

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-28542-1 - Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750

K. N. Chaudhuri

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean

Before the age of Industrial Revolution, the great Asian civilisations – whether located in the Middle East, India, South-East Asia, or the Far East – constituted areas not only of high culture but also of advanced economic development. They were the First World of human societies.

This book examines one of the driving forces of that historical period: the long chain of oceanic trade which stretched from the South China Sea to the eastern Mediterranean, passing through a series of rich urban emporia. It also looks at the natural complement of the seaborne commerce, its counterpart in the caravan trade. In analytical terms, the book emphasises the methods of multi-dimensional history by highlighting the intricate relationship between space, time and structure. Its main achievement is to show how socially determined demand derived from cultural habits and interpretations operated through the medium of market forces and relative prices. It points out, for the first time, the unique and limiting features of Asian commercial capitalism, and shows how the contribution of Asian merchants was valued universally, in reality if not legally and formally.

Professor Chaudhuri's book, based on more than twenty years' research and reflection on pre-modern trade and civilisations, is a landmark in the analysis and interpretation of Asia's historical position and development.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-28542-1 - Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750

K. N. Chaudhuri

Frontmatter

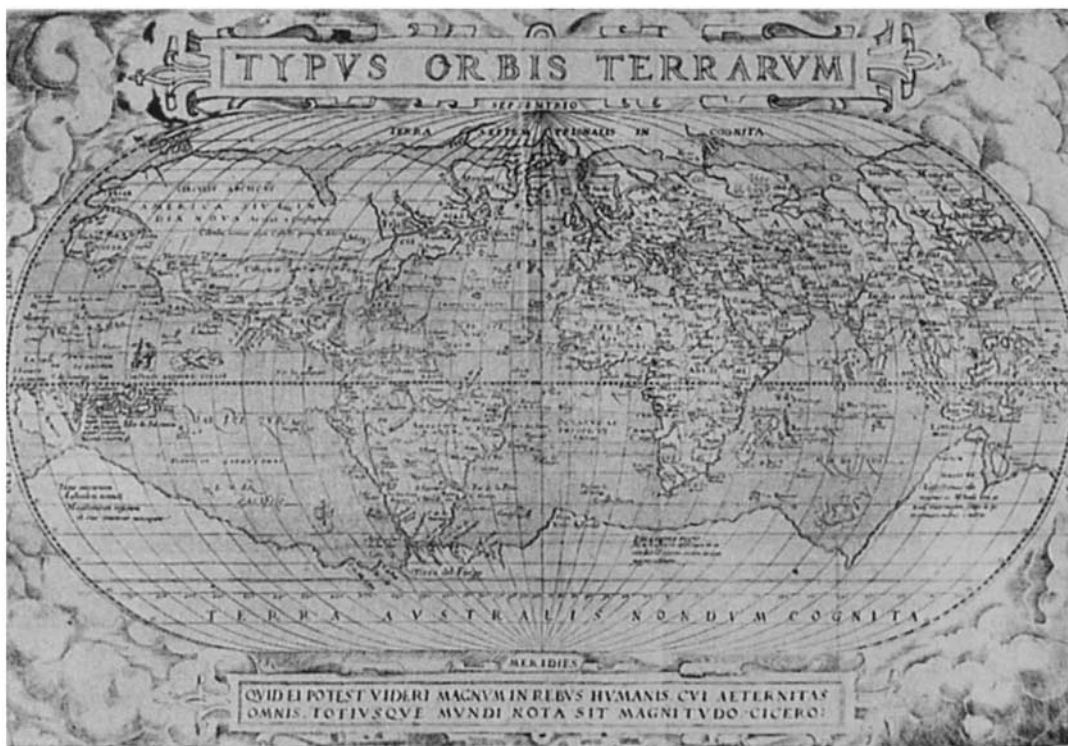
[More information](#)

Plate 1. Map of the world, from J.H. van Linschoten, *His Discours of Voyages unto the Easte and West Indies*, 1598.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-28542-1 - Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750

K. N. Chaudhuri

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean

An Economic History
from the Rise of Islam to 1750

K.N. Chaudhuri

*Professor of the Economic History of Asia,
School of Oriental and African Studies,
University of London*



Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-28542-1 - Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750

K. N. Chaudhuri

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain

Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

<http://www.cambridge.org>

© Cambridge University Press 1985

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1985

Reprinted 1993, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2002

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Library of Congress catalogue card number: 84-12152

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Chaudhuri, K. N.

Trade and civilisation in the Indian Ocean:
an economic history from the rise of Islam
to 1750.

1. Asia – Commerce – History

I. Title

382'.095 HF3752

ISBN 0 521 24226 6

ISBN 0 521 28542 9 Pbk

Contents

<i>List of maps</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>List of plates</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xiv
Introduction	1
Part I General problems and historical events	7
1 Trade and civilisation in the Indian Ocean: social, cultural, economic, and temporal dimensions	9
Chronological coherence, 9. Role of merchants, 11. The state, law, and order, 12. Attitudes to sea-power, 14. The typology of long-distance trade, 15. The function and causation of pre-modern trade, 17. The cultural role of trade, 18. The unity and diversity of the Indian Ocean; the dimensions of time, 21. Stationary time (<i>la longue durée</i>): climate, oceanography, food habits, 23; cultural identities, 31. Random time: famines, wars, and calamities, 32.	
2 The rise of Islam and the pattern of pre-emporia trade in early Asia	34
Early developments: T'ang China, rise of Islam and its expansion, 34. India and South East Asia in the pattern of voyages, 37. Muhammad and the foundation of the Islamic empire, 39. Arab achievements: trade routes, 44. Muslim voyages to India and China, 49. Muslims as commercial intermediaries, 51. Sung maritime trade, 52. Chau Ju-kua, Marco Polo, and Chinese trade, 53. Islamic trade from the eleventh century, 56. East African trade, 57. The Red Sea route, 58. Ming maritime voyages, 60.	
3 The Portuguese seaborne empire in the Indian Ocean	63
Portuguese impact on the emporia trade of Asia, 63. The main periods of the Portuguese seaborne empire in the Indian Ocean, 66. Lisbon, Venice, and the spice trade, 67. The foundation of the empire: Almeida, 68; Albuquerque and naval victories, 69. The character and policy of the Estado da India, 71. Eastward expansion, 74. The Portuguese in China and Japan, 75. Achievements and decline, 77.	
4 The Dutch and English East India Companies and the bureaucratic form of trade in Asia	80
Linschoten and Goa as a trading emporium, 80. North European background, 81. The rise of the trading corporations, 82. Bureaucratic organisation, 83. Political ideology: Dutch war against the Portuguese, 84; English policy, 85; the French Company, 86. The	

- principle of armed trading, 87. The VOC and the spice trade, 88. Country-trade and new commodities, 90. The Companies in India and the Middle East, 90; the role of South India, 92, Bengal, 93, the Far East, 94. The commercial impact of the VOC and the East India Company, 95.
- 5 Emporia trade and the great port-towns in the Indian Ocean 98**
 The emporia trade and the Islamic world, 98. Ma Huan's description of the Malabar, 99. The transplantation of merchants, 100. Pires and Barbosa as historians of the emporia trade, 102. The historical explanation of the emporia trade, 103; residence of foreign merchants, 105; political considerations, 106. The old emporia network: Aden, 107; Hormuz and Oman, 108; Cambay, 108; Malacca, 108. The later emporia trade (seventeenth century), 114.
- Part II Structure and *la longue durée* 119**
- 6 The sea and its mastery 121**
 The seafaring communities, 121. Social attitudes towards the sea, 122. Sailors and the art of navigation, 124. The different seas of the Indian Ocean, 126. The wind-system and its dangers, 127; climatic explanations of the monsoons, 127. Navigational problems: the Red Sea, 128; the Persian Gulf, 129; the Arabian Sea, 129; East Africa and the Mozambique Channel, 131; landfall in India, 131; the Malacca and Sunda passages, 133. Asian navigational techniques, 134. European navigation, 134. The risks of shipwreck, 135.
- 7 Ships and shipbuilding in the Indian Ocean 138**
 Transport by sea and land, 138. The technology of ships, 139. Types of ship, 141. The nature of regional specialisation, 142. The *Prince of Orange*, an Atlantic ship in the Indian Ocean, 144. Shipbuilding: the stitched ship, 147; the use of iron nails, 150; the development of the gun deck, 151; the methods of shell construction, 152; the Indonesian ship, 152; Chinese junks, 154; steering gear and rigging, 155; fighting ships, 156; Asian shipwrights, 157.
- 8 The land and its relationship with long-distance trade 160**
 The bond between land and sea, 160. The location of sea-ports, 161; transport costs as a factor, 163; social factors, 164. The great rivers as waterways, 165. Caravan routes, 167; trans-Asian highway, 169; the caravan trade and the maritime trade, 172. The organisation of the caravan trade, 173. The role of urbanisation, 176; Islamic cities, 177; towns in China, 177; towns in South East Asia, 180.
- 9 Commodities and markets 182**
 The contrast between pre-modern and post-Industrial Revolution trade, 182. The role of calamities in economic life, 183. The relationship between luxury and bulk goods, 184. The geography of commodities and exchange, 185. Distance and commodities, 189; types of goods, 190; two ships' invoices: rice exports to China, 192, a country-ship from Bengal, 193. Markets: the element of speculation, 194; commercial depressions, 195; the structure of markets, 196; minimising price variations, 198; the system of advance contracts, 200; the typology of markets, 201.
- 10 Capital and trade in the Indian Ocean: the problem of scale, merchants, money, and production 203**
 Long-distance trade and capitalism, 203. The scale of operations, 204; the importance of

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-28542-1 - Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750

K. N. Chaudhuri

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Contents*

vii

trade, 205. Historical events and the long term, 207. Merchants and capitalism in Asia, 209; sources of capital, 210; commercial capitalism in Europe and Asia, 212; the dilemma of wealth and investment, 213; the ownership of land and the ownership of capital contrasted, 214. The role of money, 214; precious metals in China, 215, in India, 216. Copper coins and cowries, 217. Long-distance movements in precious metals, 218. Trade and economic production, 219.

11 Conclusion 221

The significance of the period, 221. The causation of pre-modern long-distance trade, 222; the influence of demand, 222; relative prices, 223; definition of the term “market”, 223; Polyani and the “port of trade”, 223. The merchants in “diaspora”: the validity of the idea, 223. Protection costs, 227; transport costs, 227. The limits of Asian commercial capitalism, 228.

Notes 229*Glossary* 245*Guide to sources and further reading* 247*Bibliography* 252*Index* 263

Maps

1	The area of the Indian Ocean and trans-continental trade, 618–1750.	<i>page</i> 10
2	Pressure and wind direction in the Indian Ocean from April to August.	22
3	Pressure and wind direction in the Indian Ocean from December to March.	24
4	The distribution of wheat and rice cultivation.	26
5	The distribution of sugar cane and date palm cultivation.	28
6	The trading regions of the Indian Ocean.	35
7	Trading ports and cities in the Indian Ocean, 618–1500.	38
8	The pattern of single voyages across the Indian Ocean from the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, <i>c.</i> 700–950.	40
9	The pattern of emporia trade in the Indian Ocean: the triple segmentation, <i>c.</i> 1000–1500 (each circle represents the quarterly shift of the monsoon).	41
10	Portuguese seaborne empire, <i>c.</i> 1580.	70
11	The Indian Ocean in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, showing the settlements of the English East India Company and of other European nations.	96
12	The structure of emporia trade in the Indian Ocean before 1500.	104
13	The structure of emporia trade in the Indian Ocean after 1600.	115
14	The main sea-lanes in the Indian Ocean.	130
15	Main river systems used by long-distance traders.	166
16	Main caravan routes in Asia, 618–1750.	168
17	The pattern of urbanisation in the Indian Ocean: the primate and secondary cities, 650–1500.	174
18	Main regional exports from the Indian Ocean before 1750.	186

Plates

- | | | |
|----|---|--------------|
| 1 | Map of the world, from J.H. van Linschoten, <i>His Discours of Voyages unto the Easte and West Indies</i> , 1598. | Frontispiece |
| 2 | Mughal miniature painting of an imaginary meeting between Emperor Jahangir and Shah Abbas of Persia, c. 1618. | 30 |
| 3 | Plan of Alexandria, from G. Braun and F. Hohenberg, <i>Civitates Orbis Terrarum</i> , 1573. | 45 |
| 4 | Imperial palace at Peking, from J. Nieuhof, <i>An Embassy from the East India Company of the United Provinces to the Grand Tartar Chaun Emperor of China</i> , translated by John Ogilby, 1669. | 52 |
| 5 | View of Aden from the sea, showing the Portuguese attack on the town in 1513, from Gaspar Correa, <i>Lendas da India</i> , 1858. | 55 |
| 6 | View of Hormuz from the sea, from Gaspar Correa, <i>Lendas da India</i> , 1858. | 57 |
| 7 | Sea-view of Canton in the seventeenth century, showing European shipping and Chinese junks in the foreground, from Nieuhof, <i>An Embassy from the East India Company</i> , 1669. | 61 |
| 8 | Sea-view and plan of Goa, from Philippus Baldaeus, <i>Naauwkeurige Beschryvinge van Malabar en Choromandel</i> , 1672. | 65 |
| 9 | The island-fortress of Diu in the Gulf of Cambay, from Baldaeus, <i>Naauwkeurige Beschryvinge</i> , 1672. | 72 |
| 10 | Sea-views of Batavia, from Baldaeus, <i>Naauwkeurige Beschryvinge</i> , 1672. | 89 |
| 11 | Sea-views of Cochin during the period of Dutch settlement, from Baldaeus, <i>Naauwkeurige Beschryvinge</i> , 1672. | 91 |
| 12 | A seventeenth-century drawing of the English factory in Surat. | 97 |
| 13 | A view of Malacca during the Portuguese period, from Gaspar Correa, <i>Lendas da India</i> , 1858. | 111 |
| 14 | A distant view of Surat and its river, from Baldaeus, <i>Naauwkeurige Beschryvinge</i> , 1672. | 116 |
| 15 | A distant view of Masulipatam and its river, from Baldaeus, <i>Naauwkeurige Beschryvinge</i> , 1672. | 117 |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-28542-1 - Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750

K. N. Chaudhuri

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x	<i>List of plates</i>	
16	A Malabar privateering ship with two banks of oars and lateen rigging, from Peter Mundy, <i>Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia</i> , ed. R. Temple, 1914.	149
17	An Indonesian prahu under full sail: stone-carving from the Borobodur temple in Java.	153
18	A Chinese junk with bamboo-mat sail, from Nieuhof, <i>An Embassy from the East India Company</i> , 1669.	154
19	A league-tower or kos-minar, marking the old highway from Delhi to Agra in northern India.	171
20	A view of the Indo-Islamic city of Ahmedabad in Gujarat, from Baldaeus, <i>Naauwkeurige Beschryvinge</i> , 1672.	173
21	An encampment scene from Babar-Nama, 1598, showing the feeding and tending of horses, camels, and mules around the tents.	178
22	A Chinese walled-town.	179
23	The Armenian church in Julfa, Isfahan.	225

Preface

To turn to a general historical study of past civilisations after sixteen years of documentary and archival research is not an easy decision. The completion of my work on the English East India Company in the summer of 1975 left me with considerable uncertainty about the future direction in which I should go. A huge amount of material which I had collected still awaited further investigation and analysis, especially on the social aspects of the early European presence in Asia. At the same time, the urge to escape for a while from the rigours of a long scholastic incarceration was very strong. Several factors encouraged me to move in the direction of the present study. In the spring of 1975 I met Fernand Braudel for the first time in Prato, during the *Settima Settimana di Studi* at the Francesco Datini Institute, of which he is the President. Braudel and his wife received me with kindness and expressed an interest in seeing my current research, still unpublished at that time. He himself was then working on the last two volumes of *Civilisation matérielle* with the active support of his wife, and it was evident that a vast historical canvas, a work of great inspiration, was slowly taking shape. The sessions of the Datini Institute that year were devoted to world monetary history from the thirteenth century to the eighteenth. As I listened to the large collection of detailed papers presented, it occurred to me that a single work dealing with the general theme of long-distance trade and the role of money in pre-modern societies might fill a lacuna that still existed in the historiography of early trade.

In the autumn and winter of the same year, I was able to spend six months travelling in India, the Middle East, and South East Asia, and to visit some of the ancient towns and cities which were once prominent in the caravan and maritime trade of the Indian Ocean. The contrasting images of those journeys still convey to my mind the impression of a world that has almost vanished from contemporary Western Europe, a world inhabited by mankind for several millennia. Only once, in 1979 while walking through the streets of Ciudad Rodrigo in Spain, did I feel that I was face to face with the still-living past. The road that runs from Delhi to Agra, and then to Ajmer, Jodhpur and Gujarat, follows the old caravan route, often marked by tall league-towers, as do also the roads from Tehran to Isfahan, Shiraz, Yazd, and Kirman. To travel along these roads is to experience at first hand the simultaneous existence of the harsh realities of the old civilisation, the *ancien régime*, and its

finest achievements. The exquisite lake-side marble pavilions of the Mughal emperors at Ajmer are flanked by the view of the precipitous mountain fortress, the scene of many bloody massacres, and an uncompromising instrument of military power. The awesome landscape of North India is only marginally softened by its fertile cornfields; but there is nothing comparable in the wide expanse of rocks, sand, and dried-out salt lakes which make up the Iranian plateau. The only sign of life is the occasional flock of sheep, a desert breed accustomed to conditions of extreme aridity. The glittering golden-domed shrine of Qumm rises above the empty plains as a magnificent tribute to the ascetical devotion of Islam. The lake palace at Udaipur, built in the early eighteenth century, has the classic outlines of Mughal architecture from the period of Shah Jahan, though it was the residence of a Hindu prince. Its interior gardens, of ravishing beauty and elegance, recall the parterres of Mughal gardens, though transformed by Rajastani sensibilities. I saw the lake palace during a North Indian spring as the overhead sun was pushing the day temperature towards the 35°C range. A few weeks later I was in Isfahan. Snow had not yet melted on the surrounding mountains. In the courtyard of the Madrase Madar-i-Shah, the spring blossoms were just beginning to appear on the almond and cherry trees. The stately plane trees planted in that courtyard garden of perfect geometric proportions were still bare against the turquoisetailed dome. In 1677 John Fryer travelled from Surat to Isfahan by sea and land. His descriptions recorded the impact made by the Iranian primate city on someone well-accustomed to the sights of large trading towns:

thus attended we were brought over a most Magnificent Bridge with Arches over our Heads, and on both sides Rails and Galleries to view the River, the cloisters whereof were Paved with broad Marble . . . which led us to a stately large Street, continued on the other side with equal Gallantry of Buildings and Trees, till we were carried under their Lofty-Ceiled and Stately-Erected *Buzzars* . . . which is, I confess, the surprizingest piece of Greatness in Honour of Commerce the whole World can boast of, our *Burses* being but Snaps of Buildings to these famous *Buzzers*. (Fryer, II, 240–1)

The difference between the Indian adaptation of Islamic artistic tradition and the purely Islamised Iran is clearly visible, and yet the contrast is nothing like as strong as in the case of civilisations one meets in South East Asia. The sight of whitewashed Buddhist temples with multi-coloured roofing tiles and ornate Chinese religious shrines is as evocative of the cultural watershed between the west and the east in the Indian Ocean as the landscape itself, with its deep, slow-moving rivers and flooded rice fields.

The visual impressions brought back from that period of Asian travel gradually strengthened my earlier idea of undertaking a general study of long-distance trade, markets, and merchants in the context of different societies and civilisations. However, after I had written three preliminary draft chapters the plan was modified as a result of a suggestion from Robin Derricourt and the Cambridge University Press that the study might be directed more specifically

Preface

xiii

at the origin, development, and structure of Indian Ocean trade before 1800. The suggestion came at a time when new undergraduate courses were introduced examining the comparative features of the pre-modern economic system of Asia. I am grateful to the Syndics of the Press for accepting my draft proposals in outline and to Robin Derricourt for constant encouragement while progress on the work was held up by many other academic commitments. In terms of historical methodology, the present study is very different from my *Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company*. The latter was an attempt to analyse long-distance trade and commercial decision-making in terms of rigorous quantitative techniques. The series of statistics compiled from the original records demonstrates that pre-modern trade was not a matter of chance but incorporated systematic, rational processes as well. That conclusion is supported by this study also, with the additional discovery that cultural values and contrasting social habits contributed as much to pre-modern economic exchange as did purely economic factors. The present work attempts to examine this constant interaction between the rationality of commercial decisions, financial aspirations, and the larger elements of causality embedded in the human society and the environment.

A special word of thanks is due to M.A. Cook, who read the entire typescript and offered many helpful suggestions and criticisms. His vast knowledge of early Islamic sources and terms has been readily available to me, and I am grateful to him for bringing to my knowledge a number of interesting references. I must thank Gerald Hawting for checking my Roman transliteration of Arabic script, though I have not always followed orthodox conventions for their own sake. For assistance in Chinese history I have constantly turned to W.S. Atwell and benefited greatly from his detailed analysis of China's monetary economy. Roland Oliver's interest in the comparative history of civilisations was a steady source of encouragement and support. My pupils, both undergraduates and research students, have always sustained my work with their own studies and ideas. I remember with particular pleasure the response of my class in 1979, when I presented a lecture course on this subject for the first time. Finally, I should like to thank A.G. Hopkins, who made many useful suggestions for improving the final presentation of the main arguments.

London, January 1984

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-28542-1 - Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750

K. N. Chaudhuri

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Abbreviations

- IOR** India Office Records (the records division of The India Office Library and Records, The British Library)
- PRO** Public Record Office