

**THE PORTUGUESE, INDIAN OCEAN  
AND EUROPEAN BRIDGEHEADS 1500-1800:**

**Festschrift in Honour of Prof. K.S. Mathew**

Edited by:

**Pius Malekandathil  
Jamal Mohammed**

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## **The Portuguese, Indian Ocean and European Bridgeheads, 1500-1800:**

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**T. Jamal Mohammed**

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## MERCHANTS, MARKETS AND COMMODITIES: SOME ASPECTS OF PORTUGUESE COMMERCE WITH MALABAR

*Pius Malekandathil*

Malabar was a commercial zone of prime importance for the Europeans who entered the Indian Ocean region even before the discovery of Cape route. However with the circumnavigation of the Cape of Good Hope, the Portuguese raised claim for an exclusive right to the new route, which gave an entirely new character to the trade of Asia including that of Malabar<sup>1</sup>. In fact the strategies of the Lusitanians to control Asian trade revolved round two modes of operations: on the one hand diverse mechanisms were evolved to prevent the flow of commodities from the Indian waters to the Levant. The elaborate system of *cartaz*-armada-fortress was introduced to sever the commercial links traditionally existing in the Indian Ocean region with Italian ports and thus to prevent the entry of oriental commodities into Mediterranean ports. On the other hand attempts were made to strengthen the Cape route commerce that started in Cochin or Goa (and fed by a number of politico-economic satellite units established along the west coast of India) and finally terminated in Lisbon. It was through the newly emerged Cochin-Goa-Lisbon commercial axis that the Portuguese tried to integrate the Indian Ocean World Economy with the Atlantic World Economy, which ultimately gave a new dimension to international trade. This takes us to the central

problem of our investigation: How far did this re-orientation of Indo-European commerce, implemented by the Portuguese, affect the various mercantile groups and the market structure of Malabar. Were these impacts restricted to the exchange centers on the coast alone or did they permeate into inland markets? How did the Portuguese try to control the markets? What role did the Portuguese policies play in bringing about transformation processes among the merchant groups of Malabar? What were the responses of the diverse trading communities and market centers to the challenges raised by the re-structuring of trade both at regional and international levels? These questions are answered against the backdrop of the history of commerce carried out with Malabar by the Portuguese.

### *Commercial Scenario in Pre-Portuguese Malabar*

Malabar, by the time the Portuguese traders stepped into its shores in 1498, had evolved a well-equipped market mechanism in its exchange centers. It in fact revolved round a port-hierarchy that evolved in the thirteenth century, in which Calicut held the superior economic and political position, while Quilon, Cochin and Cannanore were commercially confined to secondary roles<sup>2</sup>. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were a period in which the Zamorin consolidated his political and commercial position in Malabar with the help of Al-Karimi merchants linked with the Mamluks of Egypt<sup>3</sup>. Calicut became the rallying point for the traders from the Muslim world viz., Maghreb, Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Persia etc., who were eventually emerging as the principal mercantile group in the Indian Ocean region from the fourteenth century onwards<sup>4</sup>. By the end of the fifteenth century the developments in Cannanore were heading towards the direction of transforming it into a Muslim port<sup>5</sup>. It coincided with the Calicut's expansion to Cranganore, where the commercial hegemony of the Muslim traders was extended along with the political suzerainty of the Zamorin. Meanwhile the *Perumpadappu Swarupam*, looking for a place outside the orbit of the Zamorin's conquest, shifted its residence in 1405 from Cranganore (Mahodayapuram) to Cochin, which had by this time emerged as an important port

thanks to the great geo-physical changes that occurred because of the flood in the river Periyar in 1341 A.D.<sup>6</sup> In fact the political expansion of the Zamorin and the commercial expansion of the Muslim traders went hand in hand to a great part of land-cum-sea-space, starting from north Kerala and stretching down to south, up to Cochin. These economic and political moves were taking almost a pan Kerala dimension, in which the Zamorin had the political agenda of expanding his territorial hegemony while the Muslim merchants had the commercial ambition of extending their trade networks.

The economic growth of Cochin, which depended greatly on the rich pepper producing hinterland located in the neighbouring areas, invited Zamorin's interference<sup>7</sup>. Towards the end of the fifteenth century the Zamorin, who attacked Cochin with the help of Arab merchants, demanded the conversion of this port into a Muslim trade center. One of the conditions imposed by the Zamorin upon the vanquished king of *Perumpadappu Swarupam* was that the Nazarenes (St. Thomas Christians) should be driven out from Cochin denying them right to participate in its trade, which in turn should be conferred upon the Muslim traders of Calicut.<sup>8</sup> However, even later the merchant guilds associated with these Christian traders seem to have continued to operate for some more time, as is evident from the existence of a merchant guild in Cochin called *Korran*, from which Francisco de Albuquerque bought 4000 *bhars* of well-dried pepper in 1503<sup>9</sup>. At the time of the arrival of the Portuguese, Quilon was the only port in Kerala, where Muslim presence was relatively less and where St. Thomas Christian traders (linked with the old Christian guilds) still retained some commercial predominance<sup>10</sup>.

The Muslim traders who established their activities in the major markets of Malabar in the pre-Portuguese period were not a monolithic group; they included at least three main strands, which were held together by the commonality of religion and common *shafi'ite* tradition linked with Arab origin. The *paradesi* Muslims, among whom the al-Karimi merchants engaged in spice-trade with Mamluk's Egypt formed major component,

appropriated the transoceanic trade emanating from the ports of Kerala and terminating in the ports of eastern Mediterranean, while the Marakkar Muslims, who were the natives of the coastal region between Kunimedu and Nagapattinam on the Coromandel coast, monopolistically held the coastal trade between the ports of Malabar and the Coromandel. As the *paradesis* from Red sea ports and the Marakkars from Coromandel appropriated the major chunk of Malabar commerce, the local Mappila Muslims, who were dwarfed by the two, were confined to peddling trade and stood commercially at the lowest strata<sup>11</sup>. While on the one hand the family networks and religious bonds helped the expansion of the Muslim traders, on the other hand, with the increasing capital accumulation, the frame of the merchant guild system was slowly disappearing from among the Jewish and Christian traders, who had by this time begun to resort to individual initiatives in commercial activities. Mathias of Kayamkulam<sup>12</sup> and Tarqe Tome (Tarakan Thomas) of Quilon<sup>13</sup> were the two frequently quoted merchants, who emerged into prominence in the first decade of the Sixteenth century, from the southern ports of Kerala.

The markets of Malabar were highly monetized with a variety of coins in circulation. Peter Holzschuher, who visited the exchange centers of Kerala in 1503 as an artillerist and a trader in the vessel of Afonso de Albuquerque, has given a detailed account of the market conditions of the land. There were three categories of native coins in circulation: a) The gold coin called *panam*, which was of light 15 carat gold. It was the main monetary medium used for exchanges in Calicut, Cannanore and Cochin, where 19 *panams* formed one Portuguese *cruzado*. However the value of *panam* was not uniform all through Malabar ports: in Quilon one *panam* had 19 carat gold and 12 *panams* of Quilon made one European ducat or *cruzado*. In fact the *panam* of Quilon was more valuable than that of Calicut and Cannanore. b) The silver coin called *Chare*, which was in circulation in all the port-towns of Malabar, where 16 *Chare* formed one *panam*. c) In Quilon there was also a copper coin called *Cashe* and 15 *Cashe* formed one *panam*<sup>14</sup>. The copper

coin of Quilon seems to have had more intrinsic value than the silver coin *Chare*, as is well evidenced by the difference in constituting units. The high demand for copper for the manufacture of household utensils must have added considerable value to this metal, which in turn must also have been transferred to the coins made out of copper. As early as 1409 Ma Huan, who accompanied Cheng Ho (the famous Ming Admiral), has made reference to the use of gold coin called *panam* and the silver coin *Chare* (Ma Huan calls it *Ta-urh*) in the exchanges of Cochin. However, in 1409 the *Chare* (*Ta-urh*) had more value than the early sixteenth century *Chare*, as Ma Huan mentions that a *panam* was fifteen *Ta-urhs* only.<sup>15</sup>

Besides these typically Malabar coins, there were also other small silver coins like the silver *tangas* of Gujarat, of Bijapur, of Vijayanagara and the *larins* of Persia in circulation in the trade centers of Malabar.<sup>16</sup> Coins from the Mediterranean and Western trade centres also circulated in great number. The most important among them was the *Xerafins* of Cairo, which entered Malabar through the active commerce with the Mamluk Egypt. Along with them, the Venetian and the Genoan ducats also began to enter in large numbers through the Levant traders<sup>17</sup>. The gold coin called *pagoda* (which was called so because of the representation of *Varaha* or the Boar avatar of Vishnu on it) was referred to as *Pardao* (a corruption of the Sanskrit *pratapa*) *d'ouro* and was used all along the Western India including Malabar<sup>18</sup>.

Thus on the eve of the Portuguese arrival in India, the markets and mercantile classes of Malabar operated as vital component parts of wider circuits of commerce linked with regional and international exchange systems: on the east the strands of this circuit extended up to South East Asia while on the west they reached up to the Mediterranean.

### ***The Portuguese Attempts to Control Markets***

Though Vasco da Gama's arrival in Calicut in 1498 via Cape route marked a new chapter in the history of commerce in Europe and Asia, da Gama and his men could impress neither

the king nor the market of Calicut as traders and they found it difficult to sell the commodities, which they brought along with them in their first voyage. This was mainly because of the fact that the first Portuguese came not with any commercial preparation (but with the mission of finding a sea-route to India via Cape of Good Hope) and secondly because of the privileged position of the *paradesi* Muslim merchants in Calicut, who had better commercial links and political influence to engineer intrigues against the Portuguese and to keep them away from the Zamorin's market<sup>19</sup>. However the cargo, which Vasco da Gama got from the land of the Kolathiri, fetched for the Portuguese a profit worth sixty times the cost of expedition<sup>20</sup>.

The first commercial fleet of the Portuguese consisting of 1200 men and 13 vessels, which also had the mercantile collaboration of Bartolomeo Marchioni and other Italian merchants, came to India under the command of Pedro Alvarez Cabral in 1500. However, the events followed by Cabral's demand for preferential treatment in the loading of the spices ushered in a belligerent atmosphere characterized by capturing of Arab ships, killing of the Portuguese factor and the destruction of the factory, massacring of innocents and massive destruction of the market and city of the Zamorin<sup>21</sup>. The commercial mission of Cabral became successful thanks to the timely help of the king of Cochin, from whom he obtained about 104920 kilograms of pepper, 20984 kilograms of ginger, 31476 kilograms of cinnamon for transshipment to Lisbon<sup>22</sup>. Besides cargo for Lisbon, he also won the friendship of the king of Cochin, who even gave a part of the port area for the establishment of a Portuguese factory<sup>23</sup>. Later the fleet of João da Nova that came in 1501 also procured majority of its cargo from Cochin alone, where, in the absence of sufficient capital for conducting trade, the local ruler even stood as surety for the Portuguese to buy spices. João da Nova took 52459 kilograms of pepper, 2623 kilograms of ginger and 23607 kilograms of cinnamon to Portugal from Cochin and Cannanore, of which the latter eventually was made the first and the last port of call in India for the vessels of *Carreira da India*<sup>24</sup>.

However the entry of the Portuguese into the spice-market of Malabar made the prices shoot up and the merchants were reluctant to sell their commodities at the old price offered by the Portuguese. With the penetration into the markets of Cochin, Cannanore and finally Quilon in 1502, the Portuguese were compelled to evolve mechanisms to control markets to their favour. The price was shooting up all these years: In Calicut the price of pepper per quintal was 4.64 ducats in 1498, which increased to 5.96 ducats in 1500. In some markets of Malabar it rose to 14 ducats per quintal by 1502. The price of cloves per quintal increased from 9.88 ducats in 1498 to 26 ducats in 1502<sup>25</sup>. Vasco da Gama tried to check the rise in prices and to control the market mechanisms by dictating a fixed price for the spices. On 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1503, he entered into an agreement with the merchants of Cochin fixing the price of a *bhar* (166.3kgs) of pepper at 160 *panams* (8.3 *cruzados*). In Cannanore the price of a *bhar* (Cannanore *bhar* was worth 205.6kgs) of pepper was fixed at 210 *panams*.<sup>26</sup> This price-fixation was, indeed, an under pricing of the commodities, as the price for the same quantity of pepper in Calicut in 1500 was 360 *panams* and the loss for the merchants of Cochin per *bhar* was almost 200 *panams*.<sup>27</sup> With the low price both in Cochin and Cannanore, only Calicut seemed to attract traders by keeping relatively a higher price. However, later in 1513, by enabling a pro-Portuguese candidate to occupy the throne of Calicut and by establishing peace treaty with him, the Portuguese tried to extend the same market-control mechanisms to Calicut as well. With this peace treaty, the price of Calicut was brought down, as a result of which one *bhar* of pepper in Calicut in 1516 cost only 10.17 *cruzados*.<sup>28</sup> It shows that the price of Calicut was reduced almost to the half and was brought near to that of Cochin. The price fixation, thus, was developed by the Portuguese into a mechanism to under-price the commodities of Malabar and to control its markets to their favour. The only alternative left to the Malabar traders to escape from this situation was to carry the commodities across the ghat to Tamilnadu and to transship them from the ports of Coromandel

to the ports of Red sea and Mediterranean<sup>29</sup>. However this route, besides being risky, involved much expense and used to take away much of the possible profit.

While accepting the proposal of Vasco da Gama for price-fixation, the merchants of Malabar demanded that three-fourth of the payment should be made in cash and one-fourth in the form of copper<sup>30</sup>. In 1503 about  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the price of pepper in Cochin was paid in copper<sup>31</sup>. This mode of payment necessitated that a large quantity of copper was imported to Malabar from the copper mines of Alps region and upper Hungary through the German intermediaries till the beginning of copper crisis in Europe in 1570s. (After 1570s silver in the form of "Spanish *reals* of eight" and gold became the important commodities imported to Malabar). In the first decade of the sixteenth century 4000 quintals of copper were imported to the Portuguese trade centers of Malabar, which rose to 6000 quintals in the second decade<sup>32</sup>. The high demand for this metal from the social classes of copper-smiths and bronze-smiths, who were making household utensils for the aristocratic families of Kerala, played a vital role in making it the most important commodity imported to Malabar till 1570s. Cannanore had experienced the highest demand for copper where a *farasol* (8.31 kilograms) of copper was priced at 45 *panams*, where as in Quilon it was only 36 *panams*<sup>33</sup>. Materials like mercury, camphor etc., also used for the manufacture of copper and bronze vessels were imported to Malabar in considerable quantity. In Quilon mercury was available at 55 *panams* per *farasol*, where as its price in Cannanore was 80 *panams*. Camphor in Quilon was priced at  $87\frac{1}{2}$  *panams* per *farasol*<sup>34</sup>. This price situation in Quilon and Cannanore evidently points to the regional difference in their demands, which is also suggestive of the degree of the activities of artisan-groups of copper-smiths and bronze-smiths in the suburban areas adjacent to these markets.

Corresponding to price-fixation and market-control, attempts were also made to control the movement of commodities by monopolizing spice trade. After the initial experiments of allowing the participation of private merchants,

the Portuguese crown declared pepper, cloves, ginger, cinnamon, mace nut-meg, silk, sealing wax etc as commodities reserved for the crown by the order issued in 1520<sup>35</sup>. The most valuable among these spices was cloves which was sold at 600 *panams* per *bhar* in Calicut, second place was occupied by nut-meg with 450 *panams*, mace 430 *panams*, long-pepper 400 *panams*, cinnamon 390 *panams* and brazil wood 160 *panams*. The cheapest spice was ginger, which cost 120 *panams* per *bhar* or 6 *panams* per *farasola*<sup>36</sup>. Cloves, nut-meg and mace, which were originally the products of South East Asia, entered Malabar ports regularly till the Dutch occupation of the sources of these spices in 1605. Cinnamon, coming from Ceylon, was also one among the highly priced spice item taken to Portugal. However, the merchants were prevented from conducting trade in these spices with the imposition of royal monopoly on them, which in fact turned out to be a control mechanism on free trade. Nevertheless, the Portuguese could not have a perfect and monopolistic control over the spice-trade for a long period in the Indian Ocean region, as spices were taken to the Red sea-Venice routes frequently after 1535. But, in spite of the failure in the control mechanisms of the Portuguese, the Cape-route, through which they carried out Indo-European commerce, was enviously preserved by them as a royal monopoly for about a century.

### ***Collaboration with Indigenous Merchants***

The Portuguese response to the Muslim merchants trading in Malabar ports was a mixed one. On the one hand they maintained a "crusading approach" against the *paradesi* Muslim traders, who formed the backbone of the Red-sea-Venice trade, while on the other hand the Portuguese were increasingly looking to the Mappila and Marakkar merchants as possible commercial partners for ensuring cargo for their Lisbon-bound vessels and as suppliers of food-materials for their factories and colonies established on the coast, cut off from the production centers. In fact the mercantile collaboration of the Marakkar and Mappila Muslims was incorporated by the Portuguese at the time of the price-fixation initiated by Vasco da Gama in 1502<sup>37</sup>. From 1503 onwards we find the Marakkar merchants actively cooperating

with the Portuguese in procuring cargo for the *carreira* vessels. The first among these Muslim merchants to collaborate with the Portuguese was Charine Mekar (Karim Marakkar), who came to Francisco de Albuquerque on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1503 without the knowledge of Zamorin to supply pepper to the Portuguese vessels.<sup>38</sup> Later when the Zamorin tried to create an artificial famine in Cochin as a war-tactics by blocking rice supply to the city, Duarte Pacheco befriended Mame (Muhammad) Marakkar, the head of the Marakkar merchants in Cochin, to overcome this situation and to ensure regular supply of provisions in Cochin<sup>39</sup>.

At a time when the Portuguese did not have strong base in India, the Marakkar merchants collaborated with them in many ways and above all helped them to procure spices from the various parts of Malabar for their Lisbon-bound vessels. In 1504 Cherina Marakkar and Mamale Marakkar supplied 3000 *bhars* of pepper for the fleet of Lopo Soares<sup>40</sup>; Nino Marakkar used to supply cinnamon from Ceylon to the Portuguese factory in Cochin<sup>41</sup> and he even supplied ships and fighting force consisting of 1500 soldiers to confront the forces of the Zamorin;<sup>42</sup> Chilay Marakkar gave his own ship to the Portuguese to take commodities to Goa<sup>43</sup>. Besides the Marakkar traders, the Mappila merchants of Edappilly like Ali Apule, Coje Mappila and Abraham Mappila also used to supply regularly pepper to the Portuguese in Cochin.<sup>44</sup> These Muslim traders, who co-operated with the Portuguese commercial system, were given considerable freedom to send vessels and commodities to Red sea ports, provided that they take *cartazes* or safe-conduct from the Portuguese<sup>45</sup>.

The Portuguese expansion into the markets of Cannanore in 1501 and Quilon in 1502 was followed by the conversion of Cochin into the capital of the emerging *Estado da India* in 1505, which was the chief base of political and commercial operations for the Portuguese from the time of Cabral. This commercial expansion went hand in hand with the establishment of a chain of fortresses linking and monitoring the prime centers of exchange in Malabar viz., Cochin (the first fortress built in 1503,

but later rebuilt in 1505), Cannanore (1508), Quilon (1519) and Cranganore (1536). Afonso de Albuquerque extended the chain of fortresses to Goa(1510), Malacca(1511) and Hormuz(1515), which, he believed, would check and control the movements of the vessels plying in the Indian Ocean and prevent the flow of commodities to Red sea- Venice route<sup>46</sup>.

Meanwhile the Marakkar merchants emerged as prominent traders of Malabar with the mass exodus of the *paradesi* Muslims from Calicut thanks to the peace treaty, which Afonso de Albuquerque signed in 1513 with the new Zamorin on his ascension into the throne after poisoning his uncle and predecessor. This peace treaty, which appeared more detrimental to their existence than the several battles against the Portuguese, made the majority of the *paradesi* Muslims including the al-Karimis flee from Calicut to other safer ports of Gujarat, Vijayanagara, Hormuz and Red sea<sup>47</sup>. The favourable atmosphere that prevailed during the Albuquerqueian period enabled the Marakkar traders to establish themselves as the principal mercantile community in South India and the exodus of the *paradesi* Muslims from Calicut accelerated this transformation process.

### ***The Emergence of New Merchant Groups***

By the beginning of 1520s, Portuguese *casado*(meaning family- men particularly the Portuguese citizens married to native women) traders emerged as a prominent mercantile class involved in the intra-Asian trade emanating from the exchange centers of Malabar. The married Portuguese citizens had begun to take up local trade as a means of their livelihood as early as 1510. Eventually the Portuguese with private interests got organized into a lobbying group in Cochin, known as the “Cochin group”, and were demanding less state interference (which Afonso de Albuquerque had implemented by an elaborate system of fortresses) and more an atmosphere of free trade. In fact the nomination of Lopo Soares de Albergia as the new governor in 1515 was a victory to the private entrepreneurs among the *casados*, who made use of this favourable and liberal atmosphere

for the extension of their commerce to the eastern space of Indian Ocean<sup>48</sup>. A major strand of the *casado* trade extended eastwards to the ports of Coromandel, Bengal, Malacca and South East Asia, while Cambay and Hormuz were also favoured navigational destinations of the *casados* of Cochin.

It is to be here specially noted that the abrupt emergence of the *casado* traders by 1520s coincided with the estrangement of Marakkar Muslim traders from Portuguese camp and their consequent shifting of loyalty to Zamorin. The frequent Portuguese attacks and confiscation of ships belonging to Marakkar traders, under the guise of checking *cartazes*, made many of them sever ties with the Portuguese and move over to Calicut. The prominent among them were Kunjali Marakkar, his brother Ahmad Marakkar, their uncle Muhammadali Marakkar and their dependents, who left Cochin in 1524 to settle down in Calicut. Coincidentally, the Zamorin, whose relationship with the Portuguese had already strained by this time, was also eagerly looking for merchants and naval personalities to fill in the gap created by the exodus of Arab Muslims in 1513. However, with the migration of the Marakkar Muslim traders from Cochin to Calicut, there began a transition phase in the mercantile activities of Malabar in which the Portuguese *casados* of Cochin, who stepped into this commercial vacuum, eventually began to emerge as the principal traders of the Indian Ocean region, while the Marakkar merchants under Kunjali, who shifted base of operation to Calicut, began to develop "corsair activities" as an alternative arrangement of trade.<sup>49</sup>

Meanwhile new merchant classes emerged also from the natives of Malabar, whose conversion to Christianity enabled them to operate under the commercial umbrella of the Portuguese. The most prominent among such traders was a relative of the Zamorin who got converted into Christianity and took the name D. João da Cruz. In 1513 the Zamorin after having concluded peace-treaty with the Portuguese sent a young relation of his (only 15 years old) to see ".....Portugal, its king and his things". On reaching Lisbon he learned to read and write Portuguese and lived at the court of king Manuel for a

considerable period of time. Later he embraced Catholic faith and was given the name Dom João da Cruz (Gaspar Correia calls him the young Nair João da Cruz) and was accorded the habit of the famous Order of Christ on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1515<sup>50</sup>. By becoming a *fidalgo* (noble man) of the royal house and a knight of the Order of Christ he secured a grant for his entire life.<sup>51</sup> On returning to Calicut in 1516 he built a church there for his use.<sup>52</sup> Occupying a privileged position as a knight of the Order of Christ, he got licences to send a certain amount of pepper and ginger to Portugal for three years till the crown officially monopolized spice trade in 1520. Another privilege he got was that he secured a loan of 7400 *pardaos* from the Portuguese factory of Calicut to conduct trade and earn his livelihood. João da Cruz stepped into commercial activities at a time when private trade was thriving in the Portuguese settlements. However, soon in 1521 he lost all his merchandise because of the drowning of the ship, in which he was carrying the cargo, and was hence unable to repay his loans<sup>53</sup>. Even in this crisis phase as well, he was given permission (in 1525) by the crown to send 100 quintals of pepper and 30 quintals of ginger to Cambay<sup>54</sup>.

Nevertheless by 1525 João da Cruz shifted his residence from Calicut to Cochin probably against the background of the strained relationship between the Portuguese and the Zamorin, who had already by this time extracted an amount of 35,000 *pardaos* from João da Cruz for becoming a Christian in Portugal.<sup>55</sup> But in Cochin he was arrested and imprisoned by the Portuguese for not having paid back the loan, which then came about 4000 *pardaos*. In his letter of 1533, he says that with his imprisonment he lost much of his credibility with the kings of the land and with the people, who wanted to embrace Christianity. He further says that about a thousand of them, who earlier had showed willingness to embrace Christian faith, were reluctant to do so because of the ill treatment meted out to him. However he still hopefully places certain requests before the crown that would safeguard his entrepreneurial activities, which ultimately would help him to improve his financial position. In his letter he expresses a variety of desires: (a) the post of captain

and factor of Quilon, which, if conferred upon him, would enable him to prevent pepper-smuggling to Vijayanagara kingdom; (b) the monopoly right of selling horses to Rey Grande(king of Cape Comorin), to the king of Travancore, to the kingdom of Chymbechenaque (Tumbichchi Nayak) and to the kingdom of Beteperemal (Vettumperumal who resided in Kayattar) and the neighbouring principalities which were involved in wars with Bisnaga(Vijayanagara) and Idalcao(Bijapur); (c) the office for collecting the tribute of the Pearl Fishery Coast which was lying in the territory of Rey Grande<sup>56</sup>.

João da Cruz then turned his attention to Pearl Fishery coast, where he supplied horses from Cochin (imported from Hormuz) for the war needs of the local kings and combined the activities of trade in horses and evangelization into one unit of operation. He persuaded the people to embrace Christianity through the king of Cape Comorin, to whom he was selling horses. In 1537 he spoke with the king of Travancore on the advantages of being a Christian and pointed out to him how the king would get horses regularly from the Portuguese for his wars against the king of Cape Comorin, provided that the king and his men would become Christians. Due to the persuasion of João da Cruz, who was assisted by Vicar General Miguel Vaz, about 50,000 people were already converted and by 1537 the number increased to 80,000<sup>57</sup>. St. Francis Xavier writes in 1542 that the Paravas were baptized 8 years before<sup>58</sup> and the Jesuit priest Manuel Teixeira attributes the evangelization work among the Paravas to João da Cruz, who then used to take horses to that coast.<sup>59</sup> Thus a new category of merchants was evolving in Malabar, who were carving out commercial privileges in exchange for their service in the spread of Christianity. Nevertheless the mass conversion of Pearl Fishery coast into Christianity undertaken by João da Cruz eventually led to the clashes of commercial interests between the Portuguese and the Marakkar merchants of Calicut on the question of conducting pearl trade.

Corresponding to the emergence of various new trading classes, diverse trade-routes linking the exchange centers of

Malabar also evolved: some operated within the commercial system of the Portuguese, while some others ran parallel to the Lusitanian networks and functioned as channels for the diversion of spices to the ports of Red sea. João da Cruz refers to a parallel network of markets and exchange centers running through the hinterland part of Malabar and finally terminating at Cape Comorin. They started from the land of the pepper (Vadakkencur) king called Chempenecoy (Chempene koyil or king of Chembe). The land route for the diversion of pepper to Cape Comorin passed through the lands of Lerta Morte Treberery (Ilayidathu Mutha Tiruvadi, whose kingdom was in Arthinkal near Shertalai), Teque Cute Nayre (Thekkumkutti Nayari or the king of Thekkenkur), Cherabacoy (Chiravay Koyil or the king of Chiravay family) Yreme Treberery, Yrama Trebery (may be Rama Tiruvadi or Iravi Varma Tiruvadi)<sup>60</sup>, Unyque Trebery (Unni Kerala Tiruvadi)<sup>61</sup>, Ylamana Lambeatry (Lambratry?). It finally terminated in the kingdom of Rey Grande (*Valiya Tampuran* or senior Tiruvadi of Tirupapur)<sup>62</sup>, which was the title of the king of Cape Comorin.

Meanwhile, by 1540s the Kunjali's men, who were by this time ousted from their trading bases in Coromandel, began to increasingly resort to dual modes of operations: on the one hand to patrol the west coast with tacit or explicit consent of the Zamorin, blockading and plundering the vessels of the Portuguese and on the other hand to integrate the native trade net-works for sending spices regularly to Red Sea-Venice route. The first mode of operation provided them wealth for continued resistance and space for the movement of the vessels destined for Red sea ports. Most of the anti-Portuguese factors seem to have co-operated with these corsair endeavours, which appeared as both political and economic outlets for exercising freedom. The corsair activity developed by Kunjali's men turned out to be an alternative arrangement of trade, where plundering and confiscation of enemy vessels went hand in hand with parallel shipment of commodities to the destination of their choice<sup>63</sup>.

Coincidentally the Muslim merchants of Cannanore had also by this time developed a parallel commercial network outside

the Lusitanian control systems by keeping Maldives as the base for diversion of merchandise to the Levant. The commodities of South East Asia began to move to Red sea through the straits of Karaidu and Haddumati (opposite the ports of Sumatra) via Maldives, a route which bypassed all the control mechanisms of the Portuguese<sup>64</sup>. By exercising control over this route, Mamale and later other *regedors* including Ali raja succeeded in generating wealth from its commerce for their state-building ventures at Cannanore.

### *Monetary Rewards to the Native Rulers*

With the establishment of rigid and elaborate system of trade-control on the west coast of India, which the Portuguese implemented through the instruments of *cartaz*, armada and fortresses, the private traders began to increasingly use the diverse traditional inland-trade-routes starting from the spice-hinterland of Kerala and terminating in the seaports of Coromandel for diversion of commodities to the destinations of their choice. As the Portuguese used to give only low price for the spices, which was fixed in 1502 and continued to remain the same till 1620s, the producers and the traders preferred the inland-trade-routes, which offered relatively higher price. The most prominent among these routes ran across the Western Ghats, although the land-route running parallel to the sea-route and terminating in Cape Comorin was also very active. However, the Portuguese, whose power depended more on the sea and influence restricted to the littoral, had little control over the far-flung spice-producing centers and over the inland routes used by the private traders. In order to overcome this handicap and to ensure continuous supply of spices at the Portuguese factories on the coast, the Lusitanians began to pay regular annuities and subsidies to various kings ruling in the hinterland<sup>65</sup>.

The monetary rewards to the native rulers varied on the basis of the supply of pepper cargo from their kingdoms to the Portuguese factory and on the basis of how their markets were facilitated to feed the Portuguese commercial centers. The highest monetary reward was given to the king of Cochin, who

used to get annually 640 *cruzados* from the Portuguese<sup>66</sup>. The principal region from which the Portuguese used to get pepper for their Lisbon-bound vessels was the kingdom of Vadakkenkur, which they used to call pepper kingdom (*reino da pimenta*). Correspondingly the members of the royal family were given special monetary rewards. The share of the ruling king of Vadakkenkur was 240 *pardaos* per year<sup>67</sup>, while the *Amma Rani* (mother of the king of Vadakkenkur) used to get annually 100 *pardaos* more as her share, which was raised to 220 *xerafins* in 1600<sup>68</sup>. The smaller kingdoms of Alengad, Parur, Diamper and Porcad were located in the vicinity of Cochin and were always looked upon as the satellite feeding units for the politico-commercial ventures of the Portuguese. The rulers of each of these principalities were given annually 240 *pardaos* each in recognition of their service for the trading activities of the Portuguese in Malabar<sup>69</sup>. From 1560s onwards, two kings were reigning in the kingdom of Thekkenkur; probably one residing at Kottayam and the other at Kanjirappilly. Each of them used to get 100 *pardaos* each.<sup>70</sup> The Karta of Alwaye was given an annual amount of 140 *pardaos*<sup>71</sup> for enabling the spices coming through the river Periyar to flow to the Portuguese factory in Cochin. In 1600 the king of Thodupuzha (differently written as Turuguly or Turubuli) became the king of Vadakkenkur and transferred the seat of the combined kingdom to Caricotty (Karikode near Thodupuzha). Fracisco da Costa writes in 1605 that only the king of Thodupuzha and Vadakkenkur used to supply pepper regularly to the Portuguese in Cochin, for which he received an annual reward of 240 *xerafins*<sup>72</sup>.

In principle these monetary rewards were given to the native rulers to keep their production centers and markets integrated with the Portuguese commercial structure. However it did not bring out the desired result, even though these regions continued to feed the Portuguese factories occasionally, if not regularly. In fact the native kings, who used to receive monetary rewards from the Portuguese, did not resort to force or any coercive measure over the producers and merchants to supply spices only to the Portuguese. The price-factor did play the vital

role: both the cultivators and the traders in the interior region preferred to sell commodities to those who offered the highest price, rather than taking them to the distant Portuguese centers only to sell at already quoted lower price, which deprived them of all incentives. As Caesar Frederick says, the better quality pepper was highly priced and it went to inland-routes, which finally found way to Mecca<sup>73</sup>.

The intensification of the movement of commodities through the inland regions of Kerala led to the revitalization of the already existing markets, besides the emergence of new ones in the various nodal points. The important markets thus formed in the inland part of Kerala were Erimamoly (Erumely), Canharapely (Kanjirappilly), Iratepely (Erattupetta), Turubuly (Thodupuzha), Zaruquly (Chalakydy), Corgeira (Kodakara) and Paleacate Cheri (Palakkad Churam).<sup>74</sup> These places became important exchange centers because of their junctional position between the trade routes to Tamilnadu and because of their vicinity to the principal production centers of Kerala. It was chiefly through these places that spices were taken across the ghat to Tamilnadu, which ultimately moved to the ports of Coromandel for further transshipment to the ports of Red sea or to those of Bengal and China. As Ferdinand Cron (who reached Cochin in 1587 as the agent of the Fuggers and the Welsers) testifies, the powerful merchants involved in the ghat-route trade were taking pepper to the Coromandel coast regularly with the help of a large caravan of 800 to 1000 oxen<sup>75</sup>. The volume of pepper taken from the markets of Kerala to Tamilnadu was as follows: from Erumely 3000 *bhars*, from Kanjirappilly and Tecanqutes (the kingdom of Thekkenkur) 4000 *bhars*, from Erattupetta 1000 *bhars*, from Chalakydy 5000 *bhars*, from Kodakara 3000 *bhars* and from Palakkad 3000 *bhars*<sup>76</sup>. In fact the distribution of pepper cultivation, the territorial topography, the political system and above all the demand-factor played vital role in shaping the routes of pepper trade in Malabar<sup>77</sup>.

### *The Changing Trends in Commerce*

As the inland markets and merchant groups were developing a trend towards Coromandel-oriented economic

activities, the *casado* traders engaged in the sea-borne trade were increasingly turning out to be pro-Asian in their operations. In fact the flow of people (including the *Cristãos novos* or New Christians converted from Judaism) from the mother country to the Portuguese settlements in Malabar increased unprecedentedly by 1530s, as a result of which the number of *casados* involved in private trade also swelled<sup>78</sup>. These *casado* traders eventually began to bag huge profit from their trade with the ports of Bay of Bengal and South East Asia, which was the most lucrative among the destinations in Asia. However a good many of the *casado* traders were against the official trading system of the Portuguese, which they found as an obstacle for the free development of their entrepreneurial talents. Some of them even joined hands with Muslim traders and corsairs to attack the fleet of the Portuguese Government. In 1537, the Portuguese *casados* residing in Culimute(?) used to make ships and armaments for Kunjali's men and were helping the latter to enlarge their fleet. The reason for the association of the Portuguese *casados* with the Muslim corsairs and traders was explained by one Diogo Fernandes as due to the Muslim origin of the wives of the *casados*<sup>79</sup>.

By 1550s the rift between the *casado* traders and the official Portuguese structure took wider and serious dimensions: the *casados* entered into a phase of conflict with the mother-country-born-*fidalgos*(nobles), whom the crown preferred in distributing concessions and public offices. The *casados*, who opposed the hegemony of nobles in Portuguese India, even developed a system almost parallel to and relatively independent of mother-country arrangements. By 1559, even a rumour spread that the *Estado da India* (obviously assisted by the *casados*), taking advantage of the presence of Dom Constantino de Braganza, a noble of royal blood as viceroy, had cut ties with Lisbon. The Lisbon administration, being alarmed of the situation, tried to appease the *casados* by reserving some navigational lines for them to conduct regional trade<sup>80</sup>. Later with the liberalization of Indo-European commerce in 1570, the Portuguese *casados* got more freedom and opportunity to extend their empire of

private trade. In fact the Portuguese private traders carved out more space for operation when the Indo-European trade was handed over to the German and Italian contractors during the period between 1570 and 1598.

Interestingly this period also coincided with the phase of state-building activities, which Kunjali Marakkar initiated in Pudupattanam. Kunjali's assumption of the titles "Lord of the Indian Seas" and "King of the Malabar Moors" was only imitation of the title of "*regedor do mar*", which the leader of Cannanore Muslims used to bear in the transformation phase from mercantile stature to kingly stature. A good many of the Muslim merchants took part in the state-building ventures of Kunjali, in which a great share of the mercantile capital, which should have been invested for further commerce and productive ventures, became frozen by diverting it for the establishment of diverse instruments and machineries of state as well as for meeting the expenses of the recurring wars. With the destruction of Pudupattanam by the Luso-Zamorin force, it was, in fact, the surplus accumulated nearly for a century and transplanted into various state-structures that got shattered. The tragic aspect of this transformation process was that a great many of the Muslim traders, linked with the state-building ventures, turned out to be economically poor by the beginning of the seventeenth century and were incapable of undertaking any large-scale commercial activity that involved substantial capital. However, the Portuguese *casado* traders, on their part, made use of this situation to intensify their private trading activities and to penetrate into regions, which had so far been monopolistically held by the Muslim traders<sup>81</sup>.

By this time the flow of spices through the ghat-route to Coromandel ports increased unprecedentedly with the estrangement of the spice-cultivating-cum-mercantile group of St. Thomas Christians from the Portuguese, following the developments after the synod of Diamper in 1599. As we have already seen above, about 19,000 *bhars* of pepper were moving in 1605 to the exchange centers of Tamilnadu from Erumely, Kanjirappilly, Erattupetta (through Kumaly pass), Chalakudy (through Peringalkuthu), Kodakara (through Kormala) and

Palakkad (through Palakkad pass). As a result during the period between 1600 and 1609 the Portuguese did not get spices in Cochin for transshipment to Lisbon. Since this phenomenon of dearth of spices in Cochin continued for a long time, the vessels of *Carreira da India* stopped coming to Cochin to take pepper directly from there from 1611 onwards. With the diminishing supply of pepper in Cochin and with the increasing flow of spices from the hinterland to Coromandel coast through the mountain passes, there commenced a mass exodus of *casados* from 1612 onwards, from Cochin to Nagapattanam, Mylapore and other parts of eastern coast including Bengal, Pegu and Ceylon, to take advantage of the changed situation<sup>82</sup>. As a result of the flow of Portuguese *casados* to the prospective destinations in the eastern space of Indian Ocean from Cochin, the city experienced depopulation and decline of trade. The viceroy D. Jeronimo de Azevedo writes in 1617 that the city-population of Cochin was reduced to one-third<sup>83</sup>. The second and the third decades of the seventeenth century present a contrasting situation: while many of the middle class and lower middle class *casado* traders of the city of Cochin shifted their commercial bases to the Coromandel coast, the rich Portuguese *casados* of Cochin were supporting the tottered structure of the *Estado* by providing huge loans. By 1616 the loan given by them increased to 60,000 *cruzados*, an amount which the Portuguese Exchequer could not repay in the future<sup>84</sup>. Some of these bourgeoisie *casados* were even invited to send *navetas* (ships) carrying a cargo of 2000 quintals of pepper to Portugal every year starting from 1627 onwards<sup>85</sup>.

Thus we find that different mechanisms developed in Malabar as responses to the challenges raised by the entry of the Portuguese into local markets. The Portuguese wanted to keep only the Indo-European trade as a royal monopoly, while the intra-Asian commerce by the *casados* as well as the Malabar traders was allowed to operate in a system, which acknowledged Portuguese commercial hegemony. Both the indigenous traders and the Portuguese private traders used to join hands frequently to expand commercial networks and to open up new markets.

Even in the diversion of commodities from the production centers of Kerala across the ghat to the ports of Coromandel, the hands of the indigenous merchants were active at the starting centers, and those of the *casados* at the terminal points. The merchants and the markets of Malabar reacted differently to the mercantilist means (both coercive and peaceful), which the Portuguese used to control and influence both the producers and the trading partners. The Portuguese attempts to monopolize the trade in spices and other wares, highly valued in Europe, undermined the existing atmosphere of free trade and liberal movement of commodities from Malabar, as a result of which alternative passages, running outside the control system of the Lusitanians, were evolved for the flow of commodities to traditional Red sea-Venice route. In short, though the mercantilist policy of the Portuguese to control the principal markets and their mechanisms through price-fixation and regular payment of protection rent to the rulers of the hinterlands helped the Indo-European commerce of the Portuguese to a great extent, the alternative market-arrangements and trade networks, developed and fed in the inland regions as well as outside by the indigenous traders and often assisted by *casados*, were also operating in a remarkably considerable measure in the frame of intra-Asian trade.

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- 66 Simão Botelho, "Tombo do Estado da Índia(1554)", in *Subsidios para a Historia da Índia Portuguesa*, ed. R.J.de Lima Felner, 1868, Lisboa, p .25; Paduronga S.S.Pissurlencar, *Regimentos das Fortalezas da Índia*, Bastora, 1951,pp.217-219;Vitorino Magalhães Godinho , *Les Finances de L'etat Portugais des Indes Orientales(1517-1635):Materiaux pour une Etude Structurale et Conjoncturelle*, Paris, 1982,pp.306-308;Francisco da Costa in Antonio da Silva Rego, *Documentação Ultramarina Portuguesa*, vol.III, Lisboa, 1963,p.310
- 67 Simão Botelho, op.cit.,p.25. From 1564 onwards he was given 200 *pardaos*. See for details Paduronga S.S.Pissurlencar,op.cit.,pp.217-219; Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Les Finances*, pp.306-308
- 68 From 1564 onwards she was given 100 *pardaos* as annuity. See for details Paduronga S.S.Pissurlencar, op.cit.,pp.217-219; Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Les Finances*, pp.306-308. However Francisco da Costa says that in 1605 the amount given to her was 220 *xerafins*, which must have been her annual share after the transfer of the seat of Vadakkenkur kingdom from Kaduthuruthy to Thodupuzha in 1600. Francisco da Costa, op.cit.,p.310
- 69 Simão Botelho, op.cit.,p.25. From 1564 onwards they were given 200 *pardaos* each. See Paduronga S.S.Pissurlencar,op.cit.,pp.217-219; Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Les Finances*, pp.306-308; However in 1605 the amount given to them was 240 *xerafins*. Francisco da Costa, op.cit.,p.310
- 70 Paduronga S.S.Pissurlencar,op.cit.,pp.217-219; Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Les Finances*, pp.306-308; In 1605 the amount given to each of them was 120 *xerafins* each. Francisco da Costa, op.cit.,p.310
- 71 Simão Botelho, op.cit.,p.25;Paduronga S.S.Pissurlencar,op.cit.,pp.217-219;Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Les Finances*, pp.306-308; Francisco da Costa, op.cit.,p.310
- 72 Francisco da Costa, op.cit.,pp.310;312
- 73 See Caesar Frederick in Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*,vol.V, Giasgow, 1905, p.392
- 74 Francisco da Costa, op.cit.,p.315
- 75 Fürstlich und Gräfllich Fuggersches Familien und Stiftungs Archiv, Dillingen/Donau, 46.I, The Letter of Ferdinand Cron sent from Cochin, dated 2-12-1587; Pius Malekandathil, *The Germans, the Portuguese and India*, p.89
- 76 Francisco da Costa, op.cit.,p.315
- 77 Jan Kieniewicz, "Asian Merchants and European Expansion: Malabar Pepper Trade Routes in the Indian ocean World System in the Sixteenth Century", in Karl Reinhold Haellquist(ed), *Asian Trade Routes: Continental and Maritime* (Studies on Asian Topics No.13), London, 1991,p.79
- 78 Pius Malekandathil, "Portuguese *Casados* and the Intra-Asian Trade", pp.4-6; For the details on the flow of new Christians from Portugal to India to escape from inquisitorial trial see Jose Alberto Rodrigues da Silva Tavim, "Outras Gentes em outras Rotas: Judeus e Cristãos novos de Cochim- entre Santa Cruz de Cochim e Mattancherry , entre o Imperio Portugese e o Medio Oriente", A Paper presented in *VIII Seminario Internacional de Historia Indo-Portuguesa*, Angra de Heroismo , 7-11 June, 1996,pp.4-9

- 79 Gaspar Correia, *Lendas da Índia*, tom.II,p.830;tom.III,p.712. The exact geographical location of Culimute could not be identified. It could be Calmutão which Georg Schurhammer identified as Muttamura in Travancore. See Georg Schurhammer, *Die Zeitgenössischen Quellen zur Geschichte Portugiesisch-Asiens und seiner Nachbarländer zur Zeit des hl. Franz Xaver, 1539-1552*,vol.I,Leipzig,, 1962, nr.6147,pp.461 and 540; ANTT, *Corpo Cronologico*, II, Maço 211, doc.65, fols.5-6. The Letter of Diogo Fernandes to D.John III dated 1-6-1537; See also Jorge Manuel Costa da Silva Flores, *Os Portugueses e o Mar de Ceilão 1498-1543: Trato, Diplomacia, e Guerra*, Dissertação de Mestrado em Historia dos Descobrimentos e da Expansão Portuguesa presented to the Faculdade de Ciencias Sociais e Humanas da Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 1991,pp.200-205
- 80 Luis Filipe Thomaz, "A Crise de 1565-1575 na Historia do Estado da India ", in *Mare Liberum*, No.9, July 1995,pp.503-508; Pius Malekandathil," Portuguese *Casados* and Intra-Asian Trade", pp.8-9
- 81 Pius Malekandathil, From Merchant Capitalists to Corsairs, pp.17- 23
- 82 AHU, Caixas da India, Caixa 2, doc.107. The Letter of the municipal council of Cochin sent to Philip II(Philip III of Spain) giving account of the economic condition of Cochin, dated 21-12-1613; Pius Malekandathil, "Portuguese *Casados* and Intra-Asian Trade",pp.13-115; For the volume of pepper going through mountain passes from the inland markets to Coromandel coast see Supra no.76
- 83 HAG, Livro das Monções , no.12(1613-1617), fols.254-280, dated March 1617. See also AHU, Caixas da India, Caixa 3, doc.29 dated 25-1-1615; Caixa 3, doc.31, dated 25-1-1615.
- 84 AHU, Caixas da India, Caixa 2, doc.89, fols.1-4;11-15, dated 27-1-1613; Caixa 3, doc.174, dated 2-1-1616 ; Sanjay Subrahmanyam,"Cochin in Decline, 1600-1650: Myth and Manipulation in the *Estado da India*", in Roderich Ptak(ed.), *Portuguese Asia: Aspects in History and Economic History*, Stuttgart, 1987, pp.65-79
- 85 BNL, Cod.No.11410, fols.173-178.Contract to send *navetas* from Cochin to Lisbon.