CHAPTER II

THE FIRST PHASE, 1605—1629

I

1605—1616

The interest of the Dutch in the Coromandel coast, if we are to believe Valentijn, dates back to 1603 when Zebald de Waard, Vice-Admiral in the fleet of Admiral Wybrand van Warwyk, planned a voyage to this region. On his premature death at the hands of the king of Kandi, his successor Jacob Pietersz visited the coast with a ship. Though this account is not corroborated by any documentary evidence, an anonymous memoir in Dutch on Indian textiles dated 1603 mentions incidentally the author’s commercial experiences in Coromandel. Thus it seems certain that even before the East India Company established its first factories on the coast, individual Dutch merchants, probably representatives of the ‘Pre-Companies’, had come into contact with the region.22

In 1603, the United East India Company of Netherlands sent a fleet to the east under Admiral Steven van der Haghen. In February, 1605, the yacht Delft, one of the fifteen ships in van der Haghen’s fleet, sailed from Achin under the command of Paulus van Soldt and arrived at Masulipatam in the spring of the same year. With the help of a Jewish resident of Golconda named Assalan, van Soldt soon secured for the Dutch the right to trade at Masulipatam and several employees of the Company, with Pieter Ysaacx as the chief, were left by van Soldt at Masulipatam to organise the Company’s trade there.

In 1606, van Soldt made a second voyage to Coromandel from Bantam in the yacht Delft. It was during this voyage that the Dutch first came into contact with the south Coromandel port of Pulicat, the

future seat of the Company's chief factory on the coast. Negotiations for opening trade there was broken off after it had made some progress, because the Dutch suspected a conspiracy between the local people and the Portuguese. Sailing further north, the Delft came to the port of Petapuli or Nizampatam in Golconda, where an agreement was presently concluded with the local governor. Thereby, the Dutch were granted freedom of trade at Petapuli, the toll being fixed at 4% for both import and export, and there the Company presently established its first factory on the coast. Van Soldt next went to Masulipatam, where he found the Company's men involved in a conflict with the local governor, who demanded a toll of about 12% on an average. To settle this vexatious question van Soldt and under-factor Pieter Willemsz went on a mission to the court of Golconda and there, with the mir jumla's help, secured a farman from the king in August 1606, fixing the toll at 4% for both import and export throughout the kingdom of Golconda. Further, as an exceptional favour, the Dutch were exempted from the chhap-dalali, i.e. stamp duty on cloth, which came to about 12% and had to be paid by all other traders including the king's subjects. Fortified by the royal farman, the Dutch now established a factory at Masulipatam.23

An invidious trade privilege, giving a foreign monopolistic company an obvious advantage in competition even with local merchants, was thus secured in the earliest stage of the Dutch activities on the coast. Much of their subsequent effort was directed towards the extension of such privileges as an aid to their all-out attempt to secure an exclusive control on the local buyer's market. The eagerness of the political authorities to interest the Europeans in local trade appears to have been ubiquitous. Concessions involving immediate sacrifice of income were evidently expected to yield in the long run an increased revenue from an expanding trade. Only the local officials, often without any long term interest in the region that they temporarily governed, were eager to treat the companies as milch cows even at the risk of alienating them permanently. The desire to maximise the immediate income, with no thought for the consequences, was built into the system of revenue farming, an extreme form of feudal exploitation. Even the trading activities of the nobles and officials, protected from competition through

23 For the voyage of the Delft and the establishment of the first factories, see Begin ende Voortgang, II, Steven van der Haghen's second voyage, pp.40 ff; de Jonge, III, pp.202, 213, 282 ff; Heeres, I, pp.45–6; Nederlandsch Indie, III, pp.53; McLeod, I, pp. 54 ff; Koromandel, Ch. II.
the use of political power, were in essence directly exploitative rather than an effort to seek profit through trade. The Company's chief problem, hence, was to establish trading rights, preferably exclusive, in the face of multiform feudal exploitation.

For some time the two factories at Masulipatam and Petapuli, administered by Pieter Ysaacx and Dirk van Leeuwen respectively, were independent of each other, though consultations regarding commercial matters were quite frequent. In 1607, the mutual independence of the two factories was abolished and it was laid down that the head of each factory would preside in turn for a month over the Company's affairs in Coromandel. A further important change took place in 1608 when, by a decision of the General Council at Bantam, Pieter Ysaacx, the chief factor at Masulipatam, was made the "General head over both the places," Petapuli being placed under the authority of Masulipatam, despite the strong disapproval of the local factors. This was an early manifestation of a tendency towards centralised control, an obvious necessity if a common trade policy was to be followed along the entire coast.

Meanwhile, the situation at Masulipatam had not been very easy for the Dutch. Extortionate demands of the local officials and their desire for the monopolistic exploitation of the local market, — familiar phenomena in the 17th century trade history of India, — were at the root of the trouble. As the price for the ratification of the royal farman, Sidappa, the local governor, forced the Company to lend him 3000 pagodas without interest. Hardly had he paid back the amount when, in 1607, he seized all the merchandise on board the Groote Sonne, worth about 100,000 florins, and demanded a fresh loan of 20,000 pagodas as the condition for releasing the cargo. Eventually Pieter Ysaacx had to grant a loan of 8,000 pagodas, and also to concede the demand that in future all duty-free goods imported by the Dutch would be sold exclusively to the local governor and the shahbandar. These troubles help up the Company's trade for three valuable months. Besides, only a fraction of the fresh loan granted to the havaldar was ever recovered, because the local governorship was farmed out to another person next year.

Before long, the new havaldar, Pylappa, encouraged by the example

24 De Jonge, III, pp.46 ff, 221, 282 ff, 287 ff; K.A.967, L. Ysaacx, "Memorye etc.", Bantam, 1.11.1608.

Verh. dl. 38
of his predecessor, asked for a sizeable loan from the Dutch and when this was refused, demanded that the Company should pay stamp duty from which it had been specifically exempted by the royal farman. Eventually, chief factor van Wesick went to Golconda to place his complaints before the king. But, through Pylappa’s machinations, he had to come back in January, 1610, leaving the question of stamp duties unsettled.26

At Petapuli, conditions were less uncongenial than at Masulipatam. But there, again, the local governor exercised an exclusive control over trade in a manner which severely restricted the Company’s activities. The bulk of the red cloth, which constituted the chief attraction of the Petapuli trade, was purchased by the havaldar on the plea that he had to supply every year 1000 pieces of this particular variety of cloth to the king, who sent them to the Shah of Persia for the use of the latter’s army. The famous Tambreve chay-roots were also a monopoly of the local governor. For the bulk of their trade at Petapuli, the Dutch had to enter into contracts with the havaldar himself or secure his express permission for dealing with local merchants, some of whom could trade with the company only in secret. In 1609, the havaldar, imitating the ways of his Masulipatam colleague, demanded 4,000 pagodas as ‘gate-money’, i.e., additional toll on the Company’s purchases which came from outside the town, but the offer of a present soon pacified him.27

Simultaneously with their efforts to consolidate their position in Golconda, the Dutch were looking for new trade prospects in south Coromandel. The great demand for Pulicat cloth in the spice islands was the chief reason for this venture. True, the Company did profitably secure quantities of Pulicat pintadoes through Khwaza Soheyder, their middleman at Petapuli, but it was evident that a direct contact with the source of supply would considerably augment the profits. The establishment of trading posts in the Hindu territory would also render the Company less dependent on the favours of the Golconda havaldars, and a factory at centrally situated Pulicat would enable the Company to exploit fully the commercial opportunities both in north and south Coromandel.28

26 K.A.967, van Wesick and Schorer from Bhagnagar, 11.11.1609, 28.11.1609, Ysaacx and van Wesick to “Seignores N.N.”, 1.2.1610, van Wesick to Masulipatam, 19.10.1609.
In 1608, the yachts *Arent* and *Valck* of Admiral Verhoeff's fleet, sent to the coast under the command of Jacob de Bitter, were driven by contrary winds to Tegenapatam in Gingi territory. The local governor of Tegenapatam invited the Dutch to open trade there, but as de Bitter was not authorised to accept such offers, he could only promise to refer the matter to Admiral Verhoeff. De Bitter returned to Tegenapatam in November, 1608 and within a few days a Dutch mission to Gingi secured from the *nayak* a *kaul* permitting the Dutch to re-build the fallen Portuguese fortress at Tegenapatam and fixing the import and export duties at 4%. The provisions required for the factory and all gold imported by the Company were exempted from duty.

The Tegenapatam fort, granted to the Dutch, was found uninhabitable and the Company decided instead to open its factory at the neighbouring township of Tierepopelier (Tirupapuliyur). Bourgonje was appointed chief of the new factory. The 'great Aya', who was the *nayak*'s chief minister, guaranteed in writing that the painters, weavers and merchants along the entire Gingi coast would be free to deal with the Dutch without paying any tolls. The new factory, situated so far from the northern establishments, enjoyed a position of complete independence, a fact which was resented by the northern factors.

Soon after the establishment of the Tierepopelier factory, the Dutch came into conflict with the 'great Aya' who 'borrowed' for a time some labourers working for the Company and practically kept them under arrest, thus holding up the work of the factory. The labourers were eventually allowed to return, but the Aya persisted in his refusal to let the Dutch continue the work of constructing a fort on the plea that the Carnatic king might object to it. In the spring of 1610, the Tierepopelier factors received instructions from Bantam to seek a renewal of the contract with the *nayak* and strengthen the defences of the factory. Accordingly the contract was renewed on March 29, 1610 and a building constructed for the safe-keeping of ammunition and merchandise. The toll payable by the Company was now reduced to 2% for both export and import and the 'great Aya' undertook to force all weavers and

---

29 K.A.967, Ysaacx and van Wesick to Verhoeff, 14.11.1608, Bourgonje to Verhoeff, 12.12.1609, Bourgonje to l'Hermite May, 1610; Heeres, I, p.55; de Jonge, III, 280 ff; *Nederlandsch Indie*, III, pp.64—65; MacLeod, I, pp.91 ff.

30 K.A.967, Bourgonje to Ysaacx, 6.2.1609, same to l'Hermite, May, 1610, Bourgonje and Marcelis to North Coromandel, 16.2.1609, l'Hermite to Amsterdam, 10.11.1610, van Wesick to Bantam, 15.6.1609.
painters to keep their contracts with the Dutch. More important still, the Portuguese and all other European nations were excluded from the Tegenapatanam area, and the Aya promised to help the Company against its enemies. The Dutch were also given the right to trade at Porto Novo to the south of Pondichery. The Company, on its side, promised to supply the Aya at cost price all commodities from lands under its control. The Aya and the *nayak* also reserved the right to buy sulphur from the Dutch before all other merchants. Indian ships sailing with passes from the chief factor of Tieropelier were to be allowed to go unmolested by the Dutch and the chief factor would be practically obliged to grant passes if the Aya wanted them for his own purpose. The contract is significant for more than one reason: it indicates the increasing interest of the chiefs and nobles in trade as also their power to reduce the rigours of the passport system enforced much more rigidly in the days of Portuguese ascendancy.

It further indicates the willingness of Indian authorities to help a foreign company in enforcing the observance of contracts which were not by themselves a continuous incentive to production. A second Dutch mission to Gingi which followed returned with a letter from the *nayak* to the 'Duke of Holland' promising scrupulous observance of the contract and requesting that ships be sent regularly to Tegenapatanam.31

The year 1610 witnessed another important landmark in the career of the Dutch Company in Coromandel. Plans to open trade with Pulicat, which had failed in 1606, were now once more taken up in earnest. The *kaul* eventually granted by the Carnatic king closely resembled the one secured for Tegenapatanam: it conferred on the Company the right to construct a stone warehouse at Pulicat for merchandise and ammunition, fixed the duties at 2 % for both import and export and required the Company to supply at cost price any article ordered by the king from territories under its control.32

In May, 1610, Maertssen and Fontaine went on a mission to Vellor at the king's request for further negotiations. At the Carnatic capital the Company's representatives were accorded a regal reception; but due to the machination of some Portuguese missionaries, matters did not proceed very smoothly, and it was only after considerable manoeuvring that the Dutch could induce the king to stick to his earlier decision

---

32 K.A.967, Marcelis to Amsterdam, 31.5.1610; Heeres, I, pp.83 ff; de Jonge, III, pp.384 ff; *Nederlandsch Indie*, III p.210; MacLeod, I, pp.93—94.
and let them establish a factory at Pulicat. Hans Marcelis was now appointed chief factor at Pulicat, with four other employees to assist him.33

Conflict with local officials, already a familiar phenomenon in north Coromandel, complicated matters for the Dutch at Pulicat as well. For a while, Indian traders were forbidden to have any dealings with them and the factory was besieged by soldiers. One night Marcelis and his subordinates were thrashed by the shahbandar's men and the factory was plundered by the local people. The Dutch themselves were apparently responsible for these troubles to some extent and they tried to placate Condama, the shahbandar's mother, by giving her presents. But the king, vexed by the reports of troubles, asked Condama to bring her son and the Dutch representatives to Vellar.34

The second Dutch mission to Vellar had to wait long before it was granted audience on August 30, 1610, when the king promised to redress the Company's grievances by appointing a new shahbandar. Meanwhile Portuguese emissaries were active at the Vellar court and the king was somewhat swayed by their plea that the trade of San Thomé would suffer if the Dutch were allowed to trade at Pulicat. The Company's representatives, however, turned down the king's request that the Dutch should abandon Pulicat and establish their factory at some other place, and their firmness eventually defeated the Portuguese machinations. Furthermore, the toll at Pulicat was reduced from 2% to 1½% and the neighbouring village of Averipaque [Kaveripak] was granted to the Company.35

Soon afterwards, important changes were introduced in the organisation of the coast factories. It had been felt for some time that the relations between the northern and southern factories were dangerously loose, specially in view of the oppressive ways of the local officers and the constant threat from the Portuguese. As a way out of this problem, the Council of the Indies at Bantam decided on December 3, 1610 to unify the administration of the four factories into one Directorate. Van Wesick, who had succeeded Pieter Ysaacx as the chief of the northern factories earlier in the year, was appointed the first Director of the

33 K.A.967, Fontaine to l'Hermite, 31.5.1610, Marcelis to l'Hermite, 30.5.1610, Resolution on board the Cleyne Sonne, 29.4.1610.
34 K.A.967, Marcelis and Fontaine to van Wesick, 30.7.1610, Resolution, Pulicat Council, 1.8.1610.
35 K.A.967, Marcelis and Fontaine to van Wesick, 7.9.1610, 8.10.1610, same to l'Hermite, 23.11.1610.
coast factories and ordered to take up his residence at Pulicat which now became the Company headquarters (hoofdkantoor) in Coromandel. The yacht Hasewindt, which had arrived from Europe with the news of the twelve year's truce, was sent from Bantam to Coromandel under the command of Wemmer van Berchem with detailed instructions regarding the proposed changes in administration. Further, as an economy measure, the Petapuli establishment was to be curtailed as far as practicable, if not altogether abandoned. With the appointment in 1610 of one Director at the head of the Coromandel factories, the initial period of organisation came to an end.

In June, 1612, the Pulicat factory was sacked by the Portuguese, soon after Wemmer van Berchem assumed charge as the Director of the coast factories. A few months later some employees or the Company returned to Pulicat, encouraged by its leading citizens. In October, 1612, van Berchem led a mission to the Carnatic capital, as a result of which a new kaul was granted by the king on December 12, 1612. The chief feature of this agreement was an undertaking on part of the king to complete the new castle started by the Dutch at Pulicat at the expense of Queen Obayama [Abhayamma?], the owner of the town, on condition that the Company should equally share the possession with him. Besides, the toll for Pulicat was fixed at 1½ % for import and 2 % for export, and the Dutch were authorised to freely damage the Portuguese anywhere in the king's territories. The King also promised to send his brother-in-law, Narpa-raja with several thousand soldiers to besiege San Thomé, while the Dutch attacked the stronghold by sea. Nothing tangible, however, resulted from this project.

Further to ensure the security of Pulicat, van Berchem went on a mission to the court of Jagga-raja, the feudatory overlord of the Pulicat region. There he found two Brahmin emissaries from San Thomé sent to secure the expulsion of the Dutch from Pulicat and it was only with great difficulty that van Berchem could induce Jagga-raja to confirm the kaul. Portuguese agents were also busy at other neighbouring

36 K.A.967, l'Hermite to Amsterdam, 10.11.1610, 24.11.1610, 'Instructie' for the Director, the Coromandel coast, 12.12.1610.
37 See Infra, Ch. V.
38 K.A.968, 30.8.1613, f.151vo; Heeres, I, pp.100—104; van Dam, II, ii, p.101—102; van Dijk, p.27.
39 Though the Dutch sources are silent on the point, a siege of San Thomé by the Carnatic king in 1612—1613, during which the nayak of Tanjore helped the Portuguese, is mentioned in a Portuguese document. See L.T., I, L.M., Document No. 342, 7.3.1613.
40 K.A.968, 30.8.1613, ff.151vo ff.
courts in an effort to frustrate the completion of the Pulicat fort and actually succeeded in winning over several local chiefs to their side. The construction of the fort at Queen Obayama's cost was proceeding very slowly and van Berchem therefore decided to complete the work at the Company's expense, partly from a desire to evade the obligation to share the fort with the king. The fort, completed in 1613, was named Geldria, probably after van Berchem's native province, Gelderland. There was, however, more than one opinion at the time regarding its utility, and some felt that it was "maintained at great expense and to little profit." 41

Hardly had the fort Geldria been completed, when it was faced with a serious danger. Jagga-raja's brother, Eti-raja, who had been won over to the side of the Portuguese, appeared before Pulicat with six to seven hundred men in July, 1613, bent on destroying the Dutch fort. The Carnatic king, in response to an appeal from van Berchem, promised every help to the Company and ordered Eti-raja to withdraw his troops on pain of severe punishment. Eti-raja still attacked Pulicat and was twice beaten back by the Dutch with the shahbandar's help. Eventually, through the mediation of the king's emissaries, he was reconciled with the Company, but van Berchem put little faith in his professions. 42

The Company's trade in south Coromandel was severely affected by the prolonged civil war which ensued on the death of King Venkata II in October, 1614. His nephew and chosen successor, Sriranga II, was overthrown and subsequently murdered by Venkata's brother-in-law, Jagga-raja, who put his putative nephew on the throne. One Yacama Nayak supported by the nayak of Tanjore, took up the cause of Sriranga's son, Ramadeva, while the nayaks of Madura and Gingi joined the side of Jagga-raja. Pulicat was repeatedly overrun by the rival parties, and the Dutch followed a policy of strict neutrality, always admitting into the town the most powerful contestant provided no harm was done to the citizens. Throughout the Carnatic kingdom, trade came almost to a standstill as a result of the war. 43

Meanwhile, the coast factories went through some important administrative changes. Hans de Haze, appointed 'visitadeur' in 1613 to visit all the factories, castles and establishments of the Company, arrived at Masulipatam in November, 1614 and quickly carried through a number

43 K.A.971, Hans de Haze, "Consideratie etc.", f.64vo; K.A.973, 29.3.1916, f.174vo; Vijayanagara History, Ch. XXV; McLeod, I, pp.452 ff.
of much-needed reforms in the administration of the Coromandel Directorate. Among other things, he had to deal with the question of abandoning the Tierepopelier factory, recommended by the Bantam Council. In view of the Company's limited capital, de Haze was in favour of abandoning the factory. Besides, the cargo procured at Tierepopelier was more easily available at Pulicat; and Masulipatam, as compared to Tierepopelier, offered some 33% more by way of profit on the sale of the Company's merchandise. The great Aya's insatiable greed for presents and the heavy annual toll of about 2200 rials were further factors to be considered. But as the cloth supply at Pulicat was badly affected by the war, it was decided to continue the Tierepopelier factory until conditions were more peaceful. The proximity of Tegenapatam to the Carnatic diamond mines was also a factor in this decision.44

The growing dissension between van Berchem and Samuel Kindt, second officer on the coast, was another issue de Haze had to investigate. In May, 1615, it was decided to relieve van Berchem of his office and Samuel Kindt was provisionally appointed President of the coast and commander of Fort Geldria. In 1616, the administration of the Coromandel factories was constituted a 'Government' with Hans de Haze as the first governor and Samuel Kindt holding the office of President under him.45 It is not clear, however, whether the change from a Directorate to a Government implied anything more concrete than a rise in status. But it was in any case the first formal recognition of the great importance of the coast factories in the pattern of Dutch trade in Asia. As such, it marked the end of one phase and the beginning of another.

During 1610—1616, while the Company gradually consolidated its position in the south in the face of great difficulties, affairs in the Golconda factories also did not proceed very smoothly. Van Berchem, almost immediately after his succession to office, went on a mission to Golconda to complain against the extortionate demands of the Masulipatam officers and the hostility of the Portuguese. Arriving at Golconda in August, 1612, he found Portuguese emissaries from Goa trying to bribe the king with presents so that he should expel the Dutch from his territory and it was only with great difficulty that he secured an

45 K.A.973, Resolutions, 1.5.1616, ff.194vo—195; van Dijk, p.47; Nederlandsch Indie, III, p.211; Floris, p.132
audience on August 10. At the Golconda court, his complaints were not received favourably. The *mir jumla* pointed out that the Portuguese had done no damage to the Dutch in Golconda territory and hence no reprisals could be permitted within the boundaries of the kingdom. Besides, the king complained that the Dutch, contrary to their promise, had failed to bring rich cargoes from Europe — expensive clothes, fine mirrors, guns, various curios etc. as the Portuguese used to do before their arrival. His land, in consequence, was destitute of such commodities and the trade of Masulipatam was declining. Van Berchem replied that the bulk of the merchandise formerly imported by the Portuguese came from Holland and the matter could be easily mended in future.

A further difficulty was raised by the petition of an Armenian merchant who sought restitution of his goods seized by the Dutch from the Portuguese ship *Tanaseri*. On being asked by the king to restore the goods, van Berchem replied that it was not in his power to do so. Eventually, the king agreed to issue a new *farman* which would ensure the Company's freedom of trade, but only on condition that the Armenian merchant's goods were restored, for he had already issued orders to that effect. After considerable delay, the *farman* was at last secured on September 15, 1612. The new contract, although later it proved a source of trouble, was very welcome at the time as it commuted the tolls for Masulipatam, previously fixed at 4 %, for a payment of 3000 *pagodas* a year.46

For the troubles which followed almost immediately afterwards, the Dutch were primarily responsible. Before the end of the year, to the great annoyance of the local authorities, they captured an empty ship, anchored off Masulipatam, belonging to the same Armenian merchant who had been the cause of so much trouble. Again in February, 1615, van Berchem captured at Pulicat a ship belonging to some Armenian merchants of San Thomé. Part of the cargo was claimed by a Muslim merchant of Masulipatam as his own and this was eventually restored to him for fear of alienating the Golconda king.47

Soon after van Berchem's departure, the Dutch were faced with a serious situation in Golconda. The contract secured by van Berchem did not prove to be a panacea. Formerly, because of the small volume of trade, the toll payable at Masulipatam, though fixed at 4 %, seldom

amounted to more than 2,000 pagodas a year while the Company was now obliged to pay 3,000 pagodas annually under all circumstances. Further, the local governors, deprived of the toll, started inventing new methods of extortion. They now hindered by all possible means the loading and unloading of merchandise, the transports of cargo to inland areas and the purchase of indigo. In violation of the royal farman, they claimed a 2% tax on indigo brought to Masulipatam from inland areas. Complaints to the king on every occasion were hardly possible, as each mission to Golconda cost some 1,000 pagodas and letters were of little use as they had to pass through the hands of the great nobles, who were often the friends of the local governors. The situation worsened when the merchants were forbidden to enter into contracts for the purchase of the Company's merchandise so that the Dutch might be forced to sell their wares to the local governor, who made his payments in kind with poor quality articles valued at abnormally high rates. Further, no merchants were allowed to deal with the Company until the annual toll had been paid at the beginning of the year. To deal with this situation, it was decided to sell part of the cargo to the havaldar at prices somewhat lower than the market rates and to pay him the toll in merchandise so that he might make a large profit on it before handing over the stipulated 3,000 pagodas to the king. 48

At Petapuli conditions were generally better than at Masulipatam. But in 1615, havaldar Pyleppa secured a farman from the king requiring the Dutch to pay a toll of 6,000 pagodas, — half by way of arrears for the previous and half as dues for the current year. The Company decided to fight this claim and demanded from the havaldar the payment of his outstanding debts. De Haze, in accordance with his policy of 'rationalization', was actually considering the abandonment of the Petapuli factory at the time, and threatened with this measure which would mean considerable loss of revenue, besides difficulties with the higher authorities at Golconda, Pyleppa soon adopted a more reasonable policy. 49

For the Dutch themselves these early years of their contact with Coromandel were of manifold significance. The most vital source for the supply of textiles was now open to them, though the small volume of trade with the coast suggests that the spice trade in the Archipelago

was not yet primarily dependent on the cloth supply from Coromandel. The chief factories in the region were already established and their importance in the pattern of the Company's trade was formally recognised. Further, the conflicts with local officers and the civil wars had driven home the nature of the problems that would have to be faced.

It was clear by 1616, that the local potentates, eager for the expansion of trade and for the steady supply of western curios and additional income from 'presents', welcomed commercial relations with the Dutch. The enormous capital resources of the Company offered prospects of a steadily expanding foreign market. Neither the declining Portuguese power nor the limited and disorganised resources of the Indian traders had anything comparable to offer. The latter, in fact, joined the kings and chieftains in welcoming the Dutch whose purchases on the coast implied vast potentialities of profit in middleman trade. The commercial rivalries between the Dutch Company and a rejuvenated Indian merchant class were things of the future.

One fact, however, had already emerged: in so far as the Dutch, unlike the Portuguese before them, did not establish invulnerable footholds on the mainland of India and sought instead peaceful commercial relations with the local kingdoms, any attempt to exclude Indian competitors from the high seas through a continuation of the passport system had little chance of success. Their weakness on the mainland undermined all fitful efforts to take the law into their own hands.

The comparative absence of Indian competition in the trade in Coromandel wares in the overseas market during this early phase is perhaps to be explained primarily in terms of the inhibiting after effects of the century-long exclusive control enforced by the Portuguese at gun-point. The Dutch quest for exclusive control over the market followed more peaceful and, in the long run, more paying lines, namely, manoeuvrings for differential advantages over all trade rivals including the local merchants. Their success in securing such advantages combined with, and partly flowing from, their superior resources ensured the ascendancy of the Dutch Company in the coast trade until a rival Company of monopolistic merchant capital outstripped them in the magnitude of their investments in India.
II

1616—1629

By 1616, the Dutch East India Company had firmly established itself in Coromandel. During the years to follow the problems encountered at the very inception of Dutch trade with the coast gained in intensity. The Company’s efforts at expansion were imperilled by conflicts with local officers in Golconda, a devastating civil war in the Carnatic and the competition of other European nations and Asian merchants. The story of the years 1616—1629 is one of survival in the face of manifold challenge and of new experiments in commerce in response to a new colonial policy.

In Golconda, the troubles started very early. By June, 1616 the Petapuli factory was abandoned as a counter-measure against the local governor’s extortionate demands. This decisive step gave the Company a brief respite and also helped to secure from the king a new farman in July, 1616 guaranteeing freedom from interference so long as the stipulated annual toll was paid. But in a week, the local governor of Masulipatam secured a counter-order abrogating the existing contracts with the Company and its right to trade outside the city and requiring the Dutch to enter into fresh agreements with the governor. Immediately, the governor demanded that the Company should either pay 9% duty on imports and 11% stamp-duty (chhap-dalali) for articles purchased inland or deposit the stipulated annual toll at the beginning of each year. He also farmed out the right to trade with the Company as a monopoly to a single merchant. This meant that the Company had to advance large amounts to this merchant, who often supplied products of a very inferior quality. With the inland indigo-markets closed to the Company and the cloth trade encumbered by artificial restrictions, the Masulipatam cloth trade was hardly very profitable any longer. An unfortunate brawl between a Dutchman and a Muslim led to the imposition of further restrictions: even suppliers of daily necessities were forbidden to visit the factory. Governor Hans de Haze now seriously threatened to abandon the Masulipatam factory. His firmness won the day and the restrictive orders were now quickly withdrawn.50

A second round of troubles started in 1619 with attempts on part of the local governor’s underlings to interfere with the loading of the com-

50 Coen, VII, pp.96, 361; K.A.977, Hans de Haze to Amsterdam, 5.6.1617, and 18.10.1616; Heeres, I, pp.547—48.
pany's ships, and the arrest of a Dutch under-factor on the charge of assaulting one of them. The Dutch retorted by seizing the person of the kotwal. An assault on the factory followed and in the skirmish several Dutch officers, including de Haze, were wounded. The Golconda authorities soon tried to patch up the matter by a show of friendliness. But de Haze, bent on stopping the continuous harassment by local governors, appealed to the governor, then residing at Golconda, for a new farman. The results were exactly the opposite of what de Haze had expected. The governor ordered that in future the Company was to deal with a single merchant, Lingua, nominated by him. This was the last straw. In June, 1619 de Haze ordered the abandonment of the Masulipatam factory, — a decision which was fully approved by Governor-General Coen. Plans were also made to seize the Indian ships returning from Mecca and Pegu. Such extreme measures were, however, found to be unnecessary. The king of Golconda, who could ill-afford to lose the benefits of his kingdom's trade with the Dutch, hastily opened negotiations with the Company. In the middle of these negotiations, de Haze left Coromandel, installing Adolff Thomasz as the provisional governor. The king by this time had realized the full enormity of the situation, and in July, 1619 the local governor of Masulipatam was put under arrest. The governor Mir Qasim was replaced in his office by one Itimad Khan. The local Muslims also earnestly requested the Dutch to come back. Finally, towards the end of July, 1619 the Dutch returned to Masulipatam after receiving a new farman. The next two and a half years were comparatively peaceful. Andries Soury who took over from Adolff Thomasz as governor of the coast factories in November, 1619 was on friendly terms with Mir Qasim, re-instated in his office in 1621. As a benevolent gesture Mir Qasim even abolished the practise of farming out the right to trade in coins and precious metals imported by the Dutch. "In Masulipatam," reported Coen to Amsterdam in 1621, "things are going reasonably well, but more through the fear of our power, than because of any respect for the farman which the king of Golconda has granted us." 

Coen's estimate of the Company's power in Coromandel, based exclusively on the control over the sea-ways, ignored the hopelessly weak and defenceless position of the coast factories. Abraham van Uffelen,

51 Coen, VII, p.235.
nicknamed "Little Coen" by the English for his aggressive ways, — who succeeded Soury in 1621,\textsuperscript{54} made the same mistake. The tragic incidents of Little Coen's administration may best be understood in terms of a conflict between overmighty traders and an autocratic power. Clash of economic interests, caused by the rapacity of local governors, played only a minor role.

Early in 1622 van Uffelen seized a Portuguese ship off Masulipatam and imperiously demanded of the local governor that all trading rights should be refused to the Portuguese. When the governor ordered a boycott of the Dutch factory as punishment for violating the peace of the harbour, van Uffelen started warlike preparations which forced him to rescind the orders. But the king, on hearing of these incidents, took a sterner attitude. Eventually van Uffelen had to go on a mission to Golconda, surrender a part of the booty secured from the captured ship and release the Portuguese sailors who had been taken prisoner. Out of the whole business, the Company gained little but trouble.\textsuperscript{55}

But van Uffelen, no wiser by his experiences, continued in his arrogant ways. In 1623, against the express orders of the king, he publicly shipped a quantity of tobacco to Arakan. Worse still, he forcibly detained the shroff or money-changer, allegedly in order to coerce him into accepting an unfair rate of exchange for rials. Besides, he refused passes for Pegu to Indian ships. The king also believed that he was not getting his legitimate share of the booty seized by the Dutch from Portuguese ships.

The Golconda authorities decided to strike suddenly. In November, 1623 van Uffelen, an under-factor and three of the Company's chief middlemen were arrested at Masulipatam and taken to Golconda in chains. Supply of food and water to the Dutch factory was stopped by the governor's order. At Golconda, van Uffelen and the Company's middlemen were subjected to severe torture and their release was ordered only after 16,000 pagodas had been paid out of the Company's funds. The middlemen, however, were to pay back to the Company in kind their share of the ransom.\textsuperscript{56}

Van Uffelen died in February, 1624 as a result of the bodily injuries suffered while in prison. Jacob Dedel, sent as "visitor" from Batavia, succeeded as governor. On Dedel's premature death in August the same

\textsuperscript{54} Coen, III, pp.97—98, 783; E.F.I., 1622—1623, p.120.
\textsuperscript{55} Coen, VII, 2, pp.984—85.
\textsuperscript{56} K.A.994, 27.2.1623 ff.135; K.A.995, Libenaer to Batavia, 10.1.1624, van Uffelen to various people, 28.11.1623, 18.12.1623, 30.12.1623, 15.1.1624.
year, Marten Ysbrantsz became the governor of the coast factories.\textsuperscript{57} Meanwhile, no radical improvement in the situation had taken place. Towards the end of 1624, the right to trade with the Dutch company was farmed out to six merchants, "so that none (else), be they merchants, artisans or even water-suppliers, could freely come" to the factory. Early in 1625, these trading rights, including even the right to sell victuals to the Dutch, were publicly auctioned by the governor and secured by three merchants on payment of 3,000 \textit{pagodas} each. Besides, the traders had to pay something for every item they took out of the Company's factory. In consequence, the contractors refused to take merchandise in payment for their supplies and would only accept cash. Petapuli, at first free from these restrictions, was soon brought within the orbit of the \textit{sar-i-khail}'s policy of indirect exploitation. Because of such uncongenial conditions few merchants came to Masulipatam with adequate quantities of \textit{pagodas}, the coin with which the bulk of the purchases had to be made, and the Company was threatened with a serious shortage. A mission to Golconda for buying \textit{pagodas} ended in an expensive failure through the \textit{sar-i-khail}'s machinations. A drunken orgy of factor Goeree at Masulipatam further complicated the situation. The factory was attacked by an armed mob and the transport of commodities to Dutch ships was prohibited for a time.\textsuperscript{58}

The Masulipatam factors suggested a violent solution for the existing problems, namely, that the factory should be abandoned for two or three years and the consequent losses made good through the seizure of Muslim ships returning from abroad. Ysbrantsz considered this a feasible policy. Batavia, opposed to agression against anybody except an avowed enemy as being incompatible with the Company's constitution, recommended on the other hand the practice of "discreet simulation". Amsterdam, extremely conscious of the importance of the Masulipatam trade, was in favour of a settlement "with honour" even if the Golconda government were actually in the wrong. Attempts to secure the lease of Masulipatam were recommended for the purpose.\textsuperscript{59}

There was a brief improvement in the situation towards the end of 1625 when the governor, Inayet Khan, was recalled to Golconda and

\textsuperscript{57} K.A.994, 27.1.1625, ff.135 ff, Goeree and Libenaer to Amsterdam, 4.10.1624.

\textsuperscript{58} K.A.994, 27.1.1625, ff.138 ff; K.A.996, Goeree and Libenaer to Amsterdam, May, 1625; K.A.997, Libenaer to Batavia, 29.12.1624 and 26.6.1625, Batavia to Coromandel, 26.7.1625.

the company's chief middleman, Malay, secured a certain relaxation of the pressure on the Company through an influential friend at the court. But when conditions were just returning to normal, the old king of Golconda died and was succeeded by a minor; the Company's old enemy, Muhammad Taqi, once more became governor of Masulipatam. The consequent feeling of insecurity was so widespread and intense that the merchant-middlemen broke their contracts and refused to take delivery of the Company's wares.  

The following years witnessed a progressive deterioration in the situation. The three lease-holders and the governor himself were before long the only purchasers of the Company's wares. The former owed some 27,000 pagodas to the Company and almost invariably failed to supply cloth according to specifications. By June, 1628, the Company was forced to sell the bulk of its cargo to the governor, while by September all wares imported by the European companies were allowed to be sold to him alone. He, in his turn, sold these at arbitrary prices, to the traders who formerly had direct dealings with the European factories. Late in 1628 Muhammad Taqi, after a brief eclipse of his power, was appointed chief councillor to the king and as such exercised unlimited powers of exploitation through his underling, the new governor of Masulipatam. Soon afterwards, a number of traders, living outside the jurisdiction of Masulipatam, who had dealings with the Dutch were put under arrest and forced to yield up large sums under torture. Trade, except with the governor on unprofitable terms, was at a standstill.  

Against such heavy odds, the Company's policy of "discreet simulation" was of no avail. As a tentative measure, Batavia had ordered that no cargo should be unloaded at Masulipatam before specific contracts regarding prices were made. A more drastic policy was evidently called for.  

As early as September, 1627 the English President Mr. Brown had discussed with Ysbrantsz the possibilities of combined operations against the local government. In June, 1628 Batavia finally consented to the use of force for the redress of grievances and sent detailed instructions for the blockade of Masulipatam. The instructions were remarkably fair-minded; cargoes were to be seized from the Indian ships returning home, but only in quantities enough to make good the

---

60 K.A.999, Ysbrantsz to Batavia, 5.12.1625 and to Amsterdam, 8.3.1626; K.A.1000, van Rossen and Pieters to Batavia, 15.6.1626; Coen, V, p.1181.  
61 Coen, VII2 pp.1181, 1333, 1342—43, 1436—37, 1448, 1504, 1506, 1648  
losses suffered by the Company through the governor's tyranny and bad debts.63

The stage was thus set for an open trial of strength. Still Ysbrantsz would have preferred to wait so that he might strike at a time likely to yield the richest harvest. A particularly bad monsoon had forced most of the Indian ships to abandon their projected voyages; a blockade would hardly be very paying under the circumstances. The events of the next few months however forced the hands of the Dutch Company. The English, unwilling to suffer any longer "the evell disposicion of the governor" abandoned their Masulipatam factory in September, 1628 and captured some small boats early in February, 1629. Masulipatam was no longer a safe place for the Dutch, as they might be forced to pay for the crimes of the English. So on February 19, 1629, "in the dead of the night, yet armed, the Dutch (being some 30 persons ...) made there escape aboard the English ships, leaving their house destitute of anyman". On March 1, on the arrival of some of their own ships, they sent off all their cargo to Pulicat and a regular siege of Masulipatam began.64

Financially, the blockade was a failure. A large quantity of merchandise was seized from a ship returning from Achin, but the bulk of it belonged to a friendly merchant and had to be restituted. Besides this, only cargo worth about 12,000 to 15,000 pagodas was captured from ships returning from Arakan.65 As a political measure, on the other hand, the blockade soon had the desired effect. In April, 1629 several important citizens of Masulipatam visited Ysbrantsz on board ship and requested the Dutch to return, promising to guarantee the repayment of debts. As there was little chance of recovering the losses through seizure of ships and the blockade was affecting the good relations with the Surat merchants, the Dutch were inclined to comply. Besides, the Company could ill afford to miss for long so important a source of cloth supply as Masulipatam, and it was considered better to have some trade in Golconda on an agreed basis rather than to risk all. Ysbrantsz however let it be clearly understood that he wanted not just another farman, but payment of the Company's outstanding claims.66

---

64 K.A.1012, 12.9.1629 ff. 63 ff; Coen, VII2, pp.1653 ff.
65 K.A.1012, 12.9.1629 ff, 63 ff; Coen, VII2, pp.1653 ff.
The way to an agreement was opened when the Company's chief debtors paid back 10,000 pagodas. Governor Mirza Rozbihan and the chief merchants of Masulipatam stood guarantee for the repayment of the balance of the claims by April, 1630 failing which the blockade was to be resumed. Further, all restrictive measures were to end. In return, the Dutch undertook to resume the granting of passes, but no ships would be allowed to sail until the outstanding debts were fully paid. Following this agreement, trade was resumed, though the reopening of the factory had to wait till instructions were received from Batavia.67

On the return of the Dutch to Masulipatam, Mirza Rozbihan started for Golconda in November, 1629, in company of the Dutch emissary, Jacob de Witte, to apprise the king of the situation. He secured an audience for de Witte, despite Muhammad Taqi's efforts to prevent it.

The king listened to de Witte with sympathy and promised a new farman guaranteeing unhindered trade throughout Golconda. But the bulk of the Company's financial claim amounting to 105,496 pagodas had to be written off as these could not be met from the royal treasury and Taqi had so wasted his fortune that nothing was to be had out of him. Only the 16,000 pagodas extorted in 1623—24 were to be gradually refunded through a temporary reduction of the annual toll. The promised farman was issued on December 11, 1629. Further, the king requested the Company's help for all Indian ships sailing from Masulipatam and sent a robe of honour for Ysbrantsz to seal his friendship with the Dutch. The Company's triumph was practically complete.68

The events of 1629 were full of ominous implications for the future of India's overseas trade, as they clearly demonstrated the consequences of the lack of sea-power. The share of Indian traders in this trade was once again at the mercy of the superior naval might of European nations. Even the weakness of the Europeans on the mainland had proved to be an inadequate guarantee against the possibilities of their interference with the sea-borne trade. What was more, their increasing investments had rendered the local merchants economically dependent on the European companies. The latter's naval superiority was thus reinforced by the acquisition of control over an essential lever of economic power. The Dutch saw this point only too well. Before long, they were to exploit this advantage not only in legitimate steps for the remedy

of grievances, but in efforts to eliminate Asian competition in the inter-Asian trade. Because of the continued weakness of the Dutch on the mainland of India and the advantage of long experience enjoyed by the Asian traders, such efforts did not succeed immediately but led to cut-throat competition and a prolonged see-saw struggle.

During 1616 to 1629, the Company's troubles in South Coromandel were mainly the result of the protracted civil war which broke out on the death of King Venkata II in 1614. Sriranga II, Venkata's chosen successor, had already been killed in 1614.

One Yacama Nayak, supported by the nayak of Tanjore, took up the cause of Sriranga's son, Ramadeva. The rival party was led by Jagga-raja, Sriranga's old enemy, and included the nayaks of Gingi and Madura. With the death of Jagga-raja and Ramadeva's marriage to the daughter of Eti-raja, Jagga-raja's brother, in 1619 the first phase of the war was over. The campaign against the nayaks of Madura and Gingi continued. The King's erstwhile supporter, Yacama and Damerla Venkata-pati in the North-East also rose in revolt. By the end of 1629, however, Ramadeva had the situation fully under control and the civil war was at last at an end.69

During the civil war, neutrality was the key-note of the Company's policy, though at times the Dutch were forced to take sides. By a strange paradox the trade and population of Pulicat were on the increase in the early years of the war, because of the comparative security guaranteed by Fort Geldria. In fact, thanks to the influx of displaced manufacturers more patterned cloth was produced at Pulicat at this time than the Company could afford to purchase. "We are the masters there", de Haze announced in 1617, "the inhabitants do little or nothing without our counsel". A yacht was deployed to protect the trade of Pulicat and in 1618—19, thirty Indian ships visited Pulicat, while not one called at San Thomé. In gratitude, the local chief temporarily granted freedom from toll to the Company. Prospects of stable employment and security in conditions of widespread unrest converted many of the seats of European commerce in India into prosperous urban centres in later times. Pulicat during the civil war in the Carnatic kingdom was an early and short-lived instance of such development. Even late in 1619, when heavy warfare affected production in the Pulicat region as well, enough cloth was produced in the town itself to ensure adequate supply.

69 Vijayanagara History, Chs. XXV and XXVI; McLeod, pp.452 ff.
Eti-raja's seige of Pulicat in 1620 ended in a peaceful settlement with the local governor and a friendly visit to the Dutch factory.\textsuperscript{70}

By 1624, there was a radical change in the situation. The trade of Pulicat, now continuously plagued by rival local chieftains, was in grave danger. In May, 1624 Eti-raja imprisoned his rebellious vassal, Pede-raja, the local chieftain of Pulicat, and marched on the town, but he was beaten by Pede-raja's men with the aid of the Dutch. In August, 1624, the Company entered into a treaty of mutual assistance with the other local chieftains to forestall future attacks on Pulicat. A conspiracy between Eti-raja and the Company's interpreter, Groa, for capturing the Dutch factors was discovered at about this time and Groa taken into custody. For the rest of the civil war the Dutch at Pulicat were left in peace, but their policy was one of constant preparedness. "The best friends that we have here," remarked Ysbrantsz in 1625, "are God and our weapons". In the last years of the war, however, the Company's trade suffered mainly through poor demand for its merchandise and the necessity for cash payment for all purchases. In 1625, the Company's trade came almost to a stand-still at Pulicat. Shortage of capital, and not of supplies, was primarily responsible for the situation.\textsuperscript{71}

Conditions in the Gingi territory throughout the war proved to be less congenial than at Pulicat. Even there, till 1617, there was a steady improvement in trade. Ramadeva's invasion of Gingi in 1618 however unsettled the economic life of the region, and in July, 1618, the Dutch were forced to leave Tierepopelier which was shortly captured by one of Ramadeva's generals. The latter requested the Dutch to return, but they evaded the request because most of the merchants had fled from Tierepopelier and a heavy toll had to be paid there whatever the volume of trade. Sometime after the reopening of the factory, in 1625, the general of the Gingi nayak plundered Tegenapatam and burnt Tierepopelier. As the Company's wares had already been removed, the loss suffered was negligible: only the purchase of saltpetre was hindered by these ravages. By the end of 1625, trading conditions in the Gingi territory returned almost to normal.\textsuperscript{72}

Following the pacification of his kingdom, Ramadeva presented the

\textsuperscript{70} K.A.977, de Haze to Amsterdam, 18.10.1616; Coen, I, pp.517, 611, 708, VII, pp.235, 370, 425—26.

\textsuperscript{71} K.A.994, Ysbrantsz to Amsterdam, 12.10.1624, same to Batavia, 2.10.1624; K.A.995, Dedel to Batavia, 2.7.1624; K.A.997, Ysbrantsz to Batavia, 21.1.1625, 14.6.1625, 5.7.1624.

Company with a new contract in November, 1629. The first royal grant received at Pulicat after long years of trouble, it provided a *de jure* basis for the Company's *de facto* rights. Besides, it abolished the tolls for loading and unloading cargo fixed at 1½ % and 2½ % respectively in 1612. The Company also received the promise of a gift of a village in return for some presents to the king.\(^7\)

Thus by the end of 1629 normal trading conditions had been restored in the south as well as in north Coromandel. In spite of the prolonged political insecurity, trade had suffered comparatively fewer hindrances in the southern factories. This was so partly because the Hindu lordlings had less power or inclination to trouble the Dutch. The comparatively unhampered course of industrial production under the protective care of fort Geldria was another congenial circumstance.

By the 'twenties of the seventeenth century, the Jan Company had definitely emerged as a power in the land, strong enough to enforce their demands in case of necessity and to protect their own interests in conditions of unrest. They had successfully resisted feudal exploitation, when it went beyond endurance, by an open resort to arms. Potentially, their weakness on the mainland could not thus be an inhibiting influence on attempts to exclude Indians from the high seas by force. The direction of Dutch commercial policy in India did not, however, lie that way. The events of 1629 were an object lesson for all concerned; but for the Dutch it was an object lesson only in the sense that under exceptional circumstances they could now hope to secure redress of their grievances by violent means.