

1979

## Denmark in the Indian Ocean, 1616-1845 An Introduction

Randolph Stow

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi>



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Stow, Randolph, Denmark in the Indian Ocean, 1616-1845 An Introduction, *Kunapipi*, 1(1), 1979.  
Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol1/iss1/3>

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: [research-pubs@uow.edu.au](mailto:research-pubs@uow.edu.au)

---

## Denmark in the Indian Ocean, 1616-1845 An Introduction

### Abstract

The Danish East Indian Company grew out of the ambitions of Christian IV, who in 1616 found himself with a new chancellor, Friis-Kragerup, less restraining than his predecessor. But if the ambition was Christian's, the initiative came from two Dutchmen, Jan de Willum and Herman Rosenkrantz, who first put forward the idea in 1615 and won a circle of Copenhagen merchants to their side. In an open letter of March 17, 1616, King Christian gave permission for Danish subjects to establish an East Indian Company in Copenhagen in order to engage in trade with the East Indies, China and Japan.



*Randolph Stow.*

Photograph by Michael Scott.

# Denmark in the Indian Ocean, 1616-1845

## An Introduction

'Vi må ro med de årer, vi har'.

Governor Willum Leyel of Tranquebar, 1644.

The Danish East Indian Company grew out of the ambitions of Christian IV, who in 1616 found himself with a new chancellor, Friis-Kragerup, less restraining than his predecessor. But if the ambition was Christian's, the initiative came from two Dutchmen, Jan de Willum and Herman Rosenkrantz, who first put forward the idea in 1615 and won a circle of Copenhagen merchants to their side. In an open letter of March 17, 1616, King Christian gave permission for Danish subjects to establish an East Indian Company in Copenhagen in order to engage in trade with the East Indies, China and Japan.

Two other Dutchmen played important roles: Roland Crappe, who had established good relations with the ruler of Tanjore, and Marchelis de Boshouwer, who was in even better standing with the King of Candy in Ceylon. Boshouwer claimed to be authorised to conclude agreements on the Sinhalese king's behalf; and on March 30, 1618, such an agreement was signed between Christian IV and 'the Emperor of Ceylon'. Under the treaty, valid for seven years, Denmark was to protect Ceylon with a warship and 300 foot-soldiers, for which she would be compensated. The peoples of Denmark and Ceylon would have free access to each other's countries, and the King of Candy would at least not obstruct the

conversion of Asians to Christianity according to the Augsburg Confession.

In another instrument of August 2, 1618, Boshouwer agreed with the Danish East Indian Company that Denmark and Ceylon should invest in a joint company with two presidents and twelve directors, and with two general offices, in Copenhagen and Ceylon. The civil rights of Danes and Ceylonese in each other's countries were again guaranteed.

The matter of capital was and remained a serious problem. The chief individual investor was the King, with 16,000 rixdollars. Danish, Norwegian, Dutch and German citizens and towns also contributed; but by 1620 the Company's capital was only 180,000 rixdollars, immensely far short of the Dutch VOC's initial 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> million guilders.

But long before the financial arrangements became clear, the Danish expedition to the Indies was already under way. There were five ships in all: three from the Company, and two warships from the Crown. One of the latter, the *David*, was to be placed at Ceylon's disposal, while the other, the *Elephant*, was to help the civilian ships prosecute trade and establish colonies and strongholds elsewhere in the Indies.

The yacht *Øresund* was the first to leave, in August 1618. The rest of the fleet followed in November. The Commandeur of the expedition was a nobleman from Skåne, Ove Gjedde, a protégé of Friis-Kragerup and only twenty-four years old. His second-in-command was Erik Grubbe, an investor in the Company. Erik was in love, and his family opposed the marriage. So, in traditional fashion, his Ingelborg came aboard disguised as a page, and they were married before sailing. At the Cape, Ingelborg gave birth to a son, christened Capo de Bona Esperanza, but known as Afrika Grubbe. In the Indian Ocean, however, mother and baby both died, like about 300 other members of the expedition, for it was a hard voyage. Erik Grubbe's later behaviour can be explained by this blow.

On May 16, 1620, Ove Gjedde noted that they had seen the promised land, Ceylon, with great joy. The joy did not last long. He found that Boshouwer, who had signed treaties on behalf of 'the Emperor of Ceylon', meant only the King of Candy, and that that king, one of several, had concluded a peace treaty with the Portuguese three years earlier. Moreover, Roland Crappe in the *Øresund* had come to grief in battle with the Portuguese, and some of his men had been hanged as pirates. Crappe himself, with thirteen other men, had escaped into the protection of the ruler of Tanjore.

Gjedde decided to open negotiations with the King of Candy for ratification of Boshouwer's treaty and repayment of Denmark's outlay on his behalf. The King sent word that Boshouwer, who had died after leaving the Cape, was an impostor. Gjedde went in person to the king, and after vainly trying promises, used threats. The king gave way, and on August 21, 1620, signed a new treaty, ceding Trincomalee to Denmark and granting generous commercial privileges, including freedom from tax and the right to mint coins. He also gave the Danes permission to build strongholds where they wished, and to introduce Christianity to Trincomalee. Gjedde was well satisfied.

Leaving some Danes to lay out a fort and collect goods for the return journey, Gjedde went north to the Coromandel Coast and Tranquebar, a little fishing town which Roland Crappe thought might be acquired by Denmark from the 'Naik' (or 'Nayak') of Tanjore, a minor Tamil state. After delays caused by Gjedde's rather arrogant treatment of the Naik, Tranquebar was indeed ceded to Denmark for two years. Thereafter the Naik would receive rent. The Danes would build a fort at Tranquebar with the help of the Naik's people, and have sole rights to trade, untaxed, in Tanjore; though an exception was made for the Portuguese of Negapatam.

Gjedde immediately began work on the fort, designed by himself and called Dansborg. He then began to prepare for the return

voyage, though he was by now so short of money that he had to give the Naik some cannon in exchange for pepper. The *David* sailed first, bound for Socotra with a clear hint that some piracy on the way would be acceptable to King and Company. Gjedde, with the *Elephant* and other ships, returned to Ceylon.

Here he found that no progress at all had been made with the fort at Trincomalee. The most positive achievement was that Erik Grubbe, who was getting odder, had struck some Danish money – with his own name on it.

Erik was in a strange state. On May 9, 1621, Gjedde sent him to Candy to persuade the king to do something about honouring the treaty. He was to return in a week, and the *Elephant* was then immediately to sail home. But he never returned. After a long wait, Gjedde was obliged to leave.

Erik Grubbe, all this time, was hiding in the jungle near Trincomalee. He was not interested in going home, and he never did. He lived, it seems, by hunting wild animals, in company with his servant Svend Due. Danish ships regularly looked out for them. After two years, Svend actually visited a Danish ship, and a year later he and Erik both came on board the *Pearl*. This mediaeval wild men's life lasted for perhaps five years. We know that Erik was back in Tranquebar in 1626, when he was sent on a mission to the Great Mogul, which never happened because Denmark could not afford the presents. He died at Tranquebar in 1631, one of the strangest Europeans in Indian Ocean history.

Ove Gjedde had reached Copenhagen on March 4, 1623, saying 'God's name be endlessly honoured'. He was still only twenty-eight, and his achievement had been considerable. But not in financial terms. Two good ships and hundreds of men had been lost, and the cargo brought home did not even cover expenses.

In the years immediately following, under the direction of Roland Crappe, Danish India's future was sketched out. There was conflict at times with the Naik, but the Danes endeared themselves to him by keeping the English out of Tanjore. The English and Dutch, for their part, were more patronising than hostile.

Some promising treaties, like those with the kings of Candy and Siam, proved to be worth little or nothing; however, Denmark did acquire five factories (*kontorer*) besides Tranquebar: in Macassar ('a poor factory', said the English), at Pipely in Bengal, Balasore in Orissa, Masulipatam in Andhra Pradesh, and either Bantam in Java or Sukadana in Borneo. But Tranquebar was nevertheless almost desperately poor: in money, ships and manpower. The Dutch and English could afford to tolerate a rival which received from the homeland only one or two ships a year, if that. By 1629 Crappe had almost decided to sell Dansborg to the Dutch for 15,000 pieces of eight; but this came to nothing, perhaps because of the Naik's anti-Dutch prejudice.

On the credit side, Tranquebar had in Dansborg a very handsome fortress, built by Tamil bricklayers faster and more expert than those in Europe. The informative Icelander Jón Ólafsson, who served in it when it was new, tells us how fine it was. Pictures of various dates confirm this; but more often than not, we know from Danish sources, it was delapidated.

The architectural rot set in while Crappe's shady successor as Commandeur was in debtors' prison in Masulipatam, and Tranquebar was in thrall to two drunken crazy *præster* (ministers of religion), Niels Andersen Udbyneder and Christen Pedersen Storm, both of them with native wives described as 'whores'. Niels Andersen in his cups would run around almost naked committing grievous bodily harm on all and sundry. His approach was ecumenical: among his victims were Eurasian Catholics, Hindus, Moslems and Danish officers, including the Commandant. He caused the deaths of several women. Once, drunk, he fell asleep in the pulpit while delivering a sermon, and on being wakened by a soldier his first words were: 'Fill her up, this is for Hr Stackenborg'. This became a catch-phrase at drinking parties throughout India, to the great shame of Denmark.

Under Governor Willum Leyel, Christen Pedersen Storm was condemned to death for his offences, which included causing the death of his wife. The method of execution was odd: he was sewn

in a sack and dropped into the sea, 'north of Dansborg, about a mile from land'.

Even more curiously, the vicious Niels Andersen Udbyneder was reprieved at the intercession of the native people. His fate was merely to be marooned in Ceylon.

In this period of the 1640s, Tranquebar was in sore straits. Local mismanagement had left Dansborg run-down and the Company in heavy debt to merchants in Masulipatam and elsewhere, so inhibiting country trade. The European population was tiny, and the difficulties of Denmark and Christian IV at home had almost cut communications.

The new Governor, Willum Leyel, found a sort of solution, which may have owed something to folk-memories of Danegeld. The Danes considered themselves owed compensation by Bengal for the loss of certain vessels and their cargoes. Not getting it, Leyel embarked on a pirate-war against Bengal, and with his few Europeans and mostly tiny country ships had such unexpected success that Bengal gave in and offered compensation of 80,000 rupees, which was refused. The Danes were using Mafia tactics; but as Leyel, who was given to proverbs, once remarked: '*Vi må ro med de årer, vi har* – We must row with the oars we have'. Whether bullying paid, we do not exactly know. Probably not, as the bullying Dutch, by now the supreme power in the area, strongly disapproved of these Danish adventures. But by one means and another Leyel managed in these difficult years not only to repair but to improve Dansborg, and to produce gunpowder by a new method so efficient that the surplus was available for export.

But profits were so small that in 1650 the Company was liquidated. The next year, an Englishman wrote from Madras that 'the Danes are quite blown up'. Though King Frederik III made encouraging noises occasionally, the situation in Tranquebar was desperate. A cry for help from the Commandant, the only Dane left there, was heard at last in 1668, and the warship *Færø* was sent out, the first ship from Denmark for 29 years. It found the Dannebrog still flying, and made a commercially successful trip. As a

result, a new East Indian Company was formed, and received its charter on November 28, 1670. The royal family invested loyally, and the King put Dansborg at the Company's disposal, as well as two ships (for the first six years) on easy terms. Meanwhile, in India, the Naik made over to the Company three more villages, and the vice-commandant proudly sent Christian V a present of a rhinoceros. Old trading links were temporarily renewed; the slave-trade with Indonesia, unfortunately, getting a fresh boost. The European population of Tranquebar, especially the military population, was vastly increased.

The combination of royal favour with war in Europe and India brought Tranquebar its first period of prosperity in the years 1687-1704. From 1691, manpower grew greatly. In the seventeen years of boom, as many as thirty ships arrived from Denmark. Besides cargoes sent back to Europe, an important country trade was conducted with Malacca and Atjeh: in, among other commodities, slaves. During times of famine, Indians would sell themselves or their dependants, or would be sold by their creditors or by the Naik of Tanjore. A quarrel with the Naik in 1698 diverted that supply, and Tranquebar was soon to regret this. By way of compensation, however, a peace treaty with Bengal in the same year gave permission for the building of a new factory on the Hooghly River. This *loge*, Danmarksnagore, prepared the way for Denmark's second Indian colony. But in a long short term, it meant merely enormous expense and trouble, extending even to war with the Great Mogul.

By that time (1714) Tranquebar was again in deep decline, for reasons following a pattern by now familiar. Threats were uttered, but nothing was done immediately, when Danmarksnagore was besieged by the Bengalis. They sacked it after the Danes had fled by sea.

Meanwhile, Tranquebar was fulfilling a new role, as headquarters of the Lutheran mission to the whole of India. The history of the Danish Mission is too large to go into here; but it is worth

noting that one of its later representatives, Christian Friedrich Schwartz, is regarded by the British historian of India, Percival Spear, as being almost the Light of Asia in person: a brightness in centuries of gloom. The idea of the Mission is credited to Frederik IV, but royal patronage did not protect its servants from the hostility and contempt of Company men, either in Copenhagen or in India. The first two missionaries, Ziegenbalg and Plütschau, arrived in Tranquebar in 1706, both of them young Germans from Halle, as became traditional. They were treated abominably by the Danes, because, initially, they threatened the institution of slavery.

During Denmark's war with Sweden Tranquebar had sunk back into stagnation. It had regained Danmarksnagore in 1720, but Danmarksnagore was merely a drain on a drained colony. In Copenhagen, the Company asked the State for help; and the State, refusing, offered instead the advice of a Commission. The Commission criticised everyone for incompetence and missed opportunities, and found the Company to all intents and purposes bankrupt. In October 1729 Tranquebar learned that the King had taken over everything, and that the second Company had ceased to exist.

But royal favour and some prosperous voyages by individual investors saved the situation, and in 1731 the Danish Asiatic Company received its charter, valid for forty years. Its terms were very familiar, though something new and resented was the strict economies it forced on Tranquebar. Because of this penny-pinching, Dansborg's walls crumbled, and the soldiers were so hungry that half of the Europeans deserted en masse.

Tanjore was also in decline, and in 1737 was invaded by Mogul troops, whom the Danes, like the neighbouring Dutch, had to buy off with presents. But then, perhaps, a little embarrassingly, came a Maratha army and relieved Tanjore. The Danes went back to paying tribute to the ruler, but at a lower rate than before, because of his weakness. They also acquired two extra villages in their enclave.

A few advances were made by the new Company, but they strike one generally as lost opportunities half-recalled. For example, in 1753 a factory was opened in Calicut so that the Danes could enter directly into the Malabar Coast pepper-trade without hindrance from the Dutch, French and British. All this trouble and expense might have been saved if the Danes had not, years before, in a fit of despondency, abandoned their little Malabar Coast factory of Oddaway. While Danish pepper-buyers were stealing about the Coast like characters in a spy-thriller, Oddaway was flying the British flag. Similarly, though the Company's modest and restricted trade with China was good news, one wonders why it took so very many years to achieve what had been intended from the outset.

Another playing of an old tune was the resumption, in 1753, of a Danish trade presence in Bengal, so many years after the abandonment of Danmarks-nagore. That factory, almost ruined, had become navigationally unsuitable, but the Nabob at length granted the Company a renewed privilege of trading – in return for a toll of 2½% on all goods bought and sold – and an establishment in the villages of Serampore, Akna and Perrapore. The new factory, called Frederiksnagore in honour of Frederik V, was ready for use in September 1755.

But a few months later the Nabob died, and was succeeded by his grandson Siraj-ud-daula, who decided to declare war on the British. The Black Hole of Calcutta was an opening shot. It was answered by Clive's expedition and the Battle of Plassey, after which Siraj-ud-daula was replaced by a British client, Mir Jafar. In these conditions Frederiksnagore, which had given refuge to the French fleeing from their enclave of Chandernagore and had suffered an English blockade as a result, found it difficult either to trade or to stay out of the hostilities. The factory was soon delapidated (it was complained that 'tigers, which are rife here, have an open way in to us') and the Danish Company could not compete with the privileged and imperialistic British, who even opened its mail. But individuals in the Company's service did well out of

private trade, though that was strictly forbidden by their employers. While Anglo-French hostilities lasted, merchants of those two nations found the Danish flag a great convenience.

One venture of the third Company was altogether new. This was the colonisation of the Nicobars, a group of nineteen tropical islands north-west of Sumátra. In October 1756 the Company's directors noted: 'On 1st January, 1756, without the least resistance from the natives, who seem peaceful and simple folk, the Nicobars were taken into possession in His Majesty's name, and called New Denmark'.

'New Denmark' was the island of Great Nicobar, and also the colony which Lieut. Tanck founded there; while the group as a whole was renamed the Frederiks Islands.

Long before the directors heard this good news, Tranquebar had learned that the colonists, about twenty of them with forty or fifty soldiers, were in terrible health and unable to work. In August the *Kjøbenhavn* took out 150 others to replace them. These found in New Denmark about ten Danes and ten Indians alive, every man sick. Communication with Tranquebar had ceased because the crew of the colonists' little ship were all dead.

The new settlers moved to another island, Nancowry, but the deaths continued. Until, that is, death put in charge an assistant, C. F. Lund, who seems to have been highly efficient. For six months things went well, and wood was even cut for shipbuilding, which had been the colony's purpose. Then a fresh superintendent arrived with the survivors of New Denmark, who quickly infected the Nancowry colony. The superintendent himself lived only eighteen days; long enough, however, to give the Nicobar Islanders extravagant ideas of the gifts they could expect from foreigners. When Lund took charge again, the disappointed natives first robbed and then attacked the colony. In despair, the colonists got into their little ship and left for Sumatra, where they split up to make their several ways home.

The ship carrying Lund and three other Danish colonists was wrecked near, of all places, New Denmark, where the four remain-

ing settlers had just been killed by the islanders. For fourteen months Lund and an Indian servant lived there on fruit and the natives' charity. At last they escaped on a foreign ship, and reached Tranquebar in March 1760.

A list of some of the things the colonists left behind them makes interesting reading, especially for a descendant of Western Australian colonists. They included writing bureaux, clothes chests, silver teapots and sugar-bowls, porcelain table ornaments, brass flat-irons, coffee mills, periwigs, braided velvet suits and feather-trimmed hats. Like the West Australians, they had meant to live well.

In spite of all, Lund and other Danes were eager to repeat the experiment. In 1768 another colony was founded, by the Moravian Brethren. Again it was located in Nancowry, but this time between two Nicobar villages, a site which they reasonably thought would be healthier than the last. After only nine years, traces of the former colony had all but vanished.

Meanwhile, the Company in Copenhagen was going through a quiet revolution as the time approached for the renewal of its forty year charter. Its Indian possessions had increased, but it was disappointed with the returns, much less impressive than those of the China run. It was decided therefore to open those possessions to private trade. As a result, the King in 1777 took over all the Company's territories, properties and fixtures, following the example of the French Crown after the disaster of Dupleix. From that point, Tranquebar had the power of a European state behind it.

The times favoured the royal enterprise, as England and France were again at war, and for a while Copenhagen was one of the few European cities where East Indian products could be bought. But the outbreak of peace in 1783 brought back the old problems. Denmark-Norway was too thinly populated and too exclusively agricultural to thrive on the Asian trade. It had little to offer Indian and Chinese merchants but Norwegian iron and hard cash. There was a predictable, and very great, improvement in

trade after Britain again went to war with France in 1793; but the price Denmark eventually paid for the profits of neutrality is too well known to need repeating. In India, Frederiksnagore and Tranquebar were occupied by the British in May 1801, though peacefully, and only until July and August 1802. In January and February 1808 the two colonies were taken over again; and this time the occupation looked like being permanent.

But before that great setback, there was a little one in the Nicobars. Austrians of the Trieste Company had established themselves there in 1778; and though they gave up in despair in 1783, Denmark was anxious to publicise its sovereignty. In 1784 the ship *Dansborg* arrested the remaining 'Austrians' – one Italian and one Indian – with their equipment, weapons and flag. In 1791 another colonization expedition set out from Tranquebar, to be routed as usual by fever. Some sort of garrison was maintained until 1808, and the Austrians never came back; but the Danes' death-rate was high, and their profit, as before, nil.

Denmark regained its Indian colonies in 1815, but the condition of the motherland, bankrupt in 1813 and shorn of Norway and its fleet, was precarious. With deep depression at home, it seemed unlikely that the colonies could survive for long.

Though, surprisingly, they had another thirty years of life, it was a painful time. Danish shipping, finding more profit in lading and unloading in foreign ports, deserted Tranquebar, so that the office of toll-collector became irrelevant. The town's native population fell, as the weavers felt the effects of Britain's industrial revolution. Many houses stood empty, and some of *Dansborg's* decrepit outbuildings and appurtenances were demolished.

Frederiksnagore, like Danmarks nagore before it, had suffered as an anchorage from a change in the sandbanks of the Hooghly River. There even more houses stood empty. It had become almost an English town, full of English debtors evading prison. A Dane in 1824 remarked that it was a town 'where everything is English, but where the King of Denmark is so kind as to pay the costs of administration and let justice be done'.

There was one new development, however. Colonel Ole Bie, Director of Frederiksnagore in the 'flourishing period', had been a religious man, in spite of having so many children of all colours that the English called Frederiksnagore 'the Bie-hive'. He allowed English Baptists, most unwelcome elsewhere, to settle at Frederiksnagore and set up a printing-press, something forbidden in British India. So in its commercial decline Frederiksnagore became an important evangelical and educational centre, particularly interested in the study of Oriental languages, including Sanskrit and Chinese. With the encouragement of Frederik VI, a 'College for the Instruction of Asiatic and Other Youth in Eastern Literature and European Science' was dedicated in 1821, and in 1827 a royal diploma recognized 'The Serampore College' as, in effect, a university. The famous English bishop Heber, author of the hymn 'From Greenland's icy mountains, / From India's coral strand', which seems like an unconscious reference to the extent of Danish interests, reported in 1823 that 'Serampore's administration . . . is extraordinarily good and does Colonel Krefling and the Danish officials much honour'.

But life was draining out of the Danish colonies, and in 1845 a measure often before suggested in hard times was decided upon. After a flirtation with Russia, Denmark sold her Indian colonies to Britain for 1¼ million rixdollars or rupees. The handover took place on October 11 at Frederiksnagore and on November 7 at Tranquebar. Steen Bille, commander of the corvette *Galathea*, which represented the Danes reported: 'All, white or black, Hindus or Moslems, were unanimous in expressing sorrow that their dear flag was struck'.

From India the *Galathea* went on to the Nicobars in a last attempt to establish a viable colony there. A settlement had once again been founded on Nancowry in 1830, under a missionary called Rosen; but fever did its usual work, and Governor Christensen of Tranquebar, who made a visit in 1832 to Frederikshøj, as the place was called, died on his way home. Frederikshøj was abandoned in 1834.

In 1844 an English firm in Calcutta, J. Mackey & Co., suggested setting up a new colony in the islands, and sharing the costs equally with the Danish Crown. An expedition went out the following year, and reported having found coal; which was good news, as the plan was to establish a bunkering station for steamships. Commander Bille of the *Galathea* was given these tidings on his arrival in India, and what had been intended as a naturalists' expedition suddenly became a colonists' one. Many of the new colonists were expatriate Chinese. This time the settlement was laid out on the little island of Pulo Milu. Bille found it very pretty, and was boundlessly optimistic.

But Mackey & Co. went bankrupt, fever raged again, and a Danish warship had to take away the survivors in 1848. And England, while refusing to buy the islands, insisted on Denmark's responsibility for the behaviour of its inhabitants and visitants towards foreign shipping. So, by a royal resolution of 1868, it was declared that Denmark renounced its sovereignty, and that England or any other state could do what it liked with the islands and the pirates in them. With that, Denmark's 250-year adventure in the Indian Ocean came to an end.

In its small way, it had been important: not least to the inhabitants of Île de France, or Mauritius, where the Danish ship *Flensborg* had cut ebony as early as 1622. This being so, it is unkind of the Mauritian historian Auguste Toussaint to call the Danes the 'poor whites' of the Indian Ocean. But less unkind than the possibly innocent question, long and bitterly remembered, of a Tranquebar Hindu: 'Are the Danes of a different caste from the other Europeans?' Their comparative poverty galled the Danes extremely. But given that poverty, the survival of their colonies for more than two centuries seems all the more creditable.

And everyone agrees that Frederiksnagore and Tranquebar were handsome little towns, as indeed they look in the watercolours of the gifted Peter Anker, Governor of Tranquebar in the 'flourishing period'. Tranquebar especially, with its high walls and imposing gates, verandahed houses, palms and church spires,

was generally admired. It must have been dull, it must have been stifling in the dry three-quarters of the year, when the baking wind was particularly trying; but all agree that it was 'smuk' (pretty).

I have not myself ever been to Tranquebar, or seen any photograph of it later than 1936, so it must be my memory of life on another sandy shore of the Indian Ocean that gives me such a strong feeling of having lived there. I seem to remember the hot houses, rife with mosquitoes and white-ants. Especially I seem to remember the sea beating on the walls of Dansborg, eating them away, sucking back the sand and undermining them. That sounds like the Indian Ocean I grew up with. But I shall leave it to Commander Bille of the *Galathea* to pronounce the last sad words on Danish Tranquebar.

The French circumnavigator Laplace says that he was made to think of the ruins of Pompeii when, on a bright moonlit night, he came ashore for the first time at Tranquebar and went into the town. Although I do not know these famous monuments of antiquity, I can well imagine that the observation is penetrating. Here in the regular streets one sees magnificent buildings with splendid porticoes, designed in the antique style; but the closed shutters and doors witness that they are uninhabited, and the rank-growing grass in the squares and in the streets shows plainly that only slight commerce animates the little town. (Bille, p. 65)

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Gunnar Olsen: *Dansk Ostindien, 1616-1732*

Kamma Struwe: *Dansk Ostindien, 1732-1776*

Aage Rasch: *Dansk Ostindien, 1777-1845*

(Vols. 5-7 of *Vore Gamle Tropekolonier*, ed. Johannes Brønsted. Copenhagen: Fremad, 1963)

Jón Ólafsson: *The Life of the Icelander Jón Ólafsson, Traveller to India*. Vol. 2. Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1932.

(*Æfisaga Jóns Ólafssonar Indíafara*, ed. Sigfús Blöndal. Copenhagen: Icelandic Literary Society, 1909)

- Christian Friedrich Schwartz: *Remains of the Rev. C. F. Schwartz, Missionary in India*. London, 1826.
- Steen Bille: *Bericht über die Reise der Corvette Galathea um die Welt in den Jahren 1845, 46 und 47*. Vol. 1. Copenhagen & Leipzig, 1852.  
(*Beretning om Corvetten Galatheas Reise omkring Jordan 1845, 46 og 47*. Vol. 1. Copenhagen, 1849)
- Percival Spear: *The Nabobs*. London: Oxford University Press, 1963.
- Auguste Toussaint: *History of the Indian Ocean*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966.
- Auguste Toussaint: *Histoire des Îles Mascareignes*. Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1972.