Kollam as a major port city had been controlled by one of the major European powers who came to India and traded for many years during the heydays of European monopoly in trade and commerce all over the world. Portugal was the pioneer in the discovery of new sea routes and in establishing contacts and relationships with people and civilizations. It was not a haphazard adventure but, on the contrary, a commitment of people to the realization of a national project which mobilized all the members of their society.

One of the aims of the Portuguese adventurers and the Crown of Portugal in discovering the perilous sea-route to India was to establish direct commercial contacts with the spice-producing areas of the Orient and derive the maximum profit by doing away with the middlemen and probably also the Indian merchants.Interestingly, the King of Portugal issued specific instructions to this effect and the local authorities in Portuguese India tried their best to materialize this goal.¹

In the middle of the fifteenth century, the Renaissance had definitely been implanted in Europe and with it the development of sciences especially in the areas of astronomy and nautical knowledge. Renaissance was also a kind of

revival of the scientific temper in the minds of the people of Europe. This European intellectual movement generated, among the Portuguese, a feeling of a nation that already possessed an intense maritime vocation, an interest in deepening the understanding of the science connected with the sea and navigation.²

Determinant factors were thus combined in Portugal for a maritime expansion, which would become the greatest scientific, economic and social revolution in the history of mankind and it helped to meet and cohabit various civilizations. It was also the beginning of the process of colonization which of course transformed the polity and economy of the colonized countries through exploitation.

It is true that the Portuguese were the first to have understood the concept of sea-power and evolved a naval strategy for the effective control of the Indian sea. The principal item procured by the Portuguese Estado da India, was spices, overwhelmingly pepper, though some other goods were also procured.³ However, the Portuguese hold on the Indian mainland led to conflict in coastal areas, within the range of the guns of their ships. One of their aims was to break the monopoly

of Muslim trade and to reach the source of the lucrative spices. It ultimately fostered lucrative trade on the spices of Indian peninsular.

Traders from Arabian countries had already established their commercial contacts with India even before the advent of Europeans. Sea travel was a hazardous task at that time. But this was taken up by the Arabs and hence maritime trade with the Indian Ocean became their monopoly. They were the masters of Indian Ocean trade till the arrival of the Portuguese. The Indian merchants were prevented by religious taboos from crossing the sea. However they had commercial contacts with countries across the sea. The Portuguese actually wanted to destroy the Arab monopoly of trade in Indian Ocean region.

The Portuguese were the first European who took strong steps to destroy the harmonious relationships that existed among communities of diverse faiths. They considered the local trading communities especially the Muslims as their enemy and wanted to replace the Muslim merchants.4 There were different categories of merchants in Indian society ranging from petty dealers, peddlers (banjaras), caravan traders and very rich merchants and there were nakhudas (ship owning merchants) also.5

The Portuguese king, who was in financial difficulties to continue the overseas enterprise offered liberal concessions to all the merchant-financiers interested in joining Gama. He invited people from all over Europe to invest

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money in the project he placed before them. According to the scheme developed by him, the merchant financiers were expected to fit out the vessels under the Portuguese banner. All the transactions in the East in general and in India in particular were to be done through the Portuguese officials in case of spices and other items of royal monopoly. They could also entrust to the India House (Casa da India) the commodities and cash to be exported to India for the purchase of the items they were in need of.

Kollam, to the south of Kayamkulam, furnished dry betel nuts, coloured cotton stuffs, sapan-wood, frankincense, pearls, coral, butter and jasmine flowers all of which were brought to Kollam which acted as an entrepot. According to Chinese travellers, pearls were brought from Rameswaram to Kollam and then taken to foreign countries. The native products of Kollam offered for sale were coconuts, liu-fish, betel nuts and pepper. Pyrard has referred about the sardine fish from Kollam and it was a fine fishing centre. This fish is very abundant in Malabar Coast.

Interestingly, the Portuguese established direct commercial relationship with the ports on the Malabar Coast right from the beginning of the sixteenth century (see p.232, map.11). Fortress and factories were built in various parts of Malabar with a view to deriving the utmost profit from the lucrative trade in

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6 K.S.Mathew, Indo- Portuguese Trade and the Fuggers of Germany, New Delhi, p.4.
7 Ibid., p.49.
spices and other oriental commodities. Further Casa da India (India House) was established in Lisbon in 1503.

From the first landing of Vasco Da Gama at Calicut in 1498, the policy of the Portuguese was to maintain an absolute supremacy in Eastern waters. Their aim was not territorial dominion, but only command of the seas and trade routes, in pursuance of which they sought positions of advantage, whether ports or islands, some of which they won by force, others by diplomacy.10

Portugal maintained trade relations with India mainly in three modes. First, trade was conducted with the conquered areas of the Indian Ocean regions by establishing commercial relations with the local people as vassals with their lords whose revenue for entry and exit belonged to the Crown of Portugal. Secondly, the Portuguese concluded permanent contracts with the local kings and rulers regarding the prices of commodities purchased and sold by the Portuguese as it was done with the kings of Cannanore, Cochin, Kollam and Ceylon. The said contract was only for the supply of spices to the officials of the Portuguese king stationed in his factories in India for the annual fleet going over to Portugal. The commodities other than spices were free to be purchased by the Portuguese privateers and local people at any price mutually agreed upon by the seller and buyer. Thirdly, the Portuguese merchant vessels plied through all the parts of the

9 Johnsy Mathews, Economy and Society in Medieval Malabar (A.D.1500-1600), Changanacherry, 1996, p.163.
Indian ocean conforming themselves to the practice of the place and exchanging commodities with the local people at prices agreed among themselves.\textsuperscript{11}

The monopoly claimed by them in the light of the Papal Bulls and other legal presumptions prompted them to keep the entire Indian Ocean regions under their control through the introduction of passes (cartazes), the establishment of well-fortified fortresses in strategic places and ‘cafila’ (escort for ships). Of all these, the most important for the Portuguese and most humiliating for the Indians was the system of passes.\textsuperscript{12} The Portuguese, with a view to sparing the vessels introduced an expedient under which those ships that were not to be attacked were required to carry a certificate duly signed by the Portuguese authorities, namely, the royal factor, or the captain of the fortress.

*Cartaz*, which is a loan-word from the Arabic ‘qirtas’, meaning paper or document, was some sort of license of movement or safe-conduct for navigation issued by the Portuguese to native ships, with the exclusive view of showing that these vessels did not belong to the enemy camp.\textsuperscript{13} The Portuguese considered that the right over the sea and the land which was conquered and discovered by them exclusively belonged to them by virtue of the series of Papal Bulls issued from 1441 onwards, and also it insisted and wished that the Hindus, Muslims and all other natives who wanted to ply their vessels in the sea should purchase *cartazes*.


\textsuperscript{12} *Ibid.*, p.70.

Interestingly, the ships that did not buy cartazes were confiscated along with their cargo, and the people on board were enslaved. Records say that the first written cartazes were issued in 1502 by Vasco da Gama. Thus, this attempt by the Portuguese also could be considered as their first attempt to monopolize the maritime spice trading activities in Indian Ocean region.

Later, the Portuguese officials were detailed to guard the coastal regions with a view to preventing other ships from conducting trade with any part of India and they were asked to capture and confiscate all the ships from conducting trade with any part of India and they were asked to capture and confiscate all the ships that were not equipped with cartazes from the Portuguese as they found it necessary. And hence this became a regular practice in the Indian Ocean spice trade. Thus under the pretext of checking cartaz the Portuguese officials attacked and confiscated the vessels of the Marakkar traders going to the Ottoman trade centers.14

The captains of the respective fortress or the official of the factory issued cartazes. The cartazes were to be made out by the writers of the factory who were entitled to have a share in the perquisites, but they were to be signed by the authorities of the factory or fortress.

To be specific, a cartaz contained the reference to the circumstance in which it was given. The name and tonnage of the ship, name and age of its captain, the port of embarkation as well as disembarkation, and the approximate

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date of departure etc. were also indicated in the *cartaz*. Mention was made of the arms and ammunitions carried in the ship and the items that were prohibited to the transported were also declared. Lastly the names of the writers and of the issuing authority were given along with the date of issue. In fact the Portuguese had aimed at controlling the market by establishing monopoly through the *cartazes*\(^\text{15}\).

The system of *cartazes* was an efficient instrument for the Portuguese authority in implementing the monopoly and supremacy over the maritime trade of the Indian Ocean regions.

The coastal trade that once flourished well in the Indian Ocean declined during the sixteenth century on account of the enforcement of the system of ‘*cartazes*’ with all the stringent regulations on the trade conducted by the native as well as the foreign Muslim merchants. Thus, even the merchant vessel holding ‘*cartazes*’ were under danger of being plundered by the Portuguese\(^\text{16}\).

It is obvious from the history that the Portuguese tried to introduce certain restrictions on the trade of Malabar Coast and claimed supremacy over the Indian Ocean. They set up fortresses and trading factories on the West Coast (in Cochin, Goa, Diu, Daman), on the Coromandel Coast (Negapattinam, Mylapore,

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\(^{15}\) Margret Frenze, *From Contact to Conquest, Transition to British Rule in Malabar, 1790-1805*, New Delhi, 2003, p.67.

Tranquebar and in Bengal (Hooghly, Dacca, Chittagong). The Portuguese possessions were strongly fortified settlements, accessible only by sea.  

Soon after the arrival of Alvares Cabral in 1500, the need was felt to establish a permanent Portuguese factory and colony. This was mainly determined because some of the necessary export commodities needed to be purchased in advance of the fleets from Portugal. Later, in due course a number of Portuguese factories were created and the Portuguese settled around them. Soon it realized that the number of persons required for the Portuguese Indian trade could not be provided by such a small nation as Portugal. Therefore, the king and the Governors of the Portuguese India encouraged the unmarried Portuguese male residents to marry the local Indian women in order to increase the population of those living within the sphere of Portuguese culture.

Thus, Almeida did not realize the importance of a fortress and the cordial relations with the natives. His policy was later completed by Dom Affonso de Albuquerque, who stressed more on building fortresses and having good relations with Indian states. From the time of the establishment of factories and fortresses on the Malabar Coast, a number of Portuguese men began to reside in Cochin, Cannanore, Kollam and Calicut.


19 Ibid., p.187.
With the expansion of the city of Cochin and the increase in the number of city dwellers, the needs and demands for more and more commodities increased simultaneously. Both the Portuguese Cochin and in its native counterpart, various merchants began to set up shops to exploit the opportunities offered by local trade.

Gradually in and around the fortresses in these places came up colonies of the Portuguese *casados e maradores* (married settlers). Many of them married local women giving rise to a mixed race. They preferred Muslim and Brahmin ladies, according to Affonso de Albuquerque, were fair in complexion, chaste in morality and reserved in social contacts being shut up in their houses while the others were of a liberated nature. Brahmin ladies were also desirable since they too were fair and supposedly of better conduct than the others.²⁰

Both the King and Affonso de Albuquerque encouraged mixed marriages and a permanent settlement of Portuguese-blooded population in India for the sake of the defense of the interest of the Portugal. Right from the early days of Portuguese settlement, Afonso de Albuquerque encouraged the *casados* to conduct the local trade and to set up as bakers, shoemakers, tavern-keepers and tailors. Rice and other food materials imported to the city formed the major commodities of transaction. Almost all the factories on the Malabar Coast had a hospital attached to them for taking care of the sick.

During the sixteenth century, as the trade and commerce flourished, the number of the Portuguese ‘casados’ increased. The *casados* (meaning family-men especially the Portuguese citizens married to native women) formed an important segment of the merchant communities in Portuguese Asia and their emergence as a bourgeoisie class in the Indian Ocean region played a vital role in re-shaping the commercial strategy of the Portuguese.\(^{21}\) It was not only the Portuguese merchants gained riches from the trade, but also the Indian merchants who provided the commodities.

Albuquerque’s ambition was to found a great Portuguese empire in the East, and he attached considerable importance to the erection of forts wherever he found a factory, not only for the protection of the trade on the shore, but to enable him to dominate the native rulers and to consolidate his power, with the object of coercing them into acknowledging Portugal as suzerain power.\(^{22}\)

As a result, the local rulers of the Malabar Coast wanted to take advantage of the commercial facilities offered by the Portuguese. During Gama’s sojourn at Cochin, he got a message from the Queen of Kollam, in which she had expressed her desire and readiness to have trade with the Portuguese. As the pepper sold in Cochin was principally produced in the kingdoms around Kollam- which was

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transported through river to Cochin- the queen wanted the benefit of pepper trade to her merchants.

As Gama was already in contract and commitment with the King of Cochin it was not within his power to act. So he advised the Queen of Kollam to approach the King of Cochin for further procedure. Thus, the Queen sent an envoy to Cochin for securing the sanction of the King. But the proposal was unprofitable to the King. Vasco de Gama feared to offend the Raja of Cochin by trading elsewhere, and it was only after receiving the express consent of the latter monarch that he took two ship-loads of pepper from Kollam. The King of Cochin feared that Cochin would lose her importance as a major maritime trading centre. However, Gama did not make any serious efforts in the case of Kollam’s trading interests.

A very intimate relationship existed between the rulers of Cochin and the Portuguese. Thus, With the strong support of Portuguese Cochin developed into a major port city. The Portuguese procured cinnamon from the countries belonging to Rajas in the neighborhood of Cochin. At the time of the arrival of

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Portuguese, Cochin was a petit port town situated on the bank of Cochin River. This strategic position was fairly advantageous for defense purpose.

The port of Cochin was described as the best in the world by Afonso de Albuquerque in 1504 as far as security of the ships was concerned. Determined as the Portuguese were to cherish friendly relations with the king of Cochin and to develop the port-town as a rival centre against Calicut, thus, several diplomatic steps of far reaching importance were taken by them.

The Queen of Kollam wanted a friendly relationship with the Portuguese and invited them; she gave them a warm welcome. The queen of Kollam agreed that the local merchants would accept *cartazes* from the captain of the fortress as a sign of her willingness to become a vassal of the king of Portugal for the sake of commercial prosperity of her capital-town. Albuquerque opened up a trade with Kollam. He showed a friendly approach and established a factory at Kollam in January 1504.

The Portuguese on their arrival in India signaled the end for the previously self-determined trade within the Indian Ocean. As is well known, there were two

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27 It is observed that the Cochin port is formed due to the natural flooding of the river Periyar in 1341 CE which choked the Muzris port (near the present day Kodungallur), one of the greatest ports in ancient world. Since then Cochin had been functioning as a major trading centre having trade relations with the Romans the Greeks etc. Later on major trade forces like the Portuguese, the Dutch and others were frequently attracted to the city.

methods by which the Portuguese sought to control trade: one method was the *cartaz* system. They had constructed toll stations in certain ports. In this way the *cartazes* were used by the Portuguese to charge tolls, which was actually their economic motive.\(^{29}\)

The forts had been built to safeguard the trading posts and were located at strategic points along the coast. They did however, restrict Portuguese control to only those places where they had built forts-excluding the hinterland\(^{30}\). All the Portuguese efforts were aimed towards gaining monopoly over all spices.

When Antonio de Sao was captain, a quarrel had broken out and the people of Kollam under Bala Pillai, rose up in arms and destroyed the factory. The Portuguese garrison died in the fight. In 1515 Lopo Soares De Albergaria succeeded Albuquerque as the Governor and he entered into a treaty with Kollam on 15 September 1516.

After Lopo Soares became Governor, a new treaty with Kollam was made by which the queen agreed to erect the fort of San Thome in the same manner and in the same spot, and to compensate for the death of Antonio de Sao by giving to the Portuguese king 500 *bhar* of pepper.\(^{31}\) In the same year about 5000 bullock

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loads of pepper taken from Kollam via Ariankavu Pass were captured by the factor.\textsuperscript{32}

Moreover Kollam also agreed not to export pepper but to sell it only to the Portuguese at the Cochin rates. No dues were to be paid for the use of the port, and the queen agreed not to receive or favour the enemies of Portugal.\textsuperscript{33} The Queen was asked to treat the Christians with favour. The Portuguese also secured permission to convert local people to Christianity.\textsuperscript{34} In the matter of administration of justice, they were given some sort of an exemption in the sense that if the natives of Kollam were found guilty on account of their quarrels with the Portuguese or local Christians, the judgment would be pronounced and punishment would be executed by the Portuguese captain. Thus some sort of an extra-territorial jurisdiction was granted to the Portuguese.\textsuperscript{35}

Soares appointed captain Heyton Rodrigues as factor at Kollam. He secured sanction to build a house for the Portuguese. The Moors had premonitions of the impending calamity that was to fall upon the Queen, if the Portuguese stabilized


\textsuperscript{33} K.M. Panikkar, \textit{Malabar and the Portuguese}, New Delhi, 1997, pp.95-96.


their position in her dominion. Moors want to keep off the Portuguese from Kollam.

In 1519, the construction of Kollam Fort was begun secretly by the commandant Rodrigues. The Junior Rani tried to prevent the construction work. But, by the month of September, 1519, the fort was completed and armed; it is the ‘Fort Thomas’.\(^{36}\) The Queen had an impression that if she was friendly towards them, she would be exempted from the payment of annual subsidy in pepper, but proved to be wrong in later.\(^{37}\)

When the fort was completed Rodrigues demanded the immediate supply of pepper due under the treaty. The failure on the part of the Queen to fulfill the demand resulted in gradual estrangement and ultimately it developed into enmity and war. At that time Junior Rani helped the Moors and started loading their vessels. The Portuguese seized the pepper laden Moorish vessels.

Interestingly, on 25 October 1544, Afonso De Sousa concluded another treaty with Kollam. The treaty provided that in the event of a Portuguese or a native Christian being guilty of any crime he was to be sent to the captain for trial and punishment.\(^{38}\) The Portuguese were to be exempt from all dues. The church of St. Thomas was specially protected. The Portuguese on their side promised not to kill cows in Kollam.


\(^{38}\) Ibid., p19.
With the increasing trade in Kollam the king of Travancore wanted to erect a fortress in Kollam and control its trade, as is evident from the account of Antonio de Gouveia. In 1599 the king of Travancore started constructing a fortress adjacent to the Portuguese fortress of Kollam, which obviously led to a tensed situation in Kollam. The Portuguese tried to destroy the Travancorean fortress of Kollam, by force.

The Archbishop of Goa, who was then visiting the churches of Kerala in connection with the Diamper Synod (1599) met the king of Travancore and asked him to demolish the fortress structure and to refrain from the commercial domain of the Portuguese. However the Travancorean ruler continued to pursue his attempts to control the trade of Kollam through the fortification devices he had chalked out after the Archbishop was left.  

Kollam was an important centre for the purchase of pepper for export to Lisbon, as it had its own Portuguese trade officials. Nevertheless, since the mid-sixteenth century general supervision of Portuguese commercial activities at Kollam had been exercised by the treasurer (vedor da fazenda) at Cochin. Occasional carracks had been loaded with pepper at Kollam in the later sixteenth century, and further consignments were sent to Cochin or Goa for trans-shipment to Europe.


When differences with the Nayakas of Ikkeri hampered purchases in Canara in the 1620’s, the Portuguese pepper exports from Kollam for a time exceeded those from all other ports, despite the diverting of much of the crop eastwards across Travancore to the buyers in Coromandal and beyond. There were constant contacts between the Malabar Coast and the Coromandel through land routes from Kollam. The mountain passes across the Western Ghats provided safe outlets for many native merchants to continue their trading activities by passing the control systems that Portuguese established on the West Coast. This land route that terminated in the ports of Coromandel was an easy and safe outlet for conducting trade without being harassed by the Portuguese.41

In 1629, about 5,686 heavy quintals of Kollam pepper were purchased by the Portuguese India Company, constituting 52 per cent of exports of Lisbon in 1630, and thus making the south Malabar port easily the largest single supplier in the first season of the company’s existence. 42

As the Portuguese initially did not have sufficient networks for procuring commodities and also for the distribution of the cargo brought from Portugal, they had to depend on the Marakkars. Mitos Marakkar, who was the principal supplier of cinnamon from Ceylon, Ali Apule, Coje Mappila and Abraham Mappila who


used to take pepper regularly to the Portuguese factory of Cochin, and Mathias from Kollam, were all representatives of different categories of merchant groups who used to co-operate with the Portuguese in their trade. The intermediaries contacted the cultivators directly by going from one place to giving rice, cloths and cash for the pepper. The Muslims and Jews collected cloth from Cambay and brought it to the Malabar Coast to barter for the pepper and other commodities and made good profit. There are indigenous customs-houses in all the export centres on the Malabar Coast such as Cannanore, Calicut, Cochin and Kollam, to collect duties from the commodities purchased by the Portuguese and other foreign merchants.

It was calculated that a volume of 30,000 quintals (15,73,770 Kgs.) of pepper could be collected from the area between Cochin and Kollam. The price offered by the Portuguese for pepper was very low. The king of Cochin told the king of Portugal in 1516 that the price offered by the Portuguese was very low and that the merchants would not deliver pepper at such a price. He added that even though the price agreed was only 150 panams a bhar of pepper, it was difficult to find enough of it even at the rate of 200 panams.

Nevertheless, there was no response on the part of the Portuguese King to improve the situation. As a result, pepper and other commodities were smuggled

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45 Ibid.
out to Coromandel Coast and other places. When the merchants near Kollam took the pepper to Coromandel Coast on account of the better prices, the Portuguese captured the commodity by force and brought pressure on the ruler of Kollam. There were references for the pepper smuggling from Kollam to Vijayanagara in the letter of Joao de Cruz.46 As the Portuguese did not listen to the constant demands of the kings and merchants to increase the price of the commodities in tune with the increase in places other than the Portuguese factories, they supplied to the Portuguese less commodities than what they did before. The Muslim merchants from Kollam delivered 2,45,679.24 kgs. of pepper to the factory at Kollam in 1516.47

Thus, the Portuguese trade system affected the fortunes of the foreign Muslim merchants on the Malabar Coast as well as the coastal trade existing so far. As the Portuguese found themselves incapable of conducting trade without the help of the local merchants, the King instructed the officials on the Malabar Coast to favour the Christian and the Hindu merchants in preference to the Muslims.48 The local merchants of Malabar were able to maintain their position in business and among them a new group of merchants other than the Muslims came up; this brought about far-reaching effects on the structure of the society in Malabar. Thus

the Portuguese period caused for the economic retrogression of Muslims and bitterness against Christians.\textsuperscript{49}

The production of commodities increased in proportion to the increasing demand and presumably new areas were brought under cultivation. The Portuguese trade brought more cash into the market. As the Portuguese factories were located in certain areas under the local rulers, the indigenous coins were also used in the transactions in those factories. Kollam had large coins called ‘tanga’ and small coins called ‘panams’ both of gold.\textsuperscript{50} Gold coin worth 331.3 reis was used in the region of Kollam.\textsuperscript{51}

Various commodities like pepper, cinnamon, ginger, clove, mace, nutmegs, many sorts of spices and drugs were exported in the beginning of the sixteenth century by the Portuguese. Pepper formed an essential ingredient in cooking for the wealthier classes as well for the common folk and it also had medicinal use.\textsuperscript{52} It was an item of international significance in the sixteenth century.

Mathias and Brugaida Taquatome were the main agents of the Portuguese in Kayamkulam and Kollam who supplied pepper and other commodities to the Portuguese. Mathias supplied cinnamon to the Portuguese with the help of his

\textsuperscript{49} Rolland E. Miller, \textit{Mappila Muslims of Kerala}, Madras, 1992, p.75.

\textsuperscript{50} K.S. Mathew, \textit{Portuguese Trade with India in the Sixteenth Century}, p.27.


\textsuperscript{52} Celsa Pinto, \textit{Trade and Finance in Portuguese India – A Study of the Portuguese Country Trade-1770-1840}, New Delhi, 1994, p.226.
colleagues. Probably he acted just as a paid agent in the beginning and then became a small scale merchant. Fr.Diogo Goncalvez, in his *Historia do Malabar*, 1615, gives the stations on the canal between Kollam and Cochin, where customs duty had to be paid. These stations were (Kayamkulam, Purakkad, Muvattupuzha etc.) by the Portuguese called ‘juncoes’.\(^{53}\)

Later, textiles were also included in their exports. Till the end of the 17\(^{th}\) century, the trade flourished and volume of the trading commodities increased year by year. But in the last decade, when European competitors, like the Dutch and the English, started taking more interest, their volume of trade started dwindling. This rivalry decreased the demand for the Indian goods provided by the Portuguese in the northern Europe, which had been the major centers for supply by the Portuguese.\(^{54}\)

Now these two nations began providing the same commodities in which the Portuguese earned more than 300 to 500 percent of profit while carrying them only to their country and before reshipment. To maintain the Indian commerce, the Portuguese king had to seek various means and sources of financing. The following table shows the amount of pepper exported by the Portuguese in different years from the port city of Kollam.

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Pepper Export from Kollam to Goa

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Pepper in Quintal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1615</td>
<td>1374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1625</td>
<td>3522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1629-30</td>
<td>4686</td>
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<tr>
<td>1631</td>
<td>3663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1635</td>
<td>3492</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pepper brought by the Portuguese for export to Portugal was acquired from middlemen at weighing houses and factories in Malabar and Canara and later brought to Goa. The middlemen who bought the dried pepper from the cultivators transported it by cart, oxen or river boat to the markets inland or on the coast, and sold it there to distributors and exporters.

There were independent operators also, but some acted as agents for wealthy coastal merchants. The contractors acquired their stocks either through sending their own agents to buy in the fields, or else directly from the lesser middlemen.

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55 Ibid., pp.78-80.
It is true that the economic subordination of the pepper cultivators is suggested by the fact that they were frequently forced to pledge their pepper in advance to middlemen.\textsuperscript{58} In the early sixteenth century the middle in each year acquired the next season’s crop either for cash advance or in exchange for cotton cloths, and other goods, which they stored at the seaports.

Usually the Portuguese authorities bought the pepper from middlemen or contractors after a small or a half-payment of the total amount. The remaining amount was to be paid after the arrival of the ships with pepper money from Portugal. Sometimes the contractors supplied half the contracted volume of pepper and the rest only upon full payment.\textsuperscript{59}

Certainly, there were various means of payment for cloth. Sometime the Portuguese supplied pepper, ginger, cinnamon and various sorts of spices to obtain textiles. Portuguese needed much of the Gujarati textiles for the purchase of the spices from the Malabar Coast and the regions of Canara.

Eventually the Portuguese share of the pepper exports and the export of other commodities of Malabar went down from about the end of the sixteenth century. The system of procurement through the use of force, successfully operated through most of the sixteenth century, had begun to break down. The very rich pepper principalities like Kayamkulam and Kollam had re-established links with Asian merchants and begun to sell their pepper in open markets.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., p.85.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{60} Sinnappa Arasaratnam, \textit{Maritime India in the Seventeenth Century}, New Delhi, 1994, p.92.
There were some problems between the Portuguese and the Muslim traders. The Portuguese were intruders who, in order to establish their own trade, had to break down the monopoly of the Muslims; and before the conditions of the country were properly understood, they were content to leave factors unprotected, trusting to the power of native government. They were, however, completely ignorant of the religious and social systems with which they were brought in contact.61

The Portuguese government gave specific instructions to the governors and viceroy's to encourage Hindu and Christian merchants on the subcontinent of India to disadvantage of the Muslim merchants.62 The Portuguese, from very beginning, took necessary measures to avoid local traders and enter on direct relations with the kings.63

Finally the trade rivalry that developed between the Muslims and the Portuguese was marked by acts of inhuman cruelty on the part of Portuguese. The Portuguese in their trade relations with the Kings of Kerala insisted that trade in spices should be their monopoly. Zeinuddin, the Arab traveller, observed if the

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native ships had not obtained a pass, the Portuguese “seized it, its crew and its cargo”.  

Meanwhile, a rumour was spread that all the Portuguese in Cochin were killed. The Moors took this as an opportunity to revenge on the Portuguese. Consequently, they seized Portuguese ships, transferred the cargoes to their own vessels and killed one of the Portuguese. Thus, Duarte Pacheco was sent by the Portuguese to Kollam and he found that the Moors had killed one Portuguese, and the Arab ships in the harbour were loaded and Portuguese ships empty. Pacheco unloaded the Arabian vessels and filled his own with cargoes. This provoked the Moors and they captured the Portuguese and murdered.

Contemporary records show that Dom Manuel the King of Portugal sent merchant ships every year to Malabar between 1500 and 1521. These ships carried commodities, especially spices, back to Lisbon. Crown shipping was conducted not only by the kings but also by the Portuguese officials, the nobility and the mercantile classes both Portuguese and foreign. By 1568 Dom Sebastian came into power in Portugal and by this time, most of the spice trade fallen into the hands of private traders and they enjoyed all the benefits from the maritime trade.

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The five ships of 1588, loaded with pepper reached Lisbon safe. The agents of the contractors could send 22,963 quintals from Cochin, Kollam, Cannanore and Canara. On sale of this cargo, the contractors obtained about 3,65,262 cruzados as price for it. Copper was one of the important commodities imported to India. A considerable portion of this metal was converted into household utensils at the bronze and copper factories set up by the local people.67

The Portuguese had opened a factory at Antwerp for the sale of Indian goods and for collecting silver as well as copper to be taken to India. The first ship carrying spices from India arrived at Antwerp in 1501. It is found that lot of copper being taken to Kollam from Cochin, which was brought there by the Portuguese from the Portuguese factory at Antwerp. Since copper was in great demand for making household utensils of the aristocratic families of Kerala, large bulk of copper was imported every year.

With the increasing flow of copper to Kollam, the manufacturing activities of the copper-smith as well as bronze-smiths of the region got activated, making them significant social groups in the evolving social order. It helped them to raise their social and status and a skillful labour-group developed in the local regions. However in 1543 we find lot of copper being taken from Kollam to Cochin, as there was excess supply in Kollam.68

From 1503 the re-exports of Indian spices from Lisbon to Antwerp were large and regular. The German merchants like Welsers and the Fuggers, who were


prevented from taking part directly in Indian Ocean commerce began to concentrate more on the re-export trade in Europe. They took Indian spices either from Lisbon or Antwerp for distribution in Germany and other parts of Europe.

The Welsers who had factories in Nurnberg, Venice, Danzig, Milan, Rome, Antwerp and Lisbon, entered into contracts with the Portuguese crown to purchase pepper at Lisbon to be taken to Antwerp and other places for re-sale. It was through the Antwerp factory that the Germans supplied copper and silver to Lisbon which was further taken to India. The Portuguese king needed 5000-6000 quintals of copper every year to be taken to India.69 Copper was in high demand in India for minting of coins in native kingdoms.

Thangasseri is one of the earliest settlements of the Portuguese. Certainly, the impact of the early colonizers on Thangasseri is very deep. It brought about far reaching changes in her socio-cultural and religious map of the city. Elements of Western culture are still found among the people of this area in their tongue, dress, behaviour, food habit and even in marriage ceremonies. Even the ecclesiastical architecture of Thangasseri came to be influenced by Portuguese ideas and styles. Portuguese techniques of weapons and warfare came to be included. A very significant impact was in its economy where the process of monetization brought about wonders in the economic development of the town.

Kollam, from the establishment of the factory and fortress, became a settlement of the Portuguese. The region of Thangassery with the remains of the

fortress and other survivals, stands today as a monument to the erstwhile colony of the Portuguese. The surviving churches built by the Portuguese and the cemetery in ruins as well as the people in Kollam speak for the influence of the Portuguese and their mingling with the local women.70

Varthema recorded that he found twenty-two Portuguese Christians at Kollam.71 Barbosa recorded that there are a number of Moors and Christians in the city of Coilm (Kollam). Many of the natives of Kollam became Christians and there were twelve-thousand households of Christians scattered among the Heathen. He refers about the churches in the inland country.72 Marignoli also refers about the St. Thomas Christians of Kollam.73

It is apparent that with the coming of the Portuguese, Kollam’s trade rising to wider commercial horizons, by regularly feeding the Cochin-Lisbon mercantile route. Though the Portuguese commercial arrangements demoted Kollam to the status of a feeding satellite port for Cochin, it also got access to the large bulk of cargo coming from the Atlantic, particularly copper being brought to Cochin from the Portuguese factory at Antwerp, where it was supplied by the German copper syndicates.

71 John Winter Jones (trans.), The Itinerary of Ludovico Di Varthema of Bologna, From 1502 to 1508, New Delhi, 1997, p.92.
73 S. Jerman, History of Kollam, The Ancient Dioces in India (09.08.1329), Kollam, 2008, p.86.
With the large scale import of copper to Kollam and its dissemination in the region, there was increasing proliferation of manufacturing activities related to copper and bronze. It causes the copper-smiths and bronze-smiths to emerge as socially significant group in the societal hierarchy. Though the Travancore rulers tried to control the trade of Kollam by erecting a fortress in 1599, the Portuguese managed to survive and conducted their business. They did it through the diverse mercantile networks that they had developed over decades. The traditional system of warfare underwent tremendous changes.\textsuperscript{74}

Interestingly, the Portuguese contributed immensely to the various sections of the society in Malabar. The development of Kollam as a town opened new opportunities for employment. Various professional groups began to settle down in and around the port city and it needed for the construction of more structural buildings or houses. On the more positive side, Portuguese purchases and new crops introduced by them gave a boost to the local economies. In southern India, potato, chilli, tobacco and pineapple were added to agricultural crops.\textsuperscript{75} Commercial crops also have been boosted by the Portuguese influence.

Moreover the special privileges given to the converted Christians inspired others to settle down in towns and become Christians. Portuguese records make references to the school founded by them in Cochin, Kollam and Cranganore. There was a very flourishing Portuguese society in Kollam from 1505 onwards.


\textsuperscript{75} Amita Agarwal, \textit{Indian Ocean and World Peace}, New Delhi, 2000, p.89.
About 190 families resided there with a large number of soldiers and officials to take care of the Portuguese population settled in Kollam.

The letters of Jesuit missionaries throw light on the social life of the people of Kollam. The first letter of Pope John XXII (there were a dozen letters addressed to various communities in India) was the bull dated August 9, 1329 raising Kollam to the status of a city and the seat of a diocese. The second letter, dated August 21, 1329, says that Jordanus was appointed as Bishop of Kollam.  

The arrival of catholic missionaries was an event which was destined to add new dimensions to the history of lower strata of the society in Malabar in the sixteenth century. St. Francis Xavier visited Kollam twice, in November 1544 and in March 1549. His purpose was to organise a seminary to train priests, and to educate the lay people of the diocese. Thousands of lower castes were converted to Christianity. But references speak that many Muslim men and women were forcefully converted to Christianity. This further shows that forceful religious conversion had been taking place in the background of maritime trade relations in Kerala. This further helped the Christian missionaries to propagate their religious gospels later on. In the correspondence that passed between the Jesuit provincials and their superiors in Europe, clear reference was made to the areas from Kollam

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77 Ibid., p.386.


Yet another serious aspect is that the local languages had to undergo changes due to the foreign influences. The activities of the European missionaries were the major factor responsible for these changes. The vernacular languages were not only learned by the missionaries alone but almost by the missionaries alone but almost of the Europeans who settled down on the western coast for commercial and administrative purposes. Learning of the local languages helped them very much to enter the people.

Almost all the Portuguese colonies and towns had hospitals attached to them for taking care of the infirm. The hospitals were provided with food, medicines and all other necessary things, by the Portuguese government. Slaves were employed for the menial works from the very beginning of the sixteenth century. In addition to the hospitals, a new institution broadly dedicated to care of poor, sick, orphans, widows and the handicapped, was established in all the Portuguese towns and known as ‘casa da misericôr\’dia’.\footnote{Afzal Ahmed, \textit{Op.cit.}, p.176.}

The Portuguese trade contributed a great development of the coastal towns of Cochin, Cannanore and Kollam to the detriment of Calicut. The Portuguese government also took steps in educating the children of town residents by opening schools. Such schools were found in the early sixteenth century in Cochin, Kollam, and Cranganore. In the villages, such duties were discharged by the Jesuit
missionaries. The missionary people used to move around from village to village for propagation of Christianity as well as for teaching the children. The efforts made by the Jesuits for educating the village folks had a far reaching impact on the formation of a Christian society. Thus various institutions were established to meet the requirements of the increasing population in the coastal towns of Malabar and they encouraged the widow marriage.

The Christians followed the traditions of Hindus, such as customs and manners, social organisations, art and architecture, literature and cultural activities etc. A number of kalyana pattukal (marriage songs), palli pattukal (songs related to the history of church), margamkali pattu etc. throw much light on the various customs and manners connected with marriage and other socio-religious ceremonies.81

Another contribution of the Portuguese was printing and publication. Translation of Doctrina Christiam em Lingua Malavar Tamul was printed in the san Salvadore press at Tangasseri near Kollam on October 20th 1578. Doctrina Christam of Kollam was printed on the paper imported from China.82 Salvadore College was started by the Portuguese missionaries. The Portuguese tried to evangelise the society. Until recently nothing was known about Kollam as a centre of Jesuit printing.

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Moreover the Portuguese connection helped for the restoration of the lost tradition of long distance Asian maritime trade in the latter half of the sixteenth century, by the private traders operating under the so-called concession system. Urban life and the flow of more people from the villages to the towns were boosted up by the Portuguese trade. As a result of Portuguese influence the intermediaries became independent businessmen. Ship-building in the premises of the Portuguese factories gave opportunity to the workers.

Late nineteenth century English writers on the Portuguese empire in India pointed to the existence of corruption in the Portuguese administration as one important reason for the decline of this empire. F.C. Danvers, who translated Portuguese records into English, put it like this: “A laxity of Government, and a general corruption amongst the servants of the State, in which each one, regardless of public interests, sought but his own benefit and the accumulation of wealth, only too certainly prepared the way for the downfall of Portuguese rule in India”. The Portuguese were distinguished by a “burning thirst” for gold, by corrupt morals, by constant wars with the natives, and by the establishment of the

86 M.N. Pearson, Coastal Western India, Studies from the Portuguese Records, New Delhi, 1987, p.19.
slave trade. Other two reasons put forward by the writers were mixed marriages, which produced “a languid population of half-breads”, and “the grip of religious superstition”.

It is true that the arrival of Portuguese made many socio-economic changes in Kerala. The Portuguese policy of establishing their supremacy cannot be confined to trade alone. They have a strong conviction that they were carrying out a mission of expanding Christianity. They even considered themselves to be carrying out the mission of St. Thomas. But they never treated the converted Christians on par with the European Christians. They were forced to work hard without proper remuneration. The Portuguese who settled down in Indian provinces, considered the new land full of opportunities and unlimited profits. They exploited the opportunity for satisfying the needs like religious and financial.

Hindus and Christians of Kerala used to have a cordial relationship and they used to live in the same area. The Portuguese took steps to avoid this by issuing orders that the Hindus should not live among the Christians and they should have separate places for their residences. The converted Christians were not allowed to continue any contacts with their Hindu relatives.

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87 Alex J.D. D’orsey, Portuguese Discoveries, Dependencies and Missions in Asia and Africa, New Delhi, 1998, p.18.


When the Portuguese assumed political power they issued orders regarding the social life of the people above whom they had control. The local women were asked to dress themselves in such a way that they could easily be distinguished from the Christians.\textsuperscript{90} The Portuguese influence in Indian life began to go deep into the social life of the people when they started to interfere in the social practices of the Hindus. The Portuguese encouraged the widow marriage.

Commercial interests were definitely the prime motivation behind the adventurous navigations undertaken by the Indian and European merchants. But once the contacts with the people of different locations were established it was bound to create interactions and the consequent cultural diffusion. The Indian merchants had already established wide ranging contacts with coastal regions of various parts of the world. Besides the Portuguese introduced several American plants into Malabar coast, such as tapioca, cashew, pineapple, sweet potato, chillies, papaya and maize.\textsuperscript{91}

The strong bondage of cultural relationship between India and the foreign countries were made possible only through oceanic trade.\textsuperscript{92} By the end of the 16\textsuperscript{th} century Portuguese predominance and prestige showed symptoms of gradual

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., p.408.

\textsuperscript{91} K.S.Manilal, “The Portuguese and Dutch Plant Explorations in 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} Century Malabar and their Socio-Cultural and Economic Impact” in \textit{Journal of South Indian History}, Vol.2, Issue, 1, March-2005, p.48.

waning. Local rulers who were dissatisfied and disgusted with the domineering attitude of the Portuguese welcomed Dutch presence.

The advent of the Dutch actually culminated in the growth of rivalry between European powers to establish trade monopoly on Kerala Coast. This was adversely affected not merely on the trading activities on the Kerala Coast, but on the entire process of colonization of East Asia by different European powers.