CHAPTER FIVE

COMMODITIES OF EXPORT AND IMPORT
CHAPTER-V

COMMODITIES OF EXPORT AND IMPORT

In the discussion carried out so far an attempt has been made to unravel the Arab trading posts and settlements, particularly Kayalpattnam. The study has thrown light on the various vicissitudes the Arab settlement of Kayalpattnam had experienced and how other Arab settlements had emerged, with the passage of time, at its neighbouring areas and the town-planning of the Arab settlements. It has also shed light on the impact of Arab settlements on language, literature, art and culture and politics and commerce. This chapter attempts to make a close examination of the commodities of export and import, the bedrock of any trade, particularly inter-continental trade. This chapter lays emphasis on export of precious things like pearls from the Pandya Country and on the import of horses from the Arabian Countries to the Pandya Country. In the Arab trade contact with the Pandya Country, this chapter, dealing with articles of export and import, is thought to be the cream of the study.

Peninsular India with a long coastline is eminently suited for trade. The geographical location of the Pandya Country, mid way between the Occident and the Orient, gave added impetus to trade. The zigzagging West Coast line had from very early times flourishing harbour-towns which were frequently visited by ships from the Graeco-Roman, the Chinese and the Arabs worlds. Roman galleons, Chinese junks and the Indian ships plied the seas carrying Roman gold coins, Arab horses, Chinese porcelain, Roman jars, rich spices, cotton, sandalwood, ivory and pearls of the Pandya Country and other valuable goods. Their trans-oceanic activity ushered in an era of great maritime prosperity. In the trans-oceanic trade the Arabs played an envious role, the Pandya Country receiving the maximum benefit and the Arabs enjoying the maximum profits.

In this chapter, a study is made about the commodities of import and export from the Pandya Country and the role played by the Arab merchants. Of the

commodities imported to the Pandya Country horses received the royal support. Since the Pandya kings had a fascination for the Arabian, Persian and Afghan horses, a separate study of horse trade has been attempted here. This study has been made with the help of information and evidences gathered from literary both native and foreign notices, epigraphic evidences, local traditions, sculptural representations and folktales. Native literature includes the Sangam, post Sangam works, devotional hymns, military and heroic poetry and dynastic history, particularly Pandikkovai, Muthollayiram, Kalingathupparani, Kalavali Narpathu, etc. Foreign notices include Megasthenes’ Indica, Ptolemy’s Geography, Periplus Maris Erythraea, Pliny’s Natural History and the accounts of a host of foreign travellers and mariners of the early period; the writings of Marco Polo, Abdullah Wasaff, Ibn Batuta and many other trade chronicles of medieval days; many more accounts of mariners, traders, travellers of Sri Lanka and Europe of the modern times. In fact, this chapter alone provides concrete evidence for the Arab contact with the Pandya Country from very early times to the advent of the Portuguese in the Coromandel Coast. What has been said in this chapter would attest to the ebb and flow, tide and times, progress and regress in the volume of Arab contact with the Pandya Country. This chapter very much helps a scholar formulate a theoretical framework in this particular field of study.

Many articles of trade passed through or were directly exported from the Tamil ports enroute to the Graeco-Roman Word and from their to other regions of the West. The transit goods, some of which also entered the internal exchange of Tamil Nadu were spikenard from the Ganges region, silk from China, tortoise shell from Southeast Asia and the islands near the Malabar Coast.²

Ships of small size, which continuously sailed along the coast carried the merchandise to ports on the Red Sea, from there they were taken by caravans to the nearest point on the River Nile, and by boats down the river to Alexandria. “I found”, says Strabo (25 A.D), “that about one hundred and twenty ships sail from Myos-Hermos (a port on the Red Sea) to India”. About this time, a Greek named Hippalus,

² Mc Crindle, op.cit., pp.56-64.
acting on information received probably from the Arab or the Hindu merchants, boldly stood out to sea, from Cape Fartak in Arabia, and sailing with the south-west monsoon trade winds found a direct route to the Pearl and pepper bearing country in Tamil Nadu. Thence forth, the trade with Tamil Nadu increased considerably. The Romans who conquered Egypt were not slow to take advantage of the profitable trade with Tamil Nadu.³

This trade activity not only cemented their relations but also increased exchange value. Today we have accurate and abundant information concerning this trade activity for the first time. In trade, generally, both the parties involved are in the securing end; one may appear to gain and another to lose. But, at the end, both the parties stood gain by means of commodities only by exchange. The Pandya Country gained Roman gold in large quantities; it is a gain to the Roman Empire through luxurious commodity of pearls, which were rare, precious and costly, for which they had to spend huge amount.

Of all the foreign notices, Periplus Maris Erythraea is of immense value in reconstructing trade relation between the Western World and the Tamil land, particularly the Pandya Country. It is a merchant's practical guidebook on Indian seas, giving details of harbours, marts, anchorages, tides, prevailing winds, local tribes and rulers, exports, imports, and so on. It was compiled after several years travel between the ascendancy of Nero and A.D.100. The author of this famous treatise was an anonymous Greek merchant from Berenike on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea coast. Various harbours of Tamil Nadu such as Tyndis (Tonti or Ponnani), Muziris (Muciri or Cranganore), Naure (Kannanur), Nelcynda (near Kottayam), Comari (Kanyakumari), Kolchis (Korkai) etc., are found mentioned in it. Innumerable commodities like the 'finest muslins', 'kutta-natan pepper', 'best pearl', ivory etc., are recorded, in addition to details of the rulers of the ancient Tamil Nadu.⁴

³ V. Kanakasabhai op.cit., p.31.
⁴ Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature, Vol.1, p.54.
The whole of Peninsular India was full of dense forests consisting of valuable woods like teak, sandalwood; rosewood and various other valuable and rare medicinal herbs. The beasts of these forests were made good use of variedly and they were exported.5

The foreign merchants, especially the Arabs, found these commodities of South India very profitable to exchange in the west. The spices of South India were sold like hot cakes in the cold countries. Such interested Arab merchants were given a lot of encouragement and cooperation from the natives and, as a result, there was a brisk foreign trade till they were expelled from the field with the entry of Europeans. The traffic in goods, the export and import activity became frequent.6 The export and the import activity of the Pandya Country did not start only with the advent of the Arab merchants, but it was there from very ancient times. To give a correct picture of this activity the native literature, inscriptions of trade guilds, foreign accounts and the Arab accounts are made use of.7 The Sangam literature, particularly the Pattupattu Collection, however, depicts the Tamils as being involved in long-distance commerce and also pearl-fishing. With the passage time, they not only diversified from these traditional pursuits but took to organizing trade in pearl, chank bangles, tamarind, fish, gems, horses and other riches.8 It has been already stated that a beryl industry existed in full swing in Kodumanal and according to the Periplus and Manimekhalai.9

In the maritime trade of the Pandya Country, transport played a vital role. Transport was both through land and waters. Water transport was both river and sea or oceanic. Water transport was by means of boats and ships, big and small. Sangam literature gives a description of boats and ships. Small size of the boat type transport

5 M.Shaiok Masthan, op.cit., p.308.
6 Ibid., p.309.
7 Ibid., pp.309-310.
8 Ahananuru, 340: 16-17; 350; Maduraik-Kanchi, 104-11; 315-24.
system included **vallam, odam, padagu, pappri, catamaran, thoni, thimil**, etc. and ships included **Naval, Vangam, Kalam, Pahri, Uru** and later day Kappal (a South-East Asian term for ship). **Marakkalam** is another form of **Kalam**. The literary evidence tallies remarkably with the data furnished by the foreign writers of the early centuries of the Christian era. The author of the **Periplus** refers to **Sangara** and **Colandia** and the vestiges including foreign coins found in different parts of Tamil Nadu during excavations.

The brisk export trade flourished through ports located on both the Western and the Eastern Coasts. Muziri, Thondi, Varkala, (Becare), Colachel and Muttom on the West Coast and Leepuram, (may be Levinchipuram near Kanyakumari), Ovari, Korkai, Kayal, Saliyur, Thondi, Nagapattinam, Kaverippattinam and Nirpeyarthurai on the East Coast were the major ports used for export and import of things. A detailed description of the ancient ports of Tamil Nadu is found in the **Sangam** Classics. Ships from East and West touched these ports. Both foreign and native ships were seen anchored in these ports for export and import of goods. The ports were equipped with lighthouses, exhibiting blazing light at night to guide ships to reach ports as stated in the Tamil text, particularly **Pattinappalai, Maduraik-Kanchi** and **Silappadikaram**. The writings of **Pliny, Ptolemy** and the anonymous author of the **Periplus** contain valuable information to supplement the classical accounts about these ports. **Sangam** works refer to the existence of light houses at Nirpeyarthurai, perhaps: Ezilpattinam, (Mahabalipuram), Kaverippumpattinam, Nagapattinam, Thondi; Korkai, Vizhingan, Muziris, etc.

Among the animal products the most important exports were pearls, conch shells, corals, silk, and ivory. Pearls from Korkai formed the most precious product of the Pandya Country. Yuan Chwang knew that the hand of **Malakuta** was a depot for sea-pearls. To judge from the extensive references to the use of pearls in the

---

10 The Hindu dated, July 31, 2005.
13 S.Padmanabhan, op.cit., pp.6-7.
Gupta age, the pearl trade of the Pandya Country must have been very important at that period.\(^{14}\)

**Major Export Items from the Pandya Country:**

Trade between the Arabs and the Pandyas was not of one way traffic but of two way of the major imports, horses occupied a pivotal position and incurred a larger part of the State's expenditure. This expense was equalized by export of items of which pepper and pearls occupied the major portion. This part deals with the major items of export to the western world.

**Maduraik-Kanchi** a work exclusively of the Pandya Country, with particular reference to the city of Madurai, and the port of Korkai, gives graphic picture of the capital city and the port town. The poet's command of the city life, with its trading marts and busy bazaars and native and foreign traders carrying on the business in the streets, provides authoritative information about Madurai as well as Korkai. Traders crossed the high seas, and such things as horse were imported and, pearls, gems, conch shells, bangles, salt, dried fish, sandal wood and tamarind were exported. Being a great emporium the city was cosmopolitan and men of different races, creeds and tongues were found in the city.\(^{15}\)

**Early Tamil and Non-Tamil works on Pandya Country Pearls:**

Right from the Sangam Age many Tamil poems point to the existence of the pearl-fishery and pearl-trade in the port-city of Korkai. We understand from them that the Paravas or the Paratavar were engaged in pearl-fishing.\(^{16}\) When the Pandyan King Nedunchezhian of the Sangam age was ruling over the Pandya Country, he subdued the warlike Paravas and extended his authority over the pearl-fisheries. According to Sirupanararruppadi, this Pandya conquered this warlike race of Paravas, in whose territories the pearl-fisheries were prevalent and took a necklace of


\(^{15}\) Maduraik-Kanchi II. 315-24.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., II 402-403.
lustrous pearls as an honour of his victory. These indigenous evidences inform us that the Pandyas were in possession of these pearl-fisheries at Korkai. Mutthollayiram, mostly a post-Sangam work, says that the pearls were found in Korkai only and that the Pandya was the owner of Korkai on the black sea. Silappadikaram states that the Pandya monarch had the monopoly in pearls and sandalwood. The fact that the Pandya king owned the sea near Korkai is best explained by Ahananuru. At one place, the poet Mangudi Marudanar says that the Pandya king had a necklace of pearls taken from his sea. At another place, the same poet mentions that the Pandyas guarded the pearl-fishery at Korkai. Another poem in the same Ahananuru Collection says that Korkai belongs to the Pandya who possesses a beautiful chariot, to which are yoked beautifully trotting horses, whose hoof marks cannot be traced on the ground covered with the cool rayed pearls, which the surging waves yielded. Yet another poet in the same Collection says that 'the brilliant pearls and chanks are taken from the harbour of the famous Korkai, which belongs to the valiant fighter, Pandyan'. The pearl-fishers dived into the deep sea while fishing for pearls. Deep-sea pearls were greatly valued. Purananuru speaks of the pearl, a gem emitting rays lying on bright long layers of sand in Korkai.

---

17 Sirupanarruppadai, ll. 57-58.
18 Mutthollayiram is a collection of about 100 stanzas, composed by a great poet, whose name is not known, and who is said to have lived in the beginning of 2nd century A.D. Commentary by Adiyarkkunallar. D.Dorcas Shanthini, op.cit., p. 180
19 Ibid., 36.
20 Ibid., 17:51.
21 Ibid., 17:55.
22 Ahananuru, ll. 3.
23 Ibid., ll. 4.
24 Ibid., ll. 130.
25 Ibid., ll. 125.
26 Kalithogai, 131:1-22. It is a collection of 150 verses, sung by five great poets of Sangam age, about the five physiographical divisions of the Tamil Country and society called tina. It speaks of the pearls from the sea by saying that the pearls were born of the sea; they never beautify the sea, but beautified those who wore them. 9 and 11-15-16, D.Dorcas Shanthini, op.cit., pp. 181-182.
27 Purananuru, 51.
Pearls were available primarily in the Pandya Country. This truth is confirmed by the literary sources in Tamil, non-Tamil and foreign languages. Pearls were fished from out of the delta area. The pearls fished in the Tambraparani delta region were world famous. There is no source claiming that pearls equal in worth to those of the Pandya region were found anywhere in the world two thousand years ago. The people of Egypt, Arabia, Persia, Greece and Rome had special preference for Pandya pearls. This was the reason why the literatures of these lands praised the pearls of the Pandyas, which fetched good foreign exchange. The mention of pearls has found a permanent place for India in these literatures. Today this information is of historical importance.

Sangam literature tells us how naturally and in abundance were pearls available in this land. In Madurai-Kanchi Talayalankanathu Cheru Ventra Pandiyanan Nedunchezhian says how before pearl-fishery, conches were blown to indicate the event. In Korkai harbour along with fishes, pearl-shells were caught in nets. The fishermen took their pearls and bartered them for toddy says Agananuru. According to the same work, women of Korkai while worshipping the sea god. When a horse rider rode across the seashore, the horse of his horse kicked the pearls that lay scattered. Ahananuru provides this valuable information. When the women who sold salt came to sell with their children, the latter played with rattles made of pearls. Even the monkey that the women brought along, played with pearl rattles. Sirupanarruppadai makes mention of this interesting fact which arouses our laughter, curiosity and wonder. The women of

28 Mayilai Seeni Venkatasami, op.cit., p.147.
29 V.C.Sasivalli, op.cit., p.270.
31 Mrs.Vasanthi, Tholliyal Nokki Tamilakam (T1.), Chennai, 1999, p.313.
33 Ahananuru, 296:8-10.
34 Ibid., 130:9-11.
35 Sirupanarruppadai, ll. 52-62.
the Pandya Country wore anklets filled with pearls. Valakuraikadai in Silappadikaram, mentions this. From these realistic and unique literary sources we can understand how common place pearls were in this land. From Aingurunuru we learn that the sea tides threw out pearls in their shells on the shore.

The antiquity of pearl-fishery and pearl-trade in Tamil Nadu may even go beyond the Sangam period. Sangam literatures including Pathupattu works like Maduraik-Kanchi, Ettuthogai works like Ahananuru, Purananuru, Kalithogai, Nattrrinai and the epics like Silappadikaram and Manimekhalai refer to the pearls of the Pandya Country and the connected matters. Tamil bhakti literatures like Tevaram, Nalayirathivyaaprabandam, Jivakacinthamani, etc. describe various ornaments made of pearls. Inscriptions and copper-plate grants of various rulers of the Tamil Country refer to the pearl and pearl-fishery. The Thanjavur inscriptions of Rajaraja I speak of numerous grants of pearl ornaments endowed to the Big Temple.

According to Nattrrinai, Pandya pearls were exported to other countries. Ammuvanar in Ainkurunuru, Mamulanar in Ahananuru, Mangudi Marudanar in Maduraik-Kanchi and in Ahananuru, mention about pearls and their export.

Megasthanes, the Greek ambassador to the court of Chandragupta Maurya and the author of Indica, too make a mention of the pearls of this region. The Kautilya Arthasastra refers to the pearls of this region as Tambraparnika and Pandia

36 Silappadikaram, xiv, 69.
38 Ahananuru, 3, 27, 130, 201, 280, 296, 350; Purananuru, 45, 53, 58; Kalithogai, 13:1:22.
40 Nattrrinai, 23.
41 Aingurunuru, 185.
42 Ahananuru, 201.
43 Maduraik-Kanchi, 11, 217.
44 Ahananuru, 27.
Kavadaka. Arthasastra’s Pandya Kavataka and the Tambraparnika refer to pearls gathered from the place and from the sea proper. Korkai of those days was called by Sanskrit writers Pandya Kavatam, the gateway of the Pandya Country for a long time, wrested from Madurai the honour of being the Pandya capital and retained it till about the time of Ptolemy, the Geographer. He says that the capital was recently shifted to Madurai. Korkai’s importance lay in the fact that it was the chief seat of the trade in pearls so much prized by ancient peoples.

Early Pandya Monopoly In Pearl-Fishing:

From the Sangam Age times the Pandyas had the monopoly in pearl-fishing and pearl-trade. Avvaiyar, the great Tamil poetess, says in her poems that “The Pandyas had the monopoly in pearls, as the Cholas and Cheras had rice and elephants respectively to their credit”. But political convulsions certainly had their adverse effect on the Pandya monopoly of pearl-trade in the Pandya Country.

In the beginning of Christian era the Cholas under the great Karikala conquered the Pandyas and Sri Lanka too. When the Pandyas and Sri Lanka had regained their former positions under Pandyan Nedunchezhian, the Cholas had already established their pearl-fisheries in the Palk Bay. Hence the monopoly in the pearl-trade was no more to exist with the Pandyas. Yet, the largest quantity of pearls was continued to be exported to the Mediterranean Countries from the Pandya ports.

The Sangam magnum opus from Silappadikaram that when Madurai was set ablaze by the divine wrath of Kannagi, the Pandya king, Vetriver Chezhian left from Korkai for Madurai to crown himself and to rule Korkai till a new Madurai was built. Korkai served as the great sea-port, busying itself with trade in pearls, while Madurai served as the major inland capital of the Pandyas.

---

Imperial Pandya Monopoly In Pearl-Trade:

After the Kalabhras Interregnum the First Pandyan Empire was founded about 575 A.D. by Kadungon, who overthrew the Kalabhras from Madurai. The Imperial Pandyas were great conquerors. Yvan Chwang, the Chinese pilgrim, who visited Kanchi during the 7th century A.D. had recorded their achievements. From Kadungon to Rajasimha, nearly thirteen rulers ruled over the Empire for the period extending from A.D. 590 to A.D. 920. Arikessari Parankusa Maravarman (A.D 670-700 A.D.) was one of the greatest rulers of this line. He destroyed the Paravas, of the Korkai Coast for not having submitted to him. Maravarman Rajasimha I (A.D. 730 - A.D. 765) after having defeated the Pallavas and the Malavas, proceeded to Kodumudi, where ‘he worshipped the lotus feet of Pasupati, gave away with great pleasure heaps of gold and lustrous gems’. His successors upto Rajasimha II, who was defeated by the Chola Parantaka I, had to exert pressure on the Paravas to pay what was due to the kings from the pearl- fishery. In the subsequent period, this Pandya monopoly in pearls seems to have gone into the hands of the Imperial Cholas.

Shift to Imperial Chola Monopoly:

The greatest Imperial Chola Rajaraja I (985 A.D. – 1014 A.D.) established an Empire by conquering the Pandyas, the Cheras and north Sri Lanka. By his conquest, the entire pearl - fisheries came to the possession of the Cholas. The inscriptions of the period give details of the large scale presents of pearls to various temples by the different kings of the Chola dynasty, particularly to the Great Temple at Thanjavur. An inscription of Rararaja I states, “Sixty four pearls in all strung on it out of the pearls which the lord Sri Rajarajadeva had poured out as flowers at the sacred feet and with which he had worshipped the feet of God”. The Emperor Rajaraja I pouring the pearls at the feet of God as flowers, stands as evidence for the large quantity of supply he had of the pearls from the fisheries of his Empire. This continued under Rajendra I too. There is no authentic information about the pearl - fishery of the Chola period

52 S.Arunachalam, op.cit., p.59.
except the inscriptions of the Chola Emperors referring to the wide grants of the pearls to various temples. Since Alberuni (1030 A.D.) has said that Sri Lanka did not produce pearls and the pearl oysters of Sri Lanka eylon had migrated to East Africa, we may conclude that pearls were fished only from the pearl-fishery of the Indian side of the Gulf of Mannar. The Chola Empire included north Sri Lanka and the Pandya Country and we may take it that they monopolized the entire pearl-fisheries of the Pandya Coastal region.

Pandya’s Regaining the Monopoly:

During the time of Second Pandya Empire Maravarman Sundara Pandya II asserted the Pandya’s independence from the Chola overlordship by the year 1216 A.D. Jatavarman Sundara Pandya I (1251-1268 A.D.) was a warrior king of this dynasty, who tried to regain the Pandya power. Maravarman Kulasekhara Pandya I (1268 – 1310 A.D.) was the last great Pandya Emperor to rule over a vast stretch of land, including the Chola land. The Pandyas again gained the monopoly over the pearl-fishery from the Cholas. They monopolized the possession of best pearls. They never allowed anybody to take the pearls out of the Pandya country without their notice up to their downfall. According to accounts of Marco Polo, who visited the Pearl-fishery Coast in the 13th century A.D. gives a graphic account about pearls with the king of Ma’bar. The king of Ma’bar wore a hanging in front of his chest, from the neck downwards, a fine silk thread, strung with 104 pearls and rubies of great price. The reason why he wore this cord with 104 pearls and rubies is that, every morning and evening he used to say 104 prayers to his idols. Moreover, he also wore on his arms three golden bracelets studded with many precious stones and pearls and he wore anklets also of the like kind on his legs and rings on his toes likewise. “This king carries on his person so many stones and pearls that the value there of is greater than that of a city’s ransom.”

55 Ibid., p.156 D. Dorcas Shanthini, op.cit., pp. 185-186.
57 Ibid., p.85.
59 Silappadikaram, xii,i, II.87-88.
Inland Cities, Ports and Pearls under the Pandyas:

The Sangam Age Tamils were great sea-farers and traders. The aphorism of Avvaiyar, 'seek fortune even by sea-faring' confirms it. Internal trade was not so energetic for want of conveyance facilities. Pedlars, pack-bulls or mules carried goods from one place to another. One such merchant community called Vanigar dealt in every product of the land such as grains, salt, pepper, cloth, etc. External trade in the Tamil Country was carried on through ports such as Ophir or Uvari, Korkai, Musiri, Vizhingam, Tondi and Saliyur. However, due to paucity of information or perhaps because of destruction of evidence in political convulsions, much could not be gathered about the pearl trade activities in the port of Vizhingam, Tondi and Saliyur. In the Aii port city of Vizhingam, there were pearl-fishing, an arsenal, trading-center, brisk-shipping and trade activities. The Pandyas too had invaded Vizhingam for wresting it from the Aii kings. Parantaka Nedunchadaiyan (c.A.D. 765-790), Srimara Srivallabha (c.A.D. 835), Parantaka Pandya (c.A.D. 880), Jatavarman Parantankan and Pandyan Nedumaran are said to have attacked the pearl-fisheries in Vizhingam. The West Coast seems to have continued pearl-fishing even as late as the 17th century A.D. as recorded by John Fryer, who travelled in those parts between 1672 and 1681 A.D. To quote Fryer himself: "They (sic. pearls) are also found between Cape Comory and Ceylon as I formerly declared; but these are not to be compared with the Persian, which are the true oriental ones. They are of them in the Island Sumatra, by those place the Golden Cheronese in Java, directed to the Ancient Taprobane. Between greater Java and India there are very many; between Panama and Cochin are good store, but very small, as also all along the coast of Malabar." There is a view that Rajaraja I would have destroyed this port town because the vessels used for pearl-fishing might have out-grown and interfered with the normal shipping movement of trade in the Arabian sea. Muziripattinam is known in Sanskrit literature variously as Murasipanthanam (Ramayana) and

60 "Thirai Kadal odiyum thiraviam thedu." (Avvai).
62 P.Ramachandran, Thuruthupona Thuraimukangal (T1.), Nagercoil, 1983, pp.41-43.
63 Pandikkovai, one of the famous Tamil works on the Pandyas of the First Pandyan Empire, makes mention of it in many stanzas. (Ibid., 69, 119, 127, 160, 209, 298, 301, 310, 314, 319, 305).
Marisipanthanam (Brihatasamhita). It was the brisk trading centers like Kanchi, Madurai, Uraiyyur, Karur and Tagadur that played important roles in trading activities and they were interlinked with highways also during the Sangam Age.

Variety of Pearls:

Tamil inscriptions coming from Tamil Nadu also mention different kinds of pearls fished from the Fishery Coast. They are: Vattam (round pearls), Aravattam (half roundish pearls), Oppumuthu (polished pearls), Kurumuthu (small pearls), Karadu (crude pearls), Sappathi (flat pearls), Sakkattu, Nimbolam, Pavittam, Paniccaiy (resembling toddy in colour), Tollgateyndana (pearls with rubbed surface), Toldandana (pearls with cracked surface) Civantanir (pearls of red water) and Palamuthu (old pearls). The black pearls available near the Andaman Islands are ten times more expensive than diamonds. Nowhere else in the world is this available.

Pandya Pearls and Graeco-Roman and Arabian Gold:

There had been international trade in pearls several centuries ago among countries such as Rome, Greece, Egypt, Persia, Arabia, China and India. Persian Gulf was one of the most popular centers of pearl production as also the Gulf of Mannar.

The Pandya pearls were held in high esteem in the Roman Empire. Pliny says that the pearls were mainly imported into Rome from the Indian Ocean. The Roman ladies felt glorified by having the pearls of long size, called elanchi ending in a full bulb suspended from their ears. At the time of Pliny (77 A.D.), even the poorer classes were fascinated by the pearls, as Roman people were in the habit of saying that a pearl worn by a woman in public is as good as a lector walking before her.

---

66 The Himalayas sends gem and gold, while the Kudda hills the sandalwood and akhil. Pearls came from the South Sea, the South Sea near the port of Korkai. (Pattinappalai, // 214-220).
69 W.H.Schoff, op.cit., p. 315
70 Ibid., p.57.
pearls were paid for mostly in gold. The natural historian, Pliny, the Elder, had remarked that the coffers of the nation were being emptied for the import of pearls.

The Pandya pearls were in common use in Egypt and Emperor Augustus brought back to Rome the pearls of the Ptolemies of Egypt. The pearls of Cleopatra were very famous in history. It is known that Cleopatra dissolved a pearl of high value in her wine and drank it. The cost of the pearls studded in her ear-ring was about the worth of 1,51,450 gold coins during the Roman period.

The craving of Pandya pearls was not confined to one sex alone; the fact was lamented by Quintillian. Emperors like Nero (60 A.D.) possessed large quantities of pearls. Special keepers of the pearls and the pearl-studded jewellery seemed to have spread all over the Roman Empire. Nero’s queen and her friends had their dresses and slippers bedecked with costly pearls. In the New Testament we have the pearl of the great price. Small is the pearl, but queen among the jewels’ are the words of Gregory. Form the time of Emperor Augustus pearls were consumed in a larger quantity than before. India was very glad to send her goods and get gold in return, a fact attested to by finds of Roman coins in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka. The Roman authors then called Tamilaham as Damarika. Pliny calls India the sole mother of precious stones, the great producer of the most costly genesis. He bitterly remarked that, ‘not a year passed without Empire paying out hundred million sesterces (nearly one and half crores of rupees) to India for luxury of our woman’. Pliny feared of the fall of the Roman Empire due to this economic drain for the unproductive luxury (pearl) from the Pandya Country.

However, there is a question: Why then the ancient Tamils were fond of the Roman gold? Was the Roman gold of high quality or whether it was raw gold or gold coins? By reading the complaint of Pliny, the Elder, in the Senate of Rome, it may not

be wrong to presume that the Tamils had a great fascination for Roman gold because of its absence in the native land. But, we get the contrary information that gold was exported to the court of Solomon in the remote past. It can be understood that the gold imported from Rome was not raw gold, but gold coins minted in the Roman mints. Since native gold coins were not available in abundance or the Tamils did not know the technique of minting fine variety of gold coins or what they minted and circulated were modelled after Roman coins, they were fond of the Roman coins.

Korkai of Sangam age gave way to Kayal. From thirteenth century, Kayal became the headquarters of pearl-fishery. The Arab Muslims by this time had captured the pearl-fishery as rentors and traders in pearl. The Pandya kings successfully conducted the pearl-trade by extending great favours to the merchants, the main traders among them being the Arabs. They exchanged the imported horses for pearls. Some of the Arab Muslims held high offices in the court of the Pandyas. The ports of Kayal, Vedalai, Devipattinam, Kilakkarai, Tondi and Pasipattinam were the pearl exporting centers. A considerable part of the Tamil maritime population had embraced Islam by fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and began to take to pearl - fishing as an occupation. The Muslims of Kilakkarai and Kayal were known for their specialized diving skill. The Arab Muslims attempted to outreach the Paravas.\textsuperscript{76} The wealthy Muslims of Kayal and Kilakkarai managed to keep fishing in their hands.

The Gold of Ophir:

Rich and valuable commodities formed a major portion of the foreign trade in ancient Pandya Country. It was blessed with the availability of precious metals like gold and silver as well as precious stones like beryl and diamond.\textsuperscript{77} Gold from the Tamil Country was of three kinds: quarry-gold, mined-gold and sieved-gold. Quarry-


gold was available in the quarries of the gneissic rocks, the mined-gold available in the Kolar region and sieved-gold from the river deltas.\textsuperscript{78}

The \textit{Old Testament} has about six references to Ophir and its gold. Scholars are of the opinion that this place might have been in the Dravidian India that is South India. This they say, since most of the things imported such as timber, apes, peacocks and ivory bear Hebrew names that were places in the Coromandel Coast of South India. This has got the honour of receiving Solomon’s men and one such place among them might have been Ophir. Bishop R. Caldwell was the first to identify this place with \textit{Uvari}, which is on the mouth of the river Tambraparani in the Pandya Country, while some others identify this with some place in Harappa.\textsuperscript{79}

\textbf{Import}

The major imports to South India, with particular references to the Pandya Country, are known from the \textit{Periplus}.\textsuperscript{80} They consisted of coin, topaz, coral, thin clothing and figured linens, antimony, copper, tin and lead, wine, \textit{realgar} and orpiment and also wheat, the last mentioned probably for the Graeco-Romans. Of these, wine is by far the most conspicuously mentioned item in the \textit{Sangam} works in a variety of contexts, particularly in connection with the ruling and urban elite. Roman wine was very popular with the Tamils, who were familiar with its quality and fragrance. In the \textit{Purananuru}, the poet Nakkirar lauds a Pandya king,\textsuperscript{81} of Sangam Age, namely Nanmaran, in the following words: “O Mara, whose sword is ever victorious! Spend thou thy days in peace and joy, drinking daily out of golden cups, presented by thy handmaids, the cool and fragrant wine brought by the \textit{Yavanas} in their good ships” from their home land.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{78} K.Sadasivan, “\textit{Kinds of Gold in Early Tamilaham}”, paper presented in a Seminar in the International Institute of Tamil Studies, Chennai, 1997.

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature}, Vol.I, p.56.

\textsuperscript{80} W.H.Schoff, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.68-77.

\textsuperscript{81} R. Champakalakshmi, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.187-188.

\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Purananuru}, 56. The old commentator of \textit{Purananuru} interprets the words \textit{Yavanar nan kalam thantha} means “brought by \textit{Yavanas} in bottles”. The Hon.P.Coomaraswamy of Colombo, has pointed out that the word \textit{Kalam} may mean bottles or \textit{ships}. \textit{Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society}, Ceylon Branch, Vol.XIII, No.45, V.Kanakasabai, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.36-37.
According to other evidences, the Chera Country was more fertile, more peaceful, more easily reached by Western merchants than the other Tamil regions. As such, the Chera Country served as a congenial place for the meeting of the East and the West. Apart from the evidence cited in the foregoing passages, we have other historical evidences, which throw more light on the commercial and cultural contact between the West and the East. Excavations at Arikamedu near Pondicherry have revealed one of the East Coast emporiums of Roman trade. It is thought that this was not only a transit port for Roman ships “a final entrepot for Western table ware and bullion in return for pearls, gem-stones, muslins and pepper”. It is said that “from Roman ships came gold, wine and perhaps Roman soldiers and women whose services were needed in the court of the Pandya kings of South India.”

Ancient Tamil poems also speak of the wine prepared by the Yavanas. *Arikkamedu* excavations yielded Raman wine jars (Amphoras).

The Yavana lamp, the wick of which was capable of giving out a steady flame without a flicker, was also an item of considerable demand in Tamilaham. It was a novelty to the Tamils. Some of them were like a statue bearing in their folded palms the takali or the container for the lamp.

The Pavai Vilakku, a female statue holding a lamp in its hands, is a common sight in most temples and households in Tamilaham even today. Although there are no references to it in the *Periplus*, the fact that different metals are mentioned as imports, would suggest that some at least would be finished products like lamps. While copper and bronze articles including jewellery are found in megalithic burials no evidence of lamps has so far been found in excavations. But scholars do not agree

---


84 Ibid., p.58.


to resemblance of some of the objects found in the Adichchanallur megalithic site in Tirunelveli District (South Pandya Country Region) as of foreign origin.

**Periplus Maris Erythraea** also speaks about the pirates in the coast of Damirica (the West Coast of the Tamils). Warmington thinks that the pirates referred to must be the strong dynasty of the Andhrabhritiya, that ruled over parts of the Deccan and the districts and coast of Konkar, who are mentioned by Ptolemy. According to him, the pirates of South Konkan and Canara were Tamils of the Satiya Kingdom, not much frequented by the Greeks for commerce. K. Sadasivan identifies them as Kadambas, as they have been mentioned in some Sangam works as seapirates, who had their major center of hiding in and around the Ezhilmalai or Elimalai near Kannanur. In Padirrupathu, Cheran Senguttuvan has been lauded as Kadal Pirakottiya Velkezhukuttuvan, which K. Sadasivan interprets as the ‘one who drove back the sea pirates’.89

According to the Peutingerian Tables, which are believed to have been constructed about 296 A.D., the Romans even at that date are said to have had a force of two cohorts (840 to 1,200 men) at Muziri to protect their trade and they had also erected a temple to Augustus at the same place. There is, however, no reference to it in the Sangam literatures, besides, there is no conclusive evidence for the identification of the temple for Augustus in the Chera Country.92

As pirates infested the Indian seas, the Greek merchants brought with them cohorts of archers on board their ships. Egypt being at this period subject to Rome, the archers who accompanied the Greek merchants must have been Roman soldiers, who could not have failed to inspire in the Tamils a desire to become better

87 A Raghavan, *op.cit.*, p.XII.
acquainted with the Romans and to share their civilization. The Pandyan king was the first to realize the benefits of an alliance with the Romans. He sent two embassies to Augustus Caesar, desiring to become his friend and ally.

Roman soldiers were enlisted in the service of the Pandyas and other Tamil kings. During the reign of the Pandya Aryappadai-kadantha-Nedunchezhian, Roman soldiers were employed to guard the gates of the fort of Madurai. A poet of this period describes a Tamil king’s tent on a battle field as follows: “In a tent with double walls of canvas firmly held by iron chains, guards by powerful Yavanas whose stern looks strike terror into every beholder, and whose long and lose coats are festooned at the waist by means of belts, while dumb Mlechas clad in complete armour, who could express themselves only by gestures, kept close watch throughout the night in the outer chamber, constantly moving through the inner apartment which was lighted by a handsome lamp”. It is evident from this description that Yavana and other Melechas or foreigners were employed as bodyguards by ancient Tamil kings.

Besides merchants and soldiers, many Roman engineers and artificers had settled in the Tamil land. The Roman engineers made for the use of Tamil kings battering Romans with which to destroy the walls of forts as well as numerous engines of defence, which were planted in front of the fort-gates. Tolkappiyam defines ulinai, one of the stages of war, as comprising the siege and the defence of a fort. Nacchinarkkiniyar, the commentator, explains that forts possessed engines made by Yavanas. In this explanation, the commentator records an old tradition which says that the Romans manufactured engines of war for the ancient Tamil kings. That the walls of forts were provided with engines is indicated by the phrase “the small entrance of the fort-gate provided so thickly with engines that even the moon could not pierce through”.

---

92 Bishop R.Caldwell, op.cit., p.17.
93 Silappadikaram, xiv. ll, 66-67.
94 Mullaippattu, ll.59-66.
95 Tolkappiyam, iii, ll.10-15.
96 Purananuru, 177:1-5.
Besides Roman military engineers, Roman artisans settled in South India. The workmanship of Yavanattaccar, Roman artisans, is frequently praised in early Tamil poems. E.g. 'the bowl of the lamp held in the hands of the statue of beautiful workmanship made by the Yavanas'. The Yavana artisans are mentioned in Manimekalai, along with the expert workers of Magadha, Mahratti, Avanti and the Tamil Country.

The Perunkadai, a long epic composed in the second half-millennium A.D. frequently mentions the Yavanas. It mentions 'Yavana ornaments', the beautiful lamp on statues made by Yavanas, a magara (yal-a music instrument), ornamented with the beautiful handiwork of Yavanas and a Yavana chest and the cart adorned by the Aryas with the gold lotus made by the Yavanas. The Yavanas must have settled in large numbers, because the village (Cheri or chery) of the Yavanas is referred to. Frankincense was imported from Arabia and Persia into Indian ports. Arrian informs us that the best frankincense was imported to South India especially to the Pandya Country.

Moreover the reference to the Greek and Roman coins found in large numbers all over Tamil Nadu and Kerala also strengthen this view. Some of the Arabic coins, referred to by Bishop R.Caldwell and these collected by this researcher give vivid picture about the maritime trade between the Mediterranean Countries and South

---

99 Ibid., xix, 109-110.
100 Perunkadai, i.32.1-76.
101 Ibid., i.171-175.
102 Ibid., iii.16, 11, 22-23.
103 Ibid., iii.22.1.213.
104 Ibid., i.38.11.233-4, 239.
105 Ibid., iii.4.1.8.
107 Bishop R.Caldwell, op.cit., p.287.
India, especially with the Pandya Country through Arab intermediaries. Even the horses imported\(^{108}\) also had not affected much the trading balance of the Pandya Country. This is balanced by the export of native items in large scale. That Roman gold poured largely into the Tamil Country at this period is attested to by the numerous Roman coins, dating from the reign of Augustus to that of Zeno (from B.C.27 to A.D. 491) and have been found buried in different parts of the Tamil Country.

**Arabs and Horse Trade in the Pandya Country:**

This part of the chapter aims at throwing light on the items of trade both natural and man-made, animate and inanimate. If Pliny complained in the Senate of Rome that Roman wealth (gold) was drained every year to buy the pearls of the Pandya Country, it would be more appropriate to say that the Pandya Country drained its wealth in importing horses from Arabia’ Afganistan and Persia.

The following were the items imported right from the Sangam age: horses, varieties of liquor, camphor, rose scent (panneer), saffron (kungumum), silver, oil lamps and ammunition.\(^{109}\) Of these, the kings of the Pandya Country gave importance to the import of horses.\(^{110}\) The notices of foreign travellers like Marco Polo, Abdulla Wasaff, Ibn Batuta, Ameer Valipal, Abdul Faida and Rassidueen bear witness to the lucrative trade in horses in the Pandya Country. Since ages, obviously, the horse does not belong to South India.\(^{111}\) Cavalry formed a major and important component of an army from the Sangam age itself.\(^{112}\) Horses were used to pull chariots too.\(^{113}\) It is evident from Pattinappalai that ancient Tamils were engaged in trade in horses, besides other items. These horses were taken by captains of fine ocean vessels’ (peru-

---


\(^{110}\) Pattinappalai, ll. 185-191, Maduraik-Kanchi, ll.18-26, 75-88. Nattrrinai, 131:ll. 7-8, 258:7-11.

\(^{111}\) N. Subburediidor, Manickavacagar, Madras, 1989, p.18.

\(^{112}\) Patirrupattu, 49:4-6.

\(^{113}\) Purananuru, 146:11.
nir-occunar) to distant countries. At Nirpheyarurai, milk white manned horses arrived with riches from the north, in ships standing out in the cool ocean by the sea front.

Horses, for the breeding of which the southern climate was not conducive, have always been imported into the Pandya Country, mainly from the Arab Countries. The Maduraik-Kanchi makes a mention of their import to the Pandyan ports. Strangely, rulers gifted horses to bards. References to horses as gifts are fewer than to other items, perhaps due to their scarcity and military importance to the rulers. Nonetheless, what is interesting is that to the bards or poets, such gifts as those of horses and elephants, appear to be of no immediate use or value. Horsebits or articles associated with the use of horses are reported in the early levels of excavations at Sanur, Kunnattur and Adichchanallur of Thirunelveli district in Pandya Country, but the correctness of their identification has been questioned.

Korkai, the second capital and port city of the Pandyas, was later called Kayal in the middle ages. Marco Polo, the Venetian traveller of the 13th century visited Kayal twice (1288 A.D and 1292 A.D). He found thousands of horses being imported. This was the claim of Abdullah Wasaff, Marco Polo and Ibn Batuta. The Pandya kings spent huge amount of money during the medieval period for buying horses. The Arab Muslims who carried out horse trade were called by the natives Sonagar, Rowuthar and Marakkayar. The Arab Muslims who came on Marakkalams were called Marakkalarayar and gradually it became Marakkayar.

---


115 Perumpanarrupadai, II.319-24.

116 Maduraik-Kanchi, 323.

117 Ibid., 1.224; Porunararrudai, 1-165.


In Malayalam it became Marakkar and Marakalaya or Marakala miniya in Singala language. It meant the Arab Muslim maritime traders.120

**Horse-Meaning and Use:**

This part of the study deals with the evolution of horse trade in the Pandya Country and its socio-political impact. Horse is a domesticated animal of outstanding importance. Horses are in the order of odd-toed, hoofed animals, pessiodactyla and belong to the horse family, Equidae. All modern horses are genus Equips, Species E.Caballus. Horse has most closely shared in man’s adventures, and has been intimately allied with his progress. Its ancestry and date of domestication are still matters of dispute.121 Three wild horses namely the steepe horse, the desert horse and the forest horse have made their contribution to our domestic horse. Steepe horse is now represented as the fossil representation of przewalsk’s horse. Tarpan horse corresponds closely to the now extinct Tarpan or Mongolian horse.122 The earliest record of horse dates back to Paleolithic times, about 25,000 years ago. Remains of several thousand horses around an open camp at Solutre in France indicate that horse may have served as a source of food. No one knows exactly when man and the horse first became companions. Later, when man recognized the advantage of the horse’s fleetness he tamed it to pursue other animals for food. After domestication, it shared the dangers of war, it carried him to the hunting field, in polomatches and in races.123

**Role of Horse in Wars:**

Horses seem to have played a vital role in the military exploits of the Second Pandyan Empire. Particular mention may be made of the cavalry which appear to have been mainly responsible for Maravarman Kulasekhara Pandya II to extend his

---

kingdom from Sri Lanka to Nellore. Under the Imperial Pandyas, the ports of Kilakkarai, Tondi and Kayal were busy centers of horse trade.

Place of Abundance:

Renowned as it became in Muslim literature, the horse was nevertheless a late importation into ancient Arabia. The early Semites did not know this animal, for which Najd is famous. Domesticated in early antiquity somewhere east of the Caspian Sea by nomadic Indo-European herdsmen, it was later imported on a large scale by the Kassites and Hittites and through them made its way, two millenniums before Christ, into Western Asia. From Syria it was introduced before the beginning of our era into Arabia, where it had the best opportunity to keep its blood pure and free from admixture. The Hyksos passed the horse on from Syria into Egypt and the Lydians from Asia Minor into Greece—here it was immortalized by Phidias on the Parthenon. In the Egyptian, Assyro-Babylonian and early Persian records the Arabian appears as a cameleer, not as a cavalier. The camel, rather than the horse, figured in the tributes exacted by the Assyrian conquerors from the “Urbi”. In Xerxes’ army, intent upon the conquest of Greece, the Arabs rode camels. Strabo, presumably on the authority of his friend Aelius Gallus, the Roman general who invaded Arabia as late as 24 B.C. denies the existence of the horse in the Peninsula.

Although the camel had been the more important animal in pre-Islamic Arabia, it was the horse that occupied the scene of Arab history when it unfolded under the banner of Islam. It was the cavalry units under their Bedouin riders, the armoured divisions of the Arab armies and the sinews of the ‘Semitic backlash’, which affected the historic breakthroughs in the Fertile Crescent. With the conquest of North Africa and Spain the Arab horse entered the southern and western parts of the Mediterranean region. It was accompanied by the pre-Islamic concept of chivalry, which was to figure so prominently in medieval love, romance, and poetry. The Arab horse is still very much alive today, associated with aristocratic pleasures and pastimes and has for an illustrious blood relation the Anglo-Arab thoroughbred.

124 ARE., 698 of 1916; N.Sethuraman, op.cit., p.145.
127 P.M.Holt, K.S.Ann Lombton and Bernard Lewis, et.al., op.cit., p.28.
Horse in India-Controversy: Nativity of Horse:

Very recently, a controversy as to the original home of horse ravaged historical study through the columns of The Hindu. The controversy was between N.S. Rajaram and Michael Witzel of Havard University. N.S. Rajaram, quoting S.P. Gupta, argues that horse was in existence in the cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro. While Michael Witzel argues that the horses found in the early excavations at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa do not come from secure levels and such ‘horse’, in most cases, found their way into deposits through erosional cutting and refilling, disturbing the archaeological layers. Michael Witzel, quoting R. Meadow and A. Patel, says that no horse bones were excavated in North India or elsewhere before c.1800 B.C. Further, Michael Witzel disputes Rajaram’s Dravidian derivation of Kudiral to horse. By putting forth this argument, Rajaram tells us that Kudirai (horse) is native to South India. Michael Witzel quotes profoundly from Dravidian languages the words for horse such as kitirai (Kudirai) in Tamil, kudire in Kannada, kudira in Telugu to disprove Rajaram’s theory that horse is native to South India and compares these Dravidian words with Near Eastern words: Elamite Kutira, ‘bearer’, kutt ‘to-bear’. Similarly, Witzel cites innumerable examples from Tibeto-Burmese terms for horse. He thus concludes that horse is not Dravidian and South India is not its original home. Its original home is the Siwalik Hills, Arabia, Persia and Afghanistan. Had horse been native to South India why did the Sangam Tamils and the Pandyas of medieval times lavished on its import by Arabs from the Arabian countries? Fact remains that horse was an imported commodity to the Tamil Country from very ancient times.

Even during the times of Indus Valley Civilization the Surkoda excavations show evidences of the familiarity with horses. There is a controversy that the horses were known or not known to Indus Valley people. This researcher with the permission of the Central Archaeological Department personally visited the Harappan Gallery in the National Museum, New Delhi, on 17th March 2001 and saw horse clay toy and confirmed that horses were not familiar to the Indus Valley people. It may be the impact of Aryan invasion into India Via Indus.

129 Ibid., March 5, 2002.
130 Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures, Madras University, Madras, 1976, (July to December), p.155.
Variety and Names of Horses:

Nigandu genre of Tamil literature (encyclopaedia), particularly the Sendan Divagaran Nigandu of the 9th century A.D., Pingala Nigandu of the 10th century A.D., Sudamani Nigandu of the 16th century A.D., and the Vedagiriyar Nigandu of the 19th century A.D.- all give valuable details about horses.¹³¹

Horses were addressed on the basis of the lines on their head, colour, odour and braying sound. According to the Nigandus, there existed a book called Parinool (Pari means horse nool means book), which gave details exclusively about horses. About horses in the Nigandus there are references to words with various meanings and various words with the same meaning (synonyms).¹³²

Horses are not of a single type. There are various brands. Tamil Encyclopaedia speaks about 46 types with a name for each type. Each name would stand for a variety of qualities (colour, body physique, sound, horse power, etc.). For example, the following may be cited as names: Thuragadam, Turangam, Vasi, Payma, Kuragadam, Killai, Kandugam, Karsi, Mandilam, Turaham, Ma, Evuli, Unni, Uthri, Konam, Kundagam, Kuyullai, Kokku, Pari, Achavam, Abayam, Puravi, Re, Athiri, Padalam, Kanagavattam, Koram, Tusi, Kodagam, Sayendavam, Kandarvam, Sadilam, Kannugam, Kodai, Vayama, Pathiri, Vadavai, Kundu, Kandam, Vayam, Narai, Urudhi, Alangu, Talu, etc.¹³³

Of them, the name of the Pandya king’s horse was Kanagavattam, that of the Chera king’s horse was Padalam, that of the Chola king’s Koram, and that of the chieftains Kandugam.¹³⁴ The horses of Persia were called Pari and Turkish horses were named Thuragam. The horses of Central Asia coming from Kurasan were named Koram.¹³⁵ Male horses were called Pothu; female horses were called Pettai. Young ones were called Mari or Kanru.¹³⁶

¹³² Ibid., p.728.
¹³³ Ibid., pp.728-729.
¹³⁴ Ibid., p.729.
¹³⁵ R.P.Sethu Pillai, Words and Their Significance, (Tl.), Madras, 1974, p.22.
¹³⁶ Tamilannal, et.al., op.cit., p.729.
Encyclopaedias refer to specific organs of horses. They also refer to the harness and other decorations that were put on horses. The various occasions in which horses participated too are referred. There is also a description of the types of chariots and carts horses drew. Even the places where they were tied too are described.\textsuperscript{137}

There is a clear reference to their walk and running; the qualities of the horses of kings too are mentioned. A detailed reference is made to cavalry and the types of horses that were present in it.\textsuperscript{138} Paranjothi Munivar in \textit{Thiruvilayadal Puranam} writes about the colour and structure, \textit{physignomy} and even minute details of the horse. He also tells us about the type of horses belonging to which country.\textsuperscript{139} It is a surprise that even two thousand years ago the people of Tamil Nadu were highly informed about the details about horses.\textsuperscript{140} It is true that the Chera, Chola, and the Pandya kings made all arrangements with the Arabian horse traders and trainers to stay in Tamil Nadu and train the local people with the horse trade. Meanwhile horse trade and training perhaps brought native the Hindus and Arab Muslims closer. The religion of Islam found a smooth sail in the Pandya Country.

\textbf{Horse Traders:}

Horse-trade was yet another specialized profession of the Arabs in the Pandya Country, which was at the medieval times entirely in the hands of merchants from Malaimandalam (Kerala)\textsuperscript{141} a division or a part of the state. Malaimandalam means Southern Part of the Chera Country under the control of adjoining state of the Pandyas,\textsuperscript{142} due to its geographical position for the maritime activities in the western countries. Upto Kollam and Aii Country also some times came under the control of the Pandya Kings.\textsuperscript{143} Arab trade in horse was conducted mainly through the western

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{137} \textit{Ibid.}, pp:729-730.
  \item \textsuperscript{138} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.730-731.
  \item \textsuperscript{139} S.M.Kamal, \textit{op.cit.}, p.38.
  \item \textsuperscript{140} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.38-39.
  \item \textsuperscript{141} Ahananuru, 149: 7-11. Clarence Maloney, \textit{op.cit.}, (1968), pp.182-183.
  \item \textsuperscript{142} R.Champakalakshmi, \textit{op.cit.}, p.121; see also W.H.Schoff, \textit{op.cit.}, p.312.
\end{itemize}
ports and the Cholas depended on Chera and Pandya merchants to procure and transport them into the Tamil areas. Settlements of people from Malaimandalam known as Malaiyalangudi existed in the heart of the Chola Country and in the Pudukottai region. Even Parasikas (Persians) figure in a Gangaikondacolapuram inscription of Kulottunga I.

No Greek nor Roman writer has mentioned that the Greeks and the Romans exported horses to South India. The list in Periplus on the goods exported from Egypt does not include horses. Whereas the Arabs were the pioneers in horse trade, and the Arab breed of horses was rated the best. The import of war horses to South India began in the early centuries of the Christian era. But, this trade assumed importance during the Imperial Chola period, when cavalry started playing a prominent role in the Imperial Chola army. From the Imperial Chola period till about the final decline of the third dynasty of Vijayanagara, the import and trade in horses played a very prominent part in the economic history of medieval South India. This extensive trade had been described by almost every foreign account of the medieval South India. During the Imperial Chola, Pandya and Hoyasala periods the horse trade was mainly in the hands of the native horse merchants, known as Kudirai Chettis. In the epigraphic records of the period, we find frequent mention of the Kudirai Chettis and their powerful guilds. The center of their commercial activities seem to have been in the Malainadu or Malai-mandalam, where the horses were first imported from Arabia and the Gulf Countries.

From a comparative study of foreign accounts of Sulaiman, Abu Zaid, Al Hazan, Marco Polo and Wasaff and native lithic records about the import of horses

144 Pudukottai region, Table V., 163 of 1907, IPS. No.218.
146 J.Raja Mohamad, op.cit., p.38.
147 Pattinappalai, ll. 185-186.
148 ARE., 556 of 1904.
to South India to the Kudirai Chettis, we can infer that till about the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Kudirai Chettis acted as brokers or directly imported horses through the Arab merchants. Tiruthakka Thevar in Jivaka Chinthamani, one of the five great epics of Tamil, said to have been composed in the of 10th century A.D., speaks about many horses in Tamil Nadu and foreigners riding on them. Foreigners of the 10th century A.D. must have been the Arabs only. Perunkathai of Kongu Velir corroborates this information.

**Rowuthar:**

The horsemen were known as Rowuthar in olden days. This name comes from the Arabic word Rowuth. Even now the name Rowuthar exists as a separate sect in the Muslim community and in Uthamapalayam a college is named after Haji Karutha Rowuthar and in the Pandya Country Tamil speaking Muslims are called Rowuthar even today. The natives called the warriors on horseback as Rowuthars. Rowuthar in Tamil means one who rides and maintains horses. It further resulted in the founding of Arab Muslim settlements. They married local women and thus a new sect called the Rowuthars came into being. This trade helped in the establishment of friendly relationship between the Arabs and the Tamils.

**Jonagar:**

The descendants of the Arab traders and in some cases refugees who settled in South India and married native women are not only Mappillas but under this category come the Marakkayars of Tiruneveli and the Jonagar particularly of Thanjavur. In the medieval period, the foreign maritime traders not only in the Pandya Country, but also in the whole of South India were commonly called in inscriptions as Parathesigal. However the Arab Muslim traders only were called Jonagar. Nachchinarkiniyar, the commentator of Pathupattu (Ten Idyls), gives the meaning

150 Jivaka Chinthamani (Manamagal Cilambaham) (T1.), 158:6.
152 M.K.Syed Ahamed, op.cit., p.34.
154 P.Jeya Kumar, op.cit., p.172.
of Yavana as Jonagar.\textsuperscript{155} Even today the names of Jonagan street, Jonagan vilai, Jonagan pettai, Jonagan kuthu, and Jonagan valai are mentioned by the Tamil Muslims.\textsuperscript{156} \textbf{Unniyatchi Caritam} a Malayalam-Manipravala work (the author is not known) mentions the Jonagar’s horse trade with medieval Tamilaham.\textsuperscript{157}

\textbf{Horse Traders in Paintings and Sculptures}

In the Narumbunathar temple at Tirupudaimarudur (Tirunelveli District) there is an interesting painting of unloading of horses from the ship, which is found in a portion inside the temple.\textsuperscript{158} It was done under the Pandyas, then Cholas maintained it and the Vijayanagar rulers and the Nayaks of Madurai renovated it.\textsuperscript{159} There is also an exquisite wooden work of horse imported from ship in the Thirukurunkudi temple painting in the Tirunelveli District.\textsuperscript{160} These two famous paintings depict that horses had been brought in ships. Horse whip and horse men of Melnangavaram and Ilamalaippattipudur respectively are the symbols found in inscribed stones of the merchant guild.\textsuperscript{161} A memorial stone of Palakuppam (Katpadi taluk, Velore District) is like a horse riding soldier.\textsuperscript{162} Another one cave painting in Chennarayanpalli, North Arcot District, is also like a horse riding soldier.\textsuperscript{163}

\textbf{Reasons for Import of Horses:}

Historians give a variety of reasons for the import of horses.

1. Trade in horse is a lucrative business to the horse traders and dealers. Any business naturally demands maintaining secrecy. Naturally, horse trade also needed secrecy.

2. The Tamils did not learn the art of fixing the horse shoes. Thus when horse

\textsuperscript{155} S.M.Kamal, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.34-35.

\textsuperscript{156} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.35-36.

\textsuperscript{157} P.Jaya Kumar, \textit{op.cit.}, p.179.

\textsuperscript{158} \textit{Ibid.}, p.186.

\textsuperscript{159} \textit{Ibid.}, p.187.

\textsuperscript{160} Himanshu Ray, \textit{et.al.}, \textit{op.cit.}, p.183.


\textsuperscript{163} \textit{Tolliit Aaiivu Thoguthi, op.cit.}, p.312.
shoes got worn-out they could not replace them. Thus they had to import fresh horses every year.\textsuperscript{164} The Arabs did not allow the smiths to know how to shoe horses.\textsuperscript{165}

3. Unlike the Arabs, the Tamils did not know the art of maintaining horses. Nor did they know the art of training horses.\textsuperscript{166}

4. The argument of the historians that the Tamils did not know the art of shoeing horses may not be acceptable. They shoed bullocks ever since the Sangam age that is above 2000 years ago. Further, men who shoed the bullock themselves could shoe the horses. A place in the erstwhile Tirunelveli District known as Kuthiraimozhiteri, which means the sand dune where horses were administered with the shoes stands as an evidence to the indigenous art. Therefore, a new set need not come from Arabia. However, the view that the Arabs could have hidden the art of training and maintaining horses seems acceptable.\textsuperscript{167}

However, there might have been some deficiency in the indigenous art of breeding. The foreign art was kept as a strict secret, a secret which other traders were not given to know. This could have been a trick played by the Arabs to promote their trade. Besides, the land and climatic conditions here did not suit breeding of horses.\textsuperscript{168} Further, the Arabs could have hidden the idea of breeding horse for various reasons, particularly for profitable trade. Ilango Atikal, the author of the Silappadikaram, says “Another impact of horse trade was that the Arabs and the Greeks served in Tamils’ armies.”\textsuperscript{169}

\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., p.110.
\textsuperscript{166} K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, op.cit., pp.166-167.
\textsuperscript{167} N.Subbu Reddiar, op.cit., pp.18-39.
\textsuperscript{168} Perumpanararrupadai, \textit{ll.} 319-324.
\textsuperscript{169} Silappadikaram, \textit{xi, ll.} 66-67; Mullaipattu, \textit{ll.} 59-61.
Import of Horses to Kayal:

On the fall of the Chola Empire, the Pandyas of the Second Empire, particularly Kulasekhara I and II paid much attention to territorial expansion. In this Kayal (Pattinam) served as an important port-town through which large numbers of horses were imported. Marco Polo states, "Cail is a great and noble city, and belongs to Ashar (Iswara), the eldest of the five brother-kings.\(^{170}\)

According to lithic records the port of Kayal served as a horse-trading and importing center during the Second Pandyan Empire.\(^{171}\) Kayal was by far the most important port where all the ships that came from the ports of West Asia such as Hormuz, Kis, Aden, etc. touched. Towards the end of the 13\(^{th}\) century A.D.thousands of horses were imported at this port and they were sent to Madurai. It is on record that a brisk trade in horses was carried on from Arabia to Kayal.\(^{172}\)

It is learnt from lithic epigraphic records and foreign notices that horse trade led to heavy expenses in the state treasury. "It was a matter of agreement that Maliku-i Islam Jamal-ud-din and the merchants should embark every year from the island of Kais and land at Ma’bar 1,400 horses of his own breed\(^{173}\) according to Wasaff these horses were bought at a price of 500 saggio\(^{174}\) equivalent to 220 Dinars of red gold. They were brought from many other places like Kis, Ormuz, Qator and Aden to the port of Kayal which became a great emporium of horse trade. According to above source as many as 16,000 horses were landed at this port in one season.\(^{174}\) The demand for horses was always greater than the supply as a large number of horses died even while during transportation. Yet the importers had to pay the full amount and this money was paid from the Pandya treasury in accordance with the terms of the contract. The Pandyas imported these horses for

\(^{170}\) K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, op.cit., p.179.

\(^{171}\) SII., Vol.VIII, No.442, P.Jeya Kumar, op.cit., p.185.

\(^{172}\) S.Jeyaseela Stephen, op.cit., p.28.

\(^{173}\) The value of one Dinar of gold coin, the modern weight is 5.450 gm and is equated to 2 saggio.

\(^{174}\) H.M.Elliot and J.Dowson, op.cit., Vol.III, p.32.
their army. This motivated the Pandyas to follow a semi-monopolistic policy allowing Muslims and Hindus to trade in horses at Nagore,\textsuperscript{175} Tiruchitrambalam\textsuperscript{176} and supply them only to the Pandyas. Several expressions found in inscriptions of this period such as \textit{Kulichevakarar}\textsuperscript{177} (horsemen), \textit{Kuthiraiamman}\textsuperscript{178} (horse trooper) and \textit{Kuthiraiandan}\textsuperscript{179} (stable men) attest to the fact that import and trade in horses necessitated the employment of various types of skilled persons. Kayal thus developed into a port where the Arab merchants brought their merchandise in their trading vessels. The Pandyas therefore patronized these traders and monopolised the incoming horses.

**Import of Horses to Periyapattinam:**

After some time there happened a shift in importance to the Kayal in favour of \textbf{Periyapattinam}. This shift to \textbf{Periyapattinam} between the 13\textsuperscript{th} and the 14\textsuperscript{th} centuries may partly be attributed to geophysical factors such as the accumulation of sand in the harbours or the change of bay current, but more probably it can be explained by the political situation of the time. It seems to have been the invasion of Madurai by the armies of the Khalji and Tughluq Sultans of Delhi that caused the shift. The army commanded by Malik Kafur stormed Madurai in 1311\textsuperscript{180} and Ulugh Khan came to the region in the 1323s to establish the Sultan’s rule there.\textsuperscript{181} Before long Hazan Shah, the Sultan’s commander who was in charge of Madurai proclaimed his independence in or before 1335 A.D. The Madurai Sultanate was thus born.\textsuperscript{182} Although the Sultans of Delhi and Madurai established their power in the region around Madurai, they were still surrounded by enemies, since the Pandya rulers were still active in the extreme South in the Tirunelveli and Tenkasi regions and the Hoysalas were watching for a chance of coming down to Madurai from the North.\textsuperscript{183}

\textsuperscript{175} ARE., 35 of 1914.
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., 161 of 1907.
\textsuperscript{177} IPS., No.1216.
\textsuperscript{178} SII., Vol. XVII, No.378.
\textsuperscript{179} ARE., 192 of 1926.
\textsuperscript{180} S.A.Q.Husaini, \textit{op.cit.}, p.54.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., p.74.
\textsuperscript{182} A.Swaminathan, \textit{op.cit.}, p.235.
We may safely conclude, therefore, that what was close to Tirunelveli was not safe for the Sultans and they must have desired a safer port than Kayal to ensure the continuation of the international trade, which was so crucial for continuing their welfare and maintaining their economy. The horses, which were indispensable for their army, had to be imported from the Persian Gulf. For that purpose, Periyapattinam facing the Gulf of Mannar seems to have been located most ideally, since it was easily approachable from Madurai by the Vaigai river. The Sultans, therefore, must have done a lot to develop Periyapattinam as their main port for international trade. This will explain why it suddenly got prominence in the 14th century. However, the decline of the Madurai Sultanate, which occurred in late 1360s, may have reduced the prosperity of Periyapattinam in the succeeding centuries, though it seems to have continued to function as a sea port until the 17th century.184

Tondi:

Tondi, one of the earliest Pandya sea port, imported horses.185 According to P.Jeya Kumar, it was the celebrated port city in the medieval period.186 It was modelled on the Tondi port of the Western Coast which had been sung in praise by poets. Though its beginnings could be traced back to the B.Cs.187 As said earlier, it might have risen to prominence after the sixth century A.D.

The extracts from Marco Polo and Abdullah Wasaff show that the Pandyas imported thousands of horses every year. Tondi in the Ramanathapuram District was an important centre for horse trade. The Arabs called this town Dynda. Even till today the expression “like the beautiful horse of Tondi”(உதவோன உண்ணண்டு ரோட்டு வில்பு) is in common use. T.V.Sadasiva Pandarathar also levels support to the view that the horses imported at Tondi were of high breed.188

184 Ibid., p.167.
185 S.Muruganantham, op.cit., p.37.
186 P.Jeya Kumar, op.cit., pp.93-97.
188 T.V.Sadasiva Pandarattar, op.cit., p.182.
Tax and Customs Duty to Import Horses:

Inscriptions give much importance to Kuthirai Chettis (local horse traders or distributors). We can trace their importance in importing horses to their state they wanted to meet out the vast expenditure not only from state treasury, but also from Hindu temple land income, common peoples’ presentation and tax collected from artists like Panans.\footnote{P.Jeya Kumar, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.182-183.} Like other commodities horses were also included in the list of taxable commodities; to cite an epigraphic reference, each imported horse was paid \textit{kal-panam achchu}\footnote{\textit{SI}. Vol: XXII, No.442.} direct tax of the State.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}} Commonly taxes were collected according to weight (in Tamil \textit{pothi}), but horses were individually counted and taxes were collected. This tax was called Kuthirai kanikkai.\footnote{P.Jeya Kumar, \textit{op.cit.}, p.183.} This tax was collected purely for maintaining the horse riding soldiers. Even during the period of the Vijayanagar Empire in 1492-1497A.D. inscriptions confirm the above horse taxes.\footnote{\textit{ARE.}, 145 of 1937-1938.} What we understand from this is that the State collected taxes for their upkeep and maintenance.

Reason for the fall of Arab horse-trade:

So long as there were no competitors in the field, the Arabs could regard themselves as the masters of the horse trade. But nearly ten centuries long Arab monopoly over the horse trade was most dramatically shattered at the close of the 15\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. when the Portuguese landed in India and drove out the Arabs almost completely from the Indian markets. The rise of the Portuguese power in India and the consequent ouster of the Arab merchants were accentuated by a number of factors. Among them, two factors have remained unnoticed by scholars. Firstly, in 1515 A.D. the Portuguese had been able to capture Aden and Hormuz, which was the great center of horse trade. Secondly, the second Pandya Empire which had provided a sort of royal patronage to the Arab merchants, declined and disintegrated at the close of the 14\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. Besides, the consequent second Pandya Empire’s civil war at Madurai and elsewhere too must have adversely affected the fortunes of the Arab
merchants. From the foreign accounts of the 16th century A.D. we learn that the bulk of the horse-trade came into the hands of the Portuguese.194

A look at the study made above reveals that there was an ever increasing demand for horses in the Pandya Country. This demand was necessitated by the frequent outbreak of wars, which needed the employment of war-horses on a large scale. The Arabs found themselves well-placed in the Pandya Country for this reason, though the Arabs never gave a chance to the Pandya as to learn about the method of tending horses or never doubled their integrity nor tried ever to learn it. As a result, the Arabs exploited the trust the Pandyas reposed on them and made good their business. This gullibility of the Pandyas too had a telling effect on their treasury. When the emperors became weak, their treasury too became weak and consequently trade in the country.

What becomes clear from the study made above is that the Pandya Country from time immemorial gave royal patronage to export and import of goods that were rare and abundant in the country and that were not available, but are of great demand inside. An analytical study could prove that while pearl from the Pandya Country was a rare and precious item of export to the Western Countries, horses were imported to the Pandya Country through Arab merchants and mediators. As long as pearls were produced in the country and as long as horses were needed in the Pandya Country, a lucrative business went on, though the advent of the Europeans into the Indian waters reduced the Arab quantum of trade. Trade in other items in the Pandya Country gold, pepper, and other spices, all kinds of wood (sandalwood) and timbers were secondary to pearl export and horse import. But, in the Western Coast the nature of trade was different. There spices of all kinds dominated trade with the Western and Eastern countries. This is well attested by indigenous literary, epigraphic and copper-plate evidences, local traditions and folktales, foreign travelogues and official records.