of men who were to carry the whole on their backs to Calicut, this to be done at his expense, as nothing belonging to the King of Portugal was to be burdened with expenses whilst in this country. But the Portuguese felt all this was done because it was intended to do us some ill-turn for it had been reported to the king that we were thieves and went about to steal. (p. 68).

In other words, the commodities were to be kept under strict control so there could be no changes made by any party in quality or quantity ("thieving"?). It is also apparent that transportation was carried out by the port officials and all expenses were handled by the port-of-trade which thus tended to isolate merchants from contact with its own population since they could not make expenditures either for persons or things.

Handling also involves care of the goods. That this also seems to have been part of the port officials' duties, when needed, is indicated in Albuquerque's comments:

13. ...the horses ...were placed in...stables which the Çabaio (pre-Portuguese Moslem ruler of Goa) had erected in the fortress, wherein formerly they used to place the horses which the dealers brought from Ormuz to sell. And for this purpose, the Çabaio used to have a Xabandar (sic), whose office corresponds to that of the Portuguese superintendent receiver of the royal import dues, whose duty it was to look to the care of the horses, and the people were obliged to bring

hay, and corn, and mungo, which is a certain species of seed that they feed the horses with, in abundance. (II, p. 132).<sup>21</sup>

Protection and control involve legal sanctions. Girolamo Sernigi, in his first letter, shows that these were not lacking:

14. Justice is strictly administered in this city. Robbers, murderers, and other malefactors are incontinently impaled in the Turkish fashion; and whoever defrauds the king's excise /oustoms/ is punished by having his merchandise confiscated. (p. 135).

As another point the king is quoted as having said to his factor that he should be reminded that his predecessor had been executed for extorting money from foreign merchants. The one addressed had, it seems, been trying the same with the Portuguese.

Once the merchandise was impounded on land, port-of-call officials carried out the mechanics of the transactions for both parties until an agreement had been reached, at which time the exchange actually took place. The first step, settling on the goods, appears to have been handled with the king's treasurer by means of an intermediary, according to Panikkar:

15. The Zamorin's /raja of Calicut's/ answer to the request for commercial facilities was vague, and da Gama was asked to communicate to the Treasurer of the King what commodities he wanted. (p. 36).

Treasurers are mentioned now and then in passing, but not in connection with trade.

The merchandise for exchange was opened to the inspection of buyers under conventionalized procedures. In da Gama it is stated that

16. .../da Gama/ landed his merchandise as he had been ordered, but...the Moors only came to depreciate it; and...for these reasons he looked forward to what /the king/ would order.... /The king/...sent seven or eight merchants to inspect the merchandise, and to become purchasers if they felt inclined. He also sent a man of quality to remain with the factor already there, and authorized them to kill any Moor who might go there, without fear of punishment.... The merchants whom the king had sent remained about eight days, but instead of buying they depreciated the merchandise. The Moors no longer visited the house where the merchandise was, but they bore us no good-will. (p. 68).

In other words, various merchant groups came to inspect the Portuguese goods, most of which happened not to be of the kind or quality interesting to any of them, under the supervision of port-of-trade factors. One may suspect that the depreciating and lingering of the merchants may have been part of an attempt to arrange more favorable exchange equivalencies. The significance of the threat against the Moors is



not clear from the text, but again shows the sanctioning power of the port-of-trade officials.

No resident merchants, and possibly to visiting ones as well, though no unambiguous reference was found to this effect, the king attached three officials.<sup>23</sup> According to Barbosa:

17. The king gave to each one a nair (Nayar) to guard and serve him, a Chety /see below/ scribe for his accounts, and to take care of his property, and a broker for his trade. To these three persons such a merchant would pay something for their maintenance and all of them would serve very well, and when the merchant bought spices the sellers gave him /apparently as part of the rate of exchange/ for each farazola of ginger, which is of twenty-five pounds, three or four pounds of it for them; and so of some other goods, which duties the merchant collects to pay these officials of his. (p. 148).

Barbosa says of these same Chetties (cf p. 19) of the Coromandel Coast:

18. These people are considerable merchants and changers, they deal in precious stones of all sorts, and in seed pearl, coral, and other valuable merchandise; and in gold, silver, either bullion or coined, which is a great article of trade amongst them, because they rise and fall many times. They are rich and respected, and live very decently; they have very good houses in streets set apart for themselves.... They also carry with them continually large bags in which their scales and weights are kept, and their money, and jewels and pearls /which could be used in payments/. (p. 144-145).

Besides confirming the residential pattern for merchants mentioned in Quotation 7, ff., the passage points to the function of this caste as measurers, weighers, and makers of equivalencies since they were the changers, and dealt with jewels, precious metals, and coin, all of which were used as means of exchange. They appear to have been merchants in their own right. Barbosa (p. 134) mentions other castes, such as the krabaras, involved in money-changing, from which much gain was said to have been made. The fact that these trading guilds or castes were so wide-spread suggests also that there was wide-spread standardization of weights and measures, or at least translatability into equivalent systems.

How the brokers actually arrived at agreements about what goods, how many items, what quality and bulk of items were to enter into exchange, I have not been able to find out. It is vital to note, however, that no mention of prices as measures of market conditions was encountered. Rather, there are constant references to to-and-fro exchanges of goods usually involving entire lots of varied commodities. Says Estada:

19. .../Quilon's/ merchants are called Sôlis. They are immensely wealthy; a single

merchant will buy a vessel with all that is in it and load it with goods from his own house. (p. 238).

Barbosa, speaking of the brabares mentioned above, says

20. These still deal, especially from the interior, in all sorts of goods, and collect all the pepper and ginger from the nayrs (Nayars) and cultivators, and frequently buy them in advance in exchange for cotton stuffs, and other goods which come from beyond the sea. These people are also great changers, and gain much from coin. (p. 133-134).

The method by which brabares bought suggests that regular equivalences existed. Further evidence on to-and-fro movement of goods is supplied by Albuquerque:

21. These Moorish merchants used to come from Çufim (Safie in Barbary), from Ourão (Oran), from Tramecim, and from Tripoli, with their wares to Cairo, and from Cairo, they used to make their way to Judá and from Judá to Calicut, with ready money, and there they used to build new ships, and load them with spices, and so returned to their own lands. (II, 34).

The following passage is again interesting since it also makes no reference to prices or price-making conditions, but refers to money only as an auxiliary in making exchanges of goods:

22. ...a native prince begged earnestly that Afonso Dalboquerque would either give orders for the coinage of some money, because everything was going to ruin from want of it, and barter of merchandise could not be affected, or at least that he would permit the coinage of the Çabaio to pass current. (II, 127-128).

It would seem that once the brokers had reached agreements and the scribes had measured and weighed and checked on quality, the actual transfer of goods took place. Thereupon the final official act, reported by Razzak, followed:

23. When a sale is effected, the officers of the custom-house levy a duty on the goods of one fortieth part; if they are not sold, they make no charge on them whatsoever. (p. 14)

Other references to levies are also made for Ceylon and elsewhere. <sup>24</sup>

In sum, the merchant appears to have had an official position in the social and economic structure, either temporary or permanent. Temporary incumbents initiated their tenure of the position by a payment to the king in gold, permitting him to trade. Failure to pay this imperilled the stranger merchant. <sup>25</sup> The merchant's formal position was stressed by the official attachment of the subordinate personnel: the guard, the scribe, and the broker. In short, a kind of temporary firm was established by covenant between the foreign merchant and the king through the agency of the port

officials and other public figures. The merchants were then empowered to deal in all goods considered most important in the élite trade (see below) through the agency of the factor. Payments were apparently mainly carried out by the direct exchange of goods, sometimes with auxiliary payments of money, and apparently occasionally entirely in money. Panikkar says

24. /João da/ Nova found that at Cochin the Merchants refused to exchange goods and insisted on cash. (48).

Ready money might be used in exchange for ships, for cargoes (cf. Quotation 19), and for usury.<sup>26</sup>

With respect to profits, though they seem to have been beloved of all, the evidence is not definitive that supply-demand price fluctuations were not involved. Nevertheless, the impression from the literature is that this was in fact the case, and that profits were made, rather, by other manipulations such as those suggested by Polanyi.<sup>27</sup> This single suggestive passage, describing da Gama's negotiations with the King of Chirakkal in north Malabar, was found. It indicates that the king was arguing his right also to fix prices:

25. A commercial treaty was discussed, but it was not possible to settle prices as the /apparently Portuguese/ merchants said the king had only the rights to the duties. (p. 50).

The following passage is interesting because it suggests administered prices that were used not only for profit-making by the port-of-trade itself, but for political ends as well. Alboquerque remarks:

26. And because /the Çabaio/ used to give a greater payment to foreigners than any king of India, there immediately flocked to Goa many Rumes, Turks, Arabs, and Persians, and by assistance of these people he wrested many places from the king of Narsinga and made himself the great lord of the kingdom of Daquem. (II, 96).

Noteworthy in this passage is the use of port-of-trade advantages for competition for various land areas with Narsinga, one of the great kingdoms of the Deccan plateau which made use of the port-of-trade. This suggests that the port-of-trade was beginning to decline in the manner suggested by Revere.<sup>28</sup> There are other suggestions of this which at the same time indicate political and economic competition between ports-of-trade for profits. Panikkar states that

27. The Zamorin's interference in /the Raja of Cochin's/ affairs /consisted, among other things, of/ compelling all Cochin products to be sold through the port of Calicut. (p. 46)

Like the ideal port-of-trade, Indian ports-of-trade appear to have been characterized by specialization and even separateness. Thus, Barbosa reports of Palecate on the Coromandel coast that

28. It also has much trade with the interior of the kingdom, and they sell there many jewels which are brought from Peygu (Burma). ...These jewels may be had for very little there, by whomever knows how to buy well. The King of Narsinga keeps his governors in this city, and collectors of his revenue. (p. 177).

It may be noted that Palecate had special officials, that it sold to the interior to which it was politically attached, and that it was in close contact with outside ecological areas, both overseas and inland. All of these characteristics correspond with the model port-of-trade. It was that type of port-of-trade which was a port town of an inland power, administered from a distant capital, but having a degree of autonomy. Other comments mention various towns as being remarkable for their trade and for being specialized as places of exchange for a number of external polities. For example, Albuquerque says,

29. Through this harbour of Goa was always the principal passage to the kingdom of Narsinga and of Daquem; and for this reason it contained much merchandise, and large caravans of merchants came from the interior country in quest of it, and brought other commodities in exchange. And from this commerce which they had one with another, the inhabitants of Goa grew so prosperous that it was said that Goa alone in those days had a revenue of two hundred thousand pardaos 1 p. = 370 Portuguese reis/. (II, 95).

Some towns appeared to specialize their trade with only one inland kingdom, a pattern Revere has mentioned for the Near East. In one place Barbosa states that

30. ...There is another city of Moors, very large, rich, and of much trade, which deals with the people of Narsinga by land, and is called Cotaogato. (p. 151).

At another point he reports that

31. ...At four leagues from Balapatan city/ is a city of Moors and Gentiles; very large and of much trade with the merchants of the Kingdom of Narsinga; this town is called eah paranco, in which much copper is expended. (p. 149).

One may refer again to Quotations 28 and 29 in this regard.

Autonomy of the ports-of-trade is also indicated. Goshal cites a case in which two independent territorial units gathered together to produce an agreement converting a village granted by them into a coastal mercantile town, which then possessed an autonomy from either.<sup>29</sup> Reactions to threats to the legal predominance or independence of such towns also suggest that this autonomy was at least in some degree a fact. No-

tice this lively reaction from the head of state of the inland Deccani kingdom of Narsinga, reported by Albuquerque:

32. ...and the King of Narsinga used to declare, when he heard of it, that since the Çamorim of Calicut had assented to the building of a fortress in his land by the Portuguese, the Captain-General of India might as well build another in Bisnaga (Vijayanagara) if he please. (IV, 74).

Autonomy of the port-of-trade is further indicated by a number of statements asserting that the merchant residents, castes, and professional organizations such as guilds and corporations were so powerful in these ports that they in fact governed themselves and even the ports, regardless of the actual political relationship of the port to the interior or to its own legal king. Batuta comments about Quilon that

33. There is a colony of Muslim merchants /there/...This city is the nearest of the Malayabar towns to China and it is to it that most of the merchants /from China/ come. Muslims are honored and respected in it. The sultan of Quilon is an infidel /i.e. Hindu/ called the Tirawari; he respects the Muslims and has severe laws against thieves and profligates. (p. 238)

Plainly the Muslims are important members of the community. One may note, in passing, the reference to the strictness of public order. Again, Barbosa reports that

34. They /foreign Moors, called Pardesy, living in Calicut, of Quotation 45/ have among them a Moorish governor who rules over and chastises them, without the king meddling with them. (p. 147).

These Pardesy reportedly built ships considered large even by European standards. Batuta indicates the reason why foreign resident merchants had such powers:

35. /At Mangalore/ There is a colony of about four thousand Muslims... living in a suburb alongside the town. Conflicts frequently break out between them and the /Hindu/ townspeople, but the sultan makes peace between them on account of his need of the merchants.

But the strongest statement as to the power of such merchant groups is made by Sernigi when he says of Calicut that

36. In this city there reside many very wealthy Moorish merchants, and all the trade is in their hands /or carried on their vessels, in another version of the letter/. They have a fine mosque in the square of the town. The king is, as it were, governed by these Moors, because of the presents which they give him; and owing to their industry /intelligence/ the government is wholly in their hands, for these Christians (i.e. Hindus) are coarse people.

With respect to the Indian ports being ports of trans-shipment, it is abundantly clear not only from numerous quotations above, but from the record of the movement, direction, and inventory of goods involved in this vast trade that these ports were

intended as clearing-houses for goods passing from different politico-economic units through the port-of-trade, or, sometimes, if the port-of-trade was itself a producing area, between it and an external unit. We turn first to the inventory of goods itself.

There is no doubt at all that, in the main, the goods involved were directed to state and elite consumption. Among the most important classes of commodities were precious metals, precious stones, precious animals - specifically elephants, slaves, and especially horses - prized cloths, scents, dyes, and condiments, and so on. The only food-stuff mentioned is rice, except at a very late date when coconuts appear too. Several commodities - precious stones, horses, elephants, and some others - were generally royal monopolies, though less precious jewels and small specimens of very precious ones were released for wider exchange among merchants. Jewels, precious metals, elephants, and horses were crucial in affairs of state, especially in warfare and, as gifts, in diplomacy - a gift of horses precluded willingness to carry on peaceful negotiation.<sup>30</sup> A wondrous description of these uses is given by Barbosa for Narsynga:

37. ...and the king keeps at all times nine hundred elephants and more than twenty thousand horses, all which elephants and horses are bought with his money; the elephants at the price of fifteen hundred to two thousand ducats each, because they are very great and well-fitted for war, and for taking about with him continually for state. And the horses cost from three to six hundred ducats. These horses are distributed amongst the great lords who are responsible for them, and keep them for the gentry and knights to whom the king bids them be given: and he gives to each knight a horse and a groom and a slave girl, and for his personal expenses four or five pardaos of gold per month, according to who he is; and, besides that, each day's provisions for the horse and groom; and they send to the kitchen for the rations both for the elephants and horses. ...And thus all the king's horses and elephants are well fed and cared for at his cost. ...This king has more than a hundred thousand men, both horse and foot, to whom he gives pay: and fully five or six thousand women, to whom he also gives pay. (pp. 89-90).

Those commodities which were royal monopolies were plainly central to the maintenance of the state itself since they were used in the maintenance of the army. Even a momentary consideration of the almost constant hostilities among kingdoms on the Indian plateau shows that the problem of state maintenance was vast and continuous. Therefore chiefs of state kept, or tried to achieve, control over the sources of those goods which could, like horses, be used directly, or, like gold and jewels, indirectly, in maintaining the state. This fact clarifies all the efforts at controlling the elephant and horse trades;<sup>31</sup> the actual control over jewel production and trade; the use of human porters instead of animals, since horses and elephants were kept, as Batuta re-

ports (p. 232) only for the use of the "sultan" in state affairs. In this connection, Polo reported in 1288 that Guzerati corsairmen, "plundering" merchants at sea with royal permission, agreed with the king that they were to keep everything on board except the horses which went to the king. "No ship", says Polo, "ever goes to India without horses plus other cargo." (p. 294)<sup>32</sup> The need to control these resources also explains the insistence on "gifts", or duties, of gold to the kings at the ports-of-trade.<sup>33</sup> The importance of gold is shown in the following letter, addressed to the King of Portugal from the King of Calicut, paraphrased in da Gama as follows:

38. Vasco da Gama, a gentleman of your household came to my country, whereat I was pleased. My country is rich in cinnamon, cloves, ginger, pepper, and precious stones. That which I ask of you in exchange is gold, silver, corals, and scarlet cloth. (p. 75).

Gold could be used in paying elite armies, as rewards, and in exchange for horses, elephants, and other basic state-craft commodities. In passing, it may be noted that Niccoló Conti,<sup>34</sup> travelling in 1425, mentions that Venetian ducats were circulating in parts of India - apparently utilized as hoards of precious metal for the uses just mentioned. Cloth, too, was often used as reward or payment for services rendered by what is often referred to in the sources as the "nobility". The military animals, however, were only given to the nobility conditionally in that they could be taken back if improperly cared for or if the services rendered by the nobility proved inadequate. Like all goods to be discussed below, none of these appeared to be distributed to lower castes or classes, that is, to commoners at large. In fact, the military and social structure of the Kingdom of Narsynga revolved about the king's control over the allocation of these resources.<sup>35</sup>

The passage from Barbosa which follows is most illuminating as to how the royal establishments controlled and allocated these and other resources. He reports of Ceylon:

39. ...All the good cinnamon grows in this island upon the mountains, on trees which are like laurels. And the king of the country...sells it himself to the merchants who go there to buy it, because no one can gather it except the king. There are likewise in this island many wild elephants which the king orders to be caught and tamed; and they sell them to merchants of Cholmendel, Narsynga, and Malabar, and those of the kingdoms of Decan and Cambay go to those places to buy them. ...They make great merchandise of them, and they are worth much, because they are much valued by the kings of India for war and for labor, and they become as domestic and quick at understanding as men. /Prices as in Quotation 37 are given/, but in the island, they are to be had for a small price. And all have to be brought and presented to the king. There are many jewels in this island, rubies,

which they call manica, sapphires, jacinths, topazes, jagonzas (zircon), chrysoliths, and cat's eyes, which are as much esteemed amongst the Indians as rubies. And all these stones are all gathered in by the king, and sold by himself. And he has men who go and dig for them...who are great lapidaries and who are good judges in those matters. ...And the king sends them to look there, and after they have brought them he orders to set aside each kind, and pick out the good ones, and he has them worked to have them sold when cut, which he does himself to foreigners; and the other inferior ones he sells at once to the country merchants. ...The king has a great treasure of these jewels, for whenever he meets with any very good stone he puts it in his treasure. (p. 167-169, emphases mine).

First, it is important to note the connection between affairs of state and the royal monopolies or royal control of those resources, elephants and jewels, which were ecologically indigenous and, at the same time, critical to the management of state. These goods were entered into long-distance trade directed, as we know from Quotation 37, to other kings through the agency of the merchant groups. The only other full royal monopoly appears to have been horses, also crucial in state affairs. Since, however, they were ecologically exogenous, it was necessary to maintain a complex series of institutions, including treaties, embassies, spying, diplomatic gift-giving, and the port-of-trade itself, in order to get horses in competition with other kings who were also in search of the animals. The literature abounds in examples of all these institutions. The neutral and separate port-of-trade was plainly adaptive to this situation as it was for those cases in which elephants and jewels, in particular, and all the other goods for elite circulation had to be imported. Second, it should be noted that merchants appear to have been permitted a high level of living, but only up to a point. They were allowed certain types of jewels<sup>37</sup> and other goods, but, with respect to larger jewels, which were "esteemed as treasure by the king and also by the rich,"<sup>38</sup> crucial beasts, and export goods to be used in state trade, they were merely agents of trans-shipment. At the same time, they appear to have been the bottom-most stratum to which elite goods, of any quality, could circulate. Lower castes and classes had no access to them.

Further information on goods traded is given in the passage which follows. Barbosa reports of Malabar that

40. .../They/ stow much pepper, ginger, cloves, cinnamon, mace, nutmeg, long pepper, sandal and brazil wood, lac, cardamoms, myrabolands, tamarinds, bamboos, and all sorts of jewels and pearls, musk, amber, rhubarb, aloes-wood, many fine cotton stuffs, and much porcelain. ...And these ships return laden with copper, quicksilver, vermilion, coral, saffron, coloured velvets, rose-water, knives, coloured camlets, scarlet and other coloured cloths, gold and silver... (p. 147-148)



Such passages also show that these Indian ports were centers for long-distance, rather than for local, trade, as we should expect of a port-of-trade. Duarte Barbosa, speaking of Coromandel, comments that

41. ...many ships of Malabar come here to load rice, and they bring goods from Cambay to this country, that is to say, copper, quicksilver, vermilion, pepper, and other goods. And throughout all this Chalmender much spice and drugs, and goods of Malaca, China, and Bengal are to be met with, which the Moorish ships bring here from those parts. ...And in these times /post-Portuguese/ the Malabars carry rice and cocoa nuts to them, and return with their ships laden with slaves ... (p. 174).

At another point he reports that

42. /At Colombo, Ceylon/...many ships touch from various parts to take on board cinnamon and elephants. And they bring gold and silver, cotton and silk stuffs from Cambay /at which port these goods had arrived from the Near East/, and many other goods which are saffron, coral, quicksilver, vermilion which here is worth a good deal; and there is much profit on gold and silver, because it is worth more than in other parts. (p. 170).

And still again he says

43. In this place they make many good coloured cotton stuffs which are worth much in Malaca, Peigu, and Samatra, also in the kingdom of Guzarate and Malabar they are much valued for the clothing both of Moors and Gentiles. Copper, /etc./ opium, and many Cambay goods fetch a good price, so also scarlet cloth,...velvets from Mekkah, and rose water.

Da Gama confirms these observations, mentioning yet other goods and proveniences:

44. Various kinds of spices are brought from distant islands /Maldives, Ceylon/ to Colokutt. Pepper, brazil-wood, gr̄zo, cinnamon, frankincense, lac, are to be found there. These things abound and are worth next to nothing. ...There are likewise many ivory tusks and various other kinds of merchandise, such as variously-coloured silk-stuffs, costly cloth worked in gold, fine white linen, and woollen stuffs, such as bocassins of various colours, and also much cotton. It is thought that the silver stuffs and cloths, as also the linens, come from /Cairo/.... Most of the spices brought to Kalikut are said to come from the island of /Ceylon/. (p. 142).

In passing we may note that one of the main exports exchanged for goods from the west was spices. If it is true that much of the spice supply came from Ceylon, it again confirms that these ports were points of trans-shipment and exchange for elite goods only.

The passages above, and many others as well,<sup>39</sup> clearly show the wide variety of commodities entering into trade and, as clearly, show the equally wide provenience of these goods. They came from China, Malaca, Bengal, Ceylon, Maldives, Cambay, Near East and Cairo, and they went to such ports as Cambay, Calicut, Cananor, Quilon, Colombo,

Coromandel, and many others in India, and were shipped to such ports as Ormuz, Muscat, Socotra, Aden, Oran, even Mekka and Cairo, and to ports in Burma and China.<sup>40</sup> Thus the entire Indian Ocean and neighbouring inland areas constituted an area of long-distance trade, extending even to the China Sea.

It is quite evident that this inter-port trade was not only continual but also highly organized, though whether this organization was a constant feature is not sure. A vital aspect of the organization appears to have been professional trading corporations or trading castes which operated in Burma, Sumatra, Cambodia, Nepal, Malaya, etc.<sup>41</sup> Such a corporation was the Chetti caste, mentioned on p. 10, that, according to Panikkar, was a "powerful trade guild which carried on commerce with Arabia and Egypt as well as with the Far East." They also had a sub-group called Manigranam, likewise a trade guild, "a powerful trading association whose activities extended all over Malabar", apparently from as early as Roman times.<sup>42</sup> Corporation representatives travelled by land and sea routes and were accompanied by fanfare and companies of swordsmen and foot-soldiers. The brabares mentioned in Quotation 20 appear to have been another trading caste or corporation. Panikkar (p. 4) states that much of Malabar trade had passed into the hands of Muslim merchants, with Calicut as their center, by "Medieval" times. The Moors are mentioned by Albuquerque as "mercantile and seafaring men, who live in the seaports" (p. 174). Barbosa says

45. There were other foreign Moors in Calicut, whom they call Pardesy. These are Arabs, Persians, Guzerates, Khorasany, and Decany: they are great merchants, and possess...ships for sailing to all parts with all kinds of goods. (p. 147).

Apparently various Muzrish groups, foreign and native were recognized as trading groups, even perhaps quartered separately in the towns, and treated as caste-like units by the Hindu governments of the ports-of-trade. It seems there were also organizations (samgha) of persons in the same calling, merchants for example, whose members belonged to different castes (jāti) and also regions (désa).<sup>43</sup>

In the Indian situation, there may be features of exchange which do not fully correspond with the picture of the ideal port-of-trade given at the beginning, but the evidence is too thin to decide definitively. In several of the sources, for example,

bazaars are mentioned. Some sort of competitive buying seems to have been carried on. Whether the competition involved price fluctuations or administered prices with competition by higgling and haggling over quantity and quality is unknown. We also do not yet know who the parties to bazaar trading were. It seems that in some cases one of the parties might be foreign merchants, selling with the permission of state officials; the other party either some indigenous specialized trading corporation or caste or representatives of the state itself. This is perhaps suggested by Polo's comment:

46. Many cities and countries sell at Kayal. People from all around come to buy. The king extends great receptivity to merchants and foreigners. They are glad to visit here. (p. 289).

That the bazaar was so constituted seems particularly likely with respect to such items as gold, silver, horses, sumptuary goods, etc. In general, it would seem that bazaars were devoted to the exchange of what might be termed "upper stratum commodities" even though Athanasius Nikitin of Tver, a travelling merchant from Russia with an acutely bad religious conscience, mentions eatables for sale (?) at one bazaar (p. 12). One cannot tell whether he meant that there was a food market attached to the bazaar or whether these were merely foods for the delectation of buyers and sellers. Nikitin, travelling in the mid-1400's, mentions a great fair at Beder (Bidur) in north-central Deccan. Here there was a stupendous trade in horses, in other goods such as silks, and in "black people". He claims that only Indian goods were sold - obviously untrue, since horses came from abroad. This was the bazaar with food for sale. He mentions another bazaar at Aladinand which occurred once a year and was attended by people from all India coming to trade for a period of ten days. Nikitin says that 20,000 (!!) horses were brought here for sale.

Razzak, the Persian ambassador to Narsynga, at about the same time, also mentions bazaars. "The jewellers sell publically in the bazaars, pearls, rubies, emeralds, and diamonds" (p. 24). It is quite plain this bazaar (at Narsynga) was devoted to the élite. One of its major features were the courtesans who offered themselves "for hire" and who were expensively clothed and housed, had slaves and guards to protect both them and their customers. It is interesting to note that the user was protected against theft or any other form of loss. If such occurred, the guards, part of the roy-

al army, were held accountable and had to pay out their salaries which were ultimately derived from the supine activities of the courtesans, through the royal treasuries. I mention these details because the courtesans themselves, and perhaps the bazaar of which they were a part, was controlled very much like the port-of-trade. The courtesans were elite commodities; bazaars were kept secure and orderly; trade was controlled, and ultimate control lay with the king. Furthermore they seemed to have taken place in cities which were primarily significant administrative centers, inhabited by elite classes and castes, not by lower strata of society who lived in the villages and on the land.<sup>44</sup> In sum, I would hypothesize that the bazaars mentioned in the literature were versions of the port-of-trade, probably internal to polities, possibly with international status. The bazaars do not seem to have been markets of the type described on p. 3 and 4.

Very little data has been found on markets for every-day footstuffs. A great number of castes are mentioned in the sources which are specialized for subsistence activities such as fishing, salt making, rice raising, and so on.<sup>45</sup> But no mention is made of their connection with the professional trading castes or associations. Most of them seem to be located outside the confines of the port-of-trade towns and to associate with each other. There are suggestions in the sources, on the other hand, that there were laborer castes working on properties of higher castes, the Brahmins and Nayars in particular, though probably also on lands of some of the great merchant castes which were reported as owning properties. Barbosa, for example, says that the Moorish Maupler in the interior of the country were very well provided with estates and farms. Furthermore, Goshal (b), 526) mentions partnerships between capitalists and laborers consisting of six classes: trade, agriculture, crafts, sacrifices, singing, and "theft" (for the king in foreign lands). The partnerships crossed "class" lines, e.g. artisans with cultivators, and were profit- and loss-sharing arrangements. Finally, there were the slaves which were mentioned as one of the elite trade goods above. It seems most likely that the elite groups, then, were supplied directly from their own lands, and did not need to enter into the market system, if any, of the lower strata. It would appear that visiting foreign traders were also supplied from the same sources by virtue of the fact that they were quartered with wealthy traders who either owned

lands or had direct access to subsistence goods by trade with members of their own stratum. Presumably this must also have been the case with non-landowning resident foreigners as well. Since the writers of the sources, by definition of the situation, dealt almost exclusively with the upper strata, it is not surprising that there is virtually no description of markets.<sup>46</sup>

In summary, the data from India clearly point to that organization of international exchange which has been called the port-of-trade. The sources suggest that the port-of-trade was characteristic not only of India and Ceylon, but quite probably also of the great majority of the countries with which they dealt on both sides of the Indian Ocean and beyond, although more evidence is needed to establish this.

#### IV

Why was the port-of-trade, with its characteristic exclusion of subsistence interests, so widespread? Its occurrence in so many areas, some of them indubitably quite independent of each other historically, rules out diffusion. The universality of the phenomenon rules out explanations in terms of unique historical sequences. One must conclude that the port-of-trade is a functional adaptation of a certain kind of society. Its appearance at quite different times, in different places, and its long-term viability suggest that the kind of society involved is itself a stage in social development, an evolutionary level of socio-economic development. What type of society was it that developed the port-of-trade? I do not think we have a full answer to this question yet, but, in a preliminary way, the following suggestions, inspired by Arnold's reference to "archaic societies" and Chapman's to the tangency of ecological areas may be presented.<sup>47</sup>

Administered trade appears to be associated with societies having certain broad characteristics which mark them off from societies preceding and succeeding those displaying the port-of-trade syndrome.

Each of the societies entering into port-of-trade relations occupied ecologically relatively homogeneous areas, while the port-of-trade was in an area ecologically distinct from the areas of any of the participating societies. Between the latter and the

port-of-trade area were to be found barriers such as mountain chains, rugged escarpments, or oceans. Wydah, in Africa, is on a coastal plain separated from the European complex ecological area by oceans and from Dahomey by a plateau escarpment. The same is true of coastal Phoenecia and its plateau hinterland countries, Hatti, Assyria, etc., as also of India where the Malabar coast, for example, is an enclave between the ocean and the Western Ghats, the hills which enclose the Deccan plateau. The port-of-trade areas in Meso-America were in ecological areas different from those of either the relatively homogeneous highlands of Aztec Mexico or the great limestone Yucatan peninsula of the Maya, and peripheral to both.<sup>48</sup>

Thus it would seem that the societies in question were in some special way connected with the land areas in which they occurred. It seems evident that this connection specifically involved the relationship between the technologies of these cultures and the lands upon which the technologies were operative. Impressionistically, it would seem that, however complex the technologies which were actually present, the total variety of technological categories was limited either by non-introduction of other technological activities,<sup>49</sup> whether by diffusion or innovation, or because they were ecologically unfeasible. In the Indian case, for example, rainfall agriculture<sup>50</sup> pastoralism, and stock-breeding, as of horses, were virtually absent.<sup>51</sup> I would generalize to say that each of our cases displayed relatively homogeneous technologies and hence homogeneous ecologies. They had not yet evolved the technological and concomitant organizational arrangements for joining varied ecologies into an ecologically multiplex unit.

Included in such means would be not only multiple means for dealing with the agrarian basis of life, but the means for dealing with non-agrarian ecological areas and of transbordering from one ecological area to another. Such means include the development of transport and communications, and most especially the development of sea transport and power. It is to be noted that none of our cases was a sea power. Rather, over long periods of time, it was the port-of-trade which developed sea power and began to assume control over a number of ecological areas and their concomitant societies, instead of being merely at their service. At this point, the societies operating

through the ports-of-trade began limited operations against the ports-of-trade to attempt to maintain the earlier status quo. The ultimate result was either the absorption of the port-of-trade or preeminence and control by what had been the port-of-trade.<sup>52</sup>

Until such technological changes were made our case societies were necessarily restricted to relatively homogeneous ecological areas. Such areas were characterized by politics tending towards coterminousness with the area. In Egypt and, to some extent, in the long run, in Mesopotamia, unity was achieved, probably because of the central importance of the great river systems. In the Indian Deccan, Asia Minor, and Aztec Mexico, which were ecologically more dispersive,<sup>53</sup> not having major river systems, dispersed centers of power, ecologically internally homogeneous and each equivalent to the others, rivalled each other for control of the agrarian foundations of their own power, and full unity was never achieved. It was on the basis of the constant effort to maintain, if not extend, power, that the élite militarism which characterized all these societies was built, since, apparently, it was not possible to maintain a commander-army given the nature of the agrarian technologies. Rome solved this problem by getting access to many ecological areas of great technological diversity, having itself been, from the beginning, somewhat diversified ecologically and technologically, as all Europe was to be in later ages.

Derived from the separation of state-military and agrarian functions of these societies was a class (or caste) structure, often legalized, with a plethora of associated symbols of status such as dress, jewelry, palaces, and many other rights and privileges, frequently given as rewards for the military service to the state. Herein lay the necessity for a constant inflow of élite goods, just as the militarism in essentially non-pastoral technologies required the constant infusion of new horses (where they were available), and herein the necessity for any agency of the polity which could negotiate the acquisition of these goods without itself becoming involved in the power-operations of the state: in short, the port-of-trade. When the port-of-trade began to get involved in the power-operations, its end was in sight, and a new stage of development began to appear.

In sum, I would hypothesize that an institution like the port-of-trade appears when agrarian developments of an emerging polity have developed to the point that the polity has begun to expand into an entire homogeneous ecological area or has run into another polity which is expanding competitively in the same area. In either expansion or competition, the polity requires constant supplies of certain kinds of goods which it does not itself have or cannot itself sufficiently produce. It acquires these from external sources from, or through, polities with which it is not in competition, but, rather in symbiosis.<sup>54</sup> When, in particular, the polities or ports-of-trade through which the commodities travel expand because of their strategic position and profit-making advantages, as well as through technical innovation, then conditions have appeared which foreshadow the passing of the port-of-trade syndrome.

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## FOOTNOTES

1. Arnold, a); Chapman; Revere. On Greece, cf. Arnold, p. 162. Though all the areas or polities mentioned involve what politically were states, Hickerson has suggested that a phenomenon somewhat like the port-of-trade was found associated even with non-state societies such as those of the Eastern Woodlands of the United States, though plainly at a much less formalized level of organization. The latter will not be considered here.
2. Polanyi, 262-3; Polanyi and Arensberg and Pearson, p. 374.
3. Chapman, p. 116.
4. Arnold, 154, 156, 157-8, passim; Revere, 42-3, 43 ff, passim.
5. Arnold, 154, passim.
6. The description here given is a composite of those given by Arnold, Chapman, and Revere, with some emphasis on the socio-ecological aspects. The more purely economic aspects are summarized from Polanyi in Footnote 9.
7. Cf. Revere, 44 and 44-53, concerning Hittite policy which was explicitly formulated so as to retain the autonomy and separateness of the port-of-trade.
8. Cf. Arnold, 164-6, 183; Revere, e.g. 53-54, 61.
9. Cf. Polanyi, 262-3. We may summarize his characterization of administered trade, whose main institution is the port-of-trade, as follows. It involves more or less formal treaty relationships. The whole trade is government-channelled and administered since import interests are determinative, though exports are also important. Administration is extended to arrangements concerning "rates", proportions of exchanged units, port facilities, weights, quality of control, physical transfer of goods, storage and care; control of trading personnel, regulation of "payments", credits, price differentials. Some of these matters are tied with the collection of the goods for export from, and the distribution of import goods into, the domestic economy. Goods mutually imported are standardized as to quality, weight, etc., and trade is limited to those types of goods, with equivalencies in simple unit relations. Equivalencies are set once only, and higgling-haggling to accommodate changed circumstances is not about price but, e.g. measures, means of payment, quality, proportions of currencies. Even "profits" may be bargained, price remaining stable. Involved are permanent trading bodies. If between governments, trade usually formalized by treaty. Port-of-trade handles mechanics of trade and its exchange aspects.
10. I have used mainly reports of foreign travellers since they, and particularly Europeans, encountered trade and treaty conditions which they consistently misunderstood and often reported as oddities or scandalous behavior. Often the foreign visitor is forced into a mold of behavior unfamiliar to him, which he describes. On the whole Indian sources themselves, including economic histories, do not give insight into the phenomenon examined here; their approach is chiefly through market economics and price-making institutions which obscure the port-of-trade. Panikkar, for example, constantly interprets the data in market terms. Cf. Polanyi and Arensberg and Pearson, 374. In chronological order, the major sources are: Hiouen-Tsang, ca. 629-645; Hasan (Soleyman), ca. 865; Benjamin of Tudela, ca. 1160; Marco Polo, ca 1298; Ibn Batuta, ca 1325-1350; Abd-er Razzak, ca. 1442; Athanasius Nikitin of Twer, ca. 1450; Vasca da Gama, 1497-1499; Girolamo Sernigi, 1497-1499; Afonso d'Albuquerque, 1500-1509; Duarte Barbosa, ca. 1515.
11. Warmington, cf. "Notes", 330-394.

12. Warrington, Chs I and II, passim. Cf. also Nainar.
13. Panikkar, 3-4.
14. Hudson, 141.
15. Batuta, 235. He mentions that Chinese merchants entered only the ports of Kulom, Calicut, and Eli near Mount Dolly. He says, "On the Sea of China, travelling is done in Chinese ships only". The importance of Indian shipping is suggested in his remark that in Calicut "too lives the famous shipowner Mithgál who possesses vast wealth and many ships for his trade with India, China, Yemen, and Fars. On p. 236 he notes that "Some of the Chinese own large numbers of ships on which their factors are sent to foreign countries." He arrived at Calicut at a time when 13 Chinese ships were in port at once. The large Chinese ships carried 1000 men, had four decks, cabins, saloons, lavatories, etc. Slave girls, children, etc. went along with the passengers, and sailors raised "green stuffs...in wooden tanks" on ship-board.
16. It is plain that such "plundering" was either simply legal or even an affair of state. Pedro Gabral decided it was easier to seize a ship than to go through all the legal red-tape of the port-of-trade. That this was considered an act of piracy, as opposed to rightful "plunder", is clear since the act "...caused anger and consternation, as the people of Calicut had, for many centuries, been accustomed to complete security of property and person." (Panikkar, 42). That regular legal norms existed for "plundering" generally is evident also from the following exception, which itself indicates the power of the merchants discussed on p. 3: "The 'sultan' of Calicut's/ police officers were beating the people to prevent them from plundering what the sea cast up. In all the lands of Mulyabár, except in this one land alone, it is the custom that whenever a ship is wrecked, all that is taken from it belongs to the treasury. At Calicut, however, it is retained by its owners and for that reason Calicut has become a flourishing city and attracts large numbers of merchants." (Batuta, 237)
17. Pandarani seems to have been a fore-port for Calicut, separate from the administrative center of Calicut itself, where all important port-of-trade decisions were made. There were warehouses, factors, and other officials here. I would suppose that only special visiting dignitaries actually negotiated at Calicut itself. This seems generally confirmed by the events surrounding the arrival and reception of the Portuguese.
18. Reproduced in da Gama.
19. Boal, IV, 461-462.
20. Hasan, 15.
21. The footnote indicated in the text of the Quotation reads: "Xabandar, a consul for merchants, a resident for affairs relating to commerce and trade (Vieyra). From the text it is evident that this officer is the Zemindar of the Indian continent, in his more ordinary capacity of responsible collector only of the revenues on behalf of the Government under the Mohammedan administration rather than as hereditary owner of the land he occupies.
22. Polanyi, 262-263, cf. footnote 9.
23. Marco Polo, 285, mentions that Brahmins helped foreign merchants unfamiliar with the customs. The latter entrusted their goods to the good men, who, as merchants, were asserted not to lie, and who set forth to sell the goods for the visitors at the best possible profit, asking no commission except what the stranger wished to give.

24. Polo, 272, mentions that in Ceylon the king was paid one tenth on produce. Razzak, 7, states that one tenth of the value of gold and silver was paid in duty at Ormuz in Persia, as well as on goods from Malabar and the Deccan.
25. Ostensibly friendly persons informed da Gama "that if the captains went ashore their heads would be cut off, as this was the way the king dealt with those who came to his country without giving gold." (da Gama, 72).
26. Barbosa, 145; Polo, 279.
27. Polanyi, cf. footnote 9.
28. Revere, 55-61.
29. Goshal, b, 516.
30. Gifts of horses were most important in opening ambassadorial contact. Razzak mentions giving horses several times (15, 30), one time five at once. Albuquerque mentions that the Persian ambassador to the "Hidalcão" arrived (to his sorrow) at Goa, recently seized by the Portuguese, with a number of horses as a gift for latter dignitary, but "gave" them to Albuquerque instead. (II, 107).
31. That controlling the horse trade was vital to state-craft is apparent by the near hysteria which reigned once the port-of-trade disappeared after the Portuguese seizures. Subsequent events contain a long list of embassies, delegations, entreaties, and supplications by heads of state from the interior. Albuquerque realized his position of power, achieved by denaturalizing a port-of-trade and using it, instead, as an instrument of policy. Cf. Albuquerque, II, 21, 38, 39, 76, 77; IV, 123, 124.
32. Polo, 274-275, mentions that western horse merchants did not bring farriers with them so that better horse care should not be introduced into India, thus perhaps reducing the horse trade. Barbosa, 90, says horses lived but a short while in India and were not bred there; they had to be imported from Persia and Arabia.
33. Cf. footnote 24.
34. Major, 30.
35. Ramanayya, Pt II, Ch III, "Military Organization and the Kandācāra Department"; Pt II, Ch VII, "Revenues and Taxation"; Pt II, Ch X, "Trade and Commerce".
36. Royal prerogatives are clear from this statement (Batuta, 257): "In the island of Ceylon, rubies are found in all parts. The land is private property, and a man buys a parcel of it and digs for rubies. Some of them are red, some yellow /topazes/, and some blue /sapphires/. Their custom is that all rubies of the value of a hundred fanams belong to the sultan, who pays their price and takes them; those of less value belong to the finders. ..." Blo confirms this, speaking of pearls, which if over half a saggio (a weight) were not to be taken from the island. If they were much larger than that, they went to the king.
37. Cf. footnote 36, and Quotation 38.
38. Barbosa, 98.
39. Such passages appear virtually with each new place visited by a traveller.
40. Tiedemann reports that Canton, at this time, appears to have had the traits of a port-of-trade and served to separate stranger merchants from the Chinese hinterland.

41. Goshal, a, 404-405; b, 524-526; Panikkar, 4; cf., also, p. 10.
42. Panikkar, 4-5; cf. also Goshal, a, 405, who says it was a "non-denominational institution open to Hindus as well as Christian settlers" and it operated on the coast and inland.
43. Goshal, a, 404.
44. Arensberg, personal communication.
45. Barbosa, 135-144, discusses several castes which are involved in subsistence activities, some of them appear to have been active in other ways also. The zevil tiber gathered palm fruits, tilled trees, were porters for hire, hewed stones, worked manually. The moguer were also porters for kings, mariners, and fishermen. Some of them were rich from shipping, gaining money from the Moors. The mucoa were fishermen and mariners (fish, along with rice, coconuts, etc., was an important item of diet in Malabar). They did not pay duty on fresh fish sold (unlike many other producers who paid duties to the royal treasuries), but paid 4% on dried fish. Fresh fish was cheap and "the chief food among the Indians". Some mucoa, too, were rich and well-supplied, having large houses and property. The betua made salt, ploughed and sowed rice. The puler also ploughed and sowed rice, using buffalo and oxen (though Barbosa had said there were no beasts of burden). He also mentions several craft-specialized castes not involved in production or distribution.
46. The only passage which even remotely suggested a market-like institution was the following from da Gama, 69: "In this manner all on board ship went on land by twos and threes taking with them bracelets, clothes, new shirts, and other articles, which they desired to sell. We did not, however, effect these sales at the prices hoped for [as at Mozambique]...for a very fine shirt...was worth here only ...30 reis [300 in Portugal], for [p. 70] 30 reis in this country is a big sum. And just as we sold shirts cheaply so we sold other things, in order to take some things away from this country, if only for samples. Those who visited the city bought there cloves, cinnamon, and precious stones: and having bought what they desired they came back to the ships without any one speaking to them. When the captain found the people of the country so well disposed, he left a factor with the merchandise, together with a clerk and some other men." It is to be noted that the ship's men bought no food-stuffs. Also they were exchanging materials which our quotations suggest were élite goods but of relatively little value. Selling such, they would have been acting in the capacity of lesser indigenous merchants, and, in fact, in that status, receive appropriate goods in return. As to their foreigner status, it must be recalled a) that da Gama had already forced several special accommodations by the local inhabitants, and b) that Calicut had several unusual concessions to foreigners as suggested in footnote 16.
47. Arnold, 154, passim; Chapman, 116.
48. Chapman, map, p. 118.
49. Technological activities, their varieties, and their implications for social orders are discussed in Leeds, b.
50. Wittfogel, passim.
51. Cf. footnote 32.
52. Revere, 55-61; cf. also footnote 31.
53. The concept of dispersive ecologies is discussed in Leeds, a.
54. Revere, 55 ff., uses the concept of symbiosis.

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[Anthony Leedon]  
March 1958  
a.g.

country. And the before-mentioned Sabayn Delcani resided such in this place, and he kept there his captains and men-at-arms, and no one entered or went out of this island and city, either by sea or by land, without his permission; and all those who entered there were registered with all their signs and particulars, and from whence they came; and so, with this precaution and arrangement, they allowed them to return.

Batuta (231) points out that

It is a custom of theirs that every ship that passes by a town must needs anchor at it and give a present to the ruler. This they call the "right of bandar". If any one omits to do this, they sail out in pursuit of him, bring him into the port by force, double the tax on him, and prevent him from proceeding on his journey for as long as they wish.

The bandar appears to be a sort of purchase of safe-conduct and registration fee at once. Indications scattered through the text of Albuquerque suggest that this was the case, although the term is not used.

For those ships which were not merely passing by, but came to trade at a given port clear regulations also existed. In Da Gama (67) we read that

They (the hala (= natal, Port. alcaide, + governor of a fort in Hindustani, the civil intendant of the Rajah and head of the police) and other gentlemen) told the captain that as he had informed the king that he intended to land his merchandise, he should now give orders to have this done, as it was the custom of the country that every ship on its arrival should at once land the merchandise it brought, as also the crews, and that the vendors should not return on board until the whole of it had been sold.

It was also the custom that ships anchor within prescribed limits of the port. Da Gama's suspiciousness and lack of knowledge of port regulations led to a series of contretemps between him and the port officials and king of Calicut, of which the following is an example.

(They) said we should have them (the ships boats to go back to the ships) if we would order our vessels to come nearer the shore. The captain (Da Gama) said that if he ordered his vessels to approach his brother would think that he was being held a prisoner and that he gave this order on compulsion, and would hoist the sails and return to Portugal. They said that if we refused to order the ships to come nearer we should not be permitted to embark.

Once inside the port, ships could abide at will for a greater or longer space in this harbor (Bazzak, 13). If not in the port, they could be captured as we have pointed out above (Bazzak 14; Polo, 293 remarks that ships bound elsewhere entering a port by accident could also be plundered rightfully anywhere in India).

Once inside the port, ships and merchandise alike were subject to officialdom.



Benjamin of Tudela, a Jewish traveller or merchant, wrote in about 1160 (cited in

Major, p. xlvi):

This nation (Malabar) is very trustworthy in matters of trade and whenever foreign merchants enter their port, three secretaries of the king immediately repair on board their vessels, write down their names and report them to him. The king thereupon grants them security for their property, which they may even leave in the open fields without a guard.

One of the king's officers sits in the market place and receives goods that may have been found anywhere and which he returns to those applicants who can minutely describe them. This custom is observed in the whole empire of the king.

Razzak, in 1442, makes similar comments:

Security and justice are so firmly established in this city (Calicut) that the most wealthy merchants bring thither from maritime countries considerable cargoes which they unload and unhesitatingly send into the markets and the bazaars without thinking in the meantime of any necessity of checking the account or of keeping watch over the goods. The officers of the custom-house take upon themselves the charge of looking after the merchandise over which they keep watch day and night. When a sale is effected, they levy a duty on the goods of one fortieth part; if they are not sold, they make no charge on them whatsoever.

This friendliness and order is commented on by Hasan (Soleiman) as early as 856 AD.

Another aspect of this maintaining of order is reflected in the following incident described by Ibn Batuta, around 1345:

I saw the infidel, the sultan of Calicut, wearing a large white cloth round his waist and a small turban, bare-footed with the parasol carried by a slave over his head and a fire lit in front of him on the beach; his police officers were beating the people to prevent them from plundering what the sea cast up. In all the lands of Malabar, except in this one land alone, it is the custom that whenever a ship is wrecked all that is taken from it belongs to the treasury. At Calicut, however, it is retained by its owners and for that reason Calicut has become a flourishing city and attracts large numbers of merchants. (p. 237)

In Da Gama (p. 59) the king (i.e. raja of Calicut) is spoken of as having a factor, who appears to be the same as the bala mentioned above. This bala appears to have had a number of functions. First he apparently was in charge of supervising the landing of merchandise. In Da Gama the unloading passage appears on p. 67 which we have quoted above. The bala also appears to have been the officer responsible for receiving the gift brought to the kings which apparently also served as port fee.

The king said that what he (Da Gama) brought (as a present directly to the king) ought to have been sent to his factor, and that he did not want to look at it. He then desired the captain to be informed that as he wished to depart he should pay him 600 xerafins (see exchange rate information to follow in later report) and that he might go: this was the custom of the country and of those who came

to it. (p. 70-71)

Calicut  
400  
years  
ago

86

The hala was apparently also responsible for disposing of the personnel of incoming vessels. He conducted them to audiences with appropriate officials:

At the same time, the king sent a hala with other men of distinction to Pandarani (the neighboring port to Calicut), to conduct the captain-major to where the king awaited him. This hala is like an alcaide, and is always attended by two hundred men armed with swords and bucklers.... (p. 51-3).

(Taking men and trunks, etc.) On landing the captain-major was received by the alcaide with whom were many men, armed and unarmed.... A palanquin was provided for the captain-major, such as is used by men of distinction in that country, as also by some of the merchants, who pay something to the king for this privilege (p. 52)

At another time,

The king sent a brother of the hala, who was a lord of this country, to accompany the captain, and he was attended by men beating drums, blowing angfils and bagpipes, and firing off matchlocks. In conducting the captain they showed us much respect, more than is shown in Spain to a king (p. 55).

Not only was Da Gama conducted to interviews but also to lodgings.

(After the walk) The captain-major was there deposited at the house of a man of rank, whilst we others were provided with food, consisting of rice, with much butter and excellent boiled fish.

Later, after several more misunderstandings, usually because Da Gama did not know ~~malabar~~ and did not care to find out about port regulations and customs of the country,

...The captain replied (he desired to be lodged) neither with Christians (i.e. Hindus) nor with moors, and begged as a favor that he be given a lodging by himself. The king said he would order it thus upon which the captain took leave of the king and came to where we were... (p. 59).

...the captain at last grew tired (of going through the city) and complained to the king's factor, a Moor of distinction, who attended him to the lodgings. (p. 59)

One of the members of Da Gama's expedition, one Girolamo Sernigi, wrote letters to a Florentine friend of his. He says in one place:

The king received this message (ambascia) most graciously and ordered the Christian captain to be lodged in the house of a very rich Moor.

The effect of such attentions is not only to provide lodgings for foreigners but also to supervise their activities, their comings and goings. In brief indications, there is the suggestion that such attentions were extended to the crews of ships coming into port.

They agreed that he (Da Gama) should be permitted to go (to the king), but afforded him no opportunity for doing so, for they immediately closed all the doors, and many armed men entered to guard us, none of us being allowed to go

outside without being accompanied by several of these guards (p. 65).

The hala also dealt with the merchandise:

When the captain found that the merchandise found no buyers at that place, he applied to the king for permission to forward it to Calicut (from Pandarani). The king at once ordered the hala to get a sufficient number of men who were to carry the whole on their backs to Calicut, this to be done at his expense, as nothing belonging to the King of Portugal was to be burthened with expenses whilst in this country. But (so the Portuguese felt) all this was done because it was intended to do us some ill-turn for it had been reported to the king that we were thieves and went about to steal.

This last comment, incidentally, may throw more light on the seeming custom of keeping crews under guard. It could be supposed that the Hindus believed that foreign crews, unguarded, would indulge in theft.

The hala saw to it that foreign merchants' wares were properly cared for, not only from the point of view of protecting them, but also from the point of view of maintaining the conventional rules of exchange to which the foreign merchants had to adhere. The hala therefore closely watched merchandise which had been landed in port.

When (Da Gama) left (the palace) certain men followed him, and when he arrived at the house in Calicut where the merchandise was deposited, they put a number of men inside with him to watch that none of it was sent away.

In the commentaries of Afonso Albuquerque is mentioned an official called the Kahandar, who may be the same sort of official as the hala. The following passage indicates his duties in regard to merchandise.

And all the horses that remained in the land were placed in some large stable which the Qabao (Mohammedan ruler of Goa before the Portuguese) had erected in the fortress, wherein formerly they used to place the horses which the dealers brought from Ormuz to sell. And for this purpose the Qabao used to have a Kahandar, whose office corresponds to that of (superintendent receiver of the royal import dues), whose duty it was to look to the care of the horses, and the people were obliged to bring hay, and corn, and gungo, which is a certain species of seed that they feed the horses with, in abundance.

Footnote 1 reads: Kahandar; a consul for merchants, a resident for affairs relating to commerce and trade (Vieira). From the text it is evident that this officer is the Reminder of the Indian continent, in his more ordinary capacity of responsible collector only of the revenue on behalf of the Government under the Mohammedan administration rather than an hereditary owner of the land he occupies.

A third official entering into commercial transactions is briefly mentioned by

Panikkar (p. 36) although a fuller description of his relations with the exchange of goods awaits further materials:

The Zamorin's (raja of Calicut's) answer to the request for commercial facilities was vague, and da Gama was asked to communicate to the Treasurer of the King what commodities he wanted.

The treasurer(s) are mentioned at other points in passing but not in connection with trade.

An interesting sidelight on the officialdom is provided by a comment in Da Gama which again illuminates the strict order maintained in the port:

Justice is strictly administered in this city. Robbers, murderers, and other malefactors are incontinently impaled in the Turkish fashion; and whoever defrauds the king's excise (customs) is punished by having his merchandise confiscated. (Girolamo Sernigi's first letter, p. 135)

At another point the king is quoted as having said to his factor that he should be reminded that his predecessor had been executed for extorting money from foreign merchants. The one addressed had apparently been attempting the same with the Portuguese.

When the merchandise was landed and impounded, regular forms of trading were apparently followed. The merchandise was opened to inspection to buyers under conventional procedures. The following passages are illuminating especially in view of the nature of the merchandise that da Gama brought with him. It will be made plain below that only a limited number and type of goods was subject to this kind of trading arrangement. The goods which da Gama brought were not of this order, yet he insisted on being treated as if he were properly equipped, in fact, with great arrogance, contrary to most of the regulations of the port. That the Hindus did not judge him to be in any position to behave this way is indicated by the following remark:

In addition to what we learnt through the (deserter) Moor, we were told by two Christians (meaning Hindus whom they took to be Christians; there were practically no Christians (Syriacs) in Calicut) that if the captains went ashore their heads would be cut off, as this was the way the king dealt with those who came to his country without giving him gold.

Trading procedures are indicated by the following passage.

...he landed his merchandise as he had been ordered, but...the Moors only came to depreciate it; and...for these reasons he looked forward to what he (the king) would order... (The king)...sent seven or eight merchants to inspect the merchants to inspect the merchandise, and to become purchasers if they felt inclined. He also sent a man of quality to remain with the factor already there, and authorized them to kill any moor who might go there, without fear of punishment (presumably for depreciating the merchandise).

The merchants whom the king had sent remained about eight days, but instead of buying they depreciated the merchandise. The Moors no longer visited the house where the merchandise was, but they bore us no good-will.

Batuta (p. 238) makes the following comments, which, incidentally, confirm a number of points made above, speaking of the years ca. 1340-1350.

Quilon (Kawlam)

On the tenth day we reached the city of Quilon on the Malabar coast, once the greatest of all Malabar ports and one of the three chief ports of the Chinese trade, one of the finest towns in the Malayabar lands. It has fine bazaars (see below) and its merchants are called Sulis. They are immensely wealthy; a single merchant will buy a vessel with all that is in it and load it with goods from his own house. There is a colony of Muslim merchants... This city is the nearest of the Malayabar towns to China and it is to it that most of the merchants (from China) come. Muslims are honored and respected in it. The sultan of Quilon is an infidel called the Tirawari; he respects the Muslims and has severe laws against thieves and profligates. I stayed some time at (Quilon) in a hospice...

The previous comment suggests something of the nature of exchange procedures, though more exact details of the means of arriving at a deal are not too clear. A few passages are suggestive however. Barbosa says (p. 152-34)

In this kingdom of Calicut, and in all the other Malabar kingdoms, there is a sect (i.e. caste) of gentile merchants who are called amongst them brabares, who trafficked also before foreign persons came to port or navigated in these seas. These still deal, especially in the interior, in all sorts of goods, and collect all the pepper and ginger from the mayrs (Naiars) and cultivators, and frequently buy them in advance in exchange for cotton stuffs, and other goods which come from beyond the sea. These people are also great changers, and gain much from coin.

barbarian

Somewhat further on he again suggests that there was both exchange directly of goods as well as by use of money, and that weights and measures were either standardized for an area or were translatable into different systems as one travelled from principality to principality.

facts

These people (the Chettie of Coromandel) are considerable merchants and changes, they deal in precious stones of all sorts, and in seed pearl, coral, and other valuable merchandise; and in gold, silver, either bullion or coined, which is a great article of trade amongst them, because they rise and fall many times. They are rich and respected, and live very decently; they have very good houses

gold sold  
no trade  
inland of India

Malabar is Quilon a grand (finance) scaler, but essential for revenue inland from port

in streets set apart for themselves... They also carry with them continually large bags in which their scales and weights are kept, and their money, and jewels and pearls. And their sons as soon as they have passed the age of ten do the same, and go about changing small coin. They are great clerks and accountants, and make out all their accounts on their fingers: they are great usurers, so much so that from one brother to another they do not lend a real without gain... (144-5)

Fanikkar refers to these same Chetties as a 'powerful trade guild, which carried on commerce with Arabia and Egypt as well as with the Far East' (4-5). They also had a sub-group called Manigranas, likewise a trade guild, 'a powerful trading association whose activities extended all over Malabar', apparently from as early as Roman times on. (p. 5)

The comments with regard to bullion, coined money, scales and weights used in exchange all suggest various types of equivalencies and exchange values. These will be dealt with at a later time. More will be said about profits below.

A network of relationships was apparently maintained by merchants acting for each other in widely separate communities for Barbosa says (p. 146) about the Guzerats:

They are men who possess ships, and trade in spices, drugs, cloth, copper, and other kinds of merchandise from this place to the kingdom of Cambay, and that of Decan, where they have other correspondents; and they at the same time are correspondents of others . . . . The king shows them great honor and favour, and is much pleased with them because they give him much revenue from their trade. Some of them also live in the city of Cannor, and others in Cochin; and so also in other ports of Malabar. But in general most of them reside in Calicut.

How such traders organized their business is suggested in the following passage, quoted at length because of the important material it affords on the goods with which they dealt, a subject to be discussed at greater length below.

There were other foreign Moors in Calicut, whom they call Parsees. These are Arabs, Persians, Guzerates, Khorasans, and Decans: they are great merchants, and possess...ships for sailing to all parts with all kinds of goods. They have among them a Moorish governor who rules over and chastises them, without the king meddling with them... (They) stow much pepper, ginger, cloves, cinnamon, sage, nutmeg, long pepper, sandal and brazil wood, lac, cardamoms, myrobolans, tamarinds, bamboos, and all sorts of jewels and pearls, musk, amber, rhubarb, aloes-wood, many fine cotton stuffs, and much porcelain... And these ships returned laden with copper, quicksilver, vermilion, coral, saffron, coloured velvet, rose-water, knives, coloured camlets, scarlet and other coloured clothes, gold and silver, and other things. . . . The king gave to each one a nair (nair) to guard and serve him, a Chety scribe for his accounts, and

Cambay  
(Cauldwell)

TR  
Goods

Parsee  
2  
Moors  
Ara 65

Parsee

to take care of his property, and a broker for his trade. To these three persons such a merchant would pay something for their maintenance and all of them would serve very well, and when the merchant bought spices the sellers gave him for each farazola (measures will be treated separately) of ginger, which is of twenty-five pounds, three or four pounds of it for them; and so of some other goods, which duties the merchant collects to pay these officials of his. (Barbo-

*2*  
*prochetea*  
*of Spaniards*  
*conquerors*  
*of whom*

The Pardesy were said to be powerful enough to be at least partially beyond the control of the Hindu king, maintaining an internal government. After the arrival of the Portuguese, they gradually left. The Portuguese report that they built ships which were considered large even by the standards of the Europeans. These ships were divided so as to carry all kinds of goods in different compartments.

*No p.*  
*The*  
*area*  
*people -*  
*of laws*  
*in*  
*M. A.*

A number of points in the preceding passage are extremely interesting. First is the official relationship between the king of a nation and the foreign traders in Calicut, and, apparently, also in other cities. These merchants appear to have an official position in the social and economic structure, recognized under the title of Pardesy. This official position is enhanced and made more effective by attaching to it other, subordinate positions: the guard, the scribe, and the broker. In short, a kind of protective relationship is established by covenant between the foreign merchant and the king. Second, these merchants are empowered to deal in all the goods considered most important in the trade of the important governing groups of the kingdoms, of whom more will be said below. Furthermore, a large part of the shipping itself was obviously in their hands, and at best indirectly under the control of the king, if at all. Fourth, the manner of pay is interesting as indicates that payment was often made in kind rather than in money. What the merchant's officials did with these goods is not clear. One gets the impression from what has been quoted from Barbosa at the top of p. 9, above, that these officials tended to exchange these goods for bullion and coinage with which they traded and practiced usury. These payments again suggest a regularized system of non-monetary equivalencies.

Despite the numerous suggestions of direct payment or exchange in goods without the use of money, money was plainly of great importance in the exchange relationships. After Goa fell to Albuquerque, a native prince who had cooperated with him went to

him to explain about conditions:

Timoja went . . . to Afonso Dalboquerque, and told him, that the people of the city and the merchants were suffering from a great depression, not only in the government thereof, but also with respect to the merchant trade, because there was no currency of coin. And they begged he would of his graciousness grant a permission for coining some money, because it was impossible for the city to be well governed without a currency of coinage; and they alleged that he ought to order the price of gold and silver to be raised in order to prevent their exportation.

The latter representation appears to indicate that gold and silver were valued as commodities in their own right. This is confirmed by the list of goods which were important in the trading of the great merchants, kings, and so forth (see below).

Later Timoja is heard from again:

. . . he begged earnestly that Afonso Dalboquerque would either give orders for the coining of some money, because everything was going to ruin from want of it, and barter of merchandise could not be effected, or at least that he would permit the coinage of the Cabalo to pass current. (Both passages are from Albuquerque II, 127-8)

Ready money was of great importance in the movement of goods and facilitating of trade:

*Arabs*  
These (Moorish merchants) used to come from Gafis (Gafis in Barbary), from Oran (Oran), from Tremecim, and from Tripoli, with their wares, to Cairo, and from Cairo they used to make their way to Juda and from Juda to Calicut, with ready money, and there they used to build new ships, and load them with spices, and so returned to their own lands. (Albuquerque II, 34)

The ready money was apparently used in building ships and buying the spices.

Panikkar remarks with regard to one of the earliest followers of da Gama:

*Cochin*  
(João da) Nova found that at Cochin the Merchants refused to exchange goods and insisted on cash. (p 46)

However, this may have been for the special benefit of the Portuguese who had already managed to establish an unpleasant reputation on the Malabar coast as well as most other places they had been.

*(a)*  
With regard to profits from trading there seem to be two patterns. As far as the writer can make out at the present time, if the traders were Hindus, no formal attempt at profit making occurred; if the merchants were foreigners, especially Arabian or Persian, a profit motive was such in evidence. Thus we have the following remarks from various sources:

*Pol: Suggestion + foreigners are merchants, native are tankars (officials etc)*



*100%*  
 (When asked why the Moors risked putting in at Malabar ports after the Portuguese had bottled up the coast) The Moor replied that the profits were so great that they would run all risks to get here; for, for every crugada laid out in Calicut, they used to make twelve or thirteen in Java and in all the places that stood within the mouth of the Straits; and he stated it was in consequence of this profit being so great, and the trade in pepper being so extensive that the Moors who were established in Calicut laboured to prevent the Canarin from granting permission to the Portuguese to erect a fortress in his territory. . .  
 (Albuquerque, II, 34).

Panikkar confirms this in several scores of pages devoted to describing how the merchants of Calicut not only ran the blockade but also built navies to fight it, a running warfare that lasted almost the entire time that the Portuguese were in that part of India. (Panikkar, Chs V-IX, 64-146). With regard to the interest in profits we may recall the passage quoted from Barbosa above with regard to the Chetties (top of page 9) who are said to have indulged in usury. Marco Polo, apparently speaking of the same people 286 years earlier, in 1298, said, that when boys are of age they are sent with 24 goats to trade by their parents. With some money, they go to the pearl fishers on the beach, buying five or six pearls. These they take to merchants (who are staying out of the sun) saying "These cost me such a price now give me what profit you please on them". The merchants pay "something over the cost price for their profit". "They do in the same way with many other articles so that they become trained to be very dextrous and keen traders". (Polo, 279).

*What is that?*

On the other hand, Brahman merchants did not apparently seek regularised profits on transactions. Polo describes (p. 285) how Brahmans helped foreign merchants unfamiliar with customs, that is, the system of officially regulated trading through officials which has been discussed above. The foreign merchants entrusted their goods to the Brahman merchants who took care 'faithfully' to sell these goods, getting the best profits for the foreigners wherever possible. However they asked no commission except what the merchants wished to give them. This corresponds with the lack of commission or fee suggested in the quote from Banzak, p. 4 above.

Further light can be thrown on the nature of the trade relations, although some important details are not clear to the writer because the sources do not give informa-

tion about who was engaged in these activities. Only some of Barbosa's comments, to be discussed below, suggest what the facts actually were. A number of writers mention bazaars in various contexts, in which some sort of free buying was possible. This contrasts with what we have described above, but the contrast may be more illusion than fact, if the parties to the trading in the bazaars were known in detail. For example it seems that in some cases one of the parties might be foreign merchants, selling with the permission of state officials, and the other party either some indigenous specialized trading caste or representatives of the state itself. This is particularly true for such goods as gold, silver, horses, sumptuary commodities, and so forth, which are discussed below. It would seem that, on the whole, were devoted to the exchange of what might be termed 'upper strata commodities', even though Athanasius Nikitin of Tver, a travelling merchant from Russia with an acutely bad religious conscience, mentions eatables for sale (?) at one bazaar (p. 12). One cannot tell whether he means that there was a food market attached to the bazaar or whether these were merely foods for the delectation of persons attending the bazaars. At any rate, there are several mentions of bazaars as follows.

*at Kaval* Fair? Many cities and countries sell at Kaval. People from all around come to buy. The king extends great receptivity to merchants and foreigners. They are glad to visit there. (Polo, 289)

*El case* Nikitin, travelling in the mid 1400's, mentions a great fair at Beder (Bidur) in north-central Deccan. Here there was a stupendous trade in horses, as also in other goods such as silks and in <sup>slaves</sup> 'black people'. He claims that only Indian goods were sold - obviously inaccurate, since horses were not of Indian derivation (see below). This is the bazaar at which eatables were found. He comments "no goods ... that will do for Russia". Nikitin also mentions a bazaar at Aladiband. This occurred once a year, and people from all India are said to have come there to trade for a period of ten days. Nikitin says that 20,000 (!!) horses were brought here for sale from Bidur. Razzak (p. 24) also mentions bazaars. In the Vijanagar (central Deccan) bazaar, "the jewellers sell publically in the bazaars, pearls, rubies, emeralds and

diamonds". At this same bazaar, Razzak was able to discover considerable details about the customs of the courtesans who offered themselves 'for ~~rent~~ hire' in the bazaar. They were expensively outfitted both in clothes and housing, and had slaves and guards to protect both them and their customers who apparently could purchase their services freely. It is interesting to note that the user was protected against theft or any other form of loss. If such occurred, the guards, part of the royal army, were held accountable and had to pay out of their salaries which were ultimately derived from supine activities of the courtesans, through the royal <sup>treasuries</sup>. One might say that prostitution was a form of controlled trade, one which was available only to upper strata of the population. This appears to shed considerable light on the nature of these bazaars in general. Another fact is that the horses were only for royal consumption or through royalty for the consumption of 'nobles', i.e. warriors of the kingdom, as will be seen in quotations to be given below.

Two mentions of the market are of interest. The first occurs in Albuquerque (IV, 58)

The second (request of the Zamorin), that he must give whatever pepper was required for the lading of the ships bound to Portugal, in exchange for merchandise of various kinds, according to the weights and prices current in Cananor; and that the factor of the king (of Portugal), his lord, must be allowed to purchase the ginger, which the producers are in the habit of bringing down for sale to the market-place, in accordance with the custom of the country.

The second occurs in Panikkar (p. 41)

The Portuguese were already putting forward claims of monopoly; but the native traders sold naturally to those who paid them the best price. Cabral complained of this to the Zamorin who replied that they were welcome to buy as much as they could pay for. But Arab competition was keen (see discussion of profits above); and dissatisfied with the method of having to bid and buy in the open market, Cabral hit upon the easy way of attacking and taking possession of Arab vessels within his reach.

This freedom of trading, probably under governed conditions appears confirmed by a statement in Panikkar describing the negotiations between Da Gama and the King of Chirakkal in northern Malabar.

A commercial treaty was discussed but it was not possible to settle the prices as the merchants said that the King had only the right to the duties (i.e. not to arranging prices, again a reflection of the profit-motive characteristic of the Moorish merchants controlling most of the trade of Malabar). (p. 50)

Some towns on Malabar seemed to be specialized market entrepôts with the great inland kingdoms of Warsinga (Vijayanagar) and the northern Decan. Barbosa says (p. 149)

. . . At four leagues from it (Balapatan city) is a city of Moors and Gentiles, very large and of much trade with the merchants of the Kingdom of Warsynga; this town is called eah paranco, in which much copper is expended.

Later he says

. . . There is another city of Moors, (very large, rich, and of much trade, which deals with the people of Warsinga by land, and is called Goteogato. (p. 151)

Albuquerque says (II, 95)

Through this harbour of Goa was always the principal passage to the kingdom of Warsinga and of Daquem; and for this reason it contained much merchandise, and large caravans of merchants came from the interior of the country in quest of it, and brought other commodities in exchange. And from this commerce which they had one with another the inhabitants of Goa grew so prosperous that it was said that Goa alone in those days had a revenue of two hundred thousand pardoes (1 p. = 370 Portuguese reis).

Barbosa (p. 177) speaking of Coromandel, mentions the city of Falecate:

It also has much trade with the interior of the kingdom, and they sell there many jewels which are brought from Paygu (Burma). . . These jewels may be had for very little there, by whomever knows how to buy well. The King of Warsynga keeps his governors in this city, and collectors of his revenues. . . .

We may now usefully take up the question of the commodities entering into trade.

In most of the discussions from which we have quoted, a very consistent picture emerges regarding the commodities entering into large scale trade where wealthy merchants, high castes, or the state are involved. The distribution of resources in India and neighboring Ceylon ~~mainland~~ and the Maldiva and Laccadive Islands was such that with this group of places there was a great to and fro movement of goods aside from what came from Burma, other parts of southeast Asia, and China on one side and from the West on the other. The essential breakdown of the goods according to their sources in the Indian sphere or outside of it is indicated by the letter of the 'king' of Calicut to the King of Portugal, sent by kindness of Da Gama, paraphrased in Da Gama (p. 75) as follows: *no manufactures*

*special for business*  
Vasco da Gama, a gentleman of your household came to my country, whereat I was pleased. My country is rich in cinnamon, cloves, ginger, pepper, and precious stones. That which I ask of you in exchange is gold, silver, corals, and scarlet cloth.

To this list of goods from outside India must be added horses, which were of supreme importance to all India, except the Malabar coast. In the latter,

Only the sultan owns horses. Only porters carry goods - a single merchant may have a hundred or so to carry his goods. (Batuta, 232)

This was partly because the ecological conditions of the Malabar coast, which was sometimes flooded, and always much interlaced with waterways, were not well adapted to large scale movements of cavalry as was the great plateau of the Deccan. Also the constant warfare mentioned in all the books (Batuta, Hasan in 856, et al) was mainly restricted to the Plateau because the Malabar coast was protected by the nearly impassible mountain range, the Western Ghats, although there was considerable warfare on the coast too. The military problems were quite different however and involved a considerable emphasis on sea power.

The importance of the horse trade for all India is emphasized again and again. Malabari traders played an exceedingly important part in this trade. This trade was so important because control of the horse trade essentially implied control over political events on the sub-continent or at least a maintenance of the balance of power for the heads of state. Marco Polo in 1288 stated that merchants brought to Malabar silks, gold, taffetas, and silver; Guzerat imported gold, silver, copper (exporting leather goods and cotton). From Guzerat corsairs went out to plunder merchants at sea. The corsairmen got everything on board the merchantmen, except the horses. These went to the king. This division was maintained by covenant between the king and the corsairmen. Polo remarks that all the king's horses were imported. "No ship ever goes thither without horses plus other cargo" (p. 294) Polo felt that much wealth was 'wasted' on the purchase of horses:

A horse will fetch among them 500 sargi (a weight) of gold, worth more than 100 manas of silver, and vast numbers are sold there every year.

He points out that horse merchants from the west did not bring faryors with them so that they could not slow down the sale of horses, by keeping the horses in better health. Horses were apparently not bred in India.

*faryor*

*blacksmith*

How important the horse was in the socio-political structure of India is indicated

in a number of striking passages. Ambassadors to Afonso Albuquerque, returning to the King of Narsinga, told the latter that the former was communicating with the Mohammedan King of northern Deccan:

So alarmed was the King of Narsinga at hearing of this alliance, for he knew that the Hidalcao had the horses which was the principal strength of his army, that he immediately sent back the two ambassadors to the great Afonso Albuquerque with very full powers to conclude a treaty of friendship, and to arrange the terms of the trade in horses. (Albuquerque, II, 39)

The writer of the commentaries remarks,

Afonso Albuquerque always laboured to make each one of these lords understand that he desired to have peace and friendship and the trade in horses with him, which was what they claimed; for, whereas he (Afonso) held the key of their position at Goa, he desired by means of this artifice to sow dissensions among them.

He was so successful that the Kingdom of Narsinga came to an end fifty years later in 1567. A ~~wonderful~~ picture of the integration of horses into the socio-political life of Narsinga is given by Barbosa (pp 88-90).

Many litters and many horsemen always stand at the door of this palace: and the king keeps at all times nine hundred elephants and more than twenty thousand horses (compare Nikitin on the Bazaar at Bijur, p. 13 above), all which elephants and horses are bought with his money: the elephants, at the price of fifteen hundred to two thousand ducats each, because they are very great and well-fitted for war, and for taking about with him continually for state. And the horses cost from three to six hundred ducats each, and some of the choicest for his personal use, nine hundred for a thousand ducats. These horses are distributed amongst the great lords who are responsible for them, and keep them for the gentry and knights to whom the king bids them to be given: and he gives to each knight a horse and a groom and a slave girl, and for his personal expenses four or five pardaos of gold per month, according to who he is; and, besides that, each day's provisions for the horse and groom; and they send to the kitchen for the rations both for the elephants and horses. The kitchens are very large and numerous, they contain many cauldrons of copper, and several officials who cook the food of the elephants and horses; which, it must be said is rice, chick-peas, and other vegetables. In all this there is much order and arrangement, and if the knight to whom the king has given a horse cares for it and treats it well, they take away that one and give him another and a better one; and if he is negligent they take his away and give him another that is worse. And thus all the king's horses and elephants are well fed and cared for, at his cost (and his men it might be added); and the grandees, to whom he gives a great quantity of them, act in the same manner, with their knights. These horses live but a short time; they are not bred in this country for all of them are brought there from the kingdom of Ormuz and that of Cambay and on that account, and for the great need of them, they are worth so much money. This king has more than a hundred thousand men, both horse and foot, to whom he gives pay: and fully five or six thousand women, to whom also he gives pay.

The king's outlay for horses and elephants, at average costs, would be around twelve million ducats, not counting costs of feeding them and the army itself. His need to

1. Nicolas Conti (Mason, p 70), travelling in 1425 mentions that Venetian ducats were in circulation in parts of India.

accumulate great exchangeable wealth is obvious and clarifies such matters as the manner in which jewels were handled (see below) and the organization of prostitution mentioned above. Barbosa's data is confirmed by other sources, incredible as they seem (cf Menon, Ch. III). The commentaries of Albuquerque show the effect of the horse trade on the ports of trade. Albuquerque wanted to reestablish the healthy trade of Goa and ordered all ships along the coast to be brought to Goa.

The first (reason) was, that he might benefit the harbour and repopulate the city to its former number of population; and that the caravans of Narsinga and of the kingdom of Decan, with their merchandise, might come to Goa in search of horses as they used of old to come (for the horses of this region are much esteemed and fetch a great price, because, apart from the need of them for military purposes, the captains and principal lords are in the habit of carrying their wives about on horses). The other reason was, that he might ruin the harbour of Baticala, which had become very noble through the horse-trade and the quantity of merchandise which flowed into it from Ormuz. For he considered that if the horse-trade were established in Goa, there would always be in the city from four to five hundred horses belonging to the merchants which he could make use of in case of emergency. *(military consideration!)*

There followed an influx of the horse trade, especially from Ormuz, which he conquered; horse merchants were given facilities, especially 300 'peons' of the district who had to transport grass, hay, and supplies for the horses. He also had the factories filled with spices and other merchandise "which the merchants were likely to require". Trade concentrated at Goa with the consequent disintegration of trade at ports to the south, especially Calicut and Cochin, and at Baticala, and the balance of power on the mainland shifted.

Albuquerque had perfectly understood the military importance of the horse. In attempting to conquer the Zamorin, he sent an ambassador to Narsinga offering to ally himself to destroy the Zamorin, then,

... after this is over, I shall give my attention forthwith to the affairs of Goa, wherein I can help him (Narsinga) in the war against the King of Decan, and from him (Decan) will I take the trade in horses that comes to this kingdom (Decan), whereby he is enabled to carry on war with him (Narsinga). . . . If the King of Narsinga be willing to do this he shall hold securely all the trade in horses and every other kind of merchandise of Portugal which he may need in his land.

The importance of horses is further reflected in the gifts brought by ambassadors to the kings to whom they were sent. As we know from quotations given above, the

giving and accepting of a gift was the prelude to and official opening of commercial or political negotiations. Refusal of a gift constituted a refusal to treat. This explains some of the difficulties experienced by da Gama: he brought too few gifts, he brought inappropriate gifts, and he refused to pay the usual port customs. "The

The kind of stuff he had brought from Lisbon for exchange in India was not suited to the Indian market and there was no demand for them from the Indian side. . . . The Zamorin required customs to be paid according to the regulations of the port, but this da Gama refused to do. (Panikkar, p. 37).

The horse, brought as a gift, is mentioned by Razzak (p. 15) who speaks of its importance as a gift. Later (p. 30) he mentions having given a gift to a king of five horses, as well as other things. Albuquerque (p. 107 of II) mentions the ambassador from Persia to the Hidalcao who arrived at Goa, only to find the Hidalcao had recently been driven out by the Portuguese. He brought a number of horses as gift to that leader but gave them to Albuquerque instead.

Elephants, of which Ceylon was a main source, were also important in the trading in India. They were subject to special trade regulations as will become apparent in the quotes below on the handling of jewels. Like jewels they played an important part in the political life of the sub-continent.

Barbosa (pl 98) says that "In this kingdom (of Marsinga) jewels are esteemed as treasure by the king and also by the rich, who buy them at large prices". They were bought from Ceylon and from Burma, among other places. Two major types of jewels were distinguished in this trade, what might be called 'common jewels' and 'treasury jewels'. It is the latter which were of concern to kings and persons of the upper strata. Common jewels will be dealt with again below. The manner of distinguishing and distributing the two is clear from the following passages.

In the island of Ceylon, rubies are found in all parts. The land is private property, and a man buys a parcel of it and digs for rubies. Some of them are red, some yellow (topazes), and some blue (sapphires). Their custom is that all rubies of the value of a hundred fanams belong to the sultan, who pays their price and takes them; those of less value belong to the finders. A hundred fanams equal in value six gold dinars.

2 Kings  
of  
Jewels

cf  
Taver



Marco Polo confirms this, speaking of pearls, which, if over half a saggio (in weight) were not to be taken from the island. If they were larger than that in any considerable degree, they went to the king. Barboza, 200 odd years later repeats this in discussing some pearling waters of Ceylon which belonged to Quilon on the Malabar coast:

And the men plunging under the water, where they remain a considerable time, pick them up; and the seed pearl is for those who gather them, and the large pearls are for the king, who keeps his overesser there, and besides that they give him certain duties upon the seed-pearl. (p. 170)

The king, therefore, controlled even the production of the common jewels, seeing to it that all jewels of significant value came to him, or the royal treasury.

The king of Ceylon not only controlled the jewel production and trade but also the elephant and cinnamon trade. Some details of this system of production, trade, and control, as well as other types of trade are suggested in the following interesting passage from Barboza (p. 167).

They are all given to trade and to good living. . . . And there is plenty of meat and fish, little rice, for most of it comes from Cholmendel (Coromandel), and it is their chief food; much good honey and sugar brought from Bengal, and butter of the country. . . . All the good cinnamon grows in this island upon the mountains (confirmed in other sources), on trees which are like laurels. And the king of the country orders it to be cut in small sticks, and has the bark stripped off in certain months of the year and sells it himself to the merchants who go there to buy it, because no one can gather it except the king. There are likewise in this island many wild elephants which the king orders to be caught and tamed; and they sell them to merchants of Cholmendel, Narsynga, and Malabar, and those of the kingdoms of Decan and Casbay go to those places to buy them. . . . (168) They make great merchandise of them, and they are worth much, because they are much valued by the kings of India for war and for labour, and they become as domestic and quick at understanding as men. The very good ones are worth in the Malabar country and in Cholmendel from a thousand to one thousand five hundred ducats, and the others from four to six hundred ducats according as they may be, but in the island, they are to be had for a small price. And all have to be brought and presented to the king. There are many jewels in this island; rubies, which they call menica, sapphires, jacinths, topazes, jagonzas (zircon), chrysoliths, and cat's eyes, which are (169) as much esteemed amongst the Indians as rubies. And all these stones are all gathered in by the king, and sold by himself (emphasis ours). And he has men who go and dig for them. . . . who are great lapidaries and who are good judges in those matters. . . . And the king sends them to look there, and after they have brought them he orders to set aside each kind, and pick out the good ones, and he has them worked to have them gold when cut (emphasis ours), which he does himself to foreigners; and the other inferior ones he sells at once to the country merchants. . . . The king has a great treasure of these jewels, for whenever he meets with any very good stone he puts it in his treasury.

It is quite plain from these passages that there were goods controlled by the royal houses and by the 'nobility' or upper castes as distinguished from goods which could be handled in apparently free markets by merchants and traders of lesser castes, for which more evidence will be given below.

Among the major imports to India were goods which are listed below. Most of these are quite plainly directed towards privileged consumption by royalty and high status castes. Girolamo Sernigi, in his first letter, said (Da Gama, pl 128):

There is abundance of silken stuffs, namely, velvets of various colours, satins, damask, taffetas, brocades worked in gold, scarlet cloth, brass and tin ware. In fine, all these things are to be found in abundance, and it is my opinion that the cloths worked in gold and the silks are brought thither from Cairo.

Later, in his third letter he said (Da Gama, p. 142):

Various kinds of spices are brought from distant islands (Maldives, Ceylon) to Colokutt. Pepper, Brazil-wood, gao, cinnamon, frankincense, lac, are to be found there. These things abound and are worth next to nothing. Of Brazil-wood there is plenty. There are likewise many ivory tusks and various other kinds of merchandise, such as variously-coloured silk-stuffs, costly cloth worked in gold, fine white linen, and woollen-stuffs, such as bocassins of various colours, and also such cotton. It is thought that the silver stuffs and cloths, as also the linens come from (Cairo). . . . Most of the spices brought to Kalikut are said to come from the island of (Ceylon).

Several of Barbosa's comments are interesting not only because they confirm the information above, but add certain other goods of importance. More important still, they show that several major ports of India served as entrepôts where goods coming from abroad were reshipped for trade within India.

(At Colombo, Ceylon)...many ships touch from various parts to take on board cinnamon and elephants. And they bring gold and silver, cotton and silk stuffs from Cambay (at which port that had arrived from the Near East), and many other goods which are saffron, coral, quicksilver, vermillion which here is worth a great deal; and there is much profit on the gold and silver, because it is worth more than in other parts, (see above, p. 8). (P. 170)

Speaking of Choromandel, Barbosa says (p. 174):

And many ships of Malabar come here to load rice, and they bring goods from Cambay to this country, that is to say, copper, quicksilver, vermillion, pepper and other goods. And throughout all this Chokmender much spice and drugs, and goods of Malacca, China, and Bengal are to be met with, which the Moorish ships bring here from these parts. . . . And in these times (post-Portuguese) the Malabars carry rice and cocoa nuts to them, and return with their ships laden with slaves. . . .

Cambay, Quilon, Calicut, and one or two of the ports of Choromandel were entrepôts of <sup>(see note 1, p. 25)</sup>

importance. They were distributing centers for the vital goods desired by the upper strata of Hindu society. These were goods which either contributed directly or indirectly to political control or activities (jewels, gold, silver, horses, elephants) or to the insignia of caste and class status in the form of dress, decorative (if expensive) jewelry, bells, and the like. The slaves mentioned above probably are part of this complex, but details are quite lacking. Both the goods and their distribution were controlled by the kings or their representatives as we have seen for the Malabar coast, Ceylon, Marsinga, and Chorumandel in various quotations listed above. The actual mechanics of trading appears to have been delegated to designated trading castes as has already been suggested.

Trading castes  
Parbees

More information is to be found on trading castes, although the Chetties and Parbees have already been mentioned at some length above (p 8-9). Pannikkar (p. 4) mentions that by 'Medieval' times, Malabar trade had passed into the hands of Mahomedan merchants, and Calicut was their principal mart, especially of the foreign Moors (Albuquerque II, 74). Barbosa mentions another trading caste:

In this kingdom of Calicut, and in all the other Malabar kingdoms, there is a sect of gentile merchants who are called amongst them brabares, who trafficked also before foreign persons came to port or navigated in these seas. These still deal, especially within in the interior, in all sorts of goods, and collect all the pepper and ginger from the sayre and cultivators, and frequently buy them in advance in exchange for cotton stuffs, and other goods which come from beyond the sea. These people are also great changers, and gain much upon coin. (133-34).

He also mentions the countryborn Moors 'mercantile and seafaring men, who live in the seaports (p. 174).

These castes are in strong contrast with the other, and more populous, castes of Malabar, and presumably elsewhere. Barbosa describes a number of castes at great length. Among them the gavil tixer gather palu fruits, till trees and are porters for hire, hew stones, and do other manual labour. He mentions also a number of castes specialized in crafts, but not otherwise directly involved in production or distribution of consumption goods. the hoguer were also porters, for kings, mariners,

and fishermen. He says that some of these were very rich from shipping, gaining money through the Moors. Mucos caste were fishermen and mariners. As such they must have contributed importantly to Malabar subsistence, since fish was an important item of diet there, along with rice, coconuts, and other items. Mucos did not pay any duty on the fresh fish which they sold (unlike many other producers who had to pay such duties to the royal treasuries). If they dried the fish, however, they paid four per cent duty. The fresh fish was said to be very cheap, and 'the chief food among the Indians'. Some of these Mucos, too, were rich and well-supplied, having large houses and property. Betna made salt, ploughed and sowed rice, and lived by no other occupation. Puler also ploughed and sowed the fields with rice, using buffalo and oxen (though Barbosa had said there were no beasts of burden). (135-44)

Thus, a whole series of castes contributed to the production and distribution of food goods in a system quite separate from that of the production and distribution of trade goods. There are suggestions in the literature so far examined that the latter were produced by laborer castes working on properties of the higher castes, the Brahmans and nayars in particular, though possibly also some of the great merchant castes. The slaves mentioned on p. 21 were possibly also engaged in this production. Barbosa says in this connection (p. 146), referring to native Moors called Manuler, that they dress like Hindus except for beards and caps and that they constituted about one-fifth of the population.

They carry on nearly all the trade of the seaports: and in the interior of the country they are very well provided with estates and farms.

A little light is shed on the distribution of ~~some~~ consumption goods by some of the events which transpired with members of Da Gama's expedition.

On the day after that, there came an almadia (a long boat) with four young men who brought precious stones for sale; but it appeared to us that they came rather by order of the Moors in order to see what we should do to them, than for the purpose of selling stones. The captain, however, made them welcome and wrote a letter to his people (being held in town) on shore, which they took away with them. When the people saw that no harm befell them, there came daily many merchants, and others who were not merchants, from curiosity. . . . (72)

*Bungans*

At another time (p. 69)

In this manner all on board ship went on land by twos and threes taking with them bracelets, clothes, new shirts, and other articles, which they desired to sell. We did not, however, effect these sales at the prices hoped for when we arrived at Moncobiquy (Mozambique). . . for a very fine shirt, which in Portugal fetches 300 reis (see exchange rates), was worth here only two fa-rões (see exchange rates) which is equivalent only to 30 reis, for (p. 70) 30 reis in this country is a big sum. And just as we sold shirts cheaply so we sold other things, in order to take some things away from this country, if only for samples. Those who visited the city bought there cloves, cinnamon, and precious stones; and having bought what they desired they came back to the ships without any one speaking to them. When the captain found the people of the country so well disposed, he left a factor with the merchandise, together with a clerk and some other men.

It would appear from this passage, that some of the goods circulating in the royal trade could be bought outside of it. However it must be remembered that the Chetti scribes were paid in the less valuable forms of such goods, that the smaller jewels were not kept by the royal entrepreneurs, and that soft sapphires could be found on certain beaches (Barbosa, p. 152) near a town called Capucad. Furthermore, Gir-lamo Sernigi makes the following comment (Da Gama, p. 140):

Those who have returned say that precious stones (jewels) are plentiful but deal in comparison with other merchandise. Neither the captain nor the others have brought back jewels worth taking into account, and this makes me think that they are not found there, but come from afar. The princes and kings of these countries value precious stones very much.

Apartly, Da Gama and his crew got only very insignificant goods and were able to sell what they considered valuable goods for poor prices largely because they were not goods of value to the Hindu population.

## Some Additional Notes and Comments on the Foregoing Materials

1. Barbosa (p. 177) says of Palecate in Chorowandel: 'It also has much trade with the interior of the kingdom, and they sell there many jewels which are brought from Poygu, especially rubies and spinel-rubies of good quality, and much musk. These jewels are to be had for very little there, by whoever knows how to buy well. The King of Narynga keeps his governors in this city, and collectors of his revenues. In this place they make many good coloured cotton stuffs which are worth much in Malaca, Peigu, and Sasatra, also in the kingdom of Guzurate and Malabar they are much valued for the clothing both of Moors and Gentiles. Copper, quicksilver, vermilion, opium, and many Cambay goods fetch a good price, so also scarlet cloth, coral, saffron, velvets from Mekkah, and rose water.
  
2. Girolamo Sernigi's first letter contains the following passage (Da Gama 127) In this city (Calicut) there reside many very wealthy Moorish merchants, and all the trade is in their hands (or carried on in their vessels, in another version of the letter). They have a fine mosque in the square of the town. The king, is, as it were, governed by these Moors, because of the presents which they give him; and owing to their industry (intelligence?) the government is wholly in their hands, for these Christians (i. e. Hindus) are coarse people.
  
3. Batuta (pp234-35) has several comments about who does trading in Malabar: (At Mangalore) There is a colony of about four thousand Muslims there, living in a suburb alongside the town. Conflicts frequently break out between them and the (Hindu) townspeople, but the sultan makes peace between them on account of his need of the merchants. (Chinese merchants entered only the ports of Kullom, Calicut, and Eli near Mount Bally).  
 In this town (Calicut) too lives the famous shipowner Mithqal who possesses vast wealth and many ships for his trade with India, China, Yemen, and Pers.  
 On the Sea of China, travelling is done in Chinese ships only, so we shall describe their arrangements.
  
4. There appear to have been a number of rice growing centers, and rice was imported by ship by traders, as some previous quotations have shown.  
 Having passed Baticala, at ten leagues towards the south is another small river, on which there is a town called Mayandur, under the jurisdiction of Baticala, in which much rice is gathered of a good quality, which is shipped at Baticala. (Barbosa 81)  
 The rice vessels that arrived (at Calicut during the blockade) (Panikkar 51).
  
5. Jurisdiction over towns seems to have been common in Malabar, on the pattern of Baticala and Mayandur.  
 The Zamorin's interference in his (the Raja of Cochin's) affairs (consisted, among other things, of) compelling all Cochin products to be sold through the port of Calicut. (Panikkar, p. 46).
  
6. There appear to have been more or less standardized duty rates throughout the Indian-Arabia area of trade.  
 When a sale is effected, they levy a duty on the goods of one fortieth

part; if they are not sold, they make no charge on them whatsoever.

Marco Polo (p. 372) mentions that in Ceylon the king was paid one tenth part on produce. Razzak (p. 7) states that one tenth of the value of gold and silver was paid in duty at Ormuz in Persia, as well as on goods from Malabar and the Deccan.

7. The full import of the following is not clear to the writer:  
 And because he (the Cabala) used to give a greater payment to foreigners than any king of India, there immediately flocked to Goa many Rumes, Turks, Arabs, and Persians, and by assistance of these people he wrested many places from the king of Warsinga and made himself the great lord of the kingdom of Daquem. *D. M. M. M. M.*
8. The importance of control of or access to the ports of trade is reflected in the reaction of the king of Warsinga to the building of the Portuguese fortress in Calicut -  
 ...and the King of Warsinga used to declare, when he heard of it, that since the Camorin of Calicut had assented to the building of a fortress in his land by the Portuguese, the Captain-General of India might as well build another in Bisnaga (Vijanagar) if he pleased. (Albuquerque, IV, 74).
9. Cabral's taking of merchant ships in a piratical manner (see p. 14)  
 ...caused anger and consternation, as the people of Calicut had, for many centuries, been accustomed to complete security of property and person. They indulged in riots and destroyed the Portuguese factory.
10. Marco Polo has some very interesting comments on non-economic influences on buying and selling. Merchants before going out to trade would observe the length of their shadow. If it corresponded to the proper length for that day - since each day in the week had its proper length - they went ahead; if not they probably called off their activities. The observance of a tarantula had the same effect. If it was seen coming from a lucky quarter, trading would be done, if from an 'unlucky' one, there would be no trading that day. There were similar beliefs regarding sneezes. Also if a swallow was seen 'going in the right direction' trading would be done, if in the wrong direction, not so.

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