

IMPORTANT TRADING COMMUNITIES IN CORAMANDEL COAST IN THE FIFTEENTH AND THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

S. EVANJALINE ARPUTHA ARUL PRIYA

Research Scholar, Department of Maritime History and Marine Archaeology, The Tamil University, Thanjavur
E-mail: evanjalinearpriya@gmail.com

Abstract - This study is based on the communities that dominated the trade in the Coromandel Coast. It highlights their role in India's Maritime Trade. These trading communities also influenced the European trade in South India.

Keywords - Merchants, Maritime, Trade, Communities

I. INTRODUCTION

CASTE SYSTEM IN SOUTH INDIA

The caste system in South India generally is based on the Right hand (Vadangei) and the Left hand (Idangei) concept. The Vadangei claims the authority to ride on horseback in processions and to have certain standards and to use twelve pillars for their marriage-booths whereas they claim that the left hand people should erect only eleven pillars. The Right hand caste includes the Vellalars, Komatis, Accountants, Silk weavers, Leather workers (women), Pallis (men) and Pariahs. The Left hand includes the Chettis, Artisans, Oilmongers, Weavers, Leather worker (men) and Pallis (women).

A. CHETTIYARS

The Sangam literature gives us vivid description about the Tamil Chettiyar Community was very popular trading community in Tamil Country. They did business in partnership with fellow Chettis. They were divided into two groups Vellala Chettis and Vaaniya Chettis. Initially they were money lenders, money changers and involved in lease of lands but later got involved with textile business. The Chettis were also involved in agricultural business, oil trade, betel and tobacco farms and other essential commodities.

The Telugu Speaking Chettis, Komatis chetti are right hand castes and they involved purchasing textiles from weavers. The Devanga weavers and the Perikaver caste of Telugu weavers called the Beri Chettis. They belonged to left-hand castes. They resided in Tamil Ports. Pappu Chetti were landholders and they were into agricultural business. Vellala Chettis were basically agriculturalist.

Kashi Viranna and Sunca Ram Chetti were the wealthy merchants of South India and they has trade dealings in India and abroad.

B. MUDALIARS

The Vellalars also called the Mudaliars were basically landholders. They belonged to right-hand division or Valathukai. Kaikolar Mudaliars belonged

to left-hand division. Kaikolar Mudailar supplied cloth to temples for rituals. They were participated in agriculture and temple management. They traded overseas and some of them settled in Melaka. Vellalars were the landholders and they belonged to right-hand castes. They were originally grain traders. Some of them also involved in textile business. At the Coromandel coast the Kaikolar owned dyeing centres.

C. PILLAI

The Pillais belonged to right-hand caste division. There were two groups the Vellala and Idayars. The Vellalas were landholder and the Idayars were shepherds by profession. During the advent of European the wealthy members invested in textile business. They also acted as intermediaries and their job was to arrange supplies to the Europeans.

D. MUSLIM MERCHANTS:

The Muslim merchants can be classified into two categories Indian and the Arabs. Muslims traders can be further into divided into Chuliyas and Mapillahasof Malabar coast. The mutual growth of Mappila merchants and the maritime commercial opportunities resulted in emergence of new power under the leadership of the Ali Rajas. The Arackal Swarupam was the first Muslim taravadu to achieve the status of a swarupam in Malabar. The Arackal family became one of the few mercantile elite community who claimed the political claim for itself. The main source of income was derived from Maritime Trade .

E. MARAKKAYARS:

The Marakkayars are the group of Muslim overseas traders with Arab connection. They were textile merchants and ship owners and traded at various Asian ports and inland ports. They were well versed in several foreign languages and they had good knowledge of preparing trade documents. Mamale Marakayar was chief of all Marakayar in rice trade in the Coromandel. King Narai the ruler of Thailand was impressed Marakkayars in 1656-88. Marakkayars who lived in Porto Novo, Pondicherry

and Nagappatinam had trade contacts with Aceh, Banten, Kedah and Johore.

F. PARAVAS

The Paravas practiced several occupations like fisherman, pearl and conch shell divers and cutters, Saltmakers, Seafarers, Merchants and traders. This community has very long history to its credit. Before the arrival of the Portuguese the Parava community became expert in all sorts of seafaring activities.

II. POPULAR MERCHANTS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION

TEXTILE BUSINESS

The popular business of the Coromandel coast was the textile business. There were both small scale as well as large scale textile business. The weaving community comprised of different caste group namely the Saliyars, Parayar, Seniyar. Many merchants also owned looms.

Nayinar Chetti was a popular trader in Pulicat and he assisted Portuguese in their trade and he was made as an officer in charge of civil and criminal matters. Guntur Balu Chetti was leading textile merchant of Pondicherry. In 1752 Padaaram Chetti, Mariya Chinnan Chetti and Venkatachalam Chetti from Kottar invested nearly 600,000 panams in textile business. Ananda Ranga Pillai had a weaving establishment in Arcot.

MERCHANTS AS SHIP OWNERS

Jang Marakkayar contracted ships to export goods to Aceh and Kedah. Sayyed Pillai Marakkyar a wealthy merchant of Nagore had owned a newly built ship. A Mudaliar merchant of Pondicherry owned a ship named 'Shankarabarani' and it sent cargoes from Mylapore to Manila. The ship 'Charles' set sail to Manila from Pondicherry in 1729.

MERCHANTS AS MONEY LENDERS

There were many merchants who acted as financiers. Melguri Chetti, Rayal Ayyan and Guntur Balu Chetti were popular Telugu money lenders. Kankaraya

Mudaliar gave 10,000 pagodas as interest free loan to the french Company in 1739. Arumpathai Sonachalam from Pondicherry gave a loan of Rs.246,024 in 1787 to Company.

PRECIOUS METALS

The Tamil and the Telugu merchant especially the Chettis actively involved in importing gold from Melaka. The ships of the Chettis and Marakkayars directly purchased gold ingots from Melaka and silver from Thailand.

Thus, these were the samples of popular merchants who had good control in maritime business of Coromandel Coast. There are several independent merchants who are worth mentioning.

CONCLUSION

These trading communities played a dominant role in supplying commodities to western world as well as to south East Asian Countries. These merchants not only supplied goods to European but also had direct contacts. Without the support of these trading communities European trade companies would not have survived.

REFERENCE

- [1] Chandra, Satish. Medieval India From Sultanate to the Mughals, Part Two, Revised Edition, Har-Anand Publications Pvt. Limited, New Delhi, 2016.
- [2] Krishna Bal, Commercial relations between India and England (1601-1757), George Routledge & Sons, Ltd, London, 1924.
- [3] Love, Henry Davison, India Record Series, Vestiges of Old Madras, 1640-1800, Traced from the East India Company's Records preserved at Fort St. George and the India Office, and from other Sources, Vol. I, Published for Government of India, London, 1913.
- [4] Mailaparambil, Binu John, The Lords of the Sea, The Ali Rajas of Cannanore and Political Economy of Malabar, 1663-1723, Brill Academic Pub, Leiden, 2011.
- [5] Pant D., The Commercial Policy of the Moguls, D.B. Taraporevala Sons & Co., Bombay, 1930.
- [6] Stephen, Jeyaseela S., Oceanscapes Tamil Textiles in the Early Modern World, Primus Books, Delhi, 2014.
- [7] Stephen, Jeyaseela S., The Coromandel Coast and its Hinterland, Economy, Society and Political System (AD1500-1600), Manohar, 1997

