



## NEW REFLECTIONS ON PORTUGUEESE TRADE DURING IKKERI POLEGAR PERIOD

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### **Abstract**

*The spice trade was the most lucrative commercial assignment the Europeans could find in India. Starting from the Vijayanagara time the trade continued till the time of polegars. The commerce in spices was very advantageous because it was connected overseas. This coastal trading was a money spinning enterprise as it consisted of quick rewards. The kings of this lineage were politically prominent after the fall of Vijayanagara dynasty and came to enjoy an extensive sovereignty. This paper spotlights the issues connected with the spice trade during this period with special reference to Portuguese had been able to negotiate favorable terms of trade with the weak principalities that constituted the Canara coast these trade connection had far reaching impact on the political extension of the Nayakas of Ikkeri & other principalities after the fall of great Vijayanagara Empire in South India & highlights the impact of commercial ties with Europeans countries.*

**Key words:** Commercial settlements, Political extension, Portuguese traders, Spice trade

**Introduction-** The spice trade was the most lucrative commercial assignment , the Europeans could find in India. Starting from the Vijayanagara time, the trade continued till the time of Ikkeri polegars. The commercial venture in spices was very advantageous to Europeans because it was connected overseas markets. This coastal trading was a money spinning enterprise as it consisted of quick rewards & trade benefits. ( Biedermann, Zoltán: The Portuguese in Sri Lanka and South India : studies in the history of diplomacy, empire and trade, 1500 – 1650 ).

### **Dynamics of coastal trading**

The study of the dynamics of coastal trading during 1700-1800 becomes important because the very political ambitions of the small principalities submerged into the expanding

commercial aspirations of the desirous Portuguese in South India. The Ikkeri chiefs politically prominent after the fall of Vijayanagara lineage and came to enjoy an extensive sovereignty controlled a territory nearly as large as the Vijayanagara heartland, extending south from Goa along the trade-rich inner coast of Canara. (Thornton, Thomas Henry (1898), General Sir Richard Meade and the Feudatory States of Central and Southern India )

### **Trade extension**

Sadasiva Raya Nayaka, the first of the Keladi chiefs, was granted permission by the Vijayanagara emperor to administer some towns on the western regions of Karnataka . In the decade after the fall of the Vijayanagara empire, the Portuguese, who until then had pursued their pepper trade entirely on



the Malabar coast farther south, decided to embark on spice trade as a commercial strategy, and ventured into purchasing pepper from the Canara region. The quantity of purchase was small initially. But later the Portuguese traders took the business seriously as it became more profitable. (Burton Stein State formation & economy Part-1)

After the trade picked up gradually after 1574 they ventured to achieve control over the coastal towns of Honnavara & Mangaluru and constructed fortresses and factories at each location. Along with the tradesmen, the Portuguese in South India needed people who could settle here to manage & handle the whole procedure of pepper trade. Hence the casodos or married Portuguese settlers were made to settle in South India. Their number increased gradually.

Initially the Portuguese fort contained homes for thirty settlers. They maintained a weighing station centered at Gerusoppa. Here they purchased the pepper, which was weighed, bagged & prepared for export. During 17th century, Honor (Honnavara) became not only the principal port for the export of Canara pepper, but also the most important Portuguese delivery spot for pepper in whole of Asia. The Basaruru region also became an important center of pepper trade as 30 more married Portuguese settlers were made to settle here. With the settlement of casodos the trade in this region picked up quickly & Basaruru soon became a busy trading centre exporting rice, local textiles, saltpeter, and iron from the interior regions. The

import trade was later welcomed as there were demands for precious sea beads, war horses, fine yarn aromatic scents, perfumeries, etc. (Shastri .B .S. & Charles J. Borges- Goa Canara Portuguese relations 1498 -1763)

Mangalore was a nearby location to Basarooru & it soon became an important trading center. Here too the Portuguese built a fortress and walled the town with accommodation for 35 casodos families. Both Basarooru and Mangalore became principal ports for the export of rice and during the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and supplied the many strategic forts with political & commercial significance to the expanding Portuguese Asian empire. (Shastri B S & Charles J. Borges- Goa Canara Portuguese relations 1498 -1763 ) A ready source of rice, pepper and teak, this coast was vital for their commercial expansion. During 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese were able to confer favorable terms of trade with the frail & fragile kingdoms all along the coastal region. These bargains & negotiations were very significant as it fetched the Portuguese the epithet of trading power in South India. (Stein, Burton (1985 b), "State Formation and Economy Reconsidered: Part One".)

At such a key political point, Virabhadra Nayaka (1629-1645) and Shivappa Nayaka (1645-1660) asserting their power, forced a revision of the previous trade treaties with the already established Portuguese traders. Shivappa nayaka (1645-1660) was a capable ruler who could foresee the



threats of Portuguese He built forts of Chandragiri , Bekal & Mangalore ( Shastry B S & Charles J. Borges- Goa Canara Portuguese relations 1498 -1763 ). By the 1630s, the Portuguese had agreed to buy pepper at market rates and the rulers of Ikkeri had been permitted two voyages per year without the purchase of a cartaz a pass for Portuguese protection as well as annual importation of twelve duty-free horses. Veerabhadra Nayaka who succeeded Shivappa nayaka was forced to make friendship treaty with the Portuguese in 1636 which included both political & commercial benefits for the Portuguese .( Kamath U. Suryanath, - A Concise History of Karnataka ) By the 1650s, he had driven the Portuguese out of the three forts at Honnavara, Barceluru, and Mangalore. After his death in 1660, his successor Somashkera Nayaka, however, he sent an embassy to Goa for reestablishing the Portuguese trading posts in Canara. ( Kamath U. Suryanath, - A Concise History of Karnataka).

By 1671 a treaty, which was very favorable once again to the Portuguese, had been agreed to deliver the goods directly. Before the treaty could be implemented, Somashkara Nayaka died and was succeeded by an infant grandson Basava Nayaka. The 1671 treaty suffered amidst the succession struggle until 1678, when yet another treaty was negotiated with Basava Nayaka who emerged as the victor. Since both parties in the succession struggle had been interested in purchasing European artillery from the Portuguese, the eventual treaty of 1678 was even more favorable to the

latter. Basava Nayaka agreed to pay 30,000 to Portuguese as war-charges for the decade-long conflict with the Dutch to provide construction material for the factory at Mangalore, & to provide 1,500 sacks of clean rice annually, to pay a yearly tribute for Mangalore and Barceluru, to destroy the factories of the Omani Arabs on the Canara coast, and to allow Catholic churches to be built at a number of locations in Canara. With the treaty in place, Portuguese power returned to Canara after an interregnum of almost half a century. The Nayakas of Ikkeri, in their turn, managed to control the region until 1763, at which time Hyder Ali took possession of it.

### Conclusion

Thus Ikkeri Nayakas were adaptable tools in expansion of Portuguese pepper trade because the coastal regions of Canara could not be shielded completely by Ikkeri kings. A ready source of rice, pepper and teak, the Canara coast was important to the Portuguese to enter into India. Portuguese successfully negotiated favorable terms of trade with several weak principalities along the Canara coast. These trade connections had far reaching impact on the politics of the region. Small & fragile principalities were succumbed to mighty power of European traders. But these also proved detrimental to their political expansion of Ikkeri Nayaka kings .

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