AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION SYSTEM UNDER QUTB SHAHI PERIOD

(Abstract)

The Sultans of Golconda were able and efficient rulers of Deccan. They ruled for a period of 170 years between 1518-1687 A.D, in this period seven kings ruled the kingdom. The first king to came to throne was Sultan Quli Qutb Shah who ruled between 1518-1543 A.D., under Qutb Shahi’s Deccan prospered economically. They gave much importance to agriculture and constructed tanks wells and canals. As it was the main income generating source to commonmen.

Coinage: The period of Abdulla’s reign witnessed a plethora of coins. Old pagodas (Hons), new pagodas, Moghal rupees, Golconda rupees, fanams, nevels and tars were current in the kingdom.

i) **Old Pagodas:** The old pagodas were small, thick pieces of gold “of the size of the nail of the little finger”. They were worth 4½ rupees according to Tavernier, but 5½ rupees according to Thevenot.

ii) **New Pagodas:** The new pagodas was also a gold coin and was worth 3½ rupees.
iii) **Rupees:** There were Mughal and Golconda rupees. Mughal rupees were of two kinds – gold and silver. The gold rupee was worth 14 silver rupees; but it was not common among the merchants and common people being locked up in the vaults of the nobility. The silver rupee weighed 9 deniers and 1 grain. Half-rupee coins were also in circulation.

iv) **Fanam:** The fanams were “half gold and half silver” coins. One rupee was equal to 6½ fanams, and one pagoda was worth 26½ fanams.

v) **Paisa:** Paisa was a copper coin, and 55 paisas made rupee when Thevenot was in Golconda.

**TEXTILE INDUSTRY:**

Golconda kingdom was famous for textile industry. Fabrics of various qualities and grades were produced throughout the kingdom in abundance and were exported abroad. There was no weaving factory, the weavers used to work at home and the buyers had to make advance payments to get the work done.

The plain cloth was artfully painted and named as the *Qalamkar*. This variety presented a unique art of that age and was peculiar to Golconda alone. All colours and designs are made by means of brush, its colour and designs were so indelible that
they did not lose their luster even after washing and remained to the last this Qalamkari cloth was fabricated in coastal towns like Masoolipatnam and Narsapur were famous for their textile industry throughout India.

Another important cloth industry was at Pulicat to the north of St. Thome. The factory which was established by the Dutch is one of the famous cloth centres in India. In addition to these industries Bheemunipatnam, Draksharamam, Madras were also important centres for the fine cloth. Srikakulam was famous for muslin cloth which was as fine as that of Dhaka. Rajahmundry also had fine textiles or fine muslins.

The cloths manufactured at Golconda were having demand not only in India but also in other foreign countries.

Golconda kingdom was noted for manufacturing the carpets and tapis which were the part of the textile industry. The important carpet productive centres were Warangal and Ellore. Carpet work shops using child labour also existed in the kingdom of Golconda. Carpets of Warangal region were great demand in Persia and other countries.

**IRON AND STEEL INDUSTRY:**

Golconda kingdom was famous for the production of Iron and Steel. This fact was supported by foreign contemporary travellers who mentioned that Golconda
yielded a fine quality of Iron and Steel which was in great demand both in India and abroad. The arms and armaments used in the army and other activities like aegis, swords, guns, daggers, spears, pans, blades, etc., were being manufactured in the kingdom. Besides these military weapons, iron was also used for domestic tools like knives, sickles, ploughs and spades.

**SHIP BUILDING INDUSTRY:**

Economically the most important organizationally and technologically the most developed industry was ship-building in Golconda kingdom. This was made possible not merely owing to the proximity of iron-ore, but also the forests of red sandal wood or good timber, iron and other materials which were needed for ship-building. The location of Golconda having a large coastal line had enabled the Qutb Shahi rulers to develop the ship-building industry for two purposes, i.e., for developing trace and commerce and another for military affairs.

**Ornaments:** The Qutb Shahis reign was very rich and the people were affluent, it is no wonder that not merely women were laden with ornaments but even men wore ear-rings, and these who could afford it had strings of pearls loosely hanging round their necks and jewelled bands round their arms, women wore ear-rings. Sometimes six or seven in each ear, finger rings, toe rings, gold or silver bands round their waists, many varieties of neck ware and ornaments round their wrists,
arms and neckles, even a ring or a jewel on the side of the right-nostril and sometimes even on the bridge of the nose.

The rice was stable food and cheaper than other food grains to the people of Andhradesa. It was the principal wet crop grown on a large scale. The term in the contemporary sources to denote the paddy crop is vari.

The cereals formed the most important food of the people after rice. Duratte Barbos states that wheat was grown in the Coromandel Coast only on a small scale. It was mostly consumed by the Muslims.

Sesame or gingili castor and mustard seeds were produced during this period Sesame oil and mustard oil were edible oils Sesame, it appears were widely produced in the kingdom with a variety such as pudanumu, kurunumu, telinumu.

Indigo crop is an important one as it has a commercial significance in coloring the clotts etc. Blue colour which was extensively used for bleaching the white cloths was made out of indigo which was one of the largest crops of the kingdom. Indigo plants were generally sown in dry-lands. The centers in indigo preparation were Nagulvamsa and other Coromandel towns with regards to its cultivation; it was done throughout the coastal line extending from Visakahapatnam to pulicat in Golconda kingdom.
During the Qutb Shahi period the sultans and nobles used to grant inamland to the mosques and temples for their maintenance. In condition to this, religious teachers were also granted inamlands. The interesting thing about the Qutb Shahis period was that during this period along with Muslim-religious teachers the Brahmins were also granted azaharas.

**DURG TANK:**

It is at a little distance from the Golconda Fort, on the north-western side in the hillocks, is a beautiful tank. Locally this is known as *Durg Talab*. It was constructed by Quli Qutb Shah, the founder of the Qutb Shahi dynasty.

**HUSSAIN SAGAR TANK:**

It was large sheet of water, extended over an area of 8 square miles between Secunderabad on the North and Saifabad, a portion of Hyderabad on the South. It was constructed by Ibrahim Qutb Shah in about A.D. 1525 at a cost of 2.5 lakh. It was the largest body of water sheet near Hyderabad.

From time to time the Coromandel region attracted the foreign traders and their companies to make trade in this region. Most scholars agreed that the term Coromandel comes from Choramandalam. The first record mention of the word is on an inscription of the 11th century and the term continued to be in the use even during
the 16th century. The Genoese traveller Hironymo Disanto in A.D. 1499 and the Portuguese in the 16th century as continued to use it Coromandel. Coromandel, thus was a creation of the medieval period.

From time to time the Coromandel region was divided into convenient administrative units. In fact question of regional boundary is complex one considering that a boundary hill wall with historical changes and political necessities even ecological changes are likely to modify geographical boundaries. The geographical significance of the Coromandel Coast lies in the sea ports situated in this region such as Masulipatnam, Nagapatnam, Modepalem, Srikakulam, St. Thome, Bhimlipatnam and Devapatnam. These sea ports attracted the European Companies to establish their factories in this region and make the trade not only with Indian but also foreigners.

There were five main types of cloth such as guineas, salempores, percallers and muris that were produced in the Andhra Coast as per the Dutch records. All these five types were purchased by the Dutch to be exported to Holland. However two main types of cloth required by the Dutch for trade in the Andhra Coast stood for long and they were the guinea cloth and salempores. Out of these two types to former variety of textile was used for slaves trade on the African Coast while the latter in the Intra-Asia trade particularly with Batavia and Ceylon. In due course of time guinea cloth was also exported to Batavia and thus textiles played a significant role in the Asian trade conducted by the Dutch from the Golconda.
The coarse variety of cloth that had been chiefly manufactured as a specialized product of the Northern Coromandel was the plain cloth which was called by the Dutch as guinea cloth and it is mentioned in the Portuguese documents. The same cloth was dyed and was called the blue guinea or demi-guinea. This indigo dyed cloth was initially made of nineteen and twenty three conjoins. The records of the 17th century mentioned for the first time that guinea cloth was used for the people in Africa and it was ordered to be manufactured in the Golconda. The Telugu term giniya gudda used to refer to the piece goods exported by the Dutch for trade with west Africa was also known as bafta or long cloth. The usage in Dutch guineesche Lijwaten and Negroskleden showed that textiles were meant for the use of the slaves.

An important weaving center which supplied cloth to the port of Masulipatnam was Nagulavancha located in the interior hinterland of the port. The Dutch therefore decided to purchase cloth directly at Nagulavancha that at Masulipatnam. They setup a factory to procure cloth for export.

The ruler of Golconda in A.D. 1605 evened keen interest to buying elephants. Hence the Dutch began to participate in the export of elephants from Ceylon after driving the Portuguese away from the island in A.D. 1658. Eleven elephants were sold for seven thousand real’s to an influenced merchant whose name is mentioned as Chodiaj seal who hailed from the city of Golconda.
There was a great demand for Indian textiles, particularly the Andhra textiles. Therefore the English East India Company decided to force its way into the textile trade out of any cost. The English Company dispatched a ship called clobe under the command of Hippon to open trade in the Bay of Bengal, which arrived at Masulipatnam in January A.D. 1611. After their arrival the English opened negotiations with the Sultan of Golconda Mohammed Quli Qutb Shah for the grant of permission to make trade on the coast of Andhra. Finally the English Company was permitted to establish its factories at Masulipatnam, Nagapatnam and pulicat in the year A.D. 1611. Thus the voyage not only paved the way for the establishment of an English factory at Masulipatnam, but also opened commercial relations with Andhra coast when we compare the facilities enjoyed by the Dutch they are in more advantageous position than the English. The English East India Company was not getting more facilities and concessions from the Qutb Shahis as the Dutch East India Company was getting in addition to this. The Dutch was in an advantageous position because there were backed by large factories in the Dutch East India, which proved to be good outlets for the Dutch trade and enjoyed the privileges of paying the customs duties in lump sum, whereas the English were forced to pay customs duty according to the goods handled at ports.

Transport and communication facilities played an important role in the development of trade. The account of the foreign travelers like Tavernier Bernier, and Tehvenot throw a flood of light on this subject. Their accounts may be
corroborating by the journals and letters of the European factory officials on the East coast.

The Qutb Shahi Sultans were of Persian origin, and belonged to Shia sect of Islam like Adil Shahis of Bijapur. They had special attachments/affiliations with Safavid dynasty of Persia in terms of religion and foreign / diplomatic relations and trade as well. Therefore, Qutb Shahi Sultans extended their submissiveness and modesty to the Persian along with making the trade and commerce.

Regarding customs duties of the kingdom, tax at the rate of 31/3 to 4 percent was imposed by the government on exports and imports and realized either in kind or in cash according to the direction of the officers.

The Qutb Shahis government used to collect tolls also. Tolls were collected by the private individuals usually the Brahmin community.

The trade and commerce and exports and imports were like these under Qutb Shahis period.

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