

'Tribute Exchange' and the Liminality of Foreign Merchants

in Mukunda's *Candimangal**

Introduction.

This essay is about the way merchants and their activities have been imagined in a Bengali poem of the sixteenth century, *Candimangal* by Mukunda, probably written in the second half of the sixteenth century.¹ The author was a Brahman. Mukunda wrote with the patronage of the Brahman ruler of Brahmanbhumi, in what now was undivided Midnapur

* An earlier version of this paper was presented to a panel on mediaeval Bengali literature at the 34th International Congress of Asian and North African Studies, Hong Kong, on August 28, 1993. I would like to thank the organiser of the panel, Rahul Peter Das, and a participant, William L. Smith, for their comments and questions. I also would like to thank the American Institute of Indian Studies for a Senior Fellowship which supported this work at its inception in 1982/83.

(Medinipur) District, West Bengal, and then was a frontier region in the northernmost marches of Orissa. The poet himself, however, came to Brahmanbhum from a village near the town of Burdwan (Bardhaman), some 30 miles west of the Hugli River, in the heart of the long-settled country of the Rarh.²

Mukunda's poem became well known throughout Bengal. For three centuries it was recited, and in the process added to and revised, in the courts of 'little kingdoms'³ and in the courtyards of important families on the occasion of the annual celebration of Durgapuja. Merchants play a central role in Mukunda's poem, especially in its final narrative. Before the journey to his patron's frontier kingdom, he may have known something about trading activities along the axis of the Hugli/Bhagirathi river complex, and, after that journey, in the Orissan port of Hijli, but Mukunda cannot be said to represent merchants from their own point of view, and his poem conveys little practical mercantile knowledge. Nevertheless, the way this poem imagines merchants and their activities should help us see how people in the courts of local *rajas*—'little kings' whose authority generally was qualified by their allegiance to an overlord—saw them, at least some of the time, and their

perceptions in turn were part of the world at least of local Hindu merchants. Finally, Mukunda himself seems to have been concerned in part with contemporary economic conflicts and with divinely arranged resolutions to them in the first 'human' narrative of his poem, which tells the story of how the goddess Candi transformed a lowly hunter into a little king.⁴ Merchants are involved in the conflicts of this narrative, although they are not central to it. Are economic problems similarly the concern of his final narrative, in which merchants have central roles?

Mukunda's final narrative is concerned with the ambiguous potential of merchants to 'hunt' and to 'be hunted', where both terms indicate predatory relations in human society. It seems to be concerned with conflicts relating to honour and dishonour in the conduct of merchants' affairs. Are we to understand that conflicts of honour and dishonour are different from 'economic' conflicts over wealth? Most of all, the poem is concerned with problems that arise not in market trade on a merchant's own account, but in a kind of transaction I call 'tribute exchange'. How does 'tribute exchange' differ from market trade?

Although Mukunda's poem portrays Hindu merchants of the Bengali Gandhabanik *jati*, it emphasizes their liminality as 'foreign' (*bidesi*) merchants, who journey abroad, and who on behalf of their 'own' *raja*, engage in barter for royal 'honours' with a strange king.

By definition foreign merchants do not belong to the kingdom in which they appear as strangers, and, according to Mukunda's poem, they should not establish a permanent residence therein. They carry both wealth and weapons. Reactions to them accordingly are ambivalent: they are both desired and feared. In all these respects they are liminal. Their state of 'not belonging' makes foreign merchants more vulnerable to the king in whose land they are strangers. It also seems to provide them access to a new, and 'contrary' (*biparit*) vision of Goddess Candi. Their vision of the goddess shares with the poem's merchants themselves some of the same dimensions of liminality. Finally, as solutions to merchants' conflicts, Mukunda's poem prescribes new affinal relations between merchants and rulers, relations guaranteed by the goddess. Can we specify more exactly the narrative logic which relates the conflicts in which the merchants of these poems participate, the divine manifestations which they see, and the marriages which resolve their

stories? If so, perhaps we then will be able to understand the plot of this narrative, and something about its relation to the changing worlds of Hindu merchants and rulers in sixteenth-century Bengal.

The Trading World of Bengal in the Sixteenth Century

Perhaps it is best to begin with what is known about merchants from Bengal who engaged in seaborne trade in the sixteenth century. We may begin with the difficulty of suppressing piracy in the many river channels of deltaic Bengal; perhaps they were divided between 'zones of endemic warfare and plunder, and zones surrounding trading emporia, where piracy was kept more or less under control', as James D. Tracy describes littoral Southeast Asia when Europeans arrived.⁵ At the beginning of the century the only true emporia for seaborne trade in Bengal were Chittagong (Cattagram), linked by the Padma river to the capital at Gaur, and Satgaon (Satgao or Saptagram), on the Sarasvati River, a westward distributary of the Bhagirathi.⁶ In the 1540s trade shifted somewhat from Chittagong to Satgaon, which latter place plays a small role in Mukunda's poem.⁷ Inscriptions indicate Satgaon's prominence as an administrative center from the early

fourteenth century, one where a mint was located from 1346. Two inscriptions record the construction of a Jami' mosque in 1530 by an Ašraf notable, 'the asylum of the Sayyids and the glory of the descendants of *Taha* (the Prophet)'.⁸ Tomé Pires had heard that it was a 'good city and rich' with a population of about 10,000.⁹ In 1565 Cæsar Frederici found Satgaon still a 'reasonable faire citie for a citie of the Moores', and reported that its markets were 'abounding in all things'.¹⁰ Away from these emporia, foreign trade was fluid and thin. It shifted from place to place in response to slight advantages, creating temporary markets and then abandoning them, and simultaneously enriching or impoverishing local producers, merchants and rulers.¹¹

One can see the relative position of Bengali emporia in a hierarchy of markets in the Indian Ocean by noting the prominence in Bengal of 'foreign' merchants from western India and the Red Sea.¹² Similarly, one can note where merchants 'from Bengal' did not have influence. Duarte Barbosa does not mention them in his descriptions of the important and prosperous ports of Gujarat, and of the Konkan and Malabar Coasts.¹³ He does mention merchants from Bengal in the lesser ports of Sri Lanka and the Coromandel

Coast. By the late sixteenth century, trade between Coromandel and Bengal, however,

‘was carried on overwhelmingly by merchants based at these [Coromandel] ports’.¹⁴

Similarly, Pires records the ill repute of merchants of Bengal in Melaka, and at the same

time their political influence in the lesser emporium of Pasé.¹⁵

Nevertheless, Portuguese surveys of Indian Ocean trade by Pires and Barbosa reveal widespread activities of Muslim merchants ‘from Bengal’ at the beginning of the sixteenth century.¹⁶ In the east, they traded to Melaka, to Cosmin in Pegu, and to lesser ports around the Malay peninsula. They carried sugar, preserved fruits and pickles, and rice for ballast, but Bengal’s fine textiles were their principal exports. Bengali cloth, in the words of Pires, fetched a high price in Melaka ‘because it is a merchandise all over the East’.¹⁷ (Showing his disinterest in practical details, Mukunda barely mentions this export of textiles.¹⁸) For return voyages from Southeast Asian ports merchants from Bengal purchased spices of the Spice Islands, sandalwood, Borneo camphor, Chinese silks and porcelains, and a variety of metals.

To the south they traded to Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and ports on the Coromandel and Malabar Coasts, carrying the same exports. They purchased in return cinnamon, elephants, and areca nuts in Sri Lanka, pepper in the ports of the Malabar Coast, and cowrie shells in the Maldives. Finally, goods from Bengal were carried to ports on the Konkan Coast and in the Gulf of Cambay, and perhaps to the Red Sea as well. Again textiles probably were among the principal exports, and aromatics, carpets and horses must have been among the principal imports, but the commodity composition of this trade is less clear, and neither Pires nor Barbosa described it as conducted by merchants and ships 'from Bengal'.

It is much more difficult to say who these Muslim merchants from Bengal were. None of the traditional Bengali Hindu merchant castes produced merchants engaged in large-scale overseas trade in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; rather, when Dutch trade in Bengal favored Hindu merchants in the latter century, they were migrants from Gujarat. On the other hand, Muslim merchants from Bengal were still a 'powerful overseas trading group', as they had been much earlier.¹⁹ Pires, observing from Melaka in the early

sixteenth century, had noted 'domestic' merchants of Bengal who had large fortunes, were 'brought up to trade', and were all reputedly 'false'. There also were 'a large number of other merchants, Parsees, Rumes, Turks and Arabs, and merchants from Chaul, Dabhol and Goa' who resided in Bengal.²⁰ He added that merchants from the Konkan ports of Chaul, Dabhol and Goa, 'form[ed] their companies in Bengal' for the Melaka voyage, after bringing goods to Bengal from the Red Sea ports and from the west coast of India. All merchants with ties to Bengal competed with merchants whose Indian trade was centered in Gujarat, who all together had 'the main Malacca trade'. They also competed with Malabar Muslims, and with 'Kelings' from the Coromandel Coast.²¹ The last group, Hindu merchants from the Coromandel coast, also were particularly important in the trade from Bengal to Melaka.²²

Of the merchants 'from Bengal' one therefore must not assume a 'Bengali' identity.

Relatively heterogeneous Muslim merchants did not form distinct Muslim merchant communities in Bengal, unlike the Khojas and Bohras in Gujarat, or the Mappilas in Malabar. Instead, they seem to have been undifferentiated from Ašraf Muslims, who all

claimed foreign descent.²³ Persians were particularly important in the emporium of Chittagong, and in the routes from Chittagong to the west.²⁴ In the period before the Mughal conquest of Bengal, the independent Sultans of Bengal and members of their courts were themselves involved in seaborne trade; Mughal governors continued this pattern.²⁵ One can assume that the conduct of Muslim rulers was a model for lesser notables. Hindu merchants were not excluded from foreign trade, but probably most of them were to be found at the margins of trade networks in the Indian Ocean, where they served as local collectors and distributors, or as merchants trading to and from lesser ports and in the less prestigious commodities.²⁶

The Portuguese, who by the 1530s appeared regularly in Chittagong, and who shifted their attention to Satgaon in the 1540s, competed with but did not supplant Indian merchants from Bengal in trade to Southeast Asia.²⁷ Concerning Bengal's trade to the south and west, the picture is less clear. By the end of the century much of the pepper trade from the Malabar Coast to Bengal was controlled by private Portuguese traders, but some Bengali Muslim merchants circumvented the Portuguese by clandestine trade to the

Maldives, where they traded with Malabar Muslims, and where they also could meet Gujarati ships carrying goods from Aceh.²⁸ Throughout the sixteenth century merchants from Bengal continued their trade to ports on Sri Lanka's west coast.²⁹ Still, despite their limited success, the Portuguese brought with them special anxieties both for the rulers who had to contend with their occasional military threats, and for competing Indian merchants.³⁰

Finally, we may consider the nature of transactions in seaborne trade, and the nature of relations between merchants and rulers. Europeans trading in the Indian Ocean imagined themselves in a realm beyond law, where 'anything afloat is a prize' and all states supported themselves by plunder of one kind or another. No doubt such anxieties reflected both actions sometimes taken in concert against them, and the 'fragility of their own position in a vast and alien world'. At the same time Europeans engaged in a compensatory rhetoric to justify their own reliance on privateering, selling protection, and monopoly trade. We no longer may take contemporary European views of the coercive nature Indian Ocean trade at face value.³¹ James Tracy concludes that 'direct control of

trade by state functionaries—whether the prince or his officials—was a ‘reaction to European presence in Southeast Asia, not a condition that the Europeans found on their arrival’. He notes that goods given as tribute from peripheries to centers were used for state ritual ‘as a means for attracting and maintaining state support’, and that flows of tribute were ‘separate from the mechanisms of market exchange’.³² Were conditions different in the Bay of Bengal? In several essays Sanjay Subrahmanyam has described, at the courts of the Sultans of Bengal in the period 1342-1532, ‘entrepreneur-notables’ who dominated overseas trade, perhaps with participation by the Sultans themselves. In these arrangements at the court Subrahmanyam identifies a ‘Persian’ form of mercantilism, but his case is stronger for the Qutb Shahi court of Golkonda and the port of Masulipatnam in the period 1560-1670, where an anti-Portuguese trading alliance was organized with Aceh and with ports in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf.³³ Perhaps both Tracy and Subrahmanyam suppose a view of the ‘state’ which is too circumscribed. For the seventeenth century R.J. Barendse notes, ‘In the Arabian Seas the state was not the only actor to sell protection rent’. Rulers competed with many kinds of people, from

thieves to local landlords, in selling protection and collecting taxes, and merchants in turn spread their risks by becoming tax collectors themselves, and 'playing politics as well as trade'.³⁴

One view of trade in the sixteenth century therefore is based on implicit paradigms for 'economic' transactions in markets. It assumes that merchants responded to prices, and organized flows of goods in response to price differentials in relatively 'free' markets. With perfect consistency this view also can notice transaction costs of doing business in markets, including 'protection costs' imposed by Europeans and by local rulers. It notices other risks, and measure taken to reduce them, and ideally would attempt to calculate overall rates of return.³⁵ Another view describes as 'mercantilism' the pervasive 'rent-seeking' of people who used claims to legitimacy and power for the sake of securing profits in trade. Such people included both rulers and merchant-officials.³⁶ Both views seem to have been present in Indian Ocean ports themselves. Together they reflect ambiguities and conflicts in the roles of both rulers and merchants.

'Mercantilism' of course produced conflict. Potential conflicts between merchants and rulers should take into account the organization of merchants trading in any given port into largely self-governing '*naios*'—descriptive groups with either 'formally instituted or informally recognized' structures of authority. To belong, one had to be accepted by a *natio*; criteria for belonging included religion, ethnicity and the port one traded from, as well as a merchant's personal character. *Naios* provided merchants with procedures for resolving disputes among themselves without recourse to the port's ruler, and with an organization through which they collectively could petition a ruler for redress.³⁷ We will see that Mukunda knew of merchants' groups and called them *dal*, 'parties', but his Bengali merchants denied belonging to any 'party' when they arrived in Sri Lanka.

Whether we think of merchants as engaged mostly in 'free' trade, or as victims, or willing partners in mercantilism, Mukunda does not seem to care about any of these descriptions of 'economic' transactions. His poem is about merchants, but they usually do not seem to be engaged in market trade as we understand it. The *jati* of Bengali merchants that he describes as central to 'tribute exchange' is never mentioned in

scholarly accounts of seaborne trade in sixteenth century Bengal. The goods for which they journeyed abroad were not the most valuable goods of this trade. Was his *Candimangal* thus merely an archaic folk-tale, transmitted orally for generations before he gave it literary form, anachronistic and therefore without relevance to contemporary conditions?

The Initial Problem: Hindu Merchants Who Do Not Venture Abroad

Mukunda's narrative begins with a statement that because his merchants had not ventured abroad for twenty years or more, and because foreign merchants had ceased to arrive as well, the *raja* of Ujain on the Ajay River in Bardhaman lacked certain necessary goods. His storerooms were empty of sandalwood and conch shells, needed for royal Vaisnava worship.³⁸ The poem elsewhere names conch shells together with sandalwood as the goods a Bengali merchant should seek in Sri Lanka.³⁹ The king's storerooms also lacked other insignia of royal wealth, consumption and honours: elephants, horses, spices (asafoetida, cloves and nutmeg), perfumes and medicinal unguents (saffron, musk, and aloeswood), imported cloths, rugs and carpets, jewels, and chowries.⁴⁰ One must

emphasize that all the goods listed in this passage were imported, but not from Sri Lanka, and not even by sea.⁴¹ Equally pertinent: the passage does not list cinnamon, Sri Lanka's most important export. The common quality of all these goods is not their availability in Sri Lanka, but their use in royal worship and as insignia of royal honour and wealth.

This statement of the initial problem does coincide with one dimension of our summary of Bengal's seaborne trade. Most Hindu Bengali merchants probably were local collectors and distributors in this trade, 'residents' who depended on the 'foreign' trade of others, or who confined their foreign trade to lesser ports and to products of marginal importance.

Mukunda's narrative also lets us ask, why did Hindu merchants not venture abroad?

There are two passages which suggest answers to this question. First, reporting a lack of royal 'wealth', the keeper of the *raja's* storeroom charged that the *raja's* merchants 'who used to be your debtors, now have become wealthy, engrossed and drunk with riches'.

One merchant used to engage in trade to Sri Lanka, but he died twenty years ago, and

the rest 'have become wives'.⁴² Venturing out of wifely purdah, would a merchant become more manly? Perhaps. To obtain wealth for his storerooms the *raja* commanded the merchant Dhanapati to undertake a sea voyage to Sri Lanka. To indicate Dhanapati's new status as a royal minister, commanded to trade on his behalf, the *raja* gave Dhanapati 'clothes belonging to the *raja* himself, a horse to mount, armor and a two-edged dagger as a mark of his favour, as well as a hundred thousand silver coins (*taka*) as ship's treasure, and ornaments for his body'.⁴³ In any case Mukunda's text suggests quite clearly that although the *raja* had suffered from his merchants' failure to undertake seaborne trade, his Hindu merchants had not; indeed, their wealth and their abandonment of seaborne voyages were associated. The *raja* should have kept his merchants poorer.

Mukunda's description of Saptagram supports this line of reasoning. It suggests the town's role in the trading networks of the Indian Ocean by a list of all the 'cities', including Sri Lanka, whose merchants came to Saptagram to trade. After this list of cities the poem continues:

All the merchants who dwell in all these cities come with their boats and ships to Saptagram for trade. The [Hindu] merchants (*banik*) of Saptagram do not go anywhere; they stay in their homes, and happiness and many kinds of wealth, together with liberation, come to them.⁴⁴

Apparently, this nearby emporium in Bengal, because it attracted 'foreign' merchants, had made trading voyages appear unnecessary to Hindu Bengali merchants. They could get 'many kinds of wealth' without the risks of sea voyages.

Market Trade and 'Tribute Exchange'

But if Sri Lankan merchants brought their goods to Saptagram, why could not the *raja* of Ujain send his merchants to trade with them there? Even more puzzling is a suggestion made by Dhanapati's younger wife, who opposed the voyage. She suggested that Dhanapati give the *raja* the goods he needed from Dhanapati's own stores, receive in return the *raja's* favour (*prasad*), and reside happily with his wives.⁴⁵ If Dhanapati had been able to acquire sandalwood and conch shells for his own treasury without having

journeyed abroad, why should he journey abroad for the sake of supplying his *raja*? One simply cannot answer these questions using assumptions of market trade. Perhaps at this point the poem fails to make sense. On the other hand, suppose that the *raja* of Ujain could obtain 'honours', goods proper for use in royal worship and as royal insignia, only through an exchange relation with some king. Lack of royal honour, as well as lack of royal insignia, then would have been the crux of the *raja's* problem, which his wife-like merchants had created by staying at home.⁴⁶

Mukunda's poem does suggest that Dhanapati's trade for the king of Ujain would be different from trade on his own account. Culturally patterned gestures, exchanges and speeches unambiguously reveal Dhanapati's role as a servant of his *raja*. All merchants on earth, or at least all the Gandhabanik merchants of Barddaman, may have been members of the *raja's* 'family' (*paribar*), but Dhanapati was this *raja's* 'minister' (*patra*).⁴⁷

When Dhanapati objected that journeying abroad would leave his young wives without guard or protection, the *raja's* other ministers and courtiers (*patra-mitra*) advised Dhanapati that he should not lament; and that there could be no 'offence' (against his familial duty to

protect his wives, one assumes) incurred in doing the *raja's* work. One exclaimed, 'How many desires do you obey? You dwell in the *raja's* land eating his maintenance and his gifts' (implying that because he received these gifts Dhanapati was subject to the *raja's* commands).⁴⁸ The position of being a merchant 'minister' to the *raja* involved both privileges and responsibilities. One problem for him would be that although Dhanapati was a 'minister' of the king of Ujain, sent to do his *raja's* work, he was not a minister of the king of Sri Lanka. What would be their relation?

Meantime, Dhanapati also was a merchant who traded ordinarily in markets for profit on his own account. Another problem would be whether and how to combine trade on his own account with trade in service of his *raja* during the sea voyage to Sri Lanka. Lahana, Dhanapati's greedy first wife, suggested that Dhanapati could follow the example of her father, who 'prepared seven ships to import sandalwood and conch shells, and by buying and selling became a rich man'. Given Lahana's generally disreputable character in the poem, we perhaps can assume that Mukunda's audience would have recognized conflicts of interest in combining these two roles, as we do. Still, Lahana argued correctly

that gain is necessary for a merchant. Even if his wealth were like Kubera's, like the sands of a river, it eventually would be exhausted if a merchant traded without getting an income.⁴⁹ To Lahana at least, trading in the *raja's* service would not provide her husband with an income. Apparently Dhanapati agreed, for he followed her advice.

As minister of the king, Dhanapati would not trade with his own capital, and he would not trade for his own profit. But there is another reason to distinguish what he would do on behalf of the *raja* of Ujain, and his own ordinary business as a merchant. Mukunda's poem initially represents trade between the Sri Lankan king and Dhanapati, agent of the *raja* of Ujain, as an 'exchange' (*badal*) without money. In the verse which describes this exchange, the merchant suggests that the king give 'horses (*turanga*) in exchange for deer (*kuranga*), conch shells in exchange for coconuts, cloves (*labanga*) in exchange for *biranga* (a Bengali medicinal plant), silver coins in exchange for dried ginger', etc.; that is, for each commodity to be received from the king the merchant proposes to give a separate, reciprocated commodity in return, one markedly lower in

value.⁵⁰ (Without any indication of arbitrage, one perhaps may infer the merchant's intention to profit by deceit.)

Badal, 'exchange' therefore was a kind of exchange of gifts between rulers, with perhaps an element of barter. How might 'exchange' have been differentiated from 'buying and selling'? In particular, was the most important difference the apparent absence in 'exchange' of money, either as a physical medium of exchange, or as a money of account? Of course, even without money there could have been implicit prices, the potential for gain or loss, and the possibility of economic motives and calculations in the exchange.⁵¹ In the argument that follows I will assume that one issue for kings was the receipt of 'honours', concretely embedded in goods needed for temple worship, and in other rare and valuable presents from distant kings as well. By this assumption kings sought, among other things, increased prestige in an accounting of royal honours, but this goal might have been different from the goal of 'gains' in an accounting of monetary value, because 'honour' for a recipient derives from the identity of the giver as well as from the nature of the gift. This assumption makes it possible to explain why Dhanapati could not

provide his *raja* with the goods he sought by purchasing them in market transactions:

such goods would not be ‘honours’ from another king. In order to indicate this assumption

I will use ‘tribute exchange’ to translate *badal* in this episode, and to indicate thereby a gift

exchange of royal ‘honours’, with perhaps associated economic motives as well.

Dhanapati’s suggested terms of exchange do seem to express the hope that in ‘tribute

exchange’ gifts of what was commonplace and of little value in his country might be rare

and valuable in Sri Lanka. If so, goals of honour and profit sometimes might coincide.⁵²

The term ‘tribute exchange’ deliberately suggests cultural and political contexts of gifts of ‘tribute’ beyond those particular to the imagined local, and mostly Hindu statecraft

of this poem.⁵³ Thereby it suggests ambiguities inherent in gift ‘exchanges’ of royal

honours in sixteenth century Bengal. Because of them economic motives might have

coloured the exchange of goods used for royal honours, and a clear hierarchy might not

have been established between two kings through their exchange. We can trace these

contexts and ambiguities for the Sultans of Bengal, if not for contemporary Bengali *rajas*.

Because of the Ming voyages under Zheng He, in the early fifteenth century Sultans of

Bengal had become familiar with a Chinese model for gifts of 'tribute' to the Chinese Emperor as the superior ruler. This model for 'tribute' had an explicit requirement of obeisance, and often an implicit promise of profitable trade in return,⁵⁴ but the Sultans of Bengal seem to have been as interested in securing Chinese military support for their regimes as in trading with China.⁵⁵ Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries merchants from Bengal continuously traded to Southeast Asian emporia, where the gift and receipt of 'tribute' continued to define relations of inferiority and superiority among non-Chinese kingdoms, as their gifts of 'tribute' to the Chinese Emperor continued to define their relations as inferiors to China.⁵⁶ Did sixteenth century Sultans of Bengal also expect that gifts of 'tribute' would establish hierarchical relations and would be rewarded by profitable trade? We can say at least that an alternative model also was present. Nusrat Shah, Sultan of Bengal from 1519 to 1532, expected that rulers should exchange rare gifts which they would 'enjoy', or 'in which they could take pleasure', and he seems to have thought or hoped that such exchanges of gifts need not establish hierarchical relations.⁵⁷

Nothing positively indicates that Mukunda knew of these wider contexts of Indian Ocean statecraft. Nevertheless, the ‘tribute exchange’ at Sri Lanka, in which Dhanapati almost engaged, seems to have been similarly ambiguous, promising or threatening, but not quite defining hierarchical relations between the king of Sri Lanka and the *raja* of Ujain.

Absent a clearly defined ranking of the two, can we suppose that the party who received the more rare and valuable presents in ‘tribute exchange’ would win in an accounting of both royal honour and royal profit?⁵⁸ But if exchanged goods were not to be reduced to their monetary ‘value’, how could one know with certainty which party had won, or how the exchange would appear to others? In any case, in the following sections of this essay, my interpretations of the poem will be guided by the assumption that the initial problem of its merchant was to obtain in gifts of ‘tribute exchange’ the ‘honours’ of royal insignia from another ruler, without the prior existence of clearly defined hierarchical relations between the two rulers.

The Liminality of Merchants and the Epiphany at Kalidaha

Candimangal tell the story of two merchants, the father, Dhanapati, and his son, Srimanta. Dhanapati disapproved, interrupted and countermanded his wife's worship of Candi on his behalf, just before undertaking his voyage to Sri Lanka, which voyage was marred at its outset by hosts of inauspicious signs. Near where the Adi Ganga met the sea, he lost six ships in a storm on the Magara (Porpoise) River, as punishment from the goddess, but his own ship was spared for the sake of her purposes, and he then followed the coast south to Tamilnadu. En route, he encountered a series of 'deeps' (*daha*), each of which tested his capacity as a merchant.⁵⁹ Having reached the Palk Strait, he struck out across the trackless Ocean, and mid-Ocean, at Kalidaha, the 'deep of Kali', he saw an 'inverse' or 'contrary' (*biparit*) epiphany of the goddess. When Dhanapati related this vision to the king of Sri Lanka, his inability to prove the truth of his account became the crux of his conflicts with the Sri Lankan king, and finally an excuse or occasion for his imprisonment.

Twelve years later, in search of his lost father, Dhanapati's son Srimanta, born months after Dhanapati's departure and falsely accused of being a bastard, followed the

same path in search of his father, except that he was careful to worship the goddess, and his little fleet suffered no shipwreck in the Magara River. He met the same series of 'deeps', with the same tests of his capacity. At Kalidaha the son saw the same vision, and similarly came to grief after describing it to the king of Sri Lanka.

Does the mid-Ocean 'deep of Kali' with its contrary epiphany have anything in common with the lesser 'deeps' and their various tests? Kalidaha itself is a site of boundlessness. The Ocean is difficult to cross and immeasurably deep;⁶⁰ unlike coastwise travel it offers no landmarks and no place to rest. This site without boundaries immediately before Sri Lanka suggests liminality, a place and period of transition, and the unstable, indefinite or potential condition of the merchant in transition, as he passes temporarily through an 'essentially unstructured' phase.⁶¹ In Sri Lanka, what will his status be?

The prior and lesser 'deeps' fall into two categories. In the first the father traps and the son learns to trap conch and cowries for their valuable shells. In the second the merchants learn to escape being hunted themselves by powerful predators. A sixteenth

century author of another *Candimangal*, Dvija Madhab of Nadiya, describes, among these predators, leaches the size of palm trunks, mosquitoes the size of pigeons, and crabs the size of 'great creatures', all of which the merchants somehow must evade.⁶² Merchants potentially are both hunters and hunted. They are situated liminally between these two categories, but to be successful they must learn to hunt and to avoid being hunted. In this crucial lesson their clever helmsmen are their teachers.

In his description of the epiphany at the 'deep of Kali' Dvija Madhab describes a condition which negates the ordinary relation between hunting and being hunted: tiger and deer, boar and hare, lion and elephant, jackal and goat, falcon and pigeon, mongoose and snake, and cat and mouse all meet, reside, converse, or play together, and 'no one does violence to another'.⁶³ In Mukunda's poem, does the whole epiphany at Kalidaha represent, as Dvija Madhab's account suggests, a condition negating predation?

Mukunda does not use any of these images of a 'peaceable kingdom' in the world of animals. On the other hand, both he and Dvija Madhab represent the central epiphany at Kalidaha as an act of predation in which the roles of hunter and hunted are reversed.

In Mukunda's account Candi appears at Kalidaha as a beautiful sixteen-year-old woman in the midst of a blooming lotus garden. Smiling at the merchant, she grasps a mighty bull elephant in her left hand and swallows it. She then regurgitates the elephant, which struggles but can not escape her grasp. Again she swallows and regurgitates. She is not ashamed at being seen by men. She swallows the elephant effortlessly; her jaws do not move, nor does the color of betel leaf and catechu leave her lips. She dances gracefully.

Among many signs of contrariness, predation in this image is somewhat 'contrary' to nature, for the woman is the hunter. Further, in this image predation cyclically is both represented and negated, for the woman repeatedly slaughters and swallows, and regurgitates and revives the elephant.⁶⁴ The whole image with its coincidence of opposites suggests a state of liminality between ordinary and inverse predation and between predation and non-predation. The merchant, who potentially is both hunter and hunted, sees an image which both reverses and negates ordinary predation, and simultaneously, with another image of hunting, he is smitten with the 'flower arrow' of this beautiful

woman, and swoons. I propose that he sees this divine vision because as a merchant he participates in the liminality which he sees.

A modern scholar has compared this vision to two alternative icons, and implicitly he has linked it to two interpretations. The first is of Gaja-Laksmi, in which the auspicious goddess of wealth is lustrated by a pair of elephants. This comparison, which identifies Candi with Laksmi or Sri, depends too much on the mere presence of the elephant(s) in both images, and too little on the very different actions by which the elephant(s) are related to the goddess, but it does capture the initial attractiveness of Candi's erotic appearance to the merchant and her embodiment of *sri*, a word with a very wide range of meanings, including wealth and auspiciousness. The second icon is of Visnu's Maya, who, 'skilled in appearance and non-appearance', swallows and then recreates the whole universe of gods, demons and men. Is the elephant a symbol of the whole cosmos in the process of creation and destruction?⁶⁵ Of course, with a tantric theory of creation, the erotic elements of this vision also can be related to the role of desire in the 'play' of creation, which in turn should be understood as inseparable from destruction.⁶⁶

Finally, neither the clever helmsmen nor any of the sailors saw anything of this epiphany. According to the helmsmen, each merchant had seen it because he was blessed with divine knowledge (*dhanya dibya-geyan*), the friend of all learning, and an ocean of countless virtues.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, both merchants did not understand the divine woman's character (*caritra*), and suspected that perhaps Bidhi (Fate) had dumbfounded them. (In the case of the father, Dhanapati, we in the audience are allowed to know that it was the goddess who had dumbfounded him, and given his prior treatment of her, we cannot entertain any idea of his 'divine knowledge'.) Each merchant asked the helmsman to be his witness, despite the fact that the helmsman had seen nothing, and already plainly had said so.⁶⁸ Each promised to tell the 'contrary' thing he had seen to the king of Sri Lanka and his court, for they might know its cause or purpose (*karan*). Each took pen and ink and wrote an account.⁶⁹ Each merchant, then, was located as much between knowledge and ignorance in relation to this epiphany as he was between the categories of hunter and hunted. Revealing herself in this new and contrary form, the goddess finally

secured her worship by the king of Sri Lanka and the *raja* of Ujain. Dhanapati, however, eventually learned to worship her in quite a different form.

Oaths, Forfeits and Trials

If Dhanapati's passage to Sri Lanka culminated in a divine vision located liminally between predation and non-predation, his arrival quickly led to abrogation of the somewhat dubious 'gifts' of 'tribute exchange'. That abrogation in turn led to mutual promises and forfeits under oath—a contract, that is, but one which apparently was not about the terms of 'tribute exchange'. Dhanapati's failure to perform the acts he had stipulated in turn led to the enforcement of the forfeits he had sworn, and thus to confiscation of all his wealth.

Mukunda's story thus takes us on a downward progress, from a form of giving open to self interested calculations of profit and honour, to a contract only apparently insulated from the material interests potential in tribute exchange, and then to a kind of forcible expropriation which was peculiarly lawful.

Arriving at Sri Lanka, Dhanapati swiftly became embroiled in a dispute with the king about his 'honesty', because he related to the court this vision of the goddess seen mid-

Ocean. Leading up to this incident, Mukunda's poem simultaneously discloses and forecloses problems which have to do with relations both between the king and his rivals, and among members of his court. The 'gifts' of 'tribute exchange' must not threaten these relations. Was Dhanapati a member of the Sri Lankan king's 'own party' (*ghar'dal*) or of the 'opposing party' (*par'dal*)? If the former, he would be shown favor; if the latter, driven out. But Dhanapati claimed that he was neither; he was a 'foreign' merchant.⁷⁰ Had he given the king and his court enough presents (*bhet*) to secure the privilege of 'tribute exchange'? The king's Brahman had been left out of the distribution of Dhanapati's presents, but although greatly angry with the king, he did not demand more presents from Dhanapati. Instead he asked the merchant for an account of his voyage, and the merchant then described his vision. Therewith implicit problems of honour became explicit.

The king and his courtiers ridiculed Dhanapati's account of his vision, and when he offered to show it to them, they called him an imposter (*bhanda*), and said he was not fit for their assembly.⁷¹ Of course, if Dhanapati was not fit for their assembly, the king would receive dishonour from Dhanapati's gifts in 'tribute exchange'. It therefore had to be

stopped immediately, and Dhanapati's *raja* of Ujain himself would receive dishonour by this abrupt treatment of his merchant emissary, instead of the royal 'honours' he had sought in 'tribute exchange'.

Needless to say, Dhanapati insisted on proving his veracity. Dhanapati and the king then bound themselves by mutual oaths to forfeits. Dhanapati swore that he would take the king and his court to see this vision, and if he failed, he would forfeit his wealth and go to prison for twelve years. The king in return swore that if Dhanapati could prove he had told the truth, he would give the merchant half his kingdom. Both of these sworn forfeits were written down to make an adjudicable contract.⁷² Dhanapati failed to show the king his vision of the goddess. More important, in the 'trial' which followed, when Dhanapati appealed to his helmsman to bear witness in his support, the helmsman truthfully said that he himself had seen nothing of woman, elephant and lotus. The king judged this speech to be a confirmation of Dhanapati's untruthfulness, confiscated all of Dhanapati's wealth, and threw the merchant in prison.⁷³ Twelve years later, his son Srimanta also failed at the same self-imposed task, but this time the king's forfeit was to

be his daughter, given in marriage to Srimanta, and the merchant's son's forfeit his wealth and his life.⁷⁴ Despite a final plea for mercy, Srimanta was led to the cremation ground to be executed. To save Srimanta from execution Candi herself led her demons into battle with the king's army. Candi's forces routed them, and her ghouls ate their slaughtered bodies. In Srimanta's case the downward progress is extended in a final step from plunder to war.

In executing or attempting to execute the forfeits promised by oath when the merchants 'lost', did the king of Sri Lanka do anything contrary to lawful procedure? After Candi had routed the king's armies in battle, saved Srimanta from execution, and demanded as victor the marriage of the king's daughter to Srimanta, the king answered with a spirited defence of his conduct. He accurately argued that he had taken account of Srimanta's youth and had offered the boy clemency if the latter would acknowledge his 'dishonesty' in recounting the vision,⁷⁵ and that at every step he had proceeded with the advice of learned Brahmans. Some texts say that Candi herself was shamed by this defence.⁷⁶ Of course, the king's position in each 'trial' was anomalous nevertheless, for

he was simultaneously plaintiff and judge. In any case, Candi immediately proposed a new 'contract': she herself would show the king the vision, and having seen it, he would give Srimanta his daughter in marriage. Let us suppose, therefore, that the king had done nothing explicitly contrary to lawful procedure. Does this mean he was without 'fault' entirely? Some manuscripts of Mukunda's text contain a passage that condemns the king for attempting to execute Srimanta, asking: 'for what fault?'⁷⁷ More interesting was Srimanta's belated and unavailing submission, following his sentence. Here, without admitting that he had lied about the epiphany, Srimanta argued that victory and defeat are determined by fate. He asked, since the Lord (*Bhagaban*) is the cause of fate, 'therefore what are honour and dishonour?' Srimanta continued, possibly addressing both the king and himself: 'Anger at dishonor is called "false"; do not be controlled by anger'. Srimanta concluded from this premise that for the king 'causing so much disaster (*pramad*) for such a slight offense (*laghu dose*) is not correct (*ucit*)'. Finally, he offered to become the king's slave, but because of a 'fault of fate', the king did not take mercy upon Srimanta, after this submission in which the merchant's son had acknowledged no fault of his own.⁷⁸

Apparently, we are being shown inherent defects in the relation between the king and foreign merchants like Dhanapati and Srimanta. The crux of the problem, if we take Srimanta's submission seriously, is a contest of 'honour and dishonour', to be won or lost by dictates of the Lord and of fate. Both king and merchant have experienced dishonour: the king because an untruth seems to have been spoken in his court, and the merchant because he has been charged with lying. In their subsequent contest for the sake of honour one party must fatefully 'lose' not just honour, but in the merchants' case wealth, and either freedom or life, and in the king's case half his kingdom or his daughter. The terms of these forfeits introduce a kind of predation, for greed for wealth seems to be one of their motives. No relation exists between king and merchant to moderate the terms of their contest and to restore proportion between the offenses to honour and the respective forfeits. Finally, in this atmosphere of contested honour, the king is both the plaintiff and the judge, whereas the merchants have no standing except as defendants and signatories to the contracts between them and the king. In these ways the problems of contested honour are exacerbated by the merchants' foreignness.

These episodes repeat the theme of a contest of honour, which we have assumed 'tribute exchange' involved. They intensify that conflict, and they shift its location, so that the primary conflict comes to be between the merchant and the king to whom he is a foreigner, rather than between the two rulers. Although their 'contract' comes to be about the truth of an alleged vision of the goddess, rather than about the terms of 'tribute exchange', it results in a kind of plunder of the merchants' goods, and ultimately in war. The condition which makes this downward progress possible is the merchants' foreignness. Precisely their foreignness will be removed by the marriage of Srimanta to the king's daughter. Candi will insist on the marriage to resolve this conflict.

Transformed Bodies

Before it describes this marriage, which creates a relation between the merchant and the king, the poem narrates incidents which show how one's body can become the site of Candi's transforming power. In the first instance Srimanta's body becomes impervious to all weapons, and Srimanta himself is given some of the insignia of royal

honours. In the second, the king's army is slaughtered and the soldiers' bodies are butchered and bought and sold at market.⁷⁹

At the cremation ground Srimanta asked his guard for a delay in the execution so that he might worship; this request being granted, he both praised and blamed Candi in a way so disturbing that she felt compelled to intervene. Candi assumed the form of an ancient Brahman woman, came before Srimanta's guard, who held the office of prefect of police, and asked him for a gift of the life of Srimanta, this child whom she identified as her grandson, in return for her blessings of long life and great wealth to be given to the prefect. The prefect replied that he himself was merely the king's servant, that the king had commanded Srimanta's punishment for speaking falsehood in his court, and that if he (the prefect) were to defy the king's command and spare the king's 'enemy', the king would slay both himself and his family.

The prefect then attempted to execute Srimanta as the king had commanded, but he saw all his soldiers' weapons break against the boy's 'adamantine body' (*bajra kay*), immediately made invulnerable by Candi's power.⁸⁰ Contemporary followers of the Nath—

like adherents of various other Siddha and alchemical cults—thought male yogic adepts could seek an ‘immutable body of perfection’, invulnerable to injury, death and decay, as one fruit of their mental and physical disciplines.⁸¹ Srimanta apparently had pursued no yogic disciplines. Candi’s grace alone gave him a body which could not be attacked.

Frustrated, the prefect attacked the old Brahman woman instead, and, as the goddess, she summoned her terrible troops and slew all his soldiers. The prefect then fled to warn the king, who despite this warning led his army to the cremation ground, where they also were destroyed by the goddess’s demons and witches. When victory had been won, Srimanta was mounted as a *raja* upon an elephant and given a white chowry and a white umbrella.⁸² He also had not sought these royal insignia; they were Candi’s gifts on the battlefield. The adamantine body and the royal insignia transformed Srimanta from merchant to someone like a *raja*, so that a new relation between him and the Sri Lankan king became possible.

The bodies of the king’s soldiers simultaneously had undergone an opposite transformation. They were hunted relentlessly by Candi’s demons.

Horses and elephants swam in rivers of blood. Finding no place to stand, charioteers dove in and died. The demons, who had had no battle in the Kali Age, took turns in the slaughter. The demons picked out and swallowed living men, as a peasant catches fish from the incoming tide . . .⁸³

Immediately after the battle, selling the dead bodies became a business for Candi's ghouls, who quickly assembled to create a market of flesh:

They buy and sell meat cooked and raw. Someone buys human heads and ties them up like ripe cocoanuts. The ghouls, male and female, sell elephant tusks at wholesale, and fingernails like water chestnuts for the price of twenty cowries.

Their wares are horse tongues for bananas, human knee-caps for flatbread, and bones are their cups and bowls. One ghoul knave plays catch with a testicle, and boys buy them by the pair.

Ghost weavers market their wares: shawls woven of entrails, *saris* made of elephant skin, silky stuffs made of leather. They measure ornamental belts made of horses' veins and charge a cowrie per yard.⁸⁴

Of course, in the ordinary world periodic markets regularly treated animals as marketable products. Mukunda's poem itself describes how the hunter Kalketu's wife sold the various parts and products of animals hunted by her husband.⁸⁵ Candi elevated Srimanta from one condemned to execution to one with an immutable, perfect body and the insignia of a *raja*. In the same way she slew the king's powerful warriors, stripped their bodies of all honour, and treated them as sheer economic products, just as human hunters treat the bodies of hunted animals. These are exactly opposite transformations within the field of predatory relations. Within that field the roles of the hunter, the

victorious warrior and the ruler define one pole, and the roles of hunted animals, of an enemy defeated and slain, and of a prisoner condemned to execution define the other pole. (Of course, we also cannot neglect the pleasure this litany of horrors must have been designed to give audiences of the poem, a pleasure at least in part linked to seeing the mighty humbled.)

Finally, only the king and his minister survived. By the latter's advice the king signaled his submission by tying his sword to his throat, by prostrating himself, and by singing praises to the Brahman woman as a deity, but one whom he could not recognise (he prudently asked for an introduction). The king agreed to Candi's offer to show him the vision herself in exchange for the marriage of his daughter to Srimanta. Thus the king saw and worshipped the goddess in her new epiphany as the lovely woman on the lotus who swallows and regurgitates the elephant. In order to remove the king's grief (and his death impurity, which made a wedding impossible), Candi, having received the king's worship, promptly determined to raise all the dead Sri Lankan soldiers back to life. We can pause to contemplate one image in this magical erasure of all the terrible fruits of the

action narrated thus far: ‘Those people who had died in battle and whom the demons (*raksas*) had swallowed came forth from their mouths by the energy (*tej*) of her medicine’.⁸⁶ Each slain soldier’s bodily parts found their proper places and were rejoined in a restored corporal whole, and then the dead were restored to life.

By losing the battle, submitting, seeing the new epiphany and worshipping the goddess, the king himself was transformed. He recognized the goddess as the divinity who moves kings through cycles of creation and destruction. He recognized the merchant’s son as the ‘servant’ of this goddess, and agreed to give him his daughter in marriage. These transformations all together, one assumes, would keep him from acting in future as a hunter towards the two merchants.

Srimanta’s adamantine body has another analogue. Imprisoned for twelve years, Dhanapati also suffered bodily transformations. As the ‘fruit’ of Candi’s anger, he contracted elephantiasis, cataracts and skin disease.⁸⁷ These bodily imperfections made him loathsome, because his body ceased to be properly bounded. His right foot was swollen, his skin flaked and constantly itched, and the pupils of his eyes became clouded

and discolored.⁸⁸ Clouded eyes and an unbounded, diseased body are the physical correlatives of Dhanapati's faulty understanding, for throughout his imprisonment he resolutely refused to worship Candi. His diseased body also is the middle term between the polar opposites of a perfect, masculine, and royal 'adamantine body' on the one hand, and a dead body treated as sheer economic product on the other. He too will have to learn to worship Candi so that he can be educated and restored to health. But he will not worship Candi in the form of the lovely woman on the lotus. Instead, he will learn to worship her as Ardhanarisvari, Siva and the goddess combined as an androgyne.⁸⁹

This episode repeats the theme of a merchant's liminality between hunters and the hunted, a theme we noted in the merchants' progress through the 'deeps' on their way to Sri Lanka, and in Candi's new icon shown to the merchants, wherein she swallows and regurgitates the male elephant. At the same time it enriches the meaning of the opposition between hunting and being hunted. It defines hunting as royal and masculine compared to being hunted, and it associates being hunted with treatment as an economic product, to be bought and sold in the market. Finally it substitutes a 'contract' between the goddess and

the king for the earlier ones between the merchants and king. Is it surprising that the goddess will fulfill her obligations under this 'contract', and so force the king to become a wife-giver and an inferior to Srimanta? Before we can take up this question, we need to consider in more detail the transformation of Srimanta's ambiguously gendered body and his liminal roles.

Merchants as Androgynes

In this section I will argue that although they do not understand the divine vision of the goddess given to them, and certainly cannot control her appearance to the king, merchants do participate in many features of that vision. We may begin with the relatively 'feminine' nature of merchants.

To say that Srimanta must be transformed in his body to survive battle and to become suited for royal marriages is to say something about the prior weakness and non-royal nature of his body. By contemporary assumptions, his extraordinary 'adamantine body' may be understood as masculine in its freedom from 'change, death and decay'.⁹⁰

Ordinary merchants in their conduct and characters, if not in their bodies, are given

dimensions of femininity in Mukunda's poem.⁹¹ We already have seen stay-at-home merchants compared to 'wives' in seclusion. Merchants who venture abroad also can be compared to women who do so. Merchants, like women, entice rulers and expose themselves to attacks on their wealth and honour when they wander unprotected abroad. For women the clearest statement of the temptation they pose is found in a proverb repeated by the poem: 'Fish of a drying pond, and the wandering of a woman: if one gets gold and silver in the deep forest, who leaves them aside if he gets them effortlessly?'⁹² When they visited Sri Lanka, the two Bengali Hindu merchants of this poem also were wandering alone, and it is alleged that they evoked a similar desire to possess their wealth in the heart of the Sri Lankan king.⁹³

Candi, in an earlier narrative in the poem, also had appeared as a beautiful woman wandering alone. In this very guise she had offered Kalketu the hunter a gift of great wealth that allowed him to cease hunting and to found a kingdom. Motifs of established order threatened by a wandering woman's attractiveness, of hunting negated and a kingdom established, and of royal theft from merchants' wealth all appear in this earlier

narrative.⁹⁴ Note especially that when news of Kalketu's new kingdom reached the ears of his own erstwhile king, resulting in war between them, one of the king's false accusations against Kalketu was that to escape his low estate as a hunter Kalketu had 'slain some merchant and escaped with much wealth'.⁹⁵

These same motifs are repeated both in the epiphany of goddess, elephant and lotus, and in the story of Srimanta's deliverance. In the narrative of Kalketu Candi's beauty was a threat to the moral order of Kalketu's marriage, and particularly to the position of Phullara, his wife. Struck by Candi's beauty, and yet fearful of desiring or seeming to desire her, Kalketu asked the goddess to leave, and attempted to force her to depart when he could not persuade her to do so. Similar to her appearance as this lovely sixteen-year-old, Candi, when appearing to the merchants as the woman on the lotus, also is described in stereotypical similes which eroticise each aspect of her face, body and ornamentation; especially when she swallows the elephant, she is called a *kamini*, a 'lovely woman'.⁹⁶ At first sight, the merchants felt desire for her. At once, however, their desire became fear and horror when the merchants saw the goddess swallowing and regurgitating

the elephant.⁹⁷ But unlike Kalketu's honest but mistaken attempt to force the goddess to leave, the merchants sought to show Candi to the king and to help him possess her.⁹⁸

In the narrative of Kalketu Candi made the hunter into a new *raja*, and destroyed and then restored to life the army of an existing king. In the epiphany she holds the elephant captive and repeatedly swallows him. The elephant, of course, is an instrument of the martial power of kings, and a sign of kingship generally.⁹⁹ The acts of swallowing and regurgitating also have a clear set of references in this poem. We already have seen Candi's ghouls swallowing the bodies of the Sri Lankan king's soldiers, and regurgitating these same bodies, so that Candi can bring them back to life.¹⁰⁰ In the epiphany Candi symbolically moves elephants through cycles of destruction and re-creation without letting them escape from her control, as she also did to the Sri Lankan king and his army in the narrative of Srimanta's deliverance.

Candi gave Kalketu great wealth and commanded him to found a kingdom, but his own king falsely alleged that Kalketu got this wealth by killing some merchant. On the other hand, the king of Sri Lanka in fact seized the merchants' wealth as forfeits for their

failing to show him the epiphany of woman, elephant and lotus, and he was on the point of having Srimanta executed on the cremation ground when Candi intervened. He truly had intended to do what Kalketu falsely was alleged to have done.

Like wandering women and like the goddess herself, wandering merchants have a dual potential: they ambiguously promise profit and loss, the founding and the destruction of kingdoms, blessing and curse. When merchants appear in a foreign king's port, they may advertise the martial capacity which their own king has given them as his servants, and they may in fact be his spies or thieves sent to pillage the foreign king's land. At the same time, they carry great wealth, and it may disturb existing relations among members of the king's court, and entice attacks upon the merchants themselves for the sake of the wealth they carry. 'Tribute exchange' itself may threaten honour by its ambiguity, either through the exchange of goods which are of unequal value, or through the receipt of goods from someone who himself is not honourable. Perhaps the safest course for a king would be to drive foreign merchants away, but this action would deprive the kingdom of the wealth they bring. Moreover, if merchants feel they have been mistreated, they themselves

can depart, individually or in a body, again depriving the kingdom of their wealth.¹⁰¹

Merchants maintain some connection to their own *raja*, who may think it necessary to avenge any mistreatment of his merchants. Thus, when father and son were about to return home, the Sri Lankan king anxiously asked Dhanapati not to tell about his imprisonment to the court of his own *raja* of Ujain.¹⁰² Of all of the ways merchants threaten a kingdom's order in this poem, the possibility of properly androgyne merchants acquiring 'adamantine' masculine bodies impervious to attack may be the most disturbing, and the possibility which links merchants most closely to the erotic but predatory goddess whose form they first see.

Merchants engaged in 'tribute exchange'—indeed, merchants in general—are situated liminally between being hunters and being hunted. Not themselves *rajas*, they nevertheless are their own *raja's* representatives and carry martial forces with them, and at the very same time their wealth and lack of relation to the foreign king may invite attack. In Mukunda's poem neither they nor the king to whose realms they come can presume the existence of something like a 'market': those institutions of law and custom which exclude

force and fraud from gift exchanges, and so allow only those exchanges which are voluntary and mutually beneficial. One might suppose that a solution would be the guarantee precisely of something like a 'market' for the transactions of 'tribute exchange'.

In fact, Mukunda's poem seems to criticise one feature of 'market' transactions, adjudicable contracts mutually agreed upon by merchant and king, for the way they can be used by the king as instruments of predation. It will explore an altogether different kind of solution.

Transformed Relationships: Marriages, Wedding Presents, and Tribute

When his army had been restored to life, and Dhanapati had been released from prison and reunited with his son, the Sri Lankan king gave Srimanta his daughter in marriage, according to the terms of his oath with Candi. The king and his relatives then gave Srimanta wedding presents (*jautuk*) befitting his status as a daughter's husband (*jamata*). These presents included the conch shells and sandalwood on behalf of which the *raja* of Ujain originally had sent both father and son to Sri Lanka, and they also included a crown, golden and jeweled ornaments, pearls, corals, diamonds, and 'various

wealth' as 'honours' (*puruskar*, sic.) for Srimanta.¹⁰³ With them Srimanta could return home honoured and successful in the king's service. It is not the case that a marriage relation allowed the original 'tribute exchange' to proceed by bargaining in good faith for mutually honourable terms of exchange. Rather, for the king's part, the gift 'exchange' was replaced by gifts only from him to Srimanta, gifts which were embedded in the marriage relationship itself. From his 'wedding presents' Srimanta in turn gave the conch shells and sandalwood, along with other gifts (*bhet*) that at first acknowledged his inferior status, to his own *raja* of Ujain to fulfill the purpose of his voyage. Moreover, much the same sequence of events was repeated in Ujain: the Ujain *raja* disbelieved the merchant's story of the divine epiphany and demanded to see it for himself; in return for which, by instruction from the goddess, he gave Srimanta his own daughter in marriage, and with his daughter, 'wedding presents' that again honoured Srimanta as a daughter's husband and superior.¹⁰⁴

A merchant who trades abroad must be related to more than one ruler. We can imagine a triad, dual at its top, the two rulers, and singular at its base, the merchant. The

relation between merchant and 'foreign' king is problematic because it is undefined and unprotected, compared to his relation in 'tribute exchange' as 'minister' to his 'own' *raja*, or compared to his relation as subject of his 'own' *raja* in the case of ordinary trade.

Abroad, the merchant's identity and purpose are ambiguous; he may be a merchant trading on his own account, or a spy or a thief acting on behalf of his 'own' *raja*, or an emissary sent for the sake of 'tribute exchange'. Even in the last case the potential relation between the rulers themselves through the merchant is problematic because it is indirect, and because 'tribute exchange' may produce neither clear superiority of one ruler nor clear equality of both. Our poem proposes that, in the extraordinary case of Srimanta, the merchant's unequal relations to his 'own' *raja* and to the 'foreign' king should be replaced by a single reiterated marriage relation, that of daughter's husband (*jamata*) and superior to both rulers. Marriages between the merchant and the two rulers' daughters are authorized by Candi in her new epiphany as the lovely woman swallowing and regurgitating the elephant, and Candi is worshipped by both rulers through this new image. Their novel worship unites both rulers to a common superior, the goddess. True, a problematic triad

then reappears within the merchant's own family, for he must keep peace between his two wives, the princesses, who are not to be considered equals.¹⁰⁵ But this seems to be an easier triad, for its apex, the merchant, is singular and its base is dual, rather than the reverse.

By replacing the mutual gifts of 'tribute exchange' with marriage relations and their one-way gifts, the poem proposes a structural solution to a structural problem. It replaces the ill-defined, unequal, and potentially exploitative relation between ruler and 'foreign' merchant with a relation both more defined and more protected by ties of good will. The relation itself, however, does not require, and in fact discourages permanent residence of the once 'foreign' merchant at the ruler's city: daughters' husbands should return home, as should foreign merchants. Establishing an affinal relationship moderates but does not erase the distinction between 'foreign' merchants and those who belong to the ruler, either specially as his 'ministers' or generally as members of his kingdom.

The two, symmetrical, affinal relationships between Srimanta and both rulers move 'tributary exchange' into the category of gift-giving on the occasion of marriage. I have

argued that in the status ambiguities of 'tribute exchange' one perhaps could win—in calculations of both honour and profit—by obtaining more valuable goods than one gave away. Candi, however, has removed status ambiguities from the relation between Srimanta and the king. As a wife-giver the king will become Srimanta's inferior. For him, marriage gifts also are tokens of honour, with the feature contrary to goods bartered in 'tribute exchange' that he will obtain more honour by giving more away to Srimanta.

Although they both are 'fathers-in-law' of a common 'son-in-law' (to use for convenience an inappropriate terminology), in terms of Bengali kinship the two rulers have no close relation to each other.¹⁰⁶ The reiterated marriage relations to the merchant may insulate the rulers from antagonistic relations to each other. If so, the marriages resolve two structural problems: between 'foreign' merchant and king, and between the two rulers themselves. Since these are structural problems, we should locate them, not just in the relations between our Bengali merchants and the Sri Lankan king, but also between Bengali kings and their 'foreign' merchants. With this final insight we may return to

Saptagram and to lesser markets on the Bhagirathi-Sarasvati-Hugli river axis, and to the *rajas* and 'little kingdoms' around them.

Were there 'foreign' merchants with whom it was difficult for *rajas* to deal and to whom they might have become wife-givers? It is easy to find evidence for marriages between Portuguese and Dutch men and daughters of merchants in India, but not between them and daughters of rulers.¹⁰⁷ Mukunda's description of the blessed Hindu merchants of Saptagram, who could reside by the sacred site of Tribeni without venturing abroad, also names the 'foreign' cities whose merchants came to Saptagram and made residence at home possible for its Bengali Hindu merchants. With the exception of merchants from Sri Lanka, all these 'foreign' merchants probably came from elsewhere in India.¹⁰⁸ One cannot find evidence that he had in mind merchants from outside an Indic cultural zone. Nowhere in his poem does he mention the Portuguese or any Europeans. He does include Ašraf Muslim notables in a list of the members of Kalketu's little kingdom,¹⁰⁹ but Mukunda does not allude to their trade. It would be completely consistent with this statement to suppose that for Mukunda what we have called 'tribute exchange' was peculiar to a Hindu pattern

of statecraft. His initial problem, after all, was a *raja* who did not have goods needed for royal temple worship.

Conclusion

In its final narrative Mukunda's *Candimangal* locates the most serious of merchants' problems not in market trade but in the gifts of 'tribute exchange'. These problems simultaneously involved conflicts about wealth and conflicts about honour, for in 'tribute exchange' receiving goods of greater value seems to have meant receiving greater honour.

Problems arose primarily in the relation between the 'foreign' merchant and the king to whom he was a stranger. The liminality of foreign merchants made relations with them difficult and unstable. Foreign merchants could be armed. They could be thieves or spies in disguise, as well as emissaries of their own rulers. If treated unfairly, foreign merchants could invite retaliation from their own rulers. Foreign merchants brought wealth to kingdoms, and gave presents (*bhet*) to members of the court to secure the privilege of 'tribute exchange', but the jealousies evoked by this very wealth could threaten existing relations within the court. Foreign merchants might seem weak, and subject to arbitrary

confiscations by the ruler in whose land they were strangers, but by the aid of the goddess Srimanta acquired an 'adamantine body', impervious to attack. In short, even more than most merchants, they occupied an ambiguous, middle position in a field of predatory relations: they could both hunt and be hunted, they could bring either honour or dishonour, and they could cause either profit or loss. Mukunda seems to have thought that the most serious problems involving foreign merchants arose in their thoroughly ambiguous role as emissaries sent to engage in 'tribute exchange' on behalf of their own ruler. How would it change our view of Bengali merchants of the sixteenth century if we were to adopt this perspective? We would have to understand some foreign trade, 'tribute exchange', as a diplomatic game in which both royal honour and precious goods, insignia of royal 'honours', were at risk, a game therefore which invited acts of predation.

As conceived in Mukunda's poem, Candi's purpose was to remove foreign merchants engaged in the mutual gifts of 'tribute exchange' from the entropic threat of predatory relations. The customs and institutions of a 'market'—contractual agreements and correct legal procedures—would not suffice to accomplish this purpose. Market

relations may have been dishonourable in themselves, but they also offered no guarantee against predation. 'Tribute exchange', although formally a gift relationship, could be like market relations, because potential conflicts over honour in relations between rulers and foreign merchants were so entangled with potential conflicts over wealth. In this poem care for honour, unreasoning anger at being dishonoured, anxiety over terms of 'tribute exchange' which might turn out both unfavorable and dishonourable at once, and greed for wealth to be obtained only at the other's expense, all together drove both foreign merchants and rulers into escalating disputes about honour, in which the forfeits demanded to restore honour bore no relation to the amount of dishonour experienced. Good formal legal procedure could not rectify the terms of bad agreements. Instead, the foreign merchant and the ruler had to establish new, affinal relations, converting the foreign merchant to a daughter's husband, and replacing the ruler's side of 'tribute exchange' with one-way marriage presents from the king to his daughter's husband, presents which at the same time were the merchant's appropriate 'honours'. Finally, the merchant and his own *rāja* also had to establish the same affinal relations, to secure the two rulers' common

relation to the goddess, to insulate the rulers from any potentially dishonourable relation to each other, and to reverse the hierarchy of relations between the merchant and both rulers.

Candi's epiphany as the lovely woman on the lotus who swallows and regurgitates a male elephant secures these new, affinal relations between rulers and merchants. Rulers see and worship Candi in this form and are transformed. They understand that she holds them in her power and can move them through cycles of creation and destruction by the 'play' of her desire. More important, they learn to see merchants, and especially foreign merchants sent for 'tribute exchange', as servants and representatives of Candi herself, as if through the merchants she herself were coming to them, appearing as she had to Kalketu in the provocative guise of a wandering woman. Rulers must admit these merchants into their kingdoms, as Kalketu once had to admit the goddess to receive the blessing of her wealth. By enacting, reversing and negating hunting, her epiphany enacts the liminality of merchants, who both hunt and are hunted. More importantly, its liminality suggests that relations between rulers and these merchants may and should be moved

away from the field of predatory relations, in which wealth and honour are ultimately at risk. In the story of Srimanta's deliverance, this movement is accomplished. Before new affinal relations can be established, Candi completely, if temporarily, reverses the roles of hunter and hunted. She reduces the army of the king of Sri Lanka to economic products bought and sold at market, and elevates the merchant to someone like a *raja*, with an 'adamantine body' and royal insignia. Finally, she arranges Srimanta's wedding to the king's daughter. With the king's gift of a royal bride Srimanta receives the 'various wealth' of other 'wedding presents', which also are his 'honours', and the 'honours' he will pass on to his own king.

Dhanapati, however, does not receive royal honours. Despite the possibility of new, affinal relations to replace the predatory relations of 'tribute exchange', most merchants would continue to be mere merchants, trading on their own account, as Dhanapati may have done after finally leaving Sri Lanka.¹¹⁰ By worshipping Candi Dhanapati acquired a cleansed and healthy body, but not a perfect, masculine one, immune to injury, death and decay. He retained the liminal characteristics of ordinary merchants, who are both hunters

and hunted, and both masculine and feminine. Fittingly, he learned to worship the goddess in the form of Ardhanarisvari, Siva and the goddess in one body.

To be sure, this is only one way to read Mukunda's narrative. Throughout I have selected interpretations which seem to me to be most consistent with the story as a whole, but no poem and no reading can be completely self-consistent. There is, for example, an ambiguity in what I have called the liminal situation of merchants. Because merchants generally seem to be located between hunter and hunted, the problem of the poem might concern merchants generally and their ordinary trade for profit. The solution of the poem, on the contrary, seems to resolve problems with 'tribute exchange' in particular, rather than problems with trade in general. This ambiguity may allow for readings with different emphases. Because he focused on problems of 'tribute exchange' in Sri Lanka, Mukunda missed novel problems for merchants who had to cope with mercantilist, rent-seeking strategies, both of local rulers and their officials and of the Portuguese, all of whom were motivated more by profits than honours. Later authors of *Candimangal* either did not understand or did not see the relevance of his choice of problem in this narrative. By

locating the solution to problems of 'tribute exchange' in extraordinary affinal relations between the ruler of Sri Lanka and the merchant's son Srimanta, and by supporting this solution by novel worship of Candi, Mukunda both suggested a utopian solution to his problem, and opened the way for a predominately religious understanding of his solution, one which emphasizes knowledge of and devotion to the goddess, and which is unrelated to particular conditions and problems of merchants.¹¹¹

Also open to different interpretations is the new epiphany through which Candi both reveals herself and resolves the problem of the plot. Although it enacts, reverses, and negates relations of hunter and hunted, it also can be understood to suggest the play of desire in divine and cosmic processes of creation and destruction. We can be sure that Indian audiences did not understand either the image or the poem itself in a single way; nor are they likely to have confined themselves to self-consistent meanings in their interpretations. Indeed, Mukunda's narrative of the merchants' voyages and of Srimanta's deliverance now cannot be reduced to a single, authoritative text, because it so often was added to or altered. Moreover, this narrative became a kind of model for other, later

narratives, describing new epiphanies of the goddess, revealed to new characters, who had undertaken sea voyages or journeys of some kind, but who were not always merchants.

Again these later narratives have little to do with the peculiar problems of merchants.¹¹² To

investigate the many ways Mukunda's poem has been understood by its audiences and by

the audiences of poems modeled upon it must be beyond the scope of this essay.

NOTES

¹I basically have followed Sukumar Sen's edition: Kabikankan Mukunda-biracita, *Candimangal*, Sukumar Sen sampadita (Nay Dilli: Sahitya Akademi, 1975) [hereafter cited as CM]. I have consulted the more recent edition by Pancanan Mandal: Mukundaram Cakrabarti biracita, *Candimangal*, bhumika o sampadana Pancanan Mandal (Kal'kata: Bharabi, Bengal era 1398 [1991; hereafter cited as CPM]; and the second volume of the Calcutta University edition: Kabikankan Mukundaram Cakrabarti biracita, *Candimangal*, *Dhanapati Upakhyan*, Bijanabihari Bhattacharya sampadita (Kalikata: Kalikata Bisvabidyalay, 1966) [hereafter cited as CMUC 2]. Their readings are frequently simpler and more modern than those in Sen's edition. I also have consulted Aksayacandra Sarkar's edition prepared from Sen's manuscript 'a': Mukundaram Cakrabarti, *Kabikankan Candi*, 'a new edition with numerous notes edited by Aksayacandra Sarkar' (Cucura [Chinsurah]: [published by Aksayacandra Sarkar], Bengal era 1285 [1878, in the British Library; hereafter cited as CMAK]. Mukunda's dates are discussed by Sen, '*Bhumika*', in CM, pp.

24-9. Sen argues for composition between 1544 and 1556. Pancanan Mandal, however, casts doubt on his evidence, and favors a date of 1586; see '*Bhumika*', in CMPM, p. *jha*.

²Sen, '*Bhumika*', in CM, p. 20.

³I take this term from Bernard S. Cohn, 'Political Systems in Eighteenth-Century India: The Benares Region,' in Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, introduction by Ranajit Guha (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 489-92, but also draw attention to the dissatisfaction with the expressions 'little king' and 'little kingdom' expressed by Rahul Peter Das, 'Little Kingdoms and Big Theories of History,' *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117 (1997): 127-34. I have used the term *raja* to designate people who owed allegiance to an overlord, and 'king' to designate those who did not. I have used 'ruler' as a general term to indicate both *rajās* and kings.

⁴See 'Kings and Commerce on an Agrarian Frontier: Kalketu's Story in Mukunda's *Candimangal*, in this volume.

⁵James D. Tracy, 'Introduction', in *The Political Economy of Merchant Empires: State*

Power and World Trade, 1350-1750, ed. James D. Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 19.

⁶K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1985), pp. 98-118. In defining 'emporia' Chaudhuri emphasizes the way they were the 'junctions' for 'three natural segments' of the Indian Ocean trade, at which a variety of foreign merchants therefore could be found. Successful emporia offered merchants security first of all, from which could follow predictability and transparency in market transactions; see Niels Steensgaard, 'Emporia: Some Reflections', in *Emporia, Commodities and Entrepreneurs in Asian Maritime Trade, c. 1400-1750*, ed. Roderich Ptak and Dietmar Rothermund (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1991), pp. 9-12.

Warehousing, currency and banking services, wholesale purchasers capable of clearing merchants' imports, institutions for resolving disputes and enforcing contracts, and a political climate of limited taxation also influenced merchants' choices of ports and markets.

⁷The shift probably was a consequence of the siege of Gaur by Sher Khan Sur (1537-38), and of the expansion of the kingdom of Arakan to include Chittagong in the mid 1540s, severing the port's connection to Gaur. See Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Improvising Empire: Portuguese Trade and Settlement in the Bay of Bengal, 1500-1700* (Delhi, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 108, 119-20. For Mukunda's description of Saptagram, which emphasises the presence of 'foreign' merchants, see CM, *pad* 417, p. 231.

⁸Abdul Karim, *Corpus of the Arabic and Persian Inscriptions of Bengal* (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1992), pp. 349-53, nos. 16-17; Ahmad Hasan Dani, 'Bibliography of the Muslim Inscriptions of Bengal (down to A.D. 1538)', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan* (Dacca, East Pakistan) 2 (1957), pp. 71-2, nos. 137, 138.

⁹Tomé Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires . . . and the Book of Francisco Rodrigues . . .*, trans. and ed. Armando Cortesao, 2 vols. (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1990, 1st pub.1944) 1: 91.

¹⁰ Cæsar Frederici, 'The Voyage and Travell of M. Cæsar Fredericke [sic.], into the East India, and beyond the Indies', trans. Thomas Hicocke, in Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation ...*, 10 vols. (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1927-28.) 3: 237.

¹¹For example, note the temporary market found by Cæsar Frederici at 'Butor', when the Sarasvati River began to silt, and larger ships could not pass upriver to Satgaon. It was abandoned within fifteen years, when the Portuguese moved to Hugli. See Frederici, 'Voyage and Travell', p. 237; Subrahmanyam, *Improvising Empire*, p. 121.

¹²Om Prakash, *The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal, 1630-1720*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 29. Prakash cites shipping lists of the V.O.C. in the period 1680-1718.

¹³Duarte Barbosa, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa . . .*, trans. Mansel Longworth Dames, 2 vols. (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1989, 1st pub. 1918-21) 1: 108-197; 2: 1-102. In his description of the entire west coast, trade to Bengal is mentioned only twice,

for 'Coilam' (Quilon), 1: 97, and for 'Reynel' (Rander), 2: 146. In both cases the trade was conducted by merchants of these ports, not by merchants of Bengal.

¹⁴Barbosa, *Book of Duarte Barbosa* 2: 117, 123, 125; Prakash, *Dutch East India Company*, p. 29.

¹⁵Pires, *Suma Oriental* 1: 142-4.

¹⁶For the following discussion of trade routes and trade goods I follow Subrahmanyam, *Improvising Empire*, pp. 100-03.

¹⁷Pires, *Suma Oriental* 1: 92. Bengali textiles were sold in the ports of Burma, Siam, and Cambodia, in the Liu Kiu islands, in Banda and the ports of northern Java, as well as in Melaka, and in Pasé and Pidë on Sumatra. See Pires, *Suma Oriental* 1: 111, 112, 133, 139, 186, 207; 2: 217. At least one variety of Bengali textile, white cotton 'baftas' were known in China; see Haraprasad Ray, 'Bengal's Textile Products Involved in Ming Trade during Cheng Ho's Voyages to the Indian Ocean and Identification of the Hitherto Undeciphered Textiles', in *Emporia, Commodities and Entrepreneurs*, pp. 81-93.

¹⁸The only mention I find is at CM, *pad* 337, p. 191, where Dhanapati lades his ships with ‘heaps and heaps’ of ‘various cloths’ (*nana bastra*).

¹⁹Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Maritime India in the Seventeenth Century* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 213.

²⁰Pires, *Suma Oriental* 1: 88. Duarte Barbosa, who had lived for years on the Malabar Coast, reported vaguely of Bengal that, ‘Moors dwell in the seaports where there is great traffic in goods of many kinds’, and among them were ‘strangers from many lands, such as Arabs, Persians, Abexhis [Habasis, members of “various ethnic communities from the Abyssinian highlands and the immediately surrounding regions”], and Indians’; see Barbosa, *Book of Duarte Barbosa* 2: 135-9; Richard Eaton, *The New Cambridge History of India* 1.8, *A Social History of the Deccan, 1300-1761* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 105, fn. 2.

²¹Pires, *Suma Oriental* 2: 265-72. The merchants from Gujarat included foreigners—‘Parsees, Turks, Turkomans and Armenians’ who would ‘come and take up their

companies for their cargo in Gujarat', and native Gujarati merchants as well, Muslim, Hindu and Jain. The Kelings were Tamil and Telugu merchants, both Muslim and Hindu. The word 'companies' probably refers to merchants sharing risks by hiring a common agent in *commenda* contracts.

²²Subrahmanyam, *Improvising Empire*, p. 119.

²³M. R. Tarafdar, 'The Bengali Muslims in the Pre-Colonial Period: Problems of Conversion, Class Formation and Cultural Evolution', in *Islam and Society in South Asia/Islam et Société en Asie du Sud*, edited by/études réunies par Marc Gaborieau (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1986; Collection Purusartha 9), pp. 98-99.

²⁴Subrahmanyam, *Improvising Empire*, p. 118.

²⁵Simon Digby, 'The Maritime Trade of India', in *The Cambridge Economic History of India, Volume I: c.1200-c.1750*, ed. Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 130-1, 136-7; Prakash, *Dutch East India Company*, pp. 28-33.

²⁶Thus at the beginning of the seventeenth century Hindu Gujaratis traded from ports in Orissa to Sri Lanka, and imported conch shells as well as the usual Sri Lankan goods.

See Prakash, *Dutch East India Company*, Table 2.1, p. 28, and p. 33.

²⁷M.N. Pearson, 'India and the Indian Ocean in the Sixteenth Century', in *India and the Indian Ocean, 1500-1800*, ed. Ashin Das Gupta and M.N. Pearson (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 77-8, 88.

²⁸Subrahmanyam, *Improvising Empire*, pp. 122-4; Geneviève Bouchon, '*Regent of the Sea*': *Cannanore's Response to Portuguese Expansion, 1507-1528*, trans. Louise Shackley (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 152-64.

²⁹Sinnappah Arasaratnam, 'Ceylon in the Indian Ocean Trade: 1500-1800', in *India and the Indian Ocean, 1500-1800*, pp. 224-7. In the seventeenth century the Portuguese intensified their efforts to monopolize Sri Lankan cinnamon. By the end of this century, perhaps because of Portuguese hostility to Muslim shipping, Gujarati Hindu merchants

resident in the Orissan port of Balasore held most of the residual, non-Portuguese trade to and from the island. See Prakash, *Dutch East India Company*, pp. 27-8, note 9.

³⁰The Portuguese envoy to Sultan Nusrat Shah in 1521 reported the following speech by a Muslim nobleman and ship's captain, present in the Sultan's court: 'We forget that it is the poor merchants who travel the seas who have to pay for whatever happens. Your Highness well knows that the Portuguese are so powerful here [in Bengal] that nothing stands in their way. It would only need for the smallest of their ships to position itself at the harbour bar of Chittagong or Satgaon and no other ship would be able to leave or enter. If this were to happen, if the traders no longer sold the country's goods, if foreigners were no longer able to enter the country, the Governors would find it hard to pay the allowances which are incumbent upon them. . . .' See *Voyage dans les Deltas du Gange et de l'Irraouaddy, relation Portugaise anonyme (1521)*, éditée et présentée par Genevieve Bouchon et Luis Filipe Thomaz, avec traductions Française et Anglaise (Paris: Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian, Centre Culturel Portugais, 1988), English Version, p. 333.

³¹Tracy, 'Introduction', in *Political Economy of Merchant Empires*, pp. 13-20; R.J.

Barendse, *The Arabian Seas: The Indian Ocean World of the Seventeenth Century*

(Armonk, N.Y., London: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), pp. 126-8. Barendse quotes E. de Flacourt.

³²Tracy, 'Introduction', pp. 16-18.

³³Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Persianization" and "Mercantilism": Two Themes in Bay of Bengal History, 1400-1700', in *Commerce and Culture in the Bay of Bengal, 1500-1800*, ed. Om Prakash and Denys Lombard (New Delhi: Monohar, for Indian Council of Historical Research, 1999), pp. 63-70.

³⁴Barendse, *Arabian Seas*, p. 128.

³⁵Cf. Douglas C. North, 'Institutions, Transaction Costs, and the Rise of Merchant Empires', in *Political Economy of Merchant Empires*, pp. 22-40.

³⁶Subrahmanyam, "Persianization" and "Mercantilism": pp. 47-85.

³⁷Barendse, *Arabian Seas*, pp. 88-92.

³⁸CM, *pad* 328, p. 187. The particular ritual the king was unable to perform was the 'gift of sandal' to Hari during *Harisamkirtan* on the full moon of Jyaistha: 'In the region of

Bharat whoever offers *Harisamkirtan* with sandal will have a successful life, and whoever does *Haripuja* with sandal becomes a king on earth for seven days.’

³⁹CM, *pad* 335, p. 190, Lahana’s description of her father’s trade. Towards the end of the seventeenth century conch shells still were imported from Sri Lanka; see Prakash, *Dutch East India Company*, Table 2.1, p. 28. White and yellow sandalwood (*Santalum album* and *Santalum freycinetianum*) were grown in the forests of the Western Ghats above the Malabar Coast, but the most aromatic of these ‘true’ sandalwoods came from Timor in the Sunda Islands. Only ‘false’ sandalwood (*Ximenia americana*) was a product of Sri Lanka, but Brahmans of the Coromandel Coast used its wood as a substitute for white and yellow sandalwood. Mukunda may have known of a trade in this substitute to Bengal. See George Watt, *A Dictionary of the Economic Products of India*, 7 vols. in 10 (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1975, 1st pub. 1889-1896) vol. 6, pt. 2, *v.* ‘*Santalum album*’, pp. 461-7; vol. 6, pt. 4, *v.* ‘*Ximenia americana*’, pp. 319-20.

⁴⁰CM, *pad* 329, pp. 187-8.

⁴¹The chowries would have been brought overland from the mountains between Nepal and Tibet, and in fact Bengali merchants exported them to the south. Similar arguments apply to some of the textiles: fine woolen shawls from Persian or Kashmir (*sakallat*), and silks from Bhutan (or perhaps woolens? *pamari bhot*).

⁴²CM, *pad* 329, p. 188: *disi sadhu haila badhu*.

⁴³CM, *pad* 329, p. 187; *pad* 331, p. 188: *apan anger jora, caribare dila ghara, kabaj prasad jamadhar. laksa tanka dingar dhan, gay dila abharan, biday paila sadagar*.

⁴⁴CM, *pad* 417, p. 231. The merchants are spiritually blessed by the fact that Saptagram is contiguous with the *tirtha* of Tribeni, from which they do not have to absent themselves.

⁴⁵CM, *pad* 334, p. 189.

⁴⁶For an analogous case of ‘emblems and honors’, especially ‘temple honors’ given from a greater to a subordinate lord in Tamilnadu, see Nicholas Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*,

2nd edn. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1993). In this case also: ‘If the emblems of sovereignty are not gifted by an overlord somewhere higher in the political system, they are worth less, thereby providing the basis for a lesser claim to local sovereignty’ (p. 48).

⁴⁷CM, *pad* 312, p. 178, a speech by the merchants of Bardhaman: *raj’patra dhanapati, ara banya baise khiti, sakal rajar paribar* [Dhanapati is the king’s minister; all other merchants who dwell on earth belong to the king’s family].

⁴⁸CM, *pad* 330, p. 188: *patra mitra bale bhai na kara bisad, karite rajar karyya nahi aparadh. sabhajan bale sadhu, kata sadh mana, baisaha rajar rajye khao ksem nana*; probably a mistake for CMAK, p. 486: *ksema dana*, ‘maintenance and gifts’. CMPM, p. 189, reads *ksem’sal*, ‘weal and woe’. CMUC does not include the *pad*. Notice that there is no mention by Dhanapati of a dharmic injunction against sea voyages *per se*, or of ritual pollution therefrom; cf. M.N. Pearson, ‘Indian Seafarers in the Sixteenth Century’, in *Coastal Western India: Studies from the Portuguese Records* (New Delhi: Concept

Publishing Co., 1981), pp. 133-6.

⁴⁹CM, *pad* 335, pp. 189-90: *yadi hay kuberer dhan ... phuray nadir bali, ay bine yadi kari pan*. Lahana argues that Dhanapati should not hasten to return; he first should 'make gains' (*labh karya*). A person who is subject to another (*paradhin*) is necessarily poor and unfortunate (*din*); he cannot distinguish between happiness and sorrow. Dhanapati will get travail (*kles*) in the king's service; but he should make his breast firm and go nevertheless. By trading with his own goods he can come back a rich man.

⁵⁰CM, *pad* 363, p. 204. Cf. William L. Smith, *The One-Eyed Goddess: A Study of the Manasa Mangal* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1980; Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Stockholm Oriental Studies 12), pp. 99ff.

⁵¹Arjun Appadurai, 'Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value', in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 3-63.

⁵²Barendse, *Arabian Seas*, p. 141: 'Such trade as was conducted in a few monopoly

goods by the court was not primarily seen as a source of gain. This commerce was rather perceived as an asymmetrical exchange of gifts—amiable taxation—though admittedly, it was a thin line between bestowing gifts and bartering them for a profit’.

⁵³Cf. Philip B. Wagoner, “‘Lord of the Eastern and Western Oceans’: Unguents, Politics, and the Indian Ocean Trade in Medieval South India’, manuscript of a paper prepared for delivery at the 50th Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Washington, D.C., March 26-29, 1998. Wagoner argues that Vijayanagara kings attempted to monopolise unguents, not for reasons of profit, but because of their role as gifts of honour to favoured subordinates. Gifts of unguents were used to substantiate unambiguously hierarchical relationships of ‘incorporation’, as unguents received from the superior were used upon the bodies of inferiors.

⁵⁴Digby, ‘Maritime Trade’. pp. 131-9. For a description of pricing Chinese silks against pearls, and thereby exchanging ‘precious stones, pearls, corals, and other such things’ at Calicut, see Ma Huan, *Ying-yai Sheng-lan: ‘The Overall Survey of the Ocean’s Shores’ (1433)*, translated from the Chinese text edited by Feng Cheng-Chun, with

introduction, notes and appendices by J.V.G. Mills (Cambridge: for the Hakluyt Society at the University Press, 1970), p. 140.

⁵⁵Probably for this reason in the years 1404-1439 Sultans of Bengal sent fourteen separate 'missions' to offer tribute to China, while they received only four return missions from the Chinese. See Haraprasad Ray, *Trade and Diplomacy in India-China Relations: A Study of Bengal during the Fifteenth Century* (New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1993), pp. 61-73.

⁵⁶Takeshi Hamashita, 'The Tribute Trade System and Modern Asia', *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* (Tokyo) 46 (1988):11-17.

⁵⁷*Voyage dans les Deltas*, pp. 334-5. The Portuguese had given the Sultan a horse and armor. To indicate a reciprocal relationship the Sultan wanted to give the Portuguese suitable gifts for their king, and asked for suggestions. The Portuguese, on the contrary, to assert their superiority in the relationship, argued that their king already had all kinds of luxuries, and suggested that the only suitable gift would be duty-free trade in the king's

ports.

⁵⁸So I interpret the many similar passages in Bengali *mangal-kabya* which express merchants' hopes for advantageous terms of exchange. When Dhanapati actually negotiates with the king, however, he exactly reverses these terms; see CM, *pad* 363, p. 204.

⁵⁹I am indebted to Rahul Peter Das for this translation of *daha*; see 'The Journey to Dakshin Patan and the Abode of the Snake Goddess in the *Manasamangal*, in *Essays on Middle Bengali Literature*, ed. Rahul Peter Das (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Ltd., 1999), p. 49.

⁶⁰These descriptions are found only in the account of the son's voyage, CM, *pad* 432, p. 242: *alankha* [sic., *alanghya*; cf. CPM, p. 200, and CMUC, p. 347] *sagar rahite nahi stha*; and *pad* 435, p. 244: *pramanik yojan gabhir bahe jal*.

⁶¹Cf. Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967), pp. 93-111.

⁶²The most detailed accounts of the ‘deeps’ are in CMUC, pp. 228-9, 338-40. For a similar description by a nearly contemporary author, cf. Dvija Madhab racita, *Mangalacandir Git*, Sudhibhusan Bhattacharyya sampadita (Kalikata: Kalikata Bisvabidyalay, 1952), pp. 230-40.

⁶³*Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁶⁴CM, *pad* 357-358, pp. 201-02; *pad* 432-434, pp. 242-4.

⁶⁵Sasibhusan Dasagupta, *Bharater Sakti-sadana o Sakta Sahitya* (Kalikata: Sahitya Samsad, Bengal era 1367 [1960]), pp. 187-90.

⁶⁶Pacakari Bandyopadhyay cited this image of Candi in connection with tantric theories of creation. See: *Pacakari Bandyopadhyayer Racanabali*, sampadak Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay o Sajanikanta Das, 2 khanda (Kalikata: Bangiya-Sahitya-Parisat, Bengal era 1358 [1951]), dvitiya khanda, pp. 292-307, 334-40.

⁶⁷CM, *pad* 356, p. 201 for the father; and *pad* 433, p. 243 for the son.

⁶⁸CM, *pad* 356, p. 201; and *pad* 433, p. 243.

⁶⁹CM, *pad* 357, 358, p. 202; and *pad* 435, p. 245.

⁷⁰CM, *pad* 360, p. 203. This issue appears to depend on whether Dhanapati would recognize the king's proclamation of authority (*dohai*). Without doing so Dhanapati gave the captain of the guard a present (*inam*) in place of the 'guard tax' (*digari*) which he had demanded as security for the merchant's good behavior. Dhanapati claimed the status of a foreign merchant, stating he intended to reside if he found friendliness, but if not, to depart.

⁷¹CM, *pad* 364-365, p. 205.

⁷²CM, *pad* 366, p. 206.

⁷³CM, *pad* 369, p. 207.

⁷⁴CM, *pad* 443, pp. 248-9.

⁷⁵The offer is at CM, *pad* 445, p. 249. A similar offer was not made to Dhanapati;

compare *pad* 368, p. 207.

⁷⁶CM, *pad* 479, p. 270: *rajar bacane laj paila parbati*. CMUC, p. 423 gives an alternative reading of the verse: Parbati ‘laughed’ (*hasila*) rather than ‘felt shame’ at the king’s speech. CMAK changes the verse altogether to omit her reaction; see p. 700.

⁷⁷CM, *pad* 478, p. 270. The passage is not in CMUC (see pp. 422-423). CMAK, p. 697, contains verses which describe the king’s offense even more explicitly: ‘When he came to your city, did he commit any theft or robbery? Why do you destroy him in life and wealth? . . . You strike, slay, or keep tied up all the merchants who come, and you steal all their wealth’.

⁷⁸CM, *pad* 451, p. 251.

⁷⁹Was this a reflection or recollection of actual practice, rather than just a literary conceit? We know very little about scavenging battlefields in Mukunda’s age.

⁸⁰CM, *pad* 464, p. 260.

⁸¹Shashibhusan Das Gupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, 3d edition (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1969) p. 239, and for a general description of *kay-sadhana* of the Naths, pp. 234-50.

⁸²CM, *pad* 475, p. 268.

⁸³CM, *pad* 475, p. 268.

⁸⁴CM, *pad* 476, p. 268.

⁸⁵CM, *pad* 73-74 pp. 44-5.

⁸⁶CM, *pad* 484, p. 272.

⁸⁷CM, *pad* 490-491, pp. 276-7.

⁸⁸CM, *pad* 527, p. 297.

⁸⁹CM, *pad* 524, pp. 295-6.

⁹⁰Das Gupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, p. 230.

⁹¹For a comic description of the typically plump body of a merchant, with soft shoulders and pendulous belly, see 'Lost Meanings and New Stories: *Candimangal* after British Dominance', in this volume.

⁹²CM, *pad* 316, p. 180.

⁹³So Candi suggests at CM, *pad* 478, p. 270: 'Srimanta came in hope of trade to your country, and for what fault did you loot his ships? And having taken his wealth, you also take his life and dishonor him'.

⁹⁴CM, *pad* 93-107, pp. 54-64; see 'Kings and Commerce on an Agrarian Frontier; Kalketu's Story in Mukunda's *Candimangal*, in this volume.

⁹⁵CM, *pad* 162, p. 95.

⁹⁶CM, *pad* 356, pp. 200-01; *pad* 434, pp. 243-4.

⁹⁷CM, *pad* 357, pp. 201-02, *pad* 435, p. 244.

⁹⁸See especially Dhanapati's speech in *pad* 366, p. 206: 'I would have bound and

brought elephant, lotus and lovely woman but for fear of you, crest-jewel of kings. Now give the command, oh king, from your auspicious mouth, and I can shade your house with the lotus blossom'. Srimanta invites the same command, without offering an excuse, *pad* 443, p. 248.

⁹⁹For an example in the poem, see Candi's creation of a 'kingdom of animals', *CM*, *pad* 50, p. 31, where she appoints the elephant as mount of the lion-king. Compare *pad* 475, p. 268, where she has the 'great merchant' (*sadagar*) Srimanta mounted upon an elephant as one sign of his new, royal status.

¹⁰⁰For the act of swallowing, *CM*, *pad* 475-476, p. 268; and for regurgitation, *pad* 484, p. 272.

¹⁰¹In their initial interviews with the captain of the guard, Dhanapati threatens to depart if he does not receive 'affection' (*prit*); and Srimanta if he does not receive 'happiness' (*sukh*). Cf. *CM*, *pad* 360, p. 203, and *pad* 437, p. 246. Merchants in Kalketu's kingdom threaten to depart in a body when one of his officials mistreats them; see *pad*

138, pp. 82-3.

¹⁰²CM, *pad* 507, p. 287.

¹⁰³CM, *pad* 509, p. 288.

¹⁰⁴CM, *pad* 523-524, p. 295.

¹⁰⁵CM, *pada* 525, p. 296. Srimanta assures his Sri Lankan bride that the Ujain king's daughter will be her maidservant.

¹⁰⁶One might imagine that a dispute or contest between sons of two co-wives about division of their patrimony could lead them to call upon the support of their respective maternal families. By one law of inheritance which may have governed Bengali Hindu elites, however, all sons who are of the same *jati* and are born to properly married co-wives receive, only upon their father's death, the right to an equal share of his property. Prior to his death they have no property right at all in the patrimony. In theory disputes between sons about property should not arise. See Ludo Rocher, 'Introduction', in

Jimutavahana's Dayabhaga: The Hindu Law of Inheritance in Bengal, ed. and trans. with introduction and notes by Ludo Rocher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 25-28, 92-102.

¹⁰⁷Barendse, *Arabian Seas*, pp. 95-8.

¹⁰⁸CM, *pad* 417, p. 231; but perhaps *malaya des* refers not to the Malabar Coast, but to the Malay peninsula.

¹⁰⁹CM, *pad* 130,131, pp. 76-7. Hindu merchants are described in *pad* 133, p. 79.

¹¹⁰Dhanapati's continuing trade is mentioned in a single line at *CM*, *pad* 514, p. 290: 'The merchant reached Tribeni, and after resting there, Dhanapati purchased various goods and loaded his ships'. Are we to imagine purchases at the neighboring emporium of Saptagram? The line itself, however, has several variants, some of which link his purchases not to Tribeni but to the market at 'Nimaitirtha', a place located near the confluence of the Bhagirathi and Sarasvati rivers. Compare CPM, p. 278.

¹¹¹See 'Lost Meanings and New Stories: *Candimangal* after British Dominance', in this

volume.

¹¹²Clinton B. Seely, with Fredrika V. Miller, 'Secular and Sacred Legitimation in

Bharatacandra Ray's *Annada-mangal* (1752 C.E.)', *Archiv Orientální* 68 (2000): 327-58.