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TRADE AND EMPIRE IN  
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# TRADE AND EMPIRE IN WESTERN INDIA

1784–1806

BY

PAMELA NIGHTINGALE, Ph.D.



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It seems to be too much the practice to neglect the western parts of India, and to value nothing but the fertile fields of Bengal, while in point of real riches, I am not sure but we excel them.

—*General Stuart to Henry Dundas,  
on leaving Bombay, 31 January 1800*

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## PREFACE

This study examines the influence of commercial interests on the expansion of the British empire in western India in the age of Cornwallis and Wellesley. It questions some of the assumptions which hitherto have been accepted as explanations of British imperialism in that part of India. The chief of these is that the reform of the East India Company's administration in the 1780s brought the policy of the Bombay presidency under the firm control of the governor-general in Bengal and of the Court of Directors and the Board of Control in London. The interpretation which has followed this assumption is that the East India Company extended its possessions along the west coast of India as a defence against the renewed French threat to India. The conclusions reached in this study are that, on the contrary, British policy in western India was still largely independent of the authorities in Bengal and London, and that territorial expansion was a response chiefly to local conditions which were restricting the commercial interests of private British traders.

The chief sources I have used are the records of the East India Company which are kept in the India Office Records in the India Office Library. I have used all the main classes which relate to the Bombay presidency in this period: the Bombay Political, Commercial and Revenue Proceedings; Letters Received from Bombay; Surat and Cambay Factory Records, and Bombay Reports on External Commerce. The Bombay Mayor's Court Proceedings give useful information on the activities of private merchants and the volumes of Personal Records give considerable detail about the careers of many of the Company's servants as well as notes and memoranda. There is a wealth of material in the Home Miscellaneous Series including collections of private letters received by the Board of Control from Walter Ewer, George Smith and Captain John Taylor, while small collections of papers such as the Forbes letters in the European Manuscripts series at the India Office Library, the papers held by the Forbes family, and the Michie papers in the Guildhall Library Muniment Room supplement the official records. I have explored the policy of the Bengal government as it related to Bombay by an extensive use of the

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## Preface

Cornwallis papers at the Public Record Office. This collection is particularly useful for the letters it contains from Charles Malet and Henry Dundas, some of the most important of which are not printed by Ross. I have also gone through the Wellesley papers in the British Museum which relate to Bombay, particularly Jonathan Duncan's correspondence with the governor-general, which is supplemented by that in the Home Miscellaneous Series. Sir John Shore's correspondence with Henry Dundas is printed by H. Furber and many of Shore's papers are also in the Home Miscellaneous Series. The published volumes of *The Poona Residency Correspondence* give a good account of the supreme government's diplomacy with the Marathas. I have studied the policy of the Court of Directors in their Despatches to Bombay, Letters from the Court to the Board, and in *The Correspondence of David Scott*, edited by Professor Philips. For the policy of the Board of Control I have made a thorough study of Henry Dundas's papers in the Home Miscellaneous Series, and the collections at the John Rylands Library, Manchester, and at the National Library of Scotland. I have also used the India Office Library's microfilms of the Melville papers at Harvard and in the Ames Library of South Asia in Minnesota. At the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh there is an important collection of papers which has been used for the first time for this study. This is the Walker of Bowland deposit which is yet unsorted and uncatalogued. This makes reference to it difficult as there exists only a rough press list of the boxes as they stand on the shelves and the unsorted documents within them are not numbered. When the collection is re-arranged and catalogued the press numbers will be replaced, but there is no alternative at present but to use them.

Parliamentary papers yield considerable information, while Professor Philips's book, *The East India Company, 1784-1834*, and Professor Furber's *John Company at Work* are the essential secondary works for a study of this kind.

In using quotations I have copied the exact spelling and punctuation of the original, but otherwise I have adopted the method of spelling Indian words which is used in *The Imperial Gazetteer*.

I should like to express my gratitude to Dr T. G. P. Spear for his unfailing kindness and support since I first worked under him, to Dr Peter Marshall for his helpful comments, the staff of the India Office Library and Records, the Public Record Office, the



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### *Preface*

John Rylands Library, the Bedford and Lincoln County Record Offices, and the National Library of Scotland for their friendliness and help. I owe much to my college, Newnham, and to my teachers there, Miss K. Hughes and Miss B. Behrens. I am grateful to Mr B. H. Farmer of the Cambridge Centre for South Asian Studies for including my book in this series, and to the publishers and printers in their handling of a difficult text. Finally I wish to thank my husband for his advice and work in correcting the proofs. I dedicate this book to him, to my son Giles and to my parents.

*2 St Mary's Square,  
Aylesbury*

PAMELA NIGHTINGALE

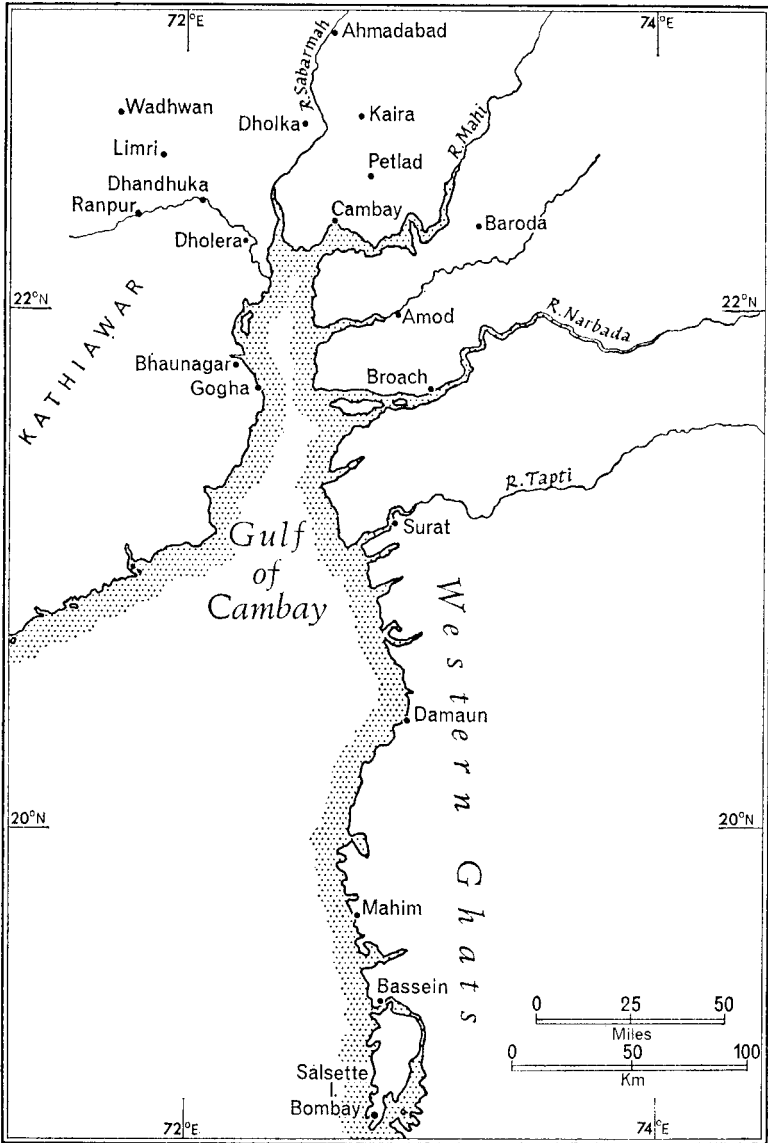
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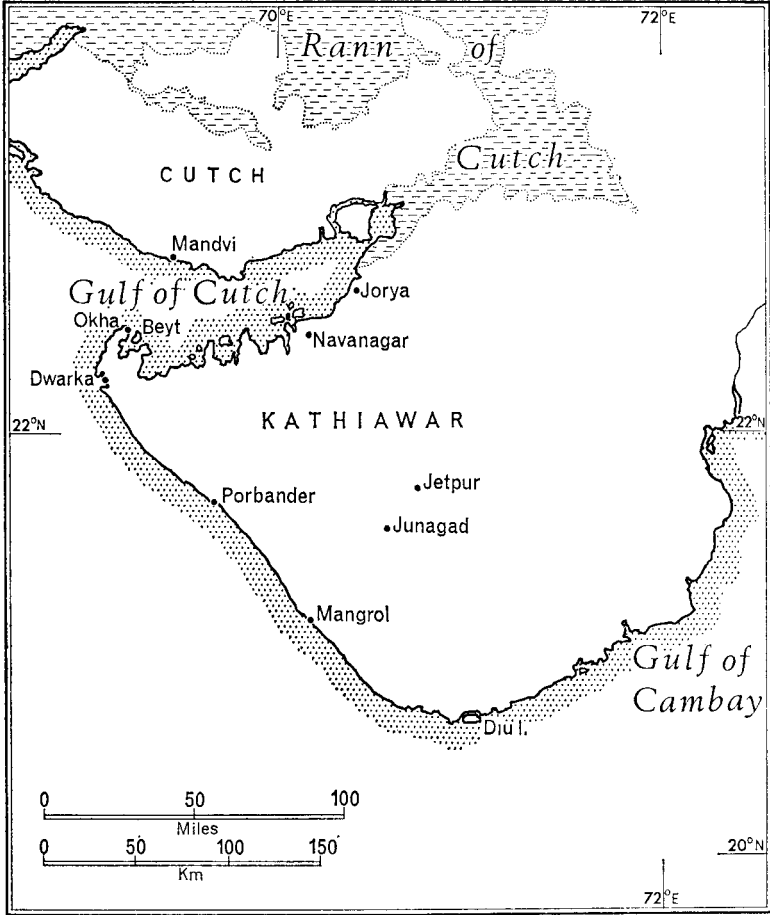
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KATHIAWAR AND CUTCH

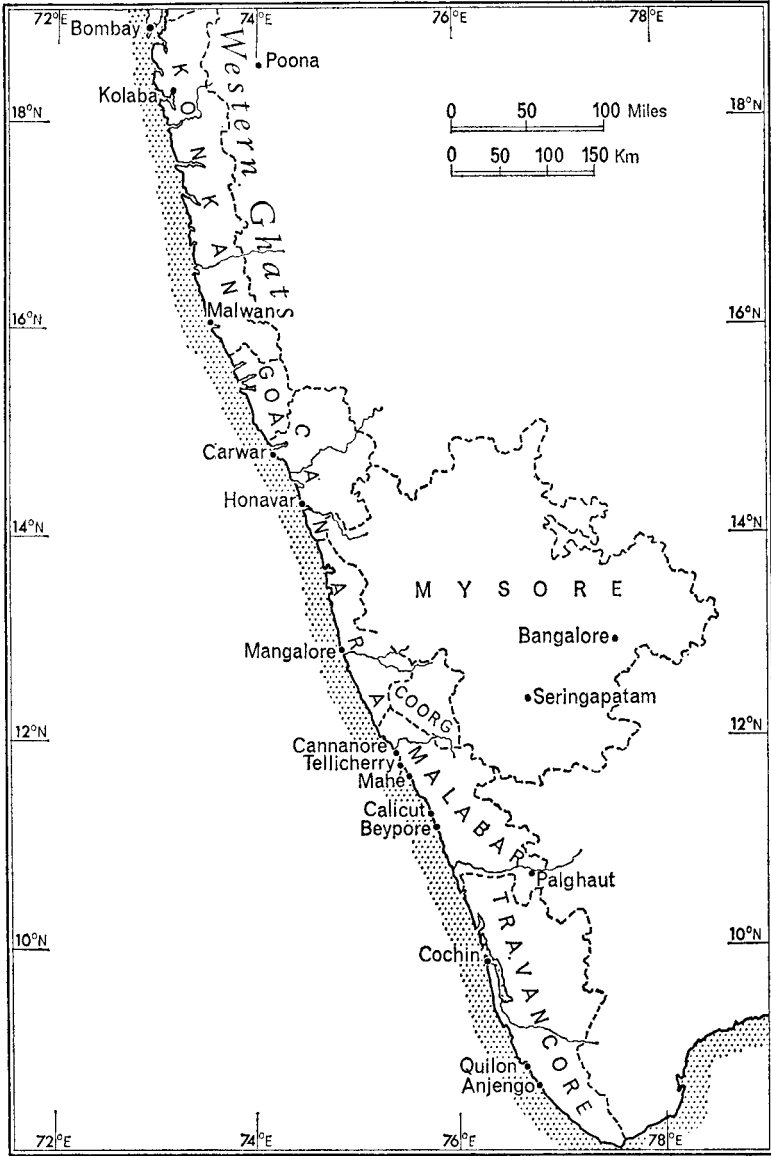
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## ABBREVIATIONS

- Add. MSS:** Additional Manuscripts  
**BCP:** Bombay Commercial Proceedings  
**BM:** British Museum  
**BPC:** Bombay Public Consultations  
**BRP:** Bombay Revenue Proceedings  
*Bombay Selections:* Selections from the records of the Bombay presidency  
**BSP:** Bombay Secret Proceedings  
**BSPP:** Bombay Secret and Political Proceedings  
**BT:** Board of Trade  
**CO:** Colonial Office  
**CSCB:** Consultations of the Select Committee of Bombay (the early volumes in the series of Bombay Secret and Political Proceedings)  
**HMC:** Historical Manuscripts Commission  
**Home Misc.:** Home Miscellaneous Series  
**IOL:** India Office Library  
**LAO:** Lincolnshire Archives Office  
**NLS:** National Library of Scotland  
**PC:** Privy Council  
**PRO:** Public Record Office  
**Rylands:** John Rylands Library, Manchester  
**WB:** Walker of Bowland

Roman capitals in the references give the number of the volume, and arabic or small roman figures give the number of the page.