

**MARITIME HISTORY OF THE PEARL FISHERY COAST WITH SPECIAL  
REFERENCE TO THOOTHUKUDI**

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## INTRODUCTION

Different concepts have been employed by historians in different times to have a comprehensive view of the past. We are familiar with political history, social history, economic history and administrative history. Maritime history is yet another concept, which has been gaining momentum and currency these days. It (maritime history) has become a tool in the hands of several Indian historians who are interested in Indo-Portuguese history. The study of maritime history enables these researchers to come closer to the crucial dynamics of historical process.

Maritime history embraces many aspects of history, such as international politics, navigation, oceanic currents, maritime transportation, coastal society, development of ports and port-towns, sea-borne trade and commerce, port-hinterland relations and so on<sup>1</sup>. As far as India and the Indian Ocean regions are concerned, maritime studies have a great relevance in the exchange of culture, establishment of political power, the dynamics of society, trade and commerce and religion of these areas.

The Indian Ocean served not only as a conduit for conducting trade and commerce, but also served and still serves, as an important means of communication. The Indians have carried commodities to several Asian and African countries even before the arrival of the Europeans from India. Exchange of goods promoted maritime trade as well as the fusion of different cultures in the Indian Ocean. Art, architecture, culinary habits, music, clothing, language and religion went through a transitional period because of the maritime activities in the Indian Ocean<sup>2</sup>.

In this way, the proposed thesis titled “**Maritime History of the Pearl Fishery Coast with Special Reference to Thoothukudi - AD 1500-1658**” is an attempt to highlight the maritime trade and commerce conducted by the Portuguese on the Pearl Fishery Coast between AD 1500 1658. Though the Portuguese had ports and trading centres in the Coromandel Coast which extends from Kanyakumari (Cape Comorin) to Pazhaverkadu (Pulicat) , the researcher has taken for her study the area lying between Kanyakumari (the southern most tip of India) and the island of Mannar which was called as the Pearl Fishery Coast by the Portuguese.

<sup>1</sup>: Mathew, K.S., Studies in Maritime History, Pondicherry University, 1990, p. xi

<sup>2</sup>: Ibid

The Pearl Fishery Coast has a long history, beginning from the Sangam Age. With the dawn of the New Age (the sixteenth century), the Pearl Fishery Coast which had till then remained a free zone and had enjoyed the freedom of navigation, became a backyard of the Portuguese. A century later, the same coast became a bone of contention and the Portuguese who had enjoyed a monopoly of trade had to yield to the Dutch and the Pearl Fishery Coast passed into the hands of the Dutch. The Portuguese era (AD 1500-1658) on the Pearl Fishery Coast is the specific period of this research work.

## **Location**

Tamil Nadu is situated on the eastern side of the southern tip of the Indian Peninsula. On the southeastern side, it has about 1,000 kms of coastline along the Bay of Bengal. The Pearl Fishery Coast is situated in the Gulf of Mannar, extending from Kanyakumari in the south to Rameshwaram in the north. The Gulf of Mannar is that portion of the Indian Ocean lying between the western coast of Sri Lanka and the eastern coast of Tamil Nadu. Its northern limit is the chain of islets and rocks called Adam's Bridge<sup>3</sup>.

The small coastal strip extends about 250 kms from the south to the north. The Portuguese resided in the island of Mannar and due to political upheavals in Tamil Nadu administered the entire Fishery Coast from this island for a certain period. The Gulf was named after the island of Mannar.

The international boundary passes through the Adam's Bridge and Mannar has now been passed on to the political jurisdiction of Sri Lanka.

The Gulf of Mannar is uniquely influenced by southwest and northeast monsoons and is internationally known for its diversified and precious maritime resources such as sea grasses, corals, chanks, (conch shells) pearl oysters, turtles, and sea cows. It is called the paradise of marine biologists.

There are twenty islands which extend between 8<sup>0</sup>47'N lat 78<sup>0</sup>12' E long and 915' N lat 79<sup>0</sup>14' long from Pamban to Thoothukudi and these islands are arranged north east from Thoothukudi. Excepting Krusadi island, Muyal island and Nalla Thanni island, these islands are small i.e. less than 5 sq. kms in area. These islands are generally formed of a calcareous framework of dense corals and coral reefs. The southern most Pandyan island has now been connected with the main land following the construction of the major port at Thoothukudi<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup>: Ramaswami A. Gazetteer of India, Ramanathapuram District, Tamil Nadu State, Government of Tamil Nadu, 1972, p.21.

The rocky ground where the pearl oysters generally occurred is locally called 'paar' or pearl bank. There are about eighty such pearl banks in the Gulf of Mannar along the Indian Coast. Among the paars of the Indian Coast in the Gulf of Mannar, Tholayiram paar is the most extensive pearl bank of about 25 sq. kms. in area and this was also the most productive and remunerative of the banks of the Gulf of Mannar<sup>5</sup>.

There were several flourishing trading centres and ports along the Pearl Fishery Coast. Thoothukudi was the head quarters and it was given its due political, commercial and cultural importance by the Portuguese.

It is situated almost at the centre of the Pearl Fishery Coast. The annual pearl fishing was undertaken from here. All the islands are spread out before Thoothukudi. It (Thoothukudi) was strategically important in the sense, that the Portuguese could control Sri Lanka from here due to its proximity. After the arrival of the statue of Our Lady of Snows here in 1582, Thoothukudi became all the more important and it became the nucleus of all the activities of the fisherfolk of the Pearl Fishery Coast. The impact of the maritime history of the coast is obvious and experienced concretely more in Thoothukudi than in other areas. Therefore the researcher has evinced special interest in Thoothukudi in her work.

#### **Statement of the Problems**

- (i) The coastal community (the Paravas) has imbibed certain peculiar customs, rites and usage of words due to the heavy influence and impact of the Portuguese.
- (ii) The Catholic religion was introduced and used by the Portuguese to exploit the fisherfolk here.

At present, the life of the Paravas living in the coastal area has not improved much compared to others living just across the road.

Traditional fishing is a highly seasonal, insecure and risky job. They (the Paravas) work the whole night or day or both continuously, daring nature and fighting against wind and water, thunder and storm, current and cruel fish. Their life is fraught with many dangers, and all for anirregular and adequate income. As they struggle hard, their nerves are highly strung and are made still more weaker by their habit of excessive alcohol consumption and lack of good rest. Whenever they do not have full time work or have no work, they are highly restless and irritable. At the least provocation, they explode, ready to grab indigenous arms to murder and to mutilate each other, as they stand divided into several groups.

<sup>4</sup>: History of Indian Pearl Banks of the Gulf of Mannar, Department of Fisheries, Government of Tamil Nadu, Madras, 2001, p. 550.

<sup>5</sup>: Ibid., p. 559

Their religion and spirituality have no authentic expression in their lives. They end up with the celebration of a few festivals to demonstrate their extravagance which also often leads to clashes, bloodshed and murder. This is repeated once or twice or thrice a year. Consequently, instead of love, happiness and peace, fear and anxiety prevail constantly among these Christians. One wonders whether Catholicism has freed them or fettered them. This question calls for a healthy critique of the impact of the Catholic religion on the life of the Paravas in the Pearl Fishery Coast.

One wonders whether Catholicism has freed them or fettered them. This question calls for a healthy critique of the impact of the Catholic religion on the life of the Paravas in the Pearl Fishery Coast.

### **Aims and Objectives of the Study**

The advent of the Portuguese to the Pearl Fishery Coast, the Mass Conversion of the fisherfolk and the attraction of the pearl trade have a lot to do with the present life style of the Paravas.

#### **a. Social**

The fisherfolk can no longer remain in their present isolated life-pattern claiming pride of their caste. They must give up their policy of isolation and widen their area of social relations with other neighbouring communities.

#### **b. Economic**

The Paravas can look out for alternative ways and means of sustaining their livelihood. The sea which is the source of their life has also become an impediment to their economic growth. An alternative Parava economy with a steady annual income alone can eradicate the illiteracy and poverty prevalent among the Paravas.

#### **c. Religious**

The faith and the religion which the Paravas profess and practise should liberate them in all the spheres of their lives. Religion therefore should be understood in a critical sense, that it is not an end but only a means. The fisherfolk can no more be a mere source of tribute for the growth of the Church which is now concerned only with the life after death.

Through a systematic and sustained education and awareness building, in short, through proper social education, they (the Paravas) have to be made to realise all these aims and objectives, and to come to decision and act.

The thesis aims at creating an awareness among the Paravas so that they would free themselves from the religion which subdues, suppresses and domesticates them. Secondly, the maritime skill and labour which they possess could be used in a constructive way so that a collective economy could emerge in the Pearl Fishery Coast.

## **Methodology**

In content methodology - descriptive, interpretative and analytical approaches have been adopted. The writer has relied heavily on the primary sources that deal with the historical period (AD 1500-1658) of the Portuguese here. Secondary and supportive sources also have been referred to. A summary and an analysis and conclusion have been made at the end of each chapter.

Important events, like the Mass Conversion, the private trade of the Portuguese officials, the trade in war-animals, the international trends that affected the local trade, etc. have been critically analysed. The views of the historians related to this topic have been either supported or disagreed with by providing apt and supportive reasons.

The historical documents pertaining to the topic chosen have been studied, analysed and the impact and the implications have been brought out in relation to today's context. A final conclusion, including all the aspects of the conclusions made under each chapter, has been presented elaborately.

## **Sources Identified and Located**

The materials for this work were collected mainly from the Historical Archives of Goa at Panaji, the Xavier Centre of Historical Research at Porvorim (Goa), Heras Institute of Historical Research at St. Xavier's College Mumbai and the Tamil Nadu Archives at Chennai.

All the source materials available in English and Portuguese have been identified. They have been classified into primary and secondary sources. The primary sources which are available mostly in Portuguese are in the form of manuscripts and published documents. The accounts left by contemporary travellers, chroniclers and missionaries also fall under the category of primary sources. The researcher learnt Portuguese to gain first hand access to the primary sources.

**Monçoes do Reino** (Royal letters sent to Goa during the monsoon), **Assentos do Conselho do Estado** (Proceedings from the Council of the State), **Assentos do Conselho da Fazenda** (Proceedings from the Council of Revenue), and **Regimentos da ortalezas**

**da India** (Regulations about the Forts of India) are the other important published documents which have been consulted. All the eighteen volumes of **Documenta Indica, Documentação para a Historia das Missoes do Padroado Português de Oriente** (Documentations of the Missions' History of the Portuguese Padroado of the Orient in five volumes ) and the **Letters of St. Francis Xavier** have also been referred to.

The accounts left by the contemporary travellers, chroniclers, Portuguese officials and missionaries have been given due importance. Ptolemy, Marco Polo, Francois, Domingos Paes, Fernao Nuniz, Tome Pires, Duarte Barbosa, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier and Gaspar Correa have provided a lot of information about pearl fishing, pearl trade, trade in war -animals and details about important ports. The accounts of these adventures have also been treated as primary sources. James Hornell's several Bulletins regarding pearl fisheries and pearl trade deposited in the Archives of Chennai provide a lot of information. The researcher has consulted most of the records.

A special mention has to be made to George Schurhammer whose contribution is immense with regard to the history of the Fishery Coast. All his works, whether they are primary or secondary, contain a lot of information about the socio, economic, political and cultural life of the Paravas in relation with the Portuguese. **Francis Xavier: His Life, His Times** (three volumes) and *Orientalia* are other important works which have been referred to.

The secondary sources also have been accorded equal importance as there are several exponents who have contributed to maritime history. **Studies in Maritime History and Mariners, Merchants and Oceans-Studies in Maritime History** by K.S. Mathew, **Portuguese in the Tamil Coast-Historical Explorations in Commerce and Culture (1507-1749)** by Jeyaseela Stephen, **The Portuguese, Indian Ocean and European Bridgeheads** by Pius Malekandathi and Jamal Mohammed, **Maritime India in the Seventeenth Century** by Sinnappah Arasaratnam, **Português e o Mar de Ceilao -Trato, Diplomacia e Guerra (1498-1543)** by Jorge Manuel Flores, **The Indian Ocean-A History of People and the Sea** by Kenneth McPherson, **The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700**, by Sanjay Subramanyam are some of the secondary source books. Other relevant printed books, journals and gazetteers have also been used as secondary sources to establish historical facts.

### **Review of the Literature (Sources)**

The researcher finds that the sources, both primary and secondary, are ample and there is a scope for further research in the same field. The primary sources available in the archives in India and Portugal are in Portuguese. Since the researcher has depended solely on the sources available in India, she thinks that she could have contributed more if she had had access to the archives and libraries abroad also.



In general, the primary and the secondary sources have been referred to equally in the research work. Secondly, the same method has been followed in each chapter. Comparatively, the references from primary sources have dominated the thesis. Proof for not only the formal commercial activities but also for the amiable the day to day interactions between the Portuguese and the Paravas as one family in the beginning, and for the estranged relations towards the end are found only in the primary sources which are highly revealing and quite interesting.

### **Hypotheses**

- (i) The maritime activities of the Portuguese have positive and negative influences on the Fishery Coast.
- (ii) Their religion (Catholicism) has been more a hindrance to the growth of the Parava society.
- (iii) Unless the fisherfolk free themselves from the religion that weighs them down, the future of their economy seems to be bleak.

### **Plan of the Thesis**

The first chapter brings out a historical survey of the Pearl Fishery Coast up to the arrival of the Portuguese. The researcher has explained how the pearl fisheries were monopolised first by the Tamil Pandya rulers, the Vijayanagar rulers and their viceroys (Nayaks) in the middle and later by the Muslims.

The second chapter deals with the maritime activities of the Portuguese in the Pearl Fishery Coast. The Portuguese settlements before and after the Mass Conversion and trade in pearl and other items have been elucidated.

The third chapter is a continuation of the second chapter which narrates the Portuguese trade in strategic goods like horses, elephants and saltpetre. The various agents who promoted the maritime activities of the Portuguese have also been brought out clearly.

The fourth chapter traces the decline and fall of the Portuguese. The Pearl Fishery Coast became a bone of contention between the local and the international powers and finally the Dutch, the second European power, occupied the entire Pearl Fishery Coast in 1658.

The fifth and final chapter speaks about the socio, economic political and cultural impact of the Portuguese on the people of the Pearl Fishery Coast. Before the Mass Conversion, all the Paravas were Hindus. All rites and rituals related to their births, deaths and marriages were alienated from the new Christians after the conversion. The first great impact of the Portuguese Padroado.

(Royal Patronage to the Catholic Church) was the Mass Conversion. The second great impact was the cultural influence of the Portuguese on the Pearl Fishery Coast.

### **Limitation of Study**

The writer's attempt in this research is very modest, in the sense that she has not totally exhausted the topic. This research has unveiled an area which needs further and deeper study not only for the sake of historical research, but also to throw more light on the life of the Paravas so as to lead them towards their empowerment and to enable them to be reasonably critical of the Catholic religion in their daily life.

### **Conclusion**

After analysing the various dimensions of the thesis titled "**Maritime History of the Pearl Fishery Coast with Special Reference to Thoothukudi (AD 1500-1658)**", one can understand the importance of the subject matter which is discussed in the forthcoming chapters elaborately. Let us go to the first chapter which takes us to a historical survey of the Pearl Fishery Coast from time immemorial.

# CHAPTER ONE

## A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE PEARL FISHERY COAST

The Pearl Fishery Coast has a long history from the Sangam Age<sup>1</sup> to the twentieth century. Whoever ruled Tamil Nadu from the early Christian era to the end of the fifteenth century enjoyed monopoly over the pearl fisheries and the pearl trade was a link between the East and the West. There are evidences to prove that several foreign travellers visited this coast for its valuable commodity, the pearls. Not only pearls, but trade in other items was also carried out in and through the Pearl Fishery Coast. Pearls were brought from the deep sea to the shore by a courageous fisherfolk caste called the Paravas<sup>2</sup> who are natives in most of the villages of the Pearl Fishery Coast. The dawn of the New Age had a great impact on the coast and for the first time a European power namely the Portuguese, dared to control it.

“The Pearl Fishery Coast is situated on the Gulf of Mannar. The bed of the Gulf of Mannar was a prolific breeding ground for oysters and natural pearls which was a very rich product of the area.<sup>3</sup> Different names have been ascribed to the Pearl Fishery Coast in different periods. Paralia,<sup>4</sup> Colchic Gulf,<sup>5</sup> Mábar,<sup>6</sup> Cholamandalam,<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The three rulers of the Sangam Age were the Cheras, the Cholas and the Pandyas. They ruled Tamil Nadu during the first three centuries of the Christian era. Rajayyan, K., *History of Tamil Nadu - Past to Present*, Kanjiramkulam, 1995, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Paravas, a fisherfolk caste, originally Hindus, were converted in 1536. They were experts in pearl fishing and at present they go fishing and diving for chanks in the Pearl Fishery Coast

<sup>3</sup> Animesh Ray, *Maritime India Ports and Shipping*, New Delhi, 1993, p.25.

<sup>4</sup> To the author of *The Periplus of the Erythraen Sea* 'Paralia', is the coastline below the Travancore backwaters, around Kanyakumari, and as far as Adam's Bridge comprised within the modern districts of Travancore, Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi and Ramanathapuram. Wilfred H. Schoff (trans.), *The Periplus of the Erythraen Sea*, New Delhi, 1974, p. 234.

Choromandel coast,<sup>8</sup> Coromandel,<sup>9</sup> Comorin coast,<sup>10</sup> Pescaria,<sup>11</sup> Fishery Coast, etc., all denote the same Pearl Fishery Coast. There are also names like Madura coast,<sup>12</sup> Tirunelveli coast, (Tinnavelly coast),<sup>13</sup> east coast,<sup>14</sup> Tamil coast,<sup>15</sup> and south Coromandel<sup>16</sup> which are linked to the Pearl Fishery Coast. ‘Fishery Coast’ will be the usage which the researcher prefers in the thesis. Thoothukudi was both the religious and the commercial capital of the Fishery Coast and it continues to be so.

### **Villages of the Fishery Coast**

The villages of the Fishery Coast can be divided under the following headings:

i) Villages of the Paravas

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<sup>5</sup> Korkai, the capital of the Sangam Pandyas was the headquarters of the Pearl Fishery Coast. Ptolemy has treated Korkai as Colchic Gulf. John W. Mc Crindle, *Ancient India as described by Ptolemy*, New Delhi, 2000, p. 57.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

<sup>7</sup> When Pandya coast along with Madurai came under the Imperial Cholas, they called it as Cholamandalakkarai. Subramanian, N., *Sangam Polity*, Madurai, 1980, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> Here Caile (Pazhayakayal) and Calicale (Kilakkarai), are treated as ports in the Cholamandel Coast. Armando Cortesão Rodrigues (ed.), *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires and the Book of Francisco*, New Delhi, Madras, 1990, p. 271.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.60.

<sup>10</sup> Francis Xavier’s usage of ‘Comorin Coast’ included the southern part of the Pearl Fishery Coast, Joseph Costelloe (trans), *The Letters and Instructions of Francis Xavier*, Gujarat, 1993, p. 50.

<sup>11</sup> Pescaria in Portuguese means Fishery Coast.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Madura coast’ signifies the seaboard of the ancient kingdom of Madura. It included the shores of the modern districts of Tirunelveli Thoothukudi and Ramnad. James Hornell, “*The Indian Pearl Fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay*”, *Bulletin*, Vol. XVI, Madras, 1922, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Tirunelveli coast formed merely the southern portion of the Pandya kingdom. Ptolemy and early Greek merchants visited the coast. (Caldwell, R., *A History of Tinnevely*, New Delhi, 1982, pp. 3, 22.)

<sup>14</sup> James Hornell, *Pearl Fisheries*, Vol. XVI, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> Pearl Fishery Coast is treated as part of the Tamil Coast. Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *Portuguese in the Tamil Coast - Historical Explorations in Commerce and Culture 1507 – 1749*, Pondicherry, 1998.

<sup>16</sup> Kanakalatha Mukund, *The Trading World of Tamil Merchant-Evolution of Merchant Capitalism in the Coromandel*, Hyderabad, 1999, p. 48.

- ii) Villages of the Muslims
- iii) Villages of the Caraiyars or Kadaiyars and
- iv) Villages of recent origin

### **Villages of the Paravas**

The names of the villages were pronounced differently during the Portuguese period.<sup>17</sup>

<b>Tamil</b>	<b>English*</b>	<b>Portuguese</b>
Kanyakumari	Cape Comorin	Cabo de Cumurim
Kumari Muttam		Mutão
Perumanal		
Idinthakarai		Irinja Caliu
Kuthenguli		Cutãooguli Patanão
Uvari		Uvarim
Periyathalai		Talle
Pudukarai		Puducare
Manapadu		Manapar
Pudukudi		
Alanthalai		Alendalle
Tiruchendur		Trechandur

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<sup>17</sup> The names of the villages in Portuguese were taken from Joseph Wicki (ed.), *Documenta Indica*, (Hereinafter referred as DI), *Vols. I – XVIII*, Institute of Historical Society, Rome.

\* Those villages names for which there were no English or Portuguese equivalents were pronounced as they were pronounced in Tamil.

Virapandyapattanam		Virandapatanão
Thalambuli		Thalambuli
Punnaikayal		Punicale
Pazhayakayal		Cael Velho
Thoothukudi	Tuticorin	Tutucurim
Vembar		Bembar
Vaipar		
Mookaiyur		

**B) Villages of the Muslims**

Kilakkarai

Kayalpattanam

Kulasekaranpattanam

**Villages of the Caraiyars<sup>18</sup>**

Kombuthurai

Vedalai

Periyapattanam

Rameswaram

Verkadu

**Villages of Recent Origin<sup>19</sup>**

Kuttapuli

Panjal

**Careas**

Combuture

Beadála

Periya Patão

Ramancor

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<sup>18</sup> Caraiyars (Kadaiyars) were members of the Pallar (Dalit) caste engaged in pearl fishing.

<sup>19</sup> Except Tharuvaikulam and Periyasamipuram, other villages of 'recent origin' were part of the Fishery Coast. But they were not so prominent as other villages during the time of the Portuguese. In Tharuvaikulam and Periyasamipuram the Nadar community is involved in fishing.

Kuttapanai

Kooduthalai

Tharuvaikulam

Sippikulam

Periyasamipuram

The history of the Fishery Coast is the history of the Paravas also. Their history reveals that the Paravas have been playing important roles as fishermen, pearl divers, chank (conch shell) cutters, salt makers, sea-farers, merchants, traders, etc., To understand the origin and the rich past and glorious heritage of the Paravas, one should know their history.

### **Origin of the Paravas**

Today, people of various communities are in search of their historical roots. But here is a community which has retained the name of its occupation, way of life, religious practices and certain characteristics like militancy and hospitality for quite a long period. One is amazed at the fisherfolk of any village along the Fishery Coast for their unique culture that has been preserved and nurtured very carefully so long. These people are called the Paravas in the Sangam literature.<sup>20</sup>

Various myths and theories have been put forward and proposed by historians with regard to the origin of the Paravas. Edgar Thurston quotes from *Historica Ecclesiastica* that the Paravas and Parvaims of the Scripture are the same. He adds that in

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<sup>20</sup> Ahananuru 10:10; 65:11; 70:1., Aingurunuru 195:1., Purananuru 24:4; 378:1.

the time of King Solomon they were famous among those who made voyages by sea.<sup>21</sup> One of the interviews of Patrick A. Roche goes like this “We, the Paravas, are the Parvaims, one of the last tribes of Israel and our present settlement of Uvari<sup>22</sup> in Paravanadu is the Ophir of the Bible”.<sup>23</sup>

It is the general belief among the Paravas that their original country was Ayodhya or Oudh; and it appears that before the Mahabharatha war, they inhabited the territory bordering river Yamuna or Jamuna.<sup>24</sup> Bharatha was not new but derived from the fact that Paravas were descendants of King Bharathan. “We are a regal people and several Sanskrit works attest to our Kshatriya origin.” This is the epitome of the Aryan-Sanskrit heritage as claimed by some Paravas according to the interview given by Roche.<sup>25</sup>

According to Edgar Thurston, the Paravas were once a very powerful people. They had a succession of kings among them distinguished by the title of Adiyarasen, some of whom seem to have resided at Uttara Kosamangay, a famous place of Hindu pilgrimage in the neighbourhood of Ramnad.<sup>26</sup>

Parava writers owing allegiance to the Dravidian school too point to the regal Pandyan ancestry of the Paravas and opt for the city of Uttara Kosamangay in

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<sup>21</sup> Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. VI, Madras, 1909, p. 140.

<sup>22</sup> Uvari is situated down south towards Kanyakumari on the Fishery Coast.

<sup>23</sup> Patrick A. Roche, *Fishermen of the Coromandel*, New Delhi, 1984, p. 16.

<sup>24</sup> Edgar Thurston, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 140.

<sup>25</sup> Patrick A. Roche, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>26</sup> Edgar Thurston, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 141.



Ramnad as the original abode of the Paravas.<sup>27</sup> S.C. Motha refers to the twenty one emblems and insignia in vogue among the Paravas to argue for their regal status. “Other evidence of regal origins of the Bharathar” he writes, “is to be found in the use of the fish flag which was the principal flag of the Pandyan kings, being the emblem of the fish goddess (Minakshi) and of twenty other banners depicting birds and animals belonging to the Bharatha kings of the north and the Pandya kings of the south.”<sup>28</sup>

If the Sanskritic and Dravidian interpretations of the past served to establish the Paravas’ royal status, the Judeo-Christian heritage had its own complementary value. As some Paravas stressed the trade connections with King Solomon the explicit references to Bharatha kings being the actual rulers of the Parvaim added a regal tinge to the jati (caste).<sup>29</sup>

Fr. Henry Heras throws fresh light on this issue saying that the Paravas belonged to one of those ancient groups of people who derived their origin from the cradle of world civilization, the Indus Valley. The Moon Paravas as he mentions in the research findings were likely to be the ancestors of the Pandya kings of Madura and of their Parava subjects of the Fishery Coast.<sup>30</sup>

Leaving their birthplace in the Indus valley, the Bharathars came down south in search of fame and fortune. They settled on the south east coast of India, the

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<sup>27</sup> Patrick A. Roche, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>30</sup> Henry Heras “*The Minavan in Mohenjo Dara*”, in Reprints from the Journal of Oriental Research, Madras, 1936, p. 284.

Coromandel Coast on the one side and on the other side along the west coast of Sri Lanka from Negambo to Mannar.<sup>31</sup>

Here they consolidated their position and became a distinct and important entity in South India. In the ancient Tamil inscription there is a reference to 'Parava men who fished pearls by paying tribute to Alliyarasani, daughter of the Pandya king of Madura.'<sup>32</sup> They were probably the only people who so fished pearls at that time.

It is noted in the Madras Census Report of 1901, that there are in reality three castes which answer to the name Paravas and which speak Tamil, Malayalam and Canarese respectively, and probably all three descend from the Tamil Paravas who are fishermen on the sea coast. Their headquarters is Thoothukudi and their headman is called Talaivan (leader). They are mostly native Christians. They claim to be Kshatriyas of the Pandya line of kings, and would eat only in the houses of Brahmins. The Malayalam Paravas are shell collectors, lime burners and gymnasts, and their women act as midwives. Their titles are Kurup, Varakurup and Nuraukurup. The Canaries Paravas are umbrella makers and devil dancers.<sup>33</sup>

It has been suggested that the west coast Paravas are descendants of those who fled from Tirunelveli in order to avoid the oppression of the Muslims.<sup>34</sup>

Whatever their origin, the Paravas make their first appearance in history as fishermen, divers of pearls and organizers and chief beneficiaries of the pearl fisheries

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Edgar Thurston, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 143.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

along their coast. The word ‘Paravan’ in classic Tamil denotes ‘man of the sea’. Its plural form in Tamil is Paravas. The Paravas are also called ‘Bharathar’ or ‘Bharadhavars’ in conformity with their alleged origin from their royal ancestor, Bharathar, the grandfather of the famous Kulasekara Pandya –founder of the Pandya dynasty in Tamil Nadu.<sup>35</sup>

### **The Paravas in the Sangam Age**

#### **Social Relationship**

The vast and spacious ocean and long and endless seashore have emboldened the Parava fisherfolk not to worry about their future. K.K. Pillai describes the noisy and merry-making life of the Paravas of the Sangam Age: always an atmosphere of joy reigned in the coastal region. When evening fell, the Parava villages were resounding with music and dance. Men were valiant and noble and the women were noted for their hospitality. The young girls were sportive and beautiful with their dazzling ornaments of pearls and gold. The children were precocious and smart, making their voices heard all over the salt-beds and seashore.<sup>36</sup> He further says that the females of the Parava caste were famous for the longest ears and for wearing the heaviest and most expensive gold earrings and other jewels made of gold. The longer the ears, the more jewels could be used and this appeared to be the rationale of elongated ears.<sup>37</sup> The women poured fish oil in the *clinchels* (shells) and used them as lamps at night.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Venantius Fernando, S., *The Impact of the Portuguese Padroado on the Indian Fishery Coast*, Rome, 1977, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> Kadiyalur Uruthirankannanar, *Pattinappalai 105-115*, P.V. Somasundaranar (ed.), Tinnevely, 1969, p. 90.

<sup>37</sup> Edgar Thurston, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 371.

<sup>38</sup> Expert Committee for History of Tamil Nadu, Sangam Age, Director of Tamil Development, nd, Madras, p. 19.

Rice along with fish curry has been the staple food of the Paravas from time immemorial. P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar says that the Paravas cooked rice mixed with a soup of aiyilai (mackerel) fish, flavoured by the addition of tamarind. Fish naturally played a prominent part in the diet of the Paravas both rich and poor. They gathered together under the punnai (laurel) trees and made merry with arrack and toddy. Toddy shops were located near the quarters of the Paravas.<sup>39</sup> They drank the three waters, palmyra, sugarcane and coconut mixed together.<sup>40</sup> It is obvious that the Paravas gave much importance to their daily food and drinking.

### **Religious Expressions**

The people of the coastal regions worshipped Varuna, the god of the wide ocean. The primitive worship of Varuna was done by planting the tooth of a shark in the sands of the beach and giving offerings to it.<sup>41</sup>

In their abhorrence of small-pox, cholera and other similar epidemics, the Paravas were keen in raising shrines at the village-entrance and borders for Mariammai, goddess of small-pox; she was worshipped especially by the mothers on behalf of their children for protection against and cure from epidemics.<sup>42</sup>

They also worshipped the moon and the sun. On full moon days the fishermen enjoyed a complete holiday when, like their womenfolk, they adorned

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<sup>39</sup> Srinivasa Iyengar, P.T., *History of the Tamils from the Earliest Times to 600 A.D.*, New Delhi, 1982, p. 215.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>41</sup> Pattinappalai 86-87.

<sup>42</sup> Venantius Fernando, S., *Muthukuzhithurai Visuvasam*, Directory of the Diocese of Thoothukudi Golden Jubilee Souvenir (1923-1973), Thoothukudi, 1973, p. 2.

themselves, ate heartily, drank toddy and bathed in the sea at intervals throughout the day. They did not go fishing in full moon and new moon; instead they took rest on those days.<sup>43</sup>

The palmyra and *punnai* trees under which the local business was conducted were considered sacred. The Paravas believed that such trees possessed divine spirits.<sup>44</sup>

The fishermen performed rituals for a good catch. This was done in front of their houses on a full moon day. They selected the horn of a shark with *chenai* (egg mass) and placed it on the sand.<sup>45</sup> The fisherwomen worn *thalampoo* (pandarkinus) the flower of *neydal*<sup>46</sup> and drank palmyra toddy. Both women and men danced in front of the shark horn and the dance movements included actions like the boat floating on the sea, men casting nets and drawing them full of fish, etc. It is said that such custom is prevalent among the tribes of Melanesia.<sup>47</sup>

### **Economic Life**

Various communities have been mentioned in the Sangam literature. The Sangam Literature also speaks a lot about the Paravas of the *neydal* land. Their heroic sea-faring life and social customs have made interesting pages in the ancient Tamil literature of the Sangam Age and also in later literature.

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<sup>43</sup> Expert Committee for History of Tamil Nadu, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>45</sup> Pattinappalai 86-87, *op.cit.*

<sup>46</sup> The littoral land is called *neydal*.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

To the littoral region belonged the Paravas, whose occupation was fishing. From fishing near the coast, they went on to fish in deeper waters. Hence the environment turned the Paravas into boat builders.<sup>48</sup> The chief produce of this region was fish and salt. The Paravas had to take them into *marudam* (field), *mullai* (forest) and *kurunchi* (hilly) lands and barter them for paddy, milk and hill produce respectively.<sup>49</sup> Those engaged in the salt trade were described as ‘*umanar*’.

The environment turned the Paravas into merchants. The quarters of the rich merchants in the *neydal* presented a prosperous outlook. There was a greater measure of urbanization in the *neydal* than in the other regions.<sup>50</sup> There were several streets of rich Paravas. Their houses were considerably huge buildings and they contained large godowns.<sup>51</sup> On the terraces of these big houses, torches were kept burning throughout the night, serving as lighthouses.<sup>52</sup>

From the Paravas also arose the race of ancient Indian sailors who later carried Indian goods in boats to Africa and Arabia in the West and to Malaya and China in the East. Besides, many among the Paravas appear to have engaged themselves in pearl fishing and in collecting conch shell.<sup>53</sup> Highly renowned for its pearl trade, Korkai was

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<sup>48</sup> Srinivasa Iyengar, P.T., *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>49</sup> Kadiyalur Uruthirankannanar, *Perumpanarrupadai: 11. 322-5*, P.V. Somasundaranar (ed.), Tinnevely, 1969, p. 90.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>51</sup> *Perumpanarrupadai: 11. 322-5*.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Srinivasa Iyengar, P.T., *op. cit.*, p. 12.

the chief town of the leading Paravas of the region. The people of the town consisted mostly of pearl divers and chank (conch shell) cutters.<sup>54</sup>

The Paravas of the coasts of South India must have discovered early the periodicity of the monsoons; indeed it is impossible to live in the Pandya country for a year without understanding this phenomenon and the possibilities for sea travel it implies.<sup>55</sup>

An interesting feature is that besides the Paravas, some Panar also engaged in fishing. Apparently a group of Panar belonged to the Parava community.<sup>56</sup> The womenfolk of the Parava class also sold fish and salt. They dried and preserved the left over fish, which had not been sold in the neighbouring villages. They would guard them from being eaten by birds. Big fish was cut into pieces and got dried. Women sold these.<sup>57</sup>

There is a lot of information available about the socio, economic and cultural activities of the Paravas of the Sangam Age. The Paravas had led a prosperous life as a community on the Fishery Coast. In course of time, as the Fishery Coast passed through different fortunes under different ruling dynasties, the Parava life style also underwent changes. This will be discussed in the following pages.

## **The Fishery Coast Under Various Kingdoms**

### **The Fishery Coast under the Pandyas**

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<sup>54</sup> Sendankannanar, *Agananuru : 350: 11*, Venkatasamy Nattar (ed.), Tinnevely, 1969, p. 97.

<sup>55</sup> Srinivasa Iyengar, P.T., *op. cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>56</sup> Orambohiyar, *Ainkurunuru : 48: 1-2*, P.V. Somasundaranar (ed.), Tinnevely, 1966, p. 68.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

The Tamil country was ruled by the Cheras, the Cholas and Pandyas<sup>58</sup> from 300 B.C. to 300 A.D. According to a tradition, the above three were brothers who originally resided at Korkai, near the mouth of the Tamiraparani river in the Tirunelveli region. While the Pandyas remained at home, the other two brothers eventually got separated.<sup>59</sup> Korkai, the capital of the Pandyas, became the primary sea port and an important trading centre because of the availability of pearls.

The earliest definite reference to a particular locality in the Gulf of Mannar where fishery was carried on, occurs in the “Periplus of the Erythraean Sea”, written about the end of the first century A.D. by an Alexandrian Greek. In a description about the ports of the Indian coast he writes that Komar was a port and a harbour has been mentioned under the government of Pandyan.<sup>60</sup> From Komar the district extended to Kolkhi (Korkai) and the pearl fishery was conducted by slaves or criminals condemned to the service, and the whole southern point of the continent was part of Pandyas’ dominion.<sup>61</sup>

According to Ptolemy also Kolkhi was an emporium of the pearl trade and the birth place of the Pandya dynasty<sup>62</sup> Maduraikanji refers to Korkai that it was the centre of pearl fishery.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> The term ‘Pandyas’ denotes the Pandyas of the Sangam Age as well as the First Pandyan rulers, who ruled Tamil Nadu after an interval of three centuries.

<sup>59</sup> James Hornell, *Pearl Fisheries, Vol. XVI*, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> Mc Crindle, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>61</sup> Nilakanta Sastri, K.A., *The Pandya Kingdom – From the Earliest Times to the Sixteenth Century*, Madras 1972, p. 31.

<sup>62</sup> Mc Crindle, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>63</sup> Nilakanta Sastri, K.A., *The Pandya Kingdom*, p. 31.



The foreign trade of Sangam Tamil Nadu (Tamilaham) under the Pandyas was brisk and had developed all the ancillary requirements such as labour, shipping and lighthouses. This proves that trade was not a freak but a bright chapter in a continuing tradition of Tamil Nadu.<sup>64</sup> Markets existed and even ordinary businessmen traded directly with countries overseas.<sup>65</sup>

The pearl trade with Rome is strongly evidenced by the Roman writer Pliny. Roman coins have been found throughout South India, especially in Tirunelveli district and in the island of Mannar.<sup>66</sup> “The Indian king who sent an embassy to the Emperor Augustus, was not Porus, but a Pandyan, the king of the Pandyas, called in Tamil “the Pandyan”. This evidence is an interesting proof of the advanced social and political position in consequence of the foreign trade the Pandyas carried on at Korkai, in connection with the pearl fishery and also on the Malabar Coast”.<sup>67</sup>

The harbour of Korkai gradually silted up and deltaic accumulation eventually cut off ready access to the sea. In consequence, the old city gradually decayed and the population drifted to the new mouth of the river, where another town sprang into being at the expense of Korkai. So the second important port was Pazhayakayal.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Pillay, K.K., *op. cit.*, p. 264.

<sup>65</sup> Caldwell, R., *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>66</sup> Arunachalam, *The History of the Pearl Fishery Coast of the Tamil Coast*, Annamalai University, 1952, p.52.

<sup>67</sup> Caldwell, R., *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>68</sup> James Hornell, *Pearl Fisheries, Vol. XVI*, p. 2.

In the intervening space between Korkai and Pazhayakayal exist traces of ancient dwellings. Even today farmers find small white shells called ‘*chippi*’<sup>69</sup> in abundance while they plough their land for cultivation.

Apart from Korkai, there were several other ports where trade and other commercial transactions had taken place in the Fishery Coast. Though Thoothukudi was not spoken of like Korkai or Pazhayakayal by the travellers in the early Christian era, there are references to Thoothukudi in the early, the medieval and the modern periods. Ptolemy found this place famous for trade in pearl.<sup>70</sup>

Another important port was Kilakkarai, situated between the Gulf of Mannar and the ports of Pamban and Thoothukudi. Traders from Middle East countries assembled in this port from very early times. Horses were imported in Kilakkarai from Arabia by the Pandya kings.<sup>71</sup> In the early centuries of the Christian era the Pandyas exploited to the full the pearl fisheries of the east coast. Besides the pearls, conch-shells were also extracted from the Ramanathapuram coast.<sup>72</sup> The Arabs who settled in Kilakkarai in the eighth century imported horses from Persia and exchanged their glass and mud products with pepper and textiles.<sup>73</sup> They established trade contacts with Sri Lanka, China and Sri Vijaya.<sup>74</sup> Anjuvannam was the trade guild through which they

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<sup>69</sup> Chippi is a kind of shellfish. They are found on the seacoast of all the villages. They are collected, burnt and used for making marter.

<sup>70</sup> Mc Crindle, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>71</sup> Ramaswami, A., *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 326.

<sup>73</sup> Abdul Rahuman, “*Varalattil Vallal Seethakathi*”, The Fifth World Islam Tamil Congress, Kilakkarai, Dec. 29-31, 1990, p. 305.

<sup>74</sup> Kamal, S.M., *Muslimkalum Tamilahamum*, Chennai, 1990, p. 12.

controlled and promoted the trade activities in the east coast.<sup>75</sup> Along with pearls and chanks, precious stones such as beryle were also found in the Gulf of Mannar.<sup>76</sup>

Arunachalam says, “Korkai was the cradle of South Indian civilization, the place where Pandya rule began”. The civilized living conditions of the people of Korkai and the nearby areas such as Pazhayakayal and Kayalpattanam during the Pandya era came to light only after archaeological survey excavated Korkai in 1960.<sup>77</sup>

### **The Imperial Cholas on the Fishery Coast**

In the ninth century inter-power conflicts between the Pallava and the Pandya kingdoms presented opportunities for the revival of the Cholas into a formidable power. Since the pearl and chank fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar were very lucrative, the Chola kings also made rival claims and at times seized control over them.<sup>78</sup> Raja Raja Chola I (985-1015), the first great Chola ruler had formidable naval fleet and hence subdued the Pandyas. Madurai and the rest of the Pandya country became part of the Chola Empire. He also brought the Cheras and the northern region of Sri Lanka under is control.<sup>79</sup> The Tiruvilangadu plates contain account about the invasion of Raja Raja on Sri Lanka. He, by his powerful army excelled, crossed the ocean by ships and burnt the King of Sri Lanka.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Abdul Rahuman, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

<sup>76</sup> Beryles are precious stones in different colours were found in the Gulf of Mannar, Animesh Ray, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>77</sup> *The Hindu*, July 2, 2002, p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> Rajayyan, K., *History of Tamil Nadu – Past to Present*, Kanjiramkulam, 1995, p. 74.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>80</sup> Nilakanta Sastri, K.A., *Cōlas*, University of Madras, 1975, p. 172.

Rajendra Chola (1012-1044), the son and successor of Raja Raja made a triumphal march through the Pandya and Kerala countries. He appointed one of his sons as viceroy (the Pandya and the Kerala king) with the title Chola-Pandya since Madurai being the headquarters of the new viceroyalty.<sup>81</sup> The new viceroy took possession of the bright spotless pearls, which were the seeds of the spotless fame of the Pandya kings.<sup>82</sup>

Rajendra Chola sent overseas expeditions to Sri Vijayam and won victory over it. Thus the Chola empire of South India was in constant communication with the islands of archipelago and with China during this period is very clear.<sup>83</sup> Therefore the Chudamani-vihara in Nagappattanam by the Sailendra King of Sri Vijaya cannot be viewed as an isolated undertaking all by itself. But it was the outcome of a flourishing maritime commerce between the countries of western world and China, in which Arabs, Indians and the people of the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian Archipelago acted as intermediaries.<sup>84</sup>

The Cholas called the east coast as Cholamandalakkarkai where pearls were found in abundance. There are no records to give authentic information about pearl industry. Only a few of the Chola inscriptions record the grant of the pearls to the temples.<sup>85</sup> The pearls were very common with the people of this period and that they were dived for in the seas. The literary works of the Chola period like Thakkayakaparani

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<sup>81</sup> Nilakanta Sastri, K.A., *A History of South India from Pre Historic Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar*, Oxford University Press, 1955, p. 174.

<sup>82</sup> Nilakanta Sastri, K.A., *Cōlas*, p. 201.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 218-220.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *South Indian Inscriptions, Vol. II, Inscription No. 79, Line 55-64*, The Director General Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 2001.

and Kamba Ramayanam refer to the pearls in many places.<sup>86</sup> But there are enough references about pearls, which prove that pearl was a source of revenue for the Cholas. Korkai continued to be an important natural harbour under the Cholas also.<sup>87</sup> In Tanjore (Thanjavur) a variety of jewels and ornaments of gold were made mounting precious stones and pearls.<sup>88</sup> ‘Siraf in China was an important market for pearls says the Arab writer, Istaknri of tenth century. From one of the inscriptional evidences it is clear that Kulottunga Chola Deva was pleased to seize the pearl fisheries of the Madura country.<sup>89</sup> Cotton and silk garments, pearls, jewels, ivory, nuts and pepper were the principal items of export from the Chola kingdom.<sup>90</sup>

The Chinese sources record four separate Chola missions to China. The Chola envoys have presented the Chinese emperor with eight hundred kilograms of pearls, sixty pieces of ivory, sixty pounds of incense and three thousand three hundred pounds of perfumes.<sup>91</sup> Also the envoys scattered pearls from a silver container under the Chinese throne as they retired.<sup>92</sup> One understands from these Indo-Chinese missions that the Cholas exercised immense control over the Fishery Coast.

“As a general rule a pearl was considered valuable if it was perfectly round; the test for its absolute roundness was, that it did not cease rolling about all day when

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Nilakanta Sastri, K.A., *Cōlas*, pp. 604, 609.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 593.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 607.

<sup>90</sup> Rajayyan, K., *History of Tamil Nadu*, p. 90.

<sup>91</sup> Tansen Sen “*Maritime contacts between China and the Chola Kingdom (A.D. 850-1279)*”, Mathew K.S., (ed.), *Mariners Merchants and Oceans – Studies in Maritime History*, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 28-29.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

put on a plate. Foreign traders (coming to China) were in the habit of concealing pearls in the lining of their clothes and in the handles of their umbrellas, and thus evaded the duties leviable upon them”.<sup>93</sup>

The Chinese records, concurrently, tell us about the tributary trade between China and Chola kingdoms. The tributes from the Chola kingdom were mostly carried by Arab merchants. Tribute bearers could make a huge profit because they were allowed to bring free of duty, prescribed quantities of goods for resale.<sup>94</sup>

The Imperial Chola rulers had developed cordial relations with the Arabs who had settled on the Fishery Coast. The Arab traders and navigators helped them to carry out trade in textiles between South India and West Asia and the Indonesian Archipelago.<sup>95</sup> The Cholas utilized fully the maritime skill of the Arabs. The local merchants and the Arabs usually controlled trade through guilds. The Cholamandala Coast had several ports and from there spices, gems, pearls and chanks were exported to Sumatra, Java, Burma, Malaysia, Malacca, Indonesia and Far Eastern countries by these Arabs.<sup>96</sup> The Chola and the Arab merchants visited Sri Vijaya in South East Asia and from there reached China.

A particular community called Kudirai-Chettis dealt in horses. They imported horses from abroad, particularly Arabia and perhaps Pegu, and distributed them among the princes and nobles in the Chola kingdom. The extensive trade described by

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<sup>93</sup> Hirth F., and Rockhill, W.W., '*Chan Ju-Kua : His work on the Chinese and Arab Trade in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, entitled Chu-fanchih*', St. Petersburg, 1911, cited in Tansen Sen, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>94</sup> Tansen sen, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>95</sup> More, J.B.P., *The Political Evolution of Muslims in Tamil Nadu and Madras 1930-1947*, Hyderabad, 1997, p. 11.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Marco Polo and Wassaf in the beginning of the fourteenth century during the Pandya rule could not have sprung up suddenly, and its beginning must be traced to the Cholas, if not an earlier period.<sup>97</sup>

The manufacture of sea-salt was carried on under government supervision and control, and was subjected to considerable imports in kind and money, local and central. The salt-pans of Kanyakumari were also among the more important centres of salt manufacture, which was a widespread industry all along the sea coast.<sup>98</sup>

The Cholas succeeded in maintaining extensive maritime activities and asserted their naval supremacy for over a century. However the Sailendras made costly adventures between 1236 and 1256 proved to be the last chapter in the Hindu oceanic supremacy. The prolonged war between the Sailendras and the Cholas ultimately harmed both and the freedom of trade and navigation was jeopardised.<sup>99</sup> The Cheras also had commercial relations with the people of the West. Roman coins found at Cannanore and the traces found at Cranganore testify to the extent of maritime activity on the Malabar Coast. They (the Cheras) maintained a navy which was overpowered by the Cholas, who had a formidable fleet. The Cheras concentrated on maritime activity in the eastern seas also. The Malabar fleet continued its existence till the advent of the Portuguese. The Pandyas were more active in and around Sri Lanka. The Gulf of Mannar was exploited by them for pearl-fisheries. During the Chera – Pandya era pearls and pepper dominated the overseas trade.

### **Revival of the Pandya Rule on the Fishery Coast**

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<sup>97</sup> Nilakanta Sastri, K.A., *Cōlas*, p. 607.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 593.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

During the middle of the thirteenth century the reign of the Second Pandyas began in Tamil country and naturally the Fishery Coast also came under its sway. It was Jatavarman Sundara Pandya (1251-1268) who revived the Pandya rule.<sup>100</sup>

Among the traditional powers of Tamil Nadu, the Pandyas had the most prolonged and yet the most chequered existence. For almost fourteen centuries, from the Sangam Age to the Afghans' conquest, they had a continuous history, either as an independent dynasty or as a subordinate feudatory. Jatavarman Sundara Pandya, defeated Rajendra Chola III, expelled the Cholas from Madurai and founded the Second Pandyan Empire.<sup>101</sup>

Pazhayakayal continued to be the important port of the Second Pandyas also.<sup>102</sup> It was visited by Marco Polo, the Venitian traveller, and Wassaf the Arabian traveller during the reign of Maravaram Kulasekara Pandya (1268-1310).

According to Marco Polo, "Cail (Pazhayakayal) was a great and noble city, and belonged to Ashar, the eldest of the five brother kings. It was at this city that all the ships that came from Aden and Arabia, laden with horses and other wares from Ormuz and Kis touched. Traders touched this port, because it was excellently situated, and provided a good market for trading".<sup>103</sup>

Marco Polo further says that,

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<sup>100</sup> Rajayyan, K., *History of Tamil Nadu*, p. 101.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> Caldwell, R., *op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>103</sup> Benedelto, L.F., *The Travels of Marco Polo*, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 323-324.



“Pearl fishing was an important industry of the Tamils. His account elaborately speaks about pearl fishing: It (the pearl fishing) began in April and continued till the fifteenth of May. Both big and small pearls were available in the Pandya kingdom. At the time of pearl fishing, the first 10 parts were given to the ruler as his share. The eleventh part was given to the magicians who cast spells to protect them from danger. The rest went to those who were involved in pearl fishing. These pearls were exported to different parts of the world. The rulers of Tamil country made immense wealth from this trade. The pearls from the Pandyakingdom were in great demand in foreign countries.”<sup>104</sup>

According to Rajayyan, Pazhayakayal was noted for overseas trade and Thoothukudi for pearl fishing.<sup>105</sup> Friar Jordanus, a missionary bishop, who visited India about 1330 A.D. tells us that as many as eight hundred boats were then engaged in the pearl fisheries of Tirunelveli and Sri Lanka.<sup>106</sup>

About the pearl fishery, Marco Polo says that in the Pandya kingdom there were found very large pearls, both good and beautiful, and precious stones. The king wore round his neck a fine silk thread, which hung down in front of him to the length of a pace; on this thread were strung most beautiful large pearls and most precious rubies, 104 in all. He also wore bracelets studded with precious stones and pearls in three different places round his legs. He wore splendid pearls and other gems on his toes.<sup>107</sup>

No one was allowed to take out of his kingdom any big or valuable stone or any pearl over half a saggio in weight. Several times the ruler issued a proclamation throughout his kingdom to the effect that all who possessed fine pearls and valuable

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 323-325.

<sup>105</sup> Rajayyan, K., *History of Tamil Nadu*, pp. 103-104.

<sup>106</sup> James Hornell, *Pearl Fisheries, Vol. XVI*, p. 37.

<sup>107</sup> Benedelto, L.F., *op. cit.*, pp. 325-326.

stones were to bring them to his court, and he paid them twice their value. It was a custom of his kingdom to give twice the value of all fine pearls and valuable stones. So traders and other people, when they had such fine stones, willingly brought them to the court, as they were well paid. This then is the reason why this king was so wealthy, and possessed so many precious pearls.<sup>108</sup>

Wassaf describes Mábar and believes Kayal (Pazhayakayal) as the port of Mábar. According to him, the king was healthy and wealthy. His treasury was filled with gold and pearls. Also Wassaf says that huge ships with wide sails frequented the coast. Laden with costly goods, they came from Sind, Hind and China. Costly goods that were found in Iraq, Khurasan, Turkey and Europe reached the Pandya country.<sup>109</sup>

The horse trade of Pazhayakayal was of considerable political importance and a good part of the revenues of the kingdom was spent on the purchase of horses for the king and the army. There is a reference to horse-dealers from Travancore in an inscription of the time (No.161 of 1907).<sup>110</sup> The Arabs imported horses from Arabia for the Pandya king and obtained pearls, precious stones, etc., in exchange. They also imported horses from Persia and silver and copper from Far eastern countries. They trained the Tamils in horse breeding and care.

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Rajayyan, K., *History of Tamil Nadu*, p. 103.

<sup>110</sup> Nilakanta Sastri, K.A., *The Pandyan Kingdom*, p. 192.

The Arabs were also involved in weaving and the east street in Kilakkarai was known as ‘ Paruthikara Theru| (Cotton Street). Anjuvannam was the name of the trade guild of the Muslims who made up a prosperous community.<sup>111</sup>

Although horse trade flourished in Tamil country, rearing of horses proved to be a failure. According to both Marco Polo and Wassaf, conditions then prevailing in South India were not suitable for the breeding of horses. Therefore the Pandyan kings relied solely on the Arabs for horses.<sup>112</sup>

The Muslims were not content with trade alone. They also participated in politics and social life. Apart from their supremacy over the maritime trade, especially horse trade with Arabia, the Muslims also enjoyed a prominent role in the political realm of the Fishery Coast.

The Moors who had already succeeded in appropriating for themselves the entire overseas trade on the coast of India had firmly established themselves on the east coast – in Kayalpattanam in the south; and also as lease holders they had gained control of the pearl fishery. Tamil Muslims were known to have made periodic visits from the Coromandel Coast to the ports in South East Asia, particularly.

The influence of the Arabs continued from the rise and progress of Islam down to the thirteenth century. It gave them a predominance by which they were able to

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<sup>111</sup> Kamal, S.M., *Muslimkalum Tamilahamum.*, p. 191.

<sup>112</sup> Afdalal Ulama and Tayka Shuayb Alim, *Arabic, Arwi and Persian in Sarandis and Tamil Nadu*, USA, 1993, p. 22.

hold the sea and monopolise all intercourse with India. Their trading emporia all along the coast had existed centuries before the Muslim conquest of the South.<sup>113</sup>

The glory of the second empire of the Pandyas reached its zenith under Maravarman Kulasekhara, but the fall came in a rapid succession of events. The death of the ruler was followed by a civil war between his sons, Sundara Pandya and Vira Pandya. The former sought the aid of the Muslims and subsequently Malik Kafur was sent by the Delhi Sultan Ala-ud-din Khilji who led his army to the Pandya kingdom in 1311. Thereafter Madurai was reduced to a province of the Muslim. This Mábar expedition drained away a vast amount of resources from the Pandya kingdom. According to Baruni, several boxes of pearls were among the other items taken by the Madurai Sultanate.<sup>114</sup>

Malik Kafur's inroad into the Madura (Madurai) country, though it did not bring the Pandya territories into subjection to the Sultanate of Delhi, nevertheless marked the beginning of the end of the second empire of the Pandyas. From this time on, the history of the Pandyas became a record of progressive decline in the portions of the Tirunelveli district. Though the Pandyas made repeated attempts to revive their glory they had to remain content with a vassal status under Vijayanagar, and towards the close of the sixteenth century, they finally disappeared from the pages of history.

The Pandya kings were the natural lords of the Paravas of the Fishery Coast and were accordingly sometimes styled as Minavarkon, 'the king of the fishermen'. The unchallenged monopoly enjoyed at the Fishery Coast by the Tamil rulers particularly

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Rajayyan, K., *History of Tamil Nadu*, p. 110-111.

the Pandyas for more than one and a half millennium, passed on into the hands of the Muslim rulers.

### **Muslims on the Fishery Coast**

As it has already been discussed, the Arabs who had settled in Pazhayakayal, Kayalpattanam and Kilakkarai were supplying horses to the Pandya rulers from ninth century onwards. The establishment of Madurai Sultanate was a boon for them, as it strengthened their position further in the extreme south. Malik Kafur's invasion was followed by a couple of intrusions which completely brought down the reign of the traditional rulers of Tamil Nadu.

Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq sent another army in 1321 under his son and heir Ulagh Khan to extend Islam up to Kanyakumari. Mábar was made a province of the Delhi sultanate when Muhammed bin Tughlak made Devagiri his capital in 1326.

Jalal-ud-din Hassan Shah asserted his independence in 1334 when he became the governor of Mábar. Ibn Batuta, a Muslim servant of the Emperor of Delhi visited Mábar that included both the Pandya and the Chola countries under the government of Muslim kings.<sup>115</sup>

The Sultanate of Madurai lasted from 1336 to 1380. It was in the days of Alauddin Sikandar Shah (1368-1378) that the invasion of Madurai (1371) by Kumara Kampana, the Vijayanagar prince, occurred and the Sultanate was brought to its end.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Subramaniyan, N., *History of Tamil Nadu*, Madurai, 1991, p. 295.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

The Madurai Sultanate brought all the Muslims of north and south and east and west together. Not only the Islamic spirit but also the profitable pearl trade in the Fishery Coast provided a lucrative proposition for the Muslims.

The Arabs who had already settled on the western coast in the seventh century moved to Pazhayakayal and then to Kayalpattanam. They were called by different names. In the west, they were known as Mappilars, and in the Chola Mandalam they were called by names such as Lebbais, Ravuthars and Marakkayars or Marakkars. These names were not caste identities but specified particularly the profession each group carried out. The word 'Marakkar' or 'Marakkayar' is derived from the Malayalam word 'Marakkan' which in turn was derived from 'marakkalam' (boat). They involved in overseas trade. The Portuguese used the word 'Marakkar' in their documents for the first time.<sup>117</sup>

After their settlement on the Tirunelveli coast, the Muslims slowly began the propagation of their religion, first under peaceful means. They made matrimonial relations with some of the Paravas also.

The Muslims made periodic visits from the Coromandel Coast to the ports in South East Asia. The Chulis (trade community) from South India, as they were more commonly known, took textiles and rice and brought back pepper, tin, aromatic woods and elephants from South East Asia.

The advent of the Muslims to the south was ordinarily dependent upon the advance of their political power. Ever since the famous expedition of Malik Kafur

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<sup>117</sup> Kamal, S.M., *op. cit.*, pp. 102-103.

(1310), every successive wave of Muslim invasion left behind large deposits of soldiers and camp followers in the Deccan and the southern districts.

The Tamil Muslims were experts not only in pearl fishing but also in selling them. The Marakkayars of Kayalpattanam and Kilakkarai earned more in pearl fishing after the Cholas and the Pandyas. Their trading centres in Madurai, Rameshwaram and Kilakkarai were known as Muthuchawadi or Muthupettai where they sold pearls. It is true that their great grandfathers were known as Muthuvappa. This has been mentioned in the Chokkanatha temple inscription at Kilakkarai. Muthupettai or Muthuchawadi existed in Periyapattinam also. From Rameswaram pearls were brought to Quilon and then taken to foreign countries, according to Chinese travellers.<sup>118</sup>

Many Arabs became chieftains in the east coast. They had already become powerful during the period of the later Pandyas and their influence continued now under the Sultanate. There was a concentration of Arab Muslim traders in Kilakkarai and Kayalpattanam and the area between these two places was a nucleus of the Islamic spirit.

### **Vijayanagar Empire and the Fishery Coast**

The Vijayanagar empire was founded by the Sangama brothers in 1336 when the Muslims were knocking at the doors of south Indian kingdoms. Bounded by the river Krishna in the north, Kanyakumari and the southern ocean to the south and the two oceans to the east and the west, the last Hindu empire protected Hinduism for more than

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 110-111.

two centuries. Its main aim was to put an end to the onslaughts of Islam and to revive Hindu civilization and culture.<sup>119</sup>

During the period of Bukka I (1356-1377) 'Liberation of Madurai' was one of the major events. His son Kampana II was despatched on an important mission in the South. Due to the frequent invasions by Delhi Sultans, the whole of South India was in chaos. He (Kampana II) set out on a victorious campaign in the south east from his headquarters Mulbagila (eastern gate) that was the capital of "Nikarili Chola Mandala".<sup>120</sup>

When the Vijayanagar empire conquered Madurai, many prominent Muslims had retreated to the Fishery Coast and slowly began to establish their authority and extend their influence into the pearl fishery itself which was till then the exclusive right of the Paravas. The political authority of the Vijayanagar empire, in spite of its several attempts, could not curtail the economic growth of the Muslims.

The interests of the Paravas were not safeguarded though the Vijayanagar rulers received their (the Paravas') tribute from the pearl fisheries. Abdur Razak says that Devaraya II had round his neck a collar composed of pure pearls of regal excellence.<sup>121</sup> To the Vijayanagar rulers the Pearl Fishery Coast was a prime source of wealth but it was an area that was not cared for.

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<sup>119</sup> Vasundhara Filliozat (ed.), *Vijayanagar, as seen by Domingos Paes and Fernão Nuniz (16<sup>th</sup> Century Portuguese Chroniclers) and others*, New Delhi, 1997, p. 1.

<sup>120</sup> Longworth, M.A., *The Book of Duarte Barbosa, Vol. II*, London, 1918, pp. 122-124.

<sup>121</sup> Venkata Ramanappa, M.N., *Outlines of South Indian History with Special reference to Karnataka*, New Delhi, 1975, p. 173.



At the dawn of the sixteenth century, Saluva Narasimha II (1496-1505) was the Vijayanagar emperor. It was during his reign that the Portuguese first arrived in India in 1498. On the arrival of the Portuguese, the only kingdom that seemed to them to have any real independent existence was that of Vijayanagar.<sup>122</sup> Vira Narasimha (1503-1509) began the Tuluva dynasty and during his reign, the Portuguese were in touch with the Pazhayakayal port. The Portuguese set their foot on the Fishery Coast in 1520 i.e. during the reign of the greatest Vijayanagar emperor, Krishnadeva Raya.

As a man of statesmanly qualities, Krishnadeva Raya realized the importance of the Portuguese friendship. The Portuguese were also interested in maintaining friendly relations with the ruler of the mightiest empire in the Deccan. They sought friendship with Krishnadeva Raya which was readily granted.<sup>123</sup> This resulted in the advancement of trade and commerce and the promotion of mutual interests. Krishnadeva Raya obtained high breed Arabian horses through the Portuguese who also aided the emperor in his campaigns against the Bijapuris.<sup>124</sup>

The Portuguese consolidated their position on the Fishery Coast when Achyuta Raya (1530-1542) became the next emperor. During his time the historic event i.e. the Mass Conversion took place in 1536 A.D. The Portuguese were on the look out for such an opportunity and brought the full coast along with its entire marine richness under their control.

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<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 181-182.

<sup>124</sup> Rajayyan, K., *History of Tamil Nadu*, p. 122.

By 1500, South India upto Kanyakumari had been consolidated under the single and strong Vijayanagar empire, though there were several local centres of power under various Nayaks, with varying degrees of autonomy.

### **Fishery Coast Under Nayaks and Poligars**

Before Krishnadeva Raya regularised Nayakships, the Tamil country was ruled as a straightforward military outpost by the Vijayanagar rulers. The numerous Nayaks appointed by the government were empowered to maintain law and order and to collect revenues in the conquered territories. They were not the representatives of the Tamil Nadu population but agents of a Telugu-speaking government which lay beyond the cultural borders of Tamil Nadu.<sup>125</sup>

Krishnadeva Raya introduced the Nayankara system in Tamil country and Senji, Madurai and Tanjore were put under three Nayaks. In practice the Nayankara system presented a graded form of oppression in Tamil Nadu.<sup>126</sup>

Visvanatha (1529-1564) was the first Nayak of Madurai which included probably all the present day districts of Ramnad, Madurai, Thoothukudi and Tirunelveli. Madurai experienced the rule of numerous Nayaks who squandered away on concubines and priests the resources they mobilized through oppression and exaction. The Nayak period witnessed the rise of a political order called the Poligar or Palayam system.

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

Similar in character to the Nayankara system but of a subordinate status, it was destined to have a chequered existence in the history of the Tamil Nadu.<sup>127</sup>

The duties of the Poligars were to collect the tribute and maintain troops for the service of the king. In fact the Poligars, mainly Telugu nobles, exacted nine tenths of the produce and paid a part of collections to the Nayak. In their turn, the Nayak paid half of their collections to the Vijayanagar emperor as tribute. The Poligars enjoyed paramilitary, police and revenue powers. Economically the Poligar system ruined the Paravas of the Fishery Coast.<sup>128</sup>

The Fishery Coast, at the arrival of the Portuguese, was a hot bed of rival claims and vaguely defined political authorities. The coast was a bone of contention among the three rulers. The defiant attitude of the rebel Nayaks towards Vijayanagar was rampant. The later Pandyas continued to receive favours from the Vijayanagar rulers till their exit from Tamil Nadu. Finally the eastern ports were not paid as much attention as that of the western ports by the Vijayanagar rulers. At the climax, the Parava - Muslim conflict created a conducive atmosphere and finally the Portuguese struck roots in the Fishery Coast firmly.

At the time of the arrival of the Portuguese the Paravas were divided up among three kings namely the king of Quilon in the south, Vettumperumal, the king of Kayathar at the centre and Tumbichi Nayak in the north. The coastal region up to river Tamiraparani near Punnaikayal was under the rule of the Great King or the Great King of

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<sup>127</sup> Rajayyan, K., *Rise and Fall of the Poligars of Tamil Nadu*, University of Madras, 1974, pp. 1-19.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

Kanyakumari. Thoothukudi was under the ruler of Kayathar.<sup>129</sup> In the north of Thoothukudi, villages like Vembar, Vaipar and Kilakkarai were under Tumbichi Nayak who like his colleague of Kayathar, had submitted to the mighty emperor of Vijayanagar.<sup>130</sup> All three were concerned about their share of the rich yield of annual pearl fishery.<sup>131</sup>

The pearl fishery in the Gulf of Mannar, which provided immense wealth to the Pandyan kingdom, was now distributed among various petty rulers and the Parava fisherfolk had to pay taxes to all these local leaders in order to carry on the pearl fishing business.

Even after the establishment of the Nayakship, disturbances in the south did not come to an end. Krishnadeva Raya's death was followed by confused political activities in Vijayanagar. The governor of Cholamandalam, Saluva Vira Narasimha, revolted against Achyuta, the successor of Krishnadeva Raya. Tumbichi Nayak, the Paramakudi chieftain collected a significant number of soldiers and defied the authority of the Vijayanagar. These two rebels joined hands with Udaya Marthanda Varma, the King of Travancore. By driving away the Pandya ruler of Tenkasi, Marthanda Varma set up his government there. These three rebels turned against the Vijayanagar emperor.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Schurhammer, "*Iniquitribirim and Beteperumal Chera and Pandya kings in Southern India 1544*", *Orientalia*, Lisboa, 1963, p. 271.

<sup>130</sup> Costelloe (trans), Georg Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier – His Life, His Times, Vol. II (1541-1545)*, Rome, 1977, pp. 258-259.

<sup>131</sup> Sathyanatha Aiyar, R., *History of the Nayaks of Madura*, Oxford University Press, 1924, pp. 68-69.

<sup>132</sup> Krishnaswami, A., *The Tamil Country Under Vijayanagar*, The Annamalai University, 1964, p. 196.

Though the Vijayanagar had extended up to Kanyakumari, the local rulers had not been done away with and there were petty Pandya and Chola descendants ruling nominally in parts of their ancestral territories. A Chola king named Vira Sekhara Chola invaded the domains of a Pandya called Chandrasekhara Pandya. The afflicted Pandya appealed to the emperor who ordered Nagama Nayak to settle the matter. Nagama drove out the Chola easily but tried to liquidate the Pandya also under the pretext of strengthening the imperial administration. Krishnadeva Raya wanted to punish Nagama Nayak and send Visvanatha to Madurai to put things straight there, which he began to do in earnest from 1529.<sup>133</sup>

Throughout the greater number of years of the reigns of the Pandya kings of the later line, the kings of Vijayanagar appeared to have exercised supreme authority. But they did not interfere much in the internal affairs of the country but were content with receiving tribute and occasional military help. Thus the various petty states included within their nominal rule were protected from foreign invasion and their propensity to spend their time in fighting with one another was kept in check.<sup>134</sup>

Udaya Marthanda Varma, the sovereign of Travancore had Kayalpattanam under his control. He also extended his dominion across the peninsula. He had established himself so far successfully in the south that he held Pazhayakayal on the Fishery Coast in his possession and appointed a viceroy. This hemmed in the Pandya feudatories of the empire, who since the advent of the Vijayanagar authority in the south

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<sup>133</sup> Henry Heras, *South India Under the Vijayanagar Empire – The Aravidu Dynasty, Vol. 1*, New Delhi, 1980, pp. 124-130.

<sup>134</sup> Caldwell, R., *op. cit.*, p. 54.

had retired to the western parts of the Tirunelveli district and had broken up into five comparatively petty chieftaincies.<sup>135</sup>

A number of minor 'Pancha Pandyas' (The Five Pandyas) refused to submit to foreign rule. Perhaps the Pancha Pandyas looked upon Visvanatha Nayaka's government as an alien government. Finally they became part of the Poligar system.<sup>136</sup>

While in the Deccan the Vijayanagar and Bahmani kingdoms stood side by side, frowning upon each other, in the south their viceroalties stood side by side in mutual fear and suspicion.<sup>137</sup>

Old states were in the melting pot of invasion and insurrection and especially was this true of southern India, where political paralysis had begun to affect the Vijayanagar empire, beginning, as it was usual in all those provinces furthest from the centre of the state.<sup>138</sup>

It is evident that Vijayanagar itself was more oriented to the ports of the west coast for its trade networks which was perhaps partly due to the great demand for horses for its military. The eastern ports were thus not of primary importance as far as the imperial centre was concerned and came under the autonomous control of the local Nayaks and rulers. The Nayaks with very small areas under their control, and thus with a

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<sup>135</sup> Durate Barbosa, *op.cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 124-125.

<sup>136</sup> Subramanian, N., *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>137</sup> Thiruvengkatachari, *Madura Vijayam of Ganga Devi*, Annamalai University, 1957, p. 51.

<sup>138</sup> James Hornell, *op. cit.*, Vol. XVI, p. 10.

narrowed power base sought to extend both their economic and political power through their control over trade and eastern ports.<sup>139</sup>

The Portuguese were fortunate in arriving India at a time when the native states were in the crucible of change, when internecine warfare left the chiefs with neither time nor power to cope efficiently with a more highly organized foe from overseas.<sup>140</sup>

### **Fishery Coast in 1500**

The Fishery Coast at the arrival of the Portuguese in the first decade of the sixteenth century was important socially, economically, politically and culturally. The two flourishing communities namely the Paravas and the Muslims were vying with one another, creating a conducive environment for the arrival of the Portuguese. The Parava - Muslim rivalry had reached its climax.

The condition of the Fishery Coast is dealt with under two stages.

- i. The unique life style of the Paravas.
- ii. The Parava - Muslim conflict.

### **The Unique Life Style of the Paravas**

#### **The Parava Society**

The Paravas mainly occupied the villages on the Fishery Coast. In some villages Maravars and Caraiyars also lived. The Mukkuvars were found in Kanyakumari and in the villages west of it. In the interior places the Shanars lived and they took

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<sup>139</sup> Kanakalatha Mukund, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>140</sup> James Hornell, *Pearl Fisheries, Vol. XVI*, p. 9.

tending the palm trees and tapped toddy. The Paravas, Caraiyars and Mukkuvars were involved in fishing pearls and chanks on the Fishery Coast.

The Paravas were honourable, trust worthy and partly friendly. They greeted others with folded hands.<sup>141</sup> The fishermen, with dark brown complexion wore only a small loincloth and white scarf around their head.<sup>142</sup> The Parava males, in former days, considered it as a mark of caste prestige to bore the ear lobes and to hang them with gold ear rings sometimes studded with pearls.<sup>143</sup> The people in the Comorin coast were illiterate.<sup>144</sup> Early accounts of the Paravas and Mukkuvars speak about crushing poverty, wide spread alcoholism and universal illiteracy.<sup>145</sup>

The affluent Paravas had slaves but not others. Slaves were found in houses and temples. Slavery was developed on account of the high rate of family taxes introduced by the Nayaks.<sup>146</sup>

The men ate by themselves and turned their backs to their wives while eating. They ate from copper bowls, without touching their food with the left hand, and they also drank from copper vessels, usually without bringing the rim to their mouth. They chewed betel, the nut of the areca palm, rolled up with lime in the leaf of the same tree, a practice which turned their teeth black, and their saliva red. They drank the sweet,

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<sup>141</sup> *DI., Vol. II (1550-1553)*, 1950, pp. 557-560.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 559.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 557.

<sup>145</sup> Charlie Pye-Smith *Rebels and Outcasts-A Journey Through Christian India*, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 189-190.

<sup>146</sup> *DI., Vol. II*, pp. 557-560.



intoxicating arrack (urâk) of the palmyra palm. The poor Paravas slept on the bare floor.<sup>147</sup>

Sati existed and those women who refused to burn themselves became public women. They had to leave their home and go elsewhere. Those who opposed sati were killed and those who performed sati were venerated. The people believed that the woman who committed sati would live along with her husband in the next life.<sup>148</sup>

Adultery and superstitions were rampant and magicians played a significant role in the lives of the people.<sup>149</sup>

### **Parava Religion**

The Paravas were originally Hindus and had pagodas (temple with idols) in their villages as objects of worship. They had a special attachment to the Hindu temple at Tiruchendur. They believed that God Subramanian was married to a Parava girl named Deivanai. The inhabitants of the seven villages (Manapadu, Alanthalai, Virapandyapattanam, Punnaikayal, Thoothukudi, Vembar and Vaipar) took active part in the religious festivals of the temple. Their *Jathi Thalaivan* (head) who resided in Virapandyapattanam (a hamlet of Tiruchendur) was to give the first pull to the chain with which the processional car of the idol was drawn. The Parava aristocrats of Virapandyapattanam should have their palanquins borne on the shoulders of Idayars (shepherds) who were the bearers of the idol of the temple.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> *DI., Vol. II*, pp. 560-561.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

The soothsayers venerated devils. The Paravas would weep before the devils and plead with them to forgive their sins. The Brahman priests pronounced magical formulas destined to ward off the sharks from the pearl divers. The Paravas did not kill cows.<sup>151</sup>

### **Parava Politics**

The Parava villages had their own government and all the authority lay in hands of the *Pattangattim (Pattangattis)*.<sup>152</sup> They ruled over a village and were chosen from the more prominent individuals. At their head was the *Pattangatti-Mor*, the chief of the caste. The Paravas dwelt in seven chief localities<sup>153</sup> and their headman was known as *Jathi Thalaivan* or the Lord of seven villages.<sup>154</sup>

### **Parava Economy**

According to James Hornell\*,

“When the Portuguese rounded Kanyakumari they found the pearl fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar in the hands of the caste of shore dwelling people, already alluded to as Paravas, whom tradition shows to have had control of this industry from time immemorial”.<sup>155</sup>

The Paravas enjoyed the monopoly of the fishing, pearl fishing and salt manufacturing which are said to be their chief occupations. Fishing and other works were

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<sup>151</sup> *DI., Vol. III (1553-1557)*, 1954, p. 231.

<sup>152</sup> Pattangattim (Pattangatti) - Overseer of a Parava village on the Fishery Coast.

<sup>153</sup> The seven localities were Manapadu, Alanthalai, Virapandyanpattanam, Punnaikayal, Thoothukudi, Vembar and Vaipar.

<sup>154</sup> *DI., Vol. III*, 1950, p. 231.

\* James Hornell was the Director General of Madras Fisheries for the whole of Tamil Nadu under the British Rule. He has given first hand information about the pearl fisheries in the Fishery Coast.

<sup>155</sup> James Hornell, *Pearl Fisheries, Vol. XVI*, p. 6.

done by the members of a Parava family together and no wage labour is said to have been associated with their activities. The fishing party consisted of both elders and youngsters of the same family. The technical know-how, whatever they had, was passed on from generation to generation. This suggests that their production-relations had not cut across the limits of their kinship relations. The Paravas as expert boatmen were engaged in bringing the imports from the foreign vessels which must have been employed to take the exporting items like pepper to the distant ships<sup>156</sup>

The Paravas who were fishermen and coastal traders had formed themselves into a well-organized community. Their social organization had some peculiarities. According to one version, the community was divided into two distinct classes the wealthy and the boat owners.<sup>157</sup>

Intermarriages between these two classes were not permitted and if at all it occurred, it was only very rare. As a result of their connection with the pearl fisheries, their villages from Vembar to Ovari came to be regarded as typical of the community and its organizations while the Paravas who lived in isolated villages from Ovari to Kanyakumari were closely knit together into.<sup>158</sup>

The fisherfolk excelled in maritime skills and they attracted attention because of their multifaceted relationship with the sea. They lived at the junction of major trade routes between the western and eastern Indian Ocean, centering on southern India and Sri Lanka and were involved in minor trade and fishing. Similarly, the

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<sup>156</sup> Georg Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier, Vol. II*, pp. 306-307.

<sup>157</sup> James Hornell, *Pearl Fisheries, Vol. XVI*, p. 2.

<sup>158</sup> *DI., Vol. XIII (1583-1585)*, 1975, p. 181.

Lakshadweep and Maldivian islands, source of cowrie shells and dried fish, invited the attention of mercantile and political elites from southern India over the centuries.<sup>159</sup>

From Manapadu to Thoothukudi aljofoor (small and bright pearls) which were more valuable was available and people here were economically better than others in the Fishery Coast.<sup>160</sup>

In order to dispose their pearls, the Paravas made agreements with the kings that a market day should be proclaimed throughout their dominion; merchants would come from all parts of India and the divers and settlers would furnish all the provisions necessary for the multitude. Two kinds of guards and tribunals were to be established to prevent all disputes and quarrels arising during this open market. Every man being subject to his own judge, and his case being subject to his payments was then also divided among the headmen of the Paravas. The Pattangattis were the owners of that fishery and hence they became rich and powerful. They had weapons and soldiers of their own, with which they were able to defend themselves against the violence of the kings or their subjects.<sup>161</sup>

About a month after the opening of the pearl fishery, the Pattangattis announced its end. The merchants packed their wares and loaded them on to the ships. Booths and cottages were set on fire and the return voyage would begin. They left the coast behind them as lonely and bare as they had dwellers in the vicinity, who sought for a few lost pearls in the sand of the pits. In the Parava villages, however, the wild

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<sup>159</sup> Kenneth McPherson, *The Indian Ocean – A History of People and the Sea*, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 188.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> Georg Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier, Vol. II*, p. 188.

lamentations of the women began for fathers, husbands, brothers or sons whom the sea, sharks and sickness had carried away and would never again return.<sup>162</sup>

Southern Coromandel was one of the intermediate points in this segmented trade, where ships from Malabar brought rice and abundance of goods from Gujarat, pepper, and commodities like copper, quicksilver and vermilion which normally were imported from Europe for the east. Ships came with spices and drugs, from Malacca, China and Bengal.<sup>163</sup>

Commodities, which came from diverse parts of Asia and Europe, were mostly bought in exchange for Indian cloth. The Coromandel merchants primarily invested in gems and precious stones to bring back to India. Trading in precious stones, pearls, coral, silver and gold was an important part of their business both in the Coromandel and in the Malabar Coasts. Barbosa observed that in several port towns the Chetti merchants dealt in gem stones, pearls and precious metals.<sup>164</sup>

The trade covering south Coromandel, the Bay of Madura, the ports of Sri Lanka and south Malabar was even more brisk. This was a trade in essential consumer goods which deeply influenced the lives of the people of those areas. Thanjavur and Tirunelveli were providers of rice to Sri Lanka and Malabar. The whole area up to Tirunelveli provided textiles to Sri Lanka and Malabar. In return came pepper and spices

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<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> *DI., Vol. IV (1557-1560)*, 1956, p. 34.

<sup>164</sup> Durate Barbosa, *op. cit.*, *Vol. II*, p. 125.

from Malabar, betel nuts, elephants and cinnamon from Sri Lanka and coconut produce from both the regions.<sup>165</sup>

The Paravas took to coastal small boat trading and to servicing ships out in the roads of the large ports. They used their expertise in pearl-diving and boating to move into shipping and trade. They became major operators in the trade between Coromandel, Madura, Malabar and Sri Lanka.<sup>166</sup>

At the arrival of the Portuguese on the Fishery Coast, the Paravas seemed to be of experts in all the seafaring activities. They along with the local merchant communities and Muslims conducted maritime trade in the Indian Ocean. But they had to fight with the Muslims to their fortune.

### **Parava – Muslim Conflict**

Navigation in the Indian Ocean was pioneered by the Arabs, and they were the dominant players throughout history, as far as sailing ships in the western part of the basin are concerned.<sup>167</sup> They were the forerunners to the Europeans in trade agreement, sending trade representatives abroad, fixing the boundary in the sea, barter system, port contact, etc.<sup>168</sup>

In the seventh century the Arabs who settled on the west coast married Kerala women. They moved to Pazhayakayal and then to Kayalpattanam. They mastered themselves in pearl and horse trade. Through marriage and conversion, they established

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<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Maritime India in the Seventeenth Century*, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 145.

Tamil Muslim communities and had pushed the Paravas, the owners of the pearl fisheries down.

Muslims held a major share of the maritime trade of the far south and were moving to exploit the rich pearl beds of the Gulf of Mannar which had previously been worked by the Paravas.<sup>169</sup> After the first Muslim invasion of south India in the fourteenth century, clusters of Muslim settlers and seafarers appeared all along the southern coast where they monopolised all the trade of the two coasts and became uncontested masters of the seas.<sup>170</sup> They tyrannised the poor Paravas, prevented them from fishing without their permission and claimed a monopoly of dealing in pearls. The Paravas who had always considered the Muslims as intruders and usurpers now rose in arms against them.

The Moors who had spread themselves over India, and principally along the coast of Madura, were strengthened by the natives professing Mohammedanism and by the Arabs, Saracens and the privateers of the Zamorin of Kozhiodu (Calicut). They began to take to pearl diving as an occupation, but being led away by ill feeling and hope of gain, they often attempted to outreach the Paravas, some of whom they gained to their party and to their religion, by which means they obtained importance. The kings themselves joined the Moors, anticipating greater advantages from the trade which they carried on and from their power at sea; the Paravas were oppressed and although they frequently rose against their adversaries, they always got the worst of it.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> Historical Relations Across the Indian Ocean, The General History of Africa: Studies and Documents, UNESCO, 1947, p. 14.

<sup>171</sup> Souter, C. A. (ed.), *Madras District Gazetteers, Tinnevely District*, Madras, 1934, p. 162.

The Fishery Coast became the habitation of several Muslims who had settled there after their expulsion from Madura by the Vijayanagar rulers. The Muslims had practically become the ultimate owners of all the pearl fisheries.

It seems that the Muslims also had a glorious past in the Fishery Coast, like the Paravas. At a certain point, history shows that the Muslims gained an upper hand over the Paravas. According to Roche, there are several factors, which caused the Parava-Muslim struggle. With the indigenous fishing know-how as well as the superior Arab navigational expertise, the Kayalar had gradually emerged as the prime maritime caste in the region. While other native sea-faring groups did not threaten Parava economic interests, the Kayalar did. They threatened the entire basis of Parava identity and livelihood and the groups seized on trivial incidents to try and oust the other from the vicinity.<sup>172</sup>

The Kayalar-Parava struggle centred upon the pearl and chank fisheries. Both pearls and chank shells were valuable commodities with regular markets in China and Bengal. The Kayalar-Parava contest was in fact more broad based and incorporated a struggle for carrying on the trade along the Coromandel Coast and across the Palk Strait to Sri Lanka.<sup>173</sup>

The Paravas and the Kayalars had tightly knit corporate solidarities. The separate corporate identities and rivalry of the two groups had been nurtured over three centuries not only on account of the splintering of certain segments of Paravas from the

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<sup>172</sup> Patrick A. Roche, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*



parent body to intermarry with the Arab settlers of Kayalpattanam but also because of their conversion and incorporation into Islam as Kayalar.<sup>174</sup>

The fate of the Paravas was not unique. Prior to the Portuguese intervention, Hindu rulers on the Fishery Coast controlled the activities of fishermen and pearl divers as a means of raising revenue. In addition, the Hindu rulers on the Malabar Coast encouraged the conversion of fisherfolk by the foreign Muslim merchants, to build a solid local base of sea-faring skills and mercantile expertise, linked to the prosperous and expanding Muslim trading world.<sup>175</sup>

Barbosa notes that it was the custom of the Paravas to fish pearls exclusively for the boat-owners every Friday. Generally the boat owners were Muslims. Besides, they also used to fish for a whole week at the end of the season for the Muslim dignitary of Pazhayakayal. Thus it is clearly established by Barbosa that the Muslims were boat owners who also wielded immense power and influence in the region.<sup>176</sup>

The problem for the Paravas was associated with the rise of Muslim mercantile and other sea-faring groups along the Coromandel Coast. Indian Muslim mercantile groups which dominated sea lanes from the Arabian Sea to the Strait of Malacca.<sup>177</sup> On the Tirunelveli coast, the Kayalar-Parava converts to Islam and other Muslim groups like Navayats, and Marakkayyars were rapidly undermining the economic

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<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> Kenneth McPherson, "Paravas and Portuguese: A study of Portuguese strategy and its Impact on Indian seafaring Community" in *The Portuguese, Indian Ocean, Pious and Jamal* (edits), Fundação Oriente, 2001, p. 136.

<sup>176</sup> Duarte Barbosa, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 22-24.

<sup>177</sup> Patrick A. Roche, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

base of Paravas by intruding into their pearling and other maritime activities. The position of local Muslim groups was further strengthened by their links with Gujarati Muslim merchants and sea-farers, which gave them access to a wide range of commodities eagerly sought by land based powers such as the Hindu rulers of Madurai and Venad.<sup>178</sup>

The Paravas' inability to withstand the superior Kayalar military and maritime power explains their recourse to outside help. Bereft of support from contiguous groups and faced with the possible collapse of their entire economy, the harassed Paravas turned for succour to the only power that had proved a match for Muslim seamen on the Indian coast.<sup>179</sup>

Though the Vijayanagar kingdom had been extended up to Kanyakumari in the extreme south of Tamil Nadu, the rulers of the same empire were not interested in bringing the entire territory under one jurisdiction because the Vijayanagar rulers were held up between the Deccan Sultans in the north and the Madurai Sultanate in the south.

Though the Fishery Coast had rich deposits of marine resources, neither the Vijayanagar emperor nor did his viceroys (the Nayaks) make any attempt to establish monopoly over the same. They must have been carried away by the pollution concept of the Vedas which prevented the Hindus from undertaking any dealing with the seas.

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<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> Kenneth McPherson, "*Paravas and Portuguese*", p. 137.

There was no power to stop the intrusion of the Muslims into the Fishery Coast. As a result, the Muslims grew strong and pushed the Paravas to the edge of the shore and the Paravas were not in a position to assert their access to the pearl fisheries.

There were a number of local rulers vying with one another to control the fisherfolk who were scattered over three kingdoms. These local rulers also took the side of the Muslims since they had already become powerful economically. Their (Muslims) association with all the Muslim merchant groups made them the real owners of the Fishery Coast. The Parava-Muslim conflict had reached its climax at the arrival of the Portuguese.

Tamil rulers have used pearls mainly as an ornamental item. Yet there are references to show that pearls were bartered for other commodities and many foreign trade missions visited the Fishery Coast. The Pandya rulers who were in possession of the Fishery Coast for more than thirteen centuries were satisfied with the tribute paid by their subjects, the Paravas. The latter were also content with their status.

In the fourteenth century the Muslims asserted their superiority over the Paravas, and thus the fate of the Fishery Coast underwent a change. When Islamic rule was introduced in the extreme South, all the Muslim merchant communities were united under one umbrella which strengthened their economy. This consideration rendered the Paravas helpless before them and they were desperately looking for a saviour to deliver them from their adversaries.

When the Portuguese arrived on the Fishery Coast, the Vijayanagar Empire was the only Hindu empire left in India. To promote their trade and colonial

interests, the Portuguese, did nothing that would change the status quo of the Hindu power. Therefore, the Vijayanagar rulers and their viceroys (the Nayakas and Poligars) extracted their share of revenue from the Paravas and left them to the mercy of their various oppressors.

At a global level, the tension between the Cross and the Crescent continued after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and it had its repercussions in the Indian Ocean also. Wherever the Portuguese met the Muslims, the Portuguese were reminded of the Spanish Moors whom they detested. Here in the Fishery Coast they found an opportunity to challenge the same Muslims. They also found a large community wanting to be freed from the oppression of the Muslims. The Portuguese found these conditions and situations very conducive to further their cause.

Their two aims, namely 'Spices and Christians', were to be realised on the west coast. On the east coast they were motivated by another motto 'Pearls and Christians'. The opportunity came in handy and the Fishery Coast came into the fold of the first European power - the Portuguese.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Maritime Activities of the Portuguese In the Fishery Coast

The Portuguese arrived at Kozhikodu (Calicut) in 1498 and within a decade they set their foot on the Fishery Coast. They located the important sea-ports and the pearl fisheries in the same coast. These areas were under the influence of the Muslim merchants with whom the Portuguese made several agreements. Until the Portuguese established their hold firmly they made use of the Muslim local sailors. After the Mass Conversion in 1536, the Portuguese found in the Parava community an ally, excelling in maritime skill and labour and with the help of the same community the Portuguese accomplished their maritime activities atleast for about a hundred years.

#### Portuguese Settlements

The Portuguese were in touch with the ports of the Fishery Coast from the very beginning of the sixteenth century. There were several reasons which prompted them to proceed towards the east coast. Though they had declared to the Zamorin of Kozhikodu that they were in search of ‘spices and Christians’, they were not content with them. The Portuguese were already aware of the pearl fisheries somewhere in the East. One of the general causes of undertaking a search for a sea-route to the East was to meet the legendary hero Prester John. They believed that Prester John was in possession of valuable commodities including pearls.<sup>180</sup> So searching for oriental pearls was paramount in their minds and as explorers, they ventured further into the Indian Ocean towards the east. They were attracted by the abundant pearl fisheries on the Fishery Coast and were inclined to procure the same.

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<sup>180</sup> Prester John, a Mythical potentate had great influence among the Portuguese. The Portuguese were eager to meet him. Boxer, C.R., *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire 1415-1825*, London, 1969, pp. 17-18.

The availability of pearls in abundance at the port of Pazhayakayal had been mentioned by Vasco da Gama in his diary.<sup>181</sup> Francisco de Almeida, the Viceroy was responsible for sending the same news to Dom Manuel, the King of Portugal. The first procurement of pearls and seed pearls from the Fishery Coast took place in Pazhayakayal between 1505 and 1508.<sup>182</sup> Though the Portuguese met with tough resistance from the Kayalars, the Portuguese could move to the pearl fishery areas because of their superior technology and navigation skills.

Jorge Manuel Flores says that the first port which the Portuguese founded in the Fishery Coast was Manapadu which was under the jurisdiction of the Great King of Kanyakumari. The port was capable of protecting the ships which were sailing between the Malabar and the Coromandel Coasts. One of the ships of Fernão Soares arrived at Manapadu as it was unable to navigate in the Malabar Coast during the winter.<sup>183</sup>

Jorge Flores further says that the sea of Sri Lanka acquired an enormous and strong strip of land extending from Manapadu to Rameshwaram. The principal settlements were situated here in the Fishery Coast. It was like a rosary that the ports were situated between Tiruchendur and Vedalai. The Portuguese habitants frequented these places and they found their requirements were available in abundance and it was very cheap to go around these ports of the Portuguese.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> *Diario da Viagem de Vasco da Gama, Vol. I, Porto, 1945, pp. 290-292.*

<sup>182</sup> Letter of Viceroy to the King of Portugal Written from Cochin on 16 December 1505, in ANTT, Gavetas, 20, Março 10, Document No. 33, fl. 4, Cited in Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *Portuguese in Tamil Coast – Historical Explorations in Commerce and Culture (1507-1749)*, Pondicherry, p. 62.

<sup>183</sup> Jorge Manuel Flores, *Os Portuguese e o Mar de Ceilão, Trato, Diplomacia e Guerra (1498-1543)*, Lisboa, 1998, p. 44.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

Towards the end of 1508 the galley slaves travelled from Cochin to the Coromandel Coast and the Portuguese tried to woo a Muslim pilot to their side and paid four cruzados and several bhars of rice in exchange of his knowledge.<sup>185</sup>

In 1519, Kadi Rayana, the chief of the Muslims of Kayalpattanam, attempted to conduct the pearl fishing on the Sri Lankan coast. The Sinhalese king Dharma Parakrama Bahu retaliated and it was followed by a lot of tension in the Fishery Coast. So the new Mudaliyar (head man) went out of his way and implored the help of the Portuguese. At once the Portuguese commanding officer of Colombo, António de Miranda de Azevedo reported the matter to the King of Portugal.<sup>186</sup>

Azevedo said,

“His Highness could reap more profit from the pearl banks. The local rulers were fighting for a long time. On some days they would fish pearls on the value of 2-3000 *pardaus*<sup>187</sup> and the fishing season lasted for three months every year. The chief of Kayal (Pazhyakayal) wanted to rescue him with two ships by the Portuguese and a certain amount would be paid by the chief.”<sup>188</sup>

The Portuguese undertook a mission under Manuel de Fries which sailed around Kanyakumari in 1523-1525 on their way to search for the remains of St. Thomas on the Coromandel Coast arrived at Pazhayakayal. They witnessed the Paravas hard pressed by the Kayalars. The Portuguese who had come with the aim of seizing the pearl fishery, had on board João Flores, already appointed by the King of Portugal as the

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<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> Georg Schurhammer, *Orientalia*, Lisboa, 1963, pp. 244-245.

<sup>187</sup> In Xavier's time a silver *pardau* was worth 300 *reis*, one of gold was worth 350. Joseph Costelloe, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

captain and factor of the Fishery Coast. The Paravas found no difficulty in exacting a rent of 1500 cruzados per annum from the headman of the coast and Flores was left with a small force to guard the pearl fishery and enforce due payment.<sup>189</sup>

Since the Portuguese did not get the expected quantum of pearls at Pazhayakayal they moved to Kilakkarai. The Marakkayars were enjoying sole monopoly over the pearl fishing at Killakkarai. In 1527, João Flores signed a contract with the *Nayinar* (chiefain) of Kilakkarai and the latter agreed to pay annually a fixed amount of 3000 *pardaus* to the Portuguese. The Portuguese assured protection to the Marakkayars against the menace of the sea pirates. At this juncture, the Portuguese introduced the cartaz (sailing permits) system, by which the Muslim Marakkayars were asked to travel with the cartazes to Sri Lanka or to the Malabar Coast. This affected the trade relations of the Marakkayars with Sri Lanka.<sup>190</sup>

To avoid conflicts with the Marakkayars of Kilakkarai, the Portuguese were on the look out for another strategic place to control the sea of Sri Lanka. Vedalai came under the control of the Portuguese in 1525 and the first fort was built after obtaining permission from Tumbichi Nayak of Paramakudi.<sup>191</sup> The Portuguese made two agreements with Tumbichi Nayak who was the ruler of Kilakkarai and Vedalai. He promised to pay 3000 *pardaus* annually to the Portuguese in return for the protection of the pearl fishers.<sup>192</sup> Secondly he allowed the supply of horses to Paramakudi by the

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<sup>189</sup> *Diario da Viagem de Vasco da Gama, op. cit.*, p. 301.

<sup>190</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., "Portuguese Commercial Enterprise at the Port of Kilakkarai and Establishment of a Trading Settlement at Vedalai on the Tamil Nadu Coast (1520-1559)", *Purabhilek – Puratatva, Vol. X, No. Two*, July – Dec. 1992, pp. 31-32, Historical Archives of Goa, Panaji.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> Georg Schurhammer, *Orientalia*, p. 244.



Portuguese.<sup>193</sup> The Portuguese found this place strategically important in the sense that they could monitor the ships going to Coromandel Coast, Bengal, Pegu, Siam and Sri Lanka.

Thus the Portuguese could bring the important sea ports (Pazhayakayal, Kayalpattanam, Kilakkarai and Vedalai) under their control. The Kayalars and Marakkayars who wielded enormous influence on the pearl fisheries were brought under the control of the Portuguese. It is important to note that the above ports had been predominantly occupied by the Muslims but they were fighting with one another. The chieftains of Pazhayakayal and Kilakkarai were not on cordial term with one another. The sea pirates known as the Moors were ravaging the pearl fisheries and inflicted great loss on the pearl traders. The Portuguese assistance to protect the pearl fisheries was very much needed. In the initial stage they met with tough resistance from the Mappilas of the Malabar Coast who came to the rescue of the Muslims in the Fishery Coast. This struggle continued upto 1535 and in the same year the Portuguese found an ally in the Paravas.

From Jeyaseela Stephen's account we understand that the Portuguese settlements at places like Punnaikayal and Thoothukudi, had come into existence at a later period. It seems that as though the Parava villages came under their sway after the Mass Conversion in 1536. But Caldwell's statement is that the first Portuguese expedition was sent to the Fishery Coast in 1532 and it corroborates the other sources also.<sup>194</sup> For instance, in 1534, Pope Leo XIII made a remark that "everywhere the flags of

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<sup>193</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., "Portuguese Commercial", p. 32.

<sup>194</sup> Caldwell, R., *op. cit.*, p. 68.

Portugal were under the shadow of the Cross; the conquests of Portugal were so many conquests of religion." This statement was made on the Portuguese factories or trading centres at Bassein, Goa, Cochin, Quilon, Colombo and on the Fishery and Coromandel Coasts and in Malacca in view. So even before the Mass Conversion the Portuguese were in touch with the ports in the Fishery Coast.<sup>195</sup>

### **Mass Conversion**

The Mass Conversion which took place in 1536 was an important turning point in the maritime history of the Portuguese not only in the Fishery Coast but also in the Indian Ocean. The Paravas who occupied the coast from Kanyakumari to Rameshwaram had been the owners of the pearl fisheries for nearly one and a half millennium years. The Arabs brought them under their yoke and when the Paravas felt that the Parava economy was under threat they sought the intervention of the Portuguese.

Silva Rego gives an account of the last quarrel between the Paravas and the Muslims just before the conversion of the former. About the year 1536 an incident occurred which threatened to throw the coastal people into the throes of a violent internecine warfare. In a scuffle between a Muslim and a Parava at Thoothukudi, the Parava had his ear torn out by his adversary, who out of sheer greed for the ring it bore, carried it with him. The Paravas took this incident as a great offence to the whole caste. It sparked a civil war between the Paravas and the Muslims, and it was soon apparent that the Paravas would be beaten in the struggle. A Muslim flotilla guarded the coast making it impossible for the Paravas to ply their trade. An offering of five *fanams* was given to anyone who would bring the head of one Parava.<sup>196</sup>

The Paravas were advised by a horse trader João da Cruz, who was at Kanyakumari supplying horses to the local kings and collecting tribute from the pearl fishery to the Great King.<sup>197</sup> In fulfilment of the treaty made with the new-comers the

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<sup>195</sup> Joseph C Houpert, *A South Indian Mission-The Madura Catholic Mission*, Trichy, 1937, pp. 143-144.

<sup>196</sup> António da Silva Rego, *Documentação para a História das Missões do Padroado Português do Oriente, Vol. II (1523-1543)*, Lisboa, 1948, pp. 257-259.

<sup>197</sup> Georg Schurhammer, *Varia I, Anhance*, Lisboa, 1965, p. 58.

Paravas became zealous Roman Catholics. Thus they won the confidence of their masters and under the protection of the Portuguese, enjoyed comparative tranquility and immunity from extortionate tyranny seldom met with by Indians living within the Portuguese influence. João da Cruz was a Chetty from the east coast but had settled in the Malabar assisting the Portuguese and other local rulers in and around Kanyakumari. He was responsible for bringing the entire Parava Hindu community to embrace Christianity before the arrival of Xavier. Several of his (João da Cruz) original letters are still preserved in the Torre do Tombo, the National Archives in Lisbon. He called himself “Dom João, ambassador of the King of Calicut”, King Manuel II was glad to see him as an envoy from the Zamorin and won João da Cruz to the Catholic faith.<sup>198</sup> According to his advice all the eighty five Pattangattis of the Parava villages expressed their willingness to be converted into Catholicism and assured that it would be followed by their subjects.<sup>199</sup> The Portuguese did not want to miss the great opportunity that would bring to them the complete control over the lucrative pearl trade. The Portuguese have also waited for this moment to rout their arch enemy, the Muslims. Not only the entire Fishery Coast embraced Catholicism, but also accepted the Portuguese King as their sovereign. Immediately after the conversion, a Portuguese fleet arrived on the Pescaria (Fishery Coast) and in a series of hard-fought naval battles gradually extinguished the power of the Kayalars and re-established the waning hold of the Paravas on their pearl fishing rights and settlements. Parava leaders sealed their own part in the contract by gathering twenty

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<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57, 61.

<sup>199</sup> *DI.*, Vol. II, pp. 257-259.

thousand of their members from thirty settlements in one camp for baptism. Jesuits' records indicate that this event took place in March or April, 1536. It was followed by mass baptism at a later date of the Parava inhabitants of Thoothukudi, Vembar and Vaipar in 1537.<sup>200</sup> Whatever the reasons for the Portuguese involvement on the Fishery Coast, it had a profound effect upon the fortunes and history of the Catholic Parava community. The two important results of the conversion are : first, the breaking up of the Muslim power on the Fishery Coast. Secondly, the advent of the Jesuit missionaries to India who not only did their missionary work but also became agents to the Portuguese officials for the smooth conduct of trade in the Fishery Coast.<sup>201</sup> **Seven Major Ports** Roche says that as soon as the Portuguese brought the Fishery Coast under their control after the Mass Conversion, they fortified the existing seven major ports.<sup>202</sup> They are all in one string of line, starting from Kanyakumari eastward. (These villages are often referred to in the letters of Xavier.) The churches and other structures here witness to the fact that the Portuguese had more influence in these villages than in other parts of the Fishery Coast. The Paravas of these ports possessed boats and Xavier called them (the boat owners) *champanotes*. They were economically rich and Xavier used to ask them to help the Christians of Kanyakumari whenever they were attacked by the Badagas. The affected Christians were asked to settle at Manapadu by Xavier.<sup>203</sup> He too undertook his missionary activities mostly in these villages. The fisherfolk in these seven villages are socially

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<sup>200</sup> Patrick A. Roche, A., *op. cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

and economically higher than the people of other villages. Xavier himself admits this by stating that the Comorin Christians were highly illiterate and experienced crushing poverty.<sup>204</sup> **Punnaikayal** Among the seven villages or ports, Punnaikayal became the central place of the trade activities of the Portuguese. The reason being that it is situated at the middle of the Fishery Coast. According to Caldwell, “the principal settlement of the Portuguese for about fifty years after their arrival seems to have been Punnaikayal.” ‘Punnai’ means the Indian laurel, and ‘kayal’, a lagoon opening into the sea. Old Kayal (Pazhayakayal) is situated to the north of the Tamiraparani river and Punnaikayal to the south, close to the mouth of the Tamiraparani and right on the seashore.<sup>205</sup> It is now only a fishing village, but traces remain of its former greatness. The first hospital, seminary, college and printing press were founded in Punnaikayal. In 1552, a mud fort which was built by the Portuguese was destroyed by the Badagas and captain Coutinho was taken captive. According to Burnell, Punnaikayal was an important port till 1542, and Thoothukudi was of less importance.<sup>206</sup>

By 1542, when Xavier visited the Fishery Coast, the pearl fishery had already fallen entirely into the hands of the Portuguese. The Muslims had been driven out of their age old economic activities. In 1560 a garrison of fifty men was stationed at Punnaikayal. When Caesar Frederic visited the Fishery Coast in 1563 he witnessed the pearl fishing at Kayal, probably Punnaikayal. (Pazhayakayal and Punnaikayal are

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<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> Caldwell, R., *op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

neighbouring villages). Chanks were once found here in great numbers as it (Punnaikayal) is situated near the mouth of river Tamiraparani. Up to the present time the greater number of the chanks used in commerce are found in the sea adjacent to the mouth of this river.<sup>207</sup> **Settlement of Thoothukudi** The earliest mention of Thoothukudi in literature has been in 88 A.D. in the Greek work, “the Periplus of the Erythraen Sea”. The first reference to Thoothukudi in history has been made in 123 A.D. by the Greek philosopher, Ptolemy. Even in the days of antiquity, Thoothukudi which was under the rule of the Pandyas and the Cholas from seventh to twelfth century was a flourishing centre for chank and pearl fishing. It had contacts with a number of western and eastern countries, known for pearl fishery. The Portuguese were the first to arrive here in 1532, and began to evince an interest in the trade.<sup>208</sup>

But Thoothukudi became the head quarters of the Portuguese only in 1582. Till then Punnaikayal had been the centre of the commercial activities of the Portuguese for half a century. The Portuguese decided to move to Thoothukudi for several reasons. Since the fisherfolk changed their allegiance from the Vijayanagar emperor to the King of Portugal, they were facing difficulties. They paid tribute to the Portuguese Crown as they were protected by the same from the oppressive Muslims. The Paravas had to bear the repercussion because of this transfer of allegiance and often Punnaikayal was invaded by Telugu forces known as Badagas. The Badagas were supported by the Muslims and in turn the latter were supported by the Muslims of the Malabar Coast. So the Portuguese were forced to choose Thoothukudi in 1582

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<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>208</sup> Sudhakar, “Pearl Turns Silver” – Thoothukudi Port Trust –Silver Jubilee, *The Hindu*, July 10, 2004.

as their second central place of their trade transactions.<sup>209</sup> According to Caldwell, “Tuticorin is the European equivalent of the Tamil name of the place Tuttukkudi (Thoothukudi). The cerebral of Tuttukkudi became ‘r’ in the mouth of Europeans by that rule of mispronunciation by which Manapadu, became Manappar. The final ‘n’ in Tuticorin was added for some euphonic reasons as turned Kochchi into Cochin and Kumari into Comorin. The meaning of the name Tuttukkudi is said to be the town where the wells get filled up; from tuttu (properly turttu), to fill up a well and kudi, a place of habitation a town.”<sup>210</sup>

The Portuguese were attracted to Thoothukudi by the advantages offered by its harbour, which was the only place that could be called a harbour along the entire Coromandel Coast. The harbour is well sheltered from every wind by islands and spits of sand. Unfortunately it is so shallow that only vessels of sixty tons’ capacity can load in it. Probably the vessels used by the early Portuguese, though built in Europe, were not much larger than good sized country craft, so they were able to load and unload inside the harbour.<sup>211</sup> Corals, grit-stones, deep sea shells, such as chanks, pretens, oysters, and pearl oysters were found in the sea. From the time Ptolemy visited, Thoothukudi has been a centre of multifaceted activities due to its proximity to Sri Lanka. In 1582 the Portuguese brought the statue of Our Lady

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<sup>209</sup> Caldwell, R., *op. cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

of Snobs to Thoothukudi.<sup>212</sup> This strengthened the faith of the Paravas and the entire caste, residing from Kanyakumari to Rameshwaram, became one body and it resulted in a unique Parava economy.

In 1587, the revenue derived from the pearl fishery consisted of 161 quintals of seed pearls. They were mostly exported from the Fishery Coast to Lisbon. Pearl fishing was suspended for sixteen years due to the suppression of the society of Jesus. When pearl fishing resumed in 1621 at Thoothukudi there was an abundant presence of pearls there.<sup>213</sup> **Pearl Fishing and Pearl Trade** Before going into details about the Portuguese trade in pearls, it is good to know how pearl fishing was done in various pockets of the Fishery Coast. Pearls were fished not only in Kilakkarai, Vedalai, Pazhayakayal, Punnaikayal and Thoothukudi but pearls were available in the entire Fishery Coast. Pearls and *aljofar* (seed pearls) were fished by the fishermen on the Comorin coast also. Kanyakumari pearls were the same as those of the Fishery Coast”.<sup>214</sup> Barbosa gives an account about the pearls found in the sea next to the island namely Sri Lanka. According to him, “ there was in the sea a shoal covered by a depth of ten or twelve fathoms of water where were found pearls, both great and small, in extreme abundance. Of these, some were shaped like pears. The Moors (Muslims) and the Heathens (Hindus) of a city named Cael (Punnaikayal), pertaining to the king of Coulaus (Quilon) used to come hither twice in

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<sup>212</sup> Venantius Fernando, S., *Portuguese Padroado*, p. 370.

<sup>213</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *Tamil Coast*. pp. 129-130.

<sup>214</sup> *DI., Vol. XVII (1595-1597)*, 1988, p. 182.



every year to fish for them. They found them in oysters smaller and smoother than ours. Men dove and found them at the bottom of the water, where they could stay for many hours. The little pearls belonged to the pearl gatherers and the great ones to the king, who kept his factor there. They paid him as well as certain fees to obtain his permission to fish.<sup>215</sup> Before venturing out to fish pearls, the Catholic fisherfolk came for the sacrament. People of different castes, creed and economic positions used to gather together at this time. The priests had to keep peace among the people.<sup>216</sup> Pearl fishing took place twice in the year, the first being in March and April and the second in August and September and the sale lasted from the month of June till November. But this fishing did not take place every year in the same place.<sup>217</sup>

Before venturing out to pearlfish the divers liked to know ahead whether the venture would be profitable. Therefore, to assess their prospects, a few boats were sent first to the fisheries. Each boat brought back a thousand oysters and if out of the thousand oysters if they (the Paravas) could not obtain pearls to the value of five fanams i.e a half ecu,<sup>218</sup> it was concluded that the pearl fishing would not be profitable.<sup>219</sup> Accordingly, if at the worst, 1000 oysters did not yield 5 *fanams* worth of pearls, they did not fish during that year. The merchants bought the oysters on chance and contented themselves with what they found inside. In some years the 1000 oysters did contain as much as 7 *fanams* worth and the whole fishing yielded 100000

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<sup>215</sup> Duarte Barbosa, *The Book of Durate Barbosa, Vol. II*, pp. 116-117.

<sup>216</sup> *DI., Vol. XVIII (1595-1597)*, 1988 p. 913.

<sup>217</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels in India, Vol. II*, New Delhi, 1977, p. 92.

<sup>218</sup> Ecu was worth of two rupees.

<sup>219</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

piastres and over. While the Portuguese were masters of Mannar they received toll from every boat. This yielded them revenue amounting to 17,200 reals in the best years.<sup>220</sup> The Portuguese took this revenue from these poor people because they (the Portuguese) had to protect these people (the poor Paravas) from their enemies (the Malabaris) who often attacked them and captured and enslaved them. It was usually good fortune if large pearls were found but it was a rare phenomenon here because the Gulf of Mannar seldom produced large ones.<sup>221</sup> The fishing was carried on from 4 to 12 cubits depth on the banks, where there were sometimes up to 250 boats. In the majority of the boats there was but one diver and in the largest only two. These boats sailed from the coast every day before sunrise, with a land wind which never failed and lasted till 10 a.m.<sup>222</sup> They returned in the afternoon as the wind blew from the sea (after the wind from the land). This wind (the sea wind) was regular. It followed the land wind at about 11 or 12' o'clock.

The pearl banks were approximately 5 or 6 leagues into the sea and the pearl fishing began once the boats had arrived at the pearl banks. The pearl oysters were fished in the following manner: A strong cord was tied under the arms of the and was held by those who were in the boat. A stone weighing about 20 pounds was tied to a rope and attached to the diver's great toe. This rope was also held by those in the boat. The stone dragged the diver down and enabled him to dive and reach the pearl banks faster so as to save his precious breath. A net was made into a sack or a bag and

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<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

its mouth was held open by a hoop into which the diver collected the oysters. This net bag was tagged to the diver's waist. The diver dived into the sea and immediately on reaching the bottom (the pearl bank) untied the stone from his toe and those above (in the boat) hauled it up. The diver gathered oysters into the net bag as long as his breath allowed him. The moment he felt he could hold his breath no longer, he tugged at the chord that connected him to the boat and those in the boat at once hauled him up. The people of Mannar were better fishers and remained for a longer time under the water than those of Bahrein and Al Katiff, for they did not place any clips on their noses nor cotton in their ears to keep the water from entering, as was done in the Persian Gulf.<sup>223</sup>

After the diver had been drawn into the boat, the nets containing the oysters were hauled up and it required about seven or eight minutes to lift the oysters and to give the diver time to regain breath, after which he returned to the bottom as before. This he did many times during ten or twelve hours and then returned to land. Those who were in want of money sold at once what they had taken, but those who had what they required to live on kept the oysters until the whole fishing was finished.<sup>224</sup> Women were employed in good number to cut the oysters during the pearl fishing.<sup>225</sup>

Pearl fishing on the Fishery Coast was done under the jurisdiction of the fort of Mannar. Ships were sent under a trustworthy captain to guard the fishery. He took oath to this effect on the Holy Scriptures. The king ordered the viceroy to

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<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> *DI., Vol. XVII, p. 184.*

collect the maximum from the fishery by assisting the Fishery Coast.<sup>226</sup> The Muslims were informed of their rights and punishments. The captain, kanakkapillai, the translator and the clerk of the factory of Mannar were present on the Fishery Coast. All the owners of the ships living on the coast were asked to take oath on the Holy Scriptures. Every thing was entered in a book and the ships of the Muslims and Hindus and their catch were entered separately.<sup>227</sup> When the fishing was over, the Pattangattis decided as to how much money, each ship should pay. This was decided according to the quantity of fishing and the custom. This amount was written below the oath in the book. This book was sent to the revenue official to see, whether everything was correct in accordance with the regulations.<sup>228</sup> In case a few ships did not pay the *fanams* they should not be allowed to fish. Those who did not fall under the Portuguese jurisdiction could not fish without taking surety from other known fishermen who would pay for the catch. All the rent and tribute would be written down by the clerk of the factory. The pearl banks had always been royal property.<sup>229</sup> All the pearls collected and brought from the Gulf of Mannar were sent to Goa. At Goa there was a large trade in pearls where pearls came from the island of Bahrein in the Persian Gulf, Mannar on the coast of the island of Sri Lanka, and from America.<sup>230</sup> Among the Portuguese exports, varieties of seed pearls, both for

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<sup>226</sup> Pissurlencar, *Regimentos das Fortalezas da India*, Goa, 1951, p. 365.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>230</sup> Monções do Reino (hereafter MDR), Livro 2A, fl.50, Historical Archives of Goa, (here after HAG), Goa, 1583-1595.

boutique and medicinal use, were included. In 1616, more than 36 bags of *aljofar* were sent to Portugal. They were of highly expensive quality. Again in 1635, ten bags of seed pearls were dispatched on the annual carracks that left the port of Goa for Portugal.<sup>231</sup> The majority of the pearls were sold by the ounce and ground into powder. Only few among them weighed of a grain and it was a great event when any of two or three carats were found.<sup>232</sup> Throughout Europe the pearls were sold by carat weight, which was equal to 4 grams, the same as the diamond weight, but in Asia the weight was different. In Persia the pearls were weighed by the àbbás and an abbas is an eighth less than a carat. In India and in all the territories of the Great Mughal and the kings of Golkonda and Bijapur, they were weighed by ratis and the rati is also an eighth less than the carat. The pearl rati was equal to 2.77 troy grains.<sup>233</sup>

The Portuguese then in all the places in India where they were in authority, sold pearls by a weight which they called *chegos* but bought them by the merchants, according to the places from where they brought them by carats, àbbás or ratis.<sup>234</sup> Though the Chinese did not have any settlement as that of the Portuguese, they showed great interest in the pearl trade on the Fishery Coast. Pearls were sent to China for ornamental use. This was proved from the finest workmanship and the most perfect work found in the making of cabinets of all patterns. They were

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<sup>231</sup> Afzal Ahamad, *Portuguese Trade on the Western Coast*, New Delhi, 1991, p. 139.

<sup>232</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 94-96.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

all of choice woods and inlaid with ivory, pearls and precious stones; in place of iron, they were mounted with gold.<sup>235</sup> In return the Portuguese bought silver from China.

The Chinese traders were also active in the east coast of Tamil Nadu (part of the Vijayanagar Kingdom) as confirmed by Joseph of Cranganore as also by some paintings which show Chinese traders along with the Arabs during the sixteenth century in a temple of Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu.<sup>236</sup> The evidence of Tome Pires of the early sixteenth century, Mendes Pinto, the mid sixteenth century Portuguese adventurer, and others show that even in the first half of the sixteenth century, Chinese ships were navigating in the eastern Indian Ocean.<sup>237</sup> These accounts corroborate the fact that not only the Portuguese but other foreign powers were also interested in pearl trade as they particularly concentrated on the eastern coast.

**Revenues from the Pearl Fishery** The Portuguese received dizimo (tithe) and this was fixed at five percent of six ounces of pearls and one-eighth of the seed pearls which were sold at the value of six cruzados each. They received from Punnaikayal one eighth of the seed pearls of three ounces at the value of five curzados. During the pearl operations, about 400 to 600 boats were used in the Kilakkarai and Vedalai regions. As the legal holder of the pearl fishery rights, the Nayak of Madurai received one day's proceeds during the seasons as his share. The actual management of the pearl fishery was in the hands of the Paravas and

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<sup>235</sup> Albert Gray and Bell, *The Voyage of Francis Pyrard of Laval to the East Indies, the Maldives, the Moluccas and Brazil, Two volumes in 3 parts, Vol. 2, Part-I*, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 176-177.

<sup>236</sup> Mathew, K.S. (ed.), *Mariners, Merchants and Oceans – Studies in Maritime History*, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 103-104.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*

supervised mostly by the Jesuits.<sup>238</sup> **Revenue Earned by the Portuguese from the Fishery Coast<sup>239</sup> A.D. 1525 – 1605**

Year	Amount (in <i>pardaus</i> of 300 reis)
1525	7500
1552	3200
1574	5000
1581	5000
1585	9000
1605	25000

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<sup>238</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *Tamil Coast*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>239</sup> Sanjay Subramanyam, "Noble Harvest from the Sea" *Institution and Economic Change in South Asia*, Delhi, 1996, p. 143, cited in Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *Tamil Coast*, p. 77.



**Mannar** Towards the close of the sixteenth century the yield of pearls from the Fishery Coast completely dried up and the fishing of pearls moved from place to place. Dom Constantantino de Braganca, the Viceroy of Goa therefore appointed a Portuguese captain namely Jorge de Mello de Castro in 1582 at Mannar. By this time the Portuguese had left from the trading centres like Vedalai and Punnaikayal but continued in Thoothukudi. From 1582, the Fishery Coast was administered from Mannar.<sup>240</sup> Mannar, although built on an island which gives it its name, is almost connected to Sri Lanka, being separated from it only by a narrow strait. It had a very small fortress, had no garrison of infantry. It was a settlement of one hundred and fifty families of Portuguese and two hundred handicraftsmen, and a captain who also resided here.<sup>241</sup> **Sources of Income from Mannar** **First Regulations of the Fort of**

<sup>240</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *Tamil Coast*, p. 71.

<sup>241</sup> Pissurlencar, *Regimentos*, p. 358.



**Mannar 1582** As per the First Order or Regulations issued by the Viceroy, income from the following items were to be collected. Every year about 64,000 *fanams* were collected during the small and the grand pearl fisheries, out of which 60,000 *fanams* were from the pearl fishing and 4000 *fanams* were collected from the Paravas and Caraiyars. This particular amount was handed over to the priests for teaching catechism to the children.<sup>242</sup> The king of Jaffnapattanam was expected to pay 13,700 *fanams* or ten elephants of six covados every year.<sup>243</sup> The Portuguese received 1280 *fanams* as tribute from the temple of Triconamalle. The other sources of income were from the rent, arrack, and fines which were collected from the Muslims and Hindus for fishing. Also income came from lending advance (*bolça*) for fishing, income from *xaya*<sup>244</sup> and income from arecanuts of Triconamalle and Batticola.<sup>245</sup> Manatota, an adjoining district of Mannar, that belonged to the King of Jaffnapattanam, came under the Portuguese. The boatmen and people from Mannar had inhabited there. Mantota brought income in the form of paddy and 400 cans of butter which cost about 500 *fanams*. If peace prevailed in and around Mannar, the people had to pay an extra tax.<sup>246</sup>

**Second Regulations of the Fort of Mannar** As the viceroy was informed that certain receipts were not included in the income as per the Order, he made the Second Regulations in the same year. The captain had taken some of the incomes for himself

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<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 358-359.

<sup>243</sup> Cavado was an old measurement of land equivalent to 66 cm.

<sup>244</sup> Xaya is a colour extracted from a particular plant in South India.

<sup>245</sup> Pissurlencar, *Regimentos*, pp. 359-360.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*

and had not collected rents at all.<sup>247</sup> So the viceroy had to make the following additional incomes: **Arrippu:** The hidden oyster banks should be unearthed and rented out by the factor. About 4000 *fanams* as rent were to be collected from the markets and shops on the Fishery Coast. **Chapa**

All the goods sold on the Fishery Coast were to be stamped with the royal emblem and 200 *paradaus* would be collected as income. Areca should be collected in the fort as per the customs. The factor should send a person to collect all the areca and bring them to the factor when they were to be sold in auction to the highest bidder.<sup>248</sup> Cartazes should be issued to the ships sailing to Batticola and Triconamalle. The cartazes should be entered in the register in the presence of the factor. If the cartaz issued to the high officer was not registered, the captain and the clerk would pay 500 *fanams* and 100 *fanams* as fine respectively. The captain, the rector of the Jesuits, the Pattangatti-mor and the kanakkapillai should make the owners of the champanas to take an oath before they venture into the sea for pearl fishing. By taking this, the owners would make it clear how many persons they were taking in their respective champanas, their names, religion, place of origin and addresses were also written down.<sup>249</sup> The factor was responsible to bring it to the book all the income from the fisheries during his service. If these procedures were not kept up, the *providor mor* (chief supplier) would complain to the viceroy and the factor would be fined. When the Second Regulations were made, Mathias de

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<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 360.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 481-485.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*

Albuquerque was the Viceroy. João de Costa and Louis Barbalho were appointed as the factor and *providor* of the fort of Mannar respectively.<sup>250</sup>

### **Tributes**

The inhabitants of Kilakkarai as they were Muslims had to pay every year as tribute to His Majesty of Portugal 2 pearls each of 5 carats of finest quality and two others of 2 carats each in accordance with the contract made with them by João de Mello Sampayo, the captain of Mannar. This contract was registered in the above factory and the factor should be careful to collect it. The Caraiyars from Carmapatão or Careapattão had to pay 50 chickens and 11 lambs. This contract was made by João de Melo.<sup>251</sup>

In general all the Muslims had to pay 20 *kurus* (small heaps) of chanks. This was arranged by João de Melo. Champanas or ships which navigate from the ports of Sri Lanka with areca and cloth passing by the fort of Mannar were subjected to His Highness. They had to produce the certificate to the factory and state how they were going to pay the money. This would be shown as receipts in Sri Lanka by the factor of Sri Lanka. In the absence of the certificate a fine at the rate of 10% would be collected.<sup>252</sup>

Lots of cinnamon produced in Sri Lanka were taken to the fort of Mannar and down below to Masulipattanam and Moca. All the spices belonged to the Majesty and trade on such item was the service of His Majesty. This business should be done by His people. Nobody should take cinnamon from Sri Lanka or to send or carry to the port of Masulipattanam and nobody should deal with the same cinnamon without a licence.<sup>253</sup>

If the above conditions were not followed all the materials found in the ships passing by the fort of Mannar would be confiscated. Of that 1/3 would be given to the persons who had reported and it was the duty of the factor, who had to carefully check the ships and if things were found, they would be taken as receipts in his account.<sup>254</sup>

With regard to the salary of armed men, those who were not in the service and those names which were not entitled should not get salary. There should be only 200 armed men, 20 captains and 3 factors in the fort of Mannar. To guard the fort, there should be only 100 soldiers. They should be paid in cash and not in kind (rice). The sailors who resided in the fort and worked in the fleets would be paid for his wives, in the form of rice and the provisions. The rice should be collected from Mantota.<sup>255</sup>

The Franciscan priests who resided at the fort were to be paid 2 *pardaus* every month and each was provided with one candid of rice. The doctor got 4 *paradaus* and his provisions each month and the nurse got 3 *paradaus*. The translator of the fort and singers of the church were paid 3 *paradaus* every month.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 481-485, 371.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 486-488.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 490.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 490-491.

In the fort of Mannar, a lot of money was disorderly spent on gunpowder and ammunition. The viceroy ordered that there could be no spending for gunpowder and ammunition by the order of the clerk or captain except only when it was absolutely necessary. If the expenses were done for the purpose of the festival, this would not be passed and would not be taken into account unless the captain's orders were shown. Mannar was strategically important. Soldiers and 8 ships were stationed at Mannar under the command of the captain to guard Sri Lanka and to monitor the ships entering and going out from the ports.<sup>257</sup>

The fort of Mannar was strengthened to oversee the southern area.<sup>258</sup> The viceroy was asked to repair the parts of the Mannar fort. João de Mello was the captain of the ship belonging to the southern navigation. The inhabitants were given 2000 *pardaus* for repair. He (João de Mello) received another 2000 *pardaus* from issuing cartazes.<sup>259</sup>

### **Trade in Chank**

Since time immemorial, the pearl-banks lying between Sri Lanka and India were worked by the sturdy caste of the Paravas, who enjoyed special rights and privileges in pearl and chank fishing.

The Hindus consider the chank as sacred and the possession of such a thing at home is considered good by other religious communities also. Like pearls, chanks also have a long history and chank fishing has been an ancient one. Kenneth McPherson says that the Paravas worked the valuable pearl and chank fisheries of the Palk Straits.<sup>260</sup>

Chank was called the mother of pearls (*Turbinella phrum*) and is divided into two categories – the right-whorled or 'Valampuri' and the ordinary or 'Edampuri' chanks. The right whorled chank has its opening from the left to the right and it is very rarely found. The ordinary chank which has its opening from the right to the left is available in plenty. The right whorled chanks are very costly, and it costs sometimes tens

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<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 366, 491.

<sup>258</sup> HAG, MDR, Livro 2A, fl. 130.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, fl. 130.

<sup>260</sup> Kenneth McPherson, “*Pravas and Portuguese*”, p. 143.

of thousands of rupees.<sup>261</sup> Agananuru speaks of the right whorled chank obtained from the waters of Korkai.<sup>262</sup> The Muslims also like to have chanks in their houses since they believe that the possession of the right-whorled chank will do good to the possessor and his family.

In India chanks were available only in the Tamil coast and Kathiwar and no where else. In the Tamil coast, the Gulf of Mannar was fested with these sea shells. They were found between pearl banks and coral beds. Chanks were found both in Thoothukudi and towards the north of it. They were also found in abundance in the islands situated before Thoothukudi.<sup>263</sup>

Next to pearls, the chank was the second most important commercial product of the Gulf of Mannar. It is called chank in English and chanco in Portuguese. The chank fishery went on from October to May and was worked by divers, who weighed themselves with stones and descended to the bottom to the sea with a net round their waist. Unlike the pearl-oysters which were found in clusters, the shells of the chank were scattered, so the divers had to move about from place to place to collect them.<sup>264</sup>

At the close of the day's fishery the chanks were brought to the shore and tested using the wooden gauge with a hole two and three-eighths inches in diameter. Those shells which passed through this hole were discarded and returned to the sea on the chance that the animal may revive and continue to grow. The larger ones were stacked in

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<sup>261</sup> Arunachalam, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>264</sup> Pate, H.R., *Madras District Gazetteers, Tinnevelly, Vol. I, Madras, 1917*, pp. 234-235.

a storehouse, where the animal substance was got rid off. Finally the shells were sold by auction to the highest bidder.<sup>265</sup>

Cosmos, an Egyptian monk, who travelled in India in the sixth century A.D. and the Arab Abu Zayeed who wrote in 851 A.D. refer to the production and the export of the chank shells from the Tamil Coast to Bengal. Barbosa who was in India in the sixteenth century speaks about the trade that was carried at Kayal (Punnaikayal). From him we learn that Punnaikayal was still an important seaport where many ships from the various parts of India including Bengal landed every year to trade with the wealthy Hindu and Muslim merchants living there. There was no difficulty in forwarding the supply of chanks directly by sea to the Dacca workshops. Garcia de Orta, in 1563, and Boccaro, in 1644, speak of the trade in the chank shells with Bengal where the chanks were made into bangles for the arms (jewellery).<sup>266</sup>

By the end of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese seem to have changed the system of collecting revenue from taxing the divers to that of farming the fishery for a fixed amount. They included the chank fishery also in this. As a result of this policy, the chank fishery was farmed out to a group of wealthy merchants.<sup>267</sup>

Every year pearl fishing took place twice and the first one which took place in April – May was known as the great fishery and second one in October – November was known as the small fishery. The chank fishing was known as small

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<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>266</sup> Arunachalam, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 104-105.

fishery. From Xavier's letter it is understood that the Paravas went chank fishing in September.<sup>268</sup>

Caldwell speaks about the chanks which were available in Thoothukudi as follows: "Chanks were found in 7-fathom water, but we may take a minimum depth of 5 fathoms, and reckon 30 feet for the depth of their habitat."<sup>269</sup>

At first the Portuguese did not seem to have been very particular about chank fishery since they were more allured to the pearl fishery and the revenue they derived from them.<sup>270</sup>

Commodities like chanks were excluded from the scope of the maritime trade of the Paravas because such articles were declared by the Portuguese captain as monopoly items in 1552. The King of Portugal relaxed the restrictions imposed on the Paravas to enable them to establish their own trade contacts. Some Paravas who became rich also built numerous champanas (boats) for their trading voyages and evinced interest in commerce.<sup>271</sup>

These Paravas were therefore able to sell the chanks for better prices and exported a major portion of their chank to Bengal. The chank which fetched only five *fanams* prior to 1536 was now sold at the rate of fifteen to twenty *fanams*, thereby boosting the income of the Paravas. While the high quality chanks were mainly exported to Bengal for making ornaments, chanks of low quality were broken by shell burners called Caraiyars, who lived in the region and lime was produced out of it. This lime was mainly used in the construction of buildings in the region.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> *Letters of Xavier*, November 10, 1544, p. 103.

<sup>269</sup> Caldwell, R., *op. cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>270</sup> Arunachalam, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

<sup>271</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *Tamil Coast*, p. 80.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*

The chanks were exported to Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, where the people continued to wear chank bangles. Workshops to make bangles out of the chanks came to exist in many parts of Greater Bengal, viz. Dacca, Patna, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Burdwars, Balasore, Banikura and Sylhet. The chief workshops were found in Dacca and Dinajpur.<sup>273</sup>

Garcia da Orta says: And this chank is a ware for the Bengal trade and formerly produced more profit than now. . . . and there was formerly a custom in Bengal that no virgin in honour and esteem could be corrupted unless it were by placing bracelets of chanks on her arms; but since the Patans came in this usage has more or less ceased, and so the chanks are rated lower now.<sup>274</sup>

At one point, the Paravas were not allowed to sell the chank mussels to whom they wished. The Jesuits had to interfere in this matter and it was made as a request to the King of Portugal along with other concessions like reduction in paying taxes to the royal exchequer.<sup>275</sup>

### Slavery

Slavery was also one of the agents which promoted the maritime interests of the Portuguese in India, especially in the Fishery Coast. Slavery as a system was existent in the Tamil society before the arrival of the Portuguese. The Imperial Cholas introduced slavery and turned it into an institution. Slaves were found in houses and temples. Even in the Fishery Coast, slaves were commonly employed in the houses.<sup>276</sup>

The Portuguese were heavily involved in slave trade right from the outset of their appearance in the Indian Ocean. African slaves brought by them were largely intended for their own use in the Estado da India (State of India), as labour, domestic

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<sup>273</sup> Arunachalam, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>274</sup> Pate, H.R., *op. cit.*, p. 235.

<sup>275</sup> *DI., Vol. I (1540-1549)*, 1948, p. 160.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 284-285.



servants, fighting men and ship hands. Portuguese officials and *casados* became major slave owners because of the cheapness of slaves.<sup>277</sup>

In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the Portuguese continued to import slaves into India through Goa from their colonies in Mozambique and Mombasa. There is evidence from travellers for the existence of a slave market in Goa but these slaves would primarily have served the needs of the Estado for manpower. The slaves imported from West Asia into the Mughal Empire were called 'luxury' slaves: eunuchs, personal attendants, palace guards and concubines. Their numbers were small and it may be assumed that this import continued in the seventeenth century, handled mainly by Indian Muslim merchants on the West Asia route.<sup>278</sup>

The Portuguese not only brought slaves to India, but also took them to Portugal and Brazil. The slaves were captured from the ships in the ocean or purchased from Mozambique, Angola, São Jorge de Mina and other places.<sup>279</sup>

Every year 2000 to 3000 slaves were brought to Goa from Bengal, Nagappattanam, Sir Lanka, and Thoothukudi. Since the number got increased, the viceroy ordered that no slaves should be brought to the city of Goa. Whoever violated the order were imprisoned.<sup>280</sup>

During the sixteenth century, slaves were used for loading and unloading of the ships as well as for menial works in the hospitals. But in the seventeenth century,

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<sup>277</sup> Mathew, K.S. (ed.), *Mariners, Merchants*, p. 197.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>279</sup> Afzal Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>280</sup> HAG, MDR, Livro 19C, fl. 970, (1634-1635).

besides being employed for carrying loads, they were trained to fight against the Portuguese enemies to make up for the shortage of soldiers, particularly when the Dutch - Portuguese wars reached their zenith.<sup>281</sup>

In contrast to what was happening on the west coast of Africa, the Portuguese were not primarily interested in slave trade on the east coast during the sixteenth century. They always traded in slaves, of course, but they were required only as domestic servants or body guards; so the numbers involved were not as large as those exported from the west coast to satisfy the voracious demands of the sugar plantations and the silver mines of South and Central America.

Some people (natives) were taken as slaves from Cochin and Thoothukudi to Sri Lanka for carrying load and felling trees. It was in order to fight with the enemies in Sri Lanka, the Portuguese had to carry the Negroes. But they found it was better to negotiate with the local people than with the Negroes. The newly converted Christians were known as *canarins* and the Negroes were known as *cafres* (blacks) by the Portuguese.<sup>282</sup>

Both Negroes and canarins were taken into the service of the Portuguese. They (the Portuguese) feared that since they (the Portuguese) were few, the Negroes might rebel against them. The Negroes had always wanted to be freed. The Portuguese told them to fight along with them and then they would be set free. They were promised

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<sup>281</sup> Afzal Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>282</sup> Pissurlencar, *Assentos Conselho do Estado, Vol. I, (1618-1633)*, p. 359.

that they would be given land first and later set free. To the canarins, the Portuguese assured that their years of service will be taken into account.<sup>283</sup>

The Portuguese were not able to undertake their journey without taking Negroes along with them.<sup>284</sup> Dom Pedro Mascarenhas one of the Councillors said that each white man be given two Negroes. It should be tried first in Thoothukudi, because in that coast, some of the Maravas and Paravas were very strong, and they knew how to fight.<sup>285</sup>

Lourenço de Melo another Councillor suggested sending more cafres, and more canarins to defeat the Sinhalese who were creating trouble against the Portuguese in Sri Lanka. He further said that the cafres should be arranged in companies under the captain with little liberty and good facilities so that they would be of a very good enterprise. So Negroes and canarins were taken from Thoothukudi, Cochin and Goa.<sup>286</sup>

As a consequence of large-scale drought and famine that occurred periodically, the Coromandel Coast (Fishery Coast inclusive), witnessed large supplies of great quantities of rice and coconuts in exchange of shiploads of slaves and the victims of the famines.<sup>287</sup>

Similarly, slaves and eunuchs imported in ships from Africa, through Arabia, were purchased by ruling groups. The numbers were not larger, but there was always a demand for them and most ships usually carried a few dozen slaves to be sold in Surat.<sup>288</sup>

The Portuguese raided the ships which were sailing without the cartazes. The goods were confiscated and the men and women who were on the board were captured as slaves. A ship which was attempting to sail from Satgaon in Bengal either to Sri Lanka or to Malabar did not carry a cartaz and, as a consequence, its entire cargo, largely pulses,

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<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 358.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 359.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>287</sup> Meilink-Roelofs, *Asian Trade and European Influence*, The Hague, 1962, p. 66.

<sup>288</sup> Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Maritime India in Seventeenth Century*, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 227.

rice and other provisions, with a small portion being Bengal textiles, were confiscated and the Muslim nakhuda and his family (who were on board) sold into slavery. Slaves were employed in making saltpetre also.

In the words of Jenette Pinto,

"Man is a spiritual being akin to his Maker. Christianity as a system and a creed raised no protest against slavery; as a matter of fact, with the discovery of new lands, the Catholic clergy compromised itself and the Church indulged openly in the slave trade".<sup>289</sup>

The Jesuit missionaries never opposed the slave systems in the Estado Da India. But they took care of the physical and spiritual needs of the slaves. They must have justified slavery from the point of the Holy Scriptures which asks the slaves to be obedient to their masters.

### **Trade in Other Items**

Apart from pearls and chanks there were other items of Portuguese interest on the Fishery Coast. Among them rice and textiles played an important role in the sense that they were procured from the Fishery Coast also. There were numerous other items which were passed through the Fishery Coast to other coasts and countries.

"In 1605, the Crown asked the Viceroy to see to it that the textiles brought from Coromandel ports were sold only in exchange for spices and drugs. The Portuguese of course, continued to need textiles not only for consumption at home but also in the exchange for slaves from African regions who were badly needed on the ships during the Portuguese-Dutch and English wars."<sup>290</sup>

Tirunelvely provided rice to Sri Lanka and Malabar. The whole area up to Tirunelvely provided textiles to Sri Lanka and Malabar.<sup>291</sup> The Tamil Coast with its

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<sup>289</sup> Jenette Pinto, *Slavery in Portuguese India (1510-1842)*, Bombay, 1992, p. 65.

<sup>290</sup> Afzal Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>291</sup> Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Maritime India*, p. 145.

hinterland had been famous for its export trade in rice and textiles.<sup>292</sup> In return came pepper and spices from Malabar, betel nuts, elephants and cinnamon from Sri Lanka and coconut produce from both the regions.<sup>293</sup>

Tobacco cargoes moved from Thoothukudi and Tirunelvely to Goa. Though of an inferior kind when compared to Brazilian tobacco, nevertheless, they served to cater to the needs of the tobacco-addicted populace of Goa at a time when Lisbon no longer supplied tobacco to the Estado da India.<sup>294</sup>

Apart from rice and textiles, the Portuguese traders exported a number of items like sandal wood, tamarind, copper, vermilion, cloves and mace. So trade was in good progress between the Fishery and the Malabar Coasts and also between the West and the Coromandel through the Fishery Coast.

Vessels with spices from the Malabar Coast reached Bengal and the Coromandel Coast in August and returned to Cochin in November or December with rice. Likewise, pepper, white cloth, sugar and long pepper were sent from Malacca and Sumatra to the Coromandel and Bengal.<sup>295</sup>

Pepper in good quantity was supplied from Puthura in the West to Kanyakumari and the Coromandel Coast. Similarly the route from Kanjirappily to the Tamil country became important for the transportation of pepper on the backs of

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<sup>292</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *Tamil Coast*, p. 67.

<sup>293</sup> Sinnappah Arasarathnam, *Maritime India*, p. 145.

<sup>294</sup> Celsa Pinto, *Trade and Finance in Portuguese India, A Study of the Portuguese Country Trade 1770-1840*, New Delhi, 1994, p. 41.

<sup>295</sup> Mathew, K.S., *Portuguese Trade with India in the Sixteenth Century*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 148.

bullocks.<sup>11</sup> So the entire Tamil Coast was in a position to procure larger quantities of pepper from Kerala.<sup>296</sup>

The Portuguese help was welcomed not only by the Paravas but also by the Muslims. The Kayalar-Parava struggle on one side and the Kayalar-Marakkayar rivalry on the other side created a conducive atmosphere for the Portuguese to make a successful attempt to settle in the important ports in the Fishery Coast.

The Portuguese set their foot on the Fishery Coast in the beginning of the sixteenth century. Yet the Fishery Coast became the backyard of the Portuguese only after the Mass Conversion (which came as a boon). The Paravas co-operated with the Portuguese in all their endeavours as a loyal community, skillful sailors and militant warriors.

The Portuguese were keen on not only the maritime resources but also on other commodities which were in abundance as well in demand. The Paravas' role in promoting trade between the Fishery Coast and Sri Lanka was significant.

The Paravas, the fisher folk of the Fishery Coast, were restored in their original position to have recourse to the marine resources such as the pearls and the chanks. Thus the Parava economy was saved to some extent. Their security was assured by the Portuguese but all the revenue from the Fishery Coast went to the royal treasury of the Portuguese Crown. As a result, a new form of opposition emerged from the local rulers. The boat owners and merchants from the same Parava community were benefited and they moved to other places to settle. The economic position of the ordinary pearl or chank divers remained the same as before and even after the arrival of the Portuguese; they did not find any difference between the economic oppression of the Muslims and that of the Portuguese.

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<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER THREE

### MARITIME TRADE IN STRATEGIC GOODS

The Portuguese began their trade activities in the Fishery Coast with marine products like pearls and chanks, but widened their horizon later. In the second stage, they began trading in essential commodities like rice and textiles. Finally, they moved from intra-region trade to intra-Asian trade by bringing West Asian horses and Sri Lankan elephants to the Fishery Coast and carried saltpetre to Lisbon from the hinterland of Thoothukudi.

The Portuguese showed keen interest in conducting trade in war animals also. They began importing horses from the very beginning of the sixteenth century. Trade in horse was already in progress in the Fishery Coast even before their arrival and the Portuguese indulged in this lucrative trade also as the situation demanded this greatly. The lust for war animals by the Vijayanagar emperors and their governors, the local disputes between them and the Hindu-Muslim rivalry resulted in the Portuguese monopoly in horse trade. The boom in the overseas import of war horses dates from the thirteenth century both in the north and south India.

#### **Need for Horses**

The horses and elephants were both highly expensive animals and had very close associations with the rich and powerful. There was a great demand by the government of Vijayanagar for elephants and horses that played an important role both in wars of period and royal paraphernalia.

The enormity of the demand for western horses in the Vijayanagar empire was often referred to by Fernão Nuniz. He himself was a horse trader and mentions fabulous prices for his Portuguese horses. He says that once Krishnadeva Raya himself came to the roadside and bought six hundred horses from the Portuguese at the rate of 4¾

for 100 *pardaus*. Krishnadeva Raya wanted to possess the exclusive right to trade in horses.<sup>297</sup>

The commercial and legal institutions did not come in the way of the free trade in the commercial emporia of the Indian Ocean. The rulers were keen on giving all forms of concessions to the merchants to attract them to their ports. The policy followed by Krishnadeva Raya of Vijayanagar bears out this attitude. He instructed that the foreign traders should be treated well. In his earnestness to encourage the merchants he went out of his way even to pay for those horses that died on the way from the West Asian ports to Vijayanagar.<sup>298</sup>

Moreover Krishnadeva Raya recommended for improving the harbours to facilitate the smooth transportation of important imports, including horses:

“Make the merchant to distant foreign countries who import elephants and good horses attract to yourself by providing them with villages and decent dwellings in the city . . . and allowing decent profits. Then the articles will never go to your enemies”.<sup>299</sup>

The Vijayanagar even thought about having complete control over the Tamiraparani delta so that they could have another door for the entry of horses from Persia and Arabia.<sup>300</sup>

Krishnadeva Raya’s enemy Adil Shah of Bijapur also approached the Portuguese government with a similar request. Albuquerque is said to have laid down certain terms and conditions to both the interested parties, as he was clearly in a position to bargain.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Vasundhara Filliozat (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 208.

<sup>298</sup> Robert Sewell, A., *Forgotten Empire-Vijaya Nagar*, New Delhi, p. 150.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>300</sup> Jorge Manuel Flores, *op. cit.*, p. 80.



The Delhi Sultanate in the North, the two arch rivals in the Deccan (the Vijayanagar Empire and the Bahmani Sultanate) and also local powers in the far south were interested in the regular overseas supply of war horses for strengthening their respective cavalry units. The long drawn hostilities between the two maintained a steady demand for war horses which now began to be regularly disembarked at Konkan harbours. The arrival of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean scenario and the formation of a centre at Goa soon paved the way for the rise of the Portuguese as a force to be reckoned with in this trade.<sup>302</sup>

Chroniclers and travellers have left accounts which speak about the lust and greed of the Vijayanagar rulers for war animals. Ludovico di Varthema (1502-1508) says that the King of Vijayanagar was a powerful king who kept constantly 40,000 horsemen.<sup>303</sup>

The Portuguese were reported to have sold horses as early as on 11 October 1512 to the Nayak of Kanyakumari region.<sup>304</sup> Even before the arrival of the Portuguese, the Great King had an upper hand in selling horses to the Muslims of Kayalpattanam.<sup>305</sup>

In the initial stage, Kilakkarai provided an opportunity for the Portuguese to supply horses to its chieftain. Tumbichi Nayak, who had a few coastal villages like Vembar, Vaippar, and Kilakkarai under his control<sup>306</sup> defied the authority of the Vijayanagar ruler Achyuta Raya and joined hands with the latter's enemies.<sup>307</sup> He also

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<sup>301</sup> Mathew, K.S. (ed.), *India Ocean and Cultural Interaction*, p. 155.

<sup>302</sup> Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *op. cit.*, pp. 226-227.

<sup>303</sup> Vasundhara Filliozat, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

<sup>304</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., "The Nayaks of Tamil Country and Portuguese Trade in War-Animals" in Pius Malekandathil & Jamal Mohammed (edits), *The Portuguese, Indian Ocean and European Bridgeheads 1500-1800*, Fundação Oriente, 2001, p.213.

<sup>305</sup> Georg Schurhammer, *Orientalia*, p. 243.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

<sup>307</sup> Krishnaswami, A., *The Tamil Country Under Vijayanagar*, The Annamalai University, 1964, p. 205.

rebelled against the Madurai Nayak, captured several towns and built a fort which he called Paramakudi.<sup>308</sup>

To fight with his enemies he needed horses from the Portuguese. The other Nayaks and their subordinate chieftains also depended on horses to carry them in their warfare. The Nayakdoms and the Palayams were only military fiefdoms which were expected to provide military help to the Vijayanagar king and the Nayaks respectively. So horse was in great need in Tamil Nadu, at least upto the battle of Talikota in 1565.

The trade in horses began to flourish in concrete terms during the period of Martim Affonso de Souza (1542-1545) the Portuguese Viceroy of Goa. He issued instructions to the Portuguese captain in Ormuz to send a minimum of twenty horses to the ports of the Bay of Bengal, as there was a lucrative trade on the east coast of India.<sup>309</sup>

Therefore, the Portuguese on the Fishery Coast requested the Portuguese Viceroy of India to arrange for the supply of horses, which came from Ormuz to the ports of Goa, Chaul and Cannanore.<sup>310</sup>

Horses were imported from West Asia to the western ports of India by the Portuguese. Some casodos (married settlers) like Pedro Alvaro de Mesquita and Diogo de Lisboa who had specialized in horse trade with the Coromandel ports stayed at Kanyakumari for the convenience of knowing in good time the arrival of horses from West Asia to the western ports. They sailed and brought the horses to Coromandel ports.<sup>311</sup> They made frequent visits to Ormuz and brought horses to Cochin also. The horse trade continued to be in a flourishing condition even after the fall of the Vijayanagar kingdom. The casodos maintained their commercial controls between Cochin and Ormuz, either through Gujarat or Goa.<sup>312</sup>

Though Goa was the main Indian port of import for the horses from Arabia (2000 horses per year), the casodos of Cochin attempted their luck by importing

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<sup>308</sup> Henry Heras, *South India Under the Vijayanagara Empire, Vol. I*, New Delhi, 1980, p. 169.

<sup>309</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S. "Trade in War-Animals", pp. 213-214.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>312</sup> Pius Malekandathil, *Portuguese Cochin and the Maritime Trade of India 1500-1663*, New Delhi, 2000, p. 216.

horses to Cochin to be taken to the Fishery Coast, Travancore and to the kingdoms of Tumbichi Nayak and Vettum Perumal. In 1546, Henriques de Sousa Chichorro said that the horses taken to Kanyakumari from Ormuz via Cochin did not yield much profit. So he asked permission to take sugar, rice and lac from Satgão (a minor port in Bengal) to Cochin. But in 1547, we find the Ouvidor of Cochin remarking that many *casados* of the city were taking horses to Kanyakumari from Cochin for trade, where they enjoyed themselves with girls, while their wives and children were dying of hunger at home.<sup>313</sup>

Apart from the *casados*, the native merchants and Portuguese captain were also involved in the distribution of horses and earned good profit from it. Cosme de Paiva supplied horses to Vettumperumal who fought against the Great king of Kanyakumari who in turn was very friendly with Xavier. Though the sale of horses by Cosme de Paiva was opposed by his own men, he did not stop his lucrative business and for that he was imprisoned.<sup>314</sup>

The Portuguese had absolute monopoly over the trade in horses. The privilege of selling horses had to be obtained from them only. In the case of João da Cruz, he asked John III, King of Portugal for the privilege of selling horses to several local rulers. João da Cruz made a promise to the Great King that the Portuguese would sell him horses, and (the Great King) in return he should allow his subjects to be Christians. The Great King allowed the conversion and when Martim Affonso with his

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<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>314</sup> *Letters of Xavier, August 19, 1544*, p. 89.

fleet came to Manapadu he allowed the Great King to collect the needed horses from the Portuguese.<sup>315</sup>

The knowledge about the transportation of the horses is very scanty. The Chinese used the term “Machuan”, literally meaning horse-ships, to denote ships with the capacity of carrying about hundred horses from Ormuz. Abdur Razak (1470) observed that ships from Ormuz carried both horses and men. According to Morland’s estimation, a ship around 125 tonnes could carry seventy war horses, besides one hundred men, including soldiers, crews and passengers.<sup>316</sup>

These horses, though a sum of 40 ducats as customs to the Portuguese in Ormuz had to be paid, were sold in south India for a value varying from 300 to 1,000 ducats. Some of the ships carried 80 horses, and some even 124 horses, to Goa, as observed by Caesar Frederick and Ralph Fitch respectively in their voyages from Ormuz to Goa. Though we do not know the approximate tonnage of the vessels or the number of the horses taken to Cochin, it is believed that they amounted to considerable proportions.<sup>317</sup>

On March 1594, the Portuguese king had to design a special intervention in the horse trade from Ormuz to Cochin. The king was of the opinion that, the import of the horses to Cochin and Kanara was prejudicial to the royal service, and that they should be taken to Goa, where the Estado might extract customs duty. As the taxes that were levied on the horses in Cochin went to the native king, there was a strong pressure to

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<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 270-271.

<sup>316</sup> Mathew, K.S., *Indian Ocean*, pp. 156-157.

<sup>317</sup> Pius, Melekandathil, *Portuguese Cochin*, p. 216.

centralise the trade on horses in Goa, for this could become a great source of revenue to the Portuguese treasury.<sup>318</sup>

Under the passport system adopted by them, the King of Portugal received a duty of 40 cruzados on each horse and on the whole collected a revenue of 40,000 ducats.<sup>319</sup>

There are two frescos available in two temples in the extreme south of Tamil Nadu which throw light on the horse trade. The first fresco is found at the entrance of the Sri Alakiyanapirayar Temple of Tirukkurankudi in Tirunelveli district. "It shows the arrival of a sewn plank ship with a single mast, possibly with a flat or square stern (though the steering mechanism is not seen). The scene depicts the figure of a king or an administrator (seated under a covered structure) before whom are brought cargoes from the ship. This includes two horses, a camel and an elephant, along with boxes of other merchandise. All men shown here wear full long sleeve jackets and elaborately pleated dhotis."<sup>320</sup>

Deloche dates this on stylistic grounds, and also because of the absence of guns in the weaponry of soldiers, to the fifteenth or early sixteenth century. Deloche identifies the ship as sakouna, a type of sambuk which was popular in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.<sup>321</sup>

There is another fresco depicting a sea going ship in the sea carrying merchants and horses. This painting is from another temple in this Tirunelveli district, and shows the ship on the sea, with six figures of horses and twelve figures of men. This too is a single masted vessel with a large sail. The men are wearing typical European dresses and match locks are carried by them. All these indicate this painting to be a later one than the one stated first.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>319</sup> Appadorai, A., *Economic Conditions in Southern India (1000-1500)*, Vol. III, University of Madras, 1936, p. 543.

<sup>320</sup> Jean Deloche, 'Konkan Warships of the XII<sup>th</sup> and XV<sup>th</sup> Centuries as Represented on Memorial Stones, BEFCO XXXVI, 1987 : 165-84, cited in Mathew, K.S., *Indian Ocean*, pp. 156-157.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>322</sup> Jean Deloche, 'Le Bateau de Tirupputaimaruntur' BEFCO LXXII, 1983:1-11, cited in Mathew, K.S., *Indian Ocean*, pp. 156-157.

Deloche opines by analysing the structure of the ship that it did not belong to the batela or baghola class, but was of European origin. A European ship carrying passengers dressed in European garments and transporting horses may be related to the effective participation of the Portuguese in the import trade of horse to India.<sup>323</sup>

There was a decline in the demand for horses by the Vijayanagar empire after it met with defeat in the battle of Talikota. The successors of Tumbichi Nayak also did not extend their patronage to the Portuguese in getting supply from them. However the Lusitanians found another lucrative trade in the elephants of Sri Lanka.

### **Export of Saltpetre**

The international rivalry particularly between the Portuguese and other European countries in establishing their colonies in the newly discovered areas and the Thirty Years' War (1600-1648) resulted in the export of saltpetre from India to Portugal. This (saltpetre) was used mainly in preparation of gunpowder. The Portuguese showed much interest in exporting saltpetre from 1630s onwards. They located the available areas and made a series of contracts and agreements with the local rulers to obtain saltpetre.

“The demand for the Portuguese gunpowder was locally fulfilled by the *casa da polvora* (gunpowder factory). But since the demand for gunpowder increased constantly, and the factory at Goa failed to produce as much quantity as was needed, the requirement had to be filled by the Crown from the gunpowder factory at Lisbon. However, because gunpowder for India was to be produced in Portugal, the Portuguese authorities at Goa sent much saltpetre to Portugal on the annual carracks.<sup>324</sup>

As mentioned earlier the Portuguese were looking out for alternative trade due to the long absence of pearl fishing from 1605 to 1621. The pearl fishers also did not show

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<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>324</sup> Afzal Ahmad, *op., cit.*, p. 128.

evinced interest in pearl fishing due to the oppressive Portuguese tax system and, so, finally, the latter had to attempt new trade ventures with the local rulers. Their experiments in conducting trade in strategic goods resulted in the exchange of elephants with saltpetre in the territory of the Nayak of Madurai.

Saltpetre was produced mainly through natural processes. Normally, it was mined in the form of brown-black dust and washed in the factories with water and certain chemicals. Saltpetre which was washed only once or twice was supposed to be of an inferior quality. The Portuguese normally had it worked again in their factory at Goa before sending it to Portugal or to the gunpowder factory in India. Saltpetre which was washed thrice was of a medium quality and that which was washed four times, was considered to be the best.<sup>325</sup>

The Portuguese officials collected saltpetre from the regions of Sindh, Balaghat, Granganore, Thoothukudi and Maduari. It is believed that Madurai was better than other regions in supplying saltpetre in the sense that the saltpetre received from there required only two washes for purification.<sup>326</sup>

Both Vithal Nayak on the west coast and Tirumalai Nayak on the east coast not only collected the saltpetre from their own territories but even sent their agents on such missions to places like Mangalore and other places in the interior.<sup>327</sup> The Nayak of Madurai brought saltpetre from Palacate to the Cochin factory where it was refined and sent to Goa, either for reshipment to Portugal or for consumption in Goa. But the Nayaks did not yield to the demand for saltpetre made by the Portuguese or any other European power unless their requirements were met.<sup>328</sup>

In order to procure saltpetre from the hinterland of Thoothukudi, i.e. Madurai, the viceroy sent the *casado*, Pero Soares de Brito from Cochin as captain of Thoothukudi in 1630. The Portuguese needed a representative to be at Thoothukudi for the collection of saltpetre since Madurai region produced enormous quantities of saltpetre.<sup>329</sup> The captain of Thoothukudi was there upon conferred the title of **Contradar de salitre em toda Pescaria** i.e. the contractor of saltpetre of the entire Fishery Coast.<sup>330</sup>

It was Linhares who facilitated the move to establish a contract with the Nayak of Madurai regarding saltpetre in 1631. Before him (Linhares) and even after having made several agreements, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the Danes made a few attempts to procure saltpetre from the Nayak of Madurai. It demonstrates that saltpetre was in abundance in and around Madurai and it was in great demand both in India as well

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<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>326</sup> Assentos do Conselho de Fazenda (hereafter ACF), Livro 5, Codice 1163, fl. 47, 1637-1643.

<sup>327</sup> ACF, Livro 4, Codice 1162, fl. 144, 1631-1637.

<sup>328</sup> Afzal Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

<sup>329</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia 1500-1700, A Political and Economic History*, New York, 1993, p. 265.

<sup>330</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *Tamil Coast*, p. 101.

as in Europe. The important point is that saltpetre was carried all the way from India to European countries. The procurement of saltpetre created and intensified the rivalry between the Portuguese and the Dutch.

### **Elephant Trade**

The Portuguese were not the pioneers in the introduction of elephant trade to the Tamil kingdoms. The Marakkayars were already importing elephants from Sri Lanka to Kilakkarai and further they were distributed in various places in the Tamil coast. The Nayaks of Senji and Thanjavur were in need of the elephants from Sri Lanka. Since the Portuguese were in demand of saltpetre they started supplying it to the Nayak of Madurai. The merchants who traded in elephants went to seek them in Sri Lanka and exported them to different countries where they sold them according to the tariff, which varied with the height of the elephants.

The efforts taken by the Portuguese for procuring saltpetre did not go in vain. The first agreement was made between the Nayak of Madurai and the Viceroy Conde de Linhares on 3 February 1633.<sup>331</sup> The Nayak promised to sell all the saltpetre only to the Portuguese. The Portuguese also agreed to sell the elephants only to the Nayak of Madurai. He (the Nayak) agreed to sell one bhar (local weight) of saltpetre at the rate of twenty seven and a half xerafins to the Portuguese for each elephant delivered at the port of Thoothukudi at the price of 662 xerafins.<sup>332</sup>

Diogo de Mello, the captain and Amaro Roiz, the revenue official of Sri Lanka did not like the agreement and thus delayed the sending of elephants to Thoothukudi. They put forward two reasons. First, the price of saltpetre was high and of the elephants very low. Second, due to the dry season, the elephants would take a longer time to cover the distance of thirty leagues between Colombo and Mannar and again to disembark at Thoothukudi.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> *Assentos, Vol. II*, p. 89.

<sup>332</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *Tamil Coast*, p. 103.

<sup>333</sup> *Assentos, Vol. II*, pp. 51-53.



The second agreement was made in the following year between Miguel de Noronha, the Viceroy of Goa and the Nayak of Madurai. Both of them agreed to exchange elephants with saltpetre. Since the Nayak reserved saltpetre for the Dutch, the captain refused to send elephants.<sup>334</sup>

On 8 February 1635, the Nayak promised to deliver one bhar of saltpetre at the price of twenty five xerafins to the Portuguese captain António de Meirelles Andrade. The Nayak also invited the Portuguese to exchange not only elephants with saltpetre but with other precious items also. The following table shows the commodities exchanged by the Portuguese for saltpetre.<sup>335</sup>

**Quantity and Price of Commodities Exchanged for Saltpetre by the Portuguese  
from Tirumalai Nayak of Madurai in 1635**

Commodity	Quantity	Price Xerafins - Tangas - Reis
Cloves	5 quintals	1184 - 8 - 80
Ivory	2 bhars	0922 - 0 - 40
Lead	60 quintals	1200 - 0 - 95
Sulphur (Siam)	53 quintals	1107 - 1 - 00
Grey velvet	21 covados	0094 - 2 - 30
Chita velvet	21.5 covados	0096 - 8 - 45
Agra velvet	41 covados	0102 - 2 - 30
Silk (tabby)	1 piece	0032 - 0 - 00
Silk (blue & yellow)	1 piece	0034 - 0 - 00
Silk (white)	11 pieces	0068 - 0 - 00
Silk (lacquer coated)	11 pieces	0080 - 0 - 00
Silk (camisole)	1 piece	0034 - 0 - 00
Silk (damask)	34 covados	0064 - 0 - 00
Silk (cochineal)	180.25 covados	1982 - 3 - 32
Gold necklace	5.2.3. Marc	1186 - 2 - 80
Gold necklace	6.3.50 Marc	1422 - 9 - 25
Necklace	4.5.1.48 Marc	1069 - 3 - 90
Necklace	3.7.24 Marc	0944 - 4 - 27

<sup>334</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *Tamil Coast*, p. 105.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 104-105.

Commodity	Quantity	Price Xerafins - Tangas - Reis
Chain (3 pendulums)	4.1.1.48. Marc	1008 - 2 - 23
Necklace	3.1.7.24. Marc	0745 - 0 - 35
Necklace	1.1.1.24. Marc	0263 - 2 - 40
Cordao	1.4.1.30. Marc	0331 - 9 - 90
Necklace	3.4.18. Marc	0705 - 1 - 20
Gold powder (China) (11 packets)	17.4.18. Marc	4126 - 8 - 15
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		18,805 - 2 - 10

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In 1635 the Portuguese obtained 8,129.5 quintals of saltpetre from the Nayak of Madurai and exported it from the port of Thoothukudi to Goa and thence to Portugal.

The exchange of trade between the Nayak and the Portuguese suffered a set back due to the arrest of the Portuguese captain António de Meireles by the Nayak in 1635. It was followed by a severe retaliation from the side of the Portuguese and in the Council meeting held on 25 June, they (the Portuguese) drew the following regulations:

- i) If the Nayak of Madurai needed elephants, he should appoint a factor, of course his own man, in the island of Sri Lanka to take the measurement of the elephants.
- ii) The price would be fixed as per the contract and accounts would be settled as soon as the measurement was over.
- iii) Elephants would be sent to Thoothukudi by ship at the risk of the viceroy.
- iv) If they wished to have horses by the same contract they would keep another factor in Goa. After the price is fixed, the viceroy would put them at the port of Thoothukudi.

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<sup>336</sup> Afzal Ahmad, *Indo-Portuguese Trade in Seventeenth Century 1600-1663*, Delhi, 1993, cited in Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *Tamil Coast*, pp. 104-105.

- v) If the Nayak wanted to have gold, gold jewellery, silk or any other clothing he would come to the port of Thoothukudi with the help of the factor or Mudaliar and they would decide the price as per the value of the land.<sup>337</sup>

In the year 1633, three elephants were brought from the region of Mannar to the ports of Cochin, probably for presentation. It is also reported that they were usually brought to the port of Cochin and only later sent to Goa. In addition, a few elephants were occasionally sent to Madurai from Sri Lanka for the purchase of saltpetre. In 1648, five elephants were sent as presents, to the Nayak of Madurai, for his services against the Dutch. However this never proved to be an item of regular import, at least during the period under discussion.

In a letter dated 24 Feb. 1633, the king asked the viceroy to load 500 quintals of saltpetre that too in the form of gunpowder from Thoothukudi. He also expressed his anguish that the ships of the fleet of the state might stop sailing due to the short supply of gunpowder. Gunpowder was in great demand and the king told the viceroy to send more gunpowder by any ship that came to Lisbon.

Another letter of 1638 spoke about the availability of more salt. Also the letter said that though Thoothukudi and Bengal had sent 1200 quintals, some more quintals could be added from the same places. This quantity was to be sent to Cochin and Goa. This was of great importance to the forts of the State.

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<sup>337</sup> *Assentos, Vol. II, p. 89.*

The king appreciated the actions taken by the viceroy in collecting more saltpetre and made requests that the viceroy would continue to send great quantity that were required for the fleets and the forts, which should always have great stock.

### **Decline in the Trade of Strategic Goods**

From the moment the Portuguese and the Nayak of Madurai signed contracts and agreements regarding trade of elephants and saltpetre both of them had been experiencing only uncordiality. Since the Portuguese were in dire and constant need of gunpowder they made several attempts repeatedly to procure saltpetre from the hinterland of Thoothukudi. They even paid exorbitantly high rates to the Madurai Nayak. Yet the Portuguese were unable to fulfill the demands of their king, who was continuously asking them to send more and more ammunitions.

The disputes between the Tamil rulers resulted in the decline of trade in saltpetre. The Marava kingdom under the Sethupathis was created by Tirumalai Nayak as a buffer state in order to prevent the intrusion of any foreign power through the Pamban strait and also to check the Portuguese power in the east coast.<sup>338</sup>

In 1635, in the civil war between Sadaika Tevar II and his brother Thambi Tevar in the Marava kingdom, Tirumalai Nayak supported the latter. As Tirumalai Nayak sought the help of the Portuguese, Sadaika Tevar was backed by the Dutch, who were awaiting to enter into the east coast. In return for the assistance, Tirumalai permitted the Portuguese to propagate Christianity, to build churches and to occupy a fort.<sup>339</sup> This enhanced the commercial relations between the Luso-Nayak powers. But at the same time, it paved the way for the Dutch involvement in the east coast. The Marava power was on the rise and the ruler became more autonomous in his dealing with other political powers.

In 1639, Tirumalai Nayak realised the growing power and popularity of the Sethupathi and the impending danger to his kingdom. Tirumalai Nayak wanted to wage a war against the Sethupathi as the latter had direct dealings with foreign powers on the east coast and he did not get the approval of the Nayak of Madurai for his transactions.<sup>340</sup>

The Portuguese firmly declined any help to the Madurai Nayak. But the Maravas procured the alliance of the Dutch.<sup>341</sup> This is the origin of the break up of the Portuguese-Nayak relationships once and for all. The Nayak not only refused to supply saltpetre to the Portuguese, but invited the Dutch to have trade alliance with him.

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<sup>338</sup> Kadhivel, S., *A History of the Maravas 1700-1802*, Madurai, 1977, p. 21.

<sup>339</sup> Rajayyan, *History of Tamil Nadu*, p. 146.

<sup>340</sup> Kadhivel, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*

The Portuguese made several attempts to renew their contracts with the Nayak but in vain. A final attempt was made on 5 March 1643 but Tirumalai felt insulted by the Portuguese negative response during his fight with the Maravas. He sent an ambassador to Arnold Heussen, the Dutch Governor of Pazhaverkadu in 1645 inviting him to trade at the ports of his Nayakdom. The Dutch were allowed to open a factory at Kayalpattanam, a place located south of Thoothukudi.<sup>342</sup> Thus the Marava-Nayak issue ended in rivalry between the Portuguese and the Dutch and it continued up to 1658.

### **Mode of Payment and Prices**

From the availability of gold and silver coins in the Fishery Coast, one can surmise that goods were paid in cash, in gold or silver coins. Sometimes goods were exchanged. For instance, the Nayak of Madurai and the Portuguese exchanged saltpetre with elephants. As the price of the saltpetre was high, the Portuguese could not strictly follow the agreements and so, instead of supplying elephants, they exchanged goods like textiles, gold, silver, ivory, etc. and received saltpetre. The Portuguese fixed the price of the elephants by taking into account the current value. It was always felt that the price of the salt was much higher than the rate of the elephants. Payment took place at the port of Thoothukudi at the time of delivery of the goods.

There were fluctuations in the price of saltpetre during the first half of the seventeenth century. Prices also differed according to the area of procurement. The price of saltpetre from Thoothukudi fluctuated between seven and ten and a half ashrafis per quintal.<sup>343</sup> The following table gives an idea about how the variation took place in different areas in different times.

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<sup>342</sup> *Assentos, Vol. III*, p. 135.

<sup>343</sup> ACF, Livro 5, Codice 1163, fl. 49, (1637-1643).

### Purchase Price of Saltpetre in India (in Quintals)

Year	Area	Price in Xerafins
1625	Balaghat	3.50
1631-4	Balaghat / Kanara	10.50
1634	Balaghat / Kanara	12.50
1636	Balaghat / Kanara	9.00
1638	Thoothukudi	7-10.50
1652	Balaghat	8.00
1656	Balaghat	7.50

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International politics affected Indian trade very much and so there was a gradual decline in the trade of certain commodities like pepper, cinnamon and textiles after the third decade of the sixteenth century. But the Portuguese were in great need of saltpetre not only to protect their settlements in India but also because there was a constant plea from the King of Portugal for the same commodity.

The profitable goods like pepper, cinnamon and textiles were gradually on the decline soon after the end of the third decade by the margins of 25.50 and 90 per cent, but in the fifth decade came down by 25 per cent and remained the same in the sixth.<sup>345</sup> The following table gives a picture about the total volume of saltpetre sent to Lisbon through Goa, particularly from Thoothukudi:

### Exports of Saltpetre to Portugal during 1631-1640

Year	Volume in Kgs.	Directions
1631	-	Sindh - Goa
1633	4,353	Bengal – Goa
1635	8,130	Thoothukudi – Goa
1636	3,14,700	Thoothukudi – Goa
1636	1,04,900	Balaghat – Goa
1637	2,09,800	Thoothukudi – Goa

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<sup>344</sup> Afzal Ahmad, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-133.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

1640	26,225	Bengal – Goa
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From the above table, it can be understood that within a period of sixty three years, only twenty years successive trade in saltpetre was conducted by the Portuguese. Secondly the maximum trade was carried out from the regions of Thoothukudi. It was almost 28,12% of the total saltpetre from this region.

#### **Medium of Exchange**

The monetary arrangement of the sixteenth century was conducive to accelerate trade in the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese used gold, silver and copper in their transactions so that the absence of the common measure of value was not very obvious in their settlements. The import of cash was also very common in the sixteenth century. In 1500 the Portuguese brought 60,000 cruzados (in cash) to the Malabar Coast which increased to 80,000 cruzados in 1506. This increased further upto 1000,000 cruzados in 1524. Coins were issued in the sixteenth century from Diu, Bassein and Daman to cater to the needs of maritime trade. Besides the coins of Indo-Portuguese origin, there were other coins too in circulation along the coastal regions of India, especially for trade and commerce.<sup>347</sup>

In the Fishery Coast, fanão or fanam (rupee) was very much in use. It was a small gold coin and four thousand of them were worth 210 cruzados. The teachers, catechists and sacristans were paid in fanam during Xavier's time.<sup>348</sup> Pardau was in use among the Portuguese officials and captains. The other coins like ashrafi, cruzados, reis, xerafin, pagoda, pattacus were also in use in collecting revenue and buying and selling goods.<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>347</sup> Mathew, K.S., *Maritime History*, pp. 18-21.

<sup>348</sup> *Letters of Xavier, January 15, 1544*, p. 63.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, March 14, 1544, p. 75.

### **Analysis of the Trade on Strategic Goods**

The Nayaks in general, and Tumbichi Nayak of Paramakudi in particular, kept up the open door policy in the introduction of horse trade by the Portuguese. According to Jeyaseela Stephen, the Portuguese were lead by profit motive and a desire to monopolze the pearl fisheries at Kilakkarai and Vedalai. More than the pearl fisheries, the Portuguese concern was oriented towards the strategically important places located in the northern end of the Fishery Coast. Kilakkarai and Vedalai were strategically important due to their proximity towards Sri Lanka. Their prime objective was to control the west coast of Sri Lanka and the Gulf of Mannar. The introduction of the cartaz system immediately after their settlement at Vedalai demonstrates the monopolistic policy of the Portuguese than their commercial interest in horse or pearls. Therefore the open door policy was altered and challenged by the Lusitanians in the Indian Ocean.

The Portuguese were not very successful in the introduction of elephant trade. They were exchanging elephants to the Nayaks of Thanjavur for cash. As soon as they came to know that saltpetre was in abundantce in Thoothukudi and Madurai they decided to exchange elephants with the Nayak of Madurai for saltpetre. These two regions (Thoothukudi and Madurai) were part of the Fishery Coast and fell under the control of the Nayak of Madurai. Though a number of agreements were made, the Nayak of Madurai did not receive the supply of elephants regularly. The reason being the Dutch were also given a share in the saltpetre. The Portuguese disagreed with the policy of the Nayak.



The main aim for the fortification of Mannar and the control of the entire Fishery Coast from the same island indicate that the Portuguese wanted to pay equal attention to the Fishery Coast and Sri Lanka. Through Sri Lanka which was abundant in commodities of high value, the Portuguese promoted the overseas trade in Indian Ocean.

Horses were imported from Ormuz to Cochin and other western ports in the Malabar Coast and the merchants brought them to Kanyakumari to be sold in the Tamil coast. This shows the network of overseas trade created by the casados and other merchants who involved in every trade, particularly in strategic goods, during the period of the Portuguese.

Another aspect of trade in war animals is that the Estado did not conduct the entire trade all by itself. Individually and collectively, different merchant groups (captains and Portuguese officials, including the viceroy) had private trade affairs. The Marakkayars of Kilakkarai who were the pioneers in importing elephants from Sri Lanka even before the arrival of the Portuguese were no more in the scene.

According to Jeyaseela Stephen, the Portuguese reacted quickly to the situation and sought whatever was advantageous to them. Two instances could be cited in this regard: First, the Portuguese did not hesitate in giving up trade with Thanjavur as soon as they found the scope of exchanging elephant with saltpetre with the Nayak of Madurai. Second, when the Portuguese realized the difficulty in loading

and unloading of elephants in small ships and especially fifteen elephants at a time forced them to build huge cargo ships of high tonnage in this period.<sup>350</sup>

The Portuguese felt that they would succeed in establishing their authority in Tamil coast with the new political strategy through “a new fuel mix of overseas trade and gun powder diplomacy”. This diplomacy worked well in the case of Goa and Malacca. The cause of the failure in implementing such a policy in the east coast is due to the sporadic settlement of the Portuguese in the same coast.<sup>351</sup>

It is good to make a little comparison of the Portuguese horse trade with the horse trade of the Pandyas in the fourteenth century in the same Fishery Coast. Both the Pandya rulers and the Nayaks purchased war animals for their army. While Pandyas followed a semi monoposonistic policy by allowing Muslims and Hindus to trade in horses and supply animals to the Pandya rulers,<sup>352</sup> the Portuguese enjoyed a monopoly in war animals.

The *Kudiraichettis* and Muslim merchant groups who conducted horse trade during the period of the Pandyas seemed to be absent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Portuguese favoured the new Christians, and casados and encouraged them as their great supporters. The non-Christians must have moved to other places seeking prosperity. The *Kudiraichettis* flourished in their multifaceted trade in the Coromandel Coast and promoted overseas trade with Malacca.

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<sup>350</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., “*Trade in War-Animals*”, p. 120.

<sup>351</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *Tamil Coast*, p. 113.

<sup>352</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., “*Trade in War Animals*”, pp. 120-121.

Those who supplied horses from Kanyakumari to other areas were Christians. João da Cruz, sought permission to deliver horses to almost all the rulers and the Nayaks who ruled the Fishery Coast with partial jurisdiction under the region of the Vijayanagar.<sup>353</sup>

The two frescos found in the Hindu temples in the extreme south of Tamil Nadu also have something to say about the Luso-Tamil trade in war animals. These paintings give the impression that horse trade flourished in the Fishery Coast. Since the coast east of Kanyakumari was declared free from custom duty, horse trade must have been conducted in great volume. The horses were in great demand for the rulers of Travancore, Kayathar and Paramakudi. The Vijayanagar rulers particularly Krishnadeva Raya also showed much interest in buying horses.

In the Pandya period a large number of horses died during transportation and this money was paid by the same rulers as per the contract. Since the Portuguese had entered into arrangements to treat the sick horses, the death rate was reduced to a great extent. In case the horses died before sale, they were not paid for by the Nayaks from their treasury. But Krishnadeva Raya, in his earnestness to encourage the merchants, went out of his way even to pay for those horses that died on the way from the west Asian ports to Vijayanagar.<sup>354</sup>

The role of the Jesuit missionaries as agents in the promotion of the Estado's trade and commerce was unique. When the elephant-saltpetre agreements failed and the Madurai Nayak was stubborn in not yielding to the demands of the Portuguese,

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<sup>353</sup> Georg Schurhammer, *Orientalia*, p. 273.

<sup>354</sup> Mathew, K.S., *Maritime History*, p. 17.

the Jesuits were asked to be the mediators between the two parties. The Jesuits and the captains differed in their policies several times. Yet in this case, the influence of the Jesuits at the Madurai court was much utilised because of the fear of the Dutch on the Fishery Coast and their (the Dutch) influence with the Nayak.<sup>355</sup>

Though elephants were available in North India it is not clear why the Vijayanager monarchs imported them largely from Sri Lanka incurring a lot of expenses. Perhaps, the Sri Lankan elephants were of a better breed and secondly, the presence of the Bahmani Sultans must have been a hurdle. The Vijayanagar sovereigns were on inimical terms with these sultans who stood on the way of the importations of the animals from North India.

### **International Trends and the Portuguese Trade**

Some of the commodities which were exported from the Fishery Coast had implication both at the local and at the international levels. The production of textiles, rice, and saltpetre increased when the Portuguese demanded them more. These items were collected from the hinterland of the Fishery Coast. When other European powers also began procuring the same item, production got accelerated but in proportion to the increasing demands.

The inflow of Portuguese money for the purchase of these goods increased the monetisation of the Indian economy. Later, it paved the way for mercantilism in other parts of the world and sowed the seeds for industrialization.<sup>356</sup>

The cultivators of rice and the producers of textiles and the merchants complained to the King of Portugal that they were paid low prices for their produce by the Portuguese officials. The Portuguese rulers did not pay heed to their words. But when the Dutch and English appeared in the seventeenth century, the Portuguese

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<sup>355</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *Tamil Coast*, p. 114.

<sup>356</sup> Afzal Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

were forced to consider the legitimate demands of this suppressed sect of the trade. The arrival of the Dutch was considered as a boon by the producers and the merchants.<sup>357</sup>

Often Portuguese ships reached Lisbon without the required needed Indian commodities. So the Portuguese decided to increase the purchase rate. For instance, in the third decade, the cost of per quintal saltpetre was two and a half ashrafis, but during the fifth and the sixth decades it rose to twelve ashrafis per quintal, which was almost 300 per cent. Similarly, the cost of per quintal rice fluctuated between one and a half and two and a half ashrafis.<sup>358</sup>

The rise in saltpetre price was responsible for the Luso-Nayak conflict and their agreements were thereafter not implemented smoothly. Since the Dutch appeared in the waters of the east coast, the Portuguese complied with the rate proposed by the Nayaks. As a result Estado faced financial crisis but the merchant class enjoyed good profits.

The *carreira-da India*<sup>359</sup> and the Portuguese power was already on decline by the second half of the sixteenth century. Though this view is supported by several historians, Afzal Ahmad finds slightly difficult to agree with this view. According to Afzal Ahmad while there was a decline on pepper and spice cargoes that belonged to

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<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 183-184.

<sup>359</sup> Ships, men and merchandise in the route between India and Portugal.

the Crown and a few privileged contractors, there was no decline in the much richer cargoes of Indian textiles, furnishings of indigo, lacquers, pearls and the diamonds.<sup>360</sup>

After a brief period of decline, textile trade had risen to a considerable volume during the first three decades of the seventeenth century. Other commodities like rice, saltpetre and precious stones rose to their climax during the same decades. But there was a paradigm shift in handling these commodities, particularly pearl and other precious stones. As the Portuguese Crown and their officials had lost the lucrative trade, it was complemented by the new Christian merchants. They preferred these light items and more profitable goods in which the state gained almost no custom duty and they occupied less space in the ships.<sup>361</sup>

Another important aspect of the whole trade syndrome was merchant capitalism. The Estado was in a declining position and the merchants provided money on loan to the former and served as ambassadors between the Portuguese authorities and the Indian rulers.<sup>362</sup> The Portuguese sea power and its trade were on the verge of decline at the end of the first half of the seventeenth century. But the Indian Ocean witnessed a transitional period from a dependent merchant class to a merchant capitalism.<sup>363</sup>

The Fishery Coast also has contributed much as it played an important role to carry out Portuguese trade in the Indian Ocean. Trade in textiles, pearls, and saltpetre

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<sup>360</sup> Afzal Ahmad, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-186.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*

was continued by the Estado as well as the new Christian merchants till the fall of the Portuguese' regime. Hence Sanjay Subramanyam and McPherson say that the Parava community cannot be looked upon just as a converted group. Their maritime skill and labour promoted enormous changes, economically and commercially.

### **Administration of the Fishery Coast**

The Portuguese king was the sovereign of all the Parava fisherfolk and he enjoyed complete jurisdiction over them. He deputed his authority to be exercised by the Viceroy who resided at Goa. He (the king) was sometimes addressed as Governor also. The Viceroy along with his *Conselho do Estado* (Council of the State) administered the *Estado da India* (State of India) and so the administration of the Fishery Coast also came under his control. The Council was a policy making body which passed several resolutions in order to regulate pearl fishing and trade. The main aim of the Council was to make all the officials stationed at the different ports of the Fishery Coast to collect the maximum profits from the pearl fisheries and other strategic goods. The Council was represented by priests, nobles and ministers.<sup>364</sup>

The royal letters which were sent from Lisbon to Goa during every monsoon are known as *Monções de Reino*. Once a year these letters reached the Viceroy and the Viceroy also replied to them promptly. The records under *Monções de Reino* contain nothing but the correspondences between the King and the Viceroy or between Lisbon and Goa.

All the major issues in buying and selling goods were dealt with in the Council. It made agreements and contracts with the local rulers. The Council decided the punishments to be given to the enemies who did any harm to the Portuguese captains, officials, clergy and the new Christians. All the decisions taken in the Council were signed by the priests and the high officials. The Viceroy took important decisions such as sending fleets to protect their settlements.<sup>365</sup>

The important officials under the Viceroy were *Captain-Mor* (General Captain), captains, *vedor da fazenda* (comptroller of finance), factor (agent), *providor-mor* (chief supplier), *providor* (supplier), prefect, clerk, *Patangattis*, *topaz* (translator), *merinhos*, and *kanakkappillai*. The religious jurisdiction was exercised by the vicar general who generally resided at Cochin. The Jesuit priests with the help of the above officials took care of the Catholics.<sup>366</sup>

### **Functions of the Captains**

The Fishery Coast was entrusted with the captain who resided at Mannar. He took oath in the name of the Pope, the King and the Viceroy that he would strive to bring good harvest and maximum profit to the Estado.<sup>367</sup> There was a captain at Thoothukudi also.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> *Assentos, Vol. II*, pp. 16-19.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>366</sup> *Assentos, Vol. I*, p. 21.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

The captain of Cochin also had jurisdiction over the Fishery Coast.<sup>369</sup> The captain of Thoothukudi made trade agreements with the Nayak of Madurai, who was the lord of the Fishery Coast in the name of the Vijayanagar kingdom.<sup>370</sup>

From 1582, the Fishery Coast was administered from Mannar. The captain of Mannar had to follow all the provisions of buying and selling the elephants otherwise he had to meet all the expenses.<sup>371</sup> He was supposed to bring the entire elephant consignment to the notice of the factor and his clerk.<sup>372</sup> As per the order of the king, no purchase or selling or spending of money was done without the presence of the captain.<sup>373</sup> The captain did all the collections from the Muslims and handed over the same to the factor.<sup>374</sup>

The captain had to provide information about the samples of *aljofar* found in new places and find out a person who would understand the perfection of the pearls.<sup>375</sup> Because of his service and quality he was given the title 'Captain-Mor' as decided in the Council.<sup>376</sup>

When Conde de Linhares was the Viceroy, he requested the Councillors to appoint a captain cum revenue official of the king. The judges of the court elected Soares de Brito who was living in Cochin. He had jurisdiction over the coast, from Vembar to Kanyakumari.<sup>377</sup>

When George de Mello de Castro was in charge as captain, *factor* and *providor* in the island of Mannar, and the administrator in the Coromandel Coast he issued cartazes to Muslims. Here, he played the role of the adjutor and would serve as long as the king would wish well.<sup>378</sup> The captain put things in order. He had to provide money for the security of the boats, people and the priests.<sup>379</sup>

The fine collected was taken by *topazes*, *merinhos* and *kanakkappillai*. It should be given to the treasurer elected by the *Pattangattis*. Even the *Pattangattis* were responsible for the money. They had to keep a separate note book for the account.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>371</sup> Pissurlencar, *Regimentos*, p. 363.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 363-364.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 366.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 371.

<sup>375</sup> *Assentos*, Vol. II, pp. 93-97.

<sup>376</sup> *Assentos*, Vol. I, p. 21.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 258-259.

<sup>378</sup> Da Cunha Rivara, J.H., (ed.), Arquivo Portuguez-Oriental, Fasciculo 5, Parte 2, Nova Goa, p. 532.

<sup>379</sup> *DI.*, Vol. I (1540-1549), p. 164.

<sup>380</sup> *DI.*, Vol. XI (1577-1580), 1970, p. 18.



The *Pattangattis* entered into agreements with the pearl fishers and made the collection. They were the supervisors of the Fishery Coast.<sup>381</sup> The important work of the factor was to effect the lease.<sup>382</sup>

According to an unpublished manuscripts in the National Archives of Lisbon, Dom Filipe I (1580-1598), the King of Portugal appointed Francisco de Sa as *ouvidor* (judge) for the first time with civil and criminal jurisdiction for the entire Tamil Coast. He resided at Punnaikayal as this settlement had a large Portuguese and native Christian population.<sup>383</sup>

The Portuguese judge of Punnaikayal, appointed by the Crown of Portugal was subordinate to the High Court in Goa. The judge was the representative of the king of Portugal who exercised his judicial power in the region. Thus the administration of Punnaikayal was brought under the Crown. All this was done by the Portuguese without the approval of the local Nayaks because it was not based on territorial but social control.<sup>384</sup>

If the people did not pay, the vicar general had to send money to be paid to the navy for guarding the people. The captain wrote to the vicar general and told him that if there was no money, there would be tyranny and people would go back to their old religion. Such a situation was created during the off season when there was no pearl fishing on the coast.<sup>385</sup>

### **Fishery Coast and Sri Lanka**

A special mention has to be made regarding the commercial contacts between the Fishery Coast and the Portuguese in Sri Lanka. The proximity of distance between the ports of the Fishery Coast and Sri Lanka facilitated a quick transportation of goods from one place to the other.

Sri Lanka had to depend totally on the Tamil country for rice. There was a scarcity of rice in Sri Lanka<sup>386</sup> during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and Sri Lanka relied on imports.<sup>387</sup>

"Coromandel, being the closest producing area, was a major supplier. Hundreds of small boats and larger would make this short voyage immediately after harvest in Thanjavur and Madurai.<sup>388</sup> There is a reference about Madurai which was fertile in rice and supplied it to the neighbouring isles.<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> *DI., Vol. I*, pp. 159-160.

<sup>382</sup> *Regimentos*, pp. 479-480.

<sup>383</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *Tamil Coast*, p. 179.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>385</sup> Antónia da Silva Rego, *Documentação para a Historia das Missões do Padroado Portuguese do Oriente*, Vol. III (1543-1547), Lisboa, 1950, p. 428.

<sup>386</sup> Sinnappah Arasaratnam, "*Merchants, Commerce and the State in South India 1650-1700*", pp. 150-161, *Revista de Cultura*, Review Nos. 13-14-Jan-Jun 1991, Edição do Institute Cultural de Macau, Vol. 1, Ano V, pp. 150-161.

<sup>387</sup> Armando Cortesão Rodrigues (ed.), *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires and the Book of Francisco*, Vol. I, New Delhi, 1990, p. 83.

<sup>388</sup> Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Revista*, p. 154.

<sup>389</sup> Albert Gray and Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

It is mentioned in Assentos de Conselho do Estado that 1000 fardos of black rice (fardos = small bags) and 1000 fardos of white rice were sanctioned to be sent to Sri Lanka on 17 Feb, 1638.<sup>390</sup>

Sri Lanka also imported other items like cotton, textiles, salt, sesame oil, vegetable oil and palm sugar. Luxury goods were imported into Sri Lanka from Coromandel.<sup>391</sup> The Portuguese supplied gunpowder, ammunition spares, soldiers and equipments, whenever the island was in war.<sup>392</sup> Portuguese men, soldiers and other provisions were also sent to Sri Lanka.<sup>393</sup>

In return Sri Lanka exported large quantities of areca nuts, coconuts and coconut produce, wood especially from the palmyrah tree, precious stones and elephants.<sup>394</sup>

The people of Coromandel ate areca with betel. It was a food stuff and was very cheap. It had a great deal of areca, which was called *avelana da Indie* (hazel nut of India) in Latin.<sup>395</sup> The Portuguese permitted and encouraged trade in cinnamon subject to the imposition of customs duties.<sup>396</sup>

The trade between the Fishery Coast and Sri Lanka was in the hands of Chetty, Chulia and Parava merchants of the Coromandel and Madura ports. The shipping ranged from small one-masted boats to large three - masted ships (capable of taking up to 100 tons). Most of the trade was of the peddling variety, in owner operated vessels, calling at a variety of ports to the east and the west of the island, as the situation demanded.<sup>397</sup>

Most of the merchants gradually established small settlements of kinsmen in the island's ports with whom they dealt in partnerships or agencies. Many merchants travelled into the interior to buy and sell goods in small boats and some had contacts with the king of Kandy and the nobles of the kingdom to whom they supplied luxury goods produced in Coromandel. The number of vessels and merchants taking part in this trade was so large that its total volume made a major impact on the economy of the two regions.<sup>398</sup>

The important trade route from Coromandel to Sri Lanka was both through the straits for small vessels and through open seas for the larger ones. This was a

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<sup>390</sup> *Assentos, Vol. I*, pp. 198-199.

<sup>391</sup> Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Revista*, pp. 198-199.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>393</sup> HAG, MDR, Livro 22B, fl, 435, 1652.

<sup>394</sup> Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Revista*, p. 154.

<sup>395</sup> Armondo C. Rodrigues, *op. cit.*, *Vol. I*, pp. 83, 86.

<sup>396</sup> Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Revista*, p. 154.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*

vital trade link for both the regions i.e. southern India and the island, and took in articles of basic consumption for the common people.<sup>399</sup>

### **Private Trade**

The Portuguese experienced a transitional period after 1535 and it affected their commercial activities very much. Private trade which was unknown during the first three decades of the sixteenth century raised its ugly head in the fourth decade. This period witnessed relaxation and weakening in the royal arrangements made to maintain the monopoly. The commodities reserved for the Crown became wares for regular Asian trade, both for the Portuguese and non-Portuguese merchants. Though there are a number of reasons for this development, Pius Malekandathil highlights three major reasons responsible for rampant private trade. They are: 1) the exigency to incorporate the Portuguese individuals into trade, 2) tensions in the hinterland and 3) the general economic crisis.<sup>400</sup>

Private trade was carried out by the captain and other Portuguese officials. Organized rice trade by the Portuguese seems to have taken shape when Cosme de Paiva became the captain of the Coromandel Coast. He retained monopoly of rice trade and exported rice from Coromandel to the Fishery Coast and Malabar, which he sold at a price of his choice. This was, quite likely, a personal enterprise. He also involved in horse trade and sold the same to Vettumperumal who had jurisdiction on Thoothukudi. Even though he had received warnings and had been jailed for selling horses to the enemy of the Portuguese, he continued his enterprise and earned covetous profit.<sup>401</sup>

The viceroy and the captain had private trade in salt. There are several examples and incidents to prove this. Just to avoid any bad image to himself the viceroy asked the captain to hand over a letter to the Nayak of Madurai.<sup>402</sup>

The captain bought and sold *aljofar* which was available in the land with his money without causing any loss to anybody like any other merchant. In his residence he sold clothes brought from China. The topaz helped him in this deal.<sup>403</sup>

Many Portuguese hid themselves on the Fishery Coast and went to Bengal and Pegu on trade. They had their own ships and were well versed in navigation.<sup>404</sup>

The religious also were drawn towards lucrative trade and earned a good income. One of the ex-Jesuit superiors of the Fishery Coast and the procurator took money from their friends to invest in the fisheries of *aljofar* which was much more than it required. It should be around 10,000 *Pardaus* that each person invested.<sup>405</sup>

### **Illicit Money**

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<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>400</sup> Pius Malekandathil, *Portuguese Cochin*, p. 170.

<sup>401</sup> *Letters of Xavier, August 29, 1544*, p. 91.

<sup>402</sup> *Assentos, Vol. II*, pp. 93-97.

<sup>403</sup> *DI., Vol. XVII (1595-1597)*, 1988, p. 421.

<sup>404</sup> *DI., Vol. I*, p. 163.

<sup>405</sup> *DI., Vol. XVII*, p. 421.

The Paravas considered the Portuguese as saviours as they had emancipated them from the clutches of the Muslims. But the economic freedom of the Paravas was short lived as the saviours turned oppressors. The Portuguese officials like the captains and factors, were involved in extracting more money, apart from the usual tax from the fisher folk, and invested it in pearl fishing. The Paravas were paying 15,000 *fanams* per annum to the King of Portugal. But the captain demanded 75,000 *fanams*. The Catholics were illtreated by the captain at Thoothukudi for not paying this stipulated amount.<sup>406</sup>

During the sale of *aljoifar*, the people indulged in verbal abuse against the Portuguese officials. The captain indulged in robbery and tyrannies.<sup>407</sup> Sometimes the representatives of the Nayak and the captain became friendly and took some money from the tribute paid by the people. When the ships were going from Thoothukudi to Punnaikayal, the captain purchased some pearls. Also a part of the catch (30 patacus) were given to the representatives of the Nayak. Both had known that it was against the conditions of the Portuguese king.<sup>408</sup>

Besides the tax, the captains demanded money from the people for his personal use. They took a share in the fishing of chanks and sent them to Bengal. The divers of chanks were under the control of the captains. They were not allowed to sell the chanks to whom they wanted. So the people brought these atrocities to the notice of the king. They felt they had never paid tax like this.<sup>409</sup>

While patrolling the coast, sometimes the captain took over the enemy ships, imprisoned them, sold the goods and made money. The Viceroy had ordered that whatever catch was brought to the fort, the sale had to be decided by the factor and the magistrate. If there was a catch, inventory of the same was done by the clerk of the factor and the goods were sold to the highest bidder and the amount was treated as per the regulations of the catch.<sup>410</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> *Silva Rego, Vol. III*, pp. 322-325.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 326.

<sup>408</sup> HAG, MDR, Livro 19D, fls. 1105-1108, 1633-1635.

<sup>409</sup> *Silva Rego, Vol. IV (1548-1550)*, 1950, p. 466.

<sup>410</sup> *Pissurlencar, Regimentos*, pp. 363-364.

When Alexandre de Souza was the captain of Mannar, there were many complaints regarding materials of the fort as well as new taxes proposed and imposed by him on the fisherfolk. The king wanted to know how much money as taxes had been collected and the manner in which it was collected and how many ships were in this area.<sup>411</sup>

After the conversion, the Paravas felt that they had the protection of the Portuguese fleet and could follow their profession undisturbed. But the Portuguese were not always fair in their dealings with them and there were cases of extortion of money from them by the officials. During the governorship of D.Estevão da Gama (1540-42), João Fernandes Correia, the captain of the Fishery Coast, who was not content with extortion, ordered some Christians to be hanged. Da Gama immediately had him replaced and imprisoned.<sup>412</sup>

"Da Gama's successor having proved no better, Martim Affonso de Souza, the next Governor was despatched to the Fishery Coast in May 1542, under António Roiz de Gambōa, a high official, to conduct an inquiry and put an end to the high-handedness of the Portuguese bureaucracy. De Gambōa found the captain guilty. He compelled him to make restitution for his extortions and took him in chains to Cochin. The Paravas were impressed by the sense of justice of the government which visited condign punishment on its offending officials.<sup>413</sup>

### **Merchant Communities**

Merchant communities played an important role in the Tamil coast, particularly in the Fishery Coast, before and after the arrival of the Portuguese. They acted as real agents in their own region, between different coasts and in the overseas trade. A number of merchant groups were involved in such trade and they were the Mudaliyars, Chettis, Marakkayars, Mappilas, Kayalars, Lebbais and Ravuthers. Among all the above merchants groups, the Marakkayars' unique role in maritime history is much remembered even today with regard to the Fishery Coast.

Even before the arrival of the Portuguese, the Marakkayars had been involved in pearl and chank fishing and supplied rice and textiles to the Malabar region. They were good sailors, boat owners and as merchants promoted trade. Barbosa says that the Moors (Muslims) were great merchants and owned many sails and they lived in the seaports. They were mainly based in Kilakkarai.

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<sup>411</sup> *HAG, MDR, Livro 6B, fls. 19-20, 1605.*

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*

These Marakkayars (belonging to Kilakkarai) had not only common trade interests, but also group solidarity and partnership as they were all friends and relatives. So it was easier for them to have links with the Marakkayars of the Coromandel and the Malabar coasts. The strong network of trade of the Marakkayars promoted inter-local trade and so they knew the demand and supply of the three coasts. They were vibrantly in touch with the producers at the grass root level.<sup>414</sup>

These Marakkayars enjoyed monopoly over rice and textiles even during the Portuguese time and they too participated in it as the pearl fishing was only seasonal. The Marakkayars of Cochin collected rice and textiles from Kunimedu in Coromandel, Kilakkarai and Kayalpattnam in the Fishery Coast and sold rice at Cochin which was cheaper than the Kanara rice.<sup>415</sup> The Marakkayars of the Coromandel Coast carried the same items to Malacca, Achin, Pegu, Macão and Pasai.<sup>416</sup> Rice and textiles were also collected from the hinterland area of the Tirunelveli coast. In this way the Marakkayars had established economic relations with their own clan groups in other coasts. The family network and partnership among the Marakkayars promoted inter-local trade by supplying needed materials to their customers and made trade very active.

The Marakkayars as pilots, sailors and navigators in the Portuguese ships received *cruzados* and rice as payment for their service. A team of Portuguese sailed from Cochin to Kunimedu in 1506 on the way to Malacca in a '*navai*'(ship) that

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<sup>414</sup> Pius Melakandathil, *Portuguese Cochin*, pp. 111-112;151-152.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

<sup>416</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *Tamil Coast*, p. 138.

belonged to Nina Marakkayar.<sup>417</sup> The Portuguese first admired the vast commercial networks which the Muslim merchants had established and won them over to their side. In this way the merchants of Pazhayakayal and Kilakkarai yielded to the demands of the Portuguese.

The Marakkayars went as far as Malacca too and helped the Portuguese to obtain commodities from the other ports of South East Asian countries. Mamale Marakkayar and Cherina Marakkayar had more influence not only among the Muslim merchants but also among the Portuguese. They brought cinnamon from Sri Lanka, cloves, mace and other commodities from Malacca and delivered them to the Portuguese factories on the east coast. The Marakkayars of Kilakkarai exported rice and textiles to Sri Lanka and imported cinnamon.<sup>418</sup> The Marakkayars were the pioneers in importing elephants from Sri Lanka and it was replaced by the Portuguese.<sup>419</sup> The important point here is that the Marakkayars had initiated overseas trade even before the arrival of the Portuguese, especially in Malacca. The Portuguese continued the same and Malacca formed an important trading centre in the Indian Ocean.<sup>420</sup>

The Mass Conversion had an adverse impact on the Marakkayars. The Kayalars and the Marakkayars were deprived of their privileges of enjoying the benefits from Pazhayakayal and Kilakkarai respectively. The Muslims were totally scared at the decision of the Hindu Paravas to embrace Catholicism. Realising the future danger, the

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<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>419</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *Tamil Coast*, p. 108.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*

Muslims also sent an embassy to Cochin after the return of the Pattangattis. Pero Vaz de Amaral, the *Vedor de Fazenda* was persuaded to change the decision of the Paravas. The Muslims even offered a tribute of eight pearls of high price, 20,000 *fanams*, and valuable articles of cloth. But the Portuguese refused to accept the gifts and they continued to look upon the Muslims as rivals.<sup>421</sup>

From this time onwards the prosperity of the Marakkayars was in danger, both in the east as well as west. The Kayalars were expelled from Pazhayakayal and they had to find an alternate port at Kayalpattanam. The Marakkayars of Kilakkarai were supported by the Mappilas of Malabar and Marakkayars of Kozhikodu.

At this juncture, in 1537, the famous Pate Marakkayar, Kunjali Marakkayar and Ibrahim Ali Marakkayar undertook an invasion on the Fishery Coast with the help of the Zamorin of Kozhikodu.

There were endless quarrels between the Portuguese *casados* and the Marakkayars. The Paravas' conversion into Christianity not only affected the coastal trade of the Fishery Coast but the entire Malabar and south Coromandel Coasts and Sri Lanka.<sup>422</sup>

After the conversion of the Paravas, the Muslim merchants were not completely evacuated from the Fishery Coast by the Portuguese. They still continued to be rich boat owners. They did not want to work for the foreigners and so destroyed the pearl fisheries.<sup>423</sup> The Mappilas considered themselves as absolute lords of the fisheries.

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<sup>421</sup> Jorge Manuel Flores, *Os Portuguese*, p. 179.

<sup>422</sup> Charlie Pye-Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>423</sup> *DI.*, Vol. I, pp. 159-160.



They were also supported by the Zamorin of Kozhikodu.<sup>424</sup> So the Portuguese had to carry out their commercial activities amidst all tensions and the mounting anti-Portuguese sentiments of the Mappilas.

The Marakkayars' prime position was reduced to a great extent after the submission of the Kunjalis. But they did not leave Kilakkarai. Jeyaseela Stephen says that the Marakkayars were relegated to the role of petty merchants, pirates and smugglers, particularly trading with Sri Lanka.<sup>425</sup> Born traders, the Marakkayars were replaced by the *casados* who also played a great role in trade but they (the *casados*) did not come in touch with the producers at the grass root level like the Marakkayars.

### **Chettis**

The Chettis were another group of Hindu merchants whose business has been described in the writings of the Chinese travellers in the fifteenth century. The Tamil Chettis had their settlement in Malacca. The Chettis with a strong base in the ports of Coromandel, were great merchants, owners of ships and used to trade with Cambay, Dabul and Chaul in areca, coconuts, pepper, jogra and palm sugar. The Tamil Chettis were called '*nagarathar*' (city dwellers) who resided in *nagarams* (cities).<sup>426</sup>

The Telugu Chetti castes 'Komatis' and 'Kavarai' had migrated from Andhra during the Vijayanagar period and had settled down in Coromandel. There were many groups among the Chettis on the basis of their specialisation in particular

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<sup>424</sup> Jorge Manuel Flores, *Os Portuguese*, p. 39.

<sup>425</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *Tamil Coast*, p. 82.

<sup>426</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *The Coromandel Coast*, p. 135; p. 139.

commodities. The *Kudiraichettis* specialised in precious stones, gold, and other metals. *Komatchettis* dealt with food items and all kinds of fruits and vegetables. *Berichettis* collected textiles from weavers and exported many varieties of textiles to Malacca.<sup>427</sup>

The *Kudiraichettis* supplied horses to the Pandyas. But the Chettis did not take active part in the horse trade between the Portuguese and the Vijayanagar empire. But João da Cruz who was responsible for the conversion of the Paravas belonged to a *Kudiraichetti* community.

The *Kudiraichettis* dealt in precious stones, metals and bullion. They also assessed and valued them. They fixed the price of pearls, seed pearls, precious stones and polished rough corals according to their carats, beauty and goodness. All these show the different activities of the merchant communities.<sup>428</sup>

### **Casados**

The role played by the casados was very important in promoting Portuguese maritime activities. In India, the Lusitanians conducted their trade through the Estado da India representing the Crown and the private Portuguese merchants. The latter consisted of two groups: the first group enjoyed the protection of the Estado and the merchants lived in official Portuguese settlements known as casados. The second group consisted of purely private merchants who did not come under the control of the Estado and enjoyed no privileges.<sup>429</sup>

The casados enjoyed certain trade concessions granted by the Crown. They were to trade on certain sectors, on a specified number of routes in Asia and to trade in a wide range of goods. So the casados enjoyed concessions like ‘concession’ routes as well as free routes but at the same time the Captain-Mor had authority over them. The

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<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>428</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *The Coromandel Coast*, p. 135.

<sup>429</sup> Mathew, K.S., *Maritime History*, p. 31.

volume of intra-Asian trade carried on by the casados increased to a greater extent during the second half of the sixteenth century. They operated their transactions through thirty routes. The casados' role in the promotion of Lusitanian trade cannot be relegated secondary to the merchant communities.<sup>430</sup>

In the first decade of the sixteenth century only a few Portuguese women were permitted to sail to India but in 1542 even this was severely forbidden by the viceroy. On the other hand, marriages between the Portuguese and the native women were encouraged. The married men were known as casados.<sup>431</sup>

Casados were not just married men. Only those persons resident under the authority of the Estado da India could be termed as casados. Moreover, they were associated with a specific place of residence. In this way they were distinguished from the ecclesiastics (church officials), *soldados* (soldiers) and officials who came from Portugal.<sup>432</sup>

Afonso de Albuquerque was the pioneer in introducing casados in India. He had two aims in introducing them: one, to settle a Portuguese population and two, the casados were expected to be strong supporters of the Estado. He even supported the casados by giving economic incentives to them.<sup>433</sup>

The newly converted Christians also joined the casados. There existed two groups of casados now as white casados and black casados. Sanjay Subrahmanyam

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<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>431</sup> *Letters of Xavier, May 16, 1546*, pp. 148-149.

<sup>432</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire*, p. 220.

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

says that in Mannar seventy white casados lived. Though they formed a small number, they carried out trade with multifaceted dimensions and quality.<sup>434</sup>

Apart from the royal goods like pearls, elephants and saltpetre, the casados also carried textiles, rice, tobacco, etc., to the places where they were in great demand. Sri Lanka and Malabar depended totally on these items.

Horses imported to Cochin from Ormuz were brought to Kanyakumari and then they were taken to the Tamil coast by the casados. The casados of course promoted the commercial interest of the *Estado*. But they were involved in illegal commercial traffic also especially in the east coast. The big *casado* merchants hired the services of the small scale *casado* entrepreneurs to collect commodities and exchanged them in South East Asia.<sup>435</sup>

Clandestine elements were never absent in the casados system. One of the greatest casados João Fernandez Correia claimed that the entire eastern coast of India from Kanyakumari to *Satgão* and the whole of Bengal belonged to him. In 1547 he took with him seventy casados and went to the Fishery Coast and moved to Bengal. Sometimes the new Christians also took up the role of the casados. Goa was alarmed at the progress of the casados in horse trade.<sup>436</sup>

The reasons for the sudden emergence of the casados are:

1. The economic position of the traditional Muslim merchants got weakened.

The Portuguese looked at them (the Muslim merchants) as rivals and imposed the cartaz system and when the Muslims failed to carry cartazes they were

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<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>435</sup> Pius Malekandathil, *Portuguese Cochin*, p. 129.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

attacked severely. In order to fulfil the vacuum created by the merchants, the *casados* emerged.

2. When the trade on royal goods failed the *Estado* looked for alternative goods like horses, rice, textiles, tobacco and other essential items which were in great demand. The *casados* took care of this.
3. There existed low custom duty. Even the local kings introduced low custom on the duties to encourage the activities of the *casados*.<sup>437</sup>

When Lopo Soares de Albergaria was the governor, he made the area east of Kanyakumari free from state interference.<sup>438</sup>

The *casados* were given protection from the attack of the corsairs. From Kanyakumari to Cochin, they were provided fleet protection. The merchants were asked to travel in caravans or small ships (*cafila*) which were guarded by a fleet. The *cafila* system was a common practice in the seventeenth century to withstand the threat from the Dutch and the corsairs.<sup>439</sup>

In due course, the *casados* rose to the position of bourgeois and wielded enormous power, economically and politically. This ended in the struggle between the *casados* and the *fidalgos* (nobles). The Crown extended its full support to the *casados*.<sup>440</sup>

### **Trade Routes**

Trade routes play a vital role in the promotion of trade and commerce. Generally these routes link the coastal ports and the hinterland towns and end with the capital cities

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<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 210-211.

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*

or towns. The Vijayanagar ruler or the Nayak of Madurai did not have any direct contact with the administration of the ports in the Fishery Coast under whom it fell but they were content with the annual tribute

In Tamil Nadu the once capital cities like Madurai, Thanjavur, and Kanchipuram were not only the important hinterland trading centres but they were religiously important also. The famous temples of these cities promoted more economic activities rather than mere religious activities. Temple economy was promoted in Madurai, because of the Meenakshi temple at the centre of the city and all the streets in and around the temple were occupied by the weavers known as Saurashtras. These people excelled in weaving and were responsible for supplying hinterland textiles to the ports of the Fishery Coast. The Hindus of Madurai or any other religious place believe that the sarees they buy in Madurai would bring prosperity to their homes. In this back ground only the routes between the sea ports and the capital of the Vijayanagar had linked with the temple towns.

The trade routes from Viayanagar to Rameshwaram covered all the important religious centres viz., Chandragiri, Tirupathi, Kanchipuram, Tiruvannamalai, Chidambaram and Madurai. The sea routes between Cochin and Mylapore included all the chief trading centres viz., Kanyakumari, Thoothukudi, Punnaikayal, Talaimannar, Nagapattinam, Tranquebar, Chidambaram and Gingee.<sup>441</sup> These routes fostered internal trade by linking commercial centres with various destinations in South India.

Just like Thoothukudi, the littoral was also linked with the hinterland Madurai, and the line of communication between the interior and littoral was the line between Madurai and Rameshwaram, which was used by the pilgrims, soldiers and merchants alike. These ports and cities belonged to the Vijayanagar empire, and a lot of autonomy was granted to them by the Vijayanagar ruler.

### ***Cartaz System***

The Arabs who succeeded to the supremacy of the sea after the breakdown of the Chola naval power were only commercial navigators and were not instruments of any national policy. During the Hindu supremacy in the Indian Ocean there was complete freedom of trade and navigation. Only the pirates were extirpated and sea routes kept open. Thus the supremacy of the Tamils on the seas remained unchallenged even after the arrival of the Arabs.<sup>442</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *The Coromandel Coast*, p. 98.

<sup>442</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire*, p. 77.

But the Portuguese had three options when they entered the Asian waters. One was to pay off Asian authorities as necessary. The second was to furnish their own protection by fortifying certain port towns. Thirdly, they went one step further to sell “protection services” to the Asian merchants to pay for the privilege of sailing in the seas.<sup>443</sup>

The Papal grant and the title of “Lord of the Conquest” by the Crown after Vasco da Gama found a sea route to India resulted in the introduction of the cartaz system. By this the king of Portugal asserted monopoly in relation to his own subjects and forbade them from trading on certain goods; secondly certain ships were denied the right of navigation without permit passes.<sup>444</sup> To enforce their supremacy over navigation the Portuguese introduced the cartaz system.

The cartaz was a document of safe-conduct for navigation issued by the Portuguese to the native ships. It showed that these vessels did not belong to the enemy camp.<sup>445</sup> The Muslims and the Hindus were forced to take the safe-conduct under the pain of confiscation and death.<sup>446</sup>

“All the native ships had to take cartazes, which contained the following particulars: the name of the vessel and of the captain, the nature of the cargo, its origin and destination (which factors attest the economic significance of these licenses) and the name of the authority issuing the cartaz. The fee charged for the cartaz was only one pardao (13

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<sup>443</sup> Pius Malekandathil, *Portuguese Cochin*, p. 123.

<sup>444</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire*, pp. 77-78.

<sup>445</sup> Pius Malekandathil, *Portuguese Cochin*, p. 123.

<sup>446</sup> Mathew, K.S., *Maritime History*, p. 44.

*fanams*) per ship, but the Estado received a huge amount by issuing cartazes to the native ships.”<sup>447</sup>

Certain commodities were reserved for the King of Portugal and nobody was allowed to trade in these items. The passes issued to the rulers and merchants specifically made mention of the cargo thus reserved for the Portuguese. Any breach of this regulation was liable to confiscation of the ships carrying the forbidden items. Besides the nominal charges for the issue of passes, the ships on their return voyage were bound to visit the specified port under the Portuguese surveillance or occupation and pay the customs duties.<sup>448</sup>

According to chronicler Gaspar Correia, in 1502 cartazes were first issued to ships from the Malabar ports of Quilon, Cochin and Cannanore in order to certify to the fact that they pertained to areas that were not at war with the Portuguese.<sup>449</sup>

In the Fishery Coast, when the Portuguese introduced the cartaz system, they were trying to control the pearl fisheries at Kilakkarai and Vedalai. In 1522, Bastião Rodrigues, the captain of Kilakkarai was authorised to issue cartazes to the Muslim merchants for sailing in the sea at Kilakkarai.<sup>450</sup>

When Vedalai was made a Portuguese settlement, the officials kept a strict watch over the sailings in the Gulf of Mannar. They collected money by issuing cartazes

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<sup>447</sup> Pius Malekandathil, *Portuguese Cochin*, pp. 125-126.

<sup>448</sup> Mathew, K.S., *Maritime History*, p. 18.

<sup>449</sup> Correia, 1975, 1:298, Cited in Sanjay Subramanyam *The Portuguese Empire*, p. 77.

<sup>450</sup> Malya Newitt, “*Trade in the Indian Ocean and the Portuguese System of Cartazes*” in Mathew, K.S. (ed.), *The First Portuguese Colonial Empire*, Exeter, 1986, pp. 69-54, p. 66.



to the ships.<sup>451</sup> The new Christians were exempted from buying the cartaz system and so they went to the Coromandel and Sri Lankan coasts and settled there.

In 1562, when the Muslim merchants of Cochin came to the Fishery Coast with cartazes, it resulted in religious tensions between the Christians and Muslims. Fr. Gasper Barzeus asked king John III not to issue cartazes to the Muslims. But the Muslim merchants used cartazes in great number in order to bring horses from Ormuz to the ports in the west and from there to Kanyakumari.

The cartaz system gave legitimacy to the merchants for the conduct of trade in the Asian waters. But it had its own adverse impact. It also resulted in illicit trade and smuggling. The Portuguese could not prevent this as they too had become victims of this system.

#### **Jesuits and the Paravas**

From the time of the appearance of Xavier on the Fishery Coast, the Paravas were led by just two objectives in their lives namely, to go fishing for their livelihood and to live in a spiritual domain. Primarily they were concerned about their livelihood and went fishing; secondarily they were forced to live in a spiritual domain, learning, listening, practising faith and memorising some prayers. When the income they received from the pearl fisheries was distributed unjustly between different officials, the Jesuits rescued them.

It is not true that the Jesuits were always motivated philanthropically and therefore helped the poor Paravas. The Jesuits were also allured by the high value of the pearls and their provincial had once said that they could not live on air and thus justified their involvement in business. They had clashed with the captains and took the Paravas on their side. Several times the Jesuits, particularly Miguel Vaz, appealed to the king of Portugal and asked him to reduce the amount to be paid by the coastal Christians.

For the protection which they enjoyed, the Paravas contributed seventy five thousand *fanams* to the Portuguese treasury. This was considered rather exorbitant by

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<sup>451</sup> Jeyaseela Stephen, S., *Tamil Coast*, p. 66.

Miguel Vaz, on whose representation to the governor; it was reduced to sixty thousand *fanams*. Miguel Vaz desired that it should be reduced to one-third, a proposal which was beyond the competence of the authorities in India to entertain, as it needed the sanction of the Crown.<sup>452</sup>

The favours made by the priests, were included in the royal letter of 1 February 1547. The Paravas were not paying any tax when there was no pearl fishery. This had been the practice of their kings before they were converted. Since they had paid for two years, in the absence of pearl fisheries, it was reasonable that sum would be substrated from the taxes when they fished again.<sup>453</sup>

### **Money Spent by the Paravas**

Apart from collecting money through illicit means from the Paravas, the Portuguese, particularly the Jesuits, expected them to spend money on teaching catechism and other religious activities.

No mission had any fixed income. The missionaries either lived on alms or on the contributions which the Paravas had agreed to pay as a kind of compensation for the protection given to them by the Portuguese fleet. The Paravas were very generous in contributing money for the training of the priests and the catechists.<sup>454</sup>

When the fort of Mannar was in a damaged condition, the Jesuits who lived in that area persuaded the Christians of the Fishery Coast to spend money and render all help to repair the fort. Half of the expenses was to be met by the people which was around 2000 *Pardaus*.<sup>455</sup>

The Paravas paid 500 *cruzados* to the custom office. They had to pay to the priests and meet the expenses of the school also. Yet there was no use of force to collect the money. They paid their taxes voluntarily.<sup>456</sup> They spent from their purse, on the

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<sup>452</sup> *Silva Rego, Vol. III*, pp. 324-326.

<sup>453</sup> *DI., Vol. I*, pp. 159-164.

<sup>454</sup> Ferroli, D., *The Jesuits in Malabar, Vol. II*, Bangalore, p. 343.

<sup>455</sup> *HAG, MDR, Livro 7, fl. 152 (1601-1603)*.

<sup>456</sup> *DI., Vol. XIII (1583-1585)*, 1975, p. 180.

college, seminary and printing press.<sup>457</sup> The Paravas were considered not only as a military reserve but as a source of tribute from the same fishery as well.

### **Opposition to Paying Taxes**

The new Christians of the Fishery Coast were not docile and submissive to the wishes of the captain and the factor. After receiving the royal letter dated 20 November 1546 the, fisherfolk were reluctant to pay taxes to the Portuguese officials. Influenced by the Jesuits, the king had exempted the Paravas from paying any taxes in the absence of any pearl fishery.<sup>458</sup>

Taking advantage of the above royal letter, the fisherfolk refused to pay whenever the Fishery Coast was invaded by the Badagas. In this case the captain found it difficult to pay the soldiers and consequently left for the west coast.<sup>459</sup>

There were several reasons as to say why the Paravas were not paying their due to the *Estado da India*. According to one version, thirty to forty leading men on the coast (of course rich) and having ships and wares allowed the pearl fishery to go ruin. All the divers and slaves were in their possession because of the prevalence of usury. This had an adverse impact on the Portuguese and the poor Paravas on the Fishery Coast. But the captain's view was that it was the Jesuit priests who had stirred the people up against him and had prevented them from paying to the king. The captain described the situation as “contrary to the service of God and of the King”.<sup>460</sup>

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<sup>457</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 184-186.

<sup>458</sup> *DI., Vol. I*, pp. 159-164.

<sup>459</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.*

The trading voyages which the king had granted to the Christians of the Fishery Coast had made them more interested in trade than in pearl fisheries. The king's revenues were consequently reduced and a door was opened for the depopulation of India.<sup>461</sup>

When captain António Moniz Bareto came to the Fishery Coast in the middle of April, 1547, he found that there was no pearl fishery. At once he wrote a letter to the viceroy saying that diminution in the pearl fishery was due to the following reason: Certain leaders who received favours as Christians from the Portuguese had now become rich. They built numerous champanas and excelled in trade now.<sup>462</sup> They believed that their business was more profitable than the pearl fishing. Also the poor pearl divers, now preferred to dive for chank rather than for pearls which was more profitable for them. They sold one chank for fifteen or twenty *fanams* which was formerly worth only five *fanams*. These chanks were exported to Bengal. Therefore the Paravas did not undertake pearl fishing, not because there were no pearl mussels in the sea.<sup>463</sup>

Of course it took many years for the Portuguese to realize that the Paravas were right when they said that in certain years there were no pearl mussels in the sea. There were different reasons for this, for example, the pearl banks were at times covered by shifting mounds of sand on the bed of the sea.

There were times, the Paravas in order to show their displeasure of staying with the Portuguese, preferred to join the Badagas. The Paravas who harvested pearls by going deep into the sea at the risk of their lives brought ashore the valuable and beautiful pearls. And like any other working class subjects, they too were alienated from the pearls they caught. The worst part of the whole episode is that the Paravas had to give a stipulated amount of money for the slippers of the queen of Portugal. At each pearl fishery season certain big pearls were reserved for this purpose.

The Portuguese made use of the political rivalry among the various native rulers. The Hindu-Muslim conflict and the power struggle between the Vijayanagar ruler and his viceroys motivated the Portuguese to take to supplying horses and other war related goods. The hinterland areas of Thoothukudi fulfilled the trade demands of Portugal. The Portuguese paid a high rate for saltpetre only to prevent the Dutch from gaining the same from the Nayak of Madurai.

The merchant groups maintained grass-route level contacts with the farmers and catered to the demands of the people and the Portuguese. Though the *casados* were loyal to the Portuguese in the beginning, they became an impediment to the Portuguese trade later on.

The Portuguese entry into the Indian Ocean altered the open door policy. They controlled the trade routes by introducing the cartaz system. The Portuguese also procured strategic goods available, all for themselves. They were parochial in their approach to trade for they supported only the new Christians to invest and reap the benefits of trade.

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<sup>461</sup> Georg Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier, Vol. III*, p. 376.

<sup>462</sup> *DI., Vol. I*, pp. 165-170.

<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.*

When the Portuguese met with financial crisis, the Parava merchants came to their rescue by providing them capital. In this way the merchants promoted monetisation of Indian economy and it resulted in industrialisation later on.

Though the Portuguese came in search of pearls in the east coast, they did not confine themselves to that particular item alone. They widened their horizon and their trading policy was so flexible that they quickly answered to the demands of the situation. The political disunity and the religious rivalry among the natives were made use by them. 'Mammon' and 'God' went hand in hand and sometimes religion became a tool to promote the interests of the Portuguese.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE DECLINE AND THE FALL OF THE PORTUGUESE

The Portuguese encountered opposition and resistance from several quarters during their stay in the Fishery Coast. In all their adversities, the Paravas stood by them and supported them. However, once settled, the coloniser turned against the inhabitants (the Paravas) of the Fishery Coast. The so called saviours also turned out to be their exploiters. The fisherfolk, thus were the victims at the hands of every political power, be they native or alien.

#### **Opposition from Native Powers**

##### **Zamorin and the Kunjalis Vs the Portuguese**

No sooner did the Portuguese come to India, than they started calling themselves as the Lords of the Seas. Portuguese kings and their viceroys adopted titles like the Kings of India and Viceroys and Governors of India respectively. However, it was not possible for Indian naval powers to accept their lordship at sea.

The most stiff and daring attempt to oust the Portuguese navy was made by the Muslim admirals of the Zamorin better known as the Kunjali Marakkayars. Their long and sustained war against the Portuguese at sea lasted for a hundred years. Though it ended in favour of the Portuguese, the credit for initiating the process of curtailing the Portuguese naval supremacy must go to the Kunjalis.<sup>464</sup>

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<sup>464</sup> António da Silva Rego, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p.29.

The Kunjalis hailed from Pantalayani Kollan in Kerala. Later, due to the harassment of the Portuguese, they shifted to Ponnani, the southern harbour in the jurisdiction of the Zamorin.<sup>465</sup>

When the first Portuguese Viceroy D. Francisco de Almeida attacked and destroyed their ships at Ponnani, they shifted to Agalpula and resolved to take revenge on the same. The Zamorin who admired their courage and loyalty had conferred on the family the title of Marakkayar with the right to wear silk turbans.<sup>466</sup>

The Kunjalis fought several wars with the Portuguese and sometimes the Kunjalis' fleets were totally destroyed. But the war was never given up and not a single man of their family ever surrendered to the Portuguese. The Kunjalis were hated by the Portuguese for two reasons: First they were Muslims and second they were the only native naval power which could confront them on the sea.<sup>467</sup> Upto 1540 the Portuguese had been defeating them and looting their richly laden ships. Many of the Muslims were killed and enslaved. In return, the Kunjalis proved their efficiency of their guerilla tactics at sea and inflicted severe losses to Portuguese ships, goods and men.

The Kunjalis moved about with their lighter *paraus* (boats) with ease, and attacked and escaped speedily. It is a fact that their flags on these *paraus* kept flying from Colombo to Kutch and from Kozhikodu to the Red Sea in mere complete defiance of the Portuguese cartazes.<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>465</sup> George Chalakkal, "*Portuguese Versus the Malabar Seamen*" in (ed.), Teotonia de Souza, *Essays in Goan History*, New Delhi, 1989, p. 29.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*

The Zamorin of Kozhikodu on the western coast of India was not content to remain a silent spectator of the growing influence of the Portuguese on the east coast. He therefore came forward to help the Muslims who had not lost their business at Pazhayakayal.<sup>469</sup>

From 1525 onwards the Muslims of Kerala known as Mappilas made several attempts to control the pearl fisheries in the east. They were found in every nook and part of the sea of Sri Lanka. Thefts and battles were the order of the day. In 1526, twenty paraus of Kozhikodu attacked the Indian coast of the sea of Sri Lanka. George Gabral the captain followed them to chase, but could not avert loss of life. Five Portuguese were also captured by the Muslims. It was an utter defeat for the Portuguese.<sup>470</sup>

In 1526, Pate Marayakkayar, one of the powerful admirals of the Zamorin was travelling to Sri Lanka in order to fight with the King of Kotte. On the way Pate Marakkayar attacked the Portuguese ships which were coming from Malacca, near Kanyakumari.<sup>471</sup> Further, Pate Marakkayar plundered all along the coast upto Pazhaverkadu. He was chased away by Manuel da Gama, the Portuguese captain.<sup>472</sup> In the encounter, João Flores, the captain of the Fishery Coast died in 1528.<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>469</sup> Sridharan, K., *Portuguese Sea - Power in the Indian Ocean 1498-1662*, Mumbai, 1998, pp. 19-20.

<sup>470</sup> Jorge Manuel Flores, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162.

<sup>473</sup> Silva Rego, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 137.



On hearing this, Martim Affonso de Mello sailed from Cochin with a powerful fleet and subdued the Muslims at Pazhayakayal and punished them for their alliance with the Zamorin.<sup>474</sup>

In 1529 Pate Marakkayar proceeded to Sri Lanka with forty paraus and pirates to steal the Portuguese ships and to kill the factor. Affonso Mexia, the captain of Cochin sent Antónia Cardosa to protect the naos (ships) of Cochin. At the port of Vembar, both the parties had to fight and the Muslims caused immense damage to the Portuguese.<sup>475</sup>

At this juncture, the Mass Conversion took place at Thoothukudi and it was followed in other villages of the Fishery Coast. Seeing the entire coast coming into the fold of Christianity, the Muslims felt that their future was under threat. So the Marakkayars sought the help of the Zamorin who in turn arranged to send ships to attack Thoothukudi in 1537. The important admirals of the Zamorin - Kunjali Marakkayar, Pate Marakkayar and Ibrahim Ali Marakkayar were ordered to go to the Fishery Coast.

At the end of 1537, the three chief captains of the Zamorin, sailed with fifty large and heavily armed battle paraus and two thousand men around Kanyakumari in the Fishery Coast, where they attacked the Christian villages and seized the boats of the fishers.<sup>476</sup> They sacked and burnt Thoothukudi, the principal city of the Paravas, in the absence of Manual Rodrigues Coutinho, the captain of the Fishery Coast. The Marakkayars took the altar stone and vestments used in the church services, murdered

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<sup>474</sup> Joao de Barros, *Decadas da Asia: Dos Feitos, que os Portugueses Fizeram no Descobrimento, Conquista dos Mares e Terras do Oriente, Decada IV, Livro 11, Capitulo VII*, Lisboa, 1777, p.78.

<sup>475</sup> Gaspar Correa, *Lendas da India, Tomo III, Part I*, Coimbra, 1931, pp. 336-337.

<sup>476</sup> Georg Schurhammer, *Orientalia*, pp 243-254.

many of the inhabitants and carried away several men, including some Portuguese, to make them as their galley slaves.<sup>477</sup>

Pate Marakkayar said he would mobilise all the Muslims in India. He boasted that even the Rumes (Turks) who had then arrived in Diu would join him. All the Muslim princes also would join and challenged that the fall of the Portuguese' rule was imminent. The income from the pearl fisheries in that year (1538) would reach them only, he had said.<sup>478</sup>

Martim Affonso de Souza was patrolling the Malabar coast. He heard that Pate Marakkayar had eluded him and had reached the Fishery Coast. Grimly he sailed southwards and a terrible fight took place with varying fortunes on both sides.<sup>479</sup>

Most of the Portuguese were already bewildered, when one of their Malabar captains devised an ingenuous plan; he set the Muslim boats which were still on the beach on fire so as to make flight impossible. On seeing their ships burning, the Muslims lost every hope of escape and ran landwards in wild panic.<sup>480</sup>

In the ensuing battle eight hundred Muslims lost their lives. Their rich booty consisting of 400 cannons, 2000 muskets and many other weapons and 22 war paraus were captured by the Portuguese. Pate Marakkayar's gorgeous tent with the state

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<sup>477</sup> *Ibid.*, p.248.

<sup>478</sup> Georg Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier, Vol. II (1541-1545)*, p.264.

<sup>479</sup> Gaspar Correa, *op. cit.*, *Tomo III, Part II*, pp.823-824.

<sup>480</sup> Georg Schurhammer, *Orientalia*, p. 249.

parasol, a present of the Zamorin to Mayadunne were also taken away by the Portuguese.<sup>481</sup>

The Paravas took the rest of the booty on their boats, delivered their prisoners and returned the captured ships to their owners. As a retaliation for all they had suffered they once more burnt down Kayalpattanam which the Muslims had just then built up again.<sup>482</sup>

The power of the Muslims of Kozhikodu had been broken and at the end of 1539, the Zamorin asked for peace, which was concluded after his death with his successor in 1540. According to the terms of the peace treaty, the Zamorin was obliged to let his ships sail only with the permission of the Portuguese.<sup>483</sup>

The victory at Vedalai was extolled in the whole of India and in Portugal. The Paravas were triumphant; the Singhalese emperor hailed De Souza as saviour; the power of the Muslims in Kozhikodu and in South India was broken.<sup>484</sup> Of the three chiefs who took to flight, Ali Ibrahim succumbed to his wounds, whereas Pate Marakkar, who lost all his treasure, and Kunjali escaped to Sri Lanka.<sup>485</sup>

In 1553A.D. Kunjali and his men landed in Punnaikayal and sacked the Portuguese' factory and fort.<sup>486</sup> Kunjali's successor Mohammed Kunjali Marakkayar, adopted guerilla tactics and captured many Portuguese ships on the east coast.<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>481</sup> Gaspar Correa, *op. cit.*, Tomo III, Part II, pp.824-825.

<sup>482</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 831.

<sup>483</sup> Georg Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier*, p. 266.

<sup>484</sup> Georg Schurhammer, *Orientalia*, p. 250.

<sup>485</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>486</sup> Sridharan, K., *op.cit.*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>487</sup> Panikkar, K.M., *Malabar and the Portuguese*, Bombay, 1929, p.159.

At one time Kunjali turned against his own master the Zamorin and he in turn supported the Portuguese to capture Kunjali. In 1600 he surrendered to the Zamorin on the condition that his life would be spared. But Andre Furtado, a hero of many naval encounters was responsible for the defeat of Kunjali took him to Goa. The victorious fleet of Furtado was welcomed in Goa with gaiety and celebrations. Kunjali was beheaded on a special French type of guillotine in front of the viceroy's palace in the presence of a vast crowd comprising of common men, fidalgos, (noblemen) noble ladies and merchants. His body was then quartered and limbs were exhibited on the beaches of Panaji and Bardez. Later his head was salted and conveyed to Cannanore with a view to strike terror.<sup>488</sup>

By the turn of the century the Portuguese had to face a new menace in Dom Pedro Rodrigues in Mannar. Though the Kunjali was no longer around, it appeared as if his ghost was still haunting the Portuguese. A cousin of Kunjali, whose Christian name was Dom Pedro Rodrigues, harassed the Portuguese relentlessly, looted their ships frequently and was feared by them even in Sri Lanka.<sup>489</sup>

When he was a boy of thirteen he was captured by Furtado during one of the battles of Cardova and subsequently brought to Goa. In 1608 he was in the galley of Goa and was named Dom Pedro Rodrigues who introduced himself as a Spaniard and not as a Portuguese.<sup>490</sup> The man seemed none other than the cousin of Kunjali, who was

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<sup>488</sup> Nambiar, O.K., *Our Seafaring in the Indian Ocean*, Bangalore, 1975, pp.178-199.

<sup>489</sup> Fernão de Queiroz, Pereira, S.G. (trans.), *Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon*, Colombo, 1930, p.628, cited in Teotonia de Souza, *Goan History*, p. 35.

<sup>490</sup> Viagem de Pyrdar, II, p.24., cited in Teotonia de Souza, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

baptised in Goa and later married to a Portuguese orphan.<sup>491</sup> He must have known of the fate of his cousin. One day (or night) he fled from Goa and managed to reach his old place safely. Nothing is known about how and when he slipped away from the Portuguese custody. He gathered followers in Khozikodu and arranged five paraus. With these he crossed Kayakumari and passed through Sri Lanka to the Tanadiva Island. He entered the beach of San João (St. John) and there he harassed the Franciscans who had baptised him in Goa.<sup>492</sup>

Constantino de Sa wrote from Sri Lanka in March 1618 saying that the renegade Dom Pedro had indulged in plunder and caused incalculable damage. He further stated that the same Dom Pedro had planned to do more harm at the request of Changali who wished to be reinstated as the Lord of Jaffna.<sup>493</sup>

Constantino de Sa sent two galliots with several men apart from forty Portuguese vessels commanded by Victoria de Abreu. Dom Pedro won a total victory on this occasion and the Portuguese were discredited by the disorderly movement of the Portuguese forces, and contrary winds. Dom Pedro attacked the Cais dos Elephantes (Elephants' Caves) and this forced the captain of Mannar to retaliate. Dom Pedro killed five hundred men including some Portuguese who were in *tonis* (boats).<sup>494</sup>

Another letter of Constantino de Sa dated 7 May 1619 tells that Dom Pedro's men had occupied the *Ilha das Vacas* (Cow Island) and seized its fort. From here

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<sup>491</sup> Teotonia de Souza, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>492</sup> Nambiar, O.K., *op. cit.*, pp. 200-201.

<sup>493</sup> Gaspar Correa, *op. cit.*, Tomo III, Part I, pp.338-340.

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.*

he (Dom Pedro) was acting as a hindrance to the Portuguese navigation and their trade. Felipe de Oliveira was immediately sent to Jaffna as the Portuguese feared that the next target of Dom Pedro would be Sri Lanka.<sup>495</sup>

However, Dom Pedro succeeded in defeating Vitorio de Abreu the commander and a Portuguese fleet without any appreciable resistance. The aggressiveness of Dom Pedro scared the Portuguese to such an extent that the captains of the convoy refused even to try recovering the lost ship.<sup>496</sup> Dom Pedro then sailed back with impunity to Maldives with his grand booty that included men, women and money like a real pirate, quite different from his forefathers.<sup>497</sup>

Though the Fishery Coast had been broken into several parts and ruled by different rulers (Viceroys, Nayaks and Poligars), the ultimate owner of the coast was the Vijayanagar emperor. In the middle of the sixteenth century, the Vijayanagar ruler sent three expeditions to the south, which inflicted great havoc on the people of the Fishery Coast. The Portuguese, the Jesuit missionaries and the Paravas opposed the enemies as one formidable alliance but in all the battles, the Paravas were the most affected ones.

## **Vijayanagar Vs Portuguese**

### **The First Expedition (1544)**

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<sup>495</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>496</sup> Frederick Charles Danvers, *The Portuguese in India-History of the Rise and Decline, Vol. II*, London, 1894, p. 203.

<sup>497</sup> Teotonia de Souza, *op. cit.*, p.37.

Sadasiva was coronated in 1542A but was only a nominal king. The whole power of the state was in the hands of Ramaraya the regent and his two brothers.<sup>498</sup> Ramaraya sent his cousin Vitthalaraya to subdue Unni Kerala Varma, the ruler of Travancore.<sup>499</sup>

In 1544 Vitthalaraya undertook his first expedition, in which his brother Chinna Timma and the Madurai Viceroy Visvanatha Nayak played an active role.<sup>500</sup> There were several causes attributed for the expedition of Vijayanagar on Travancore. The most accepted causes are,

1. the refusal of Unni Kerala Varma to pay tribute to the imperial power.
2. the disturbed political situation created by the ruler of Travancore in the south.
3. the conversion of the Paravas and the transfer of their political allegiance of the same from Vijayanagar to Portugal.<sup>501</sup>

On his way to the south, Vitthalaraya defeated his rival rulers including Vettum Perumal, the ruler of Kayathar. Finally, he entered the Travancore territory after causing death and destruction on the way.<sup>502</sup>

Xavier witnessed the atrocities committed on the Paravas by the Badagas<sup>503</sup> (Vadugars). In his letter he says that the people fled to the rock out in the sea

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<sup>498</sup> Robert Sewell, *op. cit.*, p.173.

<sup>499</sup> Henry Heras, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 141.

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid*, p.223.

<sup>502</sup> Krishnaswami, A., *op. cit.*, p. 224.

and were dying from hunger and thirst. He himself sailed to Kanyakumari with twenty tonis to assist the affected people.<sup>504</sup> He also asked the *Patangattim* (*pattangattis*) of Kombuturai, Punnaikayal and Thoothukudi to raise an amount from the champanotes<sup>505</sup> in order to help the Paravas refugees.<sup>506</sup>

On his way to Kanyakumari, Xavier persuaded the looting Vadagars to withdraw from their attack on the Parava villages.<sup>507</sup> While narrating the most pitiful thing in the Fishery Coast, Xavier said, “Some had nothing to eat; others, because of their age, had not been able to come, others were dead. Others were husbands, and wives, who gave birth on the way; and there were other most pitiful sights which, if you had seen them as I did, would have moved you to still greater compassion”. Xavier ordered all the poor people to come and settle at Manappadu. He also wished the rich people of Manappadu to help the affected Paravas of Kanyakumari.<sup>508</sup>

The ruler of Travancore collected an army from all his dominions and challenged his enemies. He expected help from Xavier thinking that the Portuguese would come to his rescue. But the holy missionary who was engaged only in spiritual affairs answered that he would offer prayers. No doubt, Xavier fulfilled his promise. The

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<sup>503</sup> The Forces of the Emperor of Vijayanagar were known as Vadugars (men from the north). The Portuguese called them Badagas.

<sup>504</sup> *Letters of Xavier, June 16, 1544*, p. 84.

<sup>505</sup> Champanotes were the owners of small boats known as champanas.

<sup>506</sup> *Letters of Xavier, June 30, 1544*, pp. 85-86.

<sup>507</sup> *Ibid., August 1, 1544*, p.87.

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid.*, p.87.



Vijayanagar army retreated from Kottar after ravaging the Fishery Coast for a couple months in the same year in 1544.<sup>509</sup>

### **The Second Expedition (1549)**

Vitthala undertook his second invasion to the northern part of the Fishery Coast in 1549. The cause seemed to be religious regarding the temple at Rameshwaram. Joao Fernandes Correa, the commander at Vedalai had dug a trench barring the path to the same temple. Thus the pilgrims had to pay a toll to the Portuguese and the alms received by the Brahmans of the temple dwindled. This was reported to Visvanatha and it resulted in the second invasion of Vitthala.<sup>510</sup>

Six thousand Telugu soldiers marched against Vedalai. They were helped by the Muslims who had been driven out of the Fishery Coast by the Portuguese.<sup>511</sup>

The Portuguese captain and his garrison sought refuge in the islands of the coast. Fr. Antonio Criminalli, an Italian Jesuit who had been appointed as the superior of the Fishery Coast arrived at Vedalai. He helped the Paravas to get into the boats to safer places. During these attempts a Muslim on a horseback pierced his left side with a lance and the Vadugars beheaded him, raised his head on the top of a spike and placed it over the door of the chapel of St. Vincent at Vedalai as a sign of their valour.<sup>512</sup>

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<sup>509</sup> Henry Heras, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp.143-144.

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*, p.156.

<sup>511</sup> Krishnaswami, A., *op. cit.*, p.239.

<sup>512</sup> Henry Heras, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 157.

Some Paravas were also killed on this occasion and many were reduced to captivity. The chapel as well as the Portuguese fort were razed to the ground.<sup>513</sup> The captured women and children were taken away as sacrificial offering to thank their god for their success.<sup>514</sup>

### **The Third Expedition (1553)**

Vitthalaraya wanted to subjugate the Portuguese completely, since they were still the lords of the pearl fisheries. This time he formed an alliance with a Muslim pirate Irapali, a subject of the Zamorin, in order to attack the Fishery Coast by sea. Punnaikayal being the capital of the Portuguese settlements became the target of their attack.<sup>515</sup>

Manoel Rodriguez Coutinho, the captain had a tough time and both Vitthala and Irapali took possession of the town together with the fort. Irapali then issued a proclamation to all the inhabitants of the coast announcing the end of the Portuguese rule. He invited all to become disciples of the Prophet unless they preferred to feel the edge of the Muslim sword.<sup>516</sup>

Gil Fernandez de Carvalho, the captain of Cochin arrived on the Fishery Coast with a huge galliot – three lighters and one sloop. He slaughtered several Muslims with the help of the Marava chieftain.<sup>517</sup> After this victory, Gil Fernandez straight away

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<sup>513</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.157-158.

<sup>514</sup> *DI., Vol. XII (1580-1583)*, 1972, pp. 377-378.

<sup>515</sup> Henry Heras, *op. cit.*, *Vol. I*, pp. 159-160.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.* p. 161.

went to Punnaikayal to rescue Coutinho, his family, soldiers and Fr. Henrique Henriques. A hundred thousand fanams were demanded as ransom. Gil Fernandez found himself unable to accede to this and sent a secret message to Ramaraya in Vijayanagar asking for his favour to liberate the captives.<sup>518</sup>

An order finally came to Vitthala to hand over the captives to Gil Fernandez and this was done at Thoothukudi. Vitthala however demanded from the captain, the sum of a thousand *pardaus* which was partly paid by the Christians of the Fishery Coast.<sup>519</sup> It was probably after this expedition that the whole of the fishery Coast agreed to pay a small portion of the catch of a day's fishing to the Nayak of Madurai<sup>520</sup> which accounted to ten thousand *pardaus* every year.<sup>521</sup>

Though Vitthala returned to his capital after completing his task as ordered by Ramaraya, the Nayaks of Madurai continued to oppress the inhabitants of the Fishery Coast. Krishnappa Nayak II (1595-1601A.D) and Muthu Krishnappa Nayak (1601-1609 A.D) were against the Portuguese and the Paravas. Tirumalai Nayak (1625-1659 A.D.) was the most prominent of all the Nayaks of Madurai who allowed the Jesuits to carry out their missionary work freely but Robert de Nobili was harassed by the local officials.

### **Oppression by the Nayaks**

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<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>520</sup> Henry Heras, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 162.

<sup>521</sup> *Couto*, VII, p. 249, cited in Heras, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 159.

Visvanatha invaded the Fishery Coast headed by a Deccan captain Melrao who reached Punnaikayal in 1560 demanding the catch of two days' fishing as tribute. Dom Duarte de Menezes, a Portuguese noble, proceeded with his forty soldiers to take on Melrao. All the inhabitants of Punnaikayal took refuge in the mud fort there.<sup>522</sup>

Though the Portuguese experienced initial success, yet neither Menezes nor Coutinho were able to withstand Visvanatha. Punnaikayal was sacked and destroyed. Coutinho was willing to pay a thousand fanams as everyone's ransom. Except Fr. Joao de Mesquita, every one was freed. The Paravas consented to pay Visvanatha the catch of two days' fishing.<sup>523</sup>

At this juncture, the Portuguese viceroy Dom Constantina de Braganca, suggested the idea of fleeing from Punnaikayal. The Paravas also preferred to live in the island of Mannar which was just opposite to Punnaikayal. Only after the death of Visvanatha did many return to their homeland.<sup>524</sup>

During the reign of Krishnappa, Christians were tyrannically treated by the neighbouring Poligars. One such Poligar is styled in the Jesuit sources as 'King of Tuticorin' (Thoothukudi) When the Paravas refused to pay a heavier sum, the Poligar marched towards Thoothukudi and entered it by surprise. He sacked the town, robbed the college of the Jesuits and destroyed the altars and the holy images of the church.<sup>525</sup>

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<sup>522</sup> Henry Heras, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 162-164.

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 164-165.

<sup>524</sup> *DI.*, Vol. IV, pp. 377-378.

<sup>525</sup> Henry Heras, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 351-352.

The Jesuit father who was in the college was captured and the Paravas had to pay a ransom of four thousand cruzados. The people expected some sort of amends from the Poligar for the injuries caused to them and the church. But he did not heed to their words. The Paravas abandoned Thoothukudi and settled in a little island “of the Kings”.<sup>526</sup>

Like his predecessor, Muthu Krishnappa also intended to oppress the Paravas. He imposed new taxes and did not control the Poligars who overruled their master in their *palayams*. One such person was the Poligar of Vigiabadi (Vijayapathi) Ariyaperumal who was tyrannising the inhabitants who lived in the tract between Kanyakumari and Manappadu. He besieged the village of Obari (Uvari) and took all its fisherfolk prisoners to his capital. The Paravas could not stand humiliations. In 1602 when this Poligar was asleep at his residence, he was slain by the Paravas. His head was cut off and brought to Manappadu as a glorious trophy of that campaign.<sup>527</sup>

Muthu Krishnappa imposed an extraordinary heavy tribute of 200,000 cruzados on the Paravas in the same year. To obtain it he despatched a body of 5000 infantry with a number of cavalry and elephantry under a captain. This detachment went straight to Thoothukudi which had been abandoned some months before. The captain then sent for one of the Jesuits who were in the island called ‘of the Kings’. The Jesuit replied that the Paravas could not pay such a large sum of money.<sup>528</sup>

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<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.*, p.352.

<sup>527</sup> Leon Besse, *La Mission du Madure*, Tiruchy, 1914, pp. 404-407.

<sup>528</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 353.

When the Nayak attacked the neighbouring village the captain from the island of Mannar with two galliots proceeded to the seashore of Thoothukudi. He attacked a Hindu temple near the town. All the priests and devotees of the shrine ran to the Telugu captain begging for mercy. The ensuing battle fight between the two groups ended in favour of the Portuguese. The Nayak retreated to Madurai with his soldiers.<sup>529</sup>

The Vijayanagar empire opposed the Portuguese at all three levels. The emperor or his regent Vitthala, at imperial, the Nayak of Madurai Visvanatha and a couple of his successive Nayaks at Nayakdom and the Poligars at palayam levels. Their army men the Vadugars continued to inflict untold miseries on the Paravas even after their masters left the scene.

### **Vadugars' Atrocities**

The Vadugars were let free to commit all kinds of atrocities on the new Christians. They roamed about the streets on horseback and plundered the Parava villages at nights. They seized not the weak and indigent but only those who could pay ransom.<sup>530</sup>

The Vadugars identified the local enemies of the new Christians and allied with them while harassing the former (the Christians). The Shanars<sup>531</sup> were induced to enter into Parava villages where they plundered all money from the Paravas. Moreover the Shanars dipped cloth in the water meant for cattle and threw it on the face of the

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<sup>529</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 353.

<sup>530</sup> *Letters of Xavier, August 3, 1544*, pp. 87-89.

<sup>531</sup> Shanars lived in the interior villages of the Fishery Coast and they were converted by the Jesuits.

Paravas. The Paravas got suffocated and later they (the Paravas) were thrown into thalai (Pandarkinus) plants.<sup>532</sup>

The Vadugars joined the Turks who had arrived on the west coast were moving along the east. Both the Vadugars and the Turks killed many Christians and were hindrance to the Paravas in collecting rice and other supplies. Sometimes the Vadugars themselves collected the items and demanded 100000 fanams from the Portuguese captain. He acceded to the demand, just to avoid torture from them.<sup>533</sup>

Sometimes, the Vadugars joined the Turks and Moors.<sup>534</sup> The Muslims of Kayalpattanam provided shelter to these groups. Even Visvanatha attacked Punnaikayal from Kayalpattanam just eight leagues from here and enjoyed arresting all the Christians.<sup>535</sup> In 1552 when Manoel Rodriguez Coutinho the captain of the Fishery Coast was at his resident at Punnaikayal, he was attacked by the Turks and the Moors.<sup>536</sup>

Once the Moors and Turks joined hands and disrupted the pearl fishing of the Paravas at Muguel near Kilakkarai. They were sheltered by the Muslims of Killakkarai. When the captain of the Moors arrived, he wanted to ally with the Maravas of Periapattanam and appointed a person from the elders of the Marava caste as chief.<sup>537</sup>

But the Maravas turned against the Turks and the Moors since many of the Maravas at Periyapattanam were Christians. They even sent a message to Gil Fernandez

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<sup>532</sup> *DI., Vol. IX (1573-1575)*, 1966, pp. 939-940.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>534</sup> In this context, the Moors are understood as sea pirates.

<sup>535</sup> *DI, Vol. XII*, p. 941.

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 943.

asking him to challenge the enemies. After this incident the Maravas became allies of the Portuguese and the Maravas were granted some privileges at every fishing season.<sup>538</sup>

Taking advantage of the weakness of the Christians in their faith, Vadugars wooed them and persuaded them to visit the temples.<sup>539</sup> So weak Christians were a source of numerous trivial problems.

They mocked at the gestures of the priests and brothers during their prayers when these religious and Jesuits had a tough time with these Christians.<sup>540</sup> Constant wars, cruelty of the rulers and the irritation caused by the other local communities caused in the minds of the Christians an aversion for Christianity. They lived in fear.<sup>541</sup>

The non-Christians whom the Portuguese called *gentios* entered into the boats of the Fishery Coast. It happened without the knowledge of their local governor or the Portuguese captain. It was found that the *gentios* were friendly with some of the Paravas who made them to do such indulgence. The *gentios* used to plead the captain by giving fifteen patacus as a gratitude for the release of their own people at Thoothukudi and other places in the Fishery Coast.<sup>542</sup> The same *gentios* used to throw fire on the houses of the new Christians and the churches.<sup>543</sup>

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<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>539</sup> *DI., Vol. IV*, p. 391.

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 755.

<sup>541</sup> *DI., Vol. XV (1582-1592)*, 1981, p. 396.

<sup>542</sup> *HAG, MDR, Livro 19D, fl. 1105, (1633-1635)*.

<sup>543</sup> *DI., Vol. IV*, p. 758.



So far we have seen the invasions and expeditions of the Vijayanagar rulers, their Nayaks and their forces the Vadugars. Thus the Fishery Coast was experiencing a battle between life and death. It is quite surprising to say that even the ruler of Travancore also made attempt to harass the Paravas. The ruler of Kayathar also did his share of squeezing the poor Christians in all the possible ways.

### **Vettum Perumal's Revenge**

After the Vadugars had withdrawn from the south, Vettum Perumal, the Pandya ruler of Kayathar wanted to have his revenge on the Christians for their alliance with the ruler of Travancore. He attacked Thoothukudi with his bands of cavalry. The fisherfolk fled to the barren islands near the coast where they lacked both water and food.<sup>544</sup>

It looks as though Vettum Perumal was at war with the ruler of Travancore. Because the Portuguese captain Cosme de Paiva profited by supplying horse to Vettum Perumal against the ruler of Travancore, Xavier asked Mansilhas to collect tonis from Kombuturai and Punnaikayal in order to bring the people from the islands to Combuture, Punnaikayal and Tiruchendur. The captain was more interested in Vettum Perumal and trade in horses. But the people in Thoothukudi were dying of hunger and thirst.<sup>545</sup> In the war between the Great King and Vettum Perumal, Xavier wanted to

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<sup>544</sup> *Letters of Xavier, September 5, 1544*, p. 93.

<sup>545</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.93-94.

protect the Paravas of Thoothukudi and Pazhayakayal, and so he wanted them to be transferred into the territory of the Great King.<sup>546</sup>

There were two groups of Paravas in Thoothukudi. One group opposed the settlement and it was supported by the captain, Cosme de Paiva, who had obtained a profitable income from the sale of horses to the Pandya king and refused to consider such a move.<sup>547</sup> But another group of people wanted to leave Thoothukudi as per the order given by Xavier.

### **Vadugars Vs Jesuits**

The Jesuit missionaries were also attacked by the Vadugars and the ruler of Travancore. At the end of 1551 the Telugu army captured a young Portuguese Jesuit Fr. Paolo de Valle. Though he was rescued by the Paravas from the Vadugars, he died soon as a result of the hardships during the captivity.<sup>548</sup>

In 1552, one of the nobles of the kingdom of Travancore pillaged several villages near Kanyakumari. The inhabitants appealed to the Nayak of Madurai. On hearing this the ruler of Travancore turned furious and joined the forces of Vitthala and overpowered the helpless Christians. The combined army slaughtered the people in the silence of the night. One of the victims was a Portuguese missionary Luis Mendez, a lay brother of the Society of Jesus.<sup>549</sup>

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<sup>546</sup> Georg Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier, Vol. II*, p. 437.

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>548</sup> Henry Heras, *op. cit., Vol. I*, p. 158.

<sup>549</sup> *Ibid.*, p.159.

Brother Baltasar Nunes was twice seized by the Vadugars. Once, when he was studying the Tamil alphabet sitting under a projecting thatch of the church, some Teulgu soldiers entered a side door of the church to rob it. When he went into the church, he was surrounded by men armed with lances and bows. When the Parava women saw what had happened, they began to lament and tear their hair and called their husbands and saved thus Nunes.<sup>550</sup>

### **Martanda Varma's Interference**

King Martanda Varma was under the influence of the Muslims and turned against the Portuguese and their missionaries. He even summoned Fr. Francisco Henriques and Br. Baltasar and ordered them not to make any conversion. He further said that the Christians should not celebrate their Sunday Mass. But Fr. Henriques replied to the king that the sea belonged the King of Portugal.<sup>551</sup>

The Portuguese officials also ill-treated the Paravas in many ways. Especially the captains became so greedy and extracted enormous sums of money from them. The captains were also at conflict with the Jesuits as they (the Jesuits) were a hindrance and prevented the Portuguese officials from collecting money from the Paravas in the name of the Crown. The following pages are devoted to these two aspects to demonstrate how the Paravas were victims of the designs of all higher officials:

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<sup>550</sup> Gerog Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier, Vol. III (1545-1549)*, p. 518.

<sup>551</sup> *DI., Vol. I*, p. 259.

The Paravas were not allowed to sell chank mussels to anybody at their will.<sup>552</sup> As per the rule, Christians were allowed to move around in the Coromandel and Sri Lankan Coasts and the cartazes should be issued to them freely. The captains violated this and charged a fee on the coastal people for issuing cartazes. If the fisherfolk were unable to pay the stipulated amount then they were asked by the captains to sell clothes from place to place.<sup>553</sup>

In the absence of pearl fishing the subjects of the Fishery Coast were exempted from paying tax to the government. But officials demanded money from the fisherfolk. After witnessing the cruelties done by the captain to the Paravas, Miguel Vaz told the king that the Fishery Coast would be at peace without the captains.<sup>554</sup>

The Portuguese officials created unrest in the Fishery Coast by not respecting the religious sentiments of the Hindus. First of all the Hindus were called *gentios*. The Christians were not allowed to mingle with them freely. Hindu temples and pagodas were destroyed and as a result the two communities looked upon each other with suspicion and distrust. There were many such incidents took place like the Vedalai episode of 1549:

Tiruchendur was a pilgrimage centre for the Hindus in the south. The Portuguese sacrilegged the temple by consuming liquor in the precincts of the temple. The enraged Brahmans murdered several Christians. They handed over the dead bodies naked to their mothers just as they were born as children. Many women and men were arrested

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<sup>552</sup> *Ibid*, p. 160.

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>554</sup> *Ibid*.

and they were led to the pagodas to be sacrificed as a sign of victory. The Brahmans joyously chanted holy songs and gave thanks to their gods.<sup>555</sup>

The captains exacted dues from the Paravas on the cowries they exported to Africa. The captains forced the Paravas to sell them same the commodities for less than a third part of the price which the foreign traders offered them. The captains did not permit the Christians to import rice into their villages by any other means. The people were forced to buy essential commodities at the rate fixed by the captains.<sup>556</sup> They did not allow Christians to live in a particular place for a longer period. They (the Portuguese) kept on changing their (the Paravas) residences so that they would be moving from place to place. The captain collected a tribute for these movements as a source of revenue to the government.<sup>557</sup>

Whenever neighbouring Sri Lanka was not at peace due to a conflict between its rulers and the Portuguese, the Paravas of Mannar were called to fight against the Sri Lankans. The Christians also carried rice in two or three champanas for the people in Sri Lanka during such times.<sup>558</sup>

The Paravas who had already settled in Sri Lanka were also not treated properly by the king. Once he asked the Parava Christians to shave their

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<sup>555</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 592 – 593.

<sup>556</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 161-168.

<sup>557</sup> Gerog Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier, Vol. II*, pp. 519-520.

<sup>558</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. III (1545 – 1549), 1980, p. 364.

beards off and smear themselves with ashes and become Hindus again. As the Paravas refused to oblige, they were fined with three hundred *pardaus*.<sup>559</sup>

The Christians were evidently looked upon by the captain of the Fishery Coast as a race of slaves with no rights and no friends. His friends were only exploiters and oppressors. This was the case with captain Cosme de Paiva by whose greediness and severity, many Christians at Thoothukudi and elsewhere suffered persecutions and death about which Xavier writes to Mansilhas as follows:

“Help Cosme de Paiva to free his conscience from the many thefts which he had committed on this coast and from the wrongs and murders that have been caused by his great greed in Tuticorin (Thoothukudi) . . . . advise him further to return the money which he received from those who killed the Portuguese for it is a despicable thing to sell Portuguese blood for gain”.<sup>560</sup>

To advance their lucrative motives the Portuguese officials made even clandestine alliances with the Muslims and Hindus leaving the native Christians to the whims and vexations of the latter. Taking control of the pearl fishery, the Muslims had many a time chased the Christians of Thoothukudi and of the neighbouring villages out of their homes and instead settled their own votaries there with the full support of the Portuguese, in order to operate the pearl fishery under their direction.<sup>561</sup>

The Portuguese controlled public offices were sold to the Muslims who paid a good price and the native Christians were excluded from them by reason of their

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<sup>559</sup> *DI., Vol. V (1561-1563)*, 1958, pp. 422-423.

<sup>560</sup> *Letters of Xavier, April 7, 1545*, pp. 125-126.

<sup>561</sup> Georg Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier, Vol. I*, p. 253.

poverty which prompted the Portuguese to go even to such an extent as to sell the Christian converts as slaves to rich Muslims and Hindus in return for a good sum from them.<sup>562</sup>

The miseries brought upon the coastal Christians by the misconduct and incapacity of the Portuguese officials were so intensely agonising to Xavier that several times he wanted to give up his mission altogether on the Fishery Coast, which is evident from his following words:

“I have good reason for being unable to cease grieving for this within my soul. I have become so accustomed to seeing the offences committed against these Christian without once being able to help them that it is a sorrow which I continuously bear”.<sup>563</sup> The Portuguese struggling for their very survival continued to be in dire straits for the money requisite to carry on an exhausting contest increased their exactions from the same time were unable to give them adequate protection, especially at sea.<sup>564</sup>

### **Maltreatment of the Coastal Christians**

The general policy of the Portuguese Crown in its relation to the Fishery Coast was indeed to promote the Christian religion among the natives and to favour in a special way the Christians in all their political as well as social struggles. Unfortunately, this policy was not carried out by the Padroado officials, clerics and representatives of the Crown on account of their private interests and malicious intentions. They even went to

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<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.*, p.256.

<sup>563</sup> *Letters of Xavier, March 27, 1544*, p. 78.

<sup>564</sup> James Hornell, *Pearl Fisheries, Vol. XVI*, 1922, p. 281.

such the extent of persecuting the coastal Christians to satisfy their lust and lucrative motives.<sup>565</sup>

The majority of the Portuguese soldiers and traders drafted from Portugal for the service of the Crown in India, and in particular on the Fishery Coast, were ‘desperados’ or condemned convicts or exiles. Hence their life in India was no better than it was in their homeland; they relapsed to the same sort of crime and avarice as they had been addicted to in their native land of origin.<sup>566</sup>

One of the vices that was most rampant on the Fishery Coast among the Portuguese soldiers and trader was concubinage. As it was practically impossible to bring women from Portugal, they preferred to consort with their native slave-girls most of whom were Christians, avoiding, however, the bonds of holy matrimony with them. The reason was that Alburquerque the Governor of Goa had discouraged the Portuguese from marrying the ‘black women’ of both Malabar and Fishery Coasts, that is to say the dark skinned women of the Dravidian origin, ‘Nigresses’ as they were called by the Portuguese.<sup>567</sup>

Nicolao Lancillotto a missionary deploras this sexual licence of the Portuguese in the following terms:

The Portuguese had adopted the vices and customs of the land without reserve, including their evil customs of buying droves of slaves, male and female, just as

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<sup>565</sup> Venantius Fernando, S., *op. cit.*, p. 243.

<sup>566</sup> *Ibid.*, cited in Boxer, C.R. *Race Relations*, p. 77.

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.64-65.



if they were sheep, large and small. There are innumerable Portuguese who bought droves of girls and slept with all of them and subsequently sold them.<sup>568</sup>

Another abominable crime committed by the Portuguese on the Fishery Coast was the seizure of the poor slave girls against their will and selling them for a good price to the Muslims and Hindu merchants after satisfying their lust. When some Portuguese committed this crime at Punniakayal, Xavier was filled with violent anger which he expressed in his letter to Mansilhas:

“I have become so accustomed to seeing the offences committed against these Christians without my being able to help them that it is a sorrow which I continuously bear. I have already written to the Vicar of Quilon and that of Cochin about the female slaves who were seized by the Portuguese in Punicale (Punnaikayal) so that through major excommunications they may know who they were whom they carried off.”<sup>569</sup>

### **The Portuguese Vs Jesuits**

It is true that whenever the Portuguese sailed to explore new areas, they carried their missionaries along with them. They were supposed to fulfil the spiritual needs of the Portuguese officials as well as to convert the natives.

But that was not true either in the Fishery Coast or in Goa in India, for instance. Of course there were genuine officials like Martim Affonso and Manoel Coutinho who rushed to the spot whenever the Christians were harassed by their enemies.

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<sup>568</sup> *DI., Vol. II*, pp. 129-130.

<sup>569</sup> *Letters of Xavier, March 27, 1544*, p. 78.

As time went on the officials looked at the missionaries, particularly the Jesuits, as their prime enemies. The reason was that the Jesuits, instead of performing their spiritual obligations, were involved in the civil and criminal jurisdictions of the Portuguese officials. Whenever things went wrong against the Christians such as the payment of taxes, the Jesuits stood for justice and the same was reported to the viceroy or the Crown.

The Crown in most of the cases was in favour of the Paravas and had punished the captains in the form of transfers or imprisonment.<sup>570</sup> The Jesuits also often involved in trade activities contrary to their missionary zeal which was opposed by the Portuguese captains. A few cases in this regard are going to be cited here.

Xavier lamented that captain Joao Fernandes Correa inflicted several harsh treatment on the Paravas. Fr. Miguel Vaz complained to the king about the same captain.<sup>571</sup>

Since, the time of the arrival of Xavier, taking advantage of the scarcity of Portuguese officials, administrators and captains, the Jesuit clergy took upon spiritual and civil jurisdiction and were involved in conducting trade also. The Viceroy Conde de Linhares in his letter to the king in 1631 said that the reason for the conflict between the captain and the Jesuits was that the latter over exercised and mastered the royal jurisdiction.<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>570</sup> Georg Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier, Vol. II*, p. 519.

<sup>571</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 519-520.

<sup>572</sup> Assentos, *op. cit.*, *Vol. III*, p. 641.

From the time of Xavier, the Jesuit priests were forced to a situation in which they enjoyed not only spiritual but also civil jurisdiction on the Paravas due to lack of the officials of the Crown. But this was raised as an offence by Count Linhares who interpreted the right of the results as illtreatment of the jurisdiction and authority of the Crown.

In fact, the Jesuit clergies had acquired this right from the lords of the land and the viceroy. When such thing was highlighted to the captain general who was furious. The furious captain expelled the Jesuits from the region and called as the population and branded them from the pulpit as the first enemy of the Portuguese Company.<sup>573</sup>

The episode of St. Peter's Church at Thoothukudi in 1632 would be the best example to show that the Portuguese captain and the rector of the Jesuits were rivals. This conflict was over is the jurisdiction over the same church between the Franciscans and the Jesuits. The people stood divided into two groups and one supported the captain and the other Fr. Fernao Lopez. Fr. Lopez took part very actively in the armed conflict and carried a flag with a Cross in one hand and with a lance he attacked the captain. The fisherfolk began running towards the sea and three children got drowned Fr. Lopez was also killed and the matter was finally brought to the Inquisition court.<sup>574</sup>

After experiencing the cruelties done to the Paravas by the captains, Miguel Vaz told the king that the Fishery Coast would be at peace without the captains. He further said that two padres (priests) and two catures (policemen) were enough to take

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<sup>573</sup> Manuela Blanco Velez, *Notas sobre o poder temporal da Companhia de Jesus na India (Seculo XVII)* –Stvdia, 49, Lisboa, 1989, pp. 199-200.

<sup>574</sup> *HAG, MDR, Livro 17, fl.95, (1632 – 1633).*

care of the new Christians. He further added that if at all the king was particular in sending a captain, he (the captain) should not be tyrannical in nature. He stressed that the importance of consulting the opinion of the Jesuits in dealing with the Paravas.<sup>575</sup>

The Jesuits' varied interventions in the Pearl Fishery drove the Portuguese officials to such a fury as to send false accusations and calumnies against them to the Viceroy and the Crown. As a result, the Viceroy often deprived the Jesuits of their normal subsidies and income of maintenance as had been granted by the Crown, and left them to be supported by the native Christians themselves, which was indeed against the spirit of the Padroado obligation of the Crown.<sup>576</sup>

Being falsely informed that the Jesuits and the Christians were collaborating for the arrest of the Portuguese captain of the Fishery Coast by the Nayak of Madura, Viceroy Miguel de Noronha (1627 – 1636) retaliated upon them by sending a fleet of twelve armed ships with soldiers which attacked Thoothukudi and the neighbouring coastal villages and burnt down the houses of the Jesuits and the native Christians.<sup>577</sup> This open enmity between the Portuguese officials and the Jesuits caused a big scandal among the non-Christians who, as a result, abhorred conversion to Christianity.<sup>578</sup>

The Fishery Coast was the backyard of the Portuguese only for about a century. The other European powers appeared on the east coast of Tamil Nadu in the very

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<sup>575</sup> *DI., Vol. I*, p. 160.

<sup>576</sup> Henry Heras, "Decay of the Portuguese Power in India," *Vol. I, No. I, March 1928*, *Journal of Bombay Historical Society*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>577</sup> Leon Besse, *op. cit.*, pp. 447-441.

<sup>578</sup> Venantius Fernando, S., *op. cit.*, p. 250.

beginning of the seventeenth century. They were looking for alliances with the Asiatic powers.

The Dutch and the Danes appeared on the coast as the chief rivals of the Portuguese. King Christian IV of Denmark sent his forces to Thanjavur in 1620.<sup>579</sup> In 1630, a Danish ship was burnt in the passage of Quilon by the Portuguese chief captain of Kanyakumari.<sup>580</sup>

The Dutch defeated the Portuguese fleet in the battle of Malacca in 1606 and reduced the rival settlements, including Nagapattanam and Thoothukudi. In 1632 the Dutch attempted to capture the fort of Thoothukudi which belonged to the Nayak of Madurai, who was the lord of Thoothukudi.<sup>581</sup> They made the second attempt to capture to same fort in 1649. By aligning friendly with the ruler of Kandy, the Dutch burnt Thoothukudi in the same year.<sup>582</sup>

Dom Rodrigo de Monsanto was ordered by the Viceroy of India to proceed with a fleet from Kanyakumari to Thoothukudi. Likewise another fleet was sent from Sri Lanka to Thoothukudi,<sup>583</sup> but it was continuously blockaded at Colombo by the Dutch. The Portuguese were unable to get the needed provisions from Thoothukudi.<sup>584</sup> The Dutch also prevented the Portuguese from getting cinnamon from Sri Lanka.<sup>585</sup>

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<sup>579</sup> Rajayyan, K., *History of Tamil Nadu*, p. 184.

<sup>580</sup> *HAG, MDR, Livro 16A, fl. 46, 1632.*

<sup>581</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>582</sup> *Assentos, Vol. III (1644-1658)*, 1955, pp. 125-126; 133-137.

<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.*, p.135.

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 225 – 258, 263-264.

<sup>585</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.270-280.

The Dutch had decided to take Thoothukudi first and it would be followed by Mannar and Jaffna. They used various strategies and formed alliances with the local people and moved forward to the targeted areas.<sup>586</sup>

On 11 February 1658, thirty Dutch ships arrived near Thoothukudi. The ships had carried the Dutch, the Bandanese (Indonesians), the Sinhalese, the Maravas and the Muslims numbering around three thousand men in two squadrons. The Portuguese defended the harbour for seven days, but in vain. Unfortunately one Pillai, the representative of Tirumalai Nayak, had already sold the Fishery Coast for the Dutch for 10,0000 patacus. This was learnt by the Portuguese from the Maravas.<sup>587</sup> The Nayak sent the Pillai with presents to meet the Dutch and allowed the Dutch to conduct the fishing of *aljofar* in the Fishery Coast.<sup>588</sup>

It is very important to mention about Tirumalai Nayak who was supporting the Portuguese against the Dutch. It was rather strange but infact opportunistic that Tirumalai Nayak who had allied himself with the Portuguese against the Dutch sold out the Fishery Coast to his erstwhile enemy later.

Tirumalai Nayak knowing that the defeat of the Portuguese at the hands of the Dutch was imminent, must have changed his attitude. Secondly the Pillai must have sold the coast to the Dutch without the knowledge of Tirumalai Nayak.

We cannot deny that Tirumalai Nayak would not have sold the Fishery Coast to the Dutch. If he had really supported the Portuguese, he should have allowed

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<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 625-626.

<sup>587</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>588</sup> *HAG, MDR, 26A, fl. 190, (1658).*

Christianity to be spread in his Nayakdom. But the Jesuit letters tell of the hardships experienced by De Nobili, caused by the officials and chieftains.<sup>589</sup> Rangachari has condemned Tirunelveli Nayak as a traitor of blockset dye on ground that by his alliances with the Muslim powers the Nayak betrayed his religion and his country.<sup>590</sup> Tirumalai Nayak would act in accordance with what the situation warranted. True that opportunism rather than principle led him in the formation of alliance system.<sup>591</sup> The selling of the Fishery Coast to the Dutch enabled them (the Dutch) to complete their final victory at Thoothukudi.

The Pillai knew that the Paravas would retaliate for the cowardice betrayal act of the Nayak. As a precaution, he sent a letter to the Pattangattis of Thoothukudi. In the letter he mentioned that the Paravas were earlier Hindus and took their new faith from the Portuguese when the Portuguese entered the Fishery Coast. And so, the same fisherfolk could accommodate the Dutch also as the former could not live without the sea.<sup>592</sup>

The Dutch took possession of Thoothukudi and became its masters on 30 February, 1658. As per the agreement, the Pillai had advised the Dutch not to stay at Thoothukudi and that their captain should reside at Kayalpattanam. Secondly, the Christian population of the Fishery Coast would remain in their villages without any disturbances.<sup>593</sup> But the Dutch did not stick to their stand and started bombarding near

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<sup>589</sup> Rajayyan, K., *History of Tamil Nadu*, pp. 147-148

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>592</sup> *HAG, MDR, 26A, fl. 190, (1658).*

<sup>593</sup> *Ibid.*, fl. 184.

Thoothukudi. Their aim was to make the discontented people to flee from the coast and seek help from the Dutch.<sup>594</sup>

Another problem that cropped up among the Paravas was that whether to stay in the coast or not. Dom Henrique, a highly respected Parava said that the Paravas could not stay on the shore without the Jesuit priests. Andre de Morais, another Parava who always caused unrest among the Paravas said that the Jesuits should not stay and that he would bring the native priests of the people of the land.<sup>595</sup>

### **Fall of Mannar and Jaffna**

The Portuguese succeeded initially in defending Mannar. The Paravas continued to demonstrate their consistency and faithfulness. But the Marava leader received the embassy of the Dutch. The Portuguese waited for Fr. Manuel to persuade the Maravas to join them.<sup>596</sup> But the enemy had already appeared in Mannar with four big ships and eight patacus (small ships) and they fought in the moon light. Caraiyars also joined the Dutch. The Captain Mor sent Fr. Antonio Pereira with a present of elephants for consulting and negotiating peace with the Dutch.<sup>597</sup>

On 24, the February 1658, Jaffna was pounded. The Paravas participated in the battle here also. When Jaffna was attacked a British ship had already arrived at Devipattanam on the north of the east coast as rival to the Dutch. Thus the Lusitanians,<sup>598</sup>

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<sup>594</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>595</sup> *Ibid.*, fls. 184-185.

<sup>596</sup> *Ibid.*, fl. 89.

<sup>597</sup> *Ibid.*, fl. 63.

<sup>598</sup> *Ibid.*, fl. 190.



commercial enterprise came to an end but “the private traders managed to survive atmost up to the middle of the eighteenth century.”<sup>599</sup>

The undeclared (but the primary) driving force behind all these conflicts and bloodshed was the pearl. It is true that pearl fishing was seasonal. Yet it brought a staggering income to the Estado da India. Before the arrival of the Portuguese, though the pearl fisheries were in the hands of the Paravas, the Muslims were the actual beneficiaries of the pearl trade. But after the conversion of the Paravas, the Portuguese established themselves strongly on the Fishery Coast, conducted pearl fishing, and had the lion’s share in the entire catch of the pearls. The Muslims were unable to navigate around the Indian Ocean as before. The income from the pearl fishing to the Vijayanagar Empire dwindled. These changed economic equations were the causes for the various wars that were fought under various banners.

It seemed that the Vijayanagar rulers did not like on religious grounds the Paravas being converted to Christianity. On the contrary, the same rulers entered into opportunistic alliances with the Muslim and the Turks. The Jesuits were also targeted while attacking the Christians the reason being the Jesuits by their presence on the fishery coast acted as agents to promote the commercial interests of the Portuguese. The Paravas considered the Portuguese Crown as their sovereign and willingly paid their allegiance to the former than to the Vijayanagar emperor.<sup>600</sup>

The Portuguese officials later betrayed the Paravas and their missionary priests. The captains and private traders sought to promote their own interests and the

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<sup>599</sup> The Portuguese were otherwise known as Lusitanians.

<sup>600</sup> Jeyaseela Stephan, S., *Tamil Coast*, p. 171.

Paravas and the priests opposed such moves and reported the same to the Crown. All those who had been adversely affected by the altered commercial trends rallied together against the Paravas.

As Bismark said “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”, the enemies of the Portuguese joined together and opposed the Paravas. When the Portuguese officials considered the Paravas and the Jesuits as their enemies, they unscrupulously joined hands with the local Nayak, Hindus and the Muslims.

The Vijayanagar rulers, the Nayaks, the Poligars, the Zamorin and the Muslims were economically driven while attacking the new Christians. At least before the arrival of the Portuguese the Paravas were economically oppressed only by the Muslims of the Fishery Coast. But the moment the Paravas turned Christians, they had to experience miseries and sufferings from several new enemies, including the Portuguese. The Jesuits were the only supporters of the Paravas because the Jesuits and all their missionary activities were supported and financed by the Paravas only.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE IMPACT OF THE PORTUGUESE ON THE FISHERY COAST

The Portuguese' presence, settlement and commercial activities on the Fishery Coast for more than a century wrought enormous changes on the Parava community. Amidst such changes the Paravas never lost their uniqueness or identity but emerged as one caste and one religion. The impact made by the Portuguese on their culture and religion is amazing and the vestiges in these spheres still remain and continue to be expressed in their day-to-day life. It is true the Occident and the Orient embraced each other in the Fishery Coast but the Parava community did not fall a victim to the European culture completely. They (the Paravas) made a synthesis of these two and formed a unique culture for themselves.

#### **Societal Changes**

The Portuguese found that certain social evils existed against women and they (the Parava women) were not treated on par with men. In order to establish equality of woman several measures were adopted. The Jesuit missionaries took up this task and passed several resolutions in the form of decrees in their Provincial Councils held in Goa from time to time. It is important to note that even before the British, the Portuguese had sowed the seeds for the emancipation of women.

The widows were asked not to commit sati or shave their heads at the death of their husbands. The Jesuit missionaries urged the Portuguese king to instruct the Brahmins in India that the latter should not force women to do such things. The widows were allowed to remarry if they were below the age of fifty. The Portuguese were not only particular about Christian women but also were concerned about the entire society that was under their jurisdiction.<sup>601</sup>

Decree Seventeen declared that women should not be deprived of their property rights. As property right is a question of human conscience, both sons and daughters should enjoy equal rights. The decree further said that whoever violated this

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<sup>601</sup> Da Cunha Rivara, *op. cit.*, Fasciculo 4, Decrees 11 & 12, 1862, pp. 211, 218-219.

right would be excommunicated and forgiven only after returning the share to the affected person.<sup>602</sup>

The Fifth Provincial Council of Goa forbade the superstitious ceremonies at the time of wedding and child-birth and considered them as unwanted. Christian women after their delivery were asked to go to the church when they found themselves fit and could take their child to the church after forty days as a pious practice in imitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>603</sup>

A married woman could become a foster mother to bring up the child of another married woman by a contract. The contract should be made with the permission of the foster mother's husband. At the end of the agreement, the foster mother would leave the child and go back to her husband. The adoption of children was licit only when the foster parent had no biological children.<sup>604</sup>

Xavier proscribed the consumption of urâk.<sup>605</sup> He executed his desire by giving one fanam for each drunkard woman captured and she was to be confined for three days. The meirinho<sup>606</sup> was asked to proclaim such an order in all the villages.<sup>607</sup>

The Portuguese were not very parochial and aimed at reforming and bring changes only among Christian men and women. The Non-Christians were also bound by certain decrees. The officials wanted the Christians not to be affected by scandalous acts

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<sup>602</sup> *Ibid.*, Decree 17, p. 500.

<sup>603</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.*, Decree 9, p. 264.

<sup>605</sup> Urraqa (urâk), a wine made from the sap of palm trees. Costelloe, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>606</sup> Meirinho in Portugal is a local official charged with executing the orders of the sovereign. In India meirinho was a warden or justice of peace. *Ibid.*

<sup>607</sup> *Letters of Xavier, March 14, 1544*, pp. 75-76.

of the non-Christians. Some Hindus had more than one woman as life partner and had even unmarried or married women as concubines. As this was scandalous for the new Christians, the Fifth Provincial Council of Goa requested the Portuguese king to authorise the ecclesiastical judges to punish such persons. The Second Decree said that Christians of low castes as well as non-Christians should be considered as equals before God and were therefore bound by the same laws.<sup>608</sup>

The children of the non-Christians should also be given care by the Portuguese when their parents died. Baptism would be administered to them when only if they really desired it. Slaves professing one religion could not be sold to the owner of another religion. If a Hindu slave was sold to a Muslim, then the Hindu owner would be condemned to go to jail.

The negligence of the *kanakkappillai* in checking the co-habitation of the domestic servants between fields and infidels led to its occurrence. So the First and the Third Provincial Councils prohibited any such co-habitation between the various religious communities.

Whenever there were Christian women in the house, Non-Christian men should not enter their house. The Christians were forbidden to learn to sing or dance in the schools. They were threatened with excommunication. The teacher one who taught music and dance was punished with fifty *pardaus* and the half of which would be given to the complainant. The culprit would remain out of the school for two years.<sup>609</sup>

It was quite prevalent among the Hindus to get married to their first cousins. But the Christians were persuaded to avoid such alliances.<sup>610</sup>

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<sup>608</sup> Cunha Rivara, Fas. 4, Decree. 2, p. 489.

<sup>609</sup> Cunha Rivara, Fas. 4, p. 269.

<sup>610</sup> *DI., Vol. IV*, p. 30.

Affonso de Albuquerque, the governor of Portuguese India encouraged the Indian unmarried Portuguese male residents in India to marry the local Indian women so as to increase the population of those living within the sphere of Portuguese culture. The intent was far reaching to have many armed men to fight the enemies of the Portuguese government. Muslim and Brahmin ladies, were preferred as they were of fair colour and could mix easily with the Portuguese race. Such encouragements helped in bringing many of the Portuguese men to settle down in India, and they in turn helped the government to form new colonies.<sup>611</sup>

### **Slave System**

The slaves formed one of the agents who promoted Portuguese' interest in the Estado da India. Before the arrival of the Portuguese, slavery existed in Tamil Nadu and the Portuguese too promoted slave trade. In course of time the condition of the slaves seemed to have become precarious. The Portuguese forts contained a large number of slaves and they were subjected to several forms of tortures. Many of them died and to cover up such deeds, their corpses were put in boxes and buried. Though the Portuguese king condemned such occurrences as inhuman yet insisted that the slaves should be punished for the good of the humanity. The king ordered the viceroy to take the list of the names of the slaves of Hindus, Muslims and Christians. He also wanted the list of the names of those who punished the slaves in inhuman ways.<sup>612</sup>

It was a custom that every year two thousand to three thousand slaves were brought from Sri Lanka, Bengal, Nagappattanam and Thoothukudi to Goa. A priest was asked to issue to each slave a letter to certify him as Christian when entering the city of Goa. It was ordered that any person who brought slaves from anywhere else to Goa would be punished.<sup>613</sup>

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<sup>611</sup> Mathew, K.S., *Portuguese Trade with India in the Sixteenth Century*, New Delhi, 1983, pp. 215-218.

<sup>612</sup> HAG, MDR, Livro I, fl. 95, (1560-1601).

<sup>613</sup> *DI.*, Vol. VI, p. 75.

In the Fishery Coast, the Jesuit priests were sympathetic to the slaves. They instructed the slave masters to treat the slaves kindly. The slaves were asked to come to the church on Sundays after their masters left from there and they also taught catechism on Sundays. They were taught to pray, meditate, recite the rosary and make an examination of their conscience. The Jesuits spent several hours together with the slaves.<sup>614</sup>

Since there existed a good understanding between the Madurai Nayak and the Portuguese at Thoothukudi, the slaves from the interior places were allowed to be baptized and the slaves who wished to live along with the coastal Christians were allowed to do so. At times Christian slaves who were fleeing from their masters in the Fishery Coast took shelter under the Nayak of Madurai. He too treated the slaves kindly.<sup>615</sup>

In the Fourth Provincial Council of Goa convened in 1592, it was decided that slaves should not be prevented from getting married. Any slave, whether female or male, should not be sold out because she or he got married without the lord's consent. Anyone who violated this order would be excommunicated and had to pay two hundred xerafins as fine.<sup>616</sup>

Usually when the slaves became sick and thereby useless, their masters threw them on the streets. Many died on the roadside itself without being taken care of by anyone. So the Fifth Provincial Council of Goa decreed that such slaves should be

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<sup>614</sup> *DI., Vol. XI*, p. 26.

<sup>615</sup> *DI., Vol. XII (1583-1585)*, 1975, p. 420.

<sup>616</sup> Cunha Rivara, Fas 4, p. 268.

collected and given shelter in the Casas de Santa Misericordia (Houses of Holy Mercy).<sup>617</sup>

Tearing away a part of the body with an iron rod or a stick or a stone, hanging, striking the hands laid on stones or wooden pieces and throwing chilies, oil, vinegar or salt into their eyes were some of the cruel forms of torture meted out to erring slaves by their masters. By the Seventeenth Decree, it was decided that inhuman tortures should be avoided and whoever punished their slaves excessively would be produced before a judge and the affected slaves would be given the freedom of certificate by the judge. Secondly the slave masters who were very harsh toward their subjects were excommunicated with a penalty of fifty *pardaus* and half of the fine would be given to the complainant. Sometimes the owners of the slaves were also castigated for their inhuman attitude toward their slaves.<sup>618</sup>

The slave trade became a part of Portuguese colonisation wherever they went and settled. Though the slaves were treated cruelly and though the Jesuits were sympathetic to the slaves they (the Jesuits) never took steps to abolish the system. They knew that the slaves promoted Portuguese trade and commerce. Moreover, in Christianity slavery was an accepted phenomenon. The Bible itself says that the slaves should be obedient to their masters.<sup>619</sup> Slave owners justified their dealings by referring to the same

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<sup>617</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268.

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 269.

<sup>619</sup> The Letters of St. Paul to the Ephesians, Chapter 6 : 5, *The Holy Bible, The New Revised Standard Version*, Bangalore, 1991, p. 195.



from the Bible. The Jesuits did not raise any opposition to slavery though but they were the ones who gave moral and spiritual support to the slaves.

### **Politico-Economic Results**

The colonial and commercial activities of the Portuguese affected the Parava polity and economy to a great extent. It is very difficult to distinguish these two aspects from one another for the Parava polity and economy were inter-linked and intertwined in the sense that one supported the other and the Parava polity could not function without Parava economy and vice versa. The Parava caste and their occupation were inseparable and this was realised by the Portuguese and the same was nurtured very strongly. The Portuguese were successful in establishing a strong Parava community even while introducing changes in the fields of politics and economy.

### **Elimination of the Muslims**

Before consolidating the Parava *jati* (caste), the Portuguese wanted to eliminate the Muslims from the Fishery Coast. One of the promises made to the representatives of the Paravas at their baptism was that the Muslims would be eliminated from the Fishery Coast. So, immediately after the baptism of the Pattangattis, a Portuguese fleet arrived on the Fishery Coast. A series of battles took place between the Portuguese and the Muslims and the latter were forced to evacuate Pazhayakayal and find an alternative settlement at Kayalpattanam.

The fights between the above two groups (the Muslims and the Portuguese) continued. The Zamorin, Kunjalis, Dom Pedro and Irapali, all fought for the cause of the Muslims of the Fishery Coast. The Portuguese thwarted all the efforts of the Muslims and enabled the Paravas enjoy the profits of the pearl fisheries. In the Fishery Coast, the Portuguese were provided with the opportunity of gaining a Christian mercantile and seafaring substitute for the detested Muslims. In this sense the conversion of the Paravas offered the Portuguese a unique possibility.

Whatever the reasons for the Portuguese involvement on the Fishery Coast, it had a profound effect upon the fortunes on the history of the Christian Parava community. The Malabar Christian communities and the neophytes utilised religion and conversion as a crutch to win the Portuguese support against the Hindu and Mappila traders. Similarly, in the Fishery Coast, the Paravas used Roman Catholicism as the only force that could deliver them from the oppressive Muslims. After receiving such an assurance of freedom from the oppression of the Muslims, the Mass Conversion took place in 1536.

The Paravas increased their religious, commercial and social insularity and distinctness, and the view that the Paravas were protected Christian subjects of the Portuguese gradually took root and the identification of the Parava with the Portuguese and of the Parava with the 'Catholic' was strengthened to such a degree that most writing pertaining to the *jati* (the Parava caste) from Portuguese times to the present have found it impossible to dissociate the two.

### **Consolidation of *Yelu Urs***

After eliminating the Muslims from their presence and influence over the pearl fisheries and other sea-faring activities, the Portuguese resorted to consolidating their strength on the Fishery Coast. As a first step, the already existing seven villages (with their ports) were fortified. These villages were controlled by the *Pattangattis* and all the pearl and chank fishing and commercial activities were supervised by the *Pattangattis*. They (the *Pattangattis*) were advised by the elders of the villages called *Urars*. The Portuguese established cordial relations with these Parava leaders to further their (Portuguese) interests. There were other villages also in the Fishery Coast, south of Manappadu and north of Vaippar. These villages had their own headmen.

Above the *Pattangattis* and the *urars*, they (the Paravas) had the *Jathi Thalaivan* as head of the caste who resided at Thoothukudi and controlled the entire politics and economy of the coast.<sup>620</sup>

Immediately after the conversion of the Paravas, the Portuguese moved systematically to consolidate the commercial and strategic position of the Paravas. Because the Portuguese power was restricted only to the Fishery Coast, they decided to relocate the entire Parava community within the *Yelu Urs* (Seven Villages), and these villages were to function as pivotal centres of security, trade, and educational and religious activities and were accordingly fortified by the Portuguese.

Continuous military harassment and a defensive mentality became pervading hallmarks of subsequent Parava history, finding expression in such repeatedly exacted measures as the shifting concentration of the Paravas to these centres was most conducive to defense and security.

Sanjay Subramanyam sounds as though the Portuguese introduced the '*Pattangatti system*' in the Fishery Coast. He further says that the Portuguese intervention in Parava affairs saw the utilization of pre-existent hierarchies to a new end. But it is not true in the sense that the *Pattangattis* were already there in Fishery Coast and they went to Cochin to present their Parava-Muslim conflict to the Vicar General and

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<sup>620</sup> Patrick A. Roche, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

made an agreement (Mass Conversion) with the Portuguese, though in fact, the Portuguese made use of the existence of the then hierarchical system to promote their interests.<sup>621</sup>

It is true that the seven villages were turned into fortified ports by the Portuguese but their presence was less compared to their presence in the West-the reason being most of the factories were centred in Goa and Kozhikodu, and so the Portuguese had to preserve a greater part of their naval and military forces on the west coast. They had delegated a small part of their colonial officials down to the isolated areas of the east coast. Although the Portuguese governor and captains encouraged an overall repository of power on the Pescaria (Fishery Coast), they utilized indigenous caste leaders as agents of local government. The Portuguese administrators and priests increasingly relied upon the authority of the “natural leaders” of the *jati*.<sup>622</sup>

These positions became hereditary and as symbols of their new and elevated status that they wore gold Crosses and chains and assumed the title “*Senhor*” or “*Senhor Don*”. The creation of a *jati* leadership provided another means for *jati* consolidation and a clearly defined group emerged within the *jati* with an economic and power interacts in maintaining a caste identity and solidarity. The Portugal intervention in the affairs of the Fishery Coast in 1530s and 1540s probably did save the Parava *jati* from precipitous social and economic disintegration. The consolidation of the Parava *jati* resulted in the flourishing of Parava economy and polity.<sup>623</sup>

The running of the ports depended upon the Parava leadership. It was in this area that the impact of the Portuguese upon the structure of the Parava society appears to have been more. Development in settlement patterns, economy, political structure and religion

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<sup>621</sup> Charlie Pye-Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-190.

<sup>622</sup> Patrick A. Roche, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>623</sup> Kenneth McPherson, “*Paravas and Portuguese*”, p. 144.

during the period indicate the part innovative and part conservative traits in the Portuguese impact on Parava social and internal organisation.<sup>624</sup>

The *Pattangattis* and the *Urars* who were the political brokers between the *jati* and the colonialists were transformed into commercial brokers known in major port settlements as “*Campagnie Adepenars*” and “*Seethathys*” (assistants). Nevertheless there is evidence to suggest that the brokerage function performed by older caste leaders led to the centralization of the *jati*’s political structure under the direction of the *Jathi Thalaivan* during the Portuguese times.<sup>625</sup>

### **Strategic Importance**

Control of the Fishery Coast provided the Portuguese access to the proceeds of the pearl and chank fisheries. More than that, it strengthened their strategic position in southern India. It facilitated their economic activities in Cochin, Sri Lanka and on the southern Coromandel Coast. Access to the ports on the Fishery Coast enabled the Portuguese, in theory at least, to better police the sea-lanes linking Cochin in the Sri Lanka and the Coromandel Coast.<sup>626</sup>

Control of the coast enabled the Portuguese to undermine a thriving Muslim seafaring community astride a sea-lane vitally important to Portuguese economic and strategic interests in the Indian Ocean. It is also provided new manpower resources to assist in the struggle to control Sri Lanka.<sup>627</sup>

Initially, the Fishery Coast was vital to the Portuguese if they were to secure sea routes eastwards from Cochin. Throughout the sixteenth century, Cochin was a central cog in a network of sea-lanes linking the major Portuguese commercial centres at Malacca and Colombo into the commercial structure of the Estado da India. But Cochin, Colombo and Malacca flourished to control contiguous hinterlands – not evident in the case of Malacca, but equally importantly, on the Portuguese ability to enter the trading world of the Indian Ocean region and to exercise some control over major seaways.<sup>628</sup>

The control of the Fishery Coast ideally permitted control of the Palk Strait and the Gulf of Mannar and kept across open to cloth exporting ports on the Coromandel

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<sup>624</sup> Patrick A. Roche, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>625</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>626</sup> Kenneth McPherson, “*Paravas and Portuguese*”, pp. 133-134.

<sup>627</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 137-139.

<sup>628</sup> *Ibid.*

Coast. (But once Jaffna was captured by the Portuguese the direct control of the Fishery Coast was considered less important.)<sup>629</sup>

The strategic importance of the Fishery Coast to the Portuguese was emphasised by their tenuous position further north along the Coromandel Coast at Sao 'Tome' de Maliapur (Mylapore). To this end, the Fishery Coast was central to any plan to promote the economic and political interests of the Estado da India eastward from Cochin.<sup>630</sup>

The Portuguese realised the inadequacy of manpower and it was impossible for them to construct a purely Portuguese run commercial empire in the Indian Ocean. Collaboration with non-Christians was forced upon them, but on the Fishery Coast they were presented with the opportunity to collaborate with a Christian community and indeed a Christian community that was Roman Catholic and not assigned to a suspect Christian sect, as was the case on the Malabar Coast.<sup>631</sup>

The Portuguese had two aims in establishing different segments in the Fishery Coast under the leadership of the *Pattangattis*. First, the Portuguese intended to mobilise labour to execute their imperial project of Portuguese expansion in Sri Lanka. The Portuguese knew very well that the strait between India and Sri Lanka was economically and strategically important.<sup>632</sup>

The pearl fishery carried on twice a year in the straits between the east coast and the west coast of Sri Lanka. So the Paravas were seen as a reserve pool of military labour, as well as a source of tribute through the conduct of the fishery itself.

One of the designs of the Portuguese colonial empire was to make the Paravas to be settled in Sri Lanka. Ten towns and sixty-two villages were assigned to the Jesuits in 1602 and it resulted in the settlement of sizeable communities of Paravas on the Sinhalese coasts. The Paravas were a little hesitant to migrate since they were attached to their homeland and apprehensive that would not be possible to effect the migration of the whole caste. They suggested that about a thousand families might make the journey accompanied by their Jesuit vicars. The king therefore instructed his viceroy Azavedo to

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<sup>629</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 133-134.

<sup>630</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>631</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.

<sup>632</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Portuguese Empire in Asia*, pp. 263-264.

examine their representations and try to persuade as many Parava families as possible to settle in the coastal towns and villages of Sri Lanka.<sup>633</sup>

The Portuguese introduced certain agricultural crops in India and they were produced abundantly. They were potato, sweet potato, corn (maize), tobacco, cashew nut, red chilly and a number of other items.<sup>634</sup>

The Portuguese intervention affected the pattern of shipping from Coromandel ports in the latter half of the sixteenth century. They introduced the system of granting monopoly rights or concessions to individuals to trade to Malacca and other ports.<sup>635</sup>

The political control was accompanied by the spread of Christianity. An easy and comprehensible connection was established between the Portuguese control and the government in the India of the sixteenth century and the Catholic faith as professed by these particular Europeans.

To become a Christian was to become automatically a Portuguese for the civil authorities were not adverse to so considering the Indian who passed over to Christianity and the association became stronger as time went on.

The indigenous or non-European character of the Christian faith was submerged in the face of a political reality. The incident of the massacre of the several hundred fishermen at Mannar, who had become Christians, because their king feared

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<sup>633</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>634</sup> Mathew, K.S., *Mariners, Merchants and Ocean*, p. 10.

<sup>635</sup> Kanakalatha Mukund, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

their conversion was advancing Portuguese influence, illustrates perfectly this very serious problem.<sup>636</sup>

“The new Christians had cultivated an attitude that salvation in this life and the next could only be obtained through the Roman Catholic Church. The idea of giving of any portion of the Padroado Real (Crown Patronage of the Church) to heretics, to Muslims, or to the ‘heathens’ (gentios) was anathema. Even so, both the English and the Dutch considered that many of the Portuguese in Asia might be prepared to live under the English Crown – or even under the Dutch Company – rule provided only that they could freely exercise the Roman Catholic religion.”<sup>637</sup>

That the fisheries were then flourishing is betokened by the fine churches and great monasteries that rose at the three centres (Punnaikayal, Thoothukudi, Mannar) named from the offerings and profits of the divers and merchants during the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>638</sup>

Shortly after 1563, when Caesar Frederic visited the coast, the fishers for pearls still continued to pay for permission to the representative of the King of Portugal. The Madura Nayak had therefore not yet succeeded in gaining supreme power.<sup>639</sup>

### **Portuguese Jurisdiction**

As soon as the Paravas became Christians (in the Fishery Coast) they accepted the Portuguese king as their sovereign and became his subjects. As a result, the Crown of Portugal enjoyed both civil and spiritual jurisdiction over these people. The viceroy, captain and other Portuguese officials exercised civil jurisdiction whereas the Padroado Diocese of Goa enjoyed the ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the new Christians.

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<sup>636</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>637</sup> Boxer, C.R., *Portuguese India in the Mid-Seventeenth Century*, Oxford University Press, 1980, pp. 3-4.

<sup>638</sup> James Hornell, *op. cit.*, Vol. XVI, p. 24.

<sup>639</sup> Stuart, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

### **Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction**

Until the erection of the Diocese of Cochin as suffragan to Goa in 1557, there was normally a Vicar General residing at Cochin exercising spiritual administration both in Malabar and the Fishery Coast in the name of the Bishop of Goa. The Jesuit missionaries took up the task of nurturing the new Christians in true faith. King Philip in his letter to Count Viceroy of Goa said that he had every right to present the religions of his own choice with spiritual power and administer all Sacraments to the Christians in the Fishery Coast. This right of patronage began from the discovery of India, he added.

Xavier acknowledged the Padroado jurisdiction and asked his Jesuit companions to be obedient and co-operative to the Bishop and the Vicar General. The Diocese of Cochin was established on February 4, 1557, after the departure of Xavier from the Fishery Coast. From that time onwards, the Paravas and other Catholic communities of the coast were placed under the jurisdiction of the Padroado Bishop of Cochin.

The Paravas were ruled by several local rulers but they willingly became the subjects of the Portuguese sovereign. The king also in return protected these Christians whenever they encountered problems. They (the Paravas) were exploited by the Vijayanagar king, the Nayaks, the Poligars, the King of Travancore and the Muslims. The Portuguese viceroy, and the captain and other Portuguese officials fought against these oppressors in the same of civil jurisdiction. The Paravas were provided with not only security and protection in the Fishery Coast when the pearl fisheries failed they were rid of their financial difficulties also.



Thus, the Jesuits guided by Xavier, took care of the spiritual and material well being of the Christians in the Fishery Coast. More than the Portuguese officials, it was Xavier who adopted protective measures when Vithala's army invaded south. Xavier even played peacemaker role between the Christians and the local kings. When the captains became tyrannical, Xavier raised his voice and put his heart and soul in protecting the Christians.<sup>640</sup>

As a token of their gratitude and loyalty to the Crown of Portugal and as remuneration for the military help received from the Portuguese during the pearl fishery, the Paravas after their conversion bound themselves to pay an annual tribute of 75,000 fanams to the Royal Treasury from their pearl fishery.<sup>641</sup> In addition to this, they also paid a tribute of 10000 gold fanams every year for the slippers of the Queen of Portugal.<sup>642</sup>

Portugal was the first European country to have a deep and sustained interaction with India culture and the interaction was more pronounced and long standing with the Parava community. To understand the outcome of this interaction in its right perspective, it is necessary to take into account some of the factors that guided Portuguese activities, namely, the mandate obtained through the Papal Decrees by the Portuguese to discover, conquer, appropriate new lands and to propagate the Catholic faith; secondly, the fear of the possible spread of the Protestant Reformation; and finally, the new Decrees of the Ecumenical Council of Trent (1545-1563).<sup>643</sup>

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<sup>640</sup> *Letters of Xavier, August 3, 1544*, pp. 87-88.

<sup>641</sup> Georg Schurhammer, *St. Francis Xavier, Vol. II*, p. 26.

<sup>642</sup> Venantius Fernando, S., *Padroado*, p. 152.

<sup>643</sup> Mathew, K.S., "The Portuguese and the Indian Ocean Regions", *Indica*, 35, Sept. 1998, Heras Institute, Xavier's College, Mumbai, p. 35.

In fact, the Fishery Coast was the only Portuguese Mission that was originally designed and diligently cultivated by the Crown of Portugal in India in consequence of the Padroado granted to it by the Holy See. Padroado means “the right of spiritual jurisdiction granted by the Holy See to the Portuguese Crown over all the lands discovered or to be discovered by the Portuguese fleet in the East. The first explicit grant of this spiritual jurisdiction was made by Pope Nicholas V to the Portuguese King, Alphonsus V, by his famous Apostolic Bull “Romanus Pontifex” (January 8, 1455).

“The Padroado gave to the Portuguese Crown certain rights and duties, rights to supervise the church, to nominate bishops and to appoint suitable candidates to various ecclesiastical benefices; duties to convert the natives, to erect and maintain churches and other pious institutions and finally, to provide them with a sufficient number of missionaries”.<sup>644</sup>

### **Cultural Impact**

The changes that the Portuguese Padroado brought in the cultural sphere in the Fishery Coast has covered several aspects. The most important one was religion and the same was used as a tool to bring other changes. Just as Parava polity and Parava economy are inseparable, the Parava religion and Parava culture are also inseparable. In the name of religion, a cultural alienation took place by segregating the Christians from other religious groups by the Portuguese. Since the Padroado was fully backed by political support, the Portuguese thought that the Paravas could be assimilated forcibly into their fold. But it did not happen. The changes occurred in the culture of the Paravas as a result the Portuguese impact may be studied as under.

### **Organised Christian Mission**

The Mass Conversion in 1536 was not followed by any organised missionary work in the Fishery Coast. The scanty presence of the Franciscan fathers did not bring any change in the lives of the Paravas. Only after the arrival of Xavier in 1542, a true Christian life was promoted among them.<sup>645</sup> The Himalayan task was very systematically schemed, organised and carried out by Xavier and his successors.

After visiting all the Christian villages, Xavier narrated his experiences in his letter to the then Superior General, Ignatius Loyola. The former wrote that there was no one to instruct the new converts in faith; they could say nothing more about their faith than that they were Christians. To put it in Xavier’s own words “they did not know the difference between their right hand and their left”.<sup>646</sup>

Since Xavier did not know Tamil, the native language, he assembled those who were more knowledgeable and sought out individuals who understood both his language and the native language. These individuals helped Xavier to translate Latin into Tamil.<sup>647</sup>

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<sup>644</sup> Venantius Fernando, S., “The Portuguese Patronage (Padroado) and the Evangelization of the Pearl Fishery Coast”, *Indian Church History Review*, Vol. XVIII, No. I, June 1984, New Delhi, p. 94.

<sup>645</sup> *Letters of Xavier, October 28, 1542*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>646</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>647</sup> *Letters of Xavier, January 15, 1544*, pp. 63-65.

He (Xavier) began with rudimentary catechism that consisted of the Sign of the Cross, confessing that there were three persons in one sole God, the Creed, the Commandments, the Our father, Hail Mary, Salve Regina and the Confiteor.<sup>648</sup> After Xavier had translated these into Tamil he learned them by heart. With a bell in his hand he went around the streets of each village and called upon the women, gentlemen, labourers, slaves and children to come out of their houses and gathered them in one place and taught them these prayers.<sup>649</sup>

The Jesuit missionaries taught both catechism and moral instruction to the fisherfolk by dividing them into groups. On Sunday evenings, the men discussed their doubts regarding their faith. On Fridays all the Christians meditated on the Passions of the Christ. They observed penance also. The women discussed practical issues on Saturdays.<sup>650</sup>

Children were taught practical lessons, on Wednesdays. Young girls were instructed about chastity and costumes. They had to give accounts of how they dealt with boys. The exemplary life of the neo Christians put even the Portuguese to shame.<sup>651</sup>

The missionaries established elementary schools near the churches in all the villages. Local children mixed with the Portuguese children in the schools. Each year the viceroy gave four thousand pieces of gold to be paid to those persons who were very diligent in teaching the Christian doctrine in the villages.<sup>652</sup>

Xavier is known for his diligent evangelising in the Fishery Coast. As historian Stephan Neill says, Xavier arrived to find an untutored mob, but left behind a Church in being. By the end of the sixteenth century each Parava village on the Fishery Coast had its own resident priest, and the Jesuits also moved among the fishing villages on the south west coast and made many more converts.

In order to carry out the catechetical work effectively and fruitfully, a small circle consisting of four persons was created by Xavier. They were the *moduthagam* (overseer), the *ubadesiyar* (sacristian), the *kanakkappillai* (catechist) and *vathiyar* (teacher). Just like the *Pattangattis*, *urars* and *Jathi Thalavan* helped to carry out the civil administration, the trio “*ubadesiyar*, *kanakkappillai* and the *padres* (priests) became a nucleus and played an influential role in shaping the Parava mob into a cultured society.”<sup>653</sup>

“In each settlement the *padre*, the *ubedesiyar* and the *kanakkappillai* played an active role and the church, both physically and ideologically, became the focal point of Parava existence. Within the portals of the Catholic churches, the Paravas were baptized, confirmed, educated, married and buried.”<sup>654</sup>

Even among the ‘trio’ the role of the *kanakkapillai* was an incomparable one and which continues to function in almost all the parishes even today. Xavier himself

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<sup>648</sup> *Letters of Xavier, October 28, 1542*, pp. 60-65.

<sup>649</sup> *Letters of Xavier, January 15, 1544*, p. 65.

<sup>650</sup> *DI., Vol. XII*, p. 46.

<sup>651</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>652</sup> *DI., Vol. XVII*, p. 17; *DI., Vol. XVIII*, pp. 179-180.

<sup>653</sup> Patrick A. Roche, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>654</sup> *Ibid.*

appointed *kanakkapillais* and they were expected to be clean and pure in heart. He (the *kanakkapillai*) had to monitor to the presence and activities of pagodas and black magicians existed in the Christian villages. It was his duty to supervise whether catechism was taught regularly. He had to make a survey of the people of those who had not received baptism and confession. If any one wanted to become a Christian, the *kanakkapillai* had to check if he or she had shed all the old superstitious beliefs. The *kanakkapillai* had to arrange for the marriage of persons of lost faith with the persons of less faith and vice versa. He had to visit sick people also. In the absence of priests he finally he had to present a report to the parish priest about the happenings in the parish.<sup>655</sup>

While Xavier was imparting Christian faith to the Paravas, he found that it was very difficult for them to cut themselves off from the trunk of their age old Hindu religious practices. Yet he strived hard and succeeded in bringing the same fisherfolk out of their primitive form of worship. The children to whom he taught catechism became agents in abolishing the vestiges of their previous religion. The Portuguese wanted the new Christians to be free from Hindu influence. They wanted the Paravas to be separated physically and culturally so that a 'client community' of the Portuguese could be formed in the Fishery Coast.

### **Social Segregation**

The caste Hindus considered the newly converted Christians as inferior and no Hindu was allowed to dine or drink with the Christians. The Hindus who associated with the 'low castes' became outcasts and such custom was so aggressive that the Hindus preferred death to violating the same. So the Portuguese decided to separate all the new Christians away from the Hindus and passed several decrees to keep the former as a separate community.<sup>656</sup>

The First Provincial Council of Goa which was convened in 1567 recommended to the King of Portugal to keep the Hinds completely separated from the Christians. It (the Council) also decided on various ways and means to keep the Christians away from the Hindus and Muslims.

The Christian communities were asked to wear a particular dress that could distinguish them from the non-Christians. The Christians were also asked to wear some head dress (like the natives of Portugal) so that they could be identified as Christians.<sup>657</sup>

The Christians received a favoured treatment and special attention as if they were quite a separate community, distinct from the Hindu community. The reason for such attention was that "the Christians are like tender plants which shake with the wind of persecution and might return to the worship of idols which they suck with their mother's milk and if they mixed with the pagans".<sup>658</sup>

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<sup>655</sup> *DI., Vol. XIII*, p. 181.

<sup>656</sup> Cunha Rivara, Fas 4, Decree 2, pp. 8-9.

<sup>657</sup> *Ibid.*, Decree 4, p. 187.

<sup>658</sup> Charles Borges, "*International Movements in the Indian Ocean Region : Churchmen, Travellers and Chroniclers in Voyage and in Action*" in Mathew, K.S., (ed.), *Indian Ocean and Cultural Interaction A.D. 1400-1800*, Pondicherry University, 1966, p. 30.

The Council did not allow the Christians to borrow musical instruments, ornaments, fireworks, etc., from the Hindus to celebrate Christian festivals solemnly. Employment of Hindu artisans and craftsmen was not encouraged. The Council forbade the Christians from getting any paintings done, or statues moulded, chalices, crosses, reliquaries, statues of saints or crucifixes made by Hindus for divine worship in Christian churches. The ecclesiastical authorities concerned were asked to penalize those who went against the instruction.<sup>659</sup>

A fine was imposed on those Christians who frequented Hindu barbers for their service.<sup>660</sup> It was further decreed that no Hindu should be appointed for any service in the Christian families. The Hindu capitalists used to lend money to the Christians for trade and commerce and enhanced their capital. This was forbidden by the Portuguese authorities.<sup>661</sup>

A number of rich and resourceful Hindu businessmen used to employ Christians as their factors for trade and commerce to make use of the Christians to enter into areas where Hindus might not be able to. Partnerships of this sort were prohibited by the Portuguese.<sup>662</sup> This was the first step the Portuguese took to separate the new Christians physically to form a separate community. The decrees passed in the Councils were binding not only on the Paravas but on the Hindus and the Muslims as well. Once the Paravas were separated from the rest of the religious groups, the Portuguese set out to obliterate the customs and practices that had been in vogue among them (the Paravas) for ages. In the second stage, the cultural alienation policy of the Padroado was implemented.

### **Christians Uprooted**

The second effort in implementing the segregation policy of the Portuguese resulted in the uprooting of the Christians from their old culture. The Christians were asked not to consult sorcerers and soothsayers before marriage, to identify a thief, to get rid of disease or to beget children. Receiving articles inscribed with charms from the sorcerers as a cure from certain infirmities and placing such articles in fields for a good produce was also forbidden.<sup>663</sup>

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<sup>659</sup> Cunha Rivara, Fas.4, Decree 28, p. 24-25.

<sup>660</sup> *Ibid.*, Decree 29, p. 25.

<sup>661</sup> *Ibid.*, Decree 32, p. 26.

<sup>662</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>663</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 104-105.

The Christians were told that it was irrational to perform purificatory ceremonies in connection with water tanks or any inanimate things.<sup>664</sup> The Provincial Council requested the Portuguese king to order the Brahmans to abolish all ‘devilish rites’ before a wedding since they were scandalous to the Christians. It further said that no public celebration should be held during marriage ceremonies and that extravagant rituals on the occasion of marriage should be avoided.<sup>665</sup>

The smearing of sandalwood paste on the forehead, the cremation of the diseased and distributing food to others on the occasion of a death were forbidden.<sup>666</sup> The Christians were forbidden to sing or dance in schools and were threatened with excommunication in case of violation. The teacher at the school was punished with fifty *pardaos* and half of which would be given to the complainant and the culprit would be out of the school for two years.<sup>667</sup>

Christians were forbidden from practicing certain social customs like purificatory ceremonial baths by the survivors after the death of a person in a family, giving food to others in the name of the deceased by the deceased person’s relatives, making designs with rice flour or rice on the floor as decoration, seating the bride and the groom in a marked place, the ceremonies conducted when cooked rice was given as food for the first time to a child, and the custom of trade as removing a thread from the cloth to be measured and sold or removing two grains from the stock of paddy to be measured for

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<sup>664</sup> *Ibid.*, Decree 5, p. 492.

<sup>665</sup> *Ibid.*, Decree 10, pp. 127-128.

<sup>666</sup> *Ibid.*, Decree 42, pp. 30-31.

<sup>667</sup> *Ibid.*, Decree 12, p. 266.

sale were all declared superstitious and were to be avoided by Christians according to the decrees issued by the Portuguese in India.<sup>668</sup>

### **Inculturation**

After the conversion of the Paravas, the Portuguese customs, arts and ceremonies were naturally imported into the Fishery Coast. In other words, the Christianization of the Fishery Coast, as effected by the influence of Padroado, assumed the garb of Portuguese culture and civilization, the effect of which is still visible in the present coastal Christian community though in a mitigated form. The Christian religion itself, as was presented under the guise of the Portuguese sense, viewed the Paravas as highly differentiated from the rest of the Christians in Tamil Nadu both in social and in religious practices.<sup>669</sup>

### **Imposition of Names**

Whoever was converted by the Padroado missionaries received surnames along with their baptismal names. Just as the Christians of Goa and Mangalore, the Paravas at Thoothukudi were also given a variety of Portuguese surnames. The Paravas in general have the surname 'Fernando'. But the people of the Yelu Urs have names like Almeida, Gomez, Lobo, Machodo, Motha, Vaz, etc., The Paravas are very proud of holding these names and they (the names) continue to be transmitted to their posterity. Some people misunderstand and misinterpret these surnames. They have problem only with 'Fernando' as though it denotes the caste 'Parava'. They are comfortable with other

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<sup>668</sup> Mathew, K.S., *The Portuguese and the Indian Ocean Regions*, Indica, 35, September 1998, pp. 103-110.

<sup>669</sup> Venantius Fernando, S., *Padroado*, pp. 154-155.

names. There are sixty eight names that are now prevalent in the whole Parava community as family names.<sup>670</sup>

It was the general policy of the Portuguese authorities also to invest the chiefs of the Parava communities with the honourable title of Dom to promote them to the rank of nobility. In realization of this policy, the Portuguese officials of the Fishery Coast invested the Parava chief or Jathi Thalaivan with the title of Dom, and granted him the highest privilege of wearing a gold chain with a cross, as a badge of nobility.<sup>671</sup>

In some cases the Christians were allowed to carry on certain native customs with modifications: Marriages were allowed to be celebrated with Tamil customs and manners. But the Portuguese insisted that the *tali* (golden chain) given to a Christian woman on her wedding day might contain a picture of a saint or an image of Our Lady or the Cross and not a picture of a Hindu god or *Pillaiyar*, the idol presiding the over wedlock.<sup>672</sup>

Similarly, several ceremonies used at wedding such as the twig of the *arasu* (a plant), the circlets drawn against the evil eye or against ill luck and the number and quality of the dishes were ordered to be given up by the Christians. Regarding the chord made of 108 threads and dyed in saffron with which the *tali* was tied around the neck, both the colour and number were condemned as superstitious.<sup>673</sup>

The proclamation of three bands, at three Sunday masses before the marriage was stressed. Those who violated this were threatened with ten *pardaus* and

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<sup>670</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 153-154.

<sup>671</sup> Edgar Thurston, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

<sup>672</sup> Jeyaseela Stephan, S., “*Societal Changes: Portuguese and the Native Christians in Tamil Country (1539-1758)*,” International Seminar on the Portuguese and the Socio-Cultural Changes in India (1500-1999), p. 15.

<sup>673</sup> *Ibid.*



excommunication. This practice (the proclamation of the bands) spread to the other places also. These days reading of at least one band is necessary before the marriage.<sup>674</sup>

The Portuguese introduced celebration of saints' feasts in all most all the villages, especially at Thoothukudi. It is doubtful whether such an attempt was a part of their inculturation or the Paravas assimilated whatever introduced by the missionaries according to their temperament. For instance, the annual feast of Our Lady of Snows has got a lot of customs and practices adopted from Hinduism.

The following is the description of the above feast this year (2004) the annual feast (as usual) began on the July 26 with the flag hoisting and the crowning of Our Lady, on the first day. There was a special novena every day for ten days and the feast ended with the vespers, procession and carrying the sapparam (float). (Occasionally the golden car drawn). On the feast day, a para-liturgical service 'vespers' took place and a solemn mass on the tenth day was the culmination of the annual feast. The vast crowd which flocked to the shrine was focussed on the elegant statue which was kept atop the altar. The statue of Our Lady of Snows has something to say about the inculturation that the Paravas have assimilated.

The statue of Our Lady Snows reached Thoothukudi in June 9, 1582 by St. Helena (a ship) and was placed in the church of *Nossa Senhora da Piedade*.<sup>675</sup> In Tamil Nadu after the Bhakti Movement in the seventh century A.D., various forms of the Mother Goddesses (*Shakthi*, the cosmic power) emerged and reached the height of importance in the fourteenth century. This strong worship was perhaps noticed by the

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<sup>674</sup> *DI*, Vol. V, p. 425.

<sup>675</sup> Venantius Fernando, S., *Idiyin Irahasiyam*, Bangalore, 1986, pp. 19-25.

Portuguese in the sixteenth century and motivated them to introduce devotion to Mary although it was popular among the medieval Christians much earlier.

Roche says that along with establishing a strong faith in the Paravas the Jesuits wanted an indigenization of ritual and worship. In an effort to supplant and divert the hoary attachment of the Paravas from their festivals at Madurai and Tiruchendur, the Jesuits sought to establish shrines and festivals which would transpose Catholic liturgy on to an Indian matrix.<sup>676</sup>

Venantius says that Xavier himself, after seeing the Paravas' deep attachment to their old tribal Mother Goddess, *Meenakshi* (deity of fish eyes), obtained for them the statue of Our Lady of Snows (*Nossa Senhora das Nevis*) from the Augustinian convent of Manila. The Paravas call her '*Panimaya Matha*' (Tamil translation of Our Lady of the Snows) and *Parava Matha* (Mother of the Paravas). The annual feast of Our Lady of the Snows has thereafter been the feast of the entire Fishery Coast. Today this strong bond of exclusive identity is not so rigid as before. The people of the various religions (It is the feast of all the religions) visit the shrine on the feast day. The feast of Our Lady of Snows which was introduced in 1582 at Thoothukudi has had great repercussions not only on the religion and the culture of the Paravas but has also affected their politics, economy and society very much because "indigenous Hindu festivals (*thiruvizhas*) in South India were not only religious events; they were also social

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<sup>676</sup> Patrick A. Roche, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

events replete with processions (*suthukalam*), the pulling of temple carts (*thers*), dramas and music (*natagams* and *bhajanams*), floats (*saparams*) and festoons (*kodis*).<sup>677</sup>

When this feast was introduced in Thoothukudi for the first time, all the rituals and practices of the *Parava dharmakarthakkal* during the festivals at Tiruchendur and Madurai entered the Fishery Coast.<sup>678</sup>

Just as the temple authorities hosted a banquet to the kings, leaders and respected men of the *dharmakarthakkal*, the Jesuits also gave a dinner (*virundu*) to all the Parava elders and *Jathi Thalaivans*. The description of the feast that was held in 1600 gives interesting news about the dinner that the Jesuits gave to the principal Christians of the Fishery Coast: There was a large table where more than one hundred persons sat. The Paravas were flattered by this mark of honour.<sup>679</sup>

The dinner during the annual festival however, resulted in creating an economic disparity among the Paravas. Those who were invited and dined with the Jesuits at one table called themselves as '*Mesaikarar*' (table Paravas) and other *Kamarakkarar* (common fisherfolk).<sup>680</sup> Another version for this distinction namely the Paravas who had wealth and status in the society were in a position to lend money to the Portuguese to conduct their trade and therefore could sit at the dinner table along with the Portuguese.

*Jathi Thalaivan*, the Adepansars of the *yelu urs*, the Pattangattis and other elites were considered as the principal Christians. When the Dutch occupied Thoothukudi they suppressed the Society of Jesus in 1759. Then the *Jathi Thalaivan* hosted the dinner during the annual festival of Our Lady of Snows. This disparity (between the elite and the other Paravas) was very obvious in Thoothukudi and other villages where the seven major ports once existed. The *Mesaikarar* (the elite) considered themselves superior and did not have any marriage alliance with the *Kamarakkarar*. "A custom of symbolic honour at a religious festival crystallized into a social distinction of great consequence for the *jati*."<sup>681</sup>

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<sup>677</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>678</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>679</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>680</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>681</sup> *Ibid.*

### **Village Festivals**

The festivals that the Jesuits introduced in the villages continue to be celebrated with gait and fervour. Each village has a patron saint like St. James, St. Joseph, St. Antony, etc., and the celebration of these saints' festival is an annual event in every village. All the elements of the feast of Our Lady of Snows are found in these festivals too. The shrines in some of the villages are very popular and attract large gatherings at festival times extravagant paraphernalia. Money is spent lavishly on decoration and other.

The Portuguese had the custom of putting up small structures called *kurusadis* (small shrines) with a Cross, in all the corners of the villages. A *kurusadi* is a raised structure with the Cross and a niche for a lamp. In the coastal villages, the Christians build *kurusadis* mainly at the entrance, and at each direction of the villages. The devotion and piety demonstrated here is greater than the solemnity and devotion at the main churches.

Though the Portuguese criticised the Hindu marriage and other rituals as devilish and meaningless, the Christians have perceived all these in a different way. The liturgical ceremonies take place in the church are given less importance compared to the ceremonies which take place at home before and after the wedding mass. In case of death also the same attitude prevails.

### **Indigenous Priesthood**

Though the Jesuit priests had an ardent desire to spread the Good News yet they were not liberated from their racial inclination towards the 'superior culture'. Xavier was very sad that he could not convert many Brahmans. He mentions in one of his letters that after having worked tirelessly for two years, he could convert only one Brahman.<sup>682</sup> A Brahman boy was sent from the Fishery Coast to Goa for priestly training. He seemed to be well behaved but the Jesuits did not want him to join the Society of Jesus, rather he was admitted as a secular clergy.<sup>683</sup>

Xavier envisaged an indigenous priesthood and he fought vigorously to encourage it. When he was in Japan, he heard that Fr. Anton Gomez, the director of St. Paul's seminary in Old Goa had dismissed all the Indian students because the rector thought that priesthood was not meant for dark skinned people. Xavier was horrified and reacted vehemently. On his arrival in India as the first Provincial of India, Xavier immediately dismissed the rector and saying he was a rotten fellow.<sup>684</sup>

### **Charitable Activities**

The Portuguese introduced a lot of charitable activities. During pearl fishing many Paravas fell sick as the oysters were strewn all over area causing an unhygienic atmosphere. Henriques set up a hospital for the poor in Punnaikayal. It was a kind of work, he said, so far unknown in these parts and was admired by the people of all creeds. Maintained by the Christians themselves, at first it was managed by a former catechist, who himself treated the patients.<sup>685</sup>

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<sup>682</sup> *Letters of Xavier, January 15, 1544, p. 70.*

<sup>683</sup> *DI., Vol. XV, p. 398.*

<sup>684</sup> Charlie Pye-Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>685</sup> Antony Da Costa, *Call of the Orient – A Response by Jesuits of the Sixteenth Century*, Heras Institute of Indian History and Culture, Mumbai, 1999, p. 25.

The Paravas donated generously to these charity missions and life-time patrons paid eighty *pardaus*. Nearly two thousand *pardaus* were spent for the welfare of the new Christian poor and orphans. The priests fed the poor.<sup>686</sup> By 1575 another hospital was put up in Thoothukudi. So Henriques lived to see some of his hopes materialized. The Jesuits, who happened to be in station used to serve the poor and helped to keep the place tidy much to the edification of their flock.<sup>687</sup>

The Paravas experienced utter poverty. Since they did not have clothes, they were ashamed of coming out of their houses. There is a reference about clothing eight hundred people by the Jesuits and made them to go to the churches. The young girls who were not able to get married due to lack of money were given donations.<sup>688</sup>

Non-Christians also came to the Jesuits seeking help. They were not asked to pay when they were treated in the hospitals. The non-Christian poor and orphans were also provided with food and clothes. The Muslims and the Hindus became friendly with the Christians. The priests borrowed money from the Christians and distributed it to the non-Christians. The fame of the people and their charity went around the world.<sup>689</sup>

There was a great famine on the Fishery Coast in 1570. Henriques established famine-relief houses in some of which fifty persons were fed daily. Don Sebastian reduced the tithes on pearls.<sup>690</sup>

To look after the hospitals and carry out other charitable deeds, the Jesuits founded many confraternities like the Holy Rosary, the Misericordia, the Sacred Heart and so on. The members of these Confraternities were dedicated and spent their time in taking care of the widows, the poor, the sick and the orphans. The members were incharge of the administration of the hospitals also. They consoled the sick, prepared the terminally sick to make a good confession so that they would die peacefully. They were the ones who collected alms to help the poor and for the young girls to get married. They submitted accounts to the priests. In case of any misunderstanding between the people and the priests, the Confraternity members brought reconciliation. Local people had more faith and found solace in them. In brief, the members lived like a leaven among the newly converted Christians.<sup>691</sup> In due course, the Confraternity changed into sodalities which have been functioning very actively in the coastal villages.

The members of the Confraternities were invested with colourful robes, glittering badges, crowns, laced banners and other insignia, all in Portuguese style. Also the officials of these Confraternities, as they do even today, bore Portuguese titles though in corrupt forms as for instance, '*persente*' (president), '*sacadader*' (secretary), '*procurador*' (procurator), '*iscriman*' (scribe), '*melenge*' (messenger) and the like.<sup>692</sup>

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<sup>686</sup> *DI., Vol. XV*, p. 444.

<sup>687</sup> Antony Da Costa, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>688</sup> *DI., Vol. XV*, p. 44.

<sup>689</sup> *DI., Vol. XV*, pp. 128-132.

<sup>690</sup> Stuart, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>691</sup> *DI, Vol. XVII*, p. 416.

<sup>692</sup> These names are in vogue in all the village of Fishery Coast even today.

The same type of pious associations for all ages exist even today. It promotes piety among the members and they involve themselves in social welfare activities also. This adds colour and beauty to the local church. The credit goes to the Portuguese Padroado because no such practice has been in vogue in any other place. The members of these associations are emotionally balanced to blend both the spiritual and the mundane elements so beautifully and make these associations life oriented.

### **Promotion of Tamil**

Xavier after staying with the Paravas for a period of four months at Thoothukudi, wrote in his letter that he could translate simple Christian prayers into Tamil.<sup>693</sup> From another letter, we understand that he had picked up Tamil sufficiently to the point of making corrections in his first version of Christian prayers in Tamil.<sup>694</sup> This shows the Jesuits' love for learning Tamil to accelerate their missionary activities.

The Jesuit missionaries focussed on educating the Paravas with Christian religious ideals and so the printing of books in Tamil was adopted as the principal means to promote the same. The year 1586 witnessed the rise of a college, i.e. a boarding school at Thoothukudi. By 1589, twenty out of thirty boys were learning Latin through the medium of Tamil. By 1590, some of them were composing Latin verses. In 1597 three of them were ordained as priests.<sup>695</sup>

These Catholic missionaries were among the forerunners in the art of teaching Tamil to foreigners and have composed several works for that purpose. Tamil language was learnt not only by the missionaries, but by almost all the Europeans who settled down in this part of the country for commercial or administrative reasons. That was not a period when the Tamils learned European languages, but it was the other way round.<sup>696</sup>

The literary activity of the period would not have been possible without printing. In 1556 the Jesuits in Goa opened the first printing press in India with Latin types brought from Europe. It became sporadically active, at least after the first years. Fr. João de Faria was the first maker of Tamil (Tamil) types, who opened a printing press in Punnaikayal in 1578, producing a number of specific works.<sup>697</sup>

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<sup>693</sup> *Letters of Xavier, January 15, 1544*, p. 65.

<sup>694</sup> *Letters of Xavier, March 27, 1544*, p.78.

<sup>695</sup> *DI., Vol. XIII*, pp. 352-354; *DI, Vol. XIV*, pp. 572-575.

<sup>696</sup> David Annonssamy, "Cultural Interactions in South India (1400-1800)" in Mathew, K.S. (ed.), *Indian Ocean and Cultural Interaction (A.D. 1400-1800)*, p. 98.

<sup>697</sup> Georg Schurhammer, *Orientalia, op. cit.*, p.317.

Tamil is the richest and apparently the most ancient of the Dravidian languages. It was spoken in the entire Coromandel Coast including the Fishery Coast, Northern Sri Lanka, and the Malabar Coast of the Peninsula as far as Trivandrum in Travancore. The closely related Malayalam ultimately derived from Tamil but with different alphabets, is the basic language of the Malabar Coast north of Trivandrum, in Travancore and Cochin, although Tamil is interspersed all along the coast. Certainly in the sixteenth century Tamil was the dominant language in the Southern India Provincial Council of 1575.<sup>698</sup>

It was Fr. Valignano who visited the Fishery Coast requested Henriques to prepare some printed material for the Tamil area. Henriques, in a letter dated 6 December 1577, wrote from Thoothukudi, that Tamil catechism was being printed and he thanked the endeavours of the Visitor (Valignano). The annual Goa letter of 1578, written 20 October by Fr. Gomes Vaz, reported that the Tamil printing press for the Fishery Coast had been perfected and that the Parava Christians had been much interested in the work, contributing four hundred cruzados towards it. On 10 January 1580, Fr. Gaspar Alvares wrote from Cochin that a Confessionary was being printed from Tamil types and that the catechism of Fr. Marcos Borge was to follow in the spring, with the native Christians defraying the expenses.<sup>699</sup>

But in spite of such support, the printing enterprises soon suffered from want of money. Secondly the death of Fr. Faria in 1582 was a death blow for the enterprises, which was renewed only a hundred years later, at Ambalakadu, near Cochin.<sup>700</sup>

The founding of a seminary was a clever and successful strategy to win local collaborations for missionary work.<sup>701</sup> Xavier made use of two local deacons from Goa, in Thoothukudi.<sup>702</sup> Native seminarians helped the missionaries as interpreters.<sup>703</sup> Unfortunately, the local clergy was mistrusted, relegated and denied minimum level of equality with the Portuguese missionaries and religious and secular clergy. They not only received insufficient attention that mattered, but were also frequently criticised.<sup>704</sup>

### **Language**

The missionaries are criticised for their contribution towards the native languages. This was not an expression of their appreciation of the language or culture. The critics raise the question that the interest shown to learn the native languages by the religious orders in the earlier period dwindled by the mid-eighteenth century. At this time “the colonial control was firmly in place and the time had come to force the natives to forget their language and learn the languages of the colonial powers. This change of attitude was already noticed in Goa from 1684.”<sup>705</sup>

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<sup>698</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 318.

<sup>699</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>700</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 319.

<sup>701</sup> *DI., Vol. IX (1573-1575)*, 1966, p. 276.

<sup>702</sup> Georg Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier, Vol. I*, p. 147.

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 147.

<sup>704</sup> Délio de Mendonça, *Conversion and Citizenry: Goa Under Portugal 1570-1610*, XCHR Studies Service No. II, New Delhi, 2002, p. 340.

<sup>705</sup> Georg Schurhammer, *Orientalia*, p. 321.

## Education

The Paravas were encouraged to get educated by the Portuguese clerics who sent them to the college at Quilon. The college was founded by Xavier in 1549. The Parava students sat along with the resident Portuguese and other native Christians. The rector of the college at Quilon was actually the superior of the Fishery and Coromandel Coasts.<sup>706</sup>

Portuguese language was given priority in the religious instructions and in the liturgical functions, next to the official liturgical language of Latin. The Christians of the Fishery Coast had been trained to recite the prayers and the Divine Offices both in Latin and Portuguese. Fr. Pietro Arboleda was surprised on his visit to the Fishery Coast and Mannar island in 1501 where the Parava Christians recited the prayers in Portuguese as well as in Latin. He said that it was a wonderful thing to see the Christians in the morning with rosaries in their hands and around necks and each one recited rosary.<sup>707</sup>

In Thoothukudi and in other coastal villages, the Portuguese language was partly used in the churches for instructions and for singing the Divine Office on Sundays and on feast days in which the people participated with great enthusiasm.<sup>708</sup> As the Dutch pastor Philip Baldaeus observes, the Paravas, chiefly those living in Jaffnapattanam, generally spoke Portuguese.<sup>709</sup> The Portuguese language was taught and used also in coastal schools and seminary. The Jesuit Annual letter of 1600 says that the seminarians of the Fishery Coast, studying at the seminary of Thoothukudi, were taught Portuguese.<sup>710</sup>

The Paravas use Portuguese vocabulary in their language. Some of them are given below:

Portuguese	English	Tamil
Adiante	forward	adhiantham (beginning)
alcunha	nick name	alcunha
Além	beyond	alam (depth)
Ananas	pineapple	annasi
Armário	cup-board	alamari
Arroz	rice	arisi
Biscoito	biscuit	biskattu

<sup>706</sup> Venantius Fernando, S., *Padroado*, p. 157.

<sup>707</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>708</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>709</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>710</sup> *Ibid.*



<b>Portuguese</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Tamil</b>
Cabelo	hair	cabalam (head)
Caçapa	pocket	ceppu
Cachecol	scarf	cachei
Café	coffee	kappi
Calca	short parts	kalasam
Calhau	stone	kal
Camisa	shirt	camsu
Campa	gravestone	cambu (stick)
Caril	curry	curry
Chappatu	shoe	sappathu
Chavi	key	savi
Chita	printed cotton	cheetti
Compadre	god father	kumbadri
Confraternity	fraternity	Kumbiriar
Copo	drinking cup	koppai (a vessel)
Cozinha	kitchen	kusini
Ela	she	yela (boy)
Equ	What	yekki (calling a girl)
Espirito Santo	the Holy Spirit	Ispiritu Santu
Leilao	auction	yelam
Macho	male	machan (brother-in-law)
Macio	soft	macia
Madre	nun	maduri (women)
Madurar	to ripen	maduram (sweet)
Mãe	mother	ammae (grand mother)
Mantle	mantle	mantei
Mastri	Master	mestri
Mesa	table	mesai
Novena	nine day devotion	navanazh
Padre	priest	padiriyar

Portuguese	English	Tamil
Pai	father	appai (grand father)
Pave	cream cake	pahu
Pendente	pendant	pendant
Plastica	plastri	plastri
Presidente	president	preridenti
Saco	sack	sakku
Scribe	scribe	serivan
Secretario	secretary	secdadari
Terco	third of a rosary	tersu 3o'clock player
Toalha	towel	tualei
Triste	sad	thusti
Va	go	va (come)
Veranda	verandha	varandha
Xarope	syrup	sirap
Xodu	sweat heart	jodi

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### Christians' Exemplary Life

The Paravas did not embrace Christianity with high ideals yet they were fortunate to be Christians. The Christians manifested a fervour and consistency in their lives and they were heroic. According to Da Costa their life was such that it would edify and embarrass not merely the Christians of Europe but even the religious. Their (the Parava) faith, their charity and their modesty were most remarkable.<sup>712</sup>

The missionaries must share the credit for this state of affairs with the lay helpers who played a very important part in the work of conversion and instruction. This was the case not only in Madurai but also on the Fishery Coast, from the time of Francis

<sup>711</sup> Collins Portuguese Dictionay, Editora Siciliano, Harper Collins Publishers, 1998.

<sup>712</sup> John Correia Afonso, *The Jesuits in India*, p. 166.

Xavier and indeed practically all the Jesuit missions in India to which what follows may be applied with due modifications.<sup>713</sup>

### **Conversion**

The conversion of the Paravas, which originated purely as a communal affair in a remote region of Tamil Nadu, soon had a tremendous impact not only on their own race (the Paravas), but even on the society of south India as a whole. As a religious catalyst, it engendered the conversion of other coastal tribes too, like the Caraiyars, the Mukkuvars, the Paraiyars and so on, and of many people in the hinterland as well. As a political factor, it helped to a great extent to reduce the Muslim power from the south. As regards the ecclesiastical jurisdiction, the Portuguese Padroado, for the first time, crossed the boundary of Goa and was enthroned on the Fishery Coast as a result of the subjection of the Paravas to the Crown of Portugal.

### **New Conversion**

After witnessing the attitude of the Jesuit missionaries, conversion took place among other castes and communities also. In 1595, about eight hundred gentios (Hindus) embraced Christianity. One of them even volunteered to donate one hundred *sardaus* for the construction of the church. Others, mostly poor, offered their physical labour. The officials of the Nayak of Madurai also became Christians.<sup>714</sup>

By the Third Decree, the Portuguese enforced that no baptism would be administered by force. If some one was brought to Christianity by force, it was understood that person was led by the devil.<sup>715</sup>

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<sup>713</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>714</sup> *DI., Vol. XVII*, pp. 417-418.

<sup>715</sup> Cunha Rivara, Fas. 4, Decree 3, p. 9.

### **Support for the Missionaries**

South India was opened for missionary activities on a large scale in the sixteenth century by the Jesuit priests of the Padroado system. The Jesuits utilized the political influence of the Portuguese in South India to gain the acceptance and respect of the native powers and the people.<sup>716</sup>

The close ties between the Portuguese and Vijayanagar in the sixteenth century assured the Jesuit clergy a safe berth in the capital of Vijayanagar. The Portuguese victories in the western coast led to the planting of the Cross in the eastern coast also.<sup>717</sup> It was not until 1593 that the Jesuits made a substantial effect to open a door to the interior for Gospel work. King Venkata I (1580-1614) of Vijayanagar permitted the Jesuits to stay in his capital and start a mission.<sup>718</sup>

Soon Father Pimenta visited him. He was given a royal reception. When he met the king in his court, Pimenta presented to him the portrait of the Pope. The emperor was so pleased to see and admire the white garment of the Pope.<sup>719</sup> The king was fascinated by the white dress that in due course white cassock was adopted as the Indian clerical dress. Pleased by the good will of the King Venkata, the Jesuits in his court wrote to the Nayak of Madurai in 1595 requesting him to provide safety to the missionaries in his territories.<sup>720</sup>

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<sup>716</sup> Sobhanan, B., *A History of the Christian Missions in South India*, Tiruvananthapuram, 1996, p.77.

<sup>717</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>718</sup> John Correia Afonso, *The Jesuits in India*, Gujarat, 1990, p. 50.

<sup>719</sup> Sobhanan, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>720</sup> Ferroli, D., *Jesuits in Malabar, Vol. II*, Bangalore, 1951, p. 343.

By this time the only Jesuit in Madurai was Father Goncalves Fernandez. The purpose of his stay was more political than religious.<sup>721</sup> He remained as an agent of the Paravas and as an interpreter of the Portuguese government in the court of the Nayak of Madurai. Taking advantage of the situation, the Jesuits obtained permission from Muttuvirappa Nayak to build a church for the Paravas in the city of Madurai. The Nayak also permitted the Jesuits to travel to any part of his kingdom.<sup>722</sup>

### **Madura Mission**

The interior of Tirunelveli and Madurai gave way for the Gospel work of the missionaries. The Old Jesuit Mission of Madurai was the chief outcome of the Indian Mission founded by Francis Xavier.<sup>723</sup> The successor of Francis Xavier in the Fishery Coast was Father Criminali who took up the thread where Xavier left abruptly. Father Criminali was killed in 1548 and thus became the first martyr of the Society of Jesus in India. His successor father Henriques, who became the superior of the Fishery Coast Mission, was the path finder of the Old Jesuit Mission of Madurai.<sup>724</sup> By 1600 there were more than 90,000 Christians in the twenty two parishes.<sup>725</sup>

### **Conversion of the Coastal Communities**

The Jesuits were particular in converting the coastal communities like the Mukkuvars, and the Caraiyars. Just like the Paravas, the Mukkuvars and the Caraiyars were also involved in pearl fishing. The Paravas as sailors and boat owners had

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<sup>721</sup> Henry Heras, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 349.

<sup>722</sup> Sobhanan, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>723</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>724</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>725</sup> Caldwell, R., *op. cit.*, p. 225.

economic power also. They had formed a very powerful caste inclination among themselves.

### **Caraiyars**

The Caraiyars lived in Kombuturai, Punnaikayal and Mannar in the northern part of the Fishery Coast. There are many references about them in the history of the Fishery Coast. They were employed as pearl fishers by the Paravas and they seemed to be lower than the Paravas in social status. They had been converted even before the arrival of Xavier.<sup>726</sup> Xavier also baptized the Caraiyars in six or seven villages. In his letter dated January 15, 1544 he says:

“As to the number who became Christians you may understand then from this, that it often happens to me, to be hardly able to use my hands from the fatigue of baptizing; often in a single day I have baptized whole villages”.<sup>727</sup>

Both free and slave Caraiyars of one thousand and two hundred people asked for baptism. They too wanted to live with the coastal Christians.<sup>728</sup>

Henriques, in his report of 1561 says that he and his companions too baptized many Caraiyars at Punnaikayal. Also on the island of Mannar there were some settlements of the Caraiyars, most of whom were migrants from the Fishery Coast. Their first group, about 1,000 in number was baptized in 1544 at Patti by a native priest sent by Xavier.<sup>729</sup>

### **Mukkuvars**

According to Thurston, Mukkuvars (Macuas) the maritime fishers of Malabar were also baptized by Xavier in November, 1544. He obtained permission from the King of Travancore, Martanda Varma as a reward for his valiant intercession with the

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<sup>726</sup> Caldwell, R., *op. cit.*, p. 225.

<sup>727</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>728</sup> *DI., Vol. VI*, p. 759.

<sup>729</sup> *DI., Vol., IV*, p. 35.

Governor in his favour.<sup>730</sup> Towards the end of 1544 he had baptized ten thousand Mukkuvars in Travancore.<sup>731</sup>

Just to escape from the oppression of the Muslims at sea and from their native rulers at home, the Mukkuvars also desired to imitate the Paravas and embraced Christianity to get the protection of the powerful Portuguese.<sup>732</sup> At the time of Xavier, they (the Caraiyars) were living in fourteen successive hamlets, of which only two, namely, Pallam and Manakkudi, were counted as belonging to the Fishery Coast. The inhabitants of the former were converted by Xavier himself and the latter at his request by his companion Francis Mansilhas.<sup>733</sup>

As we see today, the Paraiyars must have lived in the outskirts of the Parava villages during the time of the Portuguese. The caste differences existed between the Paravas and the Paraiyars and so the Portuguese were rather hesitant to convert this community in the beginning. According to the Jesuit mission history, there was already a Paraiya Christian community near Manappadu before the year 1600.<sup>734</sup>

Henriques says that there existed a Paraiya community at Periappattanam in the north region of the Fishery Coast. The Jesuits who had a resident there converted more Paraiyars in the hinterland.<sup>735</sup>

There are a couple of villages of the Nadars situated on the Fishery Coast and the people are Catholics. Venantius says that they must have been converted during the last quarter of the seventeenth century.<sup>736</sup> But we see that in the interior of all the Parava villages the Nadars have residences and there are also Christians among them.

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<sup>730</sup> *Letters of Xavier, December 18, 1544*, pp. 104-105.

<sup>731</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>732</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>733</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>734</sup> Georg Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier, Vol. I*, pp. 246-247.

<sup>735</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>736</sup> Venantius Fernando, S., *Sacred Hearts Cathedral Centenary Souvenir Thoothukudi (1864-1964)*, Thoothukudi, 1956, p. 37.

These people have been mentioned as Shanas and some of them even joined the Vadugars and troubled the Paravas.

“In the Indian sub-continent, the higher castes were only moderately affected by the missionary work. The Portuguese did a lot of conversions among the lower castes outside their jurisdiction. The low castes hoped to improve their social status under the political protection of the Portuguese. The Society of Jesus, the most suitable institution for missionary work, never operated in Muslim regions except for meeting the Mughal Emperor Akbar after being called by him”.<sup>737</sup>

The Jesuit missionaries found that the Vijayanagar kingdom provided a conducive atmosphere to spread Christianity. Here they could travel safely and the Christians were warmly welcomed. Of course, there were a few Nayaks who did not like the European religion to strike roots in their land. Yet the missionaries were not associated with any acts of exploitation or oppression and the Vijayanagar king hoped to find in the Portuguese useful allies against the invading Muhammadens.<sup>738</sup>

### **Missionaries**

At home the Portuguese bourgeois appreciated the usefulness of these missionaries as the first marketing agents of their wares in the colonies. The Portuguese, according to Professor Boxer, the veteran historian of the Portuguese empire, thought that Asia was a good place to send their illegitimate children or outlaws who would not be tolerated in the home grounds.<sup>739</sup>

The missionaries were usually more motivated to assist in the needs of the empire than the “degredados” (deported prisoners and criminals) whose only motivation was the hope of getting a reduction in their deportation period, and other victims of “reluctant” colonisation. Charles Marshall, an English, remarked on the missionaries in

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<sup>737</sup> João Tellers e Cunha, “Socio-Cultural Aspects of the Catholic Missionary Works in India (16<sup>th</sup> and Early 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries)” in Mathew, K.S., Teotonio, Pius, (eds.), *The Portuguese and the Socio-Cultural Changes in India, 1500-1800.*, Fundação Oriente, 2001, p. 251.

<sup>738</sup> Johnson, *Pioneers in India*, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 70-71.

<sup>739</sup> Boxer, C.R., *Portuguese India*, New Delhi, 1980, pp. 11, 39.



the later period that the missionaries succeeded in converting only the dregs of the society.<sup>740</sup>

The Jesuit missionaries were more educated and more socially concerned agents of the colonial-imperial society. Also they became effective tools for shaping the native populations and transmitted to them the western cultural values through their gospel messages.<sup>741</sup>

The Jesuits often as an integral part of their missionary role alienated the native populations from their traditional cultural roots. This is evident from the published correspondence of the Jesuits in the Portuguese Estado da India, the Letters of Xavier and the decrees of the Provincial Councils held in Goa from time to time beginning from 1567.<sup>742</sup>

“The missionaries saw no elements in the native culture that they could emulate, and, much less, consider as superior to their own culture. The native religious practices are almost always described as worship of the devil. The language used for other native customs is also usually offensive.”<sup>743</sup>

The Portuguese used three terms in order to distinguish the non-Christians from the Christians. The Hindus were called as gentios (gentiles), ‘heathens’ and infidels which denoted both the Hindus and Muslims. The Muslims, whether they were pirates or not, generally were known as Moors.

The evangelization of the Padroado missionaries and the establishment of the churches and other charitable activities had their own impact on the Estado da India in many ways. Some viceroys of the seventeenth century, particularly Count Linhares were of the opinion that the religious establishment was far too large. He was of the opinion that one half of the soldiers who arrived from Europe entered the religious orders. This was a means for them to avoid the rigours of a military life and thus weakened the defences of the Estado. Linhares also claimed that the ‘lazy religious’

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<sup>740</sup> Teotonio de Souza (ed.), *Discoveries Missionary Expansion and Asian Cultures*, New Delhi, 1994, p. 39.

<sup>741</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>742</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>743</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

were a crippling financial burden bleeding the treasuries white in order that they be supported.<sup>744</sup>

Further, the religious establishments were supported by the contribution made by the parishners. For instance, in the Fishery Coast, after each fishery, the Paravas paid a huge sum to the Portuguese and that was used for the missionaries. So the religious were economically independent. Sanjay Subramanyam says this independence itself caused problems, for the religious orders emerged, as a consequence, with temporal (and even fiscal) powers or became semi-commercial enterprises.<sup>745</sup>

“To the ecclesiastical authorities in India it was obvious that there was no breach of contract between the Hindus and the Christians, in spite of the conciliatory prohibitions. Paradoxically, the same Goan Councils had striven since the beginning in 1567 for the learning of Indian languages and had encouraged all kinds of cultural contacts, even if their aim was conversion and the translation of catechism into vernacular languages.<sup>746</sup>

In 1552 there were between forty five and fifty thousand Christians in Travancore and on the Fishery Coast.<sup>747</sup>

### **Assimilation**

The Paravas were never truly ‘assimilated’, in any real sense, into Portuguese Asia but instead always maintained their separate identity, the reason being, the Portuguese presence on the east coast was limited when compared to their involvement on the west. Very few individuals who had been torn away from their native context assimilated themselves to a lesser or greater degree.<sup>748</sup>

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<sup>744</sup> Sanjay Subramanyam *Portuguese Empire*, cited in Disney, 1978, pp. 21-22.

<sup>745</sup> Sanjay Subramanyam, *Portuguese Empire*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>746</sup> João Telles Cunha, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

<sup>747</sup> *Letters of Xavier, October 28, 1542*, pp. 60-63.

<sup>748</sup> Sanjay Subramanyam, *The Portuguese Empire*, pp. 263-267.

Though the Portuguese had established their settlement on the Fishery Coast for more than a century, it (the Fishery Coast) did not come into the grip of westernization. Some families, because of their wealth and their position of lending money to the Portuguese, enhanced their status in the society. An economic disparity was created between the boat owners and pearl-drivers.

Sanjay Subrahmanyam says that unlike in Japan and Goa, the Paravas had a collective identity even before the Mass Conversion. It was thus logical for them to preserve themselves into the eighteenth century as a Christian caste in a Hindu society.<sup>749</sup> According to him “the most important communities of converts that the Portuguese dealt with in Asia were the Paravas.<sup>750</sup> Because of their location and association with the Fishery Coast, northern Sri Lanka and southern Coromandel, the Paravas always maintained their separate identity.<sup>751</sup>

Paravas remained largely endogamous, the extent of assimilation through miscegenation with the Portuguese remained limited, and anyway there was never a large Portuguese presence at Thoothukudi and other centres for this to become a possibility.<sup>752</sup>

The Portuguese clerics worked very hard to transform the rough and untutored mob (the Paravas) into a refined community. The Parava women and men were freed from their old superstitious beliefs. The Paravas who had been scattered all over the Fishery Coast were brought under one leader (the *Jathi Thalaivan*) and thus the caste and the economy of the Paravas were strengthened. If the entire Parava community had not been converted in 1536, the history of the Fishery Coast would have been different.

Though the missionaries made numerous attempts to impose their culture on the fisherfolk, the former failed. The reason being the Paravas were a primitive tribal group at the arrival of the Portuguese. Their religious faith was based on the sea and sea-shore activities. So it was very difficult for them (the Portuguese) to delink them (the Paravas) from the sea-charmers and other rites and rituals which were always associated

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<sup>749</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 266-267.

<sup>750</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 263.

<sup>751</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>752</sup> *Ibid.*

with the sea. So they adapted and modified the culture that the Portuguese imposed on them depending on their (the Parava) life pattern.

The spiritual and temporal conquest of the East was complementary and in effect served one ultimate goal i.e. to annihilate the arch enemies of the Portuguese, the Muslims. As the Franciscan chronicler Paulo da Frinidade observed in 1638, “the two swords of the civil and the ecclesiastical power were always so close together in the conquest of the East that we seldom find one being used without the other, for the weapons only conquered through the right, what the preaching of the Gospel gave them, and the preaching was only of some use when it was accompanied and protected by the weapons”.

It is true that the *Padroado* wrought enormous changes on the new Christians of the Fishery Coast. The poor Paravas were fed, dressed, sheltered and taught by the Jesuit missionaries. The sovereign granted special favours and privileges to the fisherfolk. Yet, the Christians experienced colonial oppression in the hands of the Portuguese, in place of the hands of the Muslims. They (the Paravas) had to pay more tribute and at time they were victims to the greed of the Portuguese officials. The Paravas were turned more religious oriented. Their religious faith continues to be expressed only in extravagant festivals and meaningless celebrations. The religion which they now practice does not answer to their temporal problems like illiteracy, poverty and political enslavement.

## CONCLUSION

The maritime history of the Fishery Coast has been dealt with elaborately. The historical survey speaks about the antiquity and the greatness of the Paravas and the wealth of the marine resources in the Gulf of Mannar. The Portuguese with the help of the coastal community carried out their trade and later surrendered the space to the Dutch. The Portuguese had to face oppositions from different quarters, at least till their settlement at Mannar. Finally they left features of the Roman religion and the European culture on the fisherfolk who continue to cling on to these vestiges firmly, while oblivious of their glorious past where their ancestors had carried pearls to all parts of the world.

As long as the Pandyas enjoyed monopoly over the Fishery Coast, the Paravas felt secure and their economy underwent great progress. Though the Pandya rulers were fascinated by the pearls and used them for ornamental purposes, they also promoted maritime trade in the early period. The ancient ports (Korkai and Pazhayakayal) served as international markets and many foreigners visited these ports. Among the foreigners, the Chinese showed much enthusiasm in taking pearls to their country.

Though the Muslims came as traders and settled down on the Fishery Coast for commercial purposes, they entered into marriage alliances with the Paravas. Such alliances were eagerly sought after to secure the maritime and navigational skills of the Paravas. (The offsprings born to the Muslims and Paravas came to be known as Kayalars.) But as their number (the Muslim population) grew they became strong and began oppressing the rest of the Paravas. At one point, the Paravas were enslaved (by the Muslims) and were deprived of their economic resources i.e. the pearl fisheries.

Though the Muslims did not violate the open door policy in the Indian Ocean in relation with the Fishery Coast, the Paravas were alienated from their age old economic domain and as a result the Parava economy was in peril. The Muslims

strengthened their hold further when the Madurai Sultanate was founded. Also they (the Muslims) established a strong network of trade and friendship with all the Muslim merchants of the west and the east coasts.

The Portuguese were looked upon as saviours not only by the Paravas but also by the Vijayanagar rulers. Since the latter were in rivalry with the Deccan Sultans, the Vijayanagar rulers allowed the Portuguese to enter the ports of the Fishery Coast hoping that the Portuguese would come to their rescue in their war with the Sultan. Since pearl fishing was seasonal the Portuguese maintained very cordial relations with the Telugu rulers because the Portuguese had a good scope to procure goods in the hinterland areas to compensate for off seasonal losses.

The perennial hatred and rivalry that had existed for long between the Cross-and the Crescent cropped up on the Fishery Coast also. Since the Kayalars were experts in sailing through the hard shallow coral-filled Mannar gulf, the Portuguese maintained friendly terms with the same till they (the Portuguese) acquired navigational knowledge. When they found skilled labour in the Paravas who were also the masters of the pearl fisheries, the Portuguese were willing to help the Paravas against the Muslims.

Though juridically the Fishery Coast came under the administration of the Vijayanagar ruler and his viceroy the Madurai Nayak, they did not exercise their absolute control over it. As a result, the Fishery Coast had been territorially divided up and the lease on the pearl fisheries was enjoyed by the highest bidder which was always Muslim merchants. At this juncture, the Portuguese set their foot on the Fishery Coast without much difficulty.

Mutual co-existence that had been in vogue for a pretty long time in the Fishery Coast was given up when the Muslims entered the coast. In the same way the open door policy in the Indian Ocean was challenged at the arrival of the Portuguese.

The Portuguese took advantage of the troubled political and economic situation and established their settlements first in the Muslims dominated ports. The Kayalar-Parava struggle reached its climax and the year 1536 witnessed the historic event in the Fishery Coast. The Mass Conversion was followed by the fortification of the seven major ports. Also it (the Mass Conversion) resulted in the change of allegiance of the Paravas from the Vijayanagar emperor to the Portuguese Sovereign. The conversion was purely an economic attempt on the part of the Paravas to regain their old position. From now on, the pearl fisheries were declared as royal property.

Pearl fishing was seasonal but the revenue it yielded was high. So the Portuguese carried out a systematic administration of the coast from the island of Mannar. Their officials extracted the maximum benefits in different forms. By introducing the cartaz system, the monopoly of the Portuguese was established in all the trading routes of the Indian Ocean. Thus the open door policy which had been prevalent for one and a half millennium was challenged and altered by the Portuguese.

As a consequence, the Muslims were completely evicted from their economic position. The Zamorin came to the rescue of the Muslims and a formidable alliance was formed by the Muslims against the Portuguese. The rivalry went on for quite a long time. But the Muslims could never regain their supremacy.

The Portuguese made use of the availability of commodities in the hinterland areas and a *cacha* (coarse) type of cloth was procured mainly from the Tirunelveli coast. A well-balanced economy was thus introduced by involving in alternative trade. During the off-season also a steady annual income flowed into the treasury of Estado da India.

The Portuguese responded well to the demands of the local situation. Horses were sold for cash and elephants were exchanged for saltpetre. Even though the Nayak of Madurai paid a very low price for the elephants in exchange for saltpetre, the Portuguese renewed their agreements because saltpetre was an essential ingredient of gunpowder. The international rivalry forced the Portuguese to exchange even gold ornaments and varieties of high quality textiles with the Nayak of Madurai. Thus a balance of trade was maintained.

The Portuguese encouraged the different merchant communities and *casados* to conduct trade. The private trade introduced by the Portuguese had both positive and adverse impacts on the Lusitanian economy. The private merchants were responsible for promoting intra-region, intra-Asian and even overseas trade in collaboration with the Portuguese. In due course, the private merchants were involved in an enormous volume of private trade which affected the inflow of money to the Portuguese exchequer. At one point the Estado da India could not control the private trade and this was one of the reasons for the decline of the Portuguese trade.

The *cartaz* system prevented the Muslim merchants from conducting commercial transactions. This resulted in the advent of corsairs and the activities of the sea-pirates was a big menace and the Portuguese had to deal with it.



Up to the fall of the Portuguese in 1658, the Fishery Coast was very active in exporting pearls, rice and textiles. The trade in pepper and spices had almost come to a standstill in the Malabar Coast due to international rivalries. But the new Christians continued to carry out the trade in the east coast though the Portuguese had lost their enthusiasm.

Immediately after the conversion of the Paravas, Vijayanagar sent its forces under the Vadugars and the Fishery Coast underwent untold miseries and hardships. Many reasons have been attributed for such attacks, but the main cause was the pearls. The new Christians were more loyal to their new liberators and so the Vijayanagar rulers experienced a dwindling income into their treasury. Thus the Paravas experienced victimisation from all quarters, except from the Jesuit missionaries.

Since the Portuguese demanded enormous tributes from the Paravas, they (the Paravas) did not want to undertake pearl fishing. The Parava boat owners (as they had cartazes) left the Fishery Coast and settled in the Coromandel Coast, while the poor Paravas remained in the Fishery Coast and faced the wrath of their oppressors.

The international rivalry between the Dutch and the Portuguese echoed in the Fishery Coast also. The Portuguese persuaded the Madurai Nayak not to supply saltpetre to the Dutch. The strained relations between the Madurai Nayak and the Sethupathi worsened since the Portuguese and the Dutch were involved in their local politics also. The Portuguese lost the support of the Nayak of Madurai.

The Portuguese were not very ambitious in establishing an empire in India. They were interested only in sea-borne trade and so identified strategic ports and harbours. As the Portuguese lacked manpower they had allowed private trade. But this private trade could not be effectively monitored and controlled. Thus the unbridled private trade turned out to be smuggling and over exploitation of the Paravas. But when

the Dutch were about to storm Thoothukudi, the Portuguese looked for help from the Paravas.

Xavier and his companions deserve great appreciation for transforming the untutored mob (the Paravas) into a refined community. Several liberative changes were introduced by the missionaries in all spheres of life. Particularly women were freed from their enslavement. However, the Jesuit missionaries did not raise any opposition against slavery though they took care of them (the slaves) and were content with saving their souls.

The missionaries condemned as superstitions all the rites and rituals practised by the Christians. They (the Christians) were socially segregated and culturally alienated in order to impose the western culture on them. The Portuguese could succeed only partially because the Paravas were rooted very deeply in their native culture, native religion which had a great influence on their religious activities and festival celebrations. As a part of inculturation, the Christians were allowed to celebrate Pongal (boiling new rice), but in front of the Cross. The Paravas did never assimilate the western culture totally.

The scattered Paravas were asked to live in the seven ports to strengthen their identity as one caste. The consolidation of the Parava *jati* and their economy were the important outcomes of the Portuguese presence in the Fishery Coast. The consolidation of the *jati* and their economy promoted the loyalty of the Paravas (as a single unit) to the Portuguese.

The missionaries succeeded in founding an organized Christian mission on the Fishery Coast because they had established a good rapport with the local leaders. The Portuguese officials made use of the Jati Thalaivans and Pattangattis for the smooth conduct of the pearl fishing. The missionaries had the kanakkappilai, sacristans and teachers and imparted catechism. (This is still being followed in all the parishes of the Fishery Coast). The pious associations (which continue to be active) were responsible for adding social dimensions in the Catholic religion. The origin of these associations goes back to the Portuguese period.

After a comprehensive understanding of the conclusions made at the end of each chapter, the researcher presents the final conclusion which is the outcome of the thesis on the Maritime History of the Pearl Fishery Coast during 1500-1658.

The Paravas as a maritime and merchant community co-operated with the Portuguese to carry out their (the Portuguese) commercial activities. The Portuguese-Parava relations enhanced the smooth running of the hinterland, foreland and overseas trade activities of the Portuguese.

It was the Paravas who were made to settle in the island of Mannar and Sri Lanka. So the Portuguese made use of the militancy of the Paravas also. To fight against the Dutch the Paravas were needed by the Portuguese. For the Portuguese, the Paravas were not merely a converted group but a community which excelled in commercial and strategic skills, and was therefore an indispensable part of their colonial design.

But I focus my thrust on the present position of this community - the Paravas. The Paravas who contributed their share to the growth of the economy of the Indian Ocean have been reduced to a marginalised section in the society today. Their economy has been deteriorating day by day and their future seems to be bleak.

Missionary historians and chroniclers of religion look upon the Paravas as the best models of a converted race. The loyalty and exemplary lives of the neo-Christians were held up as a model for Christians elsewhere too. But the same zeal and steadfastness of the Paravas to their new religion and to their liberators has become their liability today. An unswerving loyalty to and an unquestioning faith in their religion (Roman Catholicism) have pervaded every aspect of Parava life. As a result, while the

other communities could adapt themselves to the changing political and social scenarios, the Paravas got mired in a religion and a social structure that could neither promote their economic interests nor liberate and equip them for the new trends. In consequence, the Paravas continue to dissipate their economic and physical energies either on hollow religious ceremonies and rituals or a devastating rivalries and petty squabbles among themselves. These misdirected exercises (in the form of an extravagant life style and vain clashes) have only rendered the Parava economy emaciated and unfit to face the challenges of a changing world order.

The college, the seminary and the printing press started by Padroado Mission (except for the hospitals) aimed at facilitating the propagation of the Portuguese religion (Roman Catholicism), so as to indirectly promote the colonial interests of the Portuguese. Therefore these institutions could contribute nothing to the social and economic empowerment of the Paravas. And so when the Portuguese interests came to an end on the Fishery Coast, the services of these institutions too became almost extinct. In several other parts of the world (in Latin America, for instance) Roman Catholicism became a means for liberation. On the contrary, Roman Catholicism on the Fishery Coast was a tool to domesticate, suppress and exploit the Paravas.

Roman Catholicism, with its excessive emphasis on the world after death and the redemption of the soul, has failed to create in the Paravas an awareness about the more immediate and more demanding and non negotiable needs and rights of this world, here and now. Therefore the Church (like the Portuguese) has treated the Paravas as a source of revenue and never as a flock that needs to be cared for and nurtured.

The Portuguese and the Roman Catholic Church did, of course, save the Paravas once from certain extinction. But the price the Paravas have had to pay in return to their liberators has been equally fatal. They (the Paravas) continue to pay the price and unless the Paravas change their attitude to their religion (Roman Catholicism) their liberation and empowerment are highly uncertain. In this regard, the Paravas are to be blamed as much as the Portuguese and the Padroado missionaries are to be. But hope is never far away.

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