

INDIA, THE PORTUGUESE AND MARITIME INTERACTIONS

Science, Economy and Urbanity

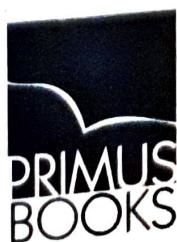
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Continuity or Change? Regimes of Trade and Empire in Coastal Karnataka, AD 1000–1700

Nagendra Rao

Introduction

THE PORTUGUESE ENTRY in the Indian landscape has been considered as the beginning of a new era. It is true that the Portuguese arrival led to significant social, political, economic, and cultural changes. Nevertheless, the Portuguese should not be considered as the first foreign element that was introduced in the Indian subcontinent. In actuality, since ancient times, India has experienced interaction with the outside world including the Greeks, Parthians, Iranians, Hunas, and other Central Asian tribes. India was an important part of the Silk Trade routes. In the early medieval period, a composite multicultural society had emerged. In the medieval period, Muslims who migrated from central Asia introduced the most important change in the form of the new religion, and they established new cultural forms, which had significant impact on the Indian society, economy, and polity. As a matter of fact, the Delhi Sultanate affected the closed economy that had emerged in the post Gupta years. The Portuguese and the other Europeans can be considered as one of the foreign groups that had migrated to India and become part of the Indian culture. The Muslims who came to India realized the need for assimilation with the Indian culture. Not surprisingly, it was expected that the Portuguese would mingle with the Indian society like their predecessors. Indian kings cannot be blamed for not envisaging the future colonialism because it was expected that Europeans, like other foreigners, would become part of India, competing with local powers for domination. Nevertheless, there is difference between the Portuguese and other Europeans. The Portuguese could not establish a vast empire, unlike the British in later

years. The Portuguese *Estado da Índia* was mostly confined to a comparatively small territory called Goa. The Portuguese could not expand their influence towards other parts of the western coast with the exception of the Malabar region, albeit for a brief period.¹ The reason for this Portuguese failure should be analysed, not only on the basis of a study of the Portuguese regime but also of other contemporary regimes. It is in this context that one questions a pure Eurocentric interpretation of the Portuguese rule in India. In the context of Kerala, it is seen that the Portuguese did not possess the necessary work force and institutions to dominate this region.² The Portuguese were involved with several conflicts with local dynasties, but they could never annihilate them. One needs to refer not only to Portuguese sources but also to large numbers of indigenous records in order to assess the nature of the relationship between the Portuguese and the local kingdoms of coastal Karnataka.

Historiography

Many scholars have analysed the nature of the relationship between the Portuguese and the indigenous rulers. Majority of works have depended on Portuguese sources. One needs to accept the fact that Portuguese records form an important category of source, but it should not be considered as the only one available to study the political and economic history of various regions of western coastal India. This is because even after the arrival of the Portuguese, the Marathas continued to remain a potent force in the northern part of western coastal India, while the Vijayanagara and the Keladi dynasty of coastal Karnataka dominated the southern part. It is important to locate and describe change and continuity with reference to pre- and post-Portuguese rule in coastal Karnataka. At the same time, it is not appropriate to ignore Portuguese sources. One cannot do without referring to Portuguese sources, implying the need for a balanced and impassionate approach towards all sources. It is found that European scholars have ignored the Indian sources while Indian scholars have undermined the importance of the European sources. At the same time, it is not possible to categorize works based on the sources used, as large numbers of works have used a combination of sources. Nevertheless, some works have predominantly depended on European sources.

The works of Shastry,³ Ahmad,⁴ Arasaratnam,⁵ Bouchon,⁶ Chaudhuri,⁷ Pearson,⁸ Rothermund,⁹ and Steensgaard¹⁰ can be considered

as those that predominantly depended on the European sources. Ahmad showed the nature of relationship between the Kanara ports and the Portuguese dominated ports. It is seen that the ports of coastal Karnataka benefited from their relationship with the Portuguese. The Portuguese who confronted the traders of Malabar had to divert their attention towards coastal Karnataka. Bouchon also exhibits the confrontation between the Portuguese and the indigenous people of Malabar. B.S. Shastry presented a detailed study of the Portuguese relationship with coastal Karnataka. The work comprises various sections such as the Portuguese arrival in India and Kanara, the role of Gerusoppa authorities in the Portuguese capture of Goa, the Portuguese attempts to take over Bhatkal, Portuguese fortresses on the Kanara coast, etc. The work gives considerable importance to Portuguese relationship with Keladi Nayakas. It is interesting to note that there is a chapter on Portuguese trade and commerce with Kanara.¹¹ The work shows that the Portuguese attempted to establish domination over coastal Karnataka. It is true that for a brief period the Portuguese were able to establish their authority over this region when the Nayakas of Ikkeri or Keladi failed to fight them. Nevertheless, in the seventeenth century, the indigenous rulers succeeded in regaining their control. This shows that the Portuguese could register short term impact on coastal Karnataka. However, a large part of Shastry's work depends on Portuguese sources. The actual impact of Portuguese devastation can be known by the study of indigenous records.

One such notable scholar who has analysed the nature of Portuguese rule in the Kanara region is Sanjay Subrahmanyam, whose work is highly appreciated because he has comprehended the need to utilize European as well as indigenous sources.

K.G. Vasanthamadhava¹² and K.V. Ramesh¹³ are reputed historians of coastal Karnataka, and one needs to note that they made a substantial contribution to the study of the region, and take into account their seminal contribution to the study of southern part of coastal Karnataka. For example, Vasanthamadhava has dealt with not only Portuguese sources but also inscriptions. In a way, he has attempted to reduce the limitations of the work of B.S. Shastry who concentrated only on the Portuguese sources. K.V. Ramesh is another historian who studied large numbers of inscriptions, and in fact, in the field of epigraphy he made substantial studies, which have enriched the historiographical tradition of the region. Nevertheless, these scholars have failed to analyse the process of interaction between the world of the Portuguese and the world of indigenous political and economic authorities.

The Region, Setting and Economy

Coastal Karnataka is situated on the western coast of India; it has a continuity with Konkan coast and Malabar. With them, it also shares dominant traditions such as the Parashurama myth. There are both similarities and differences between the Konkan coast, coastal Karnataka, and Malabar. In the distant past, the Konkan coast and Karnataka were under a single political hegemony, even though after the fifteenth century, their separate identity was acknowledged, and this development took place with the rise of Marathas and the Portuguese in the Konkan region. Coastal Karnataka has Arabian Sea as the border on the west, and this factor enabled this region to maintain contact with traders of other regions. It is not surprising that the Portuguese understood the importance of western coast of India and attempted to introduce their administrative system in this region, even though they did not entirely succeed in achieving their mission. Apart from the sea, coastal Karnataka has several rivers such as Kali River, Netravati, Gurupur River, Sitanadi and Suvarnanadi. Due to the rocky nature of the terrain, these rivers remain navigable only during a limited part of the year, particularly when the water level is high. During the rest of the year when the water level is low, navigation becomes difficult and at times, impossible, often leading to a breakdown of communication between the coastal people and those on the ghats. The ghat roads remain the only option for descending to the coastal regions.¹⁴ The people of the interior region had to depend on the coastal belt in order to export their commodities to the foreign countries. Consequently, various kingdoms such as Kadambas, Hoysalas, and Vijayanagara gave importance to the control of the coastal regions. But, as Burton Stein states, kingdoms such as Vijayanagara failed to exploit maritime potentials of this region.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the people of the region are known for their enterprising spirit, as seen by the large numbers of *cartazes* that were issued to the traders of this region.

The region can be divided into ports or trade centres and the hinterland. In most of the coastal centres, there was an emergence of Hinduism while interior regions were known for Jainism, perhaps with the exception of Barkur and Basarur. The latter was a great port, which was studied in detail by Sanjay Subrahmanyam¹⁶ and K.G. Vasanthamadhava.¹⁷ One can consider the region as an agriculture based state. This is because agricultural production constituted the largest revenue yielding occupation, assisting kings in collecting taxes. Large numbers of inscriptions refer to temple grants, as well as to remission

of agricultural taxes. At the same time, the kings allowed traders to trade in different items. The traders of the interior regions were unaffected by the Portuguese contact. For example, there is reference to the Queen of Ullala 'revolting' against the Portuguese while the Kings of Karkala continued to remain autonomous from Portuguese control. The Portuguese followed the policy of controlling the coastal region while tolerating independence of kings of interior regions. It is showed by the works of other historians that the Portuguese strategy backfired, as they were able to control neither the coastal belt nor the interior regions, contributing to ultimate demise of the Portuguese power in the region, as in other parts of the country. For example, when the Marathas established their navy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Portuguese had already become weak due to competition from other ambitious European powers such as the Dutch who had established their control over the interior parts of the country. It is found that the British could establish their control over the country due to their control of not only the sea but also the land as found in the regions such as Bengal. This shows that the Portuguese strategy was defective, particularly in the regions such as the western coast where they attempted to establish their domination by insisting on the passport system.¹⁸ The typical geographical features of the region allowed the administrators to maintain their autonomy, even though for a brief period the Portuguese could establish their control over the region. Rice was an important staple food which was produced in the region. An inferior variety of rice was also imported from outside, and it is possible that the traders of coastal Karnataka supplied finer and coarse varieties of rice to the Portuguese and west Asia.

Coastal Karnataka possessed various ports, which welcomed people from different parts of Karnataka. People in the region speak various languages such as Kannada, Tulu, and Konkani, and this multicultural mix could accommodate large numbers of traders belonging to different parts of the world. It is not surprising that a few Kannada documents have been discovered in the Historical Archives of Goa and in the collections of the Xavier Centre of Historical Research, showing continuity of cultural and economic relationship between Goa and coastal Karnataka.¹⁹

Agricultural production and trade were the chief occupations of the people, with agricultural production forming the revenue base of a majority of the population. The region is known for a reasonable fertility of soil and sufficient rainfall. On the riverbanks, there was emergence of Brahmana settlements, which became the source of

agrarian expansion. The regional historical traditions *Gramapakkhati* and *Sahyadri Khanda* mention the growth of Brahmana settlements as found in other parts of the western coast.²⁰ The agrarian base contributed to the rise of trading centres that dealt with internal and external trades. The interior trade centres such as Karakala, Mudabidare and Bantwal were known for internal trade while the ports such as Bhatkal, Honnavar, Basarur, and Mangalore were known for external contacts. Apart from agriculture and trade, there is also reference to craft production, but the latter was not a major occupation as it is showed that artisans such as textile weavers, barbers, and potters had migrated from other parts of India. The region was not known for high quality craft goods. For example, finer varieties of textiles were imported from other parts of Karnataka, Andhra, and Tamil Nadu. It is possible that this technology was imported from these regions.

Land became the defining feature of production relationship in the region. Elite communities understood the importance of ownership of large tracts of land. It was owned by both brahmanical and non-brahmanical groups. There is evidence to state that temples had emerged as important land owning institutes. It is interesting to note that traders also possessed large areas of land. As landowners, they could produce crops and the surplus of which could be traded. According to an English document, there were large numbers of people in this region who traded their surplus rice produce for other commodities. It is clear that surplus production was the basis of rice trade, as the traders could export rice to regions where it was deficit. The interaction between surplus and deficit regions contributed to the rise of considerable links between different regions. It is these links, which affected the Portuguese ability to control traders in this region. Apart from rice, there was the production of different agricultural goods such as coconut, areca nut, pepper, cardamom, chillies, sugar cane, tobacco, betel leaf, cotton, and ginger.²¹ It is possible that some commodities such as pepper and other spice varieties were imported from other parts of Karnataka and Malabar.

Indigenous Political Structure and its Impact on Economy

Even though the aim of this essay is to analyse the economic history of the premodern phase of this region, it is also important to briefly look into its political history as there are significant relations between

political developments and economic changes. The region of south-western India was ruled, since early years of the Christian era, by a dynasty called Alupas until fourteenth century AD when there was emergence of the Vijayanagara.²² Hence, the political history of the region can be broadly divided into pre-Vijayanagara and Vijayanagara periods. In the early centuries of Christian era, the Alupas established their rule in this region. Since the seventh century AD, inscriptions are available that refer to the achievements of Alupas, who were able to control regions such as Mangalore and Barkur. Over a period, there was consolidation of political authority over this region.

Another significant aspect of the inscriptions is the reference to establishment of Brahmana settlements as they were encouraged presumably to legitimize the authority of the state.²³ In the interior regions, kings tolerated traders' settlements. Consequently, the interior regions such as Karkala and Mudabidire experienced development of Jaina settlements while most of the coastal regions witnessed the developments associated with classical Hinduism, which is represented in the form of construction of temples and mathas.

The Alupas had to contend with various local principalities, the chiefdoms. The reference to these chiefdoms shows that Alupas failed to establish a centralized state authority. They had to share their power with the local principalities. The polity, therefore, can be characterized as feudal, instead of being centralized. In actuality, the features of the state emerged only in the sixth century AD, when the inscriptions refer to collection of taxes. The early inscriptions are short *prashastis* (eulogies) that attempt to exhibit the growing state authority.²⁴ The later inscriptions become more detailed, and show the differences in the authorities of Alupas and Vijayanagara. Even though Hoysalas controlled this region, they failed to completely over power local principalities. The Vijayanagara captured this region and appointed their officials in the form of governors in Mangalore and Barkur.²⁵ This shows changes in the political character of the region. Decisions began to be taken more at the centre than at the regional level. The Vijayanagara monarchs possessed the firepower to dominate the regions even though the kings conceded some autonomy to the governors of Barkur and Mangalore.

The Vijayanagara period witnessed developments such as expansion of Brahmana settlements and construction of temples and *mathas*. The Madhwa tradition, among Hindus, became popular during this period. The bhakti philosophy that was propagated by Acharyas in different regions must have contributed to this development.²⁶ However, the post-

Vijayanagara period represented a return to feudal developments, as during this period one hears more about local principalities sharing powers with the centre. The local principalities such as Bangas and rulers of Ullala represent the feudal structure of the region. The lack of central authority is revealed by the fact that Queen Abbakka Devi of Ullala fights against the Portuguese.²⁷ In this phase, the Keladi Nayakas also emerged as a potent force attempting to resist the Portuguese venture into this region.

The traders had to accommodate the political and the resultant social changes. For example, the political instability of the region was accompanied by another important development—the coming of Europeans. The political history of the region shows prevalence of feudal-unitary-feudal cycle. The region attempted to break the shackles of feudal political authority but could not completely achieve this objective. It is in this political equation that one has to locate trade in the region. It can be noted that despite lack of centralization, trade prospered due to strategic location of ports and other trade centres.

It is important to know the attitude of state towards trade and other economic categories.

The region under study, i.e. coastal Karnataka is situated on the western coast, which, from ancient times was known for trading activities, both internal and external. The region maintained trade contact with the Greco-Roman world. In the post-ninth-century period, there was a further fillip to trade with the emergence of Arab traders. As far as internal trade is concerned, sources refer to the transport of commodities such as food grains, cotton, areca nut, and pepper to ports of west coast. Either these commodities were consumed in the local markets—for there are references to local bazaars dealing in essential commodities such as food grain and cloth—or they were exported to west Asia.

The state needed traders due to two reasons. One, traders supported urban demography, as there are references to the emergence of urban centres such as Mangalore, Buntwal, Barkur, Basrur, Karkala, Mudabidre, Venur, Baindoor, and Gangolli. Some of them were internal trade centres, while others such as Mangalore and Basrur catered to the needs of international market. Second, traders enhanced state's revenue base, as the state was able to impose and collect tolls. According to K.G. Vasanthamadhava, sources such as inscriptions refer to the *sunkathanes* or custom houses.²⁸ Even internal trade was beneficial to the state as it imposed taxes on shops and merchant houses. This situation is seen particularly under Vijayanagara, which controlled both the western

coast as well as the eastern coast, leading to enhanced dependence of the state on trade, particularly on the western coast. Traders became important for Vijayanagara due to the need to obtain war horses.²⁹ The importance was obviously appreciated by Vijayanagara rulers as they appointed officials called *Shanubhogas* to supervise revenue administration in the ports, such as, Basrur.

One can note the emergence of a different regime of polity and trade that was managed and monitored by the indigenous rulers and officials. Even though the state could not control the coast, it could interact with the ghat regions, and the coastal part of Karnataka received large numbers of commodities from the ghat regions. Indigenous rulers controlled the internal trade while the Portuguese managed the overseas trade even though they could not completely dominate the ocean. In the thirteenth century, the state imposed and collected taxes on salt, pepper, ginger, paddy, and rice.³⁰ A fifteenth-century inscription refers to collection of custom duties in Mangalore.³¹ By the sixteenth century, toll collection and tax on shops had become an established practice. A seventeenth-century inscription refers to collection of custom duty on tassel, silk, areca nut, pepper, bamboo baskets, grain, rice, paddy, ragi, jiggery, oil, and ghee.³² A late-seventeenth-century inscription also refers to the existence of *sunkathanes* or custom stations at a place called Sullia.³³ Incidentally, this place acted as a link between producing centres in the ghats and exchange centres in the coastal region. The place name Sunkadakatte points to the practice of collection of taxes in this place. *Sunka* or toll is mentioned in the Tulu folklore. Rice was a major item produced in south-western India. The land was fertile, with irrigational facilities, which allowed agriculturists to produce several crops, and contribute to the economy of the region. Sources refer to the production of items, such as, rice, coconut, areca nut, cashew nut, pepper, sugar, jaggery, wooden and metal tools, cloth, coir, salt, and oil. This shows that both agricultural and non-agricultural (craft) goods were produced by agriculturists and artisans.

Economy and Society

Agriculture, craft production, and trade were the mainstay of the economy of this region. Due to its favourable geographical location and natural amenities, the peasants were able to produce surplus agricultural goods, which in turn enabled rich peasants to indulge in trading activities. Craft production can be considered as a minor economic activity, for the artisans exhibited less expertise in this field compared

to artisans of other regions belonging to peninsular India. The study region is not known for high quality artisanal products. The artisans, in actuality, migrated from other parts of peninsular India, including Karnataka, and they contributed to the artisanal production in this region.³⁴

Trade emerged as an important activity, based on surplus agricultural goods and due to its strategic location. It is interesting to note that rice, while being a food item, became a commercial crop, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam has convincingly proved this development in his article on rice trade in Basrur.³⁵ The region includes ports such as Mangalore and Basrur, which were visited by foreign traders including Greeks, Arabs, and Portuguese. In the ancient times, the ports maintained trade contact with Greco-Roman world. In the post-tenth-century period, the Arabs and Muslims from west Asia visited the ports, which resulted in the emergence of their settlements in regions such as Mangalore and Bhatkal. The indigenous traders include, Jains, Saraswats, and Hindu population. The foreign traders participated in external trade. Foreign travellers such as Ibn Battūta, Duarte Barbosa, Peitro Della Valle and others have described contemporary economic developments during this period.³⁶ Traders of the region showed interest in participating in international trade. Craft production, agricultural production, and trade were important economic activities of the region, leading to close relationships between the state, the producers, and the merchants. The Portuguese were the most dominant of all European traders, even though after the sixteenth century they lost their prominence in the region.

Trading Communities

One could find two types of traders, i.e. local traders and itinerant traders, like in other parts of South India. The local traders were found in internal trade centres such as Karkala, Buntwal, and Mudabidare, where the traders were practicing Jainas. Even today, there are several Jaina settlements in these internal trade centres. The coastal trade centres such as Gangolli, Basrur, and Mangalore attracted settlements of itinerant traders such as Jews, Muslims, and Saraswats. The itinerant traders established their own associations, which are equated with modern trader associations. For instance, *hanjamana* was a trade guild of Muslim traders, even though Jews were also associated with this trade guild. A seventeenth-century inscription refers to grant of land to

a Saraswat trader who migrated from Goa, precisely from a place called Jayavarni grama.³⁷

In the western coast, there is reference to Muslim traders called Navayats, meaning new comers, obviously referring to Arabs who had settled in the region. It is possible that Arabs assimilated with the local culture through conversions and marriages, leading to the emergence of a local Muslim community called Mapillas, that later challenged Portuguese dominance in south India.³⁸ The state had to deal with the problem of Muslim pirates on the western coast. In the fourteenth century, the Hoysala king Vira Ballala III sent his general Ankeya Nayaka to monitor pirates' activities.³⁹

The local traders were called *Settikara*. They took part in agricultural production as well as trade, as inscriptions refer to them in the context of agrarian fields. It is possible that *Settikaras* traded in surplus agricultural produce. In the locality, they had emerged dominant, as proved by inscriptions belonging to regions such as Karkala and Mudabidure. In these regions, *Settikaras* donated to Jaina religious institutions. *Nakhara* was a trade guild, which dealt with overseas trade. *Nakhara* and *hanjamana* were present in coastal trade centres such as Barkur and Basrur. It appears that during the Vijayanagara period *hanjamana* guild became prominent, particularly due to the demand for horses as war animals.⁴⁰ Local and itinerant trade guilds made significant contributions to temple-based urbanism, wherein urban complexes emerged due to donations to Brahmanical temples and Jaina *basadis*. The kings' donation to temples and *basadis* can be considered as an attempt to obtain legitimacy from the local people.⁴¹ This is seen particularly in internal trade centres where Jainism had emerged as a dominant religious sect, thereby compelling the Vijayanagara and Keladi kings to encourage temple construction and maintenance.

Trade Network

As in other parts of India, the south-western part maintained economic ties with trade centres of western and eastern coasts. It was part of the Kanara zone, which was one of the four zones of the west coast. The other zones were Gujarat, Konkan, and Malabar.⁴² South-western India maintained links with Malabar, Konkan, and Gujarat. The Kanara coast supplied a variety of rice and pepper to Malabar and Konkan. The region maintained close relationships with the international trade centres of the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea region. To reach the

Persian Gulf, the traders obtained *cartazes* or the passports from the Portuguese. In *Livros do cartazes* (Book of Sailing Permits), a Portuguese document, there is reference to a large number of Hindu and Muslim traders carrying goods from the Kanara region to international destinations. The coming of the Europeans did not alter the dominant position of local traders particularly in the Asian trade.

The Structure of European Trade

The use of the term 'European trade' is deliberate here to show that the Portuguese were one of the European powers that entered coastal Karnataka. They needed to vie with other Europeans for authority, and it is revealed that it was the Dutch and the English who ultimately wrested power from the Portuguese.

After AD 1500, one can refer to a large number of Portuguese documents that give information concerning trade in the Kanara region. This period is significant due to the rise of various dynasties such as the Vijayanagara and the Keladi kingdom. Another important development was the emergence of the Europeans such as the Portuguese, English, and the Dutch. The Portuguese were influential in most parts of the period under study. It is only in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries that one can note a decline in the role of the Portuguese in trade in coastal Karnataka. Nevertheless, the Portuguese were not the only factor that determined the trade pattern in coastal Karnataka. The local traders were important, even though they had to take permission from the Portuguese authorities to sail to the international ports of the Middle East. Overall, the period can be divided into three sections:

1. The pre-Vijayanagara period
2. The Vijayanagara period
3. The post-Vijayanagara period

Trade existed even in the pre-Vijayanagara period. Inscriptions of this period refer to trade, traders, commercial centres, and trade guilds. In the Vijayanagara period, the Vijayanagara kings determined the state policies. In the post-Vijayanagara period, both local dynasties and the European powers played a significant role in trade in the region. It is in the post-Vijayanagara period that one notes a significant role of the European traders. Nevertheless, the Indian traders continued to dominate the pattern of trade in the region.

European traders are separately treated in this essay as they

represented new economic, cultural, and social symbols. They represented emergence of considerable changes in economy, polity, and society. The Portuguese were the most dominant of all European traders, even though after the sixteenth century they lost their prominence in the region to the political power represented by the Keladi dynasty. The precolonial European connection benefited traders of the region as they were able to export their goods to different parts of the world. In this sense, south-western India became part of the 'world system' with the arrival of Europeans.

Along with the Portuguese presence, one can note the presence of the English and the Dutch. It is not possible to accept the arguments of Van Leur and Neils Steensgaard concerning the nature of premodern trade in India. They seemed to suggest that Asian trade was static and dominated by the peddlers. Historians have refuted arguments of these scholars.⁴³ A study of the pattern of trade in the study region indicates that traders made necessary adjustments in order to suit political and economic challenges. In this way, competition can be considered as an important feature of trade in the Indian Ocean. Significant differences between the Portuguese and English and Dutch can be noted. The Portuguese administration is considered as a redistributive enterprise as it played the role of custom houses collecting taxes from the traders. At the same time, it is not correct to say that the Portuguese system was entirely different from the English and the Dutch systems. The Europeans who were powerful on the sea exhibited their weakness on the land. Use of violence can be seen in the context of the European traders who had to interact with hostile elements in the Indian Ocean trade network.⁴⁴ The Europeans aimed at exploiting opportunities available in the Indian Ocean to enhance their capital. In spite of the presence of the Europeans, the Indian traders continued to prosper. The large numbers of small traders were able to deal with the European passport system. The items of trade did not remain constant. The south Kanara traders dealt with commodities such as rice and pepper. There were fluctuations in the quantity of goods that were traded. This is proved by a study of the Portuguese document *Livros do cartazes*.⁴⁵ Fluctuations in the volume of trade were mainly due to political conditions. The European traders were compelled to enter into agreements with the local rulers and traders. In actuality, the political changes emerged due to conflicts among the local Indian princes and their dynasties. For example, the Maratha attacks on the Basrur port were responsible for its eventual decline. This can be compared with the decline of Surat due to the decline of the Mughals.

Broadly, trade history of the region can be divided into pre-European and European, even though chronologically they overlap. For example, local traders continued to participate in trading activities both during pre-European and European period, but the character of trade changed with the arrival of Europeans. This is due to the sea power enjoyed by the Portuguese and English who were able to control maritime trade. Nevertheless, the Muslim traders continued to resist European domination on the sea. This shows that in precolonial period, indigenous traders remained dominant. The Indian traders were known for their competitive abilities. In the absence of antagonistic duty structure, traders had to survive in an uncertain economic atmosphere. This benefited the local traders more than the outsiders. European traders failed to establish uniform structure and pattern of exploitation of local traders, both regional and overseas. This is because the local kings continued to resist European domination. This struggle continued until the defeat of Tipu Sultan, the king of Mysore, who ruled coastal Karnataka, in late eighteenth century. In the early nineteenth century, south-western India became a part of the colonial world, which implied changes in the trade structure.

The Portuguese implemented the system of *cartazes* in western Indian coastal trade to generate revenue through 'permit fees' collected from traders wishing to visit diverse ports under Portuguese control.⁴⁶ The mechanism also helped the Portuguese to monitor regional trade movements. While the Portuguese exercised considerable authority along the western coast of the Indian subcontinent, on the eastern coast they were not a formidable power. In the west, their influence asserted itself in part through the patrolling operations of the Portuguese *armada* or navy, which sought to guarantee the safety of Portuguese and allied ships from pirate attacks and maritime rivals. Indigenous rulers likewise attempted to enforce trade controls, through customs duties collected in the *sunkathane* stations. Indigenous fiscal authority, however, was invariably exercised in the interior urban centres, not in the coastal areas: this was the case, for instance, of the permit fee known as *rahadari sunka*.⁴⁷

The implementation of the *cartaz* system in the context of a well-established local system of customs measures implied in a sense that the *Estado da Índia* had assumed an obligation to defend traders' lives and possessions. The Portuguese attempts to control trade, however, also revolved around a conscious policy to thwart competing Muslim merchants and to hinder their access to Kanara ports. The Portuguese settlements on the western coast—Goa, Bhatkal, Honnavar, Basrur, and

Mangalore—required an inflow of commodities such as rice and spices, both to survive and to export surplus cargo to international markets. However, the Portuguese rarely succeeded in rigorously imposing the *cartaz* system, owing to pressures from local Muslim Mapilla traders of the Malabar, strengthened by their contacts with Arab trading communities. A *cartaz* was valid for only one year, and was subject to a fee payable to the Portuguese officials. The fee was higher for ships bound for overseas voyages and lower for vessels involved in coastal trade. The fee structure probably reflected higher anticipated returns from long distance commerce, while the lower earning potential of petty coastal trade limited licensing returns.⁴⁸ *Cartazes* for overseas traffic were issued solely in Goa, whereas permits for coastal trade could be obtained at any Portuguese factory or fortress. Luís Filipe Thomaz identified three key categories of control embodied in the system: strategic control, aimed at embargoing spice flows through the Red Sea route; political control, aimed at harming the enemies of the *Estado da Índia*; and fiscal control, aimed at protecting Crown monopolies and implementing the taxation forcibly imposed by the Portuguese on some types of trade. Further, Thomaz suggested that the system also possessed a certain social purpose—to restrain the activities of private Portuguese merchants and prevent soldiers from becoming traders.⁴⁹

The contents of the Portuguese *cartaz* can be divided into two categories. First, it specified indispensable identification and administrative details: the name of the vessel, its owner, the number of masts, tonnage, equipment, crew, pilot, and captain guns mounted, number of soldiers, and so on. Second, it laid down a number of conditions that the grantee of a *cartaz* was required to observe. If any of the conditions were breached, the ship concerned was liable to confiscation with all goods and crew.⁵⁰

In the seventeenth century, the importance of the *cartaz* system on the western coast increased. The period was one of Portuguese ascendancy at sea, even if not on land, where the emergence of the Keladi kingdom prevented the Portuguese from asserting their influence. The large number of *cartazes* issued during this period suggests that many of south-western India's traders, both petty and substantial, perceived participation in Portuguese trade network as lucrative. In 1602, a Portuguese *cartaz* was issued to a trader from Basrur, a western coast port, authorizing him to carry rice to Hormuz. As Sanjay Subrahmanyam suggests, this *cartaz* exemplifies the period's mercantile dynamics: 'we have here a ship owned by a Hindu merchant, but whose *nakhauda* was a Muslim, and on which a large number of Muslim

merchants freighted space'. After AD 1700, however, the majority of *cartazes* issued by the Portuguese and recorded in the *Livros do cartazes* were issued to Kanarese merchants of south-western India.⁵¹

Conclusion

The two regimes differed from each other in more than one sense. Politically, the Portuguese state can be considered as maritime based while indigenous polity can be considered as agrarian based. During most of the period of interaction between the Portuguese and indigenous rulers, the local states continued to remain agriculture based, even though the process of transition from agrarian based to maritime based state was initiated. The interaction between Portuguese and indigenous trade was interesting because they belonged to different worlds and they attempted to dominate different domains. While the Portuguese dominated the world of overseas trade, the local regimes dominated internal trade. The Portuguese became one of the several groups of traders that had already been established in this region. It is not that the Portuguese did not face any challenge in this region. There was continuity in the sense that the political structure of indigenous regimes remained the same. The Vijayanagara state was not bothered about trade, as it depended on agricultural resources. The Keladi Kingdom underwent changes by interacting with the Portuguese regime, leading to the emergence of an ambiguous relationship between the two. The Indo-Portuguese trade in coastal Karnataka can be considered as precolonial in character, failing to establish its decisive stamp on the region. This is because the Portuguese followed a faulty strategy of controlling the coast while tolerating autonomous regimes, and the Portuguese state could not completely establish its system in the west coast during any point in time. It could not bear aggression by the Keladi Kingdom and the Marathas, leading to its ultimate decline in the region. To understand the nature of the Portuguese trade in the west coast, it is important to analyse not only the nature of the Portuguese political economy but also the political structure of native regimes that responded to the challenge posed by the new order.

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