The Port City of Chaul

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the port of Chaul, on the west coast of India, in the modern-day state of Maharashtra, to study the ways in which the port as urban settlement, and as a town, in both its layout and in its monuments, reflected the orientation towards the twin categories of land and sea, but leaning perhaps more towards the land. It takes as its starting point Michael Pearson's concept of ports as 'gateways' and 'hubs' and tries to examine the multiple networks of trade that were centred in this port.

In 2003, Michael Pearson had argued that it was time for a shift in perspective, to "look from the sea to the land, and most obviously to the coast."[1] While going along the coasts of the 'expansive' Indian Ocean, there were a number of choke points, at which, he said, port cities were usually found. However, he also talked of ports as 'gateways' and 'hubs', and emphasised the need to go inland from the port, rather than just along the coast. In his work on the Swahili Coast, *Port Cities and Intruders*, he focused on the need to understand the relations between the coast and the interior, stating that the "ports themselves were often located with an inland rather than maritime orientation."[2] Links here were both coastal and along land routes, with "constant reciprocity between the near hinterland and the ports."[3] Can we use these as suggestions to study ports in India? In personal conversations, he talked about how the study of ports on the west coast of India were still very meagre, despite the existence of many sources, pointing out that when ports were studied, scholars, particularly historians, did not look at the port as an urban structure, focusing, instead, on the economic dimensions alone. While Pearson did not specifically talk about ports as carriers of cosmopolitan cultures, his work on port cities does give some indication of his engagement, albeit very briefly, with the notion. However, in his work on the Swahili coast, his work on the *haj,* as well as in his more

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1. M.N. Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (London: Routledge, 2003), 5.
2. M.N. Pearson, *Port Cities and Intruders: The Swahili Coast, India, and Portugal in the Early Modern Era*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 19-20.
3. Ibid., 20.

recent edited volume on spices,[4] he pointed to the multiple networks of trade and cultural contacts that existed across the western Indian Ocean.

It is against the background of these remarks that I have undertaken the present study. The port of Chaul – as port, as urban settlement, and as a town, in both its layout and in its monuments, reflected the orientation towards the twin categories of land and sea, but leaning perhaps more towards the land. However, as the two parts of the city were also linked to different political regimes, their structures reflected the differences and the varying concerns of these regimes.

I

Chaul, today called Revadanda, is located on the coastal strip of the west coast of India, locally known as the north Konkan coast. Tradition has it that near this city lay the ancient city of Champavati,[5] mentioned in the *Vishnu Purana* as being founded by a king called Champa. Puranic geography does correspond fairly accurately with the local oral traditions about the place. The British had a more prosaic explanation for its name. The Statistical Report of the Colaba Agency 1854[6] says that the local name is derived from the fact that the place was famous for its *Champa* (frangipani) trees. The *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* mentions a place called 'Symola', while the Chinese pilgrim/traveler Xu-anxang mentions 'Chimolo' a little later, both of which seem to correspond to medieval Chaul. In 916 A.D. the Arab geographer Masudi referred to the city of 'Saimur' which he said was on the coast of Lar, which was the older name for the stretch of coast from Chaul to Bharuch (Broach). Alberuni refers to it as 'Jaimur' and says that it is to the south of Tana[7] in the country of Larin.[8] In the 13th century Saimur was described again as a place in which there were "Musalmans, Christians, Jews and Fire-worshippers [presumably Parsis][9].... the merchandise of the Turks is conveyed hither and the aloes called Saimuri are named from this place.... in the city there are mosques, Christian churches, synagogues and fire-temples."[10] In the same century, however, Marco Polo does not mention the port at all.[11]

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4. M.N. Pearson, (ed.), *Spices in the Indian Ocean World*, (New Delhi: Routledge, 2017).
5. *Thane Jillyache Varnan*, (Bombay: Thacker, Vining & Co., 1876), cited in J. Gerson da Cunha, *Notes on the History and Antiquities of Chaul and Bassein*, (Asian Educational Services, 1993), 5.
6. W.M. Hearn, *Statistical Report of the Colaba Agency* (Bombay: Bombay Education Society's Press, 1854), 26.
7. This is not the modern day suburb of Thana in Mumbai, but is the name by which the old port of Thatta in Sindh was usually known.
8. It is an odd but interesting fact that, in this area, the Persian style *lari* coins were minted during the medieval period. We do not know whether the Arab geographers referred to the area as Lars because the *lari* were already in circulation there.
9. Today, Chaul does not have a Parsi community at all, nor is there to be found any trace of a fire temple, an *agiary*, if it existed earlier.
10. H. Yule (ed.), *Cathay and the way Thither*, Vol. I, (London, Hakluyt Society, 1866), cxi.
11. I have given the descriptions of Chaul by Athanasius Nikitin, Ludovico Varthema and Duarte Barbosa in another paper and therefore will not go into those descriptions again here. See Radhika Seshan, "Secondary Ports and the Hinterland: A Comparative Study of Chaul and Porto Novo in the 17th Century" in Rila Mukherjee (ed.) *Vanguards of Globalisation: Port Cities from the Classical to the Modern*, (New Delhi: Primus Book, 2014), 111-125.

Chaul lay originally in the area of the Bahmani kingdom located in the Deccan, which had been established in the fourteenth century. By the end of the fifteenth century, this kingdom had disintegrated, to be replaced by five smaller sultanates. Of these, three, the Adil Shahi kingdom of Bijapur, the Qutb Shahi kingdom of Golconda, and the Nizam Shahi kingdom of Ahmednagar, survived into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, the seventeenth century also witnessed the rise of Maratha power, and Chaul later became part of the Maratha kingdom. While the specific port of Chaul was not an arena of conflict among South Asian powers, the coast and the trade of the region was contested among different powers, particularly by Bijapur and Ahmednagar, for the entire coast was dotted with ports which were important in the overseas trade of the Arabian Sea.

In the seventeenth century, the Konkan coast was ruled by a number of warring dynasties and its economic life was continually disrupted by wars of conquest which sought to gain profit from trade and related economic activities and to expand the territorial control of these ruling dynasties. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Konkan coast came under the influence of the Nizam Shahi and Adil Shahi rulers. Mughal power in the Deccan began to increase from the first half of the seventeenth century, as the power of Nizam Shahi declined, and it was finally annexed by Mughals in 1633. In the period of the decline of the Nizam Shahi kingdom Malik Ambar, the Abyssinian Minister of Ahmednagar, extended to the Konkan the advantages of good government. However, after the death of Malik Ambar in 1636, the whole of the Konkan dominions of the Ahmednagar kingdom were ceded to Bijapur. The cession is said by Khafi Khan "to have been made by the Emperor of Delhi in exchange for districts belonging to Bijapur in the neighbourhood of Aurangabad", and the part of the Konkan given up is described as "jungles and hills full of trees."[12] Bijapur was now for a few years the paramount power in the Konkan. With the fall of Ahmednagar in 1600, Chaul passed to the Mughal emperor Akbar and was renamed Mamle Mortezabad. Three years later Malik Ambar regained the bulk of the Ahmednagar dominions for the young king Nizam Shah II. However, his kingdom did not include Chaul, which remained in the hands of a governor who held it on behalf of the Mughals. In 1636, after concluding a treaty of peace with the King of Bijapur, the Mughal Emperor handed over all the Ahmednagar possessions in the Konkan. In 1612, the Mughals besieged Daman, Bassein and Chaul. Peace was purchased by concessions and presents. By the middle of the century, the Marathas had begun to emerge, under the leadership of Shivaji, as a substantial political force.

Shivaji appears to have appreciated early in his career the importance of dominating the coastal lands and waters. Therefore, he built up the navy utilizing the abundant resources of the Konkan coasts. His conquest of the ports of Kalyan, Bhivandi and Panvel from Bijapur made the Marathas a formidable coastal power. He extended his military

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12. Rev. Alexander Kyd Nairne, *History of the Konkan*, (Bombay: Govt. Central Press 1894), 38.

strategy of establishing forts and central seats of power to the coasts, building a number of forts along the coast and on the off-shore islands. "The entire coast from Chaul to Goa, for the space of 250 miles belonged to him and from thence to Bijapur, he had several forts, most of them among inaccessible mountains, besides cities and towns defended both by art and nature."[13] In 1658, he succeeded in taking possession of the whole of the Konkan. In 1660, he attacked Bijapur by plundering Rajapur and burning Dabhol, and the three powers of the southern Konkan— Bijapur, the Siddis and the *Savantas*—then united against the invaders in 1661. By 1672, Shivaji had taken over Chaul. His growing power is clear from a letter from Goa, in which it was stated that the entire coast from 'Chaul to Banda'[14] was under his control.[15] In 1740, the Marathas were reported as having complete control over Chaul, but during the eighteenth century Chaul steadily declined in importance.

The Portuguese had come to Chaul early on in the sixteenth century, when Burhan Nizamshah (1506-1553) granted them permission to build a fort at Lower Chaul, in return for a guaranteed supply of 300 horses per year from Persia or Arabia, it is not clear. In 1615, a treaty of friendship was concluded between Ahmednagar and the Portuguese and promises made to the effect that neither the English nor the Dutch would be allowed to settle at Chaul. In January 1617, the treaty was renewed and it was agreed that the garden between Upper and Lower Chaul would belong to the Portuguese.

II

Chaul was extremely well located for both internal and external trade. Situated on what is today known as the Roha Creek (also known locally as the Kundalika River), it has a fairly sheltered harbor, in which even during the monsoon small ships could anchor away from the winds and waves of the Arabian Sea. Overlooking it was a promontory called *Korlai*, which, according to medieval travelers, could be seen from quite a distance away at sea: according to Pietro della Valle, for example, "It stands much within the land upon a precipice where the Sea entering far into the Bay between the hills and the low Shore (into which also is discharged the mouth of a river) makes an ample and secure harbour."[16]

The trading networks of Chaul port included oceanic, coastal, and inland trade, and within the urban settlement there was a fairly large market area. Traditionally, the main area of trade was with the Persian Gulf, as can be seen from the fact that Persian style *larin* coins were minted at Chaul. The chief ports with which the vessels of Chaul

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13. Surendranath Sen (ed.), *The Indian Travels of Thévenot and Carreri,* (New Delhi: The National Archives of India, 1949), 184.

14. 'Banda' is still unidentifiable, but it is possible that this refers to the place that came to be known as Bankot, where the British established a fort later in the eighteenth century.

15. P.S. Pissurlencar, (ed.), *Marathayanchya Itihasachi Sadhane*, Portuguese Dafter, Volume II, (Bombay: Maharashtra State Board of Literature and Culture, 1974), 191

16. G. Havers (ed.), *The Travels of Pietro della Valle in India*, Vol. I (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services reprint, 1991), 140.

traded were Muscat and Basra in the Persian Gulf, Mozambique in East Africa, Manila in the Philippine Islands and at Canton.[17] In addition, Chaul was important in coastal trade, something that continued into the late eighteenth century as well. This can be seen from the Modi documents at Pune archives where we can find a list of various port and customs duties that were collected.[18]

Medieval Chaul became known to Europeans with the entry of the Portuguese. Ferishta, one of the major sources for the history of the Deccan in the seventeenth century, says that the Portuguese first appeared at Chaul in 1505.[19] Chaul was at that time under the rule of Ahmednagar and the display of naval supremacy forced the Ahmednagar ruler to agree to pay the Portuguese a yearly sum of 600 *lari* (2000 gold *pardaos*) in return for the protection of Chaul ships.[20] In 1516 the Portuguese were allowed to build a factory at Chaul; this was rebuilt after 1521 when Chaul was burnt by the Bijapur army. Local tradition states that the size of the fort was to be no larger than that covered by a certain number of cow-hides, an old established system of measurement.[21] According to sources, "The ancient city of Chaul was divided into sixteen equal parts, called Pakhady-as, or rows of buildings separated by paved alleys, and were named thus: 1. Pakhady or Pakhadi Prathama, 2. Mokhava, 3. Veshvi, 4. Dakhavada, 5. Bolave, 6. Tudal, 7. Usave, 8. Murada, 9. Ambepuri, 10. Vejari, 11. Kopari, 12. Peta, 13. Bhovasi, 14. Zivadi, 15. Dod, 16. Kasabe. Out of these, the three Pakhadyas of Dakhavada, Murada and Dod, were ceded to the Portuguese."[22] These last three became part of Lower Chaul.

Lower Chaul was nearer the coast, between Upper Chaul and the sea, and as noted above, located on the creek. Upper Chaul lay two miles up the creek, and was connected with the former by a street, or by boat along the creek itself. Upper Chaul was particularly important for its overland connections, with Daulatabad, Balaghat to the north and with the whole Deccan Konkan area. Another important trade route was one that connected it to Pune, via Ahmednagar, Paithan and Aurangabad. From Aurangabad, there was access to Bidar and to the central and eastern parts of the Deccan plateau. Lower, or Portuguese Chaul, looked out towards the sea, while Upper Chaul looked to the hinterland.

The map below is an indication of the way the port looked in colonial times, at which time there was more a memory of greatness, rather than reflective of any particularly vibrant trade in Chaul. It is here that, following Michael Pearson, I would argue

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17. Ongoing excavations at Chaul port have resulted in finds of china fragments, of both Chinese and European origin. As the mapping of the site is still going on, these fragments have yet to be studied in detail.

18. For a brief survey of port and customs duties, see Sumitra Kulkarni, "Ports, Customs Duties and Coastal Trade, 18th century North Konkan", in R. Seshan (ed.), *Medieval India: Problems and Possibilities, Essays in Honour of AR Kulkarni*, (Jaipur, Rawat Publications, 2006), 182-194.

19. *Kolaba District Gazetteer*, p. 721.

20. da Cunha, op. cit., 23-30.

21. Such systems of measurement seem to have been well established in different parts of the Peninsula. For instance, the British grant of what became Fort St. David said that the fort was to be 'as large as the range of the cannon shot'.

22. da Cunha, op. cit., 107. Some of the names continue till today, but residents of the areas have no information about the history of their locality.

that Chaul was no longer a 'hub' or a 'gateway', but merely a fishing village. The map that follows, however, is indicative of the extensive hinterland connections that Chaul enjoyed through the sixteenth and much of the seventeenth centuries.

Map 1: Chaul in the 19th century. Source: Imperial Gazetteer of India, Bombay Presidency, 1850s, courtesy Neelambari Jagtap. Note the Korlai fort, overlooking the entrance to the creek.[23]

23. It is unfortunately not possible to find out who made the map, for the Gazetteer does not have the name(s) of the cartographer(s). The portion marked as 'reclaimed land' was, according to the Gazetteer, done under colonial rule. The

The chief articles of trade were fine gold-bordered Deccan cloth for which there was much demand in Persia, glass beads, silk, rice, wheat and vegetables.[24] The trade to Muscat and Basra consisted of rice, Cambay cloth and coconuts, while the return cargo was made up of horses, almonds and dates. For Mozambique, Cambay cloth and glass beads from the Deccan and Balaghat were the main items of trade. Glass beads were exported, and in the seventeenth century, the trade in this item to China was a monopoly of the Portuguese Captain of Chaul and yielded a considerable profit. The trade to China included, in addition to cloth and linen, re-export of some goods that were brought from Muscat, such as frankincense. The main items of import, other than horses, were ivory, gold and slaves. However, we have no idea whether this direct sea trade existed prior to the Portuguese arrival.

Chaul had a local coastal trade within the region in which various articles of trade came from Rohe, Birwadi, Rajapur, Ashtemi, Kalyan, Bhivandi, and Dabhol. Coastal trade with the Gujarat and Malabar ports tended to be a very heavy trade because these regions were far less accessible by inland routes. This trade consisted mainly of food grains and other bulk goods, transported by smaller boats which could not be used on long distance trade. Trade to Cambay, for example, included coconuts, betel nuts, cinnamon, pepper and mace, besides some Chinese products like porcelain. In the eighteenth century, an important item in the country trade was the left-over stalks from the cotton harvest, used as fodder in Gujarat. From Cambay they brought cotton cloth, opium and indigo. Saraswat Brahmans of Goa and the Malabar were mainly involved in this trade.

Buddhist caves are part of the early history of Buddhism in this area, for such caves are to be found throughout the region, dating back to the period between the 2nd century BCE and the 6th century CE.

24. *Gazetteer of Kolaba District*, op. cit., p. 731.
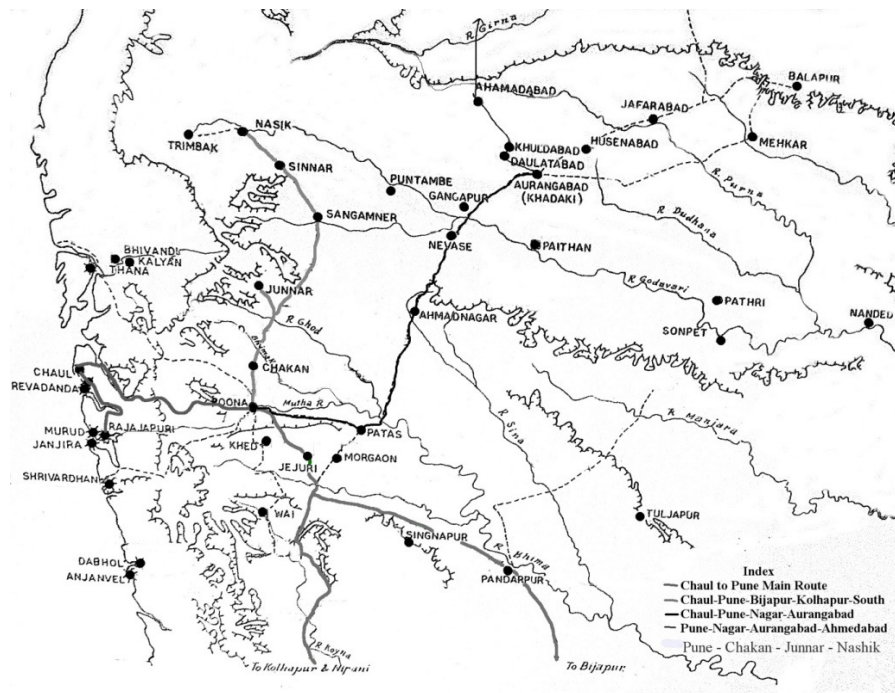
Map 2: The hinterland connections of Chaul (based on B.G. Tamaskar, *The Life and Work of Malik Ambar*, Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1978, p. 326, and modified by the author).

Through Borghat, the pass in the Western Ghats leading to the main plateau area, Chaul port connected with various inland urban centers. Commodities that came to Chaul from the Deccan included iron, which was sent to China, and in the seventeenth century, used by the Europeans for making anchors, small guns called 'falcons', and for making nails. Goods carried into the interior consisted primarily of horses from the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. Some amount of rice, vegetables, oils and salt was sent to the Deccan, mainly in return for textiles.

Trade and markets were important sources of income for the rulers. Markets in general came into existence at either crossroads, that is nodal centers, or at forts or by the sides of hill forts or ground forts. Taking into consideration the importance of a particular place, the rulers (Nizamshahi, Adilshahi and Maratha) sometimes issued *kaulnamas* for establishing markets in a particular place. This process can be also seen at Chaul.

A document from 1643 A.D. granted by Mohammad Adil Shah, the Bijapur Sultan, gives details about the establishment of the *peth*, its boundaries, administration, details of inland trading, commodities and custom duties. The word *peth* has a number of meanings. It is, first, a market or a bazaar in a city. Alternatively, it can mean any area of a town or city in which there are many shops, so that it is used in the generic sense of 'shops', rather than a specific part of the city. The word can also refer to a trading or manufacturing town, or a town that is near a fort, and supplies the fort with its food and other necessities. Finally, it can mean a suburb. However, one constant meaning of the word, is that it refers to the market and production areas, as distinct from the residential areas

of a city. From the point of view of urban layouts, one can identify a clear demarcation of space, both physical and conceptual. A document of the seventeenth century spells this out very clearly. Here it is stated that in a town there was first to be found a "Mungeri i.e. a farmers settlement, and second a Mohtarafa, i.e. settlements of merchants, traders, artisans, and administrative officials of the *Peth*. Just as every village practices the Balutedari system,[25] there are *khums* in the *Peth*, which are eighteen in number. Like Balutedar, the *khum*[26] provides various services in the market or *peth*. Prosperity of the *peth* depended upon the number of *khums* in the *peth*. For this, every *shete*[27] of the *peth* tried to convince the '*Mhetre'* who was the head of every *khum* so that they settled down in the *peth*, and the *peth* could flourish."[28]

The income from the *Zakat* and other taxes mainly depended upon the prosperity of the *peth*. As the prosperity of the *peth* would also affect the state as a whole, the officers of the *peth* i.e. s*hete* and *mahajan* and other offices of *mahal* and *pargana* were instructed to give special attention to the *peth* and encourage it to flourish.[29]

Medieval documents of Chaul refer to the market as *Peth Rustamabad*, the name by which it was known during the period of the Bijapur Sultanate. Maratha documents refer to it as both Rustamabad and as *qasbe Chaul*. The document of 1643 referred to above is perhaps one of the most detailed that we have on urban settlements, for it goes into considerable details about the boundaries of the *peth*. The record states that towards the east, it began at "Desai's mango gardens / Mangrove up to the foot of the hills. The west boundary was from the houses of Vithoji and Govind Pansara and from Manik Chauk[30] up to the foot of the Hinglaj Hills. To the south lay the route toward the bay and the boundary of the port. In the north, there was a *sarai* up to Somesvar pass which went towards North Chaul. The inland route led from the sea gate of Lower Chaul, and then left the road to Alibag to go east across the head of the creek to Bhavale lake, close to the south of Chaul."[31]

Some details about custom duties on inland trade are available. When a new market was established, the state granted exemptions in customs and other duties till the *peth* became self-supporting. Permanent shops include those of oil pressers/processors, vegetable dealers, shoemakers, cloth merchants, weavers, tailors and wine dealers. As new and old merchants from Lower Chaul established their *wakhars* (storehouses) in the *peth* for inland trade with Ghati Konkan (i.e. the area of the Konkan that lay nearer

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25. The balutedari system, also sometimes called the 'bara balute', has been defined as a 'hereditary village servant system', and which comprised the village artisans and craftsmen as well. Payment to these groups was made in kind at the time of the two harvests. This payment was in kind and was known as 'balute', from where we get the term balutedar.
26. The Khum was an official who was present at the market, and from the original documents, it seems that while he was not included in the list of balutedars, he was the equivalent of the balutedar in the market towns.
27. Shete – from seth, shopkeeper or merchant.
28. S.V. Avlaskar, *Shiv Chhatrapati Sahitya,* Vol 7 (Pune: SCS, 1953), 11.
29. Ibid.
30. None of these places can be identified now.
31. da Cunha, op. cit.

the Ghats), Lower Chaul area was exempted from 50% of the Zakat or tax. Imports and exports from inland and port routes were exempted from custom duties. The settlements of the craftsmen in the *peth* were also exempted from the Zakat. The land of the state on which the *peth* was established was free from rental charges levied by the state. Besides this, credit was given for five years to people from Ghat, Konkan and Balaghat who came and settled down in the *peth*, for cultivation and other purposes.

The chief person in charge of the *peth* was the *Shete*, sometimes referred to as *nagarshete*. He was responsible for its maintenance and development. As leader of the market, his main duty was to induce people to develop the *peth*. For this job the chief merchant was granted the right to collect additional cesses that were imposed on the shopkeepers. He was also *kotwal* of the market and in that capacity he presumably exercised police and magisterial duties. Patrolling the market place was the responsibility of the *shete*. He was a *mirasidar*, a landowner and part of the elite, with a reserved place and house in the *peth*. For the better arrangement of the market, the *shete* kept a list of the members of the market.

In order to improve the trade at *Peth* Rustumabad in Chaul, a *kaulnama* (an official order) was given by the *Sarhawaldar* (the officer of the district) of the Tal Konkan (the area south of Chaul) to the *Desak* of Chaul according to their demands. The *kaulnama* exempted certain commodities and manufactured products which were imported and exported from this *peth* from state dues. For example "the import duty on silk imported by the Khatris from *Peth* and Chaul Pargana was cancelled. Also various goods imported from the Haveli, Karyeat and Konkan areas to the *peth* were exempted from the import duty." We also get some information from the same document about the establishment of a storehouse, a *wakhar*, in the *peth*, by some merchants from 'Sangvi and Viraj', who were granted a tax exemption of 50%. This was also applicable to the other *wakhardar* (storehouse keepers) of Revadanda, whose names are given in the records as "Lakh Senwai …, Badal Senwai, … and Narayan Senwai, Raghunath Senwai". The goods, i.e. rice, indigo, a variety of cloths from Rohe, Ashtami, Birwadi and Rajapur that were brought to the *peth* through the port or the inland routes were exempted from import duty. Taxes on intermediaries and on clearing agents (i.e. *Patwa Dalali*) were also exempted. It is significant that this *kaulnama* was granted at a time of insecurity and unstable political situation in the 1640s, when the conflict between Ahmednagar and the Mughals was increasing, and when the Bijapur Sultans were also moving into the area.

Given the clear indication of the flourishing market at Chaul, it is clear that there were also a great many goods produced in or near the port. The textile industry was particularly important, and contemporary records mention many varieties of cloth, referred to as *siti* (white cloth), *Sakhalad* (Broad Cloth), Coarse Cloth, Dhoti, *Surees*, *Nawar* etc. How many of these varieties were actually produced in the town is rather difficult to determine. Also craftsmen like *Nadaf* (cotton cleaner), *Pingik* (cotton spinner) and Chate,

i.e. local textile merchants, had settled down in *Peth* Rustumabad[32] and were involved in trading activities. Duarte Barbosa's account, written circa the year 1514, says that merchants of Chaul and Dabhol went to Aden to sell textiles of different kinds. He also said that the weavers of Chaul and the surrounding countryside wore "calico cloth unbleached and after it has been worn they bleach it making it very white and starching it."[33] At the beginning of the seventeenth century (1601-1608), the French traveller Pyrard de Laval visited Chaul. He said that Upper Chaul was "a great centre of manufacture, with very deft and hardworking craftsmen, who made a great number of chests and Chinese-like cabinets, very rich and well wrought, and beds and couches lacquered in all colours." There was also "a great weaving industry, abundance of beautiful cotton fabrics, and a still more important manufacture of silk, far better than China silk, that supplied both the Indian and Goa markets where it was highly appreciated and made into fine clothing."[34] Another account, that of the Dutch traveller John Huyghen van Linschoten, mentions the silk weaving industry of Chaul.[35]

According to another account, till as late as 1668, the weavers of Chaul were making 5000 pieces of taffetas a year. There was a large variety of silk cloths, some of which are named Khara, Musdar, Pitamber (coloured silk cloth) etc. The Khatri Community of Chaul was mainly involved in silk weaving. There is mention of 'Patwa Khatri'[36] who made taffetas, and who lived in the *peth*.[37] The varieties of cloth mentioned indicate a high degree of craft specialisation, but there is not much information about this. Yet another of the industries in this area was ship building, about which there are a great many references in the records, with Shivaji being reported to have got 40 warships built in the ship yards here.[38]

Equally clear from the records is not just the demarcation of Upper and Lower Chaul, but also the urban layout within each of these settlements. Lower Chaul is no longer occupied, but remnants of the old walls and some of the old Portuguese buildings could be identified till about 10 years ago. Nineteenth century accounts such as that of da Cunha mention the ruins of the Jesuit monastery near the main street of Lower Chaul. This Dominican church found at the southwest corner of the fort and St. Barbara's tower, locally known as 'Satkhoni Buruj', was a seven-storied tower which may have served as a beacon for ships entering the harbour.

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32. Avlaskar, SCS, Vol. 10, Letter No. 3, 3.
33. da Cunha, op. cit., 33-34
34. Maharashtra State Gazetteers, Gazetteer of Kolaba District, op. cit Bombay 1883, revised edition 1964, 727
35. B.G. Gokhale, Some Urban Commercial Centers of Western Deccan during the 17th Century, in *Images of Maharshtra: A Regional Profile of India*, N.K. Wagle (ed.), (London: Curson Press, 1980), 59.
36. Probably the name of one of the chief weavers.
37. Avlaskar, SCS,Vol. 10, Letter No. 3, 3.
38. P. Pissurlencar, *Portuguese Maratha Sambandh*, (Pune: Pune University Press, 1967), 43.
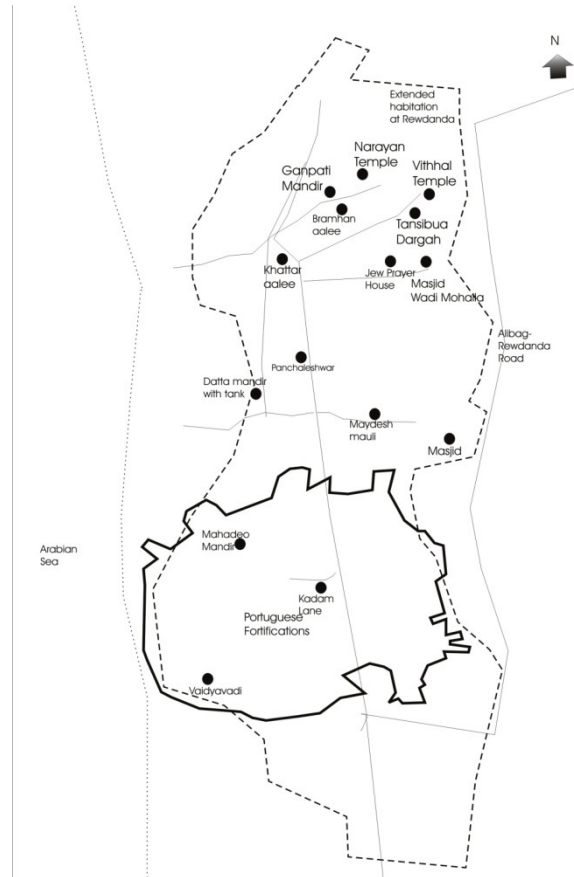
Map 3: GIS based representation of the two sections of Chaul, from field work carried out between 2014 and 2016.

Lower Chaul was fortified, and can perhaps be seen as one of the early examples of European style buildings and layout in the South Asian environment, as can be seen from the photograph, marked as Image 1, at the end of this essay. Entry to the fort was through two gates, the north towards land and the south to the sea. Near the sea gate was the original factory of Chaul built in 1516 and fortified between 1521 and 1524.

Upper Chaul did not have walls around the settlement, but a fort was built nearby, probably in the 1630s. In the nineteenth century, da Cunha, in his description of Chaul, noted that the old fort, called Rajkot, "had corner towers about fourteen feet high. The northeast and southwest were joined by a wall and through the inner wall a path led to a walled courtyard which was about 45 paces square. To the south were the ruins of a large two storied palace which was divided length ways by a central wall. In front of the palace was a fountain, and at the east end a row of houses and a well. To the east was another walled enclosure filled with palm trees."[39] A little further away was the old jetty.

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39. da Cunha, op. cit.

Present day Chaul still has a great many temples dedicated to Shiva and to Vishnu, while people living in the lanes near these temples claim that they have been living there since Maratha times. An archaeological excavation currently being carried out near the jetty[40] has yielded fragments of Roman and Chinese pottery. Remnants of old tanks can still be found and one near the market is still in use (Nagersi tank, used today also as a source of drinking water).

An important aspect of urban society is social mobility in which migration plays a vital role. Migration of the people from different parts of the country to an urban area was probably fairly common. We find instances of diverse groups of people in society which included traders, skilled workers, slaves, and bankers, who shifted from different parts of India to the port-city of Chaul to find employment. It is difficult to get exact data about the numbers of people who actually migrated, but it is clear that such migration existed. The Red Sea trade was mainly in the hands of the Arabs, who had also settled in Chaul. When the Portuguese established their settlement at Lower Chaul for trading, naval and defence purposes, many government officials and soldiers were brought from Portugal to Chaul, and they can be included in the category of the migrated population. Traders, artisans, merchants and brokers from various regions who wanted to settle down in the *peth* were taxed by the government. Artisans from Balaghat who settled down in the *peth* were granted 50% exemption from the taxes. Those artisans, *khum* debtors and other people from places such as Ghat, Konkan and Balaghat who wanted to settle down in the *Peth* of Rustamabad were charged the regular government taxes. Mention has been made of the different social groups who can be identified in the port-city of Chaul. Konkani Muslims, who were descendants of Arab settlers, developed the Chaul weaving industry. Many sub-castes were engaged in weaving, and names of groups like Khatri, Patwa Khatri, Nadaf, Koshtis and Padamshalis are found. Gujarati and Cambay merchants had also settled down in Chaul, dealing in rice, cotton, indigo and precious stones.

However, it is to be remembered that all this trade was contingent on the continued stability of the hinterland, and the necessary security for the maintenance of trade networks. This was increasingly lacking in the seventeenth century. In addition, as Maratha attention shifted away from the coast and more to the interior, and as Portuguese power declined, the port too began to shrink. Increasingly, the focus of trade shifted northwards, first to Surat, the premier port of the Mughal Empire, and then to Bombay, under the protection of the British. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Portuguese town became virtually uninhabited, while the Indian town apparently lost its connection with the water. It appears that this shift was further necessitated by a change in the river course, taking it further to the south and away from the city. Rewadanda, as Chaul is known today, cannot be considered to be 'on' the river any longer; the Portuguese settlement is

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40. This is an excavation that has been undertaken by the Archaeological Survey of India, Aurangabad Circle, which is engaged in excavation of some parts of the old city. The primary focus is, however, GIS mapping of the city, and it is hoped that this will help to identify areas of future excavation.

still right on the coast, but Upper Chaul is not along the river, it is *near* the river.

What this paper has attempted to do is take off from some of the hints given by Michael Pearson in his many works. Chaul was an important port in Western Indian Ocean trade from about the thirteenth till the seventeenth centuries, but began to decline from about the middle of the seventeenth century. However, the inland trade networks continued to be of importance, so Chaul seems to have become more important in coastal and inland trade networks, while its overseas connections declined. Pearson never worked extensively on Chaul but, as mentioned earlier, in personal conversations he emphasized the need to study the inland and coastal connections. It is these that this paper has sought to highlight.[41]

Image 1: The Fort walls. At high tide, the water washes the walls

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Image 2: Portuguese insignia on the fort wall