

Original Article

The Call of the Sea—The Cultural and Trade Activities of the Portuguese in South India—An Exploration

Kavita Charles Makhwan

Maharani Cluster University, Sheshadri Road, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India.

Received: 02 December 2021

Revised: 08 January 2022

Accepted: 15 January 2022

Published: 26 January 2022

Abstract - Living on the western edge of Europe, the Portuguese were well-placed to undertake early voyages of exploration. During the 15th century, they ventured out from their kingdom in search of gold, god and glory by sea route to the Far East. They developed a small sailing ship called a caravel, which enabled them to cover great distances by sea, as it was a great advantage for the early Portuguese explorers. The vessels were smaller, more streamlined and more navigable than Containers, and Cargo vessels were in common use at that time. Based on the design of Arab fishing boats called dhows, they carried triangular sails called lateen sails. Trade was costly, and luxury goods were meant only for the use of kings, feudal chiefs and heads of temples and monasteries. The articles such as precious and semi-precious stones, ivory, horses, etc., formed an important part of the long-distance trade. Trade formed the course of action for the Portuguese in south India. There was a tremendous change in the cultural life and trade activities of the people during the 15th century. The Present Paper deals with "The Call of the Sea—the cultural and trade activities of the Portuguese in India -an exploration". The 15th Century in South Indian History depicts a vital role for historians exploring the above-stated title.

Keywords - Bahamanis, Cartazes, Estadoda, India, Portuguese, Vijayanagara.

1. Introduction

A territorial dispute is a disagreement over the possession/control of land between two or more territorial entities. Territorial disputes are often related to the possession of Natural resources and their products. The disputes can also be driven by culture, religion and ethnic nationalism. Territorial disputes are major causes of wars, and battles, between the nations and the interstates. "Karunaadu or Karnataka", known to the modern world, shares its borders with Goa, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, which has a very vast, glorious and ancient history.

South India witnessed the Advent of the Portuguese in the western coastal region., The first Portuguese sailor Vasco –da Gama, sailed to India from Portugal in 1498 A.D to Calicut, and his main intention was to have trade contacts with the Sub Continent. It was mainly because of the Spices and other essential products available here. Hence brisk trade took place between the two countries. Gradually Portuguese history began bulging by building establishments like Factories, Colonies, Fortresses and Harbours in the western coastal areas of India. It paved the way for the rule of Viceroy or Governors in South India from 1498-1961 A .D .(till Goa became a Union Territory). In Karnataka also, most places like

Mangalore(Mangalur), Bhatkal(Bhatchala), Gerasoppa Ankola, Honnavar, Bidnur, (Haduvalli Bharangi) Barkur Karwar, Kumble, etc., which were under the rule of the

Rayas of Vijayanagara and their feudatories, which the Portuguese much influenced by their language, culture, dress mode, food habits, art, literature, customs, beliefs education, recreation and amusements on the Indian folks. The buffer zone was Bhatkal, and other areas, while Goa remained the Heartland of the Portuguese. Goa was the main trade port for the Bahamanis and the Vijayanagara Rulers.

The Portuguese came to India primarily for trade, and Simultaneously, they aimed to establish their colonial empire for their supremacy. The Portuguese presence in India was almost exclusively a coastal one, so their records deal only with seafaring and trade activities.

1.1. Section A: Trade Contacts

From the Portuguese point of view, the horse trade, along with spices, was its economic and political advantage which was an added bonus rather than the reason for their interest in the port. In the early 16th century, the main aim of the Portuguese was to take over the spice trade to Europe from the Muslim traders who dominated this product and route. In order to achieve this, the Portuguese claimed the right to inspect all native ships to see if they carried forbidden goods, notably spices, arms, timber and hostile foreigners. The great route for spices started in Malacca, The distribution centre for the products of the Spice Islands to the East. From here, the ships sailed either to the Malabar Coast itself, a pepper exporting area, or to Gujarat, and thence on to the Persian Gulf or the Red Sea.



1.2. Section B: Rise of Colonies

From the time of the establishment of factories and fortresses during the Vijayanagara period on the western coast, a number of Portuguese men began to reside in this area. Gradually, in and around the fortresses and in these places, colonies came up of the Portuguese, which were known as 'Casaclose e-moradores (Married settlers). Many of them married local women giving rise to a mixed race. Even some of the Germans, who were in the service of Portuguese power, married and settled down on the western coast of India. By 1512 A.D., there were one hundred Portuguese men married to local women in Portuguese settlements on the western coastal areas, which was for the sake of the protection of the interests of Portugal. The most important Portuguese colony on the western coast was Cochin. According to a list submitted to the King of Portugal in 1514 A.D by the Vicar General, Dominicus, there were fifty-eight Portuguese families in Cochin, which originated from the marriage of the Portuguese men with the local women, mostly Muslims. There were forty-eight children born of these unions. Besides, Muslim women married Portuguese men outside of wedlock. The women included in this group are categorized in the records according to sections of the society that they came from, such as Muslims, Nairs, Canarese etc. All these people constituted the colony of the Portuguese in 1514 A.D.

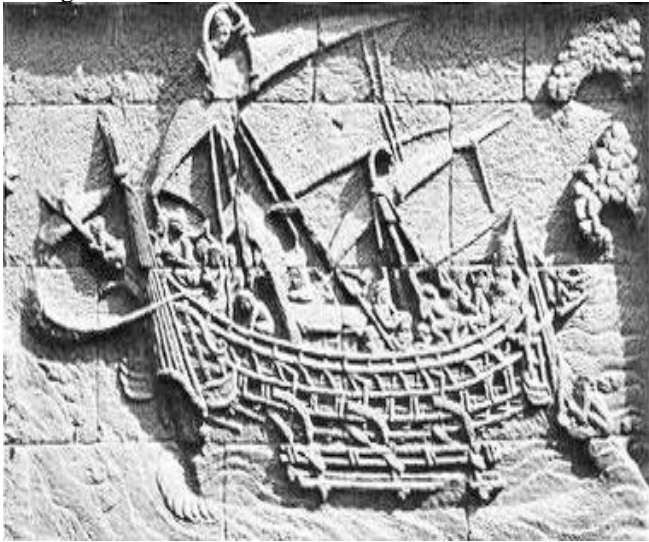


Fig. 1 Boats with sailors set on a voyage

1.3. Section C: Shipping and Shipbuilding Centres in South India

Several people from the western coastal area were also employed in the Portuguese vessels. For example, twenty men from Malabar were employed in the ship of *Santo-Espiritoin* 1509 A.D., Six under captain *George Da Silveira*, thirteen in the ship of *Santa-Maria Da victoria* and thirty-seven in the ship of *Esapara*. Bowmen (Archery experts) from Malabar were employed in the Portuguese vessels to protect the cargo. Malabar men acted as shipboys (Grumetes) in the Portuguese vessels. Several people from Malabar were

employed in the ship of *San Thome* between 1511 to 1514 A.D.



Fig. 2 Portuguese Ships coming to the Indian coast

More men were needed for the work in the shipyard. Ships were built and repaired in Cochin, Cannanore and Calicut. In 1505 A.D, the King of Portugal; instructed *Francesco-De-Almeida*, the Viceroy, to see that the ships were constructed in Cochin if possible. Therefore it was quite possible that the viceroy, after establishing his headquarters at Cochin, made provisions for the construction and repair of the ships. *Santa Catarina de Monte Sinai* was one of the ships that were built in Cochin between 1511-13 A.D. Another ship was built in 1512 A.D the timber (wood) for the construction of vessels was available at a cheap rate at Chale near Calicut; therefore, as soon as the factory and fortress were established at Calicut, the Portuguese began to construct ships there, as the king had suggested to the Portuguese viceroy that, if he wanted he could construct ships in the port of Calicut, hence a ship began to be constructed in Calicut in 1514 A.D. Another was almost ready by October of the same year.

Further, two more ships were constructed in Calicut under the supervision of *Duarte Barbosa* for a few Chettis, the merchants of Calicut who wanted to export goods to Aden in 1515 A.D and again in the same year, *Duarte Barbosa* got constructed two more ships for the Muslim merchants of Mecca. Occasionally a ship or two were constructed in Cannanore, and thus in the year 1514 A.D, the Portuguese built a shipping centre in the port of Cannanore. However, none of these could come to the level of the shipyard at Cochin, where there were permanent establishments for the construction of ships.

1.4. Section D: Coins used by the Portuguese for Trade in India:

The first aim of the Portuguese when they reached South India was to take over this trade for themselves. Such a monopoly would enable them to buy cheap in Asia and sell

dearly in Europe. The Portuguese used coins like Rupia (1952), Esudos and Tanga, Larim(1658-1660), Pardau(1509-1580), Dinheiro(1522-1550), Bazaruco(1522-1557); the Portuguese tried to tax directly and control all other Asian sea trade by means of cartazes or passports. Portuguese warships forced Asian traders to call at Portuguese forts or ports to pay customs duties and to trade.

1.5. Section E: The Cultural Impact

1. Influence on language and literature.
2. Food habits
3. House Dwellings.
4. The Costumes.
5. Impact on the social life of people
6. Recreation and amusements
7. Conclusion

1.5.1. Influence on Language and Literature

The Portuguese influenced the Indian languages and literature too. The Konkani language spoken in coastal areas contains a large number of Portuguese words directly or indirectly derived. Many such words are found in Marathi, Gujarathi, Bengali, Kannada, Tulu, Malayalam, and Tamil. Indian words, particularly the names of the various boats, articles of trade and weights, are peculiar to Indian words and are also found in the Portuguese language.

The Portuguese first attempted to translate a few words from Sanskrit. In 1651 A.D. and, a Dutch prose version of a translation in Portuguese of the 7th-century poet, "Bhartriharis", poems appeared in the Sanskrit language.

1.5.2. Food Habits

During the medieval period, the Portuguese introduced many new vegetables, fruits and crops in South India. However, they were all seriously examined to identify their Rasa, Guna, Vipaka, and Prabhava and then only they were allowed for popular usage either as drugs or as food items with their methods of cooking, for example, potatoes, tobacco, papaya fruit, cashew nuts, and foreign alcohol were introduced by the Portuguese. This food and drinks served a variety to the people. Goan cuisine has many distinctly Portuguese influences, one of the greatest examples being the famous Goan dish, the vindaloo. The name vindaloo is derived from the Portuguese dish "Carne de vinha de alhos", which is a meat dish, usually pork, with wine and garlic.

The city population's food needs were largely satisfied with imported rice and wheat. Green vegetables, beans of various kinds, coconut oil and fish, formed important ingredients of the people's diet, which were obtained from local suppliers. Several city dwellers had their own kitchen gardens and their own groves, where they set their servants to work to grow enough for themselves and a surplus for the market.



Fig. 3 (Fish meals)



Fig. 4 Vindaloo

Most of the local's conversion to Christianity consequently changed their diet also. Beef was an important diet. The inmates of the monasteries and the Christian city dwellers regularly consumed it. The cattle for slaughter were imported from the mainland. Enslaved people brought meat in earthen vessels from the Bangany, sold it at the road junctions of the city and also supplied fresh drinking water to the people. The cutleries like forks, spoons, cups, mugs, bowls and furniture like tables, chairs, etc., many kinds of soups and different varieties of seafood dishes were introduced by the Portuguese in India.

As regards eating utensils, the Portuguese had Chinese crockery imported from Macao, while the clay pottery was manufactured in Bardez. It served the needs of the Christians and non-Christians who were served food in containers made of leaves.

1.5.3. House Dwellings

The sumptuous mansions or Villas of the Portuguese settlers were in urban areas, and magnificent out-houses in the suburbs. As the houses of the downtrodden were largely made of stone and lime, and the residences of these people were close to the suburbs. From the point of view of labour demand, it is important to note that most of the building material was obtained locally. The laterite stones were quarried out of the oyster shells in kilns working in some other neighbouring villages, and the roof tiles were also manufactured there. The illumination of the houses was done by lighting with torches and lamps fed with coconut oil, while it was common to use wax candles for church services.



Fig. 5 Old Houses at Goa



Fig. 6 Restored Portuguese Mansion in Goa

1.5.4. The Costumes

Conversion to Christianity meant converts not only to the Christian faith but also to the outward trappings of European culture, such as European clothes and Christian names like frocks, gowns, skirts, shorts, and socks. Forks, spoons, soups etc. Wearing western clothes, eating pork and beef and drinking alcohol seemed essential elements of being a Christian over the years. Indian Christians have evolved their own hybrid culture. The converts and the descendants of the Portuguese have accepted an alien religion, but their way of living is a mixture of Indian and European ways. The non-Christians have taken to certain modes of dress, which indicates Portuguese influence.

1.5.5. Recreation and Amusements

Gambling, dancing, fishing, drinking wine, alcohol and others were also irresistible attractions for many of the people, and there were well-furnished houses in the cities for that purpose. For example city of Goa was no exception as all evil activities were concerned.



Fig. 7 Portuguese Traders In the 16th century



Fig. 8(dancing and instruments used for amusements)

2. Conclusion

The Portuguese considered their duty to do all they could in effecting a change for the better in the social, religious, cultural and trade activities of the people in South India, especially in the western coastal areas. The Sub Continent responded to the Portuguese activities and was still dominated by them. The cultural and trade activities like shipbuilding centres, coinages used, trading centres, food habits, costumes, house dwellings, etc., were the main attractions of the Portuguese domain in India and, of course, the impact on Christianity also. They were full-fledged in all the fields that retained a unique status in the history of South India.

References

- [1] M.N Pearson, Coastal Western India.
- [2] Omprakash: Portuguese in India, vol. 8, 2002.
- [3] Das Amita, India Impact of the West.
- [4] P. Hymavathi, "The Art and Science of Cuisine in Medieval Karnataka," *SIHC Proceedings*, 21st Annual Session, p. 377, 2001.
- [5] P.P.Pinto, Karavali Karnatakada Kristara Ithihasa.
- [6] T.R Desouza, "Medeival Goa- A Socio-Economic History," vol. 40, no. 1, pp. 160-161, 1980. *Crossref*, <http://doi.org/10.2307/2055080>
- [7] Chopra Ravindran, and Subramanian, *History of South India*, vol. 3, p. 216, 1979.
- [8] C.M Agur, *Church History of Travancore*, 1903.
- [9] Nayak, H.M. Shastri, and Gopal. B.R, South Indian Studies, The Portuguese in South India.
- [10] Albuquerque - Definition of Albuquerque. [Online]. Available: The Free Dictionary.com
- [11] *The Commentaries of the Great Afonso Dalboquerque, Second Viceroy of India*, Academic and Professional Books - Cambridge University Press. [Online]. Available: Cambridge.org.
- [12] Morse Stephens, *Albuquerque: Rulers of India*.
- [13] J. Stevens, "A New Collection of Voyages and Travels," Oxford University, vol. 2, p. 113, 1711.