ASPECTS OF BENGAL TEXTILE INDUSTRY c.1670-1740: A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF THE EUROPEAN TRADE ON ITS STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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CERTIFICATE

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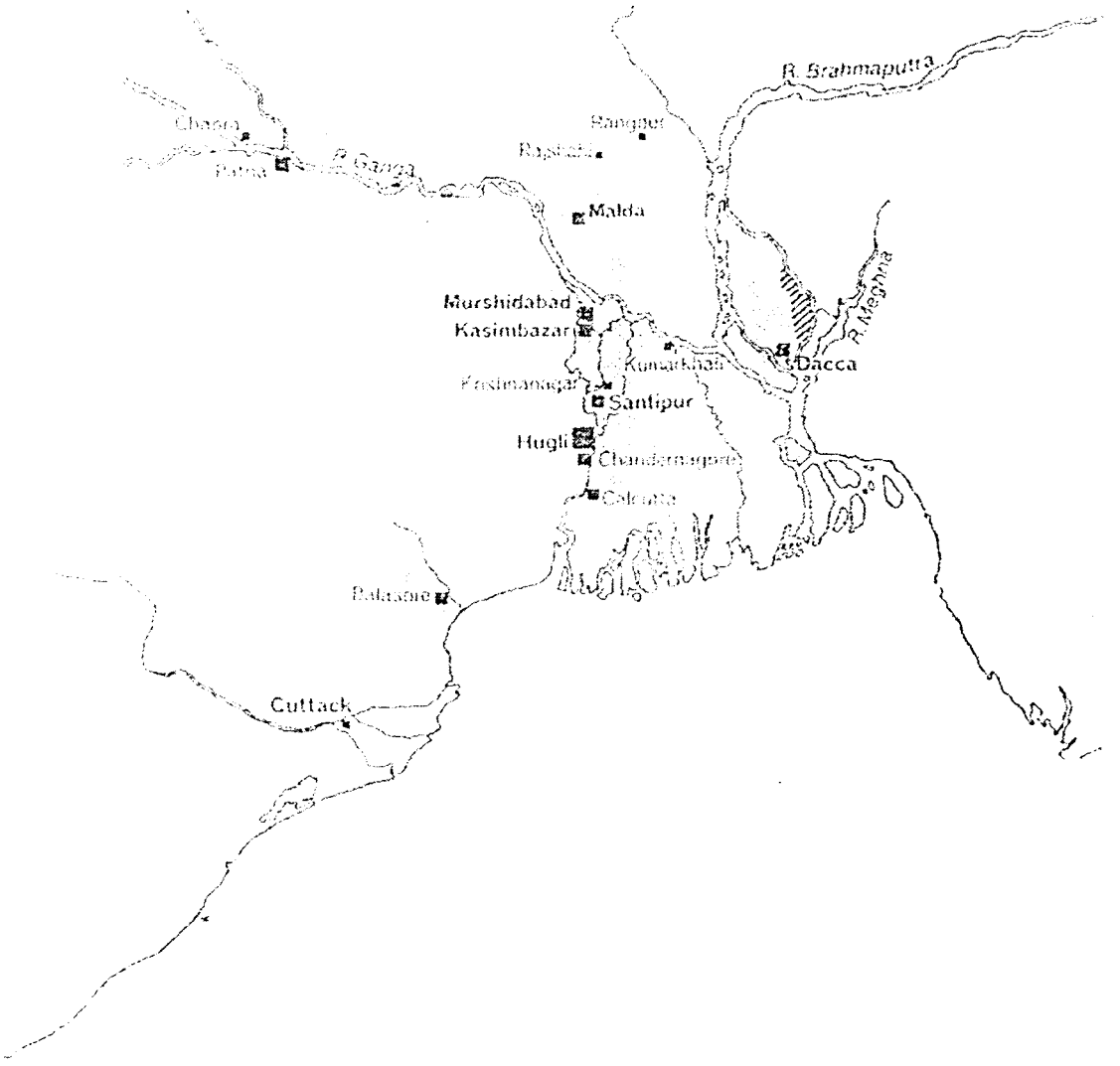
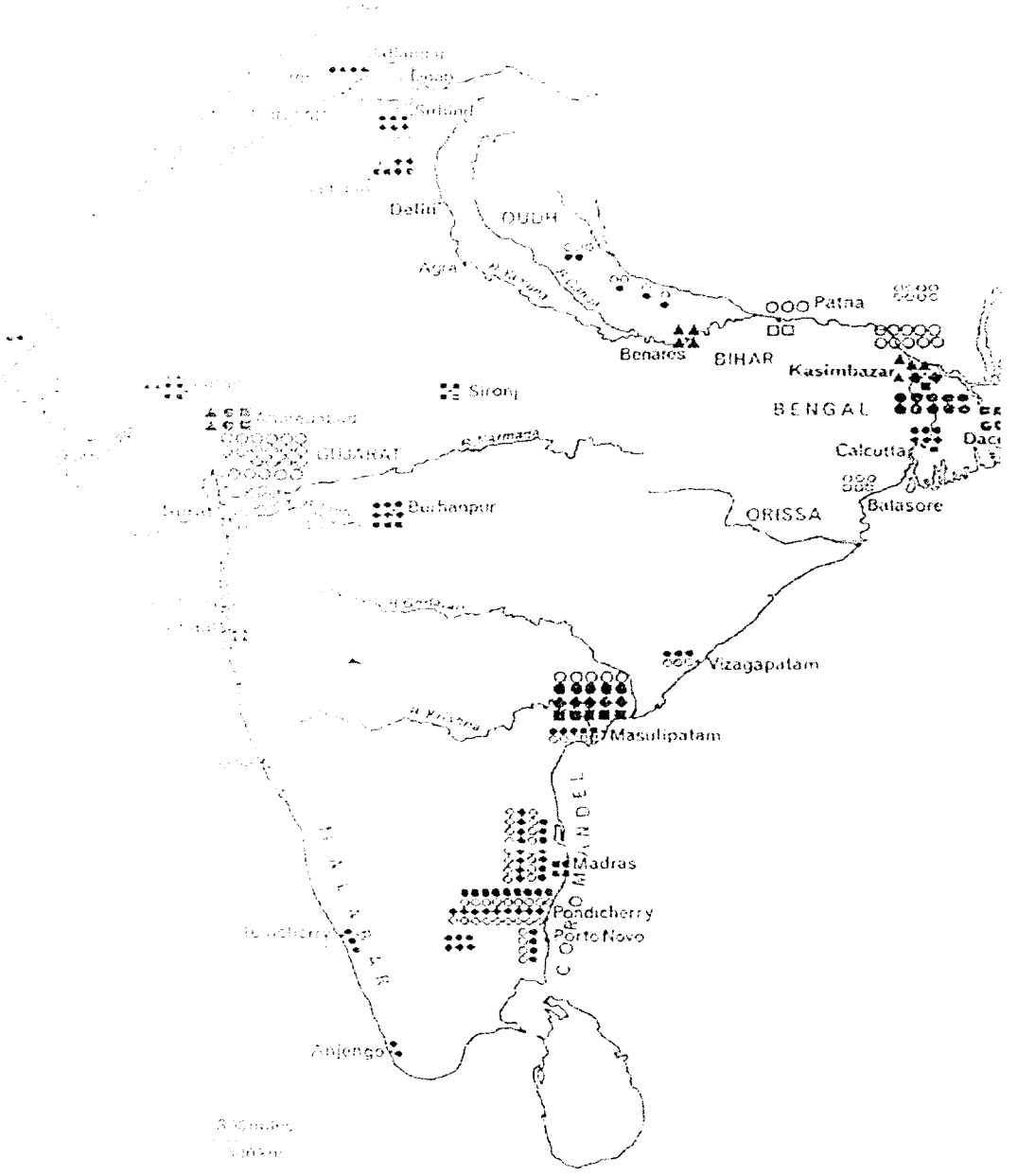


Bengal: Main textile town ,1720

SOURCE: K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trading World of Asian and the East India Company 1660-1760*, Cambridge University Press 1978, pp. No. 248

MAP NO. 1



India : main textile weaving areas 1600-1750

SOURCE: K.N. Chaudhuri. *Trading World of Asian and the East India Company 1660-1760*, Cambridge University Press 1978, pp. No. 244

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INTRODUCTION

The analysis undertaken in this study revolves around the changing social configuration within the textile producing economy of Bengal in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (1670-1740), under the agency of the European companies, of which the most dominant and of primary importance to this study, were the Dutch and the English East India companies. This study will be limited to that of the cotton industry(though silk was equally important)as cotton piece goods comprised the bulk of the European companies' exports by the end of the 17th century and continued to remain a major part of export even in the first half of the 18th century. The period 1670-1740 is selected for study, as during this time the export trade as well as the textile industry of Bengal was growing in an undisturbed fashion due favorable conditions and political stability in the province.

By the latter half of the seventeenth century a distinct shift is noticed in the trading activities of the European Companies from the first half. This included the change in pattern of trade (spice to textiles) and also in the mode of procurement (barter to increasing use of money). It was mainly due to the former that the focus of the Companies also shifted from regions such as Gujarat and later from the Coromandel Coast to Bengal. This did not mean that the Intra-Asian trade ceased to exist, but that with Europe being essentially a purchaser of textiles in the latter half of the seventeenth century, the demands for textiles increased greatly. Bengal by the end of seventeenth century had become the largest supplier of textiles to Europe in addition to the Asian markets. Thus within the Euro-Asian trade, the Euro-Bengal trade became prominent.

The essential features of the Indo-European trade as pointed out by Om Prakash in *Bullion for Goods* was the increasing use of precious metals for the procurement of goods,[1] thus marking a departure from the earlier mode of transaction. The increased monetization caused by the inflow of the precious metals in the economy of Bengal brought about not just an increase in the circulation of currency, it also meant corresponding increases in money was channelised into commercial ventures and on agrarian expansion. There is a great deal of evidence of expansion of agriculture during this period.

Having specified the general context, this study concentrates mainly on the analysis of diversification in the relations of production brought about by European trade, thereby tracing the transition within the agrarian community from agricultural production to full-time commercial activity, namely from cultivation to full-time weaving. This dissertation is essentially a case study of the *tanti* community, a community of cotton weavers of Bengal. Scholars such as Rajat Datta have pointed out the considerable size of this community during the latter half of the 18th century,[2] and, in the face of scarcity of sources on the numbers of the community during the period of study, it can be believed that the community may have expanded during the period of European trade in Bengal. Also European demand for textile provided a scope for occupational mobility to those ranking low on the purity/pollution scale for not only material gain but to move upward on the caste ladder by adopting the occupation of the tantis who ranked high and were considered 'pure Sudra' *jati*.

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[1] Om Prakash, *Bullion for Goods: European and Indian Merchants in the Indian Ocean Trade, 1500-1800*, Delhi, 2004, p.264

[2] Rajat Datta, *Society, Economy and the Market: Commercialization in Rural Bengal c. 1760-1800*, Delhi, 2000, pp.189-190.

It is in this context that Bengal during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries has been chosen for the analysis of such expanding social relations. The question which this study will explore is whether this expansion can be seen as representing an increasing flexibility of caste barriers or as a demographic shift in favor of weaving, as a response to the increasing demand for textiles?

However the study of expanding relations itself would be incomplete without the study of textile production, and hence, the necessity of analyzing the growth of the textile industry from a small scale, household based, craft producing unit (producing mainly for the domestic market) to one that could cater to the increasing demands of world market. A related question which this study explores is the extent to which European trade an instrument of growth facilitated the expansion or growth of textile industry within the economy of Bengal. This aspect leads to further analysis of the employment generation, production output and the income or revenue the industry generated for the government, which the study proposes to undertake.

However Bengal during the period of study is not seen in isolation but as a part of the lager transitional process that was taking place on an international scale, that of 'proto-industrialization' or 'proto-capitalism'. Scholars such as Frank Perlin have drawn similarities between the industry of Bengal and other regions of the subcontinent and that of Europe and other countries. This process involved production by rural industries for the world market; integration of rural and urban areas; and the growing monetization bringing about concomitant changes in society and economy.[3]

[3] Frank Perlin, 'Proto- Industrialization and Pre Colonial South Asia', Past and Present, no.98, 1983.

Review of Literature

Under this section the sources for this study can be divided into two categories –

Primary sources and secondary sources. Under the primary sources focus would be on the intensive study of select English East India company documents. These include the *English Factories in India* (1618-1677) (hereafter, EFI) Company records such as Proceedings of Board of Trade Commercial and Bengal Public Consultations. The second body of work which can be included within the primary sources are the accounts of travelers and works of contemporaries/semi contemporaries to the period of study.

English Factories in India a set of records that provides significant amounts of information on the trading activity of English East India Company in Asia. It records the Company's commercial activities in the Indian subcontinent for a period of about seventy years. It consists of letters and correspondences between the factors of the various factories in the Indian subcontinent, and the company's directors in England. It traces the development of the company from its participation in the Intra Asian spice trade to its role as one of the dominant European companies in the Euro-Asian trade. These records are important to the study as they give an understanding of the changing pattern of trade, from spice to textiles, the gradual shift of focus from intra-Asian to Euro-Asian, and within the Euro-Asian pattern, the establishment of the Euro-Bengal trade. The records trace the gradual shift of the company's focus from Gujarat and the Coromandel Coast as zones of primary importance, for the procurement of textiles, to Bengal as the most important supplier of cotton pieces goods for the European markets. However as the record informs, the Company factors

were, initially, reluctant to open trading relations with Bengal as the company was not sure of the success of the trade there. The record also reveals that the debasement in the quality of textiles made in Gujarat shifted the Company's focus to the Coromandel Coast. High cost of production and debasement of quality but most importantly a possible market for England's manufacture caused the Company to finally consider Bengal as a lucrative trading zone.

However being a record of mainly commercial activities there are certain issues that the EFI does not focus on unless it directly concerns the working of the company. Thus although the records do mention the various types of fabrics that comprised the return cargoes, they rarely mention issues of production such as the techniques and the process of weaving. Another area where the record rarely ventures into is that of the social and economic conditions of the artisan class. However, an important piece of information provided about the Bengal weavers is that caste is seen as one of the reasons behind the less migratory nature of the weavers in Bengal in comparison to their counterparts in the Coromandel Coast who were known for their migratory nature which facilitated the emergence of fortified port towns, which did not happen in Bengal. Besides these, this record gives a fairly good understanding of the organization and the structure of the company's trade during the 17th century.

Another important primary source for this study is *Proceedings of Board of Trade Commercial* (hereafter BTC). BTC is a record of the commercial activities of the English East India Company from the late 18th century and though these belong to a later period they contain valuable information about the period before 1760. For example volume 156 of the year 1801, which will be used in this study, supplements what is lacking in some of the primary sources that are used for this study. Apart from

insights into the technique of weaving and the various stages in the process of weaving, this volume provides a glimpse into the various categories of purchasers(such as the royal household in Delhi, the nawab of Murshidabad, the bankers of Murshidabad to mention a few); the preferred variety of textile by each category(jamdanies and cloths of the finest quality for the first category, cloths of fine quality for the nawab household, fine and coarse cloth for the house of Jagat Seat, and so on); markets(upper India ,west Asian markets such Basra and Mocha among others); and groups of merchants involved(such as Armenians, Pathans, Turani, and the European merchants) and most importantly the size of the trade carried out by these merchants in terms of value and volume.

The third primary source comprise a set of documents titled *Bengal Public Consultations* (BPC), which are again records of mainly the commercial activities of the Company during the first half of the 18th century. This document reveals the intensification of English East India Company's export trade especially from the second decade of the 18th century.

Another category of primary sources are the accounts of travelers and works of contemporaries/semi contemporaries as well as that of Company servants. The above documents being commercial records, they do not mention socio-cultural aspects of the period, and rarely give information about aspects outside the commercial interest of the Company. Accounts of travelers such as Thomas Bowrey, Francois Bernier to, have provided detailed information of the region, its geographic and climatic details, trade and commerce in places such as Dacca, Balasore, Kasimbazar and most importantly about the people and social groups. Above all these

travelers have been very observant about the social and economic conditions of the people.

In the context of the secondary literature, the pioneering works of K N Chaudhuri[4]and Om Prakash[5] unraveled the structure and organization of the trade carried forward by the English and the Dutch East India Company respectively. The detailed evidence provided in these works regarding the volume and value of trade carried out by these Companies is especially beneficial for this study; as apart from providing an understanding of the expanding size of the trade, it also gives a sense of the size of the textile industry. This analysis is carried further by Om Prakash who talks in terms of the impact of this trade on the economy of Bengal. To Om Prakash the importance of increasing trade lay in its precipitating a concomitant increase in bullion inflow, setting off production increases, revenue collection, Company profit and employment opportunities. In this regard a new perspective was provided by Eaton's attribution of importance to agrarian expansion as supplementing the manufacturing boom, although not ignoring the importance of the inflow of precious metals with the expansion of the European trade and its impact on the manufacturing unit.

Eaton's[6] work attributes the economic expansion and consequently the expansion of social relations, to ecological factors and most importantly to cultural factors. A change in the course of river Ganges from the west to the eastern part of

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[4] K.N.Chaudhuri, *Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company, 1669-1760*, Cambridge University Press, 1978.

[5] Om Prakash, *Bullion for Goods; The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal, 1630-1720*, Princeton, 1985.

[6] Richard Eaton, *Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontiers, 1204-1760*, Delhi, 1994.

Bengal led to the emergence of very fertile and vast tracts of cultivable land which could only be brought under cultivation with the help of tribal people under the guidance of individuals who were representatives of Islam. However Eaton argues that the manufacturing boom was made possible only because an agricultural boom had taken place, and it is in this context that the importance of the inflow of precious metals with the expansion of the European trade and its impact the economy has to be understood.

Om Prakash's argument is also in a similar line as that of Eaton's, though he attributes more importance to trade as an instrument of overall growth of the economy in Bengal in general and that of the textile industry in particular. This importance to trade is attached because it is through trade (in case of Bengal) that bullion begins to flow into the economy. The growth is seen in terms of increase in production, revenue for the government, profit for the Company, and this growth also led to the generation of additional employment. It was the inflow of bullion and the consequent expansion of the manufacturing (textile) unit which attracted the labor force from the agrarian sector. Om Prakash also strongly argues in favor of increase of bargaining power of weavers and merchants vis-à-vis the European Companies.

Susil Chaudhuri's[7] work focuses on the economic activities of English East India Company in particular. Chaudhuri's work focuses on the interactions between the European companies and indigenous trade and the commercial organizations have been studied. It is also in this light that the textile industry has been studied in this work. The significant growth in the export trade and the consequent increase in the

[7] Susil Chaudhuri, *Trade and Commercial Organization of Bengal, 1650-1720*, Calcutta, 1975.

bullion are emphasized. However his argument differs from that of the scholars like Om Prakash, as far as the impact of the influx of treasure, especially on the producers and the production organization, which Chaudhuri claims was of very limited in nature. The reason for this limited impact, according to Chaudhuri was that although the inflow of bullion had enlarged the volume of money in circulation, this money was not invested back in the production process but was hoarded by and spent in luxury consumption. Chaudhuri also argues that very little of the imported treasure reached the primary producers, thus there was little or no change in the condition of their lot. Chaudhuri therefore argues that the impact of the bullion on the economy at best was marginal.

Of the several areas which felt the impact of foreign treasure, the area which concerns this dissertation most is the manufacturing sector. Within the sector the impact was seen in terms of not just increase in production but also in terms of swelling of employment opportunities. The works of scholars like K.N.Chaudhuri and Om Prakash hints at the expansion of social groups associated with the textile industry. However these scholars do not elaborate upon this issue. It is here that works of Hitesranjan Sanyal on social mobility becomes important.

Sanyal's[8] work gives a glimpse of the caste structure of Bengal prior to the setting in of the colonial rule, He shows the prevalence of the Brahmana and the Sudra *varna* and the existence of several *jatis* or castes within the Sudra order. The caste picture is further complicated with subdivisions known as *srenis*. Sanyal's work focuses on the consistent striving for upward mobility within the caste system. by the

[8] Hitesranjan Sanyal, *Social Mobility in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1981.

jatis. This work argues in favour of a relatively flexible caste system, in sharp contrast to the traditional view of rigidity of caste barriers and which was therefore not permeable. Especially important to this dissertation is Sanyal's assertion that one of the most frequented route for upward social mobility was through occupational mobility especially to those occupations which involved some usage of machinery and therefore technology. The work establishes that such a step was not just for material gain but more importantly to climb the purity ladder as the castes associated with technology were considered as ritually purer Sudras and thus ranked higher on the purity/ pollution scale.

Chapters

The first chapter focuses on the profile of the textile industry during the period of study c.1670-1740. This chapter explores the questions the volume of production and what were the various types of textiles that were being produced by the various aurungs or production centers of Bengal. Each of the production centers specialized in producing a different kind of fabric. These production centers were dispersed over the vast region of Bengal. This chapter also explores the various markets(Asian and European) for the Bengal textiles as well as the various types of fabrics provided for each market; and therefore the different categories of purchasers of the Bengal textiles. The markets also include the huge re-export trade that was sustained by the Bengal textile industry.

Thus the relative question that has been examined is that of the factors behind the spatial location of each of the aurungs. This in turn led to the analysis of the

climatic or geographical factors, communication networks, and proximity to the sources of raw material as well as to the markets, all of which together created favourable conditions for further expansion of the industry during the period of study.

The second chapter focuses on the growing participation of the European companies in Bengal's textile. This included the commerce of both the Dutch and the English East India companies. Within this chapter emphasis is on tracing the gradual growth both in the volume and value of the companies' trade. It was therefore necessary to look into the share of each of the companies in the total trade and export from Asia in general and from Bengal in particular, more importantly the precious metal that was flowing into the economy of Bengal through the company. Another aspect that has been explored in this chapter is the organization of trade of Companies which ensured the success of trade from Bengal. This also includes the study of complex form of diplomatic and commercial relations established by the Companies with various groups of people such as the officials and the intermediaries, which included the merchants and brokers, for their trading activities. A study of these interactions is necessary for the understanding of the specificity of the structure and organization of trade, which the companies came to acquire over a period of 70 years or so. Also the minting activity of this period has been examined, as the mints played a very important role in transforming the bullion to currency form and its flow into the economy.

The third chapter is a study of the organization of textile production under the European companies. This chapter includes a study of existing production organization the European companies encountered during the initial years, and the

difference between these sets of organizations and their co existence and impact on the other.

The textile industry being differentiated in nature consisted of multiple layers of functions. These included the cultivation of cotton, spinning, weaving and post weaving process. Study of each of these stages is undertaken as allowed by the sources (primary as well as secondary)

The technique involved in the production of fabric, although integral to the Indian textile industry did not change and even if it did, the change was insignificant. However most scholars (K N Chaudhuri, S Chaudhuri, and Om Prakash) agree that an increase in production, caused by an increase in demand, was achieved not by change of technology, but by realization of full potential of textile industry, through reallocation of resources and increase of human labour. Exploration of this aspect of the industry gives an understanding of the generation of additional employment with the expansion of export trade under the European companies as well as a sense of employment capacity at each stage of production.

Producers certainly occupied the central position in the functioning of the textile industry; therefore the study of textile industry would truly be incomplete without the study people. People associated with each stage of textile production, were highly skilled and specialized in the function of each stage of the production process. However among all these producers the weaver certainly occupied a star status. Although the others producers are of equal importance, this focuses on the study of weavers especially the *tanti* community.

CHAPTER - I

THE PROFILE OF THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN BENGAL DURING THE PERIOD 1670-1740

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROFILE OF THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN BENGAL DURING THE PERIOD 1670-1740

The textiles from Bengal had both popularity and antiquity on its side. The fabrics from this region had stable markets over vast geographical regions and had varying range of purchasers as its permanent customers, from time immemorial. The term 'Bengal', during the late 17th and first half of the 18th centuries, encompassed a large geographical area. This included the provinces of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa. However in sharp contrast to the spread of markets and customers of Bengal textiles over a large spatial space, the industry itself was surprisingly concentrated in a limited geographical area. Thus the map of the location of textile industry shows that weaving villages were* mainly concentrated in the north-south zone of the present day Bengal and in the central regions of the modern Bangladesh[1]. However this does not mean that the textile manufacturing centers of Bihar and Orissa were of less significance. These regions did have weaving centers of considerable importance, which specialized in weaving specific types of cloths, but these centers were relatively few and wide spread to those in the former regions.

The period between the late 17th and early decades of 18th centuries also witnessed the coming into of prominence of the Bengal textile industry. One of the most obvious reasons, scholars such as Susil Chaudhuri and Om Prakash agree, for

[1] K N Chaudhuri, *Trading World of Asia and the East India Company, 1660 -1760*, Cambridge University Press, 1978, p.248.

* See Map No.1

this prominence was that a considerable output was witnessed from the Bengal looms with an ever growing presence of the European Companies (the Dutch and the English) on Bengal soil. While several reasons for the growth in output have been put forward by eminent scholars, which will be discussed later, it would be worth while to look at the volume and value of the textile output and their implications for a better understanding of the status of the Bengal textile industry, during the period of study when European trade in the province was beginning expand actively.

Volume of Production: A Study of the Estimated Output and Size of Textile Industry

As pointed out earlier, the period between the late 17th and the early 18th centuries was marked by a growing demand for the textiles of Bengal especially from the European markets. However this increase in demand has to be seen as an addition to the already existing demand for the Bengal textiles (prior to the Company trade) from several markets, which will be discussed later.

The primary documentation of the total or estimated output of the textile industry is scarce. Despite the difficulty in quantitative reconstruction of the industry's total output, attempts can be made to develop a sense of the size of the industry, through the study of the volume and value of export goods and goods meant for the domestic markets. In this regard the available sources include the yearly lists of investment, sent to the European Companies in Bengal, which suggests the estimated value and also the quantity of piece goods demanded. However, these lists cannot be taken as an indicator of output of the textile production, as the list only included the European side of the story and not the goods carried by the indigenous

merchants. However, the 'estimated output', would also have to take into account the quantity of piece goods that the indigenous merchants and the free European traders and private traders procured. Evidence pertaining to the latter category is scarcer relative to those available for the European Companies.

Pioneering works, in construction of volume and value textiles exported by the Europeans was undertaken by scholars such as K N Chaudhuri, Susil Chaudhuri and Om Prakash among others.

Textiles were one of the main items exported by the Europeans from the Indian subcontinent for various markets in Europe and Asia. The important regions from where textiles were procured were Gujarat, the Coromandel Coast and Bengal. All these regions were popular for the production of cotton cloths of varying qualities among others and which formed the bulk of the textile export of the European Companies. Gujarat certainly dominated the market till the middle of the 17th century by providing the maximum quantity of cotton piece goods for Companies export trade. However the dominance of Surat cloths was soon ended by the textile export of the Coromandel Coast. This was however due to warming up of European market to the Indian textiles as a result of crucial changes in the fashion circuits of Europe.[2] As far as the Asian markets were concerned, fabrics from both Gujarat and the Coromandel Coast were very popular among the customers. However with the Europeans becoming major partners in the textile trade and making textiles a major part of their import, Bengal became their favoured ground for purchase of fabrics, as the craze for Indian fabrics intensified. From the turn of the century Bengal cloths

[2] Om prakash, *The New Cambridge History of India: European Commercial Enterprise in Pre-Colonial India*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.211..

certainly occupied a dominant position in the export of the Dutch and the English East India Companies. Thus the period 1701-1703 saw Bengal cloth dominate the total textile export of the Dutch, standing at 54.19% of export from the Indian subcontinent.[3] This was the highest possible percentage reached by the Bengal textiles in terms of volume during the period of study. Especially from 1700 onwards, the exports of Bengal fabrics show a shift in direction of flow. Thus Europe in general and Holland in particular saw large quantities of both mixed and cotton being imported in its markets. Period between, 1701-1703,witnessed atleast 688956(cotton) and 140020 (mixed) piecegoods[4] from Bengal being exported to Holland. The all time high in Dutch export of Bengal cloth was reached a little after the period of study. However throughout the period 1670-1740, the share of Bengal cloth in the Dutch export continued to remain dominant over the export of other regions. The regions such as Japan saw a general decline in Japan's share of Bengal goods. In the years 1710-15 when considerable volume was being sent to Europe, Japan received only 7342(cotton) and 8900(mixed) number of piecegoods.[5] During this period Bengal fabrics also dominated the export of the English East India Company. Bengal continued to send large quantities of cotton piece goods as a part of English cargo, during the first half of the 18th century. The highest figure being 822035 pieces in the year 1727[6], which was also the highest ever recorded for almost 76 years (1664-1760). These figures do not really give an idea of the size of production, as these are

[3] Om prakash, *New Cambridge*, p.213. here Prakash is taking into account all three types of piece goods, namely the silk, cottom and mixed.

[4] See table no.1

[5] See table no 1

[6] see table no 3

exclusive of other European companies and also of the share of the indigenous merchant. But nevertheless these figures do help in establishing a sense of the size of the Bengal textile industry. Other pieces of evidences such as the number of looms and workers would also greatly facilitate this understanding. The pioneering work of Om Prakash establishes an approximate number of looms working for the English and the Dutch together at 45,000-50,000[7]. The number of looms that produced for the indigenous merchants and for domestic markets, according to Prakash rested between 117,000-155,000.[8] The number of workers, if there was at least six people employed at one loom, according to Prakash may have ranged between 167,000 to 200,000 workers. However Om Prakash's quantitative method of arriving at these figures has been severely criticized by Susil Chaudhuri.[9] This led Prakash to revise his method and argue that the workforce was even bigger than what he had suggested first. Thus while earlier Om Prakash claimed that the Companies may have employed workforce between 8.69% to 11.11% of the total workforce. However after the revision, he claimed that the workforce sustained by the Companies may have been, between 9.45% to 11.11%.[10] Though these figures are only approximations and not the exact figure, it nevertheless only establishes further more that the size of the industry was considerable and that the coming of the Europeans further expanded it in terms of not just increase in production but also in terms of labour power.

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[7] Om Prakash, *Bullion for Goods*, p.279

[8] ibid. p.279.

[9] Susil Chaudhuri, 'European Companies and the Bengal Textile Industry in the 18th Century: The Pitfalls of Applying Quantitative Techniques', Modern Asian Studies, vol.27, no.2, May 1993.

[10] Om Prakash, 'On Estimating the Employment Implication of European Trade for the 18th Century Bengal Textile Industry- A Reply', Modern Asian Studies, vol.27, no.2, May 1993.

Types of Fabrics, Aurungs and a Study of the Geographical Milieu:

Within Bengal several sorts of cloth were produced. According to Taylor, the Dacca resident, 100 varieties of cloth were manufactured in the looms[11]. There is reason to believe that more than a hundred varieties of cloth were produced as the European companies only recorded those cloths which were exported by the Companies to Europe and other related markets. By the time the European Companies came to trade with Bengal, specialization of production was already the order of the day. Several varieties of cloth that Bengal was known to produce were produced in looms of specific areas within the region. In order to understand this aspect it is necessary to look at some of the areas which specialized in producing a certain type of fabric, which requires the division of the fabrics into various categories. The piece goods can be divided into three broad categories: muslins, ordinary cotton cloth or calicoes and mixed fabrics. Also it is necessary to divide the textile producing regions into various zones for a better understanding of regional specialization of the fabrics. The main textile producing villages seem to be concentrated between the north and south of Bengal and mainly in the east of Bengal. Small pockets of weaving villages are also seen in the west of Bengal around the Patna region and in extreme south of Bengal, around the town of Balasore.[12] These regions can be divided in zones: north, central, south and east. In the north the most important towns were that of Rangpur, Rajshahi and Malda.[13] These towns were not just weaving centers but more importantly markets for the surrounding manufacturing villages. In the central zone

[11] BTC; also K N Chaudhuri and Irwin and Schwartz have mentioned several varieties exported by the European companies.

[12] K N Chaudhuri, *Trading world of Asia*, p.248.(see map no.l)

[13] ibid.

the most prominent places were that of Murshidabad and Kasimbazar.[14] Kasimbazar and Murshidabad were both important commercial regions and that the latter was also an important seat of administration. Hugli and Calcutta were important markets as well as textile towns of the southern zone. Dacca on the other hand was the most important city of Eastern Bengal.[15] Scholars such as K N Chaudhuri and Om Prakash have shown that the regions in the north and north east of Bengal specialized in producing ordinary plain white cotton cloths. Whereas fine quality cloths were produced in the central, south and east zones of Bengal.[16]

Among the fine quality cloths, muslin[17] was the most popular. While K N Chaudhuri has listed twelve sorts of muslins, scholars such as J C Sinha claim that there were at least eighteen varieties.[18] Dacca was not the only region where muslin was produced. Sironj, Broach, Baroda and Navsari were some of the other regions where muslin of probably inferior quality was produced.[19] Madras was another region where muslin was manufactured and in degree of fineness was second only to Dacca.[20] However Dacca muslin stood out from that of the other regions as its

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[14] ibid.

[15] ibid.

[16] see map no.2

[17] *Hobson Jobson*, p.600, 'there seem to be no doubt that this word is derived from Mosul on Tigris and it has been from an old date the name of a texture, but apparently not always that of the thin semi transparent tissue we now apply it'

[18] J C Sinha, 'The Dacca Muslin Industry', The Modern Review, vol.34, 1925.

[19] J N Sarkar, 'Industries in Mughal India', The Modern Review, June 1922.

[20] Forbes J.Watson, *The Textile Manufactures and the Costumes of People of India*, London, 1866, p.76.

fineness and superior quality was unrivalled so much so that Forbes J Watson points out 'very fine muslins of India' are inevitably referred to as 'Dacca muslin'[21]

Muslins were also of varying qualities and were distinguished by their fineness. To place these in descending order, the finest sorts were known by poetic names, as an ode to their beauty and exquisiteness. (These included *'malmal khas'* (king's malmal)[22], *'abrawan'* (running water), *'shabnam'* (evening dew), *'circar ali'*, *'tanjeb'*, *'jungle khass'* *'jamdani'* and *'nayansook'*. Forbes points out that each of these were produced in Dacca. The terms *'malmal khas'* and *'circar Ali'* reveal not just the fineness of the fabric but also the identity of its customers. These were the products of the 'malboos kaus cooties' or the special workshops set up for the imperial household. Other finer varieties but not the finest included, *'buddun'*, *'khas'*[23], *'kumees'*, *'jhuna'*, *'rang'*[24], *'alaballee'*, *'turudam'*[25], *'dooreas'*[26], *'charkana'*. Apart from Dacca, villages around it were also known to weave cloths of varying qualities. Some of these important villages included Sonargaon, Bazetpur and Junglebarry. All these places were known for weaving plain cloths of fine quality while Sonargaon also wove a sort known as *'seerbund'* in addition to the plain cloths.

Some of other regions that produced muslin in Bengal included Malda (north), Santipur and Hugli.[27] The Malda region and the villages surrounding it produced

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[21] ibid. p.75.

[22] ibid. pp.75-79

[23] *Hobson Jobson*, p.480, 'special, particular, royal'

[24] ibid. p.708. also known as Raings-'rang is a muslin which resembles jhuna in its transparent gauze or net-like texture. It is made by passing a single thread of the warp through each division of reed'

[25] Watson, *The Textile Manufactures* p.76.

[26] ibid. p.77-78

[27] J C Sinha, 'The Dacca Muslin Industry'

mainly plain white cotton cloth of ordinary quality.[28] On the other hand cities such as Kasimbazar and Murshidabad specialized in producing mixed fabrics of fine quality. These were also regions which were known more for its silk products than cotton, hence some amount of mixed variety were also produced.[29] Apart from these plain white cotton cloths, chintz was also produced in the aurungs that were located around these important cities. The weaving villages around Hugli and Calcutta concentrated mainly on the production of plain whites, chintz and *charconnaes* and dooreas of fine quality.[30]

Having discussed the areas of specialized production, it is imperative to discuss the geographical milieu in which the textile weaving villages were set for a better understanding of their very existence in these particular regions. Within this context, analysis of aspects such as soil conditions, climate, agricultural production of the region, and location of markets, among other would help in understanding of the nature of the industry which existed in, and was sustained by the region.

Literature such as travel accounts are replete with praises form time immemorial of the textiles and the textile industry of Bengal which had already achieved a very high degree of excellence much before the period of study. The observers were so fascinated by superior quality and excellence of the manufacture that they inevitably linked it to the very surroundings in which the industry existed. Praises for the product of Bengal looms poured in even as late as the late 18th century. The Court of Directors of the English East India Company believed that the products,

[28] K N Chaudhuri, *Trading World*, p.244.

[29] ibid.

[30] ibid.

'Perhaps....owe a part of their delicacy, to the air and water of the country in which they are prepared...'[31] Since the Europeans hardly ever praised the subcontinent, the observation was more or less true. In fact there was much more to the existence of the industry than just 'air and water'. Therefore it is imperative to look at a few areas in each zone to derive a general picture of the state of affairs of the Bengal textile industry during the period, 1670-1740.

Thus beginning from Dacca in the eastern zone, as the most celebrated product of Bengal was undeniably, the Dacca muslin. Dacca, apart from being a manufacturing center for finest muslin was also the administrative seat of the Mughal government in the east, a mint town[32] and an important military station[33] for most of the 17th century. , Dacca was seated at the meeting point of important rivers of the east, Brahmaputra and Meghna. The region of Dacca was plain but its geographical aspects varied considerably across the region. Though Dacca was considered to be one of the most fertile regions in eastern Bengal, there was no uniformity in soil conditions and thus fertility also varied considerably. Two principal tributaries, Dhaleswari[34] and Lakhmia[35] of rivers Brahmaputra and Meghna respectively, flowed through, dividing the district into four zones, north, south which were further subdivided into west and east zones. Thus Dacca city was located in the western subdivision of the northern zone, at a point where Lakhmia flowing from north met

[31] BTC, no.21, vol. 77, 1789

[32] W W Hunter, *Statistical Account of the Dacca District*, Delhi, 1973, p.68.

[33] Thomas Bowrey, *A Geographical Account of Countries Round the Bay of Bengal, 1669-1679*, (ed.) Sir Richard Temple, London 1938, p.150.

[34] Hunter, *Dacca*, p.20

[35] ibid, p.21.

river Dhaleswari. Dacca thus consisted of two main types of soil, 'red kankur[36] with strata of clay'[37] and 'alluvial earth'.[38] While the former was found in the northern part of the Dacca city, the fertile alluvial soil was found in most part of the district especially near streams and river banks and in the southern zone of the district.[39] Thus the fertility of the region was attributed to numerous rivers and their tributaries which could be seen intersecting the Dacca district especially the southern zone. The rivers and channels also formed important network of communication. Bowrey observed that 'a fine and large river that runneth close by the walls thereof, navigable by ships of 5 or 600 tunns of burthen, and the water of the river being an arm of the Ganges is extraordinary good...'[40]

Extensive cultivation was carried out in the fertile regions of the district. Rice was grown all over the district, extensively. Three main types of rice were cultivated. These included the *boro*(superior quality, crop of chars or newly formed lands), *aus*(autumn rice) and the *aman*(cold weather crop) varieties Apart from rice several varieties of pulses, such as *matar*, *kalai*, *masuri*, *mug* and *but* or gram, were also cultivated. Oil seeds, such as *sarisha*(mustard), *til* (sesamum)and *tisi* (linseed)were also grown[41] Another important crop of the district, which directly concerns this study, was the cultivation of cotton. Taylor, a former resident of Dacca, gives a detailed account of cotton cultivation of the district. Taylor observed that,

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[36] *Hobson Jobson*, p.496, 'gravel....a coarse kind of limestone found in the soil....in nodules of various sizes, though usually small.'

[37] Hunter, *Dacca District*, p.18.

[38] ibid, p.19.

[39] ibid, p.19.

[40] Bowrey, *Geographical Account*, p.150.

[41] Hunter, *Statistical Account of Dacca*, pp.82-84.

> the material of which the fine Dacca muslin are made, is entirely the produce of the district...the staple of the cotton is longer, much finer and softer. This is the *desee* or indigenous cotton of the district...there were different shades of quality observable in the staple...they were known by the names *phootee*, *nurmah*, and *bairaite*...two crops are raised in the district: they are gathered in April and September, but the first yields the finest produce, and is one that is chiefly cultivated.[42]

Cotton cultivation was not restricted to Dacca alone, but what distinguished Dacca from other regions was the fact that only in Dacca district of Bengal, the cultivation of the finest quality of cotton was carried out.

Cotton cultivation was also carried out in the Malda and Rangpur districts of northern Bengal[43]. Five variety of cotton was grown in these districts, namely '*Barabangia*', '*Beratta*', '*Narma*' and '*Banga*' in the Malda district and '*Chungleah*' in the district of Rangpur.[44] These were of medium quality cotton.[45]

The district of Malda was situated on the banks of, river Mahanada which flowed from the north of the district and continued to flow through it towards south till it joined the great river Ganges thereby dividing the district into west and east zone.[46]

The western part of the district was considered to be more fertile due to the rich alluvium deposits found in the soil, from the great river Ganges and Mahanada. The eastern half of the district was less fertile as the soil consisted of 'hard red clay'[47]

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[42] James Taylor, *A Sketch of the Topography and Statistics of Dacca*, Calcutta, 1840, pp.130-131.

[43] Hameeda Hossain, *The Company Weavers of Bengal*, p.32

[44] ibid, pp.30-31.

[45] Hossain, p.32

[46] W.W Hunter, *Statistical Account of the District of Maldah*, Delhi, 1973, p.20

[47] ibid, p.21.

Rice was the staple crop and was cultivated on both the sides of the district. Hunter points out that with the exception of rice of which four varieties were cultivated, namely *boro, bhadai*(similar to *aus*), *aman* and *haimantik*, the cultivation of other cereals were not given much importance. A few varieties of oil seeds were also grown (mustard and linseed) were also grown within the district.[48] The district of Malda and the surrounding regions were known to weave cotton cloths of ordinary quality as mentioned above.

A region closer to the district of Malda, that was known to produce considerable amount of piece goods of mixed variety, was that of the district of Murshidabad and its surrounding regions of Rajshahi, Burdwan and Nadia of the central zone. Murshidabad was of considerable commercial importance being situated on the main trade routes. It also became an important seat of Mughal administration in the east, with the shift in capital from Dacca with a consequent exodus of the Dacca's famous Jagat Seth house hold, thereby making it also an important mint town after Dacca.

The surface of this unlike the regions so far mentioned was not plain but had elevations and depressions. The important river flowing through this district was river Bhagirathi which divided the region into two, the western and the eastern division.[49] While the west was more of an elevated region, the east in sharp contrast was lowland. This pattern of surface determined the fertility condition of the respective regions. The latter area was more fertile than the former and received it precious alluvial deposits from three important rivers, that of river Ganges and its two principal

[48] ibid. for more details see pp.70-72.

[49] L.S.S O'Malley, *Gazetteer of the Murshidabad District*, Calcutta, 1914, p.1

tributaries, the Bhagirathi and the Jalangi.[50] The eastern division was known as Bagri.[51] While in the western side of the district, known as Rarh, the soil conditions varied considerably. The soil comprised the hard red clay, also known as *'kunkur'* soil and was also present in other districts. However there were also small pockets of rich alluvial soil in the regions that was found mainly in the areas of depression where considerable amount of rain water would get accumulated. The staple crop of this district was rice of two main varieties (*aman* and *aus)*[52] Alongside rice, pulses and other cereals were also grown.[53] Cotton namely *murshidabadi* and *bogga*, of medium quality was grown in the district, while the neighbouring district of Rajshahi cultivated only the *bogga* variety.[54]

The southern zone of Bengal comprised the districts of Nadia, Burdwan, Bishnupur, Bankura and Hugli among other. Most of these districts were known to have cultivated cotton of middling quality such as *'khurwa'*, *'muhri'*, *'bogga'*, and *'caur narma'*.[55] Hugli was one of the most important districts of the southern zone and derived its name from the river Hugli on the banks of which it was situated.[56]

According to O'Malley, the district of Hugli was mainly 'a product of its rivers'. Four important rivers passed through this district, namely the Hugli, Dwarakeshwar and the Damodar and Rupnarayan.[57] The strips of land between these

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[50] ibid, p.3

[51] ibid, p.1

[52] ibid, p.101.

[53] ibid, see p.102 for further detail.

[54] Hossain, pp.29-32.

[55] Ibid, pp.30-32.

[56] O'Malley, *Gazetteer of the Hooghly District*, Calcutta, 1912, p.1

[57] ibid, pp.5-6.

rivers differed greatly in their physical aspects. Thus the most fertile piece of land in this district is considered to be the one in between the rivers Hugli and Dwarakeshwar to the west of it. This strip was well watered by these two rivers and the soil comprised mainly of alluvium deposits. However in sharp contrast to this the land beyond Dwarakeshwar, to the west of it comprised mainly of red *kunkur* soil with mixture of alluvium. On the other hand, the land hedged by Dwarakeshwar and Damodar was very fertile as the soil was mainly made up of silt and sand deposited by heavy inundation. Along with these rivers several other smaller rivers and streams passed through the district intersecting it completely and giving it a deltaic impression. However as a result of the passage of several water bodies the district was rendered very fertile due to thick deposit of alluvium soil. Thus extensive cultivation was carried out here. The staple crop cultivated was that of rice of which three main varieties (*boro*, *aus* and *aman*) were grown.[58] In addition to rice several varieties of pulses and oilseeds were also cultivated in the district.[59]

Thus having analyzed the geographical aspects of a few district located in the main textile producing zones, certain similarities can be identified in each of these district and a general conclusion can be arrived at. Most of these districts owed their fertility to the existence of numerous rivers and their tributaries, big and small that passed through most of these districts. Yearly inundation ensured a continued supply of rich alluvium soil. The region that experienced yearly inundation was considerable and covered most of the areas which scholars such as K N Chaudhuri and Om Prakash have pointed out to be the main textile producing zones of Bengal. These regions

[58] Ibid, pp.139-40

[59] ibid, pp. 141-142.

mainly concentrated on the cultivation of important food grains required for everyday existence. Certain crops such as *aus* variety of rice, and several varieties of oil seeds were grown in most of the above mentioned textile producing districts. Also considerable cultivation of cotton was undertaken in most of the mentioned districts, but it certainly did not surpass that of the food grains. Scholars such as Rajat Datta has pointed that the above mentioned foodgrains were important part of a poor man's diet[60] Thus the abundant supply of foodgrains assured that the poorest of the lot, the functional class would not have to face starvation due to the abundance of food grains. Datta also points out that cultivation of cotton though profitable was a very expensive affair and could not be undertaken by ordinary peasants.[61] Apart from the limitations posed by the ecological and topographical aspects upon the cultivation of crops, resource constraints was certainly one of the reasons for under cultivation of a crop that was so integral to one of the most dominant industries of Bengal. Because of money constraints cultivation of cotton was mainly limited to the medium or inferior qualities. Bowrey describes Bengal as,

> one of the largest and most potent kingdoms of Hindostan....blessed with many fine rivers...first for the great river of Ganges...upon the banks of which are seated many faire villages...affording great plenty of cottons..butter..oyles (oils), rice, gramme, with many other beneficiall commodities to satisfy this and many other kingdoms' [62]

Thus the high degree of productivity of the land was attributed to its rivers, most important of which were Ganges and Brahmaputra that flowed into Bengal. The

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[60] Rajat Datta, *Society, Economy and the Market: Commercialization in Rural Bengal, c. 1760-1800* , Delhi 2000, p.192

[61] Datta, *Society*, p.53.

[62] Bowrey, *Geographical Account*, pp.131-133.

characteristic feature of these rivers at least of Ganges was its continuing shift towards the east, which in turn created numerous tributaries and branches which penetrated most of the land mass of Bengal.[63] During the shift in the course of the rivers towards the east several smaller branches were rendered inactive. However these smaller branches were rendered navigable during the monsoons when considerable amount of water from parent channel flowed into these branches.

These rivers and tributaries not only rendered the land fertile but were also very important means of communication. Bowrey pointed out that 'kingdom of Bengala is replenished with many faire and pleasant rivers, the most famous and much admired of which is the great river Ganges....the other brave and navigable rivers are for the most part only branches of this.'[64] Thus the rivers and its tributaries linked the remotest regions of Bengal leading to an integration of villages and towns.

This integration was completed by two important networks that of roads and markets. The network of roads intersected the region of Bengal as completely as the rivers. The roads ranged from ones connecting villages to roads linking important towns in Bengal and these towns to the other important cities of the subcontinent.[65] The market network included varying range of markets, from big cities such as Hugli, Dacca, Kasimbazar, Murshidabad, Balasore, Patna to name a few. Though these big bazaars were important even more important were those markets that could be accessed by both the producers as well as the purchasers. These included the village haats which were held once or twice a week; and also religious fairs where

[63] Richard Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and The Bengal frontier 1204-1260*, Delhi, 1994, pp.194-198

[64] Bowrey, pp.165-6

[65] Chaudhuri, *Trading World*, p.48.

considerable amount of goods were bought and sold. The region of Bengal was dotted with these small and well organized markets by the late 17th century facilitating considerable trade. It was from these markets that the merchants purchased most of the goods and carried them to the big markets using either the road or the water transport.

A study of the location of the textile industry is not complete without the analysis of the implications of the above mentioned factors on those that were involved with textile industry. Food products such as rice, oil and pulses were extensively cultivated as mentioned above and there fore abundantly available to the people. It would be worth while to look at the price of some of the commodities available. Om Prakash has pointed out that the prices of the wage goods, namely rice, wheat, clarified butter and sugar, remained more or less stable throughout the period of study. Thus only in the year 1700-01 did the price of rice rose above rupees 1 per maund. Also wheat could be procured for less than a rupee; exceptional years where the price rose above a rupee are few. On the other hand the price of clarified butter remained more or less between rupees 4 to 6; whereas the price of sugar did not rise above rupees 4.[66]

On the other hand the wages according to Taylor, which a weaver could earn, certainly depended on the kind of cloth that was woven by the weaver. Thus a master weaver of fine quality cloth such as the 'mulmull caus', could net a profit of Rs. 41 which he then had to share with the weaver and the journeymen who were employed by him at

[66] Om Prakash, *The Dutch East India Company*, pp.252-253.

'Rupees 3 to 3 rupees 8 anna and 1 rupee 8 anna to 1 rupee 12 anna per month'[67], respectively. The remainder it is assumed was pocketed by the master weaver.

On the other hand the wages of a weaver of jamdani cloth depended on the number of gudge(yard) he could weave, thus he earned: '3 rupees and half per gudge of cloth and therefore could earn up to rupees 105 per piece of 52 gudge.....[68] These incomes of the weavers were also supplemented by the womenfolk of the house hold who spent their spare time in spinning of yarns and at times earning probably the same amount as the man if she chose to take to weaving. These figures showed that the weavers in Bengal did not have to starve even if they did not have a large income or profit because of the availability of necessities at reasonable rates. These figures also ensured a low cost of production of fabric where the weaver did not have to spend exorbitant sum on food grains even if there was no increase in his income. Thus scholars have pointed out that it was this 'price differential' that the European Companies took advantage of during the period of study. The advantages an artisan was exposed to, in Bengal becomes apparent form a reply to letter by madras factors, dated 28th November 1661,

> it must be a worke of time. Neither may you ever expect that .....for all provisions of victual, when at the cheapest, is here (madras) three times dearer then in Cassambazar and Huighly....and consequently the weavers and other workemen employed therein can maintain themselves at 2/3rd less than those that shall be employed in this your towne....[69]

[67] BTC, vol. 156, 1801

[68] ibid.

[69] Foster, *English Factories, 1661*, p.65.

Cloth Marts, Merchants and Buyers:

That the produce of the Bengal looms formed an important item of export proved that production exceeded the demands of the local market. While the textiles from other regions of the subcontinent formed a part of wider market system, the fabrics of Bengal aurungs were no exception to the trend. Textiles produced in Bengal found acceptance among numerous categories of purchasers and an even larger market, both spread over a wide geographical region.

The dispersal of the cloths from their aurungs was greatly facilitated by the highly developed market network system of the time both within the subcontinent as well as outside it. The markets for the Bengal textiles can be divided into two broad categories, Asia and Europe. The Asian markets included those located in the east and west of Asia as well as the domestic, interprovincial ones of the Indian subcontinent. The European markets on the other hand included not only the respective countries of the East India Companies but also the related markets in Europe to which textiles were then re exported.

Although the evidence for various textile markets, and the volume consumed by each of these markets are scarce and scattered as the markets themselves, attempt would be made to trace them and situate them in a larger picture of market network which would in turn give a sense of the size of the textile manufacturing sector of Bengal. However it has to be kept in perspective that Bengal fabrics was only a part of the total Indian textiles made available as far as the overseas markets were concerned and given the scarcity of evidence it is difficult to ascertain the percentage of Bengal cloth sold in each market.

Some of the most important markets for Indian textiles in Europe were obviously those countries that sent their merchant companies to Asia. These then included England, Holland, Denmark, and France among others. European merchants played an important role in carrying of textiles among other goods to these big markets.

As far as the European markets are concerned, the percentage of Bengal cloth in the total textile export from India to these parts increased considerably during the period of study especially from the last decade of the 17th century. Having said this, one must remember that the contribution from other textile producing regions such as the Coromandel Coast to the total Indian textiles was no less significant during the last few decades of the 17th century, although important zones such as Gujarat had already begun to wane. Availability of Indian textiles in the European markets was not uncommon. Cloth from India was available to the Europeans even in the beginning of the 17th century, but what was striking was the considerable increase in demand for Indian fabrics in the late 17th and early 18th centuries was considerable. It seemed that the European markets were flooded not just with Indian textiles but also with European purchasers from every social group who came to buy from the several varieties of Indian textiles which were now available to them. So spectacular was the penetration of Indian cloth in European markets and societies by the end of the 17th century that K N Chaudhuri compares it to the 'discovery and spread of tobacco, potato, coffee, tea and American silver'.[70] Scholars such as KN Chaudhuri, Susil Chaudhuri and Om Prakash have attributed the spread and popularity in Europe to the

[70] Chaudhuri, *Trading World*, p.277.

changing taste of consumers and the increasing dominance of Indian fabric in the European fashion circuit.

Cotton cloth was especially popular in late 17th century as part of the dress for both men and women. During the hot seasons dresses made of cotton cloth were especially preferred by Europeans over wool and silk clothing. The fact that cotton cloth was light and easily washable made it popular among the people, and that it came in several varieties, dyed as well as printed and patterned added to the attraction. Among the rich and wealthy women of aristocratic bearing of Holland and England, Bengal muslin was very popular.[71] These included jamdannees, nainsooks and seerhaudconnaes among others.[72] These were muslins of luxury quality. Keeping in mind the taste of the aristocratic section of European, the English East India Company was handed over the task of procuring cloths embroidered with silver and gold thread that was produced in the Dacca looms.[73] Procurement of this cloth seemed to be one of the main attractions that lured the English into opening a factory in Dacca and to keep it open despite facing many difficulties. However other sections of the society were not deprived from being fashionable. Variety of muslins[74], several types of ordinary cotton cloth[75] and mixed fabrics of cotton and silk[76] were available for all pockets.

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[71] ibid, p.282.

[72] ibid, pp.504-505.

[73] Bengal Public Consultation, 15th April, 1723.

[74] Chaudhuri, *Trading World*, pp.503-505. These included *addaties, cossaes, dysookies, dimities, dosooties, hum mums, mulmuls, shalbafts, seerbettees, seer bands, tanjebs and terrindams.*

[75] Ibid, pp.503-505. These included baftas, *chillaes, chowtars, coopees, cushtaes, and cuttanees.*

[76] ibid, pp.503-505. These *allibanies, carridaries, cherconnaes, chucklaes, doreas, elatches, ginghams, romalls* (handkerchiefs), *nillaes, peniascoes, seersuckers, sooseys, and tepoy*

Before Indian textiles could be used for the European wardrobe, it was mainly used for domestic purpose such as bedspread, tablecloths and as 'house furnishing'.[77] Mainly coarse cotton cloth was used for this purpose and these included *atchabannies, chintz, emerties, gurrahs, lacowries, photaes* and *sannoes*[78].

The varieties mentioned above were not just confined to the European markets and to the European purchasers. The intention of the East India companies was not just to supply the European population, but that an even greater profit came from exporting the textiles from Europe to other parts of the world. Some of the biggest and most profitable textile markets were located in the Mediterranean, and Africa and the Americas. In fact, as pointed out by K N Chaudhuri, a triangular link existed between Europe, Africa and America[79] and the common factor between these three regions was textiles from India.

The percentage of cloth sold in the markets mentioned above was considerable as the European Companies competed fiercely with each other to send as much as piece goods that they could to Europe. The Companies got stiff competition from the European private traders or interlopers.

Although it is agreed by scholars that the European Companies controlled only 17%-20% of the Bengal textile industry, the percentage was not insignificant. However this also points out to the fact that the greater part of the industry was dominated by the indigenous or rather the Asian merchants. This approximate percentage of textile carriage by the Europeans also affirmed that despite an

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[77] ibid, p.282.

[78] ibid, pp.503-505

[79] ibid.

expanding market in Europe and the markets supported by Europe, a bigger and more dominating market for the Indian fabrics lay in and around the subcontinent, in its Asian neighbourhood.

Within the subcontinent, Bengal cloth had carved its own space in the existing market network. However severe limitations in the realization of the market size for Bengal fabrics are caused by the lack of adequate documentation on the volume carried to the markets by the various groups of merchants. The documentation of the trade carried out by the Asian merchant is scarce and scattered in sharp contrast to its European counterpart. Another important hindrance is the scarcity of the knowledge of percentage composition of each type of fabric in the total Bengal textiles carried by the merchant groups. However unlike European markets where consumers could choose from only a limited variety of cloth brought by the Companies or the private merchants, the option open to the Indian customer of purchasing any variety of cloth was vast. This was because in the Indian subcontinent, as H K Naqvi among other scholars' points out, the cotton textile industry was not just predominant over other textile industry (silk and wool) but more importantly it was a highly diffused industry.[80] Thus every region, Naqvi feels gave the impression of producing cotton cloth mostly as a household affair. Thus what is attempted here is to point out that the basic needs of each region in the subcontinent was fulfilled or partially fulfilled by production of that region itself. Thus when regions, in this case Bengal, supplied to markets in other provinces, it found a space in the those markets on the basis of its specialties which it had to offer in addition to the already existing stock of locally manufactured fabrics in those markets.

[80] H K Naqvi, *Urban Centers and Industries in Upper India,* 1550-1803, London.1968

Movement of textiles among other goods within the Indian subcontinent was greatly facilitated by well developed network of merchants and markets. Traditional groups of merchants, most important among them were the Gujaratis, Hindu merchants, and Armenians among others, frequented the markets of Bengal to purchase cloth and sell them at profitable price in other provincial markets and those outside the subcontinent. William Bolts, an Official with the English East India Company, gives a detailed account of the several groups of merchants that visited the Bengal marts:

> .....in former times it was customary for merchants from all the inland parts of Asia, and even Tartary, to resort to Bengal with little else than money or bills to purchase the commodities of the provinces. A variety of merchants of different nations and religions such as Cashmeerians, Multanys,Patans, Sheikhs, Suniassys, Poggyahs, Betteeas and many others used to resort to Bengal annually, in Caffulahs, or large parties, of many thousands together (with troops of oxens for the transport of goods) from different parts of Hindostan.....[81]

These merchants either purchased the cloth personally or sent their brokers and agents to various aurungs and cloth marts. Cloth from Bengal was certainly carried as return goods by these merchants as they were also the ones who supplied the needs of Bengal by importing goods into region, but if Bolts is to be believed these merchants came with only money in their hands which may not be entirely true. However these were not the only group of merchants engaged in trade with Asian countries. European companies also participated alongside in the inland as well as in the Asian trade. Apart from the Companies there were also European individuals who carried out considerable amount of private trade.

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[81]William Bolts, *Considerations on India Affair*, London ,1772, p.200

Market for Bengal fabric was spread over a vast geographical area covering most of Asia. Within the Indian subcontinent cloth was sent from Bengal aurungs to important regions such as Madras in the eastern and Malabar in the western coast. But upper India was by far the largest market for Bengal textiles in the Indian subcontinent. In most of these regions land routes and also water ways were frequently used for transporting the commodities. Cloth was sold in important markets of Upper India such as Agra, Delhi, and Lahore and from these big cities to Central Asia which was its favoured destination. As pointed out earlier, northern India during the period of study was producing considerable amount cotton piece goods for local consumption as well as for export trade. 'Tooranies, Puttans, Moguls and Hindoos'[82] were some of the important merchant groups that carried several sorts of textiles from Bengal. These included, 'fine cloths superfine and fine superfine terrindams, small striped dooreas, abroahs and sublums for peshwasses (or dresses), cogzie dooreas and superfine seerbunds (and), principally low priced goods worn by the natives'.[83] The textile manufacturing industry in this region was predominantly an urban one. Thus cotton cloths were produced in some of the biggest cities of the town, namely Lahore, Delhi, Agra, Lucknow, Beneras and Patna. Apart from these, there were numerous smaller towns and cities that dotted the northern provinces. The above mentioned cities did provide market for consumption of Bengal cloth but they played an even more important role. Most of these towns and cities lay on important trade routes to central Asia and were also well connected to other regions of the subcontinent, thus becoming important points of transit traffic where goods from all over the

[82] BTC, vol.156, 1801.

[83] Ibid.

subcontinent and also from other parts of the world mainly through the land routes. These were points where goods changed hands and directions. Central Asian merchants came in large caravans[84] to these transit points using the Kabul-Lahore overland route[85], especially to cities such as Agra. These merchants mainly brought fruits, both in fresh and dried forms and they earned enough by selling them to be able to purchase varieties of textiles from Bengal as well as from other regions of the subcontinent.[86] Patna played a central role in making Bengal cloths available to these foreign merchants.[87] Some of the varieties available from the eastern looms were 'alijahs, (and) maldah dupattas'.[88] Agra was also a region where the European companies may have first purchased their Bengal cloth, much before they even decided to trade with Bengal directly, at least in the case of English East India Company.[89] Some of the most important merchant groups that traded between Central Asia and Upper India were the Armenians and the Mughals. Among the Bengal variety, the Armenians mainly carried, "low priced goods, baftaes, seerbunds, mamudhiattues, coarse muslin...."[90], whereas the Mughals selected, "fine and coarse, but principally the latter....for foreign consumption".[91] The size of their trade in Bengal can be understood by the value of the cloth carried. According to Taylor, "the tooranies from 1732-1747 inclusive, a period of 15 years, 15 lac of Dacca cloths", while the "pattans exported from 1737-1747 inclusive a period 10 years, 15 lac of

[84] Naqvi, *Urban Centres*, p.43

[85] ibid, pp.41-42.

[86] ibid, pp.43-45.

[87] Ibid, pp.44-45.

[88] William Foster (ed.), *English Factories in India*, 1618-21, p.142

[89] ibid

[90] BTC, vol. 156, 1801.

[91] BTC, vol.156, 1801.

Dacca goods".[92] Armenians and Mughal merchants on the other hand purchased cloth not "less than 2 or 3 lac"[93] on an average.

The home markets on the other hand were provided for mainly by the 'hindoo'[94] merchants, who seemed to supply the needs of mainly the natives, and therefore traded mostly in ordinary cloths.

Some of the most celebrated customers ranged from the royals of the Indian subcontinent, nobles of provincial courts to the aristocrats of Europe. Some of the terms used for the fabrics gave away the identity of the customers, such as 'malmal khas' and 'circar ali' to name a few. Cloth of finest quality worth rupees 1, 00,000 were annually sent for the Emperor of Delhi. The Nabob of Murshidabad and the nobles at his court purchased cloth worth rupees 3, 00,000 annually; whereas Jagat Seat spent rupees 1, 50,000 yearly on Bengal cloth for home consumption.[95]

CONCLUSION:

On the eve of active European participation in the Bengal trade, the textile industry of Bengal was very well developed. This meant that not only was the producing zone well connected to the markets but that there was also a considerable degree of specialization of productions. These were some of the reasons that added to the popularity and demand of the Bengal cloth. Unlike the textile industries of Upper India which were urban in nature, those of Bengal were both urban as well as rural, with a bent more towards the latter. This characteristic of the Bengal textile industry

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[92] ibid

[93] ibid.

[94] Ibid

[95] ibid.

was due to the surroundings in which the industry was located. Favourable conditions for the flourishing of the industry were created by the ecology and topography of the region. Important factors contributing to this was the abundance of food supply available at low prices due to the fertility of soil conditions. Important contributions in this regard were made by the several rivers intersecting the land, at the same time also providing also providing important communication network. Alongside the water routes, there were also land routes facilitating the movement of both men and materials. To this was added well developed network of merchants and markets that facilitated the Commercial activities of the time. All these factors, on the other hand also ensured that the weaver lived comfortably and also because he had the freedom of movement and most importantly the power to bargain for his goods. Thus with the increase of demand for Bengal cloth from the European markets, weaving may have seemed a lucrative job, attracting many to it during the period.

CHAPTER - II

EUROPEAN COMPANIES, TRADE, TREASURE AND MONEY

CHAPTER TWO

EUROPEAN COMPANIES, TRADE, TREASURE AND MONEY

The period of study c.1670-1740 witnessed a considerable growth in the textile trade of the Bengal, and especially in the share of Companies trade in the region. This section, however does not take into account the export trade of the other European Companies trading in Bengal as it was limited relative to the Dutch and English. Thus long distant export trade of such a magnitude as that of these two European Companies was made possible through high level of organization both within the Companies as well as the trade. These organization and managements were in turn based on knowledge generated through regular correspondence on every aspects of trade. This in turn was supported with diplomatic and commercial relationships at various administrative (political), economic and social level. However at the end of the day, all organizational and managerial skills and establishment of well calculated relations would have proved futile if the Europeans did not the ability and means to back their trade with huge supplies of treasure in the form of bullion. All these aspects contributed towards the survival and success of a hugely profitable trade, but of all the above mentioned factors, the last was the most important.

Volume and Value of Export Trade (textiles) and the European Companies:

The export trade carried out by two giant European Companies of the 17th and 18th centuries, the Dutch and English, in Bengal for almost 70years, was considerable by any standard, is by now a well known fact. The magnitude of the export trade has been expressed both in terms of volume and value of the textiles exported, in the

pioneering works of scholar such as Om Prakash and K N Chaudhuri for Dutch and English East India Company, respectively.

A steady rise in the VOC's export of textiles from Bengal is witnessed from the beginning of the period of study. With a very humble beginning at 21.93% in 1675-6, the number of piece goods (cotton and mixed) exported during this period was approximately 33,477.[1] A continuous increase in textile export (cotton, silk and mixed piece goods) is witnessed from 1700 onwards. An average export of 54.19% (1701-3) to 49.03% (1722-3) was maintained for the next 30years or so.[2] Maximum numbers of Bengal piece goods were exported by the Dutch in 1709-10, at 4, 51,585 pieces of cloth.[3] This figure was also the highest figure for a period of almost 10 years (1700-1710) during which time the Dutch textile export reached their peak. This period also marks a considerable increase of 61% to 76% in Dutch export of textiles to Europe, and a concomitant decline in export to regions like, Coromandel, Malabar and Ceylon.[4] This shows the direction of Dutch export trade, with Europe gaining importance over the Asian markets of the VOC. The minimum number of textiles exported during these ten years did not fall below, 1, 70, 998 piece goods (1712-13).[5]

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[1] Om Prakash, *Dutch East India Company*, Princeton, 1985. This figure has been reached by adding the cotton and mixed piece goods, year wise. The numbers of silk piece goods have not been taken into account. Also this result has been arrived at by taking into account the total number of Bengal piece goods exported each year to Holland, Indonesian archipelago, Japan, Persia, Coromandel, Ceylon and Malabar (Refer to table no.2)

[2] Om Prakash, *The New Cambridge History of India: European Commercial Enterprise in Pre-Colonial India*, Cambridge University Press, 1998(first edition), First paperback edition, 2000. P.213. Here Om Prakash has taken into account all three categories of textiles, i.e. cotton, silk and mixed.

[3] Om Prakash, *Dutch East India* (Refer to table no.2)

[4] Prakash, Dutch East, pp.168-69

[5] Refer to table no.1

The years when the Dutch exported maximum numbers of textiles from Bengal (1700-1717) were also the years when maximum volume of 'treasure', mainly silver bullion, imported into Asia was directed towards Bengal. For a period of 20 years from 1697-1717, a minimum of 83.45% (1697) to a maximum of 96.99% (1717) of total treasure imported into Asia was invested in Bengal.[6] However what is not known is the percentage share of treasure, from the Bengal share, which was invested in procurement of textiles in general and that of cotton piece goods in particular.

The English East India Company also exported considerable volume of textiles from Bengal during the period of study. During 1670-1709, considerable fluctuations in the textile export were witnessed, with volume varying between a minimum of 800 pieces in 1674 to a maximum of 2, 74,541 pieces (1700)[7]. A gradual and steady increase in English export of Bengal fabrics began from 1710, and this growth was maintained till the end of the period of study. On the other hand, in this particular year the volume of Dutch textile exports had reached its maximum at 2, 62,288 piece goods. Thus the English East India Company for the next 30 years or so, continued to export considerably large volume of textiles from Bengal, with the volume not falling below 1,61,472 pieces (1722). New heights in textile export were reached from 1725 onwards. The peak was reached in 1727, when the Company exported 8, 22,035 pieces.[8] This was also the highest figure in terms of volume that the Company had exported in 70 years or so. Thus while the number of piece goods

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[6] Prakash, *Dutch East India*, pp.66-67.

[7] Chaudhuri, *Trading World*, pp.544-45

[8] ibid.

exported by the English is known from the figures provided by K.N.Chaudhuri, what is not known is the percentage share of cotton and mixed cloth in the total export. Also unlike the case of the VOC, where the volume of total import of treasure into Bengal is known, but not the share of the treasure spent on textiles, in the case of the English, the percentage of treasure imported into Bengal from the total treasure imported into Asia, is not known. K.N.Chaudhuri provides figures for the volume of treasure spent to purchase textiles each year during the period of study. Thus the value of textiles can be pitted against the total treasure imported into Asia to get a sense of the percentage of treasure the English Company spent for procuring Bengal textiles. Such a comparison reveals that for almost 40 years (1670-1710) the percentage of treasure allotted to procure Bengal textiles fluctuated considerably. Thus in 1674, only 0.32% worth (of total treasure exported to Asia) of textiles were imported from Bengal. With an exception of few years the percentage value of textiles did not show an increase above 50% mark even in the next 15 years (1711-1725). The period from 1726 onwards, however witnessed a relative increase in percentage share of value of textiles imported from Bengal, with 84.6% of total treasure imported to Bengal, worth of textiles being exported from Bengal in 1727.[9] Thus what both Dutch and English had in common at the turn of the 18th century was that both the Companies were carrying out large volumes of textiles outside Bengal and at the same time employing considerable share of total treasure imported into Asia (by the respective Companies), for the procurement of the same.

Considerable increase in the Companies textile export from early 18th century onward also saw the intensification of decline in the other important textile producing

[9] ibid..

zone of the Indian subcontinent, i.e. the Coromandel Coast. In the beginning of the period of study, Coromandel was the most dominant textile producing zone, but during the next 70 years or so it had lost its position to Bengal in the Companies trade. Thus for 40 years (1700-1740), English export of textiles, saw a minimum of 45,520 piece goods(1732) and a maximum of 3,97,575 piece goods (1723)[10] being exported from Madras. During the same time period, the English exported a minimum of 36,311(1705) and a maximum of 8, 22,035(1727)[11] piece goods, from Bengal. What becomes clear from this comparison is gradual decline in the export of textiles from the former region and a sharp increase from the latter.

While it is difficult to know the number of piece goods exported by the VOC, from Madras, as the figures are not provided by Om Prakash, but the value of textiles exported for a period of almost 40 years is provided by him. However the value of textiles exported from Bengal is not available. Thus the only comparison it is possible is that between the treasures distributed into these regions by the VOC. For the period, 1700-1740, VOC is seen to distribute more treasure in Bengal relative to Madras. Thus Coromandel saw a minimum of 5, 61, 689 million florins being imported in 1731-2, whereas in the same year a minimum of 1, 781, 999 million florins were imported into Bengal. The maximum treasure exported to Coromandel and Bengal during the mentioned period was 1, 180, 714 and 3, 884, 482 million florins respectively during 1722-3.[12]

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[10] Chaudhuri, *Trading World*, pp.542-543

[11] ibid, pp.544-545

[12] Om Prakash, *New Cambridge*, p.98.

Thus both the case of the Dutch as well as the English East India Company had made Bengal its zone of priority both in terms of exporting textiles from and importing maximum treasure into Bengal. In the case of English the Bengal factors were also supplying the quota of Fort St. George. The increasing anxiety of the madras factors is clearly expressed in their letters to Fort William, requesting the Bengal factors to, 'assist them with a large quantity of bales apprehensive of a great deficiency in their investment in Madras.'[13] The decreasing production of Madras and therefore its growing inability to conform to the list of investment by mid 1720's becomes apparent by the letter to Fort William dated 18 July, 1726, '...Fort St. George will not be able to provide their quota of bales, they being apprehensive they shall not have above 2000 bales for January shipping, obliges us to use our best endeavours to provide what goods we possibly can...'[14] Fort St. George informed Fort William that, intensification of Maratha plundering had severely affected the English East India Company's business in Madras.[15] In addition to this, other factors such as famine had not only hindered production but also enhanced the cost of production and adversely affected the quality of the fabrics. However there was nothing new in the condition of Coromandel Coast, as these were part of the decline that had set in during the late 17th century. The Coromandel Coast never really managed to come anywhere close its glorious phase reached in the 1680's.[16] The factors behind the decline in Dutch trade in Coromandel were also more or less the

[13] BPC, 5th April, 1725.

[14] BPC, 18th July, 1726.

[15] BPC, 8th May, 1727.

[16] Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650-1740*, Oxford University Press, 1986, p.153; pp.190-91.

same. Political unrest terminated the success of Dutch export trade reached around the same time as their English counterparts.[17]

Partnership between European Companies and Bengal: A Study of Organization of Export Trade

During the period 1670- 1740 the trading world witnessed an active commercial nexus in Bengal, which was no doubt the most important commercial theater of this time, especially for the European companies. As mentioned earlier the focus here would be on the Dutch and the English East India Companies, as these Companies carried out considerable size of export trade from Bengal during the period of study. This however does not ignore the significance of other European Companies that operated from Bengal namely the French and the Danes among others. The more or less successful Euro- Asian trade, carried out for nearly 60-70 years was a result of the interplay of a highly competitive and diplomatic trading relations and administrative organization. The success of the Dutch and the English trade relative to their predecessor, the Portuguese, has been credited, to the detailed attention these European Companies gave to the planning and organizational aspect of trade. However it is difficult to understand the structure and organization of these Companies without tracing their origin and the purpose of these Companies.

Both the Dutch and the English East India Company came into existence more or less at the same time in early 17th century in its respective countries, Holland and England, for more or less similar reasons. The determination of the Portuguese and Spanish to obstruct the Dutch and the English from partaking in the profits from East

[17] Ibid, pp.150-51.

Indies trade, made the latter more firm in their decision to engage in the Indian Ocean trade.[18] Thus the English East India Company came into existence in 1600, followed by its Dutch counterpart two years later in 1602[19], the United East India Company (the VOC).[20] The purpose was purely mercantile, and thus without further delay fleets were fitted out and set sail to engage in the hugely profitable trade in the East Indies goods, especially the legendry spices. The commercial endeavours of both the Companies received complete support from their respective governments throughout the period of 150 years or so that the Companies traded in the East. However a detailed study of the problems faced by the Companies in their formative years within the home countries, which although important, would be misleading, from the purpose of the study and hence will not be discussed here. The happenings in the Indian subcontinent are more pertaining to the study.

That the most dominant textile producing regions, for most of the 17th century, were Gujarat and the Coromandel Coast does not require mentioning. Although Bengal, as a textile producing region, came to acquire prominence in the Companies scheme of things, only in the latter half of the century, yet it would be utterly incorrect to assume that the Europeans were unaware of the potentials of Bengal textiles in the world market. The familiarity of both the Dutch and the English with the Bengal textiles can be traced back to the early decades of the 17th century, maybe as early as the beginning of their trade with the East Indies. The Europeans came across various

[18] Om Prakash, *The Dutch East*, p. 9

[19] ibid, p.10

[20] ibid, p.9n, VOC was the shortened form of " De Verenigde Oost- Indische Compagnie"

sorts of Bengal fabrics while frequenting big bazaars such as Agra[21] and Burhanpur[22] and in their settlements such as Masulipatnam[23] in the Coromandel Coast and the western coast of India, where indigenous merchants brought textiles among other goods from Bengal. Bengal fabrics procured from the above mentioned markets among others were meant for both European and more importantly for the Asian markets. However purchase of the cloth from anywhere but Bengal entailed purchase of the same at a much higher price and hence not really profitable to the Companies. Also there was always the risk of little or no supply of cloth[24] due to various reasons and a complete dependence upon the merchants which did not exactly put the Europeans at a very favourable position. Thus attempt to reach Bengal and establish factories were being made by both the Dutch[25] and the English from the first half of the 17th century. Nevertheless active trade in textiles from Bengal became possible only due to certain obvious factors. The decline in importance of Gujarat and the Coromandel Coast stemmed from the debasement in quality and high cost of cloth production (in the case of English) and decline of intra Asian trade in general(in the case of Dutch with emphasis to diminishing importance of Japan) and spice trade in particular[26].

Once in Bengal, the Dutch as well as the English East India Companies established factories in some of the nodal textile manufacturing centers such as Dacca, Malda, Kasimbazar, Balasore and Patna among others. Each of these places

[21] Foster (ed.), *English Factories in India, 1642-45*, v.7, p.137; (1651-54) p.54.

[22] Om Prakash, *The Dutch Factories in India, 1617- 1623*, New Delhi, 1984, p.136.

[23] ibid, pp.160-161.

[24] ibid, p.180.

[25] ibid, p.9.

[26] Om Prakash, *The Dutch East*, p.19

was linked to the surrounding weaving villages, some of which were of considerable importance. In these villages too the Companies established their subordinate factories. These detailed planning of factory establishments give only a glimpse of the organizational efficiency of the European Companies to not only ensure complete success of the Euro- Asian trade but also maximum profit from this trading venture. Kristof Glamann[27] and K N Chaudhuri have emphasized upon the relative similarity between the highly organized character of the European Companies in the 17th and 18th centuries and the modern day multinational corporations or firms.

However the more operational sides of the Companies were located within the subcontinent. The East India Companies had established factories in several important locations such as cities, trading centers and especially in the important manufacturing centers. The chief factories were then in control of the subordinate factories located in the interior areas of the regions. It was in the subcontinent that the actual commerce beginning from identification of export items, contracting with merchant groups for investment, procurement of the same and the final shipment. These were only some of the processes that constituted the actual trading activities of the European Companies. However the very functioning and existence of the Companies in Asia was dependant on the managing body seated in Europe. This fact becomes clearer by Glamann's description of the Company as, 'an organism whose European and Asiatic organs cannot be separated.'[28] The 'European organ' played a vital role of forwarding important trade related details to the 'Asiatic organ.' These included the market conditions in Europe, the prices of the goods and hence the profit or loss aspects, the

[27] Kristof Glamann, *Dutch- Asiatic Trade, 1620-1740,* Copenhagen 1981(first publication, 1958), p.x.

[28] Glamann, *Dutch-Asiatic,* p.1

popularity of commodities which would further determine the increase or reduction of demand, among others. The decision of the former 'organ', based upon speculations and careful observations, became the guiding light of the subordinate Companies in Asia. Constant links between the two organs were maintained through regular correspondence.[29]

Within Bengal the organization of the subordinate Companies could be seen within the company as well as outside of it and mainly vertically. The internal organization of both the European Companies were more or less similar. Thus within the Dutch Company, a group of eleven functionaries formed a Council. The functionaries were also known as 'factors'. These eleven factors included a director who headed the Council, a senior factor dealing with accountancy or maintaining the trade books of the Company, and a factor known as the *fiscaal* who dealt with issues of law enforcement. The other important officials were the export warehouse keeper and the import warehouse keeper. The rest of the six factors assisted the above mentioned officials in the Company's commercial activities.[30] The English Council of factors was similar to its Dutch counterpart and was headed by a president.[31] This

[29] *Bengal Public Consultation* Series; *English Factories in India*, a series of letters edited by William Foster and Charles Fawcett; *Dutch Factories in India*, A collection of Dutch East India Company documents pertaining to India, edited by Om Prakash; are only few of the vast series of letters giving a glimpse into the highly organized system of correspondence maintained by the European Companies. It would not be incorrect to assume that it was this highly developed system which ensured the existence of European commerce in Asia for a period of about 150 years or so.

[30] Om Prakash, *The Dutch East*, p.41

[31] Chaudhuri, *Trading World*, p.27.

framework of Council was imitated at the subordinate factory level which K N Chaudhuri terms as the 'third level system'.[32]

Although the organization of the Company was essential not only for carrying out of trade and for the very existence of the Companies, the efficiency with which trade could be carried out depended on other factors. The cooperation and support of the authorities of the land in which the Companies traded was even more essential. The Dutch as well as the English East India Company were attempting to open factories in Bengal as early as the 1620's[33] in order to carry out direct trade in Bengal commodities, rather than purchase it from merchants as it was proving to an expensive affair. The Dutch tried to contract in Bengal goods through the merchants who frequented Bengal[34] but soon realized the futility of it. The Europeans Companies could manage to penetrate Bengal only after a formal permission known as *farman*[35] was obtained from the imperial authorities. Active trade with Bengal only began from the second half of the 17th century which is a known fact. The Mughal authorities at a higher level were more encouraging and supportive of the trade irrespective of the ethnic origin of the traders, as the imperial authorities were well aware of the benefits that could be reaped, in terms of revenue for the coffers and expansion of industries among other. There were instances when the Europeans were invited by the ruling authorities and encouraged to settle down in an area to trade. Such a favourable treatment had certainly been extended to the Companies especially

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[32] ibid.

[33] Om Prakash, *Dutch Factories*, p.225, 239-40.

[34] Om Prakash, *Dutch Factories*, p.160.

[35] *Hobson Jobson*, p.354, 'an order, patent, or passport'

in the Coromandel Coast.[36] In the case of Bengal there is little or no evidence of direct invitation extended to Europeans to trade in the region, but the tone of the *farman* speaks volumes about the favourable attitude of the ruling authorities. The *nishan* obtained in year 1656, by Mr. Bridgman, the English factor, from Sultan Shuja, the then ruler of Bengal,

> was addressed to the present and future muttasaddies (accountants), and managers of affairs, jagirdars and faujdars, karoris (revenue collectors), zamindars, rahdars, guzarbans, chaukidars and the guards of the imperial highways extending from Akbarnagar (Rajmahal) to the boundaries of the province of Bengal and Orissa.....they realize four percent from the gumashtas (factors) of the English and make a demand for anchorage as well.....none shall molest the gumashtas of the English .....considering their goods as exempted from duties....no impediment shall be offered to the gumashtas....so that they may bring the goods from the neighbouring ports and sell them to local traders and such other persons as are acquainted with them and willingly desire to have transactions with them. Every assistance shall be given to the gumashtas....in whatever place they store their goods and sell them. If the traders and weavers be in debt to these English people, every facility shall be offered to them to realize the amount actually due.[37]

This order certainly showed a wholehearted support to the English trade, by protecting them from all those groups whom the English would have to interact with in the course of their trade. The order also seems to cushion the English against the 'harshness' of payment of extra duties and so on. Exemption from payment of duties was the dearest order for all the European Companies, as the East India Companies were driven by purely mercantile motive with profit as the end goal and hence procurement of export goods at the cheapest rate or at the lowest cost of production

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[36] Om Prakash, *Dutch Factories*, p.161. 'The governor of Mamentipatam had sent a message through the Bengali merchants inviting the Dutch to come to his port for trade.'

[37] Foster, *English Factories 1655-1660*, pp.110-112.

was very much desired. Exemption from various duties went a long way in reducing the expenditures of the Companies. The Company servants were well aware of the importance of *farman* in 'the better carrying on the trade of these parts...'[38] For these kinds of precious exemptions the Europeans did not mind shelling out the required sum of money. The above mentioned *nishan* was procured 'by giving a present of 3,000 rupees'.[39] Throughout the period of study the Europeans can be found applying for these kinds of *farmans,* orders and grants, on numerous occassions.

The very fact that the Europeans had to apply for such grants of exemptions repeatedly shows the existence of the other side of the story. Not every one was happy whenever the Europeans succeeded in getting one such exemption grant. These unhappy officials were mostly the provincial authorities who interacted with the Company servants on a daily basis. Frequent clashes between the two sides were the order of the day as each side wanted to extract a major share from the other. This attitude of the imperial officials at provincial level has been attributed by scholars to the very structure of Mughal administration. It is the provincial administration which concerns the study most, hence a brief description of it.

The provincial administration was headed by high ranking officials known as the *mansabdars.* The authority at provincial level comprised two parts, administrative and fiscal. These two positions were held by the *mansabdars.* However for reason of preventing an official from becoming too powerful, these two posts were bestowed on two officials rather than one. Thus the administrative power was wielded by the

[38] ibid, 1646-1650, p.333.

[39] ibid, 1655-1660, p.110.

nawab[40] or *subahdar*[41], while a *diwan*[42] looked after the financial aspect of the administration. The *subahdar* and the *diwan* were to work in harmony, theoretically, in running the *subah* or the province. This rarely happened as the post of both the above officials were transferable after a certain interval of time, as both wanted to make their power and presence felt in the province during their short period of service there. However these two officials did unite in their effort to maximize their benefit especially monetary during their short stay in the province. This fact is clearly seen during the period of study. In the year 1677, when Shaista Khan the *Nawab* of Dacca, was summoned back to Delhi, his luggage and retinue was so huge that it hindered the traffic in river Ganges much to dismay of traders whose trade was hindered.[43] The greedy nature of both *nawab* and *diwan* becomes clear with the description of the English, when the latter decided that it was best for the Company's trade to 'satisfy the craving covetious humor of this nawab(Shaista Khan), instigated as he was by Malik Kasim'.[44]

The European presence in Bengal was highly lucrative for the ruling classes. Company documents are replete with instances when gifts and presents were 'demanded' and forcibly extracted from the Europeans. Also the *farman* or the grant issued to the Company was not accepted as it was by the concerned provincial officials, but exempted duties were often demanded and also extracted. Thus trade was carried out by the East India Companies in conditions which was hardly

[40] *Hobson Jobson*, p.610. '...supreme chief...a viceroy or chief governor under the Mughals'

[41] ibid, p.856. 'One holding a suba (a province).

[42] ibid, p.309. '...the head financial minister, whether of the state or a province....charged in the latter with the collection of the revenue...'

[43] Fawcett (ed.), *English Factories 1677*, pp.430-31; Bowery, *A Geographical Account*, pp.147-148.

[44] Ibid, *1675*, p.309.

favourable. However this did not mean that the Companies fought a lonely battle. Not all times did they encounter official high handedness. Moreover the Company servants were assisted in their trade by several commercial groups, who were associated with trade in some form or the other. Most prominent of which were the mercantile groups, who were also not clean in their dealings with the Europeans, instances of which will be discussed later. However this analysis is not portraying the Europeans as innocent and victims of the Mughal bureaucracy. The documents testify to the arbitrariness of action by the Company servants. They were certainly not the ones to get intimidated by the above mentioned high handedness. No opportunity was wasted in counter intimidating the local authorities with superior naval power, and the threat that it was only a matter of time that the latter could be subjected to that power.[45] The local authorities were not unaware of the European might, having on several occasion availed of the support of the European forces and most of the time the European threat managed to have the desired impact.

Thus the survival and success of the European Companies trade in the subcontinent for almost 150 years speaks volumes about the success of their organizational and diplomatic skill. While these were very essential for carrying out a trade characterized by long distance, it cannot be ignored that Europeans hardly had anything to offer which would be acceptable to a self sufficient country. The Companies were at a disadvantageous position yet again. However here too the European Companies had a solution to rectify the defect. It had precious metal to offer, through which it managed to turn an unfavourable balance of trade into a very profitable one.

[45] BPC, 26th August 1723

Import of Treasure and its Implications:

Organization of Company and its trade both at internal and external level ensured not only the survival of the Company but also its efficient functioning. However such meticulous planning was only partly responsible for making the Company's East Indies trade, a very profitable one even when the balance of trade was not in its favour. The other more important reason was the ability of the Companies to import large quantities of treasure, to support its well organized trade. It was this import of treasure, which scholars such as Om Prakash opined, became the characteristic feature of the Euro Bengal trade.[46]

Scholars have attributed this attraction of treasure into the economy of the subcontinent in general and that of Bengal in particular during the period of study, to the favourable balance of trade of the region. This favourable situation of Bengal, which played a major role in sustaining a flourishing textile industry especially during the peak period of about 70 years of European trade in Bengal, can be attributed, mainly to the topography and ecology of the region, as has been discussed in the previous chapter. Thus the period between c.1670-1740 witnessed not only the increasing presence of Europeans on Bengal soil but also a simultaneous increase in the inflow of treasure into its markets and economy.

There were several sources, through which treasure flowed into Bengal but the European Companies were considered to be the biggest agents and its trade the largest channel for the inflow of treasure into the subcontinent.[47] The Dutch and the English, among other European Companies, as is well known were the biggest suppliers of

[46] Om Prakash, *Bullion for Goods*, p.264.

[47] ibid,p.337

treasure, because of the fact that they were also the biggest purchasers of textiles and carried out considerable size of textile export trade from Bengal.

The period between c.1670-1740 witnessed a gradual increase in inflow of treasure into the region of Bengal. Pioneering work has been done on the Dutch and the English East India export trade by scholars such as Om Prakash and K N Chaudhuri.

Taking the Dutch case first, the VOC's import of treasure into Asia began to increase steadily and considerably from the 1690's. From 28.605 million florins in 1690-1700, the flow reached its peak in 1720-30, when the VOC imported 66.03 million florins.[48] It is imperative to first consider the inflow of total treasure in Asia first, as it is against this figure, the share of Bengal will be marked. Before the 1690's the Dutch supply of treasure into Bengal shows considerable fluctuations. Between c.1670-1690, the lowest amount imported was 478,617 florins, and the maximum amount was 1,812,400 florins. However it was only from 1690's onward that Bengal began to receive considerable amount of treasure. This corresponded with the increasing inflow of treasure into Asia around the same time. Between c.1690-1740, largest amount of treasure was imported into Bengal in the years 1699 (3,274,672 florins)[49] and 1722-23 (3,884,482 florins)[50]

For the period of almost 28years, from 1690-1717, Om Prakash points out, the import of Dutch treasure into Bengal averaged about 87.5% of the total inflow of

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[48] Om Prakash, *The New Cambridge History of India: European Commercial Enterprise in Pre-Colonial India*, Cambridge University Press, 1998(First published), First paperback edition, 2000, p.87.

[49] Om Prakash, *Dutch East India*, pp. 66-67.

[50] Om Prakash, *The New Cambridge*, p. 98.

Dutch treasure.[51] The highest figure just mentioned, however does not match the percentage of treasure (from the total import into Bengal) imported; 96.99% which corresponded to 3,136,000 florins in the year 1717, marked the highest percentage of treasure imported. However these figures do not indicate the actual amount invested in Bengal for the procurement of textiles which is of significance to this study. In this regard the figures (for total imported treasure), put forward by K N Chaudhuri for the English East India Company.

In sharp contrast to the figures of the VOC, the English import of treasure into Asia was more consistent and with lesser fluctuations in the inflow. In the period, 1670-1740, the year of import of treasure, 25.1%, was 1694. However this was an exceptional year. The total treasure imported into Asia ranged from a minimum of 56.3% in 1697 to a maximum of 100.0% in years 1703, 1704 and 1705. These three years were again exceptional phases when there was a complete absence of commodities in the total English import to Asia. However as mentioned earlier the percentage of treasure does not indicate the actual figure of imported treasure. Thus the year 1701 marked the highest import of treasure at £6, 77,633.[52] K N Chaudhuri has also provided a detailed list of volume and value of textiles procured by the English Company as seen in the first section of this chapter. Therefore it is not difficult to ascertain the share of treasure directed towards Bengal to procure textiles. For instance the treasure spent for purchasing Bengal fabric for the year 1727 was 84.6% of the total outlay. In this year the Company purchased 8, 22, 035 pieces, the

[51] Om Prakash, *Dutch East India*, pp. 66-67.

[52] Chaudhuri, *Trading World*, p.512.

largest amount of purchase made so far, valued at £4, 18,966.[53] This year saw the import of £4, 95,017 of treasure.[54]

Treasures in the form of precious metals were not the only item of the European import into the subcontinent. At the beginning of the Euro-Bengal trade, the Companies especially the English East India Company intended the trade with Bengal to be a two way process. Bengal was to be a market for purchasing textiles but more importantly a market for selling the products of England.[55]

The goods imported by the English into the subcontinent were wide and varied such as broadcloths, woolen cloths, laces, and velvets, tin, lead, copper etc. The prime commodities of import however were the varied pieces of broadcloth (also known as the aurora and scarlet cloth) particularly green and red. Broadcloth being the product of England's loom, suitable market had to be found for it, in order to promote the home industry. Thus the English factors were advised by Streynsham Master 'to use their utmost endeavours to put them (broadcloth, lead and other English goods) off, being much for the nation's interest.'[56] The Dutch on the other hand brought commodities such as, '...tuttenag[57], tinn(tin) from Malaya, pepper, chank(conch), bettlenutts (betel nuts), bell metal....and some cloth, which sell not so well.'[58] These were mostly goods from their intra Asian trade.

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[53] ibid, pp.544-545.

[54] ibid, p.512.

[55] Foster, *English Factories*, 1646-1650, p.338

[56] Richard. C. Temple (ed.), *Diaries of Streynsham Master, 1675-1680*, vol. 2, London, 1911, p.78.

[57] *Hobson Jobson*, p.932. 'Tootnague...an alloy of copper, zinc and nickel, sometimes called 'white copper'

[58] Temple, *Diaries*, p.83.

However promoting the home industries and national interest were not the only motive behind the Company's drive to sell the European commodities. There was another more important reason behind its endeavours. A perpetual shortage of funds always threatened to hamper the English trade. Documents are replete with instances when the Company lamented about its shortage of capital. Throughout the period of study the English East Company suffered from this weakness. For instance in the year 1674, the Bengal factors were well aware that, 'the progress of the year's investment was hampered by the small stock available for its purchase...'[59] The English Company's condition did not improve much subsequently also as can be seen from the instance when Mr. Cole at Balasore informed Fort William that, '...that the weavers had brought in goods to the amount of dadney delivered and that they will proceed no further till more money is delivered them...'[60] Dutch East India Company on the other hand faced no such problem, or even if it did, it appears to have been insignificant. On the contrary, Streynsham Master observed that, 'the Dutch have very advantageous trade in Bengala and commonly a great stock....the goods they bring hither are...gold from Japan, copper from Japan...'[61] The intra Asian trade carried out by the Dutch was profitable enough for them to comfortably invest in Bengal cloth without worrying much about the funds. For the English, the hampering of investment due to scarcity of money supply was only one of their problems, the other more significant worry was their being edged out by the other European Companies which had sufficient stock of capital.[62] The fear and nightmares of the English is well

[59] Fawcett, *English Factories, 1674*, p.373.

[60] BPC, 9 September 1721.

[61] Temple, *Diaries 1675-80*, vol. 2, p.83.

[62] BPC, 4th August, 1720.

reflected in two Balasore letters dated 1720 and 1721. In the former Mr. Clare informed the Fort William, '....that a French chief was arrived from Hughly with a large sum of money to be invested in sannoes and other Balasore goods,' which he feared 'would be some hindrance in getting in the Hon'ble Company's sannoes.'[63] While the second letter revealed that, 'the Dutch and the French having given out dadney for the ensuing year, it becomes a nightmare for our merchants to make a beginning at the *aurung*, wherefore.'[64]

Despite the fiscal shortages the Company in the face of the mercantile competitors took full advantage of few options available to it. One such solution was to borrow at interest from the local moneylenders. The desperation that led the English factors to borrow at interest, which was generally very high, becomes apparent from the letter of Mr. Harry Clare, informing the Fort William, that he had taken Rupees 3000, '...which he has taken at interest at one and half percent per month from that day (of borrowing), which he judged better to do as the interest is to run but a short time, than be disappointed in procuring the quantity of cloth ordered...'[65] Also the Company used the existing system of dadney to its own advantage. As the money was supplied to the *dadni* merchants in installments, payment was made partly and hence remained incomplete. The payable balance on the contract was given to the merchants only after the loading of cargoes and the departure of the Europe bound ships. This saved the Company much of the tension of

[63] BPC, 19th September, 1720.

[64] BPC, 10th April, 1721.

[65] BPC, 1st October, 1719; BPC, 16th July 1745, shows that some of these moneylenders were non other than the important banking houses of Dacca and later Murshidabad, the greatest of which was the House of Futtichand or Jagatseats. The Companies borrowed large sums of money; hence the services of big banking houses were required.

having to pay the merchants at once; hence a great relief for the Company. However it was altogether another matter that despite the ships bringing in stock, the Company still found itself unable to pay off the balance, which quite often made the merchants 'very clamorous for their arrears due to them'[66] and threaten 'that unless (the Company) discharge their arrears....they (would not) be able to continue with their contract....'[67]

From the beginning of English trade in Bengal, the Company was driven by the motive to procure textiles, among other goods, at a low cost. Thus in the face of shortage of stock, a solution available to the Company was to procure the cloths against the manufactories of England, i.e. broadcloths. The English factors were very open about their intention to procure cloths either from the profit acquired by selling of English goods or by barter. This intention is clearly stated in a letter to the Bengal factors, 'wee are very desirous to advance the sale of that manufacture of cloth, and therefore wee desire that you endeavour the vending of as large quantities....though at a small profit....and if the taking of calicoes...in barter at indifferent and reasonable prices, will cause a larger consumption, wee give you liberty therein.'[68] As for selling the broadcloth, it could never make its mark in Indian markets and so its sale remained insignificant throughout the period of study. In case of bartering it for textiles, the Company in its letter, dated 29th and 30th November, 1669, informs that 'they (broadcloth) were taken...if a large proportion of money accompanies them.'[69] The victims of this intention were obviously the contract merchants. Often such

[66] BPC, 4th August, 1720.

[67] BPC, 25th August, 1720.

[68] Foster, *English Factories, 1668-69*, p.170.

[69] ibid, p.311

merchants were compelled to accept English goods in lieu of Bengal textiles either as part of the dadney system or the ready money system. Despite the undesirable terms of contract the merchants quite often accepted the deal under pressure. An increase in instances of procurement of textiles through barter with broadcloth (instead of ready money) and dadney payment in (broadcloth) was witnessed from 1720's coinciding with an increase in Company's purchase of Bengal cloths.[70]

However all these did not mean that the English East India Company did not import enough treasure. As seen earlier that both the Dutch and the English East India Companies were importing considerable amount of treasure into Bengal especially during the last 40 years of the period of study. For three consecutive years (1703, 1704 and 1705) the English export into Asia consisted of 100.0% treasure, although the actual volume of treasure was much lower than what was exported in 1722. This year saw a record export of £6, 42,246.[71] However in the case of the English, the demand or the list of investment far exceeded the supplies brought from England. The treasure supply as pointed out by the scholars, consisted of precious metals such as silver and gold from several sources such as Spain and Mexico, in its uncoined form and also a small supply of coin. However each time ships brought treasure supply for the Companies, the Company servants had no reason to feel elated about. The supply did not ease out the problem of delay in investment immediately, in fact it added on to their trouble. The treasure had to be coined before it could be used. The Europeans therefore had to make use of the existing mint houses of Bengal. There were at least three large mints in some of the most important towns of Bengal, such as Rajmahal,

[70] BPC, 10th August, 1719.

[71] Chaudhuri, *Trading World*, p.512.

Dacca and Murshidabad (also known as Karimabad mint, a name derived from its regional location) and less significant ones at Patna and Balasore.[72]

Before discussing the functioning of the mints in Bengal, it is imperative to take a glance at the existing minting pattern within the subcontinent, which would help in understanding of the nature of mints and minting of the above mentioned mints. The organization and structure of mint and minting varied considerably from region to region within the subcontinent. Two dominant patterns seemed to have been coexisted during the period of study. In the southern part of subcontinent mints and minting existed in a decentralized condition with existence of several mints and lack of any uniform code of minting, in terms of weight and fineness.[73] Thus several varieties of coins under circulation at a time, such as *pagodas* (gold), *kasu, babbu and nevel* (copper), *fanams*(gold coin with alloy of silver and copper), and Mughal rupees(silver) among others.[74] Not only were these varieties under circulation but more significantly each of these coins types had regional variations and thus differed greatly in value. In such a situation though there were advantages, the disadvantages were greater in number. Thus, while on the one hand immediate transactions could be carried out without hindrances or delay as an outsider had little to worry whether he carried treasure in metal form or had coins of varying value, as both was acceptable.[75] Such a situation was highly favourable to the European Companies as these were easily granted minting rights by the local rulers and each Company had minting houses in its respective port towns. However an overview would reveal the chaotic

[72] Om Prakash, *Bullion*, p.365.

[73] ibid, pp.347-49.

[74] Arasaratnam, *Merchants*, pp. 294-6.

[75] Ibid, p.298.

nature of the situation. Existence of differing value of coins could always result in unequal transactions, and also increase opportunities for fraud and cheating. Scholars such as Arasaratnam have attributed the chaotic character of the monetary system to the administrative changes introduced by the Mughals in the late 17th century, prior to which the monetary system was fairly stable and transactions carried out without hindrances, despite the existence of coins of varying values.

The monetary system of northern India and most of the Mughal Empire was very highly organized and completely centralized,[76] in sharp contrast to its southern counterpart. A uniform code of minting existed through out the empire with a very strict emphasis on maintenance of weight and fineness, thus the coins that circulated in the empire were more or less equal in value. The coins minted in Bengal mints were thus no exception to this rule. The mints in Bengal were known as the imperial mints and as mentioned above belonged to the state. Some of the most important cities in Bengal partly owed their prominence to the imperial mints located within their boundaries. This can be seen from the fact that Rajmahal more or less lost its importance to the shift of mint to Dacca. On the other hand Murshidabad came into prominence not only due to the fact that it was made the seat of governance in early 18th century, but also because it had become the new mint town of Bengal and thus an important commercial area. All the metals that entered Bengal, including those brought by the Europeans, were brought to these imperial mints.

The processes and techniques of minting followed in Bengal were similar to those followed in other imperial mints of Mughal India. Unlike southern India, where

[76] Om Prakash, *Bullion*, p.360

gold based coinage was predominant, Bengal mostly minted Mughal rupees and thus was silver based. Though gold (*muhr*) and copper coins (*dam* or *paisa*) were in circulation, the usage of former was limited for ceremonial purpose; while the latter was reserved primarily for low value transactions.[77] Thus the first step towards minting of coin was to assay the metal or old coin (in case of recoinage) to establish its purity level. The purity level had to be brought at par with the standard of the Mughal *sicca* rupee and thus add or deduct value from the metal. Mughal *sicca* rupee was distinguished as one of the purest form of silver coins with only 4% alloy content.[78] This was one reason behind the popularity of Mughal rupee. The minting of coins demanded the metal to be subjected to the process of smelting. The metal once purified was placed between engraved dyes and hammered into final shape.[79] In return for the mint services, charges had to be paid, which included the imperial tax known as seigniorage and the labour charges. Therefore the total cost for coining 100,000 sicca rupees was approximately Rs. 3953: 10 ½ annas and that of gold *muhrs* worth Rs. 64,396:14 annas, about Rs.2719:4 annas(in Rajmahal mint in 1701 and 1692 respectively.[80]

The Europeans although did not enjoy the same advantages[81] as they did in southern India, nevertheless had some consolation. 'Free mintage' was practiced throughout Mughal India.[82] However this did not mean minting coins free of charge

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[77] Om Prakash, *Bullion*, p.360.

[78] ibid, p.362.

[79] ibid, p.367.

[80] Cited in Om Prakash, *Bullion*, pp.343-44 and pp.346-47.

[81] Arasaratnam, *Merchants*, p.300. By minting their own coins, the Europeans did not have to pay minting duties and also their dependence on metal merchants was greatly reduced.

[82] Om Prakash, *Bullion*, p.362.

but that the mint despite belonging to the state, was open to all who had metals and wanted to use the mint, but on the payment of necessary imperial and minting charges. This rule was strictly adhered to and no compromise was made even for the Europeans, especially the English who made several attempts to procure grants exempting them from payment of mint duties.[83] Although the Europeans were denied rights to open their own minting house, in sharp contrast to the treatment they received in their southern settlements, they were nevertheless allowed to use the imperial mints on days that the state was not minting its own coins. Also fortunately for the Companies, the imperial charges were greatly reduced during the period of study, from 3.37% to 2.5%, which in turn brought about slight reduction in the total mint charges.[84] Though these consolations were nothing in comparison to the freedom enjoyed by the Europeans in southern India, still it reflected the Mughal government's awareness of the importance and significance of European trade. Also the Companies in Bengal had the assurance of government's complete support and protection as a very strict adherence to minting rules were emphasized upon by the supervising imperials officials. Such imperial strictness however often failed to protect the Companies from being cheated by the mint officials, who took full advantage of the Companies needs. These cheating officials always tried to extract money over and above the minting charges. One such instance of trouble was that which had 'arisen at Rajmahal, from the darogah of the mint detaining some gold mohurs on pretence of an order from the Emperor for the levy of new mintage of 5 percent on all persons

[83] ibid, pp.372-3

[84] ibid, p.342.

that coined money, other than Muhammadans.'[85] An appeal to Haji Safi Khan, the Emperor's *diwan* did not bring respite to the English.[86] However these counted only as minor problem for the Europeans, relative to the one where despite having precious metal, either it could not be coined immediately or even if it was deposited in the mints, the wait for coins would be unbearably long.[87] This caused serious delay in investment. These were some of the problems which were common to both the Dutch and the English with regards to usage of imperial mints, which scholars such as Om Prakash opined, must have driven the Europeans into the arms of moneylenders or *sarafs*.

In Mughal India though the mints belonged to the state, the minting of coin was placed under the supervision of the imperial official and the officially recognized regional moneylenders. In the case of Bengal the predominant form was one where minting was carried out under the supervision of imperial officials. Elsewhere, such as in Surat, coinage was generally carried out under the vigilant eyes of the *sarafs*. This did not make the *sarafs* any less important in Bengal. The assistance of the *sarafs* was often sought by the Companies. When currency was desperately needed, the Companies could either deposit their metal and take the coins worth the metal or have their metal coined through the agency of the *sarafs*. The Companies, in times of desperate need, also borrowed heavily at interest from the *sarafs* as mentioned earlier. However the services of sarafs provided only momentary relief to the Companies. In the long run the services of the *sarafs* proved to be expensive for the Companies, as

[85] Fawcett, *English Factories*, 1677, p.421.

[86] ibid, pp.435-6.

[87] BPC, 10th August 1719; BPC, 26th August, 1723.

unlike the imperial mints where the charges were fixed, the service charges of such private *sarafs* were much higher. Also these moneylenders did waste any opportunity in fleecing bulk customers such as the European Companies. Often low price was offered when the Companies came to sell their bullion to the sarafs. Thus Kasimbazar factors informed the Fort William about their plight in two of their letters. The first letter mentions that,

> ....two chests of treasure sent them they have been obliged to sell for 207 rupees, 7 annas and 4 pice (sicca) for 240 sicca weight, having kept it sometimes in the hopes of a better price but Futtichund having the entire use of the mint, no other shroff dare buy an ounce of silver and he will give no more than 'fore mentioned' price....[88]

While the second reveals that,

> ....for the ten chests of ducatoons sent them....Futtichund (was) offering but 2 rupees, 7 annas and 3 pice per piece at which rate they were unwilling to let them go, having always sold them for 2 rupees, 7 annas and 6 pice, but were obliged at last to divide the difference and sell em' for 2 rupees, 7 annas and 4 ¼ pice per Ducatoons, for the merchants will not take bullion, Futtichand extorting it from them at a much less rate...'[89]

These letters clearly revealed the desperate conditions of the Company servants where coining of metal was concerned. Also the letters show the importance of big moneylenders such as Fateh Chand in the economic scene. The impression that such accounts give is that of Fateh Chand having monopolistic control over other moneylenders and also over the mint. However scholars such as Om Prakash have refuted the claims made by such accounts of Fateh Chand's monopoly, as it would be contradictory to the very ownership of the state and the rule of 'free minting'.[90] Also he dismisses such claims as excuses made by the English for obtain minting rights.

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[88] BPC, 9th November, 1721.

[89] BPC, 27th November 1721.

[90] Om Prakash, *Bullion*, pp.371-72

Despite the above mentioned constraints faced by the European Companies, what cannot be ignored is the importance of mints in the economic life of Mughal India. Despite insignificant production of precious metal within the subcontinent, trade was highly encouraged as it was the only means through which precious metal could flow into the subcontinent. This in return also led to the expansion of trade. It was this characteristic of trade to attract precious metal into the subcontinent that led scholars to term it as an instrument of growth.[91] However scholars such as Susil Chaudhuri, while not denying the inflow of considerable volume of bullion, underestimate its importance to the Indian economy in general and that of Bengal in particular.[92] However the fact that the impact of large sum of bullion flowing into Bengal was considerable cannot be denied. Considerable degree of monetization had taken place and the extent of it can only be seen in the fact that even revenue in Mughal India was being collected in cash and not kind. The classical view that the money that flowed into the economy was being hoarded has been refuted by eminent scholars who emphasize that it was not possible to hoard the treasure as it came into public hand only in the form of coins. Not only was the flow not hindered by hoarding but that it was being increasingly channelized into several aspects of the economy. Not only was there an increase in revenue for the government but that a considerable sum was being directed into the industry that played a major role in inflow of treasure. The textile industry certainly expanded from a small scale producing unit to one which was catering successfully to the increasing demands of world market. An important issue here would then be the

[91] Om Prakash, *Bullion*, p.264.

[92] Susil Chaudhuri, *Trade and Commercial Organization in Bengal, 1660-1720*, Calcutta, 1975. p.214.

volume of money that was being released into the economy in the form of coins. This issue has led to considerable debate between eminent scholars.

Pioneering work in this regard has been done by Aziza Hasan, who attempted to estimate the currency output of the Mughal Empire during the 16th and the 17th centuries and its impact on the prices of various commodities.[93] Using a novel method of taking into consideration the number of coins kept in various museums and belonging to a various mints across the Empire. Hasan also shows important correlations between currency outflow and bullion inflow into the Empire especially from American sources. Hasan's view was severely criticized by scholars such as Om Prakash and J. Krishnamurty for taking into consideration only limited sources for the supply of bullion which was again limited to silver.[94] The criticism of the duo reveals various sources of treasure, most important of which were the Asian sources. Also it takes into account other forms of precious metals, other than silver such as gold and copper. Since Hasan does not take into consideration these metals types, her estimated currency output was incorrect. In the absence detailed evidence on the minting capacity of the imperial mints, the figures cited by Om Prakash gives a sense of the daily and annual output of mints, though these figure do not represent true figures. An account by servants of English East India Company reveals that Rajamahal mint produced approximately 10,000 sicca rupees, while Murshidabad mint turned out about 12.16 million sicca rupees. Om Prakash believes that these figures may not be far from the truth. Assuming that the mint functioned 300 days a year, prakash believes that the

[93] Aziza Hasan, 'The Silver Currency Output of the Mughal Empire and Prices in India During the 16th and 17th Centuries', IESHR, vol.6, 1969.

[94] Om Prakash and J Krishnamurty, 'Mughal Silver Currency- A Critique', IESHR, vol.7, 1970.

daily output may be more than 40,000; whereas if the mint was open for 250 days a year, the output would be upto 48,000 coins.[95] Prakash also rubbishes the assumption that the prices increased with the inflow of bullion as the classical view is that of price rise due to hoarding. Keeping in view the considerable growth in manufacturing sector during the period of study it is not difficult to believe Prakash's claim that the increasing inflow of bullion was being directed into productive channels through the mint[96] during the period of study. Textile trade was not just attracting precious metals of the Companies but that these metals in the form of dadan or advance, increasingly reached the aurungs through the contract system during the period of study.

[95] Om Prakash, *Bullion*, pp.366-7.

[96] Om Prakash, *Bullion*, p.267.

CHAPTER - III

CHANGES IN ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE OF PRODUCTION AND THE EXPANSION OF THE WEAVING COMMUNITY (THE TANTIS)

CHAPTER THREE

CHANGES IN ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE OF PRODUCTION AND THE EXPANSION OF A WEAVING COMMUNITY (THE TANTIS)

One of the most visible impacts of European trade can be seen in the organization and structure of production process of the textile manufacturing sector of Bengal. This chapter traces the changes and modifications brought about in the traditional system of procurement and adaptation of the existing technique of production to increase the production of export goods through considerable reallocation of resources. Precious metals imported by the Companies were increasingly invested into textile production through the dadan or advance system thereby bringing about a concomitant expansion of the tanti sub caste.

Weavers, Merchants and Companies: Organization of Textile Production

The looms of Bengal were known to have produced several varieties of cotton piece goods. These cotton cloths as mentioned earlier can be classified into muslin, calicoes or ordinary cotton cloth and mixed fabrics. Each of these categories of cloth could be further subdivided according to the degree of its fineness and therefore into coarse, fine and superfine.

These classifications suggest that the clothing needs of all sections of society were met by the manufacturing section of Bengal and that the production of each category was organized differently. These classifications also revealed that the production of each category was organized differently. Organization of production

was governed by several important issues such as nature of demand which included the kind of goods demanded, the category of purchasers, and more importantly the nature of finance and the manner in which the goods were procured.

The variety which had the largest production was probably the coarse variety of cotton piece goods. This category was in demand from two types of markets, the international and the domestic market. In the domestic market coarse variety of cloth was in great demand among the poor people. In the villages cloth was produced in the looms of poor individual weavers. For individual weavers, weaving was a family affair where he was assisted by his family members. Being poor he worked at his single loom and wove coarse cloth which when completed he sold at the haat or village fairs, where several weavers like him brought their loom products for sale.[1]

Cloth production was also undertaken by weavers who were not necessarily poor. Rich weavers funded their own production and produced for the market. This becomes clear from William Bolts' account of the working of the weavers. He says that,

> In the time of the Mogul government, and even in that of the nabob Allaverdy Khawn, the weavers manufactured their goods freely and without oppression.....it was then a common practice for reputable families of the Tanty, or weaver caste, to employ their own capitals in manufacturing, which they sold freely on their own account. There is a gentleman, now in England, who in the time of that nabob had purchased in the Dacca province, in on morning 800 pieces of muslin at his own door, as brought to him by the weavers of their own accord. [2]

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[1] D.B. Mitra, *The Cotton Weavers of Bengal 1757-1833*, Calcutta, 1978, p.35.

[2] William Bolts, *Considerations on Indian Affairs*, London, 1722, p.194.

From this account it becomes clear that these weavers, during the period of study had the freedom to produce and sell to whom so ever they liked. However such weavers may have been few and their production must have been limited. But there is no doubt that the produce were meant for wider market. Such weavers being wealthy could afford to hire labour and thus were also known as the master weavers. They were almost always assisted by two or three assistants who included the apprentice (nikari) and journeymen (kareegar)[3]

A more common sight than the above two instances was that of several poor weavers working for a wealthy merchant or mahajan. It was a very common practice in the villages that the weavers could accept a contract from a merchant and work for him till the completion of production. In a weavers village each weaver, in all probability would be working for a separate merchant. Likewise the merchant contractor would go to the individual weavers' house to offer contracts. It was also possible that the merchant being a customer of some weavers always contracted with them but was also free to contract with others. When the weaver had accepted the contract, the merchant would give dadan[4] or advance to the weavers and the work for the merchant would begin formally. The advance was the partial value of the complete production. With this money the weaver purchased the necessary raw materials but most important of all the money also sustained his family for the period that he worked for the merchant and enabled him to purchase the necessities of life. Although the personal freedom of the weaver was not curbed he was nevertheless bound by the rules of the contract; which meant weaving the type of cloth that the

[3] Mitra, *Cotton Weavers*, p.40.

[4] *Hobson Jobson*, p.290, "to give".

merchant wanted him to, a fixed quantity to be produced and a fixed date for the delivery of goods. Also the merchant kept a constant check on the progress of the production and supplying the requirements of the weaver, through his servants, the pykar and the mookeems.[5] With the completion of the production the merchant or his servants came to collect the goods and delivered it to the washer men for washing and bleaching.[6]

This was the set up that was prevalent prior to the coming of the European Companies and in this form production for provincial or inter provincial markets were undertaken.

Several wealthy merchants from Bengal as well as from other provinces who traded in Bengal textiles used this form of production organization to procure their goods.

Thus when the European companies began trading in Bengal textiles, mainly from the later half of the 17th century and in a fairly considerable scale, they did not have difficulty in organizing the production for their trade.[7] Thus it was more or less the continuation of the traditional structure. However certain changes and modifications in the traditional structure did come about as the trade of the Europeans (Dutch and the English) traded gradually increased in the volume in the province. These changes and modifications were, sometimes consciously brought about. However throughout the period of European commercial transactions, the basic structure of production organization more or less remained the same.

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[5] Mitra, *Cotton weavers*, p.40

[6] Barun De, 'An Account of Cultivation of Cotton in Bengal', IHRC, vol.34, 1958.

[7] J. Irwin and P.R. Schwartz, *Studies in Indo-European Textile History*, Ahmedabad, 1966, p.45.

The Europeans were subject to several disadvantages, being unfamiliar with the region, the language and people and the functioning of the textile manufacturing industry. Hence they had to depend on the local contractors who were more than willing to help. These local contractors were functionaries in the local industry and thus possessed detailed knowledge not only about the region but also about the various weaving localities and villages, the aurungs of specialized production. These local helps of the European companies would also provide detailed information regarding the weavers and merchants whom they knew personally as they interacted with them on daily basis; and also about the varieties of textiles that were the staple of Bengal looms; the prices of each variety; seasons when weaving was undertaken, and much more. These local helps included the dalals[8], and pykars[9] among others.

Thus as a preliminary step the European Companies employed a dalal at their service. Once the Company made its intentions known to the dalal; he would go out collecting appropriate information as per the requirements of the Company. Having received the necessary information, the Company again with the help of the dalal, set about contracting with the various merchants who were brought by the servant; the amount to be advanced had to be bargained with the merchants. Once the advance or dadan was fixed, the merchants were handed out the musters[10] which included details of the types of textiles required, the length and breadth of the cloth, the texture, the number of pieces of each type and also a tentative date when the goods were to be handed over to the Company, generally before the arrival of Europe bound ships.

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[8] *Hobson Jobson*, p.304, "deloll, a broker....the literal meaning being one who directs (the buyer and seller to their bargain).

[9] Ibid, p.703, "picar or paikar....a retail dealer, an intermediate dealer or broker."

[10] Ibid, p.605, "a pattern or sample".

The merchants, who came to be known as Company merchants or dadni merchants, went to the weaving villages, contracting with the weavers and handing out the musters to them also paid them advance to purchase raw material and hire labour if need arose. However the pressure upon the weavers from the merchants in this particular situation were more than when they worked for indigenous merchants, because the merchants in turn were under pressure from the Companies (to deliver the procurement) that they worked for. Once the production was completed, the cloth was brought to the Company factories and according to the muster, prized and packed, ready for shipping.

This was the broad outline of the structure of contract and production undertaken on behalf of the Companies. Although this set up seemed the most favorable to the Europeans Companies, in reality the Companies worked in an environment which was anything but favorable. The several problems that the Europeans faced are discussed in the second chapter. Here only the problems related to the production organization and more importantly those related to the issues of procurement would be considered significant.

Beginning with the issue of organization, the first difficulty that the Companies faced was at the level of contracting with the merchants. This was deeply connected to the issue of procurement. Procurement of investment formed the most integral part of the Companies' existence in the subcontinent as the entire trade was depended on successful procurement of the export goods and at the appropriate time. The companies would incur massive losses if it could not send the goods to the European markets when the Europe bound ships arrived. The English East India Company documents are replete with evidences of bad debts, a term used for the

Company not being able to receive the procurement in time for shipment. This becomes clear from the letter by Bengal factors dated 9th January, 1727,

> The time of the year now growing pretty late and the goods contracted for in March, July and August last, not coming in so fast as we reasonably have expected....the merchants sent for....they acquainted us that they on the immediate receipt of our orders for providing more goods than what were at first contracted for in March sent orders to all their gomastahs at the several aurungs to set about buying an additional quantity of goods ....that they were ready to produce their books that they had sent large sum of money for procuring the same, that their gomastahs had given out dadney and contracted with several weavers for such and such goods, that they had taken money of the Dutch and the French and other people so that the price had not only risen but the goods as soon as they were made were immediately divided some to one nation and some to another which occasioned their not having in their goods as usual....upon this we acquainted them that the season of the year was far spent and that our ships waited for nothing but their goods to have early dispatches. We assured them that whatever person should not bring in his goods in time should be obliged to pay ...we told them the necessity these was for the hastening their goods, as fast as possible and threatened them with severe usage, in case of their non performance...[11]

The reasons for bad debts may have been several, although every one seemed to be shifting the blame on the other. Thus the merchant put the blame of delay of deliverance onto the weavers, as is very evident from the above letter. The letter also suggests the possibility of the weavers having sold off the goods to other European Companies, for ready money, when offered a higher price. In this case the English East India Company suffered more than the other Companies due to their perpetual shortage of fund and faced difficulties in securing the contract with the weavers as the VOC and the French almost always managed to contract with the weavers before the English, which certainly delayed the investment and therefore the procurement. Also

[11] BPC, 9th January, 1727.

the shortage of money supply cost the English dear as it hindered the very process of production. Weavers refused to weave any further if not supplied the required sum of money. Although the Dutch did not face the shortage of money supplies like their counterpart, the English East India Company, as its source of money supply was very much in Asia. However, the deterioration of Dutch trade with Japan (main source of precious metal) greatly affected their trade in India. However despite not facing the problem of money shortage in the early half of the period of study, the Dutch also faced similar problem of not having goods delivered at the right time.

This difficulty originated from excessive dependence on the contract system or the dadni merchants, who looked upon the service to the Companies as secondary to their own business dealings. Thus several times, the merchants were unable to honor their part of the contract, and their obligations automatically shifted to the next season in addition the new list of investment of that year. The Companies being aware of the short comings of the contract system, tried to experiment with the agency system, in which the agent, a servant employed in the service of the Companies, undertook the task of investing on behalf of the Companies. This system met with little success as it was not free of loopholes, so much so that, in the case of English East India Company, the Company was forced to consider the contract system, the better of the two systems. In the light of such difficulties, the Companies continued to make an effort to purchase the goods with ready money[12], in which case the Dutch with their ready stock of money had a slight edge over the English.

[12] For further reference see, BPC, 11th September, 1704.

Desperate to find a solution to the perpetual problem of procurement, the Companies tried to organize the production process under their supervision and thus in their factories. This was hardly successful as the weavers could hardly be lured to move anywhere as they were less migratory than their southern counterparts. This nature of the weavers in particular and artisans in general can be explained by the situations and circumstances faced by them. The weavers and artisan communities being very vulnerable to the conditions of distress and political unrest were forced immediately to regions of relative peace and quiet. However, in Bengal, during the period of study, such a grave situation did not arise.

Although the Europeans failed to bring the weavers to work under one roof, this was made possible under a special circumstance. High quality Bengal textiles were very popular with the imperial household and those of the court nobles. These textiles were produced in special workshops and the produce of which was not sold to anyone. These workshops were known as the Mulboos Caus Cooties. Taylor gives a detailed description of the functioning of these Cooties, which were especially found at Dacca, Sonargong and Junglebarry.[13] Artisans were selected from the best and were put under the supervision of the Darogas. For most of the time the weavers were coerced and dealt with harshly, and forced to stay in the erected accommodations at the Cooties. Taylor says that 'peons were put on them if they did not attend and they were punished if they attempted to abscond, none of the weavers worked willingly on account of the inadequate profit which the cloth yielded them'.[14] Hours of work were fixed, and pieces given out to the weavers for them to weave. Every day the thread

[13] Progs Board of Trade Commercial, 1801, vol.156.

[14] ibid.

that was brought by the weavers was minutely examined and so was the piece woven, by the end of the day. This routine was maintained till the work was completed. Thus it has to be emphasized here that when the weavers were subjected to coercion under the service of the Companies, it was not a new experience for them. Taylor attributed the high quality of the royal cloths to fine quality thread which could only be produced after years of practice of spinning high quality thread; and the fear of the Darogas at the Cooties which the hindered the weavers from using any foul practices.[15] Taylor points out that, annually, 200-300 pieces were made for the emperor.

However not all cloths were woven completely at the Cooties. Exceptions such as the Jamdanies were woven partly at the Cooties and partly in the house of the weaver.

Textile Industry: Differential Structure Limitations Of Superior Technology

The Indian textile industry was known by two of its most important characteristic features, first, the techniques of productions that had achieved a level of superiority which could not be matched in the world and second the structure of the production that was differentiated in nature. The peculiarity of Indian textiles was that the fabrics were not produced under one roof (except in case of Mulboos Caus Cooties). This was due to the fact that the entire process of production was divided into several different stages or levels. Each of these stages was separate and distinct from each other so much so that the functions of each of the levels were specialized in nature. It can be safely said that it was the differentiated nature of structure that

[15] ibid.

enabled the technology, no matter how rudimentary, to attain superiority, as great degree of specialization had taken place and which in turn enabled the production of high quality product. The process of production can be divided into three or four broad stages which in turn incorporated several minor processes; these included the cultivation of cotton, processing of cotton to be spun into a yarn and spinning, weaving, and dressing or the post production processes. Each of these broad processes involved a separate method of production.

The first stage of production was the cultivation of cotton or kapas as it was locally known. Considerable amount of cotton of differing variety was grown within the province of Bengal for its textile manufacturing sector. Kapas was grown by the peasants alternately with the cultivation of other crops in the same land. In all probability the land was continuously cultivated and was seldom left fallow as the poor peasant with a small piece could hardly afford to do so for the fear of starvation, but this was not uncommon either. However in the fourth year it was necessary to leave the land fallow.[16]

Cotton was grown in several districts of Bengal especially in those where there were manufacturing centers. Cotton growing did not require any technology as such, and the only labor that was involved was that of plowing the land and sowing of seeds which had been stored in an earthen vessel[17] and hung over the fire place to keep moisture from getting in and before being sown, in the month of October and

[16] Proceedings of Board of Trade Commercials(BTC), December ,1801, vol. 156

[17] De, 'An Account of the Cultivation', p. 199.

November[18], was mixed with cow dung which acted as the manure.[19] This crop was ready to be harvested during the month of April and May.[20] The need for constant weeding was the peasant's main concern during the growth of the plant. This was the small scale cultivation of cotton. Large scale cultivation was also undertaken.[21] According to James Taylor, a resident of Dacca, 'the finest coppas' in the world was that which was 'grown within the Dacca province'.[22] The superior variety of cotton that Taylor was referring to was known as *nurmah*, the cultivation of which was more or less limited to regions in and around Dacca. Most of the districts of Bengal which cultivated cotton, grew mainly inferior qualities of cotton such as *bhoga* and *mulree*.[23] The term kapas was used for cotton which has not been separated with from the seed and ruyi for the one from which the seeds had been removed. Removal of seed reduced the volume to of the cotton to one third of its original weight. Thus ".....2 seer[24] 4chittaks of seed could produce up to two maunds of cotton and if a seer of cotton weighed 80 sicca weight, 65 sicca weight would be seeds while the remainder 15 sicca weight would be cotton of different qualities, about a third of cotton, that part which adheres most to the seed is capable of being spun in to the finest thread, another part is fit for making thread of inferior degree of fineness, and a

[18] BTC, 1801, vol.156.

[19]Hameeda Hossain, *The Company Weavers of Bengal, 1750-1813*, Delhi, OUP, 1988 , p.24.

[20] BTC, 1801, vol. 156.

[21] Hossain, *Company Weavers*, p.24.

[22] BTC, 1801, vol. 156.

[23] Datta, *Society, Economy*, p.52-3.

[24] *Hobson jobson*, p. 807, "Indian denomination of weight ....equivalent to 80 tolas or rupee-weights, varying widely in different parts of the country."

third for making coarse thread only".[25] However the cotton which could be spun into a good quality thread was one which has been kept from the market for a season.[26]

A process prior to weaving was that of spinning the ruiy into yarn and which further comprised processes such as ginning, carding and teasing before the cotton was spun into a yarn. These were carried out along side the household chores especially by the women of the house not necessarily a weaver's house. Women probably took up spinning in their spare time in order to supplement the family income. Taylor specifies that these women were 'hindoo', however in all probability the spinner also came from muslim household. Since the work was carried out indoors some of the simplest instruments were used for the purpose. The preliminary work was to purchase the kapas from the market or village haats and clean it of small twigs and leaves. Having done this the women would take out some time to remove the seeds from the kapas and then carefully comb or card the cotton wool with the jawbone of the baolee fish, which was plentifully available especially in the Dacca region. The purpose was to clean the fiber of the cotton wool carefully. Having done this the woman proceeded to extract the seeds from the cotton wool with the help of a flat wooden board and an iron rolling pin. The kapas was placed on the board and the pin rolled over it gently.[27] The raw fibres being very delicate needed to be

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[25] Ibid.,

[26] De, 'An Account', p.199

[27] Watson, J Forbes, *The Textile Manufactures and the Costumes of People of India*, London, 1866, p.61(an account of the process of the Dacca manufactures by James Taylor, the resident of Dacca, has been reproduced in this volume)

strengthened, thus the fibres were placed in a vessel and introduced to slight heat over the fire.[28]

The ruyi was now ready to be teazed. Teazing was undertaken by women as well as men. The instrument used for this purpose resembled a small bow[29] or a harp[30] with strings made of catgut or muga silk or even fibers of plants such as rattan or plantain. This instrument was known as dhankara and hence the teazer as dhunera.The ruyi was then taken strung on the dhankara which separated or loosened the fibers to an extent that it was ready to be spun into a yarn.

When the cotton wool would be required for spinning was not known to the woman, thus it required to be preserved. The cotton was carefully rolled around a wooden roller and when it had acquired the rollers shape, the cotton was flattened between two flat slabs. This was done so that the fibers were kept from getting entangled. The cotton was then rolled around a thin reed and covered finally with the skin of cuchia fish, which was again abundantly available.

Thread was spun in two ways; for coarse fabric a wheel was used to spin the yarn whereas for a fine cloth, a spindle was put to use.[31] The wheel was also known as charkha locally, while the spindle was an instrument which comprised of short needle at the end of which was a bit of clay that rested on a shell. This was done to make the spindle slightly heavier, so that it could spin well.[32]

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[28] De. An account....p.200

[29] Watson. p.61.

[30] De. An account..., p.200.

[31] BTC. Vol. 156.

[32] Hossain, *Company Weavers*, p.37

Weaving was the most complex of all the stages of production as it required proper knowledge of the arrangement of the warp and the woof and of the arrangement of the loom itself before weaving could be undertaken. The actual process of weaving was undertaken by the help of the apprentice and the journeymen. The number of assistants a master weaver required depended upon the kind of cloth that was being woven.

Taylor has described the setup of the loom and the actual process of weaving in great detail in his description of the Dacca textile manufacturing sector.

The loom was made up of separate sections which had to be set up together when weaving was to be undertaken. It consisted of "four bamboo parts which were fixed in the ground and four bamboo stakes again fixed in the ground in such a way so as to serve as shoulders to the breast and end roll[33]". Once the harness was set up, the warp was brought to the loom after which "roll rods are passed through the knotted loops at the end of the warp and fastened to the breast and end rolls with cords"[34]. The harness, however required support and hence had to be supported with bamboo and reed supporters. One of the most important parts of this setup was the treadle, which when pressed by the weaver put the whole loom into motion and thus began the process of weaving

This kind of loom setup was used to weave all kinds of cotton cloth. The only difference was in the number of thread used and the quality of thread that was put to the loom. Thus when a weaver, wove a plain cotton cloth and pressed the treadle "the harness fastened to it sinks and with the harness the warp thread to which they are

[33] BTC, 1801, vol.156

[34] ibid.

attached; the opposite balance by means of harness balance rises and the shuttle with the woof thread being applied to the opening between the upper and the lower thread of the warp is passed by a jerk of one hand through the warp and received with the other hand at the opposite side; the woof thread is then drawn home by a stroke of the frame wherein the reed is placed which when released from the weavers hand , swings back and leaves room for the shuttle to be returned "[35].

This process was repeated again and again till the weaving of the desired length and breadth of cloth was completed. For the weaving of plain cloth the master weaver required the help of two people to help him through the entire process. Weaving of a plain cloth required anything between 15 to 60 days.

On the other hand weaving of a superfine cloth such as the jamdanies, involving of a slightly different and a difficult procedure for weaving the pattern of the flowers, required the help of three assistants to the master weaver. The time taken to weave this variety, varied from two to five months.[36]

Weaving of the fabric was not the end of the production but rather the middle of it. The fabric now required the finishing touch, which would reflect its true quality to the customers. The post weaving process consisted of several processes, which were equally important and had acquired high degree of specialization, and it is these processes that gave the Bengal cloth its final look. Washing and bleaching was carried out by "the bleachers (who were) all Hindoos of the caste of Dhobee".[37]

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[35] ibid.

[36] ibid.

[37] Watson, *Textile Manufactures*, p.72.

The cloth was collected from the weavers' loom, by the merchants, pykars and gomastahs who had given advance to the weavers earlier.[38] The cloth while being woven must have become dirty and stained; hence it certainly required washing and bleaching as the next step. For small scale washing individual dhobis were employed. However for large scale washing and bleaching, as under the Companies during the period of study, large area where these processes could be carried out became a necessary requirement. Also large numbers of washermen were required to work together. Thus large areas for the purpose were owned by the Companies' in the suburbs of towns such as Dacca.[39] Sometimes the Companies' also availed of the services offered by individual dhobis who were wealthy and owned large washing grounds and rented these out plus hired labour.[40]

Taylor provides a detailed account of the process of washing and bleaching. "Cloths are first steeped in large semicircular earthen vessels (gumlahs).....and are then beaten in their wet state, upon a board, the surface of which is cut into transverse parallel furrows".[41] Except for muslins which were too delicate for such a rough process, cloths of all types were soaked in "alkaline ley composed of soaps and sajee matee (impure carbonate of soda)". The cloths were then spread out over the grass to be half dried and occasionally sprinkled with water to prevent the clothes from fully drying up. As a next step, the half dried cloths were taken to the boiling house and steamed. A large earthen pot with a capacity to contain 8 to 10 gallons of water and with a very wide mouth was used as an instrument for the purpose. The vessel was

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[38] De, 'An Account', p.202

[39] Watson, *Textile Manufactures*, p.70.

[40] Hossain, *Company Weavers*, p.42.

[41] Watson, *Textile Manufactures* pp. 70-71.

seated on a pit dug on the ground (meant for fire) and then covered with clay till its neck, so that a sort of platform was formed around the neck. "....a hollow bamboo, or a reed, fitted with a cup or funnel made of coconut shell, serves as a tube, through which water is poured into the vessel. The cloths are twisted into the form of loose bundles, and placed upon the broad clay platform, on a level with the neck of the boiler ....arranged in circular layers, one above the other, around the bamboo tube.....the whole forming a conical pile that rises to a height of 5 to 6 feet above the boiler." When the fire was kindled beneath the vessel, the steam from the water in the vessel rose and spread over the pile of cloths placed above, thereby "swelling by its temperature the threads of the latter, and allowing the alkali still adhering to them to penetrate more completely into their fibers, and seize on the coloring matter of the cotton." This procedure began in the evening and lasted till the next morning, when the cloths were removed, dipped in the alkaline ley and then spread out to be half dried. The above process was repeated alternately (till the cloth was completely bleached) a process known as the 'bucking' and 'crafting'. The cloths were finally soaked in filtered water mixed with lime juice, as part of the final bleaching. Taylor points out that the waters of "Catarashoonda in Sunargong...(and) water found in the vicinity of Dacca, extending from Naraindeah....to Tezgong..."[42], were considered to be the most appropriate for the purpose of bleaching.

The process of production was rounded off by dressing of the fabrics which required the services of several groups of people. These included the Nurdeeahs, Rafugars, Dagh dhobis and Koondegurs[43] to mention a few. Dressing involved

[42] Ibid, p.70.

[43] ibid, pp. 72-73.

primarily the processes by which the defects of the cloth could be hidden and quality added to the cloth. If a cloth was damaged during weaving and later by the harsh bleaching solutions, professionals such as Nurdeeahs and Rafugars immediately came to the rescue of the fabric. The Nurdeeah would first locate the place where the thread has been displaced and then bring them in proper order. On the other hand the Rafugar, the darner, darned the damaged portions in a manner that it would be hard to tell the damaged portion from the rest of the cloth. Dagh dhobi completed the process of washing by washing the stains and spots from the 'half washed'[44] cloth.

One of the most important tasks before the packing of the cloth was smoothening of the cloth. This was done by the Koondegar who placed the cloth on a wooden board and beetled the cloth with smooth chank shells while simultaneously sprinkling starch water over the cloth that was being beaten[45]. This was equivalent to the later day ironing.[46] One of the most important branches of fabric dressing was that of embroidery.

Embroidering was mainly carried out by women folk known as *butadars*. Some of the most predominant forms of embroidery were that of *kasidah* and *chikan*. While the former involved embroidering with silk threads (muga or tassar), while in the latter white cotton thread was used. In both the cases malmal was used as the base for embroidery.[47] During the period of study, the demand for embroidered cloth from Bengal went up considerably, so much so that the English East India Company had to

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[44] De 'An Account', p.202.

[45] Watson, *Textile Manufactures*, pp.72-73.

[46] Hossain, *Company Weavers*, p.43.

[47] ibid, p.44.

settle factories at Dacca[48] and Malda.[49] From Malda, there was a great demand for 'gold threads (woven) in at the heads of the fine cossaes'[50] Whereas the embroidered fabrics that were in great demand included 'mulmuls flowered with silk, various colours; mulmuls flowered with thread; tanjebs flowered with thread and gold ends; and terrendams with gold ends'.[51]

Full Potentials of the Textile Industry: It's Realization

While some scholars agree to the superiority of technology of Indian textile industry over its western counterpart[52] others have argued that there were no significant changes in the technique of production. However there is disagreement between them over the significance of the changes in the technology, if any had ever taken place. The general opinion prevalent among the scholars such as K N Chaudhuri, Om Prakash among others is that there were no changes in the techniques of production, or rather that the changes were insignificant and attributed the growth of trade through increase in production to 'wage differentials'. Irfan Habib[53], Vijaya Ramaswamy and Hameeda Hossain on the other hand believe that the few changes that took place in the technique of production were significant ones and cannot be ignored. In Ramaswamy's words, ".....a competent went hand in hand with low wages in contributing to the popularity of Indian textiles abroad ...it was a combination of technical excellence and low labor costs that led to the massive export

[48] BPC, 25th February, 1723.

[49] BPC, 11th March, 1723.

[50] Ibid.

[51] BPC, 15th April, 1723.

[52] Om prakash, *Bullion*, p.265

[53] Habib Irfan, 'The Technology and Economy of Mughal India', p.10, IESHR, vol. 17, no.1, 1980.

to Europe and the firm faith of contemporary thinkers that Indian calico was more valuable than English bullion".[54]

However to say that no changes had taken place in the techniques of production is untrue. Also to say that the changes, even if it did take place, were in insignificant is incorrect. The changes such as the spinning wheel with its crank handle among others were significant in themselves as it added to the superiority of the indigenous technique and contributed towards highest degree of efficiency in production especially prior to and during the period of study. However changes in technology could certainly not be brought about overnight. Moreover the people who used the technology on daily basis were the poor and illiterate artisans, who were only interested in earning their meager wages to sustain themselves and their families and pay their dues to the state.[55] This lack of motivation is also seen in the attitude of the state, as despite its awareness of the textile manufacturing sector as an important source of income, the state did not come forward to initiate changes in the technology of production. Thus it can be said that, though there had been significant changes in technology, the changes had taken place very slowly. While, given its superiority, the technology could adjust to a slight change in demand, but with a steady increase in demand, as seen during the period of study, an additional support from employment of labor surplus was more than welcome. Also this prospect was too attractive an option for the entrepreneurs especially when their main aim was to produce at low cost.[56] Thus the increase of production which is witnessed during the period of study

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[54] Vijaya Ramaswamy, *Textiles and Weavers in Medieval South India*, Delhi, OUP, 1985, p.127

[55] Om Prakash, *Bullion*, p.268.

[56] ibid, p.268.

is said to be the result of 'reallocation of resources'[57] which meant directing the import surplus within the textile manufacturing sector in a manner that more of high quality high priced textiles would be produced. That with the participation of the European Companies, the Bengal trade expanded in addition to its existing state is commonplace. What was more important was that the knowledge of textile industry as an important source of income was not hidden from the government and even if it did not consciously work towards the advantage of the manufacturing unit, it more than welcomed the European participation. This led to the investment of the major portion of imports in the form of precious metal into the working of the textile industry. The channelising of bullion in it, though important, was not sufficient in itself. This was due to the fact that given the status of the technology, 'reallocation of resources' in itself was not enough and required the support of another important factor that of employment of human resources that was available abundantly in Bengal.

Considerable growth of population was witnessed in the delta region of Bengal during the medieval period and was greatly intensified during the late 16th century onwards. This was facilitated by several factors, of which two were considered most important. The growth in the population of Bengal has been directly linked to ecological change in general and riverine changes in particular.[58] Ganges, one of the major rivers of the subcontinent, and which flowed through Bengal in the form of various channels, shifted from west to the eastern region of the delta, slowly but gradually over a long period of time. Sedimentation was considered to be one of

[57] Om prakash, *New Cambridge Economic*, p.316.

[58] Richard Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the*, pp.194 -200

the most important reasons for this shift.[59] Late 16th century witnessed the intensification of this process of shift[60] towards east of Bengal in general and towards south east in particular. Thus in the 17th century concentration of population can be seen in the north eastern and especially in the south eastern regions of Bengal. This is also made evident by the location of the aurungs or textile producing centers. Thus the major weaving villages of Bengal were concentrated in the north- south and the eastern zones.[61] And the artisans who produced textiles were mostly the residents of the village itself. An approximate population of the Bengal province during the period of study was estimated to be around twenty million.[62]

The second factor was the considerable expansion of agriculture. It was also an important link between the riverine shift and the demographic growth. Constant deposit of silt by the shifting course of the tributaries had made the delta extremely fertile. As the rivers shifted eastwards more and more virgin wetlands were brought under the plough and the agrarian expansion created agricultural surplus which could sustain and support the growing population.[63] Bengal was viewed by foreign travelers as a land of plenty. These observers noticed that everything especially the necessities of life were cheaply and abundantly available. This was also one of the most important factors that had attracted the English East India Company to Bengal.[64] Due to the achievement of agricultural surplus there was hardly any fluctuations in the price of provisions namely rice, wheat, sugar and clarified butter. During the period of

[59] ibid, p.194.

[60] ibid, p.195

[61] see map no1

[62] Om prakash, *Bullion*, p.279.

[63] Eaton, *Rise of Islam*, p.198.

[64] English Factories in India, 1661-64, p.64.

study the price of these necessities remained more or less stable, even with the increasing inflow of precious metals into the economy due to considerable monetization of transaction and consequent increase in circulation of money.[65] Thus the agrarian surplus made it made possible for the employment of surplus human resource in the working of the textile industry caused due to the limitations of the existing technology in addition to the ever growing demand for Bengal textiles.

Wide ranging varieties of cloth were produced from the looms of Bengal and exported by the European companies. Among the piece goods three major classifications could be made. These included coarse or ordinary cloth, muslin and mixed piece goods. Within each of these classifications the textiles were further classified on the basis of the center of production. Specialized product was further categorized according to their quality into coarse, middling, fine, superfine and fine superfine variety. The finely detailed categorization of textiles becomes clear with the varying price range for cloth falling under the same broad category but produced at different aurungs or cloth of the same category but of differing quality. Taking into account the high degree of specialization required for production of each variety, it would not be wrong to assume that a considerable number of artisans worked 'full time'. Due to the availability of company records, a sense of employment generated by the textile manufacturing sector has been provided by the pioneering work of scholars such as Om prakash.

According to Om Prakash the growth of textile industry during the period of study sustained 8.69% to 11.11% of the workforce in the textile manufacturing sector

[65] Om Prakash, *Bullion for Goods*, p.267.

of Bengal. Although the quantitative method used by Om Prakash, has been severely criticized by Susil Chaudhuri, what Chaudhuri does not deny is that the growth of Bengal trade had indeed generated employment opportunities.

Expansion of the Weaver Sub Castes:

Producers certainly occupied the central position in the functioning of the textile industry; therefore the study of textile industry would truly be incomplete without the study of the producers. The term 'producer' within the textile industry would encompass several groups of people (such as the cultivators of cotton, spinners, weavers, and those involved in the post production processes such as washing, bleaching, darning, embroidery etc.). The function of each of these groups was a specialized one and therefore differed greatly from the other, as discussed above, so much so that one group seldom ventured into another's area. Thus the textile industry by the late 17th century and especially in the 18th century had emerged as one of the most specialized sections of the manufacturing sector. However as stated earlier that this chapter, while not ignoring the importance of other 'producers' within the textile industry, will focus on the weavers in general and cotton weavers in particular. The reason for focusing only on the weaver is that it is the weaver who brought together all the materials and brought out the final fabric into existence. Also as stated earlier while looking at the general condition of the weavers, attention will mainly be given to the expansion of the tanti *jati* or caste within the Sudra Varna, which scholars such as Om Prakash among others, have hinted as taking during this time period.[66] The expansion of the sub caste can be seen taking place in two ways. This happened

[66] Om Prakash, *Bullion*, p.270.

through the occupational and the social mobility which are distinct but related processes.

Before venturing into aspects of social and occupational mobility it is imperative to look into several preliminary issues. These include the definitions of social and occupational mobility. This is then linked to the larger issue of mobility within the existent caste system. This in turn requires a preliminary survey of the existing caste structure during the period of study.

The fundamental features of the caste structure in the 17th and the 18th centuries were no different from the period before or after it. The most prominent feature was the ordering of Varna or the caste within the structure, which O'Malley describes as the basis of the Hindu society[67]. During the period of study the Brahmans continued to occupy the dominant position within the caste frame work, followed by Kshatriyas and Vaishyas and last of all by the Sudras. This was the general pattern of the caste structure during the above mentioned period. However that this caste structure did not exist in a uniform manner within the Indian subcontinent is commonplace. While the ordering of the castes remained as it was the importance of castes varied from region to region. Thus in medieval south India two main groups, i.e. the Brahmans and the Sudras were recognized. While in the other regions such as Bengal the position of the varnas between the Brahmans and the Sudras varied from district to district. However one thing that is clear is that the normative position of the four broad varnas remained unquestioned.

[67] L.S.S O'Malley, *Indian Caste Customs*, Delhi, 1974, p.2

As pointed out by O'Malley[68] and as is well known, each of these varnas was separate distinct and exclusive categories or groups. O'Malley explains the 'exclusiveness' in terms of marriage and social interaction. Varna was endogamous in nature. This then was accepted as the norm of the day and failure to adhere to which entailed punitive measures as severe as social boycott or excommunication of the members. Thus such exclusiveness suggested that each caste or Varna was separated from the other by a barrier which was rigid and could not be permeated. This rigidity of barrier was mutually accepted and acknowledged by all as one which was sanctioned by the Hindu religion and looked upon as 'divine and immutable'[69].

These four, broad Varna were further divided into sub castes. Contrary to the rigidity of barriers between the Varna, the boundaries between the sub castes within each Varna were fairly elastic considering that each of the sub castes was mostly replicas of the main caste[70]. This flexibility was seen in terms of relatively greater degree of interaction between the members of various sub caste in a caste. The sub castes were also ranked on the purity-pollution scale in imitation of the ordering of the four Varna. Thus in a descending order at the top of the scale were the so called pure sub castes while at the bottom of it were the impure lot[71]. The term pure/impure or clean/unclean, as O'Malley rightfully pointed out was more ceremonial rather than physical purity or impurity of a person[72].

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[68] O'Malley, *Indian Caste*, p.2

[69] ibid, p.12

[70] ibid, p.3

[71] Hunter (in Statistical Accounts) has placed the various sub castes according to its ranking within the Varna system.

[72] O'Malley, *Indian Caste*, p.14

Having explained the backdrop it is necessary to clarify that the aim is not to discuss the merits and demerits of the caste system in terms of inequality or otherwise. The intention however is to explore the possibilities of social mobility within the complex web of the caste system. The complexity of the caste structure becomes apparent when one considers the fact that even within the impure class there were further sub divisions where at the bottom of the class hierarchy would be a group which even the so called impure group would consider unclean.[73] However the ranking on the purity-pollution scale is considered by scholars as one of the motivational force behind social mobility. This aspect will be discussed later.

Social mobility, according to Collins Concise Dictionary, refers to movement (of individuals or of social groups) within and between classes, occupations and localities. Scholars such as James Silverberg, Bernard Barber, Burton Stein to name a few, saw social mobility as a movement over multiple dimensions of social order such as economic, evaluation/prestige and power dimensions among other. This view conformed to the 'new' picture of the Hindu caste system as opposed to the 'older' picture.[74]

The 'older' picture viewed the social order and hence the caste system as an unchanging one and thus the individual or the group seemed to adhere to the various categories or Varna that they were born into. This view stressed upon the importance of religious values and ideas as the only determinant of individual or group behavior. Thus such a view would naturally assume that there was little or rather no social

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[73] ibid. p.138.

[74] Bernard Barber, 'Social Mobility in Hindu India', in James Silverberg (ed.), *Symposium on Social Mobility in the* Caste *System in India*, Chicago, 1961,pp. 18-35.

mobility.[75] The traditional or 'older' picture of the Hindu caste system was advocated by scholars in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries, most of whom were western scholars. The above conclusion about the Hindu society was reached by consultation of mainly religious literature and the acceptance of its view uncritically.[76] Another reason put forward by the Barber for the traditional outlook was that the western scholars in their attempt to establish a comparative study between the social order of the west and that of India focused on the differences in the two orders without highlighting the similarities. Whereas there were others such as the contemporary historians of British India, accuses Barber, who purposely highlighted the differences in order to justify the civilizing mission of the colonial rule. On the other hand the 'new' outlook of the social order while stressing on sustained mobility (change) within the system, the system itself remained 'stable, unchanging and unalterable'.[77] Although scholars advocating the 'newer' picture have differed on the direction of mobility, horizontal (i.e. Barber's dimensions and Marriot's differential zones) or vertical (Damle's reference models), one aspect which is clear from all of their arguments is that the mobility was taking place at all times and from time immemorial. One would especially agree with Damle, that mobility was especially more flexible in the middle orders or models rather that at the higher orders,[78] while disagreeing with his claim that just by imitating the behaviors of the reference group an individual or group would be absorbed into that group. Another dimension of

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[75] Ibid. p.18

[76] Ibid. pp.26-27

[77] ibid. p. 33.

[78] Y.B Damle 'Reference Group Theory With Regards to Mobility in Caste', in James Silverberg (ed.) *Symposium on Social Mobility*, pp.95-102.

mobility, the cultural aspect will not be discussed here as it is not pertaining to the study. Thus while instances have shown that mobility from one caste to another, from a smaller to a higher caste, especially if the 'reference' model happens to be the Brahmana order, the mobility to it was less likely, than, from it. Whereas mobility from Vaishya to Kshatriya was not unheard of either. Thus mobility between castes was less frequent than that within the caste, between the sub castes. But this did not mean that there were no hindrances to the process of mobilization. Mobility of the sub castes within the caste had their share of problems but there was more surety of being accepted by the host or the 'reference' sub caste.

Keeping these broad features of mobility within the complex framework of the caste system the expansion of the weaver sub castes in Bengal during the 17th and the 18th centuries can be explored.

Weaver community forming a part of the artisan or the 'functional'*jati*[79] belonged to the Sudra Varna and this position was uniform throughout the Indian subcontinent. However the position of the weavers within the Sudra order varied from place to place. In Bengal, during the period of study, there was more than one weaver sub caste within a district at any given point of time. W W Hunter in his Statistical Accounts of several districts of Bengal has divided the Sudra sub castes into three broad categories – a. 'the pure castes of undoubted sudras'[80]; b. 'the less respectable castes'[81] and; c. 'the very low and despised castes'.[82] Hunter has heavily drawn from the Census Reports of the year 1872, for the information on the existing caste

[79] O'Malley, *Indian Caste*, p.122.

[80] W.W Hunter, *Statistical Account of Dacca District*, p.47

[81] ibid, p.48

[82] ibid, p.50

structure.[83] Some of the main weaver sub castes of Bengal were the *Tanti*, *Hansi*, *Khatba*, *Jogi* and *Kapali* communities. Although these *jatis* find mention in late 19th century and thus almost 150 years later than the period of study (1670-1740), it is assumed that these *jatis* existed even during the late 17th and the early 18th centuries.[84] The classifications suggested by Hunter makes it apparent that the ranking in this case is done on the purity-pollution scale. However as mentioned earlier the ranking of the sub castes varied from district to district and the sub castes of the weavers were also variously ranked in the same district so much so that in one district a sub caste would be considered pure, while in other region it might be considered unclean and hence not even worth mentioning.[85] Thus in the Dacca district the *Tanti* sub caste ranked highest among the most pure of the Sudra caste while the Kapali community were considered to be low on the purity scale and the rest of the sub castes (*Hansi*, *Khatba* and *Jogi)* ranked very low on the mentioned scale and were considered as untouchables or the despised castes. On the other hand in the district of Rangpur although the *Tantis* did not rank the highest in the Sudra caste they were still the 'respectable' community. Others that ranked on the scale of respectability were the *Ganesh* and *Kapali* sub castes. However those that were considered despised in this district were the *Jogi*, *Julaha*, *Dera* and the *Chapal* sub castes.[86] What is noticed in the district of Rangpur is that the *Hansi* and *Khatba* castes are not even mentioned. While on the other hand three new castes find mention, i.e. *Ganesh*, *Julaha*, *Dera* and

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[83] ibid.p.47

[84] Hitesranjan Sanyal, Social Mobility in Bengal, Calcutta, 1981, pp.14-15. Jatis were probably as old as the Aryan expansion in the subcontinent. The tribes or outsiders who were absorbed within the varna order came to be the constituents of the lowest order, the Sudra Varna.

[85] Hunter, *Dacca*, p.48

[86] W.W Hunter, *Statistical Account of Rangpur*, pp.217-219

the *Chapal*. *Julaha* on the other hand was a Mohammedan weaver community and so should not have featured with the Hindu Sudra sub castes.[87]

Though these were all weaver communities, it is worth knowing what each of these communities wove. Thus while the *tantis* were mainly the weavers of cotton cloth which also included muslin, *Kapali* on the other hand was weavers of umbrella and canvas. On the other hand it is not known what was woven by the *Dera*, *Chapal* and *Khatba* communities, as Risley does not mention them at all, while Hunter mentions these sub castes but not their occupation. While *Hansi* was a sub caste of the *Tanti* caste of Orissa[88] *Jogi* or *Jugi*, a weaving community was found in Eastern Bengal and was also a sub caste of *Tantis* but of Bengal.

From the above observations it seems that the *Tanti* sub caste of the Sudra order was the largest weaver community which spread over the provinces of Bengal, Orissa and Bihar of the Bengal region. The *Tanti* community seems to have been a sort of caste within itself as it was further subdivided into several sub castes or *srenis*. Some of the main sub castes or sreni were the *Aswini*, the *Bara-bhagiya* or *Jhampaniya* and the *Chotta-bhagiya*[89] of Dacca; *Banga-tantis* of Eastern Bengal[90]; *Chamar-tanti* and *Kahar-tanti* of Bihar[91] and; *Matibans-tanti*, *Gala-tanti* and *Hansi-tanti* of Orissa [92]

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[87] Taylor, *A Sketch of the Topography and Statistics of Dacca*, Calcutta, Military Orphan Press, p.175; Hunter, *Rangpur*, p.213.

[88] H.H Risley, *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, vol. 1,Calcutta,(First Published, 1891), 1981, , p.314

[89] ibid, vol. 2, p.296.

[90] ibid, vol. 2, p.296.

[91] ibid, vol.2, p.297.

[92] ibid, vol.2, p.297.

Most of these sub castes were engaged in weaving cotton cloth of varying quality. There are reasons to believe that the tanti *jati* in general saw an expansion during the period between the late 17th and early 18th centuries, with the coming of the European companies and thereby an increase in demand for cotton piece goods, in addition to the already existing demand. Risley was of the opinion that the tantis were 'probably a functional group developed under the pressure of natural demand for woven cloth.' The *tanti* sub caste, in all probability may have received people from different professions, as the names of some of the caste seem to suggest. Thus *Chamar-tanti* and *Kahar-tanti* who were from the *Chamar* and *Kahar* castes and may have taken up the profession of weaving[93]. Another sub caste which had taken up weaving as a full time profession were the *Chotta-bhagiya*, who seemed to have been from the *Kayasth* caste and had been goldsmiths.[94] A large number of cultivators from agricultural sub castes may have taken to weaving as peasants had always been part time weavers, weaving in the non agricultural seasons. There was already an agricultural boom in Bengal and with the coming of the European companies and consequent inflow of bullion into the economy of Bengal 'contributed to the movement of men and resources to and within the frontier'.[95]

Identification of some of these cultivator sub castes would help in knowing the source from which movement was taking place towards the Tanti sub caste. These agricultural castes were *sadgop* (21), *chashi kaibarttas* section of the *kaibarttas* (29),

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[93] ibid. vol.2. p.297.

[94] ibid. vol.2. p.296.

[95] Eaton. *Rise of Islam*. p.207.

dalui (35), *parasar das* (38), *chasa dhopa* (39) and *rajbansis* (50).[96] The numbers in parenthesis indicate their ranking in the purity -pollution scale and most of these sub castes ranked low on the scale of respectability. Scholars such as Rajat Datta has pointed out to the considerable size of this community by the end of the 18th c. For instance there were 6 households in Rangamati in 1775, whereas in Sibpur in 1791 there were at least 26 *tanti* households.[97] Another indication of the strength of the community is derived from the account of William Bolts. According to him during 'the time of Seraj al Dowlah...(there were)...seven hundered families of weavers in the district of Junglebarry...'[98] Gradual increase in their number may have taken place from the beginning of the century.

A shift towards weaving could have been motivated by several reasons. With the growing demand for the cotton piece goods, the prospect of having a steady source of income seemed very lucrative. In this light a shift in occupation in favor of weavers may have offered prospects of better economic position. A more important reason would have been to advance in the purity scale once a reasonably comfortable economic position was achieved. Scholars such as Hitesranjan Sanyal pointed out the tantis were ranked higher on the purity/ pollution scale because of their association with machinery and technology were certainly considered more respectable than those who toiled in the open field like the cultivators. Sanyal also points out to the correlation between technological advancement and relative prosperity.[99] Though there was no such advancement during the period of study, the tantis service was

[96] Hunter, *Dacca*, pp.48-50.

[97] Datta, *Society, Economy*, pp.189-190.

[98] Bolts, *Considerations*, p.194

[99] Sanyal, *Social Mobility*, pp.20-21.

certainly in demand due to an increase in demand for cotton piecegoods; thereby assuring a steady source of income. The tantis during the period of study were certainly a prosperous lot as pointed out by William Bolts.[100] Their prosperity and purity certainly made the *tanti jati* a 'reference model'. To be recognized as ritually pure or as a member of a respected caste would seem too appealing to someone who belonged to lower ranks of the despised caste. Sanyal points out again that although upward mobility was a difficult procedure, but with passage of time and sustained effort on the part of the aspirant, promotion to a clean Sudra rank was usually conferred upon the seeker, after the aspirant has been approved by the ritually pure, the brahmans. This Sanyal asserts was due to 'relative flexibility of the caste barriers'.[101] Thus caste mobility through occupational mobility was probably the frequented route to the higher ritual position.

Conclusion:

Long term changes were brought about by the participation of European Companies in the Bengal trade. The organization and the structure of the production process however cannot be deemed as static. The changes and the modifications in the organization of production, brought about by the European participation did not break down the traditional system. The indigenous merchants who were in fact the greater purchasers of Bengal textiles continued to employ the traditional system of organization. The Europeans in their quest for increase in supply of export goods pressurized the existing system of organization and thereby reached out to remote centers of production. This accelerated the degree of localization. Further the process

[100] Bolts, *Considerations*, p.194.

[101] Sanyal, *Social*, pp.28-29.

linked the remote production zones with the larger world market. On the other hand, the European demand for a more varied exportable finished goods both quantitatively and qualitatively, not only brought about increase in production but also a great degree of standardization.

Though the techniques of production had high degree of superiority it was still unable to cater to the growing demand. This could only be achieved through higher degree of specialization and greater division of labor.

Fulfillment of the needs of the European traders, through modifications and adaptations in organization and structure of production, was simultaneously bringing about a gradual change in the social configuration of the textile industry. The new circumstances, encouraged movement from other professions into full time weaving. This provides the socio-economic explanation for the numerical increase in a number of caste groups such as the Tanti sub caste which metamorphosed into one of the biggest weaving community. All these changes were taking place during the 60 to 70 years between the years 1670 to 1740, as this was the time period that saw the intensification of the European trade in addition to the already existing indigenous trade.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

The European Companies trade in the Indian subcontinent in general and Bengal in particular was without doubt purely mercantile in nature. The successful Euro-Bengal export trade of both the Dutch and the English East India Companies, which lasted for almost a century was guided by two or three basic principals. These continued to guide the Companies commerce throughout the period of study c. 1670-1740 and even beyond. It was the sustained endeavour of the European Companies to continuously increase the volume of piece goods meant for export in the face of growing demand, especially from the late 17th century onwards. However these piece goods were to be procured at the lowest possible cost of production. Maintenance of the quality of the cloth was the third most important consideration by which the Companies were driven. The European Companies did not compromise on these considerations throughout the period of its commercial venture in the subcontinent. Thus towards the latter half of the 17th century these European Companies discovered that Bengal was one such region that would more or less fulfill all of the above conditions of trade. Bengal lived up to European expectations. Both Gujarat and the Coromandel Coast failed to sustain these conditions and thereby lost their dominant position to Bengal.

The expansion of the European trade from Bengal during the period of study was also indicative of the considerable growth of the textile industry during the same period. Major role in this regard was played by the milieu in which the industry was located. The two types of soils found commonly on which most of the weaving villages were located, produced among several varieties of crops, *aus* rice, pulses and

cereals and oilseeds. These were important for the everyday diet of artisanal classes. The alluvial and thus the more fertile soil also produced cotton, though of middling and lower quality for the textile industry of Bengal, although this was not adequate. This insufficiency of cotton stock was removed by import from other parts of the subcontinent through the existing land and water communication networks which comprehensively intersected the land mass of Bengal. Thus at all times of the year remote areas of Bengal could be reached. These facilitated the movement of people and commodities considerably. Moreover Bengal by the period of study had a well developed system of bazaars, hats and periodical fair markets, which further facilitated movements. Thus favourable conditions already existed in Bengal on the eve of European trade to facilitate the further growth of textile industry if need arose.

The presence of European Companies on Bengal soil during the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries acted as external stimulus for the expansion of the manufacturing industry during this period. Their presence was justified and backed by the growing demand for Bengal cloth especially by the European population which in turn was intensified by the warming of European fashion circuit to Indian fabrics in general and Bengal in particular. However huge export of Bengal cloths was made possible by two distinct but intertwined processes building first a series of relation both political as well as commercial. The second process was that of monetary activities taking place simultaneously (which involved above all, the intensification of minting activities encouraged by the increased inflow of bullion into the sub continental economy.).

The nature of the relations with various social groups varied from diplomatic to commercial. These two processes were part of the elaborate organization of trade

carried on by the European Companies. The commercial aspect was common to both the processes, in that both were different ways for expanding trade in the economy of Bengal. While the former led to the opening of commercial opportunities, the latter sets of relations were the channels through which the treasure could flow into the Bengal economy. These considerations guided the Companies to enter into contract with several groups performing varying functions, in procurement and production. Thus at the top of the ladder were the contract merchants and at the bottom of it the artisnal class (weavers). It was only through the contract system that the Companies could achieve the above mentioned motives. However production itself was impossible without the role of money. Here the mints played significant role in turning the bullion into a more productive form.

The coined money generated by the mints could reach the production centers or aurungs only through the channel of the advance contract or dadni system. However despite considerable amount of money flowing through the productive channels, it was impossible to increase production itself, given the stagnant nature of the technology. The money inflow however stimulated the labour intensive nature of the structure of production into expansion. It was though the expansion of the labour force that increases in production and therefore considerable expansion in industry was achieved during this period. Considerable inflow of money into the textile production and an ever increasing demand for the Bengal cloth generated hopes of steady supply of income for the artisan. Also during the period of study the weavers retained their bargaining power vis-à-vis the merchants in general and Companies in particular. Intense competition amongst the European buyers not only increased the demand and prices of the textiles but also hinted at the scope of considerable

expansion in output. Thus the deal looked lucrative for producers. Moreover the main weaving community of Bengal, the tanti ranked higher in the purity pollution scale relative to other functional jatis. It is likely that the tanti jati at the beginning of the period was not numerically as big as that of late 18th century and thus would not have been able to supply the increased demand. Thus expanding economic opportunity may have provided a scope for social mobility for other groups who were ranked low on the purity/pollution scale.

ANNEXURE

TABLE NO.1: DUTCH EXPORT OF PIECE GOODS FROM BENGAL, 1670-1717.

YEAR	JAPAN			COROMANDEL, CEYLON, MALABAR	INDONESIAN ARCHIPELAGO		
	COTTON	MIXED	TOTAL	TOTAL	COTTON	MIXED	TOTAL
1670-75	900		900	19151	5030	378	5408
1675-80				11008	12351	3294	15645
1680-85		11800	11800	15153			
1685-90				91343			
1690-95		46670	46670	145382	265997	7110	138107
1695-1700	300	7400	7700	8105	54049		54046
1700-05	12300	23900	36200	13910	160191	2000	162191
1705-10	20790	67500	88290	8791	225269	400	225669
1710-15	7342	8900	16242	12319	182810		182810
1715-18	5060	7200	12260	14885	111035		111035

YEAR	PERSIA			HOLLAND		
	COTTON	MIXED	TOTAL	COTTON	MIXED	TOTAL
1670-75	13555		13555	22263	3600	8110
1675-80	36418	4400	37218	39583		66436
1680-85	79211	5134	84345			
1685-90	38252	7290	45542			
1690-95	43678	2666	46344	452991	69662	525653
1695-1700	81354	7221	88575	292680	35748	328428
1700-05	114698	7840	122538	688956	140020	828976
1705-10	99409		99409	715064	75140	790204
1710-15	68355		68355	776897	65500	842397
1715-18	56181		56181	608426	29588	638014

SOURCE: Om Prakash, *The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal, 1630-1720.* Princeton, 1985.

TABLE NO.2: DUTCH EXPORT OF PIECE GOODS FROM BENGAL, 1670-1717.

YEAR	JAPAN			COROMANDEL,CEYLON,MALABAR			INDONESIAN ARCHIPELAGO
	COTTTON	MIXED	TOTAL	TOTAL	COTTON	MIXED	TOTAL
1670-1671				10295			
1671-72							
1672-73							
1673-74	900		900	4978			
1674-75				3878	5030	378	5408
TOTAL	**900**		**900**	**19151**	**5030**	**378**	**5408**
1675-76				7061			
1676-77				3947	5551	94	5645
1677-78							
1678-79-					6800	3200	10000
1679-80							
TOTAL				**11008**	**12351**	**3294**	**15645**
1680-81				530			
1681-82				4507			
1682-83		11800	11800	3656			
1683-84				6460			
1684-85							
TOTAL		**11800**	**11800**	**15153**			
1685-86				416			
1686-87				2827			
1687-88				1480			
1688-89				32979			
1689-90				53641			
TOTAL				**91343**			
1690-91		23125	23125	61431	17773		17773
1691-92		15493	15493	81459	22620		22620
1692-93		3012	3012		44573	6410	50983
1693-94		4003	4003	2492	150001	700	15701
1694-95		1037	1037		31030		31030

TOTAL		**46670**	**46670**	**145382**	**265997**	**7110**	**138107**
1695-96							
1696-97							
1697-98							
1698-99	120	6100	6220	3575	17789		17786
1699-1700	180	1300	1480	4530	36260		36260
TOTAL	**300**	**7400**	**7700**	**8105**	**54049**		**54046**
1700-01		5200	5200	10530	25695		25695
1701-02	1100	4600	5700		23275	960	24235
1702-03	3000	3200	6200	1780	37340	1040	38380
1703-04	6200	4700	10900		28871		28871
1704-05	2000	6200	8200	1600	45010		45010
TOTAL	**12300**	**23900**	**36200**	**13910**	**160191**	**2000**	**162191**
1705-06	2000	8300	10300	1000	10260		10260
1706-07	1200	14500	15700		39279	400	39679
1707-08	5920	11500	17420	3173	43410		43410
1708-09	4820	14200	19020	1120	51330		51330
1709-10	6850	19000	25850	3498	80990		80990
TOTAL	**20790**	**67500**	**88290**	**8791**	**225269**	**400**	**225669**
1710-11				2931	73450		73450
1711-12	3350	4300	7650	3335	46709		46709
1712-13				93	10340		10340
1713-14	2882	2300	5182	3830	19901		19901
1714-15	1110	2300	3410	2130	32410		32410
TOTAL	**7342**	**8900**	**16242**	**12319**	**182810**		**182810**
1715-16	2220	400	2620	3918	46740		46740
1716-17	800	1600	2400	3097	17785		17785
1717-18	2040	5200	7240	7870	46510		46510
TOTAL	**5060**	**7200**	**12260**	**14885**	**111035**		**111035**

YEAR	PERSIA			HOLLAND			TOTAL
	COTTON	MIXED	TOTAL	COTTON	MIXED	TOTAL	
1670-1671							10295
1671-72	2850		2850				5700
1672-73							0
1673-74	8525		8525	8110			31938
1674-75	2180		2180	14153	3600	8110	44917
TOTAL	**13555**		**13555**	**22263**	**3600**	**8110**	**92850**
1675-76	8663		8663			17753	42140
1676-77	10150	4000	10550				39937
1677-78	17605	400	18005	9773			45783
1678-79-				29810		9773	59583
1679-80						38910	38910
TOTAL	**36418**	**4400**	**37218**	**39583**		**66436**	**226353**
1680-81	33760	3434	37194				74918
1681-82	5870		5870				16247
1682-83	5849		5849				38954
1683-84	9026		9026				24512
1684-85	24706	1700	26406				52812
TOTAL	**79211**	**5134**	**84345**				**207443**
1685-86	26405	2700	29105				58626
1686-87	1047	390	1437				5701
1687-88							1480
1688-89	10800	4200	15000				62979
1689-90							53641
TOTAL	**38252**	**7290**	**45542**				**182427**
1690-91	25375	1240	26615	57498	5300	62798	322053
1691-92	5268	1326	6594	76084	10814	86898	344669
1692-93				105857	13309	119166	346322
1693-94	6137		6137	123393	23589	149982	486138
1694-95	6898	100	6998	90159	16650	106809	291748
TOTAL	**43678**	**2666**	**46344**	**452991**	**69662**	**525653**	**1790930**

1695-96							0
1696-97	8008	2050	10058				20116
1697-98	21798	700	22498				22498
1698-99	24234	1761	25995	205412	18900	224312	545984
1699-1700	27314	2710	30024	87268	16848	104116	346810
TOTAL	**81354**	**7221**	**88575**	**292680**	**35748**	**328428**	**935408**
1700-01	**27113**	**200**	27313	**220143**	**23000**	243143	613232
1701-02	10465	800	11265	119920	32160	152080	386560
1702-03	5100	5040	10140	134226	50520	184746	480712
1703-04	27600	900	28500	82967	23600	106567	349676
1704-05	44420	900	45320	131700	10740	142440	483540
TOTAL	**114698**	**7840**	**122538**	**688956**	**140020**	**828976**	**2313720**
1705-06				114270	15600	129870	301860
1706-07				101120	14340	115460	341678
1707-08				118328	16300	134628	394089
1708-09	20450		20450	138098	9860	147958	478636
1709-10	78959		78959	243248	19040	262288	899672
TOTAL	**99409**		**99409**	**715064**	**75140**	**790204**	**2415935**
1710-11	8460		8460	167646	19080	186726	540203
1711-12	18484		18484	141370	17300	158670	466361
1712-13	2140		2140	147925	10500	158425	341903
1713-14	21358		21358	136074	10214	146288	389288
1714-15	17913		17913	183882	8406	192288	494172
TOTAL	**68355**		**68355**	**776897**	**65500**	**842397**	**2231927**
1715-16	21282		21282	194589	8550	203139	551480
1716-17	22172		22172	197592	9750	207342	502495
1717-18	12727		12727	216245	11288	227533	595890
TOTAL	**56181**		**56181**	**608426**	**29588**	**638014**	**1649865**

SOURCE: Om Prakash, *The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal, 1630-1720.* Princeton, 1985.

TABLE NO. 3: VOLUME AND VALUE OF ENGLISH EXPORT OF BENGAL TEXTILES AND THE TOTAL ENGLISH IMPORT OF TREASURE INTO ASIA, 1670-1740.

YEAR	TOTAL TREASURE IMPORTED INTO ASIA	VALUE OF TEXTILES EXPORTED FROM BENGAL	PERCENTAGE OF VALUE OF TEXTILES EXPORTED TO THE TOTAL TREASURE IMPORTED	QUANTITY OF PIECE GOODS EXPORTED	PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN THE QUANTITY OF PIECE GOODS EXPORTED
1670	189704	11972	6.31	22233	
1671	203504	25814	12.68	43276	94.6476
1672	181567	43177	23.78	68132	57.43599
1673	131295	40948	31.19	98108	43.99695
1674	155476	508	0.33	800	-99.1846
TOTAL	**861546**	**122419**	**14.86**	**232549**	**28968.63**
1675	299012	22241	7.44	44005	-81.0771
1676	292327	36488	12.48	80684	83.35189
1677	221278	42292	19.11	75359	-6.59982
1678	325932	32489	9.97	57174	-24.1312
1679	340819	39265	11.52	76595	33.96824
TOTAL	**1479368**	**172775**	**12.10**	**333817**	**335.8209**
1680	394464	46767	11.86	67904	-79.6583
1681	536798	37789	7.04	73174	7.760957
1682	609162	80639	13.24	164479	124.7779
1683	524928	17869	3.40	45782	-72.1654
1684	429613	96415	22.44	187004	308.4662
TOTAL	**2494965**	**279479**	**11.60**	**538343**	**187.8778**
1685	508595	148810	29.26	227788	-57.6872
1686	298957	100961	33.77	203372	-10.7187
1687	309442	56518	18.26	77624	-61.8315
1688	165943				
1689					
TOTAL	**1282937**	**306289**	**27.10**	**508784**	**-7331240**

1690					
1691		34538		71130	-86.0196
1692	135789				
1693	150097	9339	6.22	17987	-74.7125
1694	82430	36857	44.71	89052	395.0909
TOTAL	**368316**	**80734**	**25.47**	**178169**	**100.073**
1695	251142	26308	10.48	71539	-59.8477
1696	232963	70490	30.26	156411	118.6374
1697	23510	56616	240.82	125747	-19.6048
1698	320473	60257	18.80	120314	-4.32058
1699	448930	119363	26.59	180540	50.05735
TOTAL	**1277018**	**333034**	**65.39**	**654551**	**262.5518**
1700	482219	181499	37.64	274541	-58.0566
1701	677633	151205	22.31	247704	-9.77522
1702	258433	165521	64.05	213307	-13.8863
1703	233389	37270	15.97	52494	-75.3904
1704	398086		0.00		
TOTAL	**2049760**	**535495**	**27.99**	**788046**	**1401.212**
1705	193280	24040	12.44	36311	-95.3923
1706	285959	50984	17.83	78296	115.6261
1707	281483	42742	15.18	66184	-15.4695
1708	422798	37021	8.76	56174	-15.1245
1709	438956	76784	17.49	116005	106.5101
TOTAL	**1622476**	**231571**	**14.34**	**352970**	**204.2714**
1710	37351	130453	349.26	223812	-36.5918
1711	359829	245329	68.18	347572	55.29641
1712	317322	200951	63.33	282893	-18.6088
1713	201425	209569	104.04	253493	-10.3926
1714	259442	146501	56.47	193822	-23.5395
TOTAL	**1175369**	**932803**	**128.26**	**1301592**	**571.5399**
1715	387106	145050	37.47	202034	-84.4779
1716	346314	172598	49.84	271868	34.56547
1717	573703	121344	21.15	176987	-34.8997
1718	517703	173917	33.59	275752	55.80353

1719	611231	202928	33.20	331294	20.14201
TOTAL	**2436057**	**815837**	**35.05**	**1257935**	**279.7035**
1720	571195	296037	51.83	562875	-55.254
1721	559914	274603	49.04	490875	-12.7915
1722	642246	85303	13.28	161472	-67.1053
1723	624711	169342	27.11	304595	88.63642
1724	489726	155760	31.81	289806	-4.8553
TOTAL	**2887792**	**981045**	**34.61**	**1809623**	**524.4257**
1725	556400	136464	24.53	257905	-85.7481
1726	516834	286911	55.51	574639	122.8103
1727	495017	418966	84.64	822035	43.05242
1728	381581	306731	80.38	531548	-35.3375
1729	540709	386744	71.53	608121	14.40566
TOTAL	**2490541**	**1535816**	**63.32**	**2794248**	**359.4888**
1730	631066	366674	58.10	528049	-81.1023
1731	560820	416712	74.30	613700	16.22028
1732	620672	364154	58.67	622058	1.361903
1733	399334	249227	62.41	530281	-14.7538
1734	408985	316361	77.35	624447	17.75775
TOTAL	**2620877**	**1713128**	**66.17**	**2918535**	**367.3791**
1735	502840	310134	61.68	637646	-78.1518
1736	477627	325032	68.05	593372	-6.94335
1737	575745	208254	36.17	439956	-25.8549
1738	498464	316739	63.54	560381	27.37206
1739	448631	373024	83.15	670933	19.72801
1740	440319	329932	74.93	556141	-17.1093
TOTAL	**2943626**	**1863115**	**64.59**	**3458429**	**521.8619**

SOURCE: K. N Chaudhuri, *Trading World of Asia and the East India Company, 1660-1760.* Cambridge University Press, 1978.

TABLE NO. 4: VOLUME AND VALUE OF ENGLISH EXPORT OF BENGAL TEXTILES AND THE TOTAL ENGLISH IMPORT OF TREASURE INTO ASIA, 1670-1740.

YEAR	TOTAL TREASURE IMPORTED INTO ASIA	VALUE OF TEXTILES EXPORTED FROM BENGAL	PERCENTAGE OF VALUE OF TEXTILES EXPORTED TO THE TOTAL TREASURE IMPORTED	QUANTITY OF PIECE GOODS EXPORTED	PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN THE QUANTITY OF PIECE GOODS EXPORTED
1670-75	861546	122419	14.86	232549	-
1675-80	1479368	172775	12.10	333817	43.55
1680-85	2494965	279479	11.60	538343	61.27
1685-90	1282937	306289	27.10	508784	-5.49
1690-95	368316	80734	25.47	178169	-64.98
1695-1700	1277018	333034	65.39	654551	267.38
1700-05	2049760	535495	27.99	788046	20.39
1705-10	1622476	231571	14.34	352970	-55.21
1710-15	1175369	932803	128.26	1301592	268.75
1715-20	2436057	815837	35.05	1257935	-3.35
1720-25	2887792	981045	34.61	1809623	43.86
1725-30	2490541	1535816	63.32	2794248	54.41
1730-35	2620877	1713128	66.17	2918535	4.45
1735-40	2943626	1863115	64.59	3458429	18.50

SOURCE: K. N Chaudhuri, *Trading World of Asia and the East India Company, 1660-1760.* Cambridge University Press, 1978.

TABLE -5: PIECE GOODS AND AURUNGS

PIECE GOODS	DESCRIPTION	AURUNGS/PRODUCTION CENTERS
Addaties	Plain white muslin,medium to fine quality	Bengal,Dacca district
Allibannies	Mixed cotton and silk,probably striped,medium to superior quality	Bengal,Malda-Kasimbazar
Atchabannies	Plain white,coarse quality	Bengal
Bafta	Plain white, medium to superior quality	Bengal and Bihar,Dacca,Jugdea,Patna
Carridarries	Mixed cotton and silk,striped,fine quality	Bengal
Chillaes	Striped cotton in blue and white,medium quality	Bengal
Chintz	Block printed,medium to superior quality	Bengal and Bihar,Kasimbazar,Patna,Calcutta
Chowtars	Plain white,Medium to superior quality	Bengal and Bihar
Coopees	Plain white, Medium to superior quality	Bengal
Cushtaes	Striped blue and white, Medium to superior quality	Bengal,Nadia district
Chucklaes	Mixed cotton and silk,fine quality	Bengal
Cuttanees	Plain white and striped,superior to fine quality	Bengal
Cossaes	Plain white muslin,fine quality	Bengal,Santipur,Dacca district
Dysooksies	Plain white muslin ,fine quality	Bengal
Doreas	Mixed cotton and silk,fine to superfine quality	Bengal,Malda-Kasimbazar
Dimitties	Plain white muslin,fine quality	Bengal and Orissa, Dacca,Balasore
Dosooties	Plain white muslin,medium,fine and superfine quality	Bengal
Elatches	Mixed cotton and silk .stripped,fine quality	Bengal ,Malda,Bihar,Patna
Emerties	Plain white,medium quality	Bihar,Patna
Ginghams	Mixed cotton and silk striped,medium quality	Bengal, Kasimbazar
Gurrahs	Plain white ,coarse to medium quality	Bengal,Kasimbazar-Malda area
Hankerchief	Cotton and silk mixed,medium to fine quality	Bengal
		Contd...
...Contd		

Hummums	Plain white muslin.superior to fine quality	Bengal
Jamdannees	Brocaded with white or coloured silk.luxury quality	Bengal.Dacca district
Lacowries	Plain white.coarse to medium quality	Bihar.Patna.Lahkhowar
Mulmul	Plain white muslin.fine to superfine quality	Bengal.Santipur.Dacca district
Nainsooks	Plain white muslin.superfine to luxury quality	Bengal,Dacca district
Nillaes	Mixed cotton and silk,stipped.medium to superior quality	Bengal
Photaes	Dyed calico,coarse to medium quality	Bengal
Peniasco	Mixed cotton and silk stippped,medium quality	Bengal
Romalls	Hankerchief,medium quality	Bengal
Sannoes	Plain white ,medium quality	Orissa,Balasore
Shalbafts	Plain white muslin,fine quality	Bengal
Seerhaudconnaes	Plain white muslin,luxury quality	Bengal,Dacca district
Seerbettees	Plain white muslin.fine to superfine quality	Bengal,Dacca district
Seerbands	Plain white muslin.medium to fine quality	Bengal,Dacca district
Seersuckers	Mixed cotton and silk ,stipped.medium to superior quality	Bengal,Kasimbazar
Sooseys	Mixed cotton and silk.stipped.fine quality	Bengal,Kasimbazar
Tanzeebs	Plain white muslin.fine quality	Benga.Dacca district
Terrindams	Plain white muslin.fine to superfine quality	Benga.Dacca district
Tepoy	Mixed cotton and silk.fine quality	Bengal

SOURCE: K. N Chaudhuri, *Trading World of Asia and the East India Company, 1660-1760.* Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp503-505 : Bengal Public Consultation, various years.

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