

Overseas trade links with the west coast and Malenadu during the Vijayanagara period

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Abstract:

"The western Ghats played important role in the advancement of commercial superiority of Indian sub-continent in ancient past. The western Ghats region of Karnataka is featured with heavy rainfall, so the local name for this area is called The Malenadu, which means land of rainfall. This Malenadu region is comprised of the Karnataka districts like Belgaum, North Canara, South Canara, Shimoga, Chikkamagalure, Coorg and Parts of Hassan. The main crops of this region are, Paddy, Spicy products, Coffee and tea, which have perennial demand in African, Middle East and European countries. The added advantages of this area is the coastal region of Karnataka in Arabian sea with number of natural and artificial sea ports. The rulers of South India and particularly, Vijayanagara, Keladi, Ikkeri rulers, Wodyers of Mysore and Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan developed close trading relationship with western and Arab trader by providing all facilities in their respective rule. In this article, effort is made to analyses and decipher the trading relation and condition of agriculture and its demand in western world."

Key Words: Western Ghats, Malenadu, Coastal region, Spicy products, Sea Ports,

Adjacent to the western coast of South India is the Western Ghats range and the inland region known as the Malenadu, a thickly forested and richly resourced region known for a wide variety of food and commercial crops. Soraba, Sagara, Hosanagar, Tirthahalli taluks of Shimoga district and Koppa Sringeri, Mudigere and Chikkamagaluru taluks of Chikkamagaluru district fall under the range of hill area. These regions have a unique cultural heritage and were under the jurisdiction of several royal families in the ancient, medieval and modern eras. In the present article, an attempt has been made to explain the factors that foreign traders, tourists and ambassadors witnessed in Malenadu and Western Karavarali during the Vijayanagara period.

The Malenadu of the Vijayanagara period were densely forested and connected to the west coast by footpaths and roads through the most inaccessible hills and valleys. In this way, foreigners entered the locality and introduced foreign culture. The important commercial crops of this land such as pepper, cardamom and other spices attracted foreigners and were in high demand in the foreign market.

The west coast has several natural harbors, among which Bhatkala was an international commercial center. In addition, foreign trade transactions were conducted through Honnavar Mirjan, Basarur, Mangalore, Kasaragod and Karwara. Through these ports, foreign countries entering the west coast had trade connections with important coastal and inland towns such as Bhatkala, Mangalore, Honnavar, Byndur, Barakur, Bayaru Kumble, Mirjan, Manjeshwar, Kasaragod, Karkala, Moodbidel, Kalasa, Sagar, Chandavara, Banavasi, etc.

From the 13th century AD to the 16th century AD, the west coast and interior of Karnataka were visited by traders from eastern countries and westerners. From the eastern countries Ibn Babuta (Morocco) (14th century AD) and the Chinese exile Wang-Yuan (1330-1349 AD).) Ma Huan (1412-1413 AD) Cheng-Hu (1405 AD) and others arrived in Karnataka. During this period European tourists and traders Gaspero Balbi of Venice Niccoloconti of Italy (1420A.D) Abdul Razak of Persia (1443A.D.) Niketin of Russia (1470 A.D.) Portugal tourists Babarossa (1514-16 A.D.) Domingo Pías (1520 A.D.) Nuñez (1535A.D.) Varthema and Duret Menezes, Italy's Pietro-Della-Vella and others entered the western coast and interior of Karnataka. These tourists, as party members, have given a visionary picture of the region's agriculture, life of the people, food and commercial crops, trade, Trade routes, Markets, transportation and guilds etc.

Merchandise:

During the Vijayanagar Empire, there was a huge demand from the Europeans for food grains, commercial crops growing in plenty in the Inlands. The commercial crops of Western Ghats like pepper, cardamom and spices were of excellent quality and were in high demand in the European markets. From the 14th to 16th century AD, the major exports through the west coast ports of Karnataka were spices, cloves, ginger, cardamom, plantain, and tamarind, saffron, indigo, sandalwood, honeycomb, rice, fiber, diamonds, coconut, sugarcane, Goods such as sugar, cotton, incense etc. and Arab horses were imported from other countries. A thousand horses were coming to India. The cost of one horse per year from Arabia was 300 to 400 crusado. He says that it imported camphor, dates, raisins, salt, Sulphur, and coarse pearls, and copper-copper was used in the manufacture of coins and utensils." (Nagegowda, 1983)

During the rule of Vijayanagara, domestic and foreign traders were doing business in the regions of Maleadu and coastal Karnataka. The transport-links then in use are confirmed by foreign records as well as local sources. The routes from the highlands to the west coast of those days were densely forested and inaccessible through valleys.

Merchant Communities:

Domestic and foreign merchant communities were involved in commercial activities in Vijayanagara administrative area. After the 11th century AD, the Muslim community called "Hanjamans" were dominant in this area, they were involved in domestic and foreign trade, and had trade relations with Alegia, Muskan, Africa, etc. through waterways. (madhava, 1983) During this period, local communities such as Shettikars, Banajigars, Banakudas, Nanadeshis, Goravaras, Vaishyas and Veerbanajigars etc. were engaged in trading activities.

The Shettys had control of the rice trade in the port of Basarur, even before the arrival of the Morchus in India. They were rich and their trade was profitable. At the same time, Muslim businesses were rich and they traded black rice, pepper, coconut, sugarcane etc. in the ports of Kasaragod, Mangalore, Honnavar, Mirjan and Goa. (madhava, 1983) From Goa to Kasaragod on the west coast the Shettys and Muslim traders had a monopoly.

Burton Stein, who responded to the trading communities of Karnataka during the Vijayanagara period "After the 14th century, the dominance of Muslim merchants in South India became so intense that local merchants gradually died out." (Stein, 1980) There were two types of merchant guilds in Karnataka during the Vijayanagara period. They are 1. Professional Associations 2. Trade organizations.

The professional organizations were based on caste and they settled in one place and engaged in business. For example goldsmith, blacksmith, blacksmith etc.

Merchant organizations moved from place to place. For example Nanadeshis, Vaishyas, Shettys Ayyawole, Ayyawola Salumule, Banajigars etc.

In the 14th century AD, the Hanjamans, the Persian traders, came and settled in Tulu Nadu. Gradually established dominance in local business. Many of them split into sects. They are Basarur Hanjamans, Honnavar Hanjamans, Barakuru Hanjamans, Mangalore Hanjamans, thus

they were identified as sects indicating the towns where they settled. And these merchant communities had their own land and were engaged in agricultural activities (Hiremath BR, 1980) Transport – Connections.

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According to Barbosa, 'Agricultural products such as rice, vegetables, sugarcane, pepper, cardamom etc. were transported to inland coastal towns such as Mirjan, Honnavara, Bhatkala, Byndur, Basarur, Mangalore and Kumbala through kavadi, headgear, horses, herats and bullock carts. There was Mnnn mnnn mm m mm mm m m mm one supervisor to supervise 20 to 30 hairs. According to Domingo-Payas who visited in 1522 AD, Hampi Goa. Bankapura, Banavasi. The road between Honnavar and Bhatkala was in good condition, goods were being transported in herats and carts and in AD 1623 the roads connecting Sagara, Ikkeri and other Pattas of Malnad were in good condition, wide, there were dense green trees in the area and 5 to 6 thousand herats were coming to Bhatkal in the interland. (swell, 2011) Varthema confirms that during the same period, goods were transported in herats and bullock carts to the Portuguese in Ankola, Honnavar, Bhatkala, Mangalore, Basarur and Barakur on the coast.

The routes connecting the highlands and the west coast were narrow and dangerous, carrying goods on barges, Arab and European traders from port towns on the west coast carried goods in ships. (swell, 2011)

Trade Routes

During the period of the Vijayanagara kings, most of the trade deals were with eastern and western countries. As Barbosa tells a Portuguese traveler, the principal towns on the coast are Bhatkala, Mangalore Honnavar, Byndur, Barakur, Basarur, Kumble used to transport goods to foreign countries. Barbosa, who explained about the Western Ghats, said that the mountain ranges here are full of gravel and are as high as the summit, and it is difficult to climb. (Nagegowda, 1983)

In the 16th century AD, good quality rice grown in Karnataka was exported to Maldives, Aden and Ormaz through the ports of Basarur, Barakur and Mangalore. (Shivanna, 1993) In the beginning, there was commercial competition between Arab and Portuguese traders and the Portuguese were successful in keeping the Arabs out of the Indian market.

Araga was the provincial administrative center of the hill country during Vijayanagara rule. During this period the important hill towns like Araga Baderu Govardanagiri, Gerusoppe, Shiravante Sagara along with the western Karavari were connected by road to Honnavar and Bhatkala through Gerusoppe. For example, towns like Kalurukatte (New City), Bidanoor (City) were connected by road through Hulikalla road, connected to the coast by road, and towns like

Araga, Mahishi, Tirtharajapura (Tirthahalli), Tallur etc. were connected by road to Mangalore port. (Kuberappa., 2005)

The medieval highlands consisted of dense and inaccessible forested areas, and most of the connecting routes from the highlands were footpaths or cart paths. Vijayanagara inscriptions and foreign writings mention footpaths and bandidaris in this regard. "The valleys leading inland from the coast are densely forested and rocky," says Payas in 1520 AD. -During this period, most of the goods were transported to the ports by kavadi, harhore, herats and bullock carts. As foreign traders and contemporary inscriptions mention, these routes were extremely impassable and dangerous, with traders traveling in groups of 100 to 500 for protection. To protect the goods and lives of the traders, the sturdy people of the mountains were employed as bodyguards. In many cases, these bodyguards have died fighting highway robbers, and there are instances where hero stones have been carved in their memory and land has been donated to the relatives of the deceased.

Proceeds of foreign merchants, tourists and ambassadors.

From 14th century AD to AD. During the 16th century several foreigners raided the western coastal Malabar and southern hinterlands of Karnataka.

Gaspiro Balbi: He was a Venetian jeweler who explored the west coast of Karnataka in the 16th century AD.

Varthama He was a merchant from Portugal who traveled to the west coast between 1503 and 1508 AD, described the natural description of coastal Karnataka and inland, and commercial transactions. Italian traveler Niccolò Conti visited the Vijayanagara Empire in 1420 AD. Having come to South India through the west coast of Karnataka, he traveled along the Malabar coast and visited Hampi, the capital of Vijayanagara. He traveled from Cambay to Barcoor, where the port of Barcoor was important in ginger and indigo trade; Ginger is like the root of a shrub and grows two cubits high. Niccolò-Conti's statements about major food and cash crops, as well as commercial activities are important. (Nagegowda, 1983)

Abdur Razak entered India via Kallikote on the west coast as a Persian ambassador, traveling via Mangalore and Honnavar and visited Hampe, the capital of Vijayanagara in 1442 AD. Descriptions of Hampe's royal splendor, commercial activities, Mahanavami celebrations etc. convey the history and cultural splendor of contemporary Vijayanagara. Abdur Razak, who traveled from Mangalore to Bidanur (city) through the Ghati, said that this route was the Ghati region; It is said that along the route there are high-rise mountains and thick forests, so that neither the rain nor the rays of the sun fall on the ground. Bidanur informs that it is a place of pilgrimage for fire worshippers. (Nagegowda, 1983)

Nikitin traveled to India from 1468 AD to the Russian traveler. Entering through Chawul on the west coast and inland through Bidar, he visited the kingdom of Nitin Bahmana and Vijayanagara. Pepper, ginger in coastal markets. Varieties, Muscati rice, cloves, daltinni, aromatic roots, kachu, various spices are available, silk, sandalwood and crystal are all available here at cheap prices. Most of these things that he bred were upland crops. (Nagegowda, 1983)

Barbosa: He was a traveler who visited the capital of Vijayanagara from 1514 AD to 1516 AD from Portugal. He describes the agricultural activities of the then Karnataka, various crops, cultivation methods, soil quality, standard of living of the farmers, agricultural produce markets and trading centers. (Barbosa, 1918) In Honnavar, rice trade, coconut, oil jagra and palm wood are available. He explained that then Bhatkala was a heavy commercial center and a town of wealth.. From here white rice, rice, sugar, iron and medicines were sent to Armoz. He informs the people here that they cannot mold sugar. Good paddy was grown in Byndur and oxen and buffaloes were used. Coori was used for sowing. They used to grow two crops a year on irrigated land through planting system. Four varieties of paddy are grown in the coast namely Girajat, Janibazar, Kamagar and Pachari, each of which has a different price and taste and is used in the preparation of kuchalu rice. In Mangalore, mostly brown rice was used as it was healthier than white rice. Kumbala was a port town on the west coast from where curry rice went to Malabar and Maldives and coir ropes were imported from Maldives. (Nagegowda, 1983)

Use of money in business:

During the period of Vijayanagara, there were good commercial relations with India and Arab and European countries, and the use of money composed of gold, silver and copper metals as a medium of exchange was prevalent. During the reign of the Hoysalas, a gold coin called "gadyana" was in circulation in this part of the highlands and coastal areas as early as 1062 AD. AD Dr. K. G. Vasanthamadhav in his work Western Karnataka-Its Agrarian Relations clarified the information that important coastal towns such as Barakur and Mangalore were money printing centers in 1205. (madhava, 1983)

Before the 15th century AD, coins named Gadyana, Varaha, Varahadyana, Pada Pagoda, Pratava, Haga, Kasu etc. were in circulation in the hill country and coastal areas. These coins had the images of Hanuman, Garuda, Nandi Durga etc. in circulation. AD In the 16th century, foreign coins were in circulation in the coastal and hilly areas under the names of Bahiragadyana, Pagoda, Kairafins Khuzarat etc. After the Portuguese invaded Goa, Portuguese coins equivalent to the local coins came into circulation.

The gold coins in circulation during this period were Gadyana, Varata, Honnu(Ponnu) Kati-gadyana, Kati- Pratapa, Sunna-pratapa, Money and so on. Among the important chelli coins in circulation were Gadyana, Tara, Sata-gadyana and a copper coin called 'duddu' (Rao, 2016) Barbosa identifies a silver coin called 'daam' in circulation on the coast of Karnataka." (Nagegowda, 1983)

European traders in coastal Karnataka and inland used to deal in coins of their respective countries and used to vary the face value of their coins after 1534 AD. During the Vijayanagara period, the Portuguese used Savo-Thomas, Xeraphin and Khujarat coins in the rice and pepper trade in the Vijayanagara period, noted by Dr. Vasanthamadhav. In 1637, Peter Munde identifies the circulation of gold coins called money and tara in Bhatkala and confirms that these coins were used in pepper trade.

The rule of the Vijayanagar Empire extended to most of South India. Areas of hilly and coastal Karnataka were also included. Araga was the provincial administrative center for the hill province, and the Keladi leaders were vassals during the latter half of the Vijayanagara period. Under the rule of prosperous Vijayanagara, there was development in all fields, including Vaja.

The highlands and the coastal regions were constantly linked in commercial activities, with foreign traders entering the hinterland through the west coast to market the highland cash crops such as spices and interacting with the local farming communities. "Revupattans in Karnataka are peaceful and our (Portuguese) factories are there," he said, describing the nature of the day with the information that "a terrible lightning storm blows in this part". The foreign traders, ambassadors and tourists who visited here as eyewitnesses described the true images of those days in their own languages, which are unbiased records for the study of the history and culture of Vijayanagara. Foreign tourists mostly visited the west coast; Most of the goods he mentions are highland goods from which local and foreign traders carried out trade activities during this period as European culture affected the coast and the interior.

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