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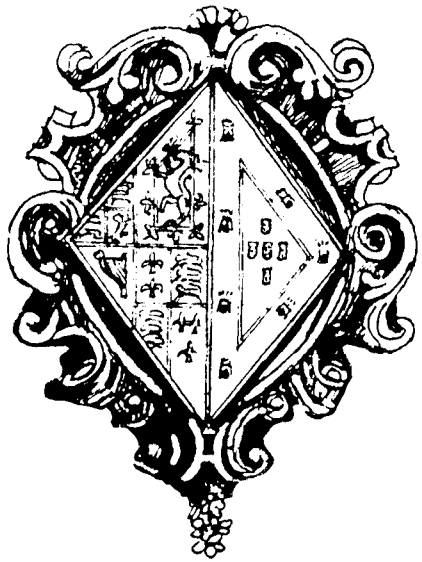

A Tale of Two Coromandel Towns
Madraspatam (Fort St. George) and São Thomé de Meliapur
or Portuguese and British Interfacing in India

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I first came upon Henry Davison Love's *Vestiges of Old Madras* a decade ago in The Hague. The four volumes were published at London in 1913 and have been recently reprinted by the Oriental Books Reprint Corporation of Delhi. The dull cloth bindings of the Indian edition, however, hardly conjure the thrill I experienced the first time I watched the original volumes heave into view on the book conveyor of the Royal Library. Probably no one had checked them out for over fifty years, and they sparkled pristinely, as though they had been delivered from a time warp. Golden letters embellished on ivory-coloured boards flashed richly out from maroon and black mouldings decorated with slender urns and caryatids. How much we miss today for not having editions like that!

Love belonged to the era of Sir William Foster, whose fourteen-volume *English Factories in India* represented archival digging exceeding even his own. And yet it occurred to neither compiler to print his documents in their entirety, nor precisely to identify the sources where the information, is to be found. Modern historians who use such series can only admire the zeal which produced them but deplore their want of scholarly apparatus. It is queer that Love would take such pains to create his historical synthesis, then never realise that future scholars might be inspired by it and wish to delve more deeply into its subject matter. He does not even reveal that all his manuscript sources are to be found within (what now are) the State Archives of Tamil Nadu at Egmore

in Madras. Obviously, the proviso of full archival citations à la Leopold von Ranke was not yet standard practice in England.

Next to the former Portuguese archive in Goa, Egmore is the richest depository in Asia for the history of European expansion. Even so, no effort seems to have been made by the British in 1947 to fill out their own India Office Library with copies of documentation from its holdings; the decolonisation process appears to have been too hasty and budgets following World War II too small. As a result, all the manuscript material pertaining to Fort St. George and its community and all the records of voyaging and private trading by East India Company Servants - in excess, I am told of a thousand volumes - remain beyond reach of any but the most intrepid researcher. The noted economic historian, Kirti Chaudhuri, has written books on the trade of the early East India Company and one on the Indian Ocean as a whole; yet, he does not provide a single citation in any of his books from Egmore. I admit it is difficult to obtain permission to work there; for it seems that chaos and internal bickering have reigned ever since the friendly and efficient director criticised Indira Gandhi in a newspaper article during the 1970's and was forced to resign. Scholars often must wait months and use every stratagem they and their Indian friends can devise even to gain access.

Until I am able to do so (or some other researcher does), I must depend upon Love for an idea of what activities went on in and around Fort St. George in the years following its establishment in 1640. And plenty of interesting things did. In this article, I have merely sought to combine what Love divulges about the city proper with the results of my recent research on the VOC in India. What emerges is something never studied before, even in passing, namely, that Fort St. George and adjacent São Thomé de Meliapur were very closely related in their fortunes and that much of the English success, not to speak of the Dutch failure to master the country trade of the Bay of Bengal, was due to the pool of Indo-Portuguese who collaborated with the English from the very first moment.

The VOC, Fort St. George and Jobs for Hungry São Thomesians

The symbiosis of the English and the Indo-Portuguese on the Coromandel coast during the second half of the seventeenth century came to my attention because I had been following the story of São Thomé de Meliapur from its foundation around 1518, together with the Indo-Portuguese presence in the Bay of Bengal. I thought I had reached almost the end of the Portuguese story when the Dutch and English had arrived soon after the turn of the sixteenth century. I assumed that the semi-independent Portuguese (I mean semi-independent from Goa) simply had shattered under pressure of the hostile Protestant companies. But I subsequently discovered that this was not so much the end of the story as the beginning of a new and equally interesting twist, in which the Indo-Portuguese played an important part in another drama, that of Anglo-Dutch rivalry in South Asia.

Throughout the seventeenth century, and much of the eighteenth, the Dutch of the VOC, or United East India Company, were far more powerful in ships, capital, organisation, and personnel than the English of the Honourable East India Company of London. The Dutch also drove ruthlessly toward a monopoly of the cloves, nutmeg and mace of the Moluccas, which they were initially obliged to share with the English company, if only because both had arrived there at more or less the same time, in fact before 1602, when the Dutch had welded their small, separate India companies into one giant corporation. You may next recall that in 1623, the aggressive VOC governor-general, Jan Pietersz. Coen, became annoyed with the English and roughly expelled them from the islands in an incident which has been known ever since as the "Amboyna Massacre". The English were then obliged to fall back upon the Indian subcontinent for their sustenance.

By the second decade of the seventeenth century, both companies were already present in India; they had come soon after their arrival in Asia because Indian cotton textiles were essential to any dealings with the spice islands[1]. Cotton was not produced in the Moluccas, and it had to be imported from the subcontinent. Because the Moluccan economy was only partly monetarised, the desired varieties and qualities of cloth were the best medium of exchange for the islands' condiments. If the spices were to be paid for in silver, the islanders would ask a high price and then merely use it to purchase cloth from another source. Having learned this lesson, both the VOC and the English had established themselves on the Coromandel coast almost simultaneously. The area was most convenient to the Moluccas and suitably distant from the centres of Portuguese naval power on the Indian west coast.

The English company thus had a few trading footholds there dating from before its Moluccan expulsion, none very satisfactory. At one point, it had even rented part of the Dutch fort at Pulicat from 1621 to 1623, until the VOC had sharply raised the rent, probably to rid themselves of their rivals presence[2]. Thereafter, the English factors hung out at a marginal place called Armagon, just to the north. They soon discovered, however, that their Dutch rivals had threatened the weaving castes in the region if they dealt with them[3]. This situation had prevailed until 1639, when the senior merchant, Francis Day, received overtures to occupy Madraspatnam, to the south, from two local magnates. Ayappa Naik and his brother, Damarla Venkatappa, nominal vassals of the Raja of Chandragiri. The next year, the Company founded its,

[1] From J. Leonard Blussé, *Strange Company: Chinese Settles, Mestizo Women and the Dutch in V.O.C. Batavia* (Leiden 1986) 35-48.
[2] Om Prakash, *The Dutch Factories in India, 1617-1623: a Collection of Dutch East India Company Documents pertainning to India* (New Delhi 1984) 146, 255.
[3] See Holden furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800* (Minneapolis 1976) 108.

Coromandel presidency there and traced the outlines of Fort St. George[4].

This was quite coincidentally five kms. north along the coast from the Portuguese town of São Thomé de Meliapur, the putative resting place of the bones of St. Thomas, the Apostle. The place had been colonised as early as 1518 by Portuguese traders and was the informal Portuguese "capital" on the Bay of Bengal. Note that the Portuguese settlements in the Bay were all of an impromptu nature and until the mid-seventeenth century were not a regular part of the administrative system of Goa, though by the 1620s the otherwise highly independent *moradores'* (residents) fear of the Dutch and English had made them seek closer ties with the vice-royalty in hopes that it would be able to protect them from what was now becoming a Protestant scourge. This had resulted in a curious solution: in 1606, São Thomé had been elevated to the status of a bishopric, and for the first decades, the prelate nominated to this post by the crown was made its governor in addition to his ecclesiastical duties.

By 1640, unrelenting Dutch patrols along the Coromandel coast had brought the Indo-Portuguese there to the very edge of disaster. The only success the Portuguese enjoyed was at the very beginning. After the Dutch first established themselves at Pulicat in 1607, the Portuguese were able to drive them out five years later when Viceroy Rui Lourenço da Távora sent a handful of soldiers from Goa under a commander - named Manuel de Frias, who organized the *moradores* of São Thomé into a striking force. But that was as far as the Portuguese involvement in the Bay area went: the Dutch returned the following year in greater force and recaptured Pulicat. At the same time, they settled in Machilipatnam, whence the Indo-Portuguese shipowners and traders departed, while most of their service personnel stayed behind to find work with their new masters. Only São Thomé and Nagapattinam were left alone for the time being, and of course their

[4] See William Foster, *The Founding of Saint George, Madras* (London 1902).

traders were at jeopardy from the VOC squadrons determined to throttle off the extensive Indo-Portuguese trading activities in the Bay region and arrogate it to themselves.

To judge from the number of *moradores* of São Thomé who trekked up the beach to seek employment at Fort St. George from the very moment it was founded, the Dutch seizure of Indo-Portuguese vessels on the high seas had greatly affected the town's prosperity. It's bishop, Frei Jerónimo de Sá and its newly-appointed General of the Coromandel coast, D. Luís de Mello (sent from Goa to deal with the increasing menace from the English and the Dutch companies) took a dim view of this collusion with the Anglican heretics and interlopers and tried to thwart it. Unfortunately, they had no jobs to offer their subjects, while the newly-ensconced English did.

Fluctuating Anglo-Portuguese Relations

The emphasis in Anglo-Portuguese scholarship has always been on the ancient alliance and friendship between the two nations, but frictions between the two kingdoms had already arisen in the 1550s over English interloping voyages to the Guinea coast, and then for a period of sixty-odd years, between 1580 and 1640, Portugal became part of the Spanish crown. One must consider that when Philip II of Spain invaded Portugal and took over its throne as Philip I, he employed Lisbon as the staging port for the Armada of 1588 and that Drake raided both Cascais and the Algarve to harass preparations being made for it. King James I, of course, made peace with Spain in 1604, but this was not construed as applying to Asia because the Spanish refused to allow the English trading privileges in their overseas possessions, including those of Portugal. Thus, so far as the Hon. East India Company was concerned, the *Estado da India Oriental* was available for its aggrandisement.

In practice, however, the Company did not possess sufficient capital for warfare, and, aside from hijacking a few

Portuguese vessels on the seas, its most famous action against Portuguese Asia comprised its naval cooperation with Shah Abbas of Persia to blockade Ormuz and prevent Goa from relieving it, in 1621-1622. But by 1635, the English of the Company had become preoccupied far more with the Dutch than with Portugal, and in that year, they accepted the overture of the Count-Viceroy of Linhares to conclude a non-aggression pact with Goa. The English seem shrewdly to have calculated that this was more advantageous than maintaining, a state of hostilities with their old ally - and as one of Linhares' successors, the Count of Óbidos, remarked bitterly more than a decade later, the English were profiteers at Portuguese expense without giving very much in return.

But back to São Thomé. One will remember that Frei Jerónimo de Sá and D. Luís de Mello were prone to consider the English as little more than "black" Protestants and as enemies. Both disapproved strongly of Indo-Portuguese *moradores* who traipsed up the beach from São Thomé to seek work at Fort St. George during the week, and when the migrant São Thomesians returned to attend mass, the authorities did their utmost to fine or arrest them - and otherwise prevent them from returning to their English employers. It seems the migrants were obliged to visit São Thomé on the Sabbath because until then, the English authorities had expelled all Portuguese priests accompanying them from Fort St. George as profligates and/or enemy agents! Tensions were heightened, of course, because in 1642, from their position on the Coromandel coast, one could not yet have heard that the restored monarchy of D. João IV and the English had just (on 29th January) signed the Treaty of London, formally ending all hostilities between the two powers[5].

[5] One will recall the *Restoração* of 1640 and that in 1641, D. João IV dispatched ambassadors to Amsterdam, Paris and London, with instructions to seek recognition of the new regime and peace on the basis of the mutual friendship which had prevailed prior to Philippine takeover of Portugal in 1580. In the case of France and The Netherlands, both them at war with Spain, to ask for military assistance against a common enemy. Of the three missions, none

An Acceptable Clergy for the "Interface" Peoples

The English harboured fewer inhibitions about dealing with the Portuguese, for they viewed the availability of such indigenised "interface" peoples as the S. Thomesians as a godsend. This was because they knew the Tamil language and all the usual ways of expediting business in the region; they were ideal as foremen, as brokers, as translators, as soldiers, as suppliers of fresh fish, in fact as intermediaries for all the range of activities which are useful in establishing and operating a fortified trading post in the midst of a strange landscape. So eager in fact were the Britons to avail themselves of their services that they offered the migrants thirty years' exemption from consumption taxes and even monies to build their houses in the vicinity[6]. Hence the *moradores* must have felt hopelessly torn between Mammon and God, between their English employers and their obligations to attend mass on Sundays. But

proved wholly satisfactory, since the French were willing enough to make a peace, but had just entered the Thirty Years War directly and would promise little save token military aid. The English were likewise willing but would promise no arms or troops, at least for the moment, while the Dutch balked at the Portuguese demand that territories conquered by their India Companies be returned - including parts, of Brazil, Ceylon and Africa. The best they would promise was a few troops and a ten-year truce which entirely begged the issue of reparation of territories. The truce was so porous and fill of vitiating conditions - it did not begin until six months after ratification in the case of Brazil and a year in the case of Asia - that it only served to increase the aggression of both India companies while they waited for the truce to go into effect. About the only substantive benefit the Portuguese derived from all their diplomatic activity was comparatively meaningless peace treaties with the French and the Swedes and the more useful one of 29 January 1642 with the English. No real peace with the Dutch was signed until 1661.

[6] Henry Davidson Love, Vestiges of Old Madras (4 vols.; London 1913) I, 34-35.

help was on the way, in the form of two French Capuchins, Father Efrem de Nevers and his colleague, Father Zenon, who were all but literally washed up on the beach, as in answer to an Anglican prayer[7].

It would seem that the Fathers de Nevers and Zenon had been en route to establish a mission in Pegu when the vessel on which they travelled paused at Madraspatam, and although Papist priests would hardly have been welcomed in any other part of the English Protestant world, it must have occurred simultaneously to all the Company servants that if the good fathers (whose nationality made them acceptable) could be induced to take up residence at Fort St. George and say masses for the Indo-Portuguese, these would not have to return each Sunday to São Thomé and be subjected to the constraints and blandishments of De Sá and De Mello. Frei Efrem and his companion were therefore petitioned in June 1642 by a delegation of Indo-Portuguese to stay and become their parish priests, and it should be obvious that the English put them up to it.

As it turned out, Frei Efrem and his associate not only agreed, but Frei Efrem proved himself to be an exceptional Christian, selfless and devoted to his flock. He spoke (besides his native French) Portuguese, English and German and some Persian, Arabic and other Asian languages as well. He constantly acted as a peacemaker between the Portuguese themselves and in disputes between them and the English. Nor would he accept any fees or rewards save food. Frei Efrem and his subsequent Capuchin associates behaved themselves with great charity and probity - and diplomacy - taking care not to arouse the ire of their Anglican counterparts. Hence, they proved the ideal solution to English needs for Catholic clergymen to service their Portuguese workers;

[7] In fact everyone was washed upon the beach in a swirl of surf until the nineteenth century, if only because the Madras area had no harbour, but merely a long, sandy shoreline; in season, vessels anchored off the coast and were tended by boats and lighters. The British constructed an artificial breakwater only about a century ago, which for the first time made Madras into a true harbour city.

moreover, they allayed all fears that the English community would be infiltrated by a Goa-oriented clergy who might stir resentment or disobedience among the Portuguese residents at Madraspatam.

The only interruption between the arrival of Frei Efrem and his death in 1694 - after 52 years of service - occurred in 1649. The Venetian merchant and author, Niccolao Manucci, provides all the details and even verbatim documents from ecclesiastical sources. These declare that Bishop De Sá not only held Frei Efrem's failure to seek permission for his activities among the English against him but also his saintly life. In any event, the bishop bore a grudge against the Frenchman and thereupon had him kidnapped and taken to Goa, where the Portuguese authorities deposited him in the prison of the Inquisition, on a variety of charges, not only of disobedience, but on theological grounds as well, including an accusation that he had recognized the priesthood of the Anglican clergy. So wroth were the English over this high-handed abduction that they retaliated by kidnapping a Portuguese official from São Thomé (who it seems presently escaped) and generally made a diplomatic stink over the affair. Fortunately, Frei Efrem knew how to take care of himself in debate, and, since Bishop De Sá himself was both absent and a Jesuit, unpopular among the Franciscans, Augustinians and Dominicans, the French Capuchin could count on a sympathetic audience among Inquisitors representing the senior orders. After two years he was finally released and allowed to return to Madras[8].

The two original Capuchins were joined at a later date by a third member of their order, "Miguel Anjou", Frei Michel de Anjou,

[8] Niccolao Manucci, *Storia do Mogor, or Mugul India* (4 vols.; London, 1907-1908) III, 431-436, 438-455. Jean Baptiste Tavernier says that Frei Efrem was released through the good offices of the Qutb Shah of Golconda, but this seems unlikely, given the testimony collected by Manucci. See Fran Penny, *The Church in Madras, Being the History of the Ecclesiastical and Missionary Action of the East India Company in the Presidency of Madras in the XVII and XVIII Centuries* (2 vols.; London 1902-1904) I, 218.

or, as he was also called, Padre Michel Ange de Bourges, who likewise served faithfully until his death, in 1708. Matters did not always run smoothly thereafter, there was a brief stir against the Capuchins performing marriage ceremonies in 1680 (raised, seemingly by an Anglican newcomer). Then, nearly half a century after Frei Efrem's troubles with Bishop De Sá, Frei Miguel de Anjou seems to have taken his lumps from the Roman Catholic ecclesiastical authorities over his residence among the heretics. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the narrow-minded and disapproving papal legate, Cardinal Tournon, on a mission to China to scotch the Jesuit "heresies" there, sought to withdraw him from Madraspatam. Fortunately, before Tournon could implement his design, he passed on to China, where the Portuguese, furious at what they considered a breach of their *Padroado* privileges, as well as his stupid and boorish conduct in Beijing, imprisoned him in Macao on his return from the imperial court. There the churchly prince expired[9].

São Thomé and Nagapattinam under VOC Attack

However badly or well neighbouring São Thomé fared during the 1640s and the 1650s under the Dutch blockades is not

[9] Much of the friction, even after the Treaty of London became known, was due to the fact that the English refused to recognize the subordination of any Portuguese priest who tried to serve the Portuguese *moradores* at Fort St. George to the Portuguese monarchy, as vassals under the *Padroado*. Whenever they were found in the precincts of the Fort, the English expelled them. The Anglicans also claimed that the Portuguese clergy from São Thomé led profligate lives and kept prostitutes, though this may be no more than a Protestant invention in an age of general religious intolerance. The presence of the French clergy in Madraspatam continued to rankle the Portuguese and even led to diplomatic protests at the highest levels; for instance, as late as 1670, the Portuguese ambassador to the Court of St. James wrote to the directors of the Company in London, complaining about the two French clergymen. See Penny, *Church in Madras I*, 78, 218-219.

precisely known, but prior to 1662, its *moradores* must have been better off than those of Nagapattinam. That port city, nearer to Cape Comorin, although not exclusively Portuguese, held a large Portuguese population, actively engaged in trading, and was possibly as important as São Thomé itself. It was also, close to important weaveries not accessible from the city of the saint. Frightened by the incursions of the Dutch into Ceylon, its Portuguese community had petitioned the crown to be incorporated within the *Estado da India,* and in 1642, it loyally acclaimed the restored Portuguese monarch, D. João IV. But all of this did no good; in 1659, the Dutch of the VOC easily drove out the Portuguese inhabitants, anyway, whence these founded Porto Novo nearby. But only two years later, Porto Novo itself was ravaged by a Bijapuri army. Rebuilt, it was again attacked by Aurangzeb in 1687.

Certainly, São Thomé, thanks to its more distant location from Ceylon (in the 1640s, and 1650s under attack by the Dutch) was less in danger than Nagapattinam, and its economy must have been helped in those years through its relationship with Fort St. George and Madraspatam; no doubt the families of many Indo-Portuguese who worked in the English town received monies from them. There is also evidence that São Thomé absorbed an influx of refugees, first from Jaffna, in Ceylon, then from Nagapattinam and later from Porto Novo. As a result there must have existed some concentrations of entrepreneurial capital and expertise among its citizenry. But it is not easy to determine whether the recent peace with England had made possible an immediate and direct cooperation between these old and new *moradores* of São Thomé and the English at Madraspatam, or whether close economic cooperation between the English and the Indo-Portuguese was restricted to those individuals who had actually emigrated to the English complex after 1640.

Portuguese Entrepreneurs as Partners of the English

Apart from Portuguese migrants employed through efforts of the Hon. East India Company, by 1642 the climate between Englishmen and the endangered Portuguese freelance traders must also have permitted cooperation on a personal level even if official attitudes emanating from Goa and the local authorities at São Thomé might hardly have encouraged it. This cooperation, I think, had little or nothing to do with the official trade of the Hon. Company, but much with its structure - or rather, the lack of it. For much of the seventeenth century, its board members in Europe were not obliged to commit fixed sums to the organisation, but merely pooled their resources as they chose, often only for single voyages; upon their completion, the profits, were paid out and the subscription process began anew. At times there was even insufficient capital to pay the company servants who manned the presidencies and permanent stations the Company maintained.

Until the 1670s both the English and the Dutch companies had much the same prohibitions against their servants' pursuit of personal trading. This having been said the English management was in a poor moral position to forbid their personnel from making a living when the Company was such a bad. paymaster; moreover, it would have required more floating capital than they had available to organise the intra-Asian, or country trade (as distinct from. their trade between Europe and India). Hence, by 1674 the English company abandoned all ideas of controlling the country trade and freed its servants, to deal privately in all Asian products - subject to certain restrictions - something they had been doing for decades anyway[10]. By contrast, from the very beginning of the VOC, the powerful *Heeren XVII,* as the directors in the home provinces were called, and the *gouverneur-generaal* and his council in Batavia were in complete agreement that the intra-Asian trading was, an

[10] George D. Winius and Marcus P. Vink, The Merchant-Warrior Pacified. The VOC (the Dutch East India Company) and Its Changing Political Economy in India (New Delhi 1991) 58.

important source of Company profits and that Dutch servants were to keep their hands out of it - on pain of the most severe penalties.

Nota bene that the better to achieve its, cherished monopoly in this intra-Asian commerce, the VOC soon completely reversed its earlier position on the freedom of the seas. One will perhaps recall that early in the seventeenth century, it had commissioned the *Mare Liberum* from the young jurist Hugo de Groot, or Grotius, whose arguments it had used to justify its attack on the Iberian monopolies. Instead of remaining faithful to this free trading doctrine, by the 1640s, it declared a monopoly of its own, based on its conquest of the Portuguese territories and their appertaining pretensions à la the jurist Serafim Freitas, whose tract, *De justo imperio lusitanorum asiatico* argued for a *mare clausum.* Hence, the VOC even began issuing *laissez-passer* documents similar to the *cartazes* the Portuguese had used[11]. But there was a clear difference of intent between the otherwise similar Dutch *pascedullen* and the *cartazes*: the Portuguese used them primarily to raise revenue while the Dutch used them to keep others out of a trade they wished to dominate[12].

The only weakness in the VOC position, dominant as the company was in Asia, was that the Dutch Republic had the English as neighbours across the North Sea. Although both Protestant powers had much in common *qua* religion, they were trading rivals who fought three bitter naval wars over trade - in 1652-1654, 1665-1667, and in 1672-1674. The battles had largely been standoffs, but they were enormously destructive both of men and of material and cost the Dutch admiralties and the Republican economy dearly; in fact, they presaged the end of Holland's *Gouden Eeuw,* or Golden Age. Thus it was that even though the VOC sought to maintain its independence from political pressure, the *Hooge Mogenden,* their High Mightinesses of the States-General,

[11] See Marcus P. Vink, "*The Entente Cordiale,* the Dutch East India Company and Portuguese Shipping through the Straits of Malacca, 1641-1663", in RC; *Revista de Cultura* (1991) 289-309.
[12] Ibidem.

repeatedly warned the directors of the powerful VOC - and with effect - not to create incidents in Asia, which might stir up new woes in Europe. One of the English battle cries in the North Sea wars in fact was enough to establish the link: "Remember Amboyna!"

The result of all this was that VOC patrols, while they struck relentlessly at indigenous shipping in the Bay of Bengal and Strait of Malacca, were obliged to stand helplessly by as the English private traders sailed by under their noses. Or were they really all English? As the Dutch suspected darkly, appearances were deceiving: the Indo-Portuguese had taken to flying English colours on their vessels and sometimes even had an Englishman on board to warn the Dutch in no uncertain terms to keep their hands off.

It should be obvious that servants of the English company could not give full time to their private trading activities, and that the Indo-Portuguese were just as handy to them as moonlight partners as they were to the official East India Company operations at Fort St. George. The Indo-Portuguese knew the ropes, they knew where to invest and to voyage, and their English associates knew how to protect them. The result was an ideal symbiosis between private capital and expertise.

In fact this symbiosis appears to have wrecked VOC pretensions to monopolise trade in the region. There is nothing in the documentation recorded in Love's *Vestiges of Old Madras* to document what was actually occurring, nor have I come across anything in other English sources to suggest how and when the practice began. But the Dutch were in a prime position to know that something disturbing was afoot. As early as 1642, VOC commanders began to suspect that Indo-Portuguese ships were flying English flags. Then in 1644, the Dutch governor of Malacca, Jeremias van Vliet, complained bitterly to his superiors in Batavia that he was unable to intercept illicit commerce because it was all thus disguised. "If we allow the English to conduct this

back-and-forth trade", he wrote, "it would be an inwardly-eating cancer for the Company[13]."

Van Vliet was indeed prophetic, because another letter of 1680, written from Amsterdam by the Company's own directorate, the *Heeren XVII*, can be taken as an admission that the whole policy of the *pascedullen*, the control of commerce by issuing passes, was a dismal failure: "The European competitors make it impossible for us to maintain this [monopoly] right, which we thought we had conquered from the Portuguese, employing their flags and servants, or else their passes, allowing [the Portuguese] to appear as English. Because of the consequences, we dare not put a stop to it[14]. "Of course the VOC directors here do not distinguish between the official policies of the English company and the freelance moonlighting activities of its servants, and I cannot say with absolute certainty that there had not been a secret protocol between Goa and London to allow even Portuguese vessels from Goa to fly English pennons and carry English identification. But I doubt it. I hardly believe that by 1661, the year Cochin and the Malabar strongholds fell to the VOC, there existed enough Goa-based intra-Asian trade to bother the Dutch. What we are dealing with here almost certainly is the symbiotic trade operating from Fort St. George and consisting of private capital owned jointly by English and by their Indo-Portuguese partners.

After 1662, the Indo-Portuguese trading partners of the English could not very well have based themselves out of nearby São Thomé itself, for in that year the Qutb Shah of Golconda laid siege to it from its western, or landed side. In order to cut off possible relief from the sea, always the thing most dreaded by the Indian powers when confronting their European rivals, the Qutb Shah struck a bargain with the VOC, who gladly imposed a naval blockade. After a siege of four months, it fell, on 2nd May. The city

[13] H.T. Colenbrander ed., Daghregíster gehouden in 't Casteel Batavia, etc., 1643-1644 (The Hague 1899) 127.
[14] VOC 1342, O.B.P. 1680, fl. 1521 r & v, Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague.

of Thomas the Apostle thereafter remained under Moslem rule for ten years, or until the French captured it, only to lose it again to an alliance of the VOC and Golconda two years later. By then, the city had been thoroughly sacked three times; now it was levelled to the ground, on suggestion from the Dutch. Obviously it was no longer a suitable base of any kind of Indo-Portuguese trade. But meanwhile, there had taken place a new migration of the *moradores* to Fort St. George, and not only directly from São Thomé, but from Porto Novo, which in 1661 had been besieged by the Adil Shah of Bijapur[15]. It would thus seem that by around 1663, virtually all the important Indo-Portuguese shippers were operating from within the English battlements, supported by their East India Company confederates.

One should not wonder that the moonlighting English company servants scrupled to use their company's identity to further their private ends. Officials and corporate employees today often, tacitly use company cars to make private and even vacation trips. Yet, in the case of the Honourable East India Company, the practice far exceeded such trifles; one even sees the use of Company fleets to blockade harbours where the local rulers had confiscated the private trade of Company servants[16]. So it could hardly have been much of a departure to outfit Indo-Portuguese vessels carrying cargoes jointly owned by Englishmen and the *moradores* with all the badges of official English commerce. How quickly were the Indo-Portuguese, especially the important ones, interwoven into the elite population of the Fort! In fact, a consultation of 1680, issued by the council of the Presidency, states that the resident Portuguese "have been loyal and serviceable in the defence of the place in time of war and are a great security to us on that account. Moreover, our greatest income arises from the customs upon their commerce[17]." It was certainly coincidence, but

[15] See Love, *Vestiges*, I, 175, 197.
[16] Winius and Vink, *Merchant-Warrior*, 87. See for instance, the case of Robert Cowan.
[17] *Consultations, 1680, of 22-III-1680.* Reprinted in Penny, *Church in Madras*, I, 79.

one should note that the letter of the *Heeren XVII* just quoted, complaining of the Portuguese use of English flags and the consequent demise of the *pascedullen* was from this very same year!

Portuguese Life among the English

Like all fortified towns in India, the original Fort St. George consisted of the citadel proper, forming a nucleus within its own walls. Then bordering it were the "white" and "black" towns, and around these was a second wall, obviously much greater in circumference. The original Christian church within the enceinte seems to have been Roman Catholic, and it seems to have preceded St. Mary's Anglican church by several years[18].

The second Catholic church remains unnamed in surviving documentation, being called simply "an open pendall chapel"[19]. It is therefore most likely that this was simply an auxiliary place of worship, where the priests went to say masses on Sundays at different times in the day. The fathers also made wills for the *moradores*, in the absence of a Portuguese *escrivão*, or scribe.

By 1688, Love estimates that of the 128 houses in the "white town", the exclusive part of Fort St. George, half belonged to the Indo-Portuguese![20] The "white town" was where the elite lived, and one can gain some idea of how wealthy some of the Indo-Portuguese had become from the fact that when the house of one prominent merchant, Luís de Medeiros Barreto, was sold to the company by his widow, Antónia, it was made over into the Company headquarters as Government House[21]. Barreto had on

[18] Joseph Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India from the Middle of the Sixteenth Century to the End of the Seventeenth Century, 1542-1700* (Bangalore 1982) 203-204.
[19] Love, *Vestiges*, II, 46-49.
[20] Ibidem, I, 538.
[21] Ibidem, I, 433 n. 3.

occasion lent his monies to the Company and on his death, left an estate of some 19,000 pagodas. His father, Cosmo Lourenço de Madeira, in addition to being an alderman and militia commander, also built de Descanção church in nearby Adyer, where he was buried[22]. Another prominent resident of the "white town" was João Pereira de Faria, a shipowner who came to Fort St. George around 1683 from Nagapattinam. He was likewise an officer in the militia and built a spectacular garden around his home in Pettanaikpetta, which long gave his name to that quarter of the city.

The "black town", also called the "Malabar town" was less exclusive than the "white town"; it was inhabited by "gentiles" - Hindus, Moslems, the Thomas Christians, Armenians, and the poorer Indo-Portuguese. The names of both towns seem to have referred to the racial identity of the inhabitants, though, as in Spanish America, whiteness and blackness as perceptions were also relative to wealth[23]. What the racial composition of men like Madeira and Faria actually was is anybody's guess, since by the late seventeenth century, probably all the Indo-Portuguese were to a greater or lesser degree *mestiços* - mixtures of Indian and white ancestry. In the case of the prominent Indo-Portuguese, however, this does not seem to have prevented intermarriage with the English, for example, around 1686, the aforementioned Niccolao Manucci married Mrs. Thomas Clarke, a prominent widow, the daughter of Christopher Harley and Aguida Pereira[24].

Thus while São Thomé had fallen into ruin, its *moradores*, or at least a number of them, survived to prosper among the English. It was perhaps more sentimental than entrepreneurial of some members of the Indo-Portuguese merchant community when, in 1688, they leased the territory from the local naik that São Thomé had occupied and moved back. Possibly because of their interventions, in 1694 the viceroy at Goa appointed a relative, one

[22] Ibidem, I, 433 n. 3.
[23] For descriptions of the towns, see Alexander Hamilton, A *New Account of the East Indies* (London 1727).
[24] Manucci, *Storía do Mogor*, II, 297-298.

Luís Francisco Coutinho, as General of the Coast of Coromandel. Coutinho thereupon imperiously directed all Portuguese to return to their home city, something few were inclined to do if only because he tried to pay his handful of disreputable soldiers by levying fines on the community. Meanwhile, his attempts to refortify São Thomé failed when the English authorities at Fort St. George refused to supply him with arms and the Indian authorities pulled down his walls before they were completed. Two years later, he gave up and sailed back to Goa[25]. It goes without saying that São Thomé was never to regain its former preeminence.

But São Thomé never wholly disappeared either: rather, the town of Madraspatam, today simply Madras, simply expanded its borders and fused the twin nucleí that it and Fort St. George had comprised; today, both are merely two districts of a great metropolis, presided over by two Christian saints. But they, or rather, the towns named after them, made the modern city possible. For the old city of Thomas would have been crushed without the fort dedicated to the dragon-slayer, while Fort St. George might well have been helpless without the clever inhabitants of São Thomé. In collusion with the English, they thwarted the would be Dutch monopolists, while the underpaid servants of the Honourable East India Company learned from the Indo-Portuguese how to make money in the back-and-forth trading of the Bay. Additional research is needed, of course, but it is unlikely to alter substantially the exchange of miracles between two very different saints.

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[25] Loves, *Vestiges*, I, 574-575.