

CHAPTER FIVE

COMMODITIES, PRICES, WEIGHTS AND MEASURES
CURRENCY AND CUSTOMS DUTIES

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The European trading companies investigated much of the regions in India for procuring the merchandise useful in Western Europe and to find the Indian markets for the sale of European goods in India. After settling the factories on the Coromandel Coast of India, the European merchants carried on investigations in the territories of Qutbshahi kingdom and other local Hindu Nayaks of this region. Masulipatam, Golconda, Pulicat, Vellore, Jinji, Madras, San Thome, Cuddalore, Porto Novo, Salem, Madapollam, Tanjore etc. were the major port towns and mart towns in this region. The factories were established on the coastline to transport the goods to other places through the ships. The following account of the commodities can give the nature of their trade. The commodities which were purchased by the English merchants for the consumption in Western Europe were woven piece-goods, or various types of cloth, indigo, salt petre, precious stones, animal skin etc.

EXPORT COMMODITIES

Woven Piecegoods or Cotton Textile

Woven piece-goods or cotton textiles of different varieties was an important and largest single component of the export trade.

The export markets for Indian textiles within Asia had been developed over centuries. Certain producing centres in Coromandel region were specialised in production for export. The extensive range of the markets and the diverse character of the demand are reflected in great variety of textiles listed in the invoices for export in the 17th century. In August, 1618, Bantam factors requested the English factors at Masulipatam to send several sorts of cotton goods such as white morrys, white percalles, white salem pores, white and red beteles, dragon malaia, fine gobare, fine tappy serasses, tape chindees etc.¹ In later part of the 17th century we find some other names of cotton goods listed in the invoices such as long cloths, sallem porees, parcallaes, Ginghams, Metchlapatam, Izaree Gingham, Morees, Betleez, Allejaies, Sallowes, Dungerees, Naik-cloth, Dyapers, Sail cloth, Romals, Sannoos, Taffaties etc.²

These various names of cotton textiles indicate the nature of the materials and the markets for which they were intended. Some of the names or terms are of obvious Telugu and Tamil origin, others are of Hindustani origin and yet others are of Malay, Javanese and Burmese origin. The quality and texture of the fabrics exported were also very diverse. There were calicoes of very coarse weave for the rough daily use by the common people. Some types of fine muslins were made for wealthy women. There were piece-goods and articles of dress such as Sarongs, skirts, shawls, matles and turbans.³ Some calicoes were used in Europe as household needs such as table cloth, bed-linen, napkins etc.⁴

The Coromandel cloth was very famous for its dyeing, painting and for printing of beautiful colour printing designs. The colours and designs matched the tastes of various kinds and classes of people. The width of the borders, and stripes, their colours and various types of designs were to be made according to demand of markets.⁵ There were three major varieties of cotton cloth manufactured in Coromandel region - longcloth, Salempores and Moris. These three varieties are found mostly in the invoices of export of East India Company. These were extensively woven in looms from north to south Coromandel.⁶ In the second half of the 17th century, long-cloth was the largest single item in the invoices of the East India Company. The name by which it was locally known is obscure. It was made of staple cotton and was the longest of locally woven varieties. Its standard measurements were 37 yards long and 1 yard broad. Because of its length, it was known as longcloth. But there is a view that the word could have been derived from Lungee (*ᳵ*) meaning a strip of waistcloth.⁷ There were various varieties of long-cloth, such as ordinary, brown, fine, superfine, blue, without stifning.⁸ Certain areas like Salem, Warangal were famous for best quality of long-cloth.

Salempore, was one of the popular export varieties of cotton cloth to South East Asia and later on to Europe. It was woven in a wide range, from fine to coarse. It was found in many colours and of varying length from 16 to 22 yards. It was woven throughout the Coromandel region. The best salempores were produced in Nellore district and round about Masulipatam.⁹ Large quantities of this cloth were also produced in Cuddalore, Tanjore and Madurantakam. The origin

of the term is obscure, some think that it is derived from the place Salem in Coromandel. Some others believe it to be derived from the Telugu weaving caste, Sale who wove it, though it was also woven by other weaving castes.¹⁰ Salempores in bright colours were in great demand in Europe as bed covers and furnishing.¹¹

The third major export variety made out of staple cotton was Mori which was finer and of superior quality. Moris were used for painting and were sold in South East Asia as a painted chintz. They were shorter than long cloth and salempore, being 10 yards long and $1\frac{1}{4}$ yards broad. Moris were woven by skilled weavers craftsmen in villages in the districts of Nellore, Arni, Masulipatam and Cuddalore.¹² Painted chintz of Masulipatam was famous in all over India and in Asian countries in medieval period,¹³ and later there was large demand for them in Europe. There were also various varieties of moris such as fine, superfine and ordinary.

Long cloth of same texture and weave but woven from cotton thread dyed in bright colours and with stripes and checks was called as Guineacloth. It was mostly in demand in Asian countries. Portuguese were the first who introduced it in West Africa and from thence it was probably known as Guinea cloth. By the close of the 17th century it had become the most important calico in the London market.¹⁴ It was woven in Andhra lowlands, in Cuddalore and Tanjore district. It was either bleached white or dyed blue. The Dutch merchants called it negro-cloth.¹⁵

Besides these major varieties of export there were number of other varieties of cotton cloth. They were of different grades of fineness and of length. Many of these names occur in various European records. Percalla was a plain cotton cloth of good quality manufactured in Pulicat, Rajmundri, Mylapore and Devanampatam. Percalles were of 8 yards long and 1 yard width.¹⁶ Bethiles were a fine muslin. The best bethiles were procured from interior Andhra, Warangal region. They were also produced and exported from Cuddalore, Nagore and Arni districts. Allegias were cotton fabric, or cotton mixed with silk or with gold thread worked in, in two colours - red and white or blue and white.¹⁷ They were exported mainly to West Asia, to Bandar Abbas

Dungari was a coarse cotton cloth used by the poor. It was exported in bulk to Malay Archipelago, Ceylone and Persia. The gingham was striped cloth. It was woven in different pattern for different markets of West Asia and South East Asia. This type of cloth was woven in Masulipatam, Madapollam, Pallakollu and Pulicat.¹⁸ There are various names of cotton goods which originated from South Eastern Asian countries like Malay peninsula, Java, Sumatra and Japan. Kaingulong means rolled cloth. It was of cotton with gold thread. Madaphones was a striped or checkered cotton cloth, some times with painted heads and borders. Gober meant curtain cloth, tapis meant skirt, sar'assa meant multi-coloured cloth. They were all of cotton, woven with many colour patterns. They were also decorated with flowers, stars etc. They were used as waist cloth, shawls and curtains. These varieties were mainly obtained from Ponnari near Pulicat in Kaliaturai, Armagon.

Sucatoons were probably very heavy cotton cloth, used for packing and as blankets. They were made in the North Coromandel districts and in Cuddalore. A cloth specially made for sacks was the gunny and similar type was used as sail cloth. Rumals were small cotton or silk pieces used as handkerchiefs or towels. They were woven in and around Musulipatam, Palakollu and Cuddalore. Muslin type cloth like cassa putech, cassamerah, kalakarais were made and exported from Masulipatam, Pulicat, Devanampatam.¹⁹ All these varieties of coarse and fine painted cotton fabric was known or recorded as Coromandel chintz and it was famous all over India, Asia and Europe. It was procured in various parts of Coromandel region. There was availability of dyes of superior quality by which bright and fine paintings were done. Various colours were made from chaya roots, indigo and other local plants and these printed goods had thriving markets in Persian Gulf, Burma, Malaya, and Sumatra. The designs of the prints were suitable to the markets. The best chintz were painted in Palakollu, Masulipatam and Nellore. Further to the south chintz were painted in San Thome, Devanampatam. Thevenot said that the chintz made at San Thome was much finer and of better colours than anywhere else in India.²⁰

Indigo

The other commodities exported from Coromandel coast included indigo, saltpetre, rice and paddy, animal skins, precious diamonds etc. Indigo was another important commodity of trade and was exported from the region that produced it in surplus. In early 17th century, indigo produced in Coromandel region was of lower price

than of other regions of India, because it was grown in the villages near sea ports on the East Coast and the absence of high charges for land transport. The Dutch were the first who exported indigo from Masulipatam in 1613. In 1619, English factor at Masulipatam exported indigo over 1000 Cwt. to London. In 1640, 400 to 500 candies or about 2,000 Cwt. were exported from Coromandel Coast.²¹ The indigo produced in Khammamet district was exported through Musulipatam mainly to Surat and West Asia. Indigo produced in Cuddalore district was exported through Devanampatam, mainly to Pegu and Tenasserim. It was produced in varying degree of refinement and the price differed accordingly. While indigo had a good market in Asian trade, it was difficult to obtain it for export to Europe. As the demand for painted and dyed goods of Coromandel increased indigo produced locally was just enough for their domestic industry. So, in later part of the 17th century, export of indigo from Coromandel was considerably reduced.²²

Saltpetre

Saltpetre was other important article of commerce. Uses of saltpetre are many as an ingredient for gunpowder, bleaching, washing and cooling purposes. In the 17th century records we do not get references regarding these uses of saltpetre, except that it was used as an ingredient to gunpowder.²³ From the Dutch records it seems that from 1617 the Dutch factors at Coromandel coast started the trade of saltpetre for Europe. The English Company also followed the Dutch because there was scarcity of saltpetre in England. So, in 1624 commission of the Navy told company to fetch saltpetre from India. Saltpetre

was obtained from various parts of India. The Coromandel coast was the first region to be exploited.²⁴ In 1624 saltpetre from Masulipatam was sent to Surat.²⁵ In 1625 saltpetre about 45 tons, in 1639 33 tons and in 1643, 25 tons were sent to London. Most of the quantities of saltpetre were carried from Orissa in Coromandel and it was exported. But in second half of the 17th century the volume of trade of saltpetre began to decrease because of its high prices and profit gained from it was comparatively small.²⁶ Some saltpetre was available at the mouth of the Krishna river near the port of Nizamapatam, and near Pulicat and Madras.

Precious Stones

The most profitable industry of the region was the mining, refining and cutting of diamond. The diamond trade of Golconda and Bijapur grew in 17th century with demand from Asia and from Europe. The diamond mines were situated in Bijapur-Karnataka region.²⁷ Raval-konda was a diamond cutting centre for the mines in the Gandhikotta hills. The mines at Kollur produced most of diamonds in this period and there was a thriving industry employing several people. When Methwold, chief factor of Masulipatam visited the mines, thirtyfive thousand men including miners, porters and shifter were working there.²⁸ In 1652, Tavernier visited the Kollur mines and he has given the description of various kinds of diamonds and their weight. Tavernier says that the largest diamond he ever saw in the shop weighed $176\frac{1}{2}$ mangelines or $242\frac{5}{16}$ carats, costing about 7,50,000 French livers.²⁹ The largest

and most perfect of the diamonds "Kohi-Nur" was mined from Kollar mine in this period. Besides diamonds, precious and semi-precious stones like garnet, amethyst topaz, agate etc. were produced in this region.³⁰ The major diamond market was in Golconda. Most of the best stones were brought at Golconda and then were sent to northern India and West Asia through Surat port.

Rice and Paddy

There was export trade in rice and paddy but mainly within region from area of surplus production to area of deficit production. The north Coromandel areas upto Orissa were generally areas of surplus production and exported rice regularly to central and south Coromandel. But this depended upon the situation. If there was shortage of rice then shipments from north Coromandel Coast were directed to Pulicat, Madras and Porto Novo. If there was no shortage in these parts then rice was exported to South East Asia. The South Coromandel ports could export rice during surplus harvest season. In general the ports of the Tanjore region exported rice and paddy to Ceylone, Malabar and Malacca.³¹

Animal skins, leather, redwood, cattles were exported from Coromandel ports in 17th century. Gumlac, and tobacco which came from hinterland of Masulipatam were exported to Arabia and South East Asia.³² We find that after 1642 English factors at Coromandel Coast began to export Bengal sugar to Persia and Europe.³³ In 1651-52 various types of Bengal Sugar - jaggery, powder-sugar and sugar candy were

sent to England. In 1659, 700 tons of Bengal sugar was exported from Coromandel by the English.³⁴ There is evidence of periodic export of slaves. The merchant of the Company sometimes carried on the slave trade.³⁵

IMPORT COMMODITIES

The foreign merchants not only purchased the commodities in the Coromandel region but they made efforts to sell the European commodities or the goods brought from other places in the vast peninsula. It is difficult to estimate the nature and value of the import trade. Because it was also equally diverse in its variety of goods. In Coromandel region a wide variety of goods like spices, pepper, aromatic wood, elephant, horses, various types of metals, drugs, dyestuff etc. were imported. We find that even the broad-cloth made in England was imported in India in later part of the 17th century.

Coromandel was not an easy market for imports, because the roads were not suitable for large scale traffic. Water transport inland was very meagre. With the decline of Vijayanagar Empire, autonomous and even independent various local states arose which hampered the country trade due to their transit and consumption duties. Even population settlements in Southern India were such that there were nuclear centres in fertile and strategic area with sparsely populated infertile tracts between them.³⁶ So, it was difficult for a foreigner to have an easy access to hinterland. Nevertheless, we find that there

was sometimes import trade in Coromandel region in 17th century.

The major items of import were pepper and spices. These were necessary ingredients in cooking for the wealthier classes. They were also used for medicinal purposes. Pepper was more popularly used and most of the pepper was imported from Kerala both by land and by sea. Pepper was also imported from South East Asian ports. Pepper was mostly used in cooking and for medicines but spices like cardamom, cloves, cinnamon, nutmeg, mace and ginger were used on a small scale. It appears that during this period in India spices were used more by Muslims in their cooking than by the Hindus. Hence the areas where spices were sold well were the Islamic kingdoms of Golconda and ports of Bijapur. Nutmeg, cloves and mace were imported from South East Asia. Cinnamon came from Ceylone and ginger from Mughal Empire.³⁷ The English also traded in spices but very little of these spices was consumed by the coastal people. They were mostly transported to central Deccan and Mysore and to the towns mostly populated by the Muslims. It seems that the margin of profit in spices was great but the turnover was not large.

The metals had good demand in Deccan and Coromandel region. The base metals of every day use were the largest single commodity of import. Of these metals tin was in more demand. Tin was imported from South East Asian countries. As a metal with multitude of uses it was sold well throughout the Coromandel coast. Major ports for its import were Nagapatam, Porto Novo, Madras, Pulicat and Masulipatam.³⁸ The other metal that was imported in some quantity

was copper. Copper was in demand because of its varied use in making implements, utensils, statuary; and in minting of the coins. Moreland asserted that in the beginning of the 17th century southern India depended mainly on the supplies of copper imported by the Europeans.³⁹ The other base metals were lead and zinc which were imported from Burma and China to Coromandel. In other metals we find that bullions were carried from Europe by European merchants in Coromandel region. Especially as the English and the Dutch had got concessions to mint the coins in their settlements, gold and silver bullion were imported from Europe. The ingots of gold and silver were sold at good prices in Bijapur region. But most of gold and silver were used for minting various coins.

The other commodities of import were broad cloth, vermilion, quick-silver, aromatic woods, dye woods, other dyes, benzoin, stick lac, Persian, Arabian goods and corals. Broad-cloth was imported from England by the English merchants. Its consumption was mostly in Muslim military camps. In the first half of the 17th century there was not much demand for it, but in the latter part of the 17th century sale of broad-cloth increased. Most of the broad-cloth was imported to Madras and Masulipatam and then it was sent (in) interior parts of Coromandel region through local merchants. Aromatic woods, dye woods, benzoin, stick lac etc. were imported from Malaya, Burma, Thailand. Persian and Arabian goods, silk carpet, brocade, dried fruits, rose water were mainly imported in Masulipatam. The consumption of most of these goods was in the interior, in Hyderabad and Bijapur.⁴⁰ Corals from Persian gulf and other regions were imported in Coromandel by

the English merchants. Persian corals had good demand and in Masulipatam these were imported by the English merchants.⁴¹ Along with the above articles, we find that horses and elephants were also imported in Coromandel region. Horses were brought from Persia into the port of Masulipatam. In the 16th century horse trade flourished in Coromandel because Vijayanagar emperors imported horses through their West Coast port. But as the Vijayanagar Empire declined, the horse trade became less important. In the 17th century elephants were imported from Acheh, Pegu, Thailand and Ceylone. Masulipatam was the major port where they were disembarked. They were bought by Muslim kingdoms and Hindu Nayaks for their armies. Petty rajas and zamindars also bought them for prestige ceremonial purposes and as a gift to temples.⁴² Likewise coconuts and coir were imported from Ceylone. Coir was very useful article for making ropes and for boat building industry. This coir also came from Malabar and Maldives as well.

Prices

We get very meagre information regarding the prices of articles in our sources. However, with the available data we can reach some conclusions regarding the prices in our period. At the beginning of the century, Coromandel prices seem to be lower than those of Gujarat and other major trading regions. This can be noticed regarding prices of rice. In the period from 1610 to 1613 rice was sold between 350 and 530 pounds per pagoda in Golconda and in Masulipatam.⁴³ At the same time price of rice in Gujarat was at 65 pounds per rupee i.e., it was about 243 pounds per pagoda.⁴⁴ (1 pagoda =

$3\frac{3}{4}$ rupee). Thus, at the beginning of the 17th century rice was 50 per cent cheaper than in Western India. But in the later 17th century we find that there were variations in price between rice exporting areas and rice importing areas.⁴⁵ In 1646 at Masulipatam the price of rice was 50 pounds per rial of eight. It means it was about 317 pounds per pagoda.⁴⁶ From the middle of the 17th century the prices rose. In 1650 the price of rice at Masulipatam was 55 pounds per rial of eight.⁴⁷ In 1655 rice was sold at Madras at 275 pounds per pagoda and in 1661 it was sold at Bimilipatam at 250 pounds per pagoda.⁴⁸ When rice was cheap it was available at 360 to 600 pounds per pagoda. But prices rose due to the scarcity, drought and war-like conditions. In 1676 rice was sold at 122 pounds per pagoda in Masulipatam. In 1678 price dropped to 363 pounds per pagoda and in 1682 price rose to 114 pounds per pagoda at Masulipatam. This was due to drought conditions and Mughal aggression in north Coromandel. In Southern parts of Coromandel the price of rice was increasing from 1678. Only in 1697 the selling price of rice at Tanjore was 363 pounds per pagoda due to good harvest season. But next year the price almost doubled to 195 pounds per pagoda.⁴⁹ Thus we find that there was increase in price of rice from the mid of the 17th century throughout the region. This increase was due to various reasons such as expanding European settlements and their purchasers for export, growth of population, political unrest and administrative changes. There is scanty information about the prices of textiles. But from the various letters sent by the English factors to England we find their arguments regarding the prices and varieties of cotton goods in Coromandel. Throughout the 17th century

the price of cotton fluctuated from 35 to 37 pounds per pagoda. During the period of scarcity the price of textiles rose slightly. It is very difficult to determine the price trends in the textiles during this period because of variations in quality, texture and length of the textiles.

K.N. Chaudhuri, in his most detailed statistical analysis of the price trend of the English East India Company's export from India, established certain conclusions which can be used for the study of price movements in Coromandel. Plotting the average unit cost of textile bought in Madras from 1660 to 1760 he revealed the continuing upward price movement. In 1660 the average cost price of Madras textiles was almost half of the price in the 18th century. In 1678, the price of long cloth and salemore were per piece $1\frac{3}{16}$ pagoda and 11 pagodas per corge respectively.⁵¹ In the same year the price of moories was 17 pagodas per corge and superfine quality of mooris was $35\frac{1}{2}$ pagodas per corge.⁵² These prices seem to be lower compared to the prices of textiles in other regions. But after 1690 there was rise in prices of cotton textiles. Regarding the prices of broad cloth which was imported from England, there was no increase in the price throughout this period. In the beginning broad-cloth was brought to Coromandel region and sold at $3\frac{1}{2}$ rupees per yard, but there was little demand for it. So the prices of broad cloth fell from the beginning. Thereafter until 1680 there were not much fluctuations in it. Many times in our records we come across the references, where the English merchants complain that there was not much demand for the European commodities and expressed the difficulties in selling the European commodities.

In 1610 the price of clove was 5 and a half to 10 pagoda per maund.⁵³ In 1618 it was 14 and a half pagodas per maund, in 1623 13 pagodas per maund, in 1637, 6 pagodas per maund.⁵⁴ The cinnamon rose from 2 pagodas a pound to $3\frac{1}{2}$ pagodas. Nutmeg increased from 0.7 pagoda to 2.14 pagodas a pound in 1661, after which it steadily increased to 4.6 pagodas per pound in 1665.⁵⁵ This increase in prices of nutmeg and cinnamon was due to the monopoly of the Dutch. In the first part of the 17th century, the price of copper was steady, without any marked increase. In 1654 the Dutch sold copper at Masulipatam at 11 pounds a pagoda but by 1670 the price seems to have increased and rose at 8 pounds a pagoda.⁵⁶ Similarly the price of tin was steady for most of the 17th century. In early 17th century price of tin was 7 pounds per pagoda at Golconda but the price dropped in later years.⁵⁷ The steady prices of these two metals were due to competition because the English and the Dutch merchants imported these metals on a large scale.

The prices of various other commodities were steady. There were slight changes in their prices. The prices of indigo rose from 1.5 pagodas per maund to 2.5 pagodas. Price of saltpetre rose from 20 to 25 pagodas per ton. Goat and sheep were sold at 1 to 2 fanam i.e., 5 to 10 annas, ox 1 to 2 pagodas, i.e., $3\frac{3}{4}$ to 5 Rupees and Bengal sugar $7\frac{1}{2}$ or 8 rupees per bale.⁵⁸

The price movement in Coromandel seems to be generally stable except on some occasions. During warfare we find, rise in price level of various provisions. During the war-fare normal

transportation of the commodities was stopped and hence the scarcity of the articles was experienced. Some commodities especially the provisions were required by the armies and hence the scarcity of the provisions was also experienced. Naturally, when the demand was higher for the commodities and supply was short, the prices rose up.⁵⁹ Secondly, the prices of provisions in Coromandel also depended upon the nature. At good harvest time they were falling and at bad harvest or scarcity prices shot up.⁶⁰ The prices of European commodities or other imported commodities also fluctuated under various circumstances. When warfare began, the merchants thought it wise to sell commodities with them. Likewise the competition between the various trading companies had effect on the prices of the import commodities. Prices of all the spices rose markedly after the Dutch secured full control of the spice Islands and Ceylon.⁶¹ Upto 1690, however, there was general stability in price levels but a gradual upward movement. After 1690, there was violent fluctuation in prices because of Mughal aggression in Coromandel.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

The principal unit of weight in Coromandel region was maund or mann.⁶² The maund was equal to about 26 lbs.⁶³ But it must be noted that the weight of maund was not same at all the places and the number of lbs in a maund was also different from place to place. The maund of Pulicat was $24\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. The maund at Nizampatam was of $27\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. and at Masulipatam 26 lbs.⁶⁴ At Madras and Teganapatam a maund contained 25 lbs. In Portuguese settlement of Negapatam the mann (maund) was of 8 viss, and the viss was of $2\frac{7}{8}$ lbs. hence maund

was equal to about 23 lbs.⁶⁶ In Portuguese settlement at Nizampatam the viss was of $3\frac{1}{8}$ lbs. and the mann (maund) was of 25 lbs.⁶⁷ It seems that the proportion of lbs. to maund varied from year to year and from commodities to commodities. At Masulipatam the mann some times rose to $36\frac{2}{3}$ lbs.⁶⁸ The maund used for weighing animal skin, in 1619 was of 26 lbs. while maund used for weighing coral was of 25 lbs.⁶⁹

The other larger unit of weight was candy (Khandi) which was equal to 20 manns.⁷⁰ The weight of the candy also varied from place to place. Candy of Negapatam weighed 480 Dutch pounds and 500 lbs. at Nizamapatam.⁷¹ The other unit of weight was bahar which was equivalent to a candy.

The smaller unit of weight in Coromandel region was seer which was used as common measure of grains. This seer was equivalent to $1\frac{3}{17}$ lbs. or 1.7 lbs.⁷² The precious stones were weighed by mangelins which were supposed to weigh 7 grains at Raulkonda and $5\frac{3}{5}$ grains at certain other places. Five magelins were equal to 7 carats of diamonds. In certain parts of Coromandel diamonds were sold by rattis. Tavernier has described the various units of weights of diamonds. According to him the ratti was equal to 2.66 grains troy.⁷³ The gold was weighed by Rattis, Masha and tola. The proportion of these weights were as 8 rattis = 1 masha, 12 masha = 1 tola.⁷⁴

The measure of length of textile was Hasta or Cubit, which was taken as half yard or slightly more than that or equal to

$1\frac{3}{7}$ Dutch ells.⁷⁵ Coved is frequently mentioned in our records but coved was regarded equivalent to hasta or cubit. The standard length of Salempore cloth is given sometimes as 16 yards and sometimes as 32 coved.⁷⁶ For the sale of European cloth the linear measure of yard was used by the English merchants and for purchasing the Indian cloth the measure known as corge was used. The English yard was about 0.914 metre. A piece of English cloth known as broad cloth was $1\frac{1}{2}$ yards wide and 23-24 yards long. Corge was the linear measure of 20 cloth pieces.⁷⁷ From Coromandel Coast most of the long cloth was exported to London. The length of the long cloth was usually between 35 and 40 yards. In 1658 Company directed the English factors that the length should be of 37 to 38 yards. They also quoted the required length of the salempores as 16 yards, moorees as about 9 yards, percalles about 8 yards and white gingham about 21 yards.⁷⁸ Along with these measures we come across terms like bales, fardles etc. These terms were related to packing load or bundle. The bale of cotton yarn was equal to about 165 lbs. and a bale of piece goods contained 25 pieces of long cloth each of 36 yards.⁷⁹ But when goods were repacked for export, the bales were probably larger and their weight upto maximum 300 lbs. As regards the cotton goods where the weight is not given, bales of calicoes varied from about 1,000 to 1,500 yards.⁸⁰

CURRENCY

In the 17th century there were various coins in Coromandel region. European travellers and merchants have mentioned various

types of coins of gold, silver and copper in their records.⁸¹ The coinage of southern India, including the East and West Coast, was based upon gold for high denomination and copper for the small denomination. The principal gold coin in Coromandel was pagoda. The pagoda was an original Hindu coin called 'varaha' or 'pon' in the period of Vijayanagar empire and was circulated throughout the territory as standard coin of high denomination. It was the coin widely known to the Europeans as the 'pagoda' because of the impression of temple gopuram on the coins. Large payments in commercial and revenue transactions were made in it. The gold for these coins came from the gold mines of central Karnataka, Deccan and some gold came from West Asian ports.⁸²

In the beginning of the 17th century Vijayanagar pagoda was circulated, with regional variations, throughout the south India and Coromandel. But in the early 17th century new pagoda was minted in Golconda which seems to have had a lower intrinsic value than the existing pagoda. The old pagoda, however, continued to be in great demand because of its intrinsic value and state demanded payments from its rentiers of revenues in the old coin.⁸³ Tavernier was in the Deccan in 1638-39, in 1651 and again 1657. According to him "the old pagodas were the surviving coins of the Vijayanagar Empire, they were of the same intrinsic value as the new pagodas but commanded a premium of about one rupee". The value of old pagoda was $4\frac{1}{2}$ rupees.⁸⁴ The value of old pagoda was 25 per cent more in 1633 than a new pagoda. Then it increased to 30 per cent in 1651, 45 per cent in 1656.⁸⁵ The value of old pagoda went up gradually and it reached its peak

at 190 new pagodas for 100 old pagodas. After this the old coin appears to have gone out of circulation.⁸⁶

The Golconda pagoda, current throughout North Coromandel, had a figure of Vishnu on the obverse and Nagari legend on the reverse. It had good reputation all along the coast. These pagodas were found to be $20\frac{13}{16}$ carat fine gold.⁸⁷

In the 17th century there were large number of mints set up all over the country. They produced pagodas of slightly different metal content from each other. These mints were established in the interior and along the coast. In addition, the licences were given to European settlements by Kutubshahi and Adilshahi Sultans and by the Kings' representatives. In North Coromandel there were Golconda pagoda, Masulipatam pagoda, Petapoli or Nizampatam pagoda and Pulicat pagoda. Methwold, who was at Masulipatam from 1618-1622 has given a useful information that pagoda was equal to a French crown or 7 shillings and 6 pence of English money.⁸⁸

To the South there were pagodas minted at Armagon, Madras, Alambaram, Sadraspatam and Devanampatam. Further to the South pagodas were minted at Porto Novo and Tanjore and they were current throughout Tanjore territory. As trade on Coromandel expanded, the European companies had to secure pagodas for their trade. They could do this in various ways. They could import unminted gold and take into the nearest mint to the port where they wanted to make their investment. If they did not have gold but only silver, they could

sell this silver to the merchant or to the mint at market rates and purchase pagodas. Some times they sold the minted coins of foreign origin and purchased pagodas to that value. In these transactions they suffered loss due to minting charges and exchange rates. Under these circumstances all the companies desired to secure minting rights in their settlements.⁸⁹ Like other European companies, the English also secured the grant of Madras in 1639, including permission to mint pagodas and fanams without payment of duty, from local Hindu Nayak. This concession was confirmed by the Golconda ruler in 1682 and later all these grants were confirmed by the Mughals.⁹⁰ The English minted their pagoda and other coins at Madras. Thus the gold pagoda was the major currency of large scale commercial transactions. Generally the new pagodas of various mints weighed about $54\frac{4}{5}$ grains to 55 grains.⁹¹ The standard weight of Dutch pagoda was $52\frac{4}{5}$ grains and gold of $20\frac{7}{10}$ carat and English pagoda minted at Madras was $52\frac{4}{5}$ grains and $20\frac{7}{10}$ carat fine. The English pagoda had figure of Vishnu on the obverse.⁹²

But it seems that the value of new pagoda varied from time to time. In the year 1621 the new pagoda was worth about 3 rupees. The Armagon pagoda was also worth about 3 rupees in 1633. But in later period pagoda rose in its value to $3\frac{1}{2}$ rupees to 4 rupees.⁹³

Besides the pagoda, there was another coin that was current in limited scale. This was 'panam', referred to by the Europeans as 'Fanam'. Before the coming of the Europeans, this was a gold coin with an alloy of silver and copper. While the pagoda was a standard gold coin with an equivalent value throughout the region,

fanam was a local coin and varied in its gold content and weight. Therefore, it was of diverse value and its relationship to the pagoda varied from time to time. Such variation ranged from 10 fanam to 1 pagoda to later low of 42 fanams to 1 pagoda. This was much circulated among the weavers, cotton merchants and grain purchasers. When local merchants wanted to transfer money across the regions they converted their fanams into pagoda.⁹⁴ In the 17th century there were large number of fanams with different values. In Masulipatam and North Coromandel fanams were in circulation in the early 17th century. There were big fanam and the small fanam. The value of the big fanam was $7\frac{3}{4}$ to a pagoda. But this fanam appears to have gone out of circulation in later part of the century. Small fanam was worth 12 to 15 to a pagoda.⁹⁵

At Madras the fanam was a silver coin and worth much less, 32 to a pagoda. In Armagon in 1628, 20 fanams went to a pagoda. To the further South there were a number of different types of fanam of different value. The Porto Novo fanam was valued at 18 to a pagoda. Devanampatam were 16 to a pagoda. In Tanjore there were two types of fanam, a heavier fanam worth 16 to a pagoda and lighter one at 24 to a pagoda. The Madura fanam was 18 to a pagoda. The fanam weighed $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 grains.⁹⁶ There is evidence that most of the fanams were minted in European settlements, because most of the transactions were made in fanam and they were convenient to carry in bulk out of territory. Monthly payments to Company servants and native employees were made in fanams. Small scale importers who sold their goods in small quantities to retail merchants were paid in

fanam.

The closer commercial relations of Coromandel with other regions of Mughal Empire and Mughal expansion in Deccan, resulted in the circulation of Mughal rupee in the South. After 1656 Mughal rupee was minted in some Golconda mints for the use of tribute.⁹⁷ Moreover, the silver rupee was used in the inland trade between interior Golconda and other parts of the Mughal India. From 1650 Mughal rupee was widely circulated in Coromandel.⁹⁸ The European companies in Coromandel had trade links with Mughal Empire. They tried to secure permission from Golconda rulers to coin rupees in their mints. In 1682 English secured the permission from Golconda Sultan to coin rupees in Madras to the standard and value of Golconda rupees.⁹⁹ According to Thevnot the Mughal rupee was one tola in weight and equalled to one shilling and 6 pence of the English money. It contained about 175 grains of silver.¹⁰⁰ The Mughal rupee under Aurangjeb was increased in weight to 180 grains. The rupees coined in mints of Coromandel conformed to this standard with some slight variations in weight. The most popular of these rupees was Arcot rupee. In 1692 the English secured confirmation to the right to mint coins in Madras. From the Mughals they also secured permission to mint Alamgir rupee of 179 grain weight.¹⁰¹ The exchange rate between the rupee and the pagoda was reasonably stable during this period. In the mid 17th century the pagoda fetched about $3\frac{3}{4}$ rupees.¹⁰²

Very little is known about the circulation of copper money. The names of the copper coins were Kasu, doody or dubbu, nevel and paisa. They were minted all over the coast and were widely

used in payments of daily wages and the purchases of retail goods. The payments of small taxes by individuals must have also been made in copper coins. With the expansion of the European settlements in Coromandel, variety of labouring jobs increased. So for the payment of wages and for small markets there arose a need of copper coins for daily circulation. The Kasu was old copper coin in the Tamil region. Eighty to eightyfour Kasus were equivalent to one fanam. The Kasu of other area would have varied in their value. The Dutch at Pulicat coined copperKasu of 10, 8, 6, 4, 2, 1. The dubbu was small copper coin of the value of 20 Kasu. It was current in Andhra Pradesh, and also known as doody. It was current along the coast in the purchases of provisions such as fish.¹⁰³ Paisa was current in Golconda region and in some ports of north Coromandel region.¹⁰⁴

Besides these Indian coins there were quite a few European coins current in the European settlements. These were Spanish rials of eight, Portuguese parado, Dutch guilders, Hungarian ducats, Persian laris and abbasis, Gujarathi¹Mahmudies and English double albert noble and ryder.¹⁰⁵

CUSTOMS DUTIES

We get some information regarding the customs duties on Coromandel Coast in the 17th century from various travellers' accounts, the English factory records and from historians of early 20th century. Moreland who based his study on travel accounts and factory records says that the taxation system of Golconda, Bijapur

and many Nayakdoms in the South was utterly oppressive, arbitrary and unpredictable, because the local governors had complete freedom to impose any taxes and grab anything they found worthwhile. This adversely affected the trade practices in general.¹⁰⁶ But on the other hand Thevnot says that the duties levied on the import and export were comparatively low.¹⁰⁷ There was a further relaxation in favour of certain European companies.¹⁰⁸ According to Moreland taxes on commerce were of two kinds. There were the customs duties paid on the import and export trade, major road tolls and town and market duties. These taxes were either collected by royal officials or farmed out to rentiers on the basis of expected annual returns. Then there were specific imposts charged by local Governors and Polygars on trade that passed through their jurisdiction.¹⁰⁹

The tax on export and import through the seaport was generally fixed at $2\frac{1}{3}$ per cent 'ad valorem' in all the ports of the coast.¹¹⁰ The duty at Pulicat and Nizampatam were 2 per cent and $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent under Golconda rule. But at Masulipatam it was 4 per cent.¹¹¹ In Armagon in 1626 while the general customs was 3 per cent, the English were allowed 1 per cent for import and 3 per cent on export.¹¹² In 1636, English had been able to get 'Golden Farman' from Qutbshah by which concessions were granted to the English under the Golden farman. The English were to carry on trade within the Qutbshahi dominions duty free; on payment of annual lumpsum of 800 pagodas. And if the duties chargeable to the English goods exceeded the amount, they were to pay extra.¹¹³

In 1639, the English secured a grant of Madras and by this grant the English had secured the territory and Government of the village Madras duty free and half of all the customs and duties collected at Madras port.¹¹⁴ When Mir Jumla became the lord of Karnataka and occupied Madras, he confirmed these privileges.¹¹⁵ Mir Jumla was an astute statesman and financier, and in order to supervise the custom revenue fully he set up offices at Madras, San Thome and Mylapore with an officer at their head. One of these officers was Mallappa who was the officer in charge at Madras from 1648 to 1654. He keenly observed the share in the customs revenue duly credited.¹¹⁶ After Mir Jumla's defection to Mughal camp Neknamkhan became the lord of Karnataka. In his period clashes arose between him and the English about customs duties. By an agreement of 1658 Neknamkhan had agreed to accept 300 pagodas annually as half the total amount of cusdtom duties collected. But the matter was not settled satisfactorily. At last this was settled in 1672, when the English had to agree to pay 1,000 pagodas for the previous 11 years and 1,200 pagodas as annual payment for the future.¹¹⁷ The effects of the struggle between the English and Neknamkhan were so severe that the customs revenue at Madras dwindled from about 2,000 pagodas per annum to one pagoda a day and the English goods became practically unsaleable.¹¹⁸

Transit duties were other major form of taxation. Taxing on goods on transit along a major road was important source of revenue. When Governor of Poonamallee, the hinterland district of Madras, saw that great deal of grain was moving into Madras, he took steps to set up custom post on the road at the outskirts of

Madras to tax the grain.¹¹⁹ Later another rentier of the hinterland set up custom post at the village of Vepery to tax goods going into Madras.¹²⁰ Apart from transit duties there were other local taxes that regional authorities imposed. In Masulipatam and Nizamapatam, during Golconda rule the Governor imposed a tax of 11 per cent on textile exported from there as stamping and brokerage duty.¹²¹

The English, who enjoyed total freedom from custom duties at Madras, started charging land and sea customs of $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on all goods passing through. This discouraged imports, so the two customs were separated in 1684, with 3% on imports and exports by sea and 3% by land.¹²² But later on for compensating the increasing expenses in Madras an import and export duty by sea was fixed at 5 per cent.¹²³ This was higher rate than anywhere else in the region and was a disincentive to trade. When the grain trade started picking up, duty on grain was also fixed at 5 per cent.

Anchorage duty was charged on all ships in Coromandel ports. In Madras there was Anchorage charge on size of the ship. All European ships over 200 tons paid 9 pagodas, under 100 tons paid 6 pagodas. All Indian ships over 100 tons paid 5 pagodas and under 100 tons paid 3 pagodas. All sloops paid 2 pagodas, large boats one pagoda and all small boats half pagoda.¹²⁴ These duties were paid at the custom houst at the seafront. There were some minor charges payable in the banksall, khown as measuring and weighing duties. In Madras there was a measuring duty of $\frac{1}{6}$ pagoda on each bahar. There was another customs at the boundary of the port called land

custom or choultry custom. Goods that came into the port from interior were also taxed at this post. The inland customs at town gate were known as Sunkum or juncan duties. In Masulipatam octroi was 6 pagodas per candy of 500 pounds on weighing goods. In Armagon it was 1 pagoda for each candy.¹²⁵ There were also some inland customs charged according to the nature of means of transports. On betelnut for each oxload or man-load the duty was 1 fanam, and 5 kasu. For salt, it was 1 fanam 60 kasu for each ox or man load and on indigo 1 fanam 60 kasu for each ox or man load. Company merchants bringing cloth paid 40 kasu for each ox load. An ox load consisted of 20 pieces of long cloth or 50 pieces of shorter salemore.¹²⁶ From the above mentioned duties we find that sea port customs duties were relatively low in the Coromandel ports. It is the reason why European Companies tried to get concessions from seaport customs. For obtaining these concessions the English merchants gave the presents called "peshkash" to the king and to the local officials. This way they obtained the various concessions and expanded their commercial activities in the Coromandel Coast.

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