

IMPORTANT TRADE CENTERS IN MALABAR COAST BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF THE PORTUGUESE

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Abstract - This study is based on Malabar Coast and its important Ports. The trade in South India were dominated by Malabar Coast on the Arabian Sea and Coromandel Coast on the Bay of Bengal region. The Coromandel coast exported pearls, corals, arcanut, cardamom, silk and cotton textile. Malabar Coast reached its zenith by the coming of the Arabs and the Chinese.

Keywords - Malabar, Maritime, Trade, Spices.

INTRODUCTION

The Malabar coast is basically a dominated by the Malayalam speaking people. Alexander observers that term 'Malabar' is not often mentioned in indigenous literature and it is not a indigenous term whereas it is referred in Foreign writings. Al Beruni was the first person to use this term. Some sources also gives other names for this region like Minibar, Manibar, Melibar, Mulaibar etc. Some of the important ports were Onore, Barcelor, Cannanore, Calicut, Cochin were important ports. Popular trading commodities include ginger, pepper, cinnamon, cardamoms, bettle, arecanut, coconut, copra, coconut oil, fine timber for ship building, furniture, rice butter, sugar, palm sugar and cotton cloth were exported. Important Trade centres Calicut: Calicut was the most wealthiest kingdom in Malabar under Zamorin. He was the most powerful prince's of Malabar. It had rich and extensive pepper cultivation. He invaded Cochin regularly and Cochin had to send Pepper to Calicut muslim merchants with whom Zamorin had trade relations. Muslim traders were in control of maritime activities. Ginger was an important export goods . Raja of Calicut and the Portuguese had mutual enmity.Cochin raja gave patronage to system of piracy.

A. Cochin:

The native kingdom of Cochin was Porakkad in the south to Chettwaye in the North. Cochin was the chief port of Malabar coast. Cochin a popular destination of spice trade.Cochin became a centre which distributed rice to Maldives.

B. Travancore:

Travancore was a small kingdom in south. North of Travancore had areas of minor principalities like Attingal, Peritaly, Desinganadu, Maruthu Kulangara, Kayamkulam, Porakkad,Punjar, Tekkumkur, Vadakkumkur, and Idapally. was good in spice trade and it supplied pepper to near by kingdoms since early times.

C. Chirakkal

Chirakkal the weakest of all four kingdoms of Malabar, was once popular for pepper,cardamom and sandalwood trade.After the decline of Kolathunadu Swaroopam Chirakkal ended to important power in Malabar.

Cannanore

The beginning of seventeenth century Cannanore was divided into two economic zones. The Europeans in Fort Angelo and the Mappila Muslims in Cannanore bazaar. The European traded pepper. The Cannanore bazaar provided anchorage to ships and boats.

Important commodities for export were spices however to keep up the local demands they traded in coconuts products,rice, areca nut in bulk as these were important local demand.

They sent their local products to different parts of Indian Ocean in their vessels. The Red Sea ports, the Persian Gulf, Surat, Canara, the Maldives, Lakshadweep, Ceylon, Coromandal, Bengal,and Aheh are important trading region. The Cannanore traders actively participated in Persian gulf spice trade.

D. Laccadive Island or Lakshadweep Island:

The Mohammaden chief in Malabar Ali Raja of Cannanore also enjoyed sovereign status in Malabar region. He obtained Laccadive Island and called himself Sultan of Laccadive Island.

E. Tirchoor

It is large and populated town in Cochin region. It had a bazaar. In most of the house in this bazaar was something or other was displayed for sale of rice, coconut, copra, cotton cloth, grass and bamboo mats,earthen-pots, lanterns,areca nut, betal leaves, plantain, chillies, pumpkin and vegetables and spices of various kinds common to the country.

Foreign travellers account about Malabar Coast

Ibn BattutaIbn Battuta of Tangiers the greatest Arab traveller. He visited Calicut and describes the availability of cloves, coconut, palms, areca-nut

palms, jackfruit. Abulfeda of Damascus, Arabian geographer also gave a vivid description of Malabar pepper .

Asian products were always in demand especially malabar's spices, drugs and timber. William De Rubruquis mentions that ,spices and drugs Malabar Coast reached

Europe through Constantinople in the twelfth century.

Marcopolo's account describes Malabar as a great place of trade where traders of Kis, Hormus,Dofar, soer (suhar) and Aden bring destriers horses. He gives information about Kayal a port city which gets ships laden with horses and other products from Hormos,Kis,Aden and Arabia.

Quilon is had good contacts with Brazil and it was a popular trade destination for Ginger, pepper and Indigo. It had good contact with merchants of Arabia,Persia and manzi.

Marino Sanuto, venetian traveller's who visited east about 1300-1306 narrates venetian and Indian trade in his book Liber secretorum fidelium crucis,super terrae sanctae recuperatione. Odorico de Pordenone beatus of Roman Catholic Church, travelled to India between 1316 and 1330. He noticed the bulk pepper cultivation in Malabar coast and he also mentioned about the active coastal towns of Cranganore, Cochin.

Abd-ur-Razzak mentions ships laden with pepper from Calicut continuously sail to Mecca. He further says the Calicut produced adventurous sailors.

CONCLUSION

The discovery of New continents America and Australia created sense of maritime spirit as well as strife between two powers on the Iberian peninsula. Fall of constantinople in 1493 forced the European powers to look out for alternatives.

Thus, the situation in Europe and writings of foreign travellers about India's fabulous wealth and Malabars spice trade kindled the spirit of enquiry and fascinated them to find a new Sea route to India. And it led to the discovery of India by Vasco Da Gama when reached Kappad near Calicut on 20th May 1498.

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