



## **Portuguese trade and their political interventions on the Malabar coast in the sixteenth century**

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### **Abstract**

This essay endeavours to encapsulate the historic journey of the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama and the Portuguese commercial and imperial ambitions carried out on the Malabar Coast. The Portuguese being the pioneering European trading company to set foot in India also had noticeable interventions made in the spheres of politics besides trade. Having realized the vitality of the political patronage for acquiring merchandise, they have managed to win the support of the native principalities, though not all, often putting one against the other. However it is to be noted that it was the Portuguese much before anybody else who did bring politics, rather say, violence into the Indian Ocean trade. This essay deals with the trading fortunes and the political interventions of the Portuguese on the Malabar Coast.

**Keywords:** zamorin, marakkar, mappila, pardesi, quilon

### **Introduction**

Ever since Portuguese discovery of the cape route the whole century until this arrangement was successfully challenged by the Dutch in the seventeenth century, the only merchant group engaged in direct trade between Europe and Asia along the all water route was the Portuguese. The importance of the new discovery is that it broke the monopoly which the Venetians and Egyptians had enjoyed in the trade with India. The Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama's arrival on the Malabar Coast was the end of India's political isolation from Europe though the interaction beyond the territorial limit was confined to those lived on the northwest frontier. The discovery of an all sea route to India represented a revolutionary change in the direction, organization and ultimately in the control of the ancient trans-oceanic trade between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. The spices previously came from Cochin and Calicut to Alexandria and Beirut were redistributed in Europe through Venetians were henceforth destined to be monopolized by the Portuguese king and his capital subsequently became the centre of European trade. The era of peaceful trading in which, occasional instances of violence notwithstanding, had been the norm in the Asian waters for centuries now altered by the Portuguese<sup>[1]</sup>. The journey of Vasco da Gama and his landing on the Malabar Coast at Kappad near Calicut on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1498 after overcoming many hardships and dangers marked a different epoch in the history of Malabar mentioned above. The fleet of Gama commenced the journey with four ships; Sao Gabriel and Sao Rafael, a caravel and a store ship touched the African coasts of Angola, Mozambique, Mombasa and Malindi. On reaching Mozambique Gama's fleet could take advantage of the navigational knowledge of Asian seamen accumulated over centuries to proceed to India. The ruler of one of his stopover on the way, the Sultan of Malindi genuinely welcomed Portuguese seeing them as allies against a hostile Mombasa. Subsequently he was provided with the assistance

of a Konkani pilot<sup>[2]</sup> furnished by the Sultan to guide him to Malabar. The land first sighted in Malabar was Cannanore but the Portuguese instead sailed down the coast and anchored off Kappad, a few miles north of Calicut<sup>[3]</sup>.

### **Vasco da Gama at Calicut**

On Vasco da Gama's arrival at Kappad he was received by the Zamorin and his subjects with traditional hospitality. Although the king conversed with them after the customary greetings, the meeting between the two parties failed to produce any concrete result. There are four concerns why Gama failed as a diplomat which indeed shattered the situation miserably; primarily Gama did not bring with him any rich presents of the kind local customs demanded; secondly he asked the king to deliver one *bahar* of cinnamon, another of cloves and other spices in exchange of the goods brought from Portugal which remained unsold (there was no demand for those commodities at Calicut); thirdly Gama further persuaded the king to keep a factor behind him in charge of the unsold merchandise for which the king insisted on payment of custom duty in accordance with the law of the land. Fourthly he urged on expelling the Moors from the Calicut trade which they had controlled for so long years.

Shortly after leaving Calicut, Gama appeared before Cannanore. Kolathiri, the ruler of Cannanore, who was at loggerheads with the Zamorin concluded a treaty of friendship. The king provided Gama with all commodities he required and set sail for Europe on 20 November 1498 and reached Lisbon almost by the end of 1499. The cargo which he took with him was worth sixty times the cost of the expedition<sup>[4]</sup>. Following the return of Gama the king of Portugal adopted the title- Lord of the conquest, Navigation and Commerce in Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India<sup>[5]</sup>.

### **Portuguese expeditions after 1498**

Soon after the first Portuguese expedition under Gama, there

were few more expeditions. Encouraged at the outcome of the first expedition the Portuguese king selected Pedro Alvarez Cabral as the commander of the next expedition and the fleet consisting of 33 ships and 1500 men set sail from Lisbon on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1500, on 13<sup>th</sup> September he dropped anchor off Calicut with only six ships after a perilous voyage. On the way it was driven by a storm to South America thereby Cabral become the discoverer of Brazil. Cabral's agent Aires Correa arrived at a settlement with Zamorin under which the Portuguese got the right to erect a factory at Calicut. But the keen competition between the Portuguese and the local Arabs in the Indian waters created a crisis in the relations between the Portuguese and Calicut. Under Joao da Nova a fleet in 1501 sailed, having heard of the events at Mozambique about Cabral's experience at Calicut, instead of heading to Malabar he returned to Portugal <sup>[6]</sup>.

The experience of Cabral convinced Dom Manuel of the necessity of sending a large fleet to India if the title which he had assumed should remain more than an empty phrase. Due to the profit expected from the spice trade, the hope of propagating the Catholic faith and to maintain the Indian connection, a large squadron consisting of 20 ships was dispatched to India on 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 1502 under Vasco da Gama which was his second journey to India. It was also out of the desperation of the poor performance of Cabral's visit, Dom Manuel equipped this expedition. And the third voyage of Gama took place in 1524 accompanied by thirteen others having 3000 troops on board. Having gone to Cochin he found that Portuguese possessions there threatened by the Zamorin. However his stay was short-lived. On the night of 25<sup>th</sup> December 1524 he expired after being only three months in India <sup>[7]</sup>.

### **Introduction of violence on the Malabar Coast**

The conflicting rajas of Malabar and the rise of Zamorins of Calicut by attempting to expand towards down south, often attacking Cochin to establish his claim of the powerful king of Malabar proved a better space for Portuguese to utilize. The Portuguese brought with them the idea of violence in Indian Ocean in general and Malabar in particular. The fifteenth century maritime trading network of the Indian Ocean linked ports stretching from Quanzhou in southern China to Sofala on the southern coast of Mozambique. Great entrepots- such as Malacca, Calicut, Cambay, Ormuz, Aden and Kilwa-loomed large in it, but none could lay claim to domination. The Portuguese began and carried out frequent attacks on Calicut, as a result many of the Muslim merchants, despite the protection offered by the king of Calicut left the town and this led to the decline of a once flourishing trade <sup>[8]</sup>.

The three earliest travels of 1498, 1500 and 1502 of the Portuguese into Malabar have witnessed series of violent events that hitherto be unknown. The skirmishes or battles in Malabar essentially were centred on few claims of the Portuguese; primarily they insisted that the rulers of Calicut, Cannanore and Quilon expel the native traders (many of them were of Arabic origin) who functioned as the mediators between the local and the foreign merchants. When the Portuguese made their aims clear by both actions and words, the Zamorin reacted asking them how he could expel more than 4000 foreign Muslim householders who are natives of

Calicut from whom his kingdom had received much profit. Compromise was probably never possible given these conflicting aims and interests <sup>[9]</sup>. Secondly the Portuguese attempt for monopoly insisted on the delivery of the whole pepper produced in Malabar which indeed was beyond the domain of the kings or chieftains. Thirdly the pass system introduced by the Portuguese called cartaz which in fact intended to put control on the sea trade, was against the norm of the Indian Ocean trade though there was a system of custom duties in most of the ports. Ever since 1504 the Portuguese had been insisting upon the Moorish ships for obtaining passes from their commandants at Cochin and Cannanore.

The Portuguese employed many violent means to monopolize the spice trade of Malabar. When Gama during his first visit had been expecting an instant compliance with his demand of the spices, he was deeply mortified with Zamorins reply. And when the king detained the factor and his clerk as securities for payment, he flew into a paroxysm of rage, and at once seized six Nairs and sixteen fishermen who had come on board to see his ships <sup>[10]</sup>. While Cabral was at Calicut, he and his men seized ten Moorish vessels and transferred its contents to the factory. Six hundred moors were slain in the melee, and three elephants were killed and salted for a return voyage. He also seized a Moorish ship loading in the harbour. Then they bombarded the city and inflicted much destruction. Setting fire on the ships captured, they sent them against the shore. Gama during his second visit in 1502 off Cannanore came upon a ship returning from Mecca having 300 pilgrims of on board removed all the merchandise to his own, set fire to it despite their earnest request to save them in return of all what they have <sup>[11]</sup>. Gama also sent in a boat the heads, arms, legs separated from the men perished as gift to the Zamorin <sup>[12]</sup>. When Almeida's fleet was at Cochin, the captain of the caravels precipitated the violence by taking possession of Muhamedan ships loading pepper and left the place in hurry <sup>[13]</sup>. Thus we see plunder, seizure of ships, massacre and bombardment have become the tools of the Portuguese monopoly attempt.

The Portuguese control over the sea in a considerable way was not possible till the battle of Chaul in which Mir Husayn of Egypt, the Zamorins of Calicut and Malik Ayaz of Diu fought jointly against Portuguese. On 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1508 Francisco de Almeida appeared with 6000 Europeans and a handful of Cochin Nairs at Chaul <sup>[14]</sup>. The moors in turn were encouraged by the well anticipated Egyptian fleet consisting of 12 ships, under the command of Mir Husayn. The two fleets met at Chaul. The battle lasted for two days which ended in the defeat of Portuguese. For a while the Portuguese lost the control of the sea.

However on the receipt of the news of the disaster, the viceroy himself took the command of the fleet. On 12<sup>th</sup> of December 1508 with 1300 Europeans and 400 Cochin Nairs, he sailed for Diu where Mir Husayn had established his base, to avenge the death of his son and to recover the command of the sea. The opposing fleet met on 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 1509. Though Mir Husayn had been reinforced by 300 foists from Calicut, he was weakened by the desertion of Malik Ayaz <sup>[15]</sup>. This defeat of the joint venture against the Portuguese proved to be the establishment of Portuguese command over the Indian Ocean <sup>[16]</sup>.

### Portuguese acquisition of Chaliyam and the Zamorin's recapture

This event is considered to be the beginning of changing nature of the balance of power at Calicut. Till then the Zamorins with the assistance of their admirals, were successfully challenging the Portuguese on Indian sea. However the recapture from Portuguese and demolition of Chaliyam fort in 1571 by Calicut under Kunjalis made the admirals more powerful even to challenge their very master. Therefore we see the change in the attitude of the Zamorins towards Portuguese who then seen coming in agreement with Portuguese to curb the power of the Kunjalis, the admirals. The Portuguese had built a fort at Chaliyam in 1513 based on the agreement they made with the raja of Vattat (Tanur) in return of the protection he sought from the Zamorins. Meanwhile in continuation of the discussion held between the Zamorin and the Portuguese concerning the losses incurred during Cabral's visit, the king agreed to deliver one thousand bahars of pepper to the Portuguese in three instalments.

The Portuguese fleet went into action in 1528 against Kutti Ali and the bravest commander was captured, made prisoner of Bakrur. The Zamorins re-organized his fleet under Pachachi Marakkur, a relative of Kutti Ali, Ali Abraham, a merchant of Cairo and Kunjali II, the young son of Kutti Ali. The Kunjali Marakkars now took the bold step of attacking the Portuguese possessions in Ceylon and on the East Coast. As a result the Portuguese trade in Indian waters almost came to a standstill. As stated above the possession of Chaliyam in 1513 gave the Portuguese ample opportunities to harass the Zamorins fleet whenever they wanted.

Realizing the growing power of Portuguese as a result of the succeeding developments, the Zamorin conceded to the demands of the Portuguese despite the ongoing armed confrontation between the Mappila traders and the Portuguese. Thus the Portuguese were allowed to build a fort at Cranganore in 1536, and in 1538 at Chaliyam on the mouth of Baypur River. However the defeat of the ruler of Vijayanagar, the ally of the Portuguese in the battle of Talikotta in 1565 emboldened the Zamorin to carry out large scale military operations against the Portuguese. In 1570 the Calicut ruler entered into an alliance with Adil Khan of Bijapur and Nizam Shah of Ahmed Nagar against the Portuguese. In 1571 the Zamorins army laid siege to the Portuguese fort at Chaliyam to abandon it<sup>[17]</sup> and the fort was completely demolished. The Zamorin handed over Chaliyam to the Parappanad raja as a reward for the assistance rendered by him on the occasion.

### Establishment of Portuguese on Malabar Coast

After the triumphant historic journey of Vasco da Gama Dom Manuel accepted the title as stated above, the Lord of Conquest, Navigation and Commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India. Henceforth we see a series of expeditions by the Portuguese bringing the turbulent years in Indian Ocean littoral. After the depredations at Calicut the landing of Portuguese at Cochin and the friendship developed between them had a cause of restlessness for the king of Calicut. Subsequently the relation of Zamorins with Cochin got worsened further. The Zamorin often warned Cochin raja to be cautious of the foreigners and not to befriend them, often insisted him to expel all the Portuguese nationals from his

kingdom. However Cochin raja refused to oblige him. Thereafter a series of battles were fought between Cochin and Calicut which has taken many lives and materials from both sides.

The attacks of Zamorin over Cochin were indeed functioned as a pretext to have more protective measures for Portuguese there. The Portuguese began to strengthen their hold on Malabar ever since they built their first fort at Cochin in 1503 which was also the first ever European fort in Indian soil. Later during the expedition of Almeida they secured a place to build a fortress at Cannanore in 1505 which was in continuation of the friendship Vasco da Gama developed during his visit in the kingdom of Cannanore. Kolathiri had further reportedly appointed six Nairs to guard the area. It is to be noted that while Albuquerque landed at Cochin he found that the Fort of 1503 was devastated by the Zamorin's attack. It was he who could manage to reconstruct the fort after commissioning the king and this fort was further enlarged and strengthened in 1515. The fortress at Calicut was built in 1513 after the death of the then king of Calicut. However the new Zamorin was less friendly towards the Portuguese. Following the Portuguese attack on Ponnani, the southern capital of the Zamorin's kingdom under Meneses in March 1525, the Portuguese fort at Calicut was put under siege. They had to evacuate the fort and it was blown up in 1525. With the invitation from Quilon Portuguese opened trade relation and agreed to construct a factory there and it was materialized despite the opposition from junior *Rani* in 1519, after they were able to bribe the *Rani* and her trusted minister Chanai Pillai<sup>[18]</sup>. In the succeeding years they made further treaties and agreements with the minor principalities for trading concessions and making fortresses and factories mainly by offering them protection from the powerful kings of Malabar. Once these forts were constructed the Portuguese began to use them as a base of their operations. They as part of their eastern policy banned export of pepper and ginger and began seizing the vessels who defied their orders. The Portuguese also built two supporting forts north of Cochin; Pallippuram and Vaipin to dominate the traffic through Periyar and also help defend Cochin from Calicut attacks via land from the north.

As the Portuguese policy of monopoly or control of trade was possible only with the co-operation and assistance from the local rajahs; they had frequently made treaties and agreements with them either for supplying with merchandise or for the support in case of the enemy attack. During Lopo Soares in 1516 the Portuguese entered a treaty with Quilon to supply a fixed quantity of pepper to the Portuguese yearly in three instalments. The treaty also agreed to assist each other in the case of hostilities with an enemy. The Zamorin in 1513 had agreed to deliver one thousand bahars of pepper to the Portuguese in three instalments as compensation to the damage inflicted upon them during Cabral's visit. The Portuguese again in 1540 signed a treaty with Zamorin at Ponnani. As per the treaty, the Portuguese were to buy all the Calicut pepper at the Cochin rate, and ginger at 92 fanams per bahar, allow the Zamorin to send 3½ bahars of pepper to Portugal in his own account for every 100 bahars brought by the Portuguese. Further they agreed to sell part of their merchandize at Calicut, so that he might have his customary dues on imports, and to provide him with quicksilver,

vermillion and coral. The treaty bound them the neutrality of Portuguese even if he attacks their allies. In return he agreed to accept their passports for the Moorish vessels. It proved advantageous to both; the Portuguese got the monopoly of trade at Calicut and the Zamorin's unrestricted freedom of action against local powers in view of the Portuguese assurance of non-intervention in their wars. It also paved the way for similar treaties between the Portuguese and the rajas of Purakkad and Quilon.

### **Portuguese trade in Malabar**

The Portuguese trade in Malabar indeed brought about some substantial changes; though there are contrary views which argue that they have just followed the previous pattern <sup>[19]</sup>. The Portuguese with their superior organizational structure of trade with network of factories along the Indian Ocean littoral have made diplomatic treaties and agreements. This structure of Portuguese company helped conducting a considerably continued trade across the seas despite occasional armed confrontations with the groups of traders previously occupied along these coastal towns and cities.

### **Casa da India: India House**

The Portuguese trade introduced few new elements in the organization of trade and thus improved the system that was in existence till the arrival of Vasco da Gama on the coast of Malabar. The most important role in this respect was played by the Casa da India or India House set up in Lisbon. There was a factor, a treasurer, and three writers to conduct the affairs in the Casa da India till 1509. Afterwards King Manuel I owing to the ever growing work of the Casa da India appointed more officials. There was treasurer of spices, the other as the treasurer of the proceeds of spices, and three writers. The other employees like the treasurers, writers, accountants, judge of weights, purchasers, guards and porters of Casa da India were subjected to the authority of factor.

There were multiple functions of Casa da India; it discharged the functions of a great house where the commodities brought from India and those purchased from Europe for sending out to India were stocked, it served as a custom house as it was entrusted with the duty of collecting the customs from the participants in the trade with Malabar, it performed the function of a market place where the oriental commodities were sold to the whole sale merchants as well as to the retail purchasers wherein great firms flocked to Casa da India to make contracts of the purchase in advance. It was also the duty of Casa da India to furnish the outgoing vessels with the commodities necessary for sale in the various factories in India as well as things needed for the consumption of the crew and the officials leaving for India. All the functions necessary for the fitting out of the fleet to India and the matters of payment of the officials in the various parts of the Portuguese India were handled.

### **Cartaz**

The South-Western India, because of the availability of spices at cheaper price and also because of the need to control the movement of Malabar spice to the ports of Red Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean had developed as the core area of official Portuguese trade and expansion. The Portuguese state

tried to control this region by their wider system of cartaz to control the movement of the native ships between the coastal western India and the ports of Red Sea as well as the Persian Gulf <sup>[20]</sup>. The cartaz as a measure consisted of restrictions on the personnel and armaments allowed on the ship and its resources and cargo it could carry <sup>[21]</sup>. With the introduction of the system of cartaz all the rulers as well as the merchants were compelled to be on friendly terms with the Portuguese. Portuguese ships plied in the India Ocean to give 'protection' to the ships carrying commodities to Portugal and coming to the Malabar Coast. This was particularly necessitated by the presence of competing Arab vessels conducting trade on the Malabar Coast. For instance, there were five ships detailed to remain in the Indian Ocean in 1502 giving protection to the Portuguese factories at Cannanore and Cochin. In 1507 Dom Lourenco was sent up to Chaul with eight vessels to guard the coast and prevent other vessels from taking spices from Malabar.

The officials at Cochin were held responsible for guarding the Cranganore River to blockade any others coming to the Malabar Coast. The merchants and rulers interested in sending commodities to Ormuz, Gujarat and other places were expected to take permit from the Portuguese officials and similarly those who would come to the Malabar Coast also had to have the same sort of permit failing which the ships could be captured by the Portuguese. The cartazes were issued by the captain of the fortress or the factor of the respective factories with registration of the same. It was a source of income for the Portuguese and some time, in some cases it went to the king of the locality <sup>[22]</sup>. The payment for protection from the Portuguese depredations had no element of reciprocity; it has not given any guarantee of free sail along the seas and was sheer un-reciprocal extortions.

### **Intermediaries on the Malabar Coast**

Intermediaries especially the local merchants had a key role to play in the organization of Portuguese trade. The Marakkar traders from the rice ports of Kunimedu, Kilkarai and Kayalpatanam in Coromandel Coast were supplying food materials in the ports of Malabar in return of spices formed a major mercantile community that linked the economy of Coromandel Coast with Malabar in substantial way in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries <sup>[23]</sup>.

The Portuguese officials in Cochin contacted Cherianina Marakkar and Mamale Marakkar, the great merchants of the locality, to store pepper for the ships that arrived in the fleet of Lopo Soares on 14th September 1504. Alee Apule, a Muslim merchant of Edappalli was one of the important merchants in 1512 who supplied a large quantity of pepper to the Portuguese factory. The above said two Marakkars were so influential and friendly with the Portuguese that they used to come along with the king to visit the Portuguese viceroy at Cochin. They went all over the Malabar Coast to procure pepper as cheap as they could and brought it to the factory at Cochin. Nino Marakkar even fought against the Muslims of Calicut with 1500 men at their coast to safeguard the interest of the Portuguese. Coja Mappila, Abraham Mappila Cunhevira, both Muslims, Mathai Mappila, a Christian from Edappalli brought more than 498900 kilo grams of pepper a year to the factory. Mahomed Macary was one of the principal

merchants of Calicut who since 1513 helped the Portuguese in their trade at Calicut. Coja Byqui, a resident of Calicut, but hailing from Ormuz was another reliable merchant who associated himself with the Portuguese in the factory at Calicut. Pocaracoa, a Muslim merchant of Cannanore too had commercial relations with the Portuguese. Mathias and Bragaida Taquatome were the main agents of the Portuguese in Kayamkulam and Quilon who supplied pepper and other commodities to the Portuguese. Mathias with his brothers and children were given food materials and cash for their expenses daily from the Portuguese factory. Mitos Marakkar supplied cinnamon from Ceylon to the Portuguese factory on the Malabar Coast and Chaliya Marakkar used his vessels to transport elephants from Malabar to Goa to be taken to Portugal <sup>[24]</sup>. During the late sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century Portuguese pepper at Cochin was supplied mostly through a great businessman called Manuel Ramos and his family collaborators. In 1550 the Portuguese managed to reach an accommodation with some major *pardesi* traders, such as Khoja Shams-ud-din Gilani of Cannanore <sup>[25]</sup>. The intermediaries contacted the cultivators directly by going from one place to another giving rice, cloths and cash for the pepper. The Muslims and the Jews collected cloth from Cambay and brought it to the Malabar Coast to barter for pepper and for other commodities thereby making good profit. In certain cases they themselves stored the commodities thus purchased at retail from the cultivators and gave them to the Portuguese at the time of arrival of the ships to the Malabar Coast.

### The commodities of trade

Normally, pepper, ginger and other spices were grown in Malabar and Canara. Cinnamon in Ceylon, mace, nutmeg and clove came from Moluccas and Banda islands. From Persia came horses and better quality carpets, both prime items of Portuguese trade. Ivory, slaves, precious metals and stones, corals etc. were brought from Mozambique, Angola and other places in Africa <sup>[26]</sup>. The merchants coming to Malabar coast purchased pepper, ginger, cinnamon, Cardamoms, myrabolans, tamarind, precious atones, seed-peals, musk, amber, rhubarb, aloes-wood, cotton, sealing wax, jewels, almiscar, benzoim, silk-cloths, preservatives, cloves, nutmeg, mace, sandalwood, brazil wood, porcelains, and a number of other various products.

All the items of trade evidently was not produced in Malabar, but were brought from other trading centres such as Malacca, Ceylon, Pegu, and so on and Calicut served as a great entreport. Coco nut, copra, coco nut oil, betel nut, jaggery, areca nut and coir were exported from Malabar. Copper, quick silver, vermilion and coral from the western Mediterranean, saffron carpets, porcelain, tin from China, coloured velvets, rose water, knives, coloured camlets, gold, silver, madder, raisins, opium, scarlet in grain, coloured woollen cloths, glass beads, brass and horses were imported into Malabar. Horses from Persia, rice from Goa and Orissa was also imported. Gold silver, copper, iron wares, coloured satins, white silk, cotton stuff, blue and white porcelain, beads, camphor, black tassels, cardamoms and cloves were imported from China.

### Costal trade and trade across the seas

An important feature of Portuguese trade in Malabar was the coastal trade or port to port trade and the trade across the sea. Vessels with spices from Malabar Coast left for Bengal and Coromandel Coast in August and returned to Cochin with rice. Copper, pepper and silk from the factories of Cannanore and Cochin were carried to Cambay to bring back great quantities of cloth of various sort, indigo, sealing wax, gold and silver coins and a sort of shining stone which could stop bleeding. Copper from the factory at Cochin were taken to Ceylon in return of Cinnamon and other commodities. Pepper, ginger, nutmeg, rice and copper from the factories of Cannanore and Cochin were taken to Ormuz to bring horses, larins, and silver to India. Pepper was in such a great demand in Ormuz that a ship full of pepper could be sold in an hour. Copper had a very good market in Gujarat (Cambay) to such an extent that copper worth 100,000 cruzados could be sold in a day. Cloths brought from Gujarat and copper from Europe to Cochin were sent to Malacca to bring nutmeg, mace, clove, and cinnamon and so on, back to Cochin and finally to Portugal. Pepper was sent to China from Cochin in order to collect silk, porcelain, satins, brocades and musk. Spices from Malabar were sent to Mozambique and Soffala onto the African Cost in return of Ivory (Mozambique) from and gold (Sofala) to the Malabar Coast.

### The overland trade routes

As a result of the introduction of Portuguese control system like patrolling fleet and checking of vessels for license called cartaz on the Western Coast which obstructed free trade, the diversion of spices to Tamil Nadu with the help of pack Animals via Ghat route turned to be profitable both for producers as well as local traders. Pepper being the most important element in Tamil culture, the demand gradually increased and a large volume of pepper was taken from the ports of Malabar by the Portuguese to Coromandel ports clandestinely. In Tamil Nadu it was used for obtaining textiles, which they further carried to south-east Asia in exchange for obtaining nutmeg, mace and cloves.

However the easiest way to obtain pepper from Malabar was to take rice from Kaveri basin <sup>[27]</sup>. This increased the frequency of rice-pepper circuits between East-West Coasts through the commercial intermediaries of Portuguese *casados*. During the period between 1587 and 1598 about 3, 11, 15257 kgs of rice were imported to Cochin alone and a major share of this came from Tamil ports. Tamil Pattar Brahmins and Ravuthar Muslims linked to Madurai used the routes across the Western Ghats and took pepper on a large scale from the interior Malabar in return of cloths, rice, and cereals brought from Tamil Nadu. A large number of these two groups settled in pepper producing zones and pepper trading centres of Malabar became the major suppliers of pepper to the Dutch East India Company in the succeeding years. Many of the Pre-Portuguese churches of Saint Thomas Christians of this region (Kothamangalam, Muthalakodam, Kanjirappally) were located along the several trade routes running to Madurai from these island markets. This evidently suggests the participation of pepper cultivating-cum-trading groups of Saint Thomas

Christians of these places in the Ghat rout trade with Tamil Nadu <sup>[28]</sup>. There is another Ghat route from Thodupuzha that passed by Velliamuttum from where the merchants used to carry goods to Nadukaani Ghat and then to Cheruthony located 11 miles away from it. Crossing the river of ChruTHONY they travelled 33 miles further to reach Peerumedu from where they used to make another seven miles journey to reach Periyar or Vandi Periyar. Thence they travel 23 miles and three furlongs further to reach Kurrungull-aar (?) crossing the rocky bed and then finally to Cumbam, from where commodities were further taken to Madurai mostly by Tamil merchants. The distance from Thodupuzha to Cumbam was covered by the oxen and a pack of animals that used to carry the commodities within eight days. The trade route from Kothamangalam leading to Madurai via Thattekadu, Kuttampuzha, Pooyamkutty, Munnar and Udumalpettai indeed was the ancient route that used to connect the regional economies of Chera, Chola and Pandian territories. In the second decade of the sixteenth century these traders took about 7740 quintals of pepper from production centres of Malabar to Tamil Nadu across the Ghats. The different trade routes from Erumely, Kanjirappally, Erattupetta and Thodupuzha used to get converged at Kumily or Cumbamedu, from where they moved to Cumbam, Theni and Madurai. However Madurai located on the banks of Vaigai was not the final destination of quintals of pepper thus diverted from central Malabar. A sizeable share was again taken via Dindigal or Pudukottai to the Coromandel ports after having fed the elite consumer class of the Kaveri basin including those of Trichinapoly and Tanjavur. A major share of pepper from Kothamangalam went through the old Munnar route via Kuttampuzha. The pepper that was taken through land routes into the interiors of Tamil country was circulating within the region and the excess was taken further to the ports of Coromandel like Nagapattanam, Mylapore, Pulicat and Masulipatanam for further distribution in China, Pegu Bengal and Mughal territories.

#### **Procurement of commodities and mode of Payment**

The principal item sought by the Portuguese Crown in Asia was spices- overwhelmingly pepper. From 1506 onwards the trade in precious metals from Portugal to Asia, and that pepper and other major spices in reverse direction were reserved as a royal monopoly. Meanwhile In 1570 the trade in spices was opened to free competition although the crown continued to participate in the trade and retained its monopoly on the export of precious metals to Asia. The Asian contract system introduced in 1575 given away the royal monopoly of cape route, the procurement of spices in Asia, their shipment to Europe, the provisioning of carracks in Lisbon and Goa and the distribution of pepper in Europe <sup>[29]</sup>. Under the Asian contract system the contractors were supposed to purchase each year in India a total of 30,000 quintals of pepper. The contractors were free to sell half of their pepper as they choose. The cargoes sent out from Portugal to Asia to facilitate the procurement of pepper. And other return goods included precious metals (West African gold and from 1570 onwards primarily Rials coined from American Silver) non-precious metals such as coral and alum, wines and olive oil, and fine textiles such as scarlet, damasks and silks. The annual

average value of 103,295 cruzados sent out to Cochin between 1510-1518 copper accounted for 49,464 cruzados (47.88 percent) silver and specie for 30,274 cruzados (29.31 percent) while the remainder was accounted for by other non-precious metals and corals. The average annual exports from Cochin factory from 1510 and 1518 shows that, of the total value of 50656 cruzados, pepper accounted for 84.64 percent. The percentages for cloves, nutmeg, mace, and cinnamon were 3.64, 2.60, 2.76 and 2.32 respectively. However the second half of the sixteenth century suggests the declining role of pepper to less than seventy percent. Similarly the annual figure of pepper imported by the Portuguese gone up from 18825 quintals in 1503-06 to 29866 quintals in 1513-19 but the last fourteen years of the century witnessed a sharp down trend with the annual average imports standing at only 20943 quintals during 1587-90 and 9513 quintals during 1592-98. Against the total of approximately 17300 quintals of pepper imported into Lisbon in 1506, the average amount imported each year from Cochin alone during 1506 and 1507 was 13214 quintals.

The mode of payment for the commodities purchased differed in many ways in accordance with places. It was agreed with the king of Cochin in 1503 that the payment of pepper would be made three fourth in cash and one-fourth in copper. Six Crusados of gold of 24 carat and a Fracola of copper at the fixed rate of two gold Crusados were to be paid to the merchants for a bahar of pepper at Cochin <sup>[30]</sup>. In the coinage of Malabar, it was calculated as follows: 150:5 fanams were to be paid to the merchant for a bahar of pepper. Out of this amount, 36 fanams were given in copper i.e., one Fracola of copper. An amount of 9.5 fanams was to be paid to the king of Cochin for every bahar of pepper as his custom duty. Thus, only 124 fanams out of the total cost of 160 fanams were paid in cash. The merchants always preferred to get the cash in gold coins and therefore the factors often requested the king to send the gold coins to the Malabar Coast both Portuguese and Cruzados. The king of Cannanore agreed to accept the same terms and conditions of payment as prevailed in Cochin. At least for a considerable period of time half of the price of pepper purchased from there was paid in commodities and only half in cash. The entire price of pepper purchased in the factory at Calicut after 1513 were paid in commodities while the duties to the Zamorin were paid in cash. The mode of payment in the factory at Quilon was similar to the one in Cochin as far as essentials were concerned. However in 1508 cloves and mace were purchased by paying partly in cash and partly in commodities. Thus a bahar of cloves cost 400 fanams in cash and 480 in commodities; a bahar of mace however coast the same and was paid in the same manner.

#### **Decline of the Portuguese**

By the end of the sixteenth century Portuguese predominance and prestige showed symptoms of gradual waning. The local rulers who were dissatisfied with the Portuguese high-handedness found a potential rival in the Dutch against the Portuguese who welcomed them. Their Indian piracies brought on them the vengeance of the coast princes. Taking the Dutch into confidence the costal princes discarded the Portuguese for their contemptible activities <sup>[31]</sup>. It was evident from the first connection of the Dutch with Malabar since the

treaty they negotiated with Calicut as early as 1604 was solely intended to expel the Portuguese from his territories. In 1602 the fleet of the Dutch company routed the Portuguese near Bantam and laid open forever the roads to Moluccas. In 1603 they even threatened Goa the largest Portuguese stronghold in India. In 1641 the Dutch captured Moluccas from Portuguese. After many years of struggle in 1658 the Dutch established their position in Ceylon driving the Portuguese out. This was followed by the Dutch conquest of the Portuguese stronghold of Quilon, Cranganore, Purakkad, Cochin and Cannanore. The capture of Cochin by the Dutch in 1663 considered to be the final blow inflicted upon the Portuguese in Malabar. The failure of the Portuguese to establish an enduring dominion in India as its base in Malabar was inevitable. Their early success facilitated by the naval supremacy they enjoyed in Indian waters remained so long as other European powers were absent in the scene. The greedy, corrupt officials utilized their career in India to make profit from their private trade which often was against the larger interest of the Portuguese company<sup>[32]</sup>. It accelerated when the Portuguese government felt hesitant to pay cash salaries to their civil or military officers. The public appointments in India assigned in auction, nepotism of the Portuguese officials, the religious policy, unscrupulous and violent actions, and internal tussles within the Portuguese system and finally the absorption of Portugal by the Spain under Philip II in 1580 deteriorated the Portuguese possessions in India. Their revenue was absorbed by the cost of European wars, by the corruption of government officials and by the exorbitant expenditure for religious activities. The laxity of the colonial administration, the alienation of the native population produced by religious intolerance further weakened their hold on Malabar<sup>[33]</sup>.

### Impact of the Portuguese in Malabar

The most important effect on the Politics in Malabar due to Portuguese was it made apparent in Malabar the absence of a strong centralized state as it prevailed in the north of India and this made apparent the drastically changing balance of power. Once the three major kings were constantly asserting their absolute sovereignty over these minor rajas, with the Portuguese arrival on the scene strengthened many of them to claim their own sovereignty, and this phenomenon was seen in the succeeding centuries. In this process the less prominent ports like Cochin Parur, Vettat became prominent. The age long trade hitherto held by both local and foreign Moors, Venetians and Genovans and other groups as a result of the Portuguese depredations in sixteenth century either moved from Malabar or shifted their allegiance in Malabar towards Portuguese. This to a large extent altered the range of involvement of these communities or groups in the trading network of Malabar. The coastal town of Quilon and Cranganore lost its importance while Cochin and Chaliyam grown into prominence with Portuguese patronage. Beginning from the trouble at Calicut, the trade there has declined considerably, not necessarily because the Portuguese were not active over there in trade, but the peaceful atmosphere at Calicut was dismantled. This gave the opportunity for Cochin where Portuguese could accommodate them better against the Calicut port city. Chaliyam indeed located in the territory of Zamorin's feudatory, the Chaliyam raja, and it grew

importance possibly to divert Calicut trade into this port and to regulate the growing power of Zamorins keeping a close watch over it. They have introduced cashew nut, tobacco, pineapple, guava, etc. into Malabar, and Coir as a result of large scale ship building around this time became a chief item of export. Coconut plantation in Malabar has begun to be commercial; there were huge quantities of coconut exported to different parts of the world by the Portuguese. With the Portuguese there appear to be a change in the ship building too, there begun to be ships built in bigger size wherein coir been used widely.

### Conclusion

The Portuguese as a pioneering European company ever since their arrival on the Malabar Coast has brought about noticeable changes be it was in terms of trade or at the politics hitherto existed. They have institutionalized the practice of trade by transforming it as an 'office' wherein many officials held different departments of trade rather than a day to day practice. The growth of Cochin as a main trading port centre in Malabar began to be a reality with the political patronage the Portuguese provided to the Cochin rajas and it was said to have happened at the cost of other important ports flourished till then. At the political front, the growth of Cochin principality as a major political entity was also materialized along with the Portuguese presence. The introduction of new commodities, routes, and stabilizing old networks along with building new networks of trade was also a noticeable change the Portuguese brought into Malabar trade.

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