

operating under the protection and the jurisdiction of the Estado da Índia on the basis mainly of the concession system.

The scale of this trade was quite large and it embraced practically all the major segments of the Indian Ocean – South China Sea trade. As an example, I would draw attention to the famous Goa-Malacca-Macao-Nagasaki concession voyage started in the 1550s. This voyage resumed the practice of long distance Asian maritime trade by which I mean a single voyage connecting all the three geographical segments of Asian trade, namely the Western Indian Ocean, the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea. This was a tradition that had been lost ever since the cessation of the Cheng-Ho voyages in the 1430's.

CALICUT, THE INTERNATIONAL EMPORIUM OF MARITIME TRADE AND THE PORTUGUESE DURING THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

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Calicut was a widely known international port town of the east west axis of the emporia trade connecting Malacca with Venice on the Adriatic. The visitors of the fifteenth century found it the most important port town of the whole of India. As reported by Affonso de Albuquerque in 1512, it was the chief emporium of Cairo. Linschoten noted that the town of Calicut was in the past the most famous town in all Malabar or India. Merchants from various parts of the world crowded together at Calicut to take part in the international maritime trade. Even when the Gujaratis who met Vasco da Gama on the East African coast and offered whatever spices they wanted and dissuaded the Portuguese from going over to Calicut, Vasco da Gama did not fall prey to their insinuations and insisted on proceeding to his destination. The Portuguese contacted the Zamorins from time to time to come to terms with them and establish a fortress and their settlement even after suffering a lot of harm from them. This shows the great stake of the Portuguese at Calicut. But the Dutch and the French visitors to Calicut towards the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century understood that when the Portuguese began to prosper in their enterprise and to get possession of the country, and so masters of the sea, Calicut began to decay and to lose both name and traffique. They were of the opinion that by the close of the sixteenth century it was one of the towns of least account in all Malabar. In other words, the decline of trade at Calicut during the sixteenth century and its fall from the earlier position are closely connected with the Portuguese. It may be said that the scholars of Indo-Portuguese studies have done little attempt to

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study the vicissitudes of Calicut against the backdrop of Portuguese activities in the Indian Ocean and especially on the Malabar coast. We shall therefore address ourselves to the condition of the port town of Calicut before the arrival of the Portuguese and at the close of the sixteenth century based on contemporary sources.

Calicut before the arrival of the Portuguese

The port of Calicut from the second half of the thirteenth century till the second half of the fifteenth century occupied a significant position in the international maritime trade. It had a bustling trade and became a centre of competition chiefly between the Arab and Chinese merchants. It attracted the attention of a number of travellers like Marco Polo, the Venetian, Ibn Batuta, Mahuan, Chengo He, Abd Er Razzak, Athanasius Nikitin, the Russian, Nicolo Conti, and Hieronimo di Santo Stefano, and so on in the pre-Portuguese period. The kingdom of Calicut extended itself from Pudukattanam in the North to Parappanangadi in the south including the ports of Tricodi, Pantyalayani, Kappakkat, Calicut, Chaliyam, Ponnani and Chetwai.¹

Rise of the port as a center of trade with the ports of the Adriatic Sea via Cairo and Alexandria owes, to a great extent, to the turn of events in West Asia.² In February 1258 the city of Baghdad was stormed by the Mongols. The Caliph at Mustasin was killed. Hulagu declared the abolition of the Abbasid Caliphate. This political collapse caused a commercial decline. The area of the Persian Gulf lost its important role in the trade of the Arabian Sea. Egypt under its vigorous Mamluk Sultans assumed control and Arab traders began to sail from a revived Aden to the newly established Calicut. By 1344 Calicut had emerged as one of the chief harbours of Malabar where people from China, Sumatra, Ceylon, the

¹ The original seat of the Zamorin's family was in a village in the Ernadu Taluk. The head of the house was known as Nediyruppu Mutta Eradi, a title enjoyed by the ruling Zamorin. Under the Chera rulers of Tiruvanchikkulam the Mutta Eradi governed Ernadu with the title of Ernad Utaiyar. Later Ernad Utaiyar became *Swarupi* or independent king and his family came to be known as Nediyruppu Swarupam. The members of the Nediyruppu *Swarupam* belong to the Eradi subdivision of the *Samanta* section of the Nayar group. When the Zamorin conquered Polanadu, his family transferred its residence to Vikaramapuram, founded by him. The Ampati Kovilakam or the palace of the princesses or *Tampuratis* was built west of Tali. Tali was the centre of the new town. Ref. K. V. Krishna Ayyar, *The Zamorins of Calicut*, Calicut, 1999, pp.14-15.

² "Calicut came into prominence as a centre of trade during the second half of the thirteenth century. This was the outcome of a remarkable transformation in the course and character of Asian Trade. Before this time, the ports of the Persian Gulf had maintained predominance in the commerce of the Arabian Sea. Vessels had usually sailed from Bassora and Hormuz to Quilon and Colombo. Quilon had been the centre especially for the numerous junks from China." Ashin Das Gupta, "Malabar in 1740" in *Bengal Past and Present*, No. 80, 1960, p. 90.

Maldivian Islands, Yemen and Fars came. It is reported that merchants from all quarters of the globe came together at Calicut. It is further stated by Ibn Batuta that the harbour of Calicut was one of the largest in the world.³ The port of Calicut had a *Shahbundar* or the head of the merchants and his deputy.⁴

By the forties of the fifteenth century Calicut turned out to be a secure harbour, like Ormuz bringing together merchants from various countries including the maritime centres of trade on the East African coast. Precious commodities from Abyssinia, Zirbad, and Zanguebar and other places were brought to Calicut without any fear. Security was assured in the port to any body interested in having trade with Calicut. The merchants were accustomed to spend shorter or longer time in the port town as they liked. The officers of the customs house kept watch on the commodities brought by the merchants. The customs duties were collected only when the commodities were sold.⁵ By the first half of the fifteenth century Calicut became known as a maritime city, a noble emporium for all India abounding in pepper, lac, and ginger, a large kind of cinnamon, myrobalans,

³ Mahdi Husain (ed.), *The Rehla of Ibn Battuta*, Baroda, 1976, p. 188. A few works on Calicut for popular reading have appeared a) M. G. S. Narayanan, *Calicut: the City of Truth revisited*, Calicut, 2006; M. G. S. Narayanan, *Kozhikodinte Kadha* (Malayalam), Kozhikode, 2001; V. Kunhali (ed.), *Calicut in History*, Calicut, 2004.

⁴ "The Raja (sultan) is a heathen called Zamorin (*Samiri*). He is an old man and shaves his beard like of the Europeans, I saw him in Calicut... The head of the merchants in this town is Ibrahim, the *Shahbundar* from Bahrein, an accomplished man of great attributes; at his house the merchants meet and at his *simat* they dine. The judge of Calicut is Fakhr-ud-din Usman, a man of learning and high-minded generosity and the keeper of the hospice is Shaik Shihab-ud-din of Kazerun, to whom are brought the votive offerings which the inhabitants of India and China make to Shaik Abu Ishaq al-Kazeruni. ... In Calicut lives the ship-master, Misqual, whose name is widely known. He possesses great riches and many ships for trading purposes in India China, Yemen and Fars." Mahdi Husain, *The Rehla...*, p. 189.

⁵ R. H. Major, *India in the fifteenth century*, London, 1857, pp. 13-14: "Calicut is a perfectly secure harbour, which, like that of Ormuz, brings together merchants from every city and from every country; in it are to be found abundance of precious articles brought thither from maritime countries, and especially from Abyssinia, Zirbad, and Zanguebar, from time to time ships arrive there from the shores of the House of God and other parts of the Hedjaz, and abide at will, for a greater or longer space, in this harbour; the town is inhabited by Infidels, and situated on a hostile shore. It contains a considerable number of Mussulamauns, who are constant residents, and have built two mosques, in which they meet every Friday to offer up prayer"... Security and justice are so firmly established in this city, that the most wealthy merchants bring thither from maritime countries considerable cargoes, which they unload, and unhesitatingly send into the markets and the bazaars, without thinking in the meantime of any necessity of checking the account or keeping watch over the goods. The officers of the custom-house take upon themselves the charge of looking after the merchandise; over which they keep watch day and night. When a sale is effected, they levy a duty on the goods of one-fortieth part, if they are not sold, they make no charge on time whatsoever". He states further, "But at Calicut, every ship, whatever places it may come from, or where it may be bound, when it puts into this port is treated like other vessels and has no trouble of any kind to put up with." R. H. Major, *India...*, p. 14.

and zedoary. The women of Calicut [Hindus] practised polyandry. When one of the men visited the woman, he was expected to leave some mark at the door of the house which was an indication for the next man who came to visit her that he should leave the place without any remonstrance. The matrilineal inheritance was also practised in Calicut. The women did not stay with her husband.⁶ Towards the third quarter of the fifteenth century Calicut (Calicut) became a port for the whole Indian sea.⁷ The polyandrous relations of local women at Calicut (probably *sambadam*) have been reported by the foreign travellers even in the last quarter of the century. There is also some hint to the pre-puberty ceremony *talikettukalyanan* in vogue among the women of Calicut. Abundance of pepper and ginger in Calicut had been noted by the travellers.⁸

Sea-Borne trade of Calicut

Calicut right from the thirteenth century developed as a major centre of international maritime trade. Calicut and Khambatt were the two important centres of trade on the western coast of India during the pre-Portuguese period as far as international maritime trade starting at Malacca and going so far as to the ports of the Adriatic sea namely Venice and Genoa.⁹ The sea-borne trade that thrived in Calicut during this period had two different directions, one that stretched to the Red Sea regions and the other to China Sea.

With the abolition of Abassid Dynasty and the subsequent decline of the trade of the Persian Gulf regions the Red sea Regions developed active commercial relations with Calicut. It was reported that there was continuous sailing from Calicut to Mocha laden with pepper during the first half of the fifteenth century.¹⁰ The major group of traders that had a great stake in the port of Calicut constituted the Al-Karimi merchants. Calicut was the principal centre of trade for the Al-Karimi merchants from Cairo¹¹. A few of the merchants from Cairo settled down in Cambay and from there they came to the Malabar coast.¹² Qus near Cairo was in fact an important emporium of Indian commodities in which the Karimi merchants traded. They held some sort of a monopoly of trade between Yemen

⁶ Nicolo Conti, ref. R. H. Major, *India...*, pp. 19-20.

⁷ Athanasius Nikitin, ref. R. H. Major, *India...*, p. 19.

⁸ Hieronimo di Santo Stefano, ref. R. H. Major, *India...*, pp. 4-5.

⁹ K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*, Delhi, 1985, p. 99 ff.

¹⁰ Abd-Er. Razzak, ref. R. H. Major, *India...*, p. 19.

¹¹ S. D. Goiten, "New Light on the Beginnings of the Karim Merchants" in *Journal of the Economic and Social History Review of the Orient*, vol. 1, Leiden, 1958, p. 181.

¹² Tomé Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires and the Book of Francisco Rodrigues*, vol. 1, New Delhi, AES reprint, 1990, pp. 41-42.

and Cairo where they had their headquarters.¹³ Ali Ibn Muhammad Kalyubi who died in 1492 was one of the rich Karimi merchants who had trade with Calicut in the second part of the fifteenth century.¹⁴ The measures taken by Sultan Barsbay in the fifteenth century to establish a state monopoly over the spice trade in the Mamluk Egypt dealt a fatal blow on the Karimi merchants and consequently a number of them left for India and settled down on the Malabar coast.¹⁵ Calicut, as the centre of Arab trade, became the pivot in the exchange between Eastern and Western Asia.

This direction of trade from Calicut had a very important ramification. Every season about ten to fifteen ships loaded with pepper, ginger, cinnamon, cardamom, myrobalans, tamarinds, canafistula, precious stones of every kind, seed pearls, musk, ambergris, rhubarb, aloes-wood, great store of cotton cloths and porcelains sailed to Aden, and Mocha. Some of the goods were sold to the merchants from these places and from Jidda. The commodities were loaded there into small vessels which proceeded to Toro and from there to Cairo and Alexandria. Further they were sent to Venice from where these commodities were taken to various parts of Europe. On the return voyage from Jidda copper, quicksilver, vermilion, coral, saffron, coloured velvets, rosewater, knives, coloured camlets, gold, silver and so on were taken to Calicut. The ships used to set sail from Calicut in February and return in the middle of August to the middle of October. The king used to take great interest in this trade. He regularly assigned a Nair to be at the service of the merchants coming to Calicut. The Chetty clerk was appointed to look after the accounts. A broker was also arranged to take care of the supply and sale of goods.¹⁶

Calicut was known to the Chinese as Ku-Li-Fo. "Ku-Li-Fo is the most important of all the maritime centres of trade. It is close to His-lan (Ceylon) and is the principal port of the Western Ocean".¹⁷ The Chinese merchants were in great number found in Calicut. Till the twenties of the fifteenth century they had a factory at Calicut. The king of Calicut is reported to have ill-treated the Chinese merchants in the first half of the fifteenth century and therefore they ceased to come to Calicut. The Chinese trade with Calicut was considered to be

¹³ Walter J. Fischel, "The Spice Trade in Mamluk Egypt" in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 1, Leiden, 1958, pp. 162-63.

¹⁴ Gaston Wiet, "Les Marchands D'Epices sous les Sultans Mamlouks" in *Cahiers D'Histoire Egyptienne*, serie VII, Fasc.I, Cairo, 1955.

¹⁵ Eliyashu Ashtor, "The Venetian Supremacy in Levantine Trade: Monopoly or Pre-colonialism?" in *The Journal of European Economic History*, vol. 3, no. 1, Rome, 1974, pp. 21, 27.

¹⁶ Duarte Barbosa, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, vol. II, Nendeln/Liechtenstein, 1967, p. 77.

¹⁷ W. W. Rockhill, "Notes on the Relations and Trade of China with Eastern Archipelago and the Coast of the Indian Ocean during the fourteenth century" in *T'oung Pao*, IV, Part II, Leiden, 1915, p. 454.

very active and prosperous.¹⁸ The Chinese eunuch Cheng He and his companions visited the Zamorin in A.D. 1407 and conveyed to the king letters patent conferring on him (the title of vassal king) and different gifts to his highest officers and to all of them hats, girdles and carved stones.¹⁹ It is reported in the Chinese source *Yu'ing yai sheng lan*: "All the merchandise brought here by Chinese junks is under the control of the two high officers who send brokers to come to an understanding as to the prices, which are not subsequently changed. And their mode of counting is to rely solely on the bending of the fingers and they do not make an error of a fraction. In trading, they use six-tenths fine gold coins called *pa-nam* (*fanam*) weighing two candareems and with writing on both sides..."²⁰ The native products included pepper which was raised in gardens.²¹ The Chinese trade with Calicut continued till the end of the first quarter of the fifteenth century. With the withdrawal of the Chinese and the end of long voyages the pattern of Asian trade as it stretched from the ports of China to the ports of Red Sea, was therefore rearranged.

Besides the Al-Karimi and Chinese merchants, a number of others from various parts of the world visited Calicut and conducted trade with the port. There were very many Moorish merchants, several traders from Mocha, Tenneserim, Pegu, Ceylon, Sumatra and Jawa, Ormuz, Persia, Arabia Felix, Syria, Turkey, Ethiopia and from various parts of India like Vijayanagar, Bengal, Bhatkal, Kayamkulam, Dabhul, Chaul, Coromandel coast and Cambay who came to Calicut for the sake of conducting trade.²² Thus Calicut was in deed an international emporium of trade prior to the arrival of the Portuguese and the subsequent encounters.

¹⁸ "Some 80 or 90 years ago, they had a factory in Calichut. Having been outraged by the king of that place, they rebelled and gathering a large army came to the city of Calichut and destroyed it. From that time up to the present day they have never come to trade in the said place... There were more business men there when the people of China used to go there for trade... They are very dynamic people who at one time were having much trade in Calichut. But once it happened that the king of Calechut badly received them. So they went off from there but shortly returned and killed many of the inhabitants of the town of Calechut and afterwards they have never returned" ref. Antony Vallavanthara, *India in 1500 A.D. - The Narratives of Joseph the Indian*, Mannanam, 1984, pp. 196-199.

¹⁹ W. W. Rockhill, "Notes on the Relations..." in *T'oung Pao*, p. 455.

²⁰ W. W. Rockhill, "Notes on the Relations..." in *T'oung Pao*, pp. 457-58.

²¹ W. W. Rockhill, "Notes on the Relations..." in *T'oung Pao*, p. 459.

²² Ludovico di Varthema, *The Itinerary of Ludovico di Varthema of Bologna from 1502-1508*, London, 1928, p. 61.

Brokers and the way of making sale

As noted above the Zamorin took great interest in conducting trade efficiently. He appointed even brokers to help the merchants collect. The way in which the brokers effected a deal between the buyers and the sellers of the products attracted the attention of foreign visitors. The commodities brought by the foreign merchants were kept under the care of two high officers of the king of Calicut. They used to send the brokers to the buyers and sellers and the price was agreed upon solely on the bending of the fingers without committing any error.²³ The details of the way in which the agreement of the sale reached, are brought to our knowledge through the observation of an Italian traveller.

The merchants have this custom when they wish to sell or to purchase their merchandises, that is, wholesale.

They always sell by the hands of the Cortor (Portuguese mercador) or of the Lella (Arabic, Dallal, dealer) that is, of the broker. And when the purchaser and the seller wish to make an agreement, they all stand in a circle, and the Cortor takes a cloth and holds it there openly with one hand, and with the other hand he takes the right hand of the seller, that is, the two fingers next to the thumb, and then he covers with the said cloth his hand and that of the seller and touching each other with these two fingers, without saying "I will have so much" or "so much". But in merely touching the joints of the fingers they understand the price and say: "Yes" or "No". And the Cortor answers "No" or "Yes". And when the Cortor has understood the will of the seller, he goes to the buyer with the said cloth, and takes his hand in the manner above mentioned, and by the said touching he tells him he wants so much. The buyer takes the finger of the Cortor, and by the said touches says to him: "I will give him so much". And in this manner they fix the price".²⁴

Shipbuilding and Navigation

Calicut (Beypore) was considered to be the best centre for shipbuilding during the period before the arrival of the Portuguese. Calicut has been reported

²³ The Chinese eunuch Cheng He and his companions visited the Zamorin in A.D. 1407 and conveyed to the king letters patent conferring on him (the title of vassal king) and different gifts to his highest officers and to all of them hats, girdles and carved stones ref. W. W. Rockhill "Notes on the Relations and Trade of China with Eastern Archipelago and the coast of the Indian Ocean during the fourteenth century. It is reported in the Chinese source *Yu'ing yai sheng lan* that all the merchandise brought here by Chinese junks is under the control of the two high officers a who send brokers to come to an understanding as to the prices, which are not subsequently changed. And their mode of counting is to rely on the bending of the fingers and they do not make an error of a fraction", *T'oung Pao*, IV, part II, p. 454.

²⁴ L. Varthema, *The Itinerary...*, pp. 67-68.

to have good timber in great abundance surpassing the supply of timber in Italy. The availability of good variety of timber suitable for the building of ships in the interior places like Nilampur and the possibility of transporting it from the interior to Calicut through riverine traffic are well known. Kallayi is famous for the treatment of timber in water. Kallai River was the major means of bringing timber from the interior places to the areas of shipbuilding.

The tonnage of the ships varied from three hundred to four hundred butts as observed by Ludovico di Varthema.²⁵ In the days of prosperity i.e., before the arrival of the Portuguese, the shipyard at Calicut built keeled ships of one thousand to one thousand two hundred *bhares*' tonnage.²⁶ It was observed by Ludovico di Varthema that the shipbuilders at Calicut did not put any oakum between one plank and the other but, they were experts in planking the ships perfectly watertight. They used a lot of iron nails according to Varthema though the general observation of visitors is that the use of iron nails for the building of ships was not common on the Malabar coast before the arrival of the Portuguese. Thus for example, Duarte Barbosa who was in India since 1503 while speaking about shipbuilding in Calicut before the arrival of the Portuguese firmly asserts that the ships were built without any iron nails. He adds: "...the whole of the sheathing was sewn with thread, and all upper works differed much from the fashion of ours, they had no decks".²⁷ The sails of the vessels made in Calicut were of cotton and there was always an extra sail besides the main. This was spread when the navigators wanted to catch more wind. This was something different from the practice in Europe where only one sail was used.²⁸

Marble pieces were used as anchors for the vessels built in Calicut. Anchors of this type eight palms long and two palms broad and thick were tied to the vessel through two large ropes.²⁹ Several types of vessels were found in Calicut during the period before the arrival of the Portuguese. The flat-bottomed vessels known as Sambuk were manufactured at Calicut. Vessels with bottom like those of Italy were also employed in Calicut for navigation. They were called *kapal*. Another variety was called *parao* (*prahu*) measuring ten paces made of a single piece of timber. Boats of this type were propelled by oars. The mast for such boats was made of cane. Similarly ferry-boats made of one piece of timber called *almadia* were also built in Calicut. Another sort of vessel made of a single log was propelled by oars and sails. This measured twelve to thirteen paces in length. All these vessels made of single piece of timber had a very sharp opening and

²⁵ L. Varthema, *The Itinerary*..., p. 62.

²⁶ D. Barbosa, *The Book*..., vol. 2, p. 76.

²⁷ D. Barbosa, *The Book*..., vol. 2, p. 76.

²⁸ L. Varthema, *The Itinerary*..., p. 62.

²⁹ L. Varthema, *The Itinerary*..., p.62.

were fast in movement. They were called *chaturi* and excelled Italian galleys, *fusta* (foist) or brigantines. The corsairs must have used vessels of this nature.³⁰

Navigation from Calicut was governed by monsoon. It was possible only for eight months in the year, namely from September to April. Navigation is not possible from May to August on account of the fury of South West monsoon. The vessels crossed Cape of Cumerin and entered another course of navigation during this period. Very heavy showers were common during the months of May, June, July and August in the period before the arrival of the Portuguese.³¹

The scenario that emerges from the discussion above underlines the view that Calicut before the arrival of the Portuguese, or during the period of its prosperity was a port bustling with international and long-distance maritime trade attracting merchants from far and wide. Merchants from China, various parts of West Asia, African coast and from all over coastal regions of India found their way to Calicut. The commodities from Calicut to the West were taken chiefly via Red Sea to the international emporia of Cairo, Alexandria and Venice.

CALICUT AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF THE PORTUGUESE

1. The First Portuguese Factory

Pedro Álvares Cabral who reached Calicut on 13 September 1500 with a mission to open a factory at Calicut succeeded in obtaining a place for the same from the Zamorin. Aires Correa was appointed as the factor. He was given a Gujarat merchant to instruct him in the customs and manners of the country.³² After several discussions a treaty was concluded and a factory near the sea was opened where the Portuguese flag was hoisted. The Zamorin signed two copies of the treaty, one on silver plate with gold seal and the other on copper plate with brass seal. The former was to be taken to the Portuguese king and the latter to be kept in the factory at Calicut.³³ In the ensuing fight between the Portuguese and the local merchants, the Portuguese factor with fifty men was killed and the factory was razed to the ground.³⁴ Being apprised of the sad event, Vasco da Gama came in 1502 for the second time to Calicut with a fleet of twenty five

³⁰ L. Varthema, *The Itinerary*..., pp. 62-63.

³¹ L. Varthema, *The Itinerary*..., p. 62.

³² Fracanzano Montalbodo, *Paesi Novamente Retrovati & Novo Mondo da Alberico Vesputio Intitulato, Venezia, 1597, Facsimile*, London, 1916, p. 90.

³³ *Cronica do Descobrimto e conquista da India pelos Portugueses*, Coimbra, 1974, p. 21.

³⁴ F. Montalbodo, *Paesi*..., p. 96; Constancio Roque da Costa, *Historia das Relações diplomáticas de Portugal no Oriente*, Lisboa, 1895, p. 22, Leonardo da Ca' Masser, "Relazione..." in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Appendice, tom. II, Firenze, 1845, pp. 15-16.

vessels to take revenge upon Calicut. When diplomacy failed; he stormed the city and massacred a lot of people. He sent in a boat the heads, arms and legs separated from their trunks as a "present" to the Zamorin with a letter written in the local language saying that he came to Calicut to sell and purchase good commodities and these where the merchandise he could find there.³⁵

The port of Calicut was considered by Affonso de Albuquerque, the Portuguese governor the best in the whole of India and the king the most powerful of the princes of Malabar. It had an abundance of commodities and rich merchants.³⁶

2. First Portuguese Fortress in Calicut

Soon after the demise of the reigning Zamorin, his nephew/his younger³⁷ brother sent a message in 1512 to Afonso de Albuquerque in Goa expressing his willingness to come to terms with the Portuguese and permitting them to have a factory and a fortress in Calicut. Afonso de Albuquerque had already written to the King of Portugal explaining the importance of the port of Calicut and the power of the Zamorin of Calicut. He wrote very emphatically that the Zamorin was the most powerful of all the rulers of Malabar and that the port of Calicut was the biggest of all ports in India and the trade in this port was great. Very rich and powerful merchants were found in Calicut.³⁸ He had informed the Portuguese king that Calicut was the ancient emporium of Cairo and Venice.³⁹ Affonso sent his nephew Garcia de Noronha to arrange the treaty of peace with the king of Calicut. He sent Francisco Nogueira as captain of the proposed fortress, Gonçalo Mendes as the factor and Thomas Fernandez as the master of masons to build the factory.⁴⁰ He underlined the fact that Calicut would be the true emporium of pepper, ginger for Portugal and would provide cargo for the ships coming from

³⁵ Thomé Lopes, "Navegação as Indias Orientaes" in *Colecção de Noticias para a Historia e Geografia das Nações ultramarinas que vivem nos Dominios Portugueses ou lhes são visinhos*, tom ii, no. 1 & 2, Lisboa, 1812, p. 190. "Eu vim a este porto com boa mercadoria, para vender, comprar e pagar os vossos generos; estes são os generos desta terra, eu vo-los envio do presente, como e também as el Rei". Also João de Barros, *Da Ásia*, Decada I, part II, p. 53.

³⁶ R. A. Bulhão Pato e E. H. Lopes de Mendonça (dir.), *Cartas de Afonso Albuquerque seguidas de documentos que as elucidam (CAA)*, Tomo I, Lisboa, Academia das Ciências, Lisboa, 1884, p. 250.

³⁷ CAA, I, p. 152, Affonso de Albuquerque writes that it was the brother of the deceased Zamorin called Nambiadiry who expressed his willingness to come to terms with the Portuguese. Castanheda too writes that Nambeadiri was his brother. Ref. Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, *Historia do Descobrimento & Conquista da Índia pelos Portugueses*, Livro III, Coimbra, 1928, p. 291.

³⁸ CAA, I, p.250.

³⁹ CAA I, p. 137.

⁴⁰ Gaspar Correa, *Lendas da Índia*, tomo II, Coimbra, 1923, p. 330, CAA, I, p. 152.

Cochin.⁴¹ He further reasoned out that the only way to stop the flow of spices from Calecut to Cairo was to have a fortress in the place offered by the Zamorin and to have eighty men in the fortress. It would be rather impossible to stop the diversion of spices through waging maritime battles.⁴² Garcia de Noronha on behalf of Affonso de Albuquerque, the Portuguese governor made the agreement with the Zamorin of Calicut on 24 December 1513.⁴³ The Portuguese took the responsibility of bringing to Calicut coral, silk cloths, scarlet, quicksilver, vermilion, lead, copper, saffron, alum stone other commodities available in Portugal. The Zamorin undertook to supply all the necessary spices and drugs found in the region of Malabar and needed for the Portuguese. The Portuguese bound themselves to pay usual taxes for the commodities purchased by the Portuguese. The buyers of the commodities were asked to pay the customs duties to the king of Calicut. The merchants from Ormuz, Cambay, Malacca, Sumatra, Pegu, Tennasserim, Bengal, Coromandel, Ceylon, Jafnapattanam, and Chael were bound to pay the usual taxes to the king of Portugal. Similarly, the Portuguese who brought horses or elephants to Calicut were asked to pay the usual taxes to the Zamorin. Sambuks coming to Calicut except those from Cochin and Cannanore were expected to collect *cartazes* from the Portuguese captain at Calicut. On account of the damage caused to the Portuguese king in Calicut, the Zamorin agreed to deliver one thousand *bhares* of pepper in three installments as compensation according to the unit of weight used in Cranganore. The local people were to be punished by the Zamorin while the Portuguese by their captain for the crime committed by them. The Portuguese were bound to pay the usual taxes to the Zamorin for the commodities purchased by them. The Zamorin agreed to pay to the Portuguese half of the income from the customs houses at Calicut. As desired by the Zamorin, the treaty was ratified by the king of Portugal on 26 February 1515.⁴⁴ He further sent his relative to Portugal. The boy sent by Zamorin became Christian and received the habit of the Order of Christ. He was called Dom John of the Cross and stayed in Portugal for five years.⁴⁵ Fifty Nairs worked as guards in the fort of Calicut in 1514 and out of them 20 used to reside in the fort night and day. They were under a Panikkar. All of them were paid special amount and materials during the local festivals.⁴⁶

⁴¹ CAA, I, p.152.

⁴² CAA, I, p. 153.

⁴³ Julio Firmino Judice Biker, *Collecção de Tratados e Concertos de Pazes que o Estado da India Portuguez fez com os Reis e Senhores com quem teve Relações nas partes da Asia e Africa Oriental desde o Principio da conquista até ao fim do Seculo XVIII*, Lisboa, 1881, pp. 21-223.

⁴⁴ J. F. J. Biker, *Collecção de Tratados...*, pp. 28-33.

⁴⁵ Gaspar Correa, *Lendas...*, tomo II, p. 334.

⁴⁶ CAA, vol. VII, p. 131.

But for the fact that the new Zamorin (1513-1522) saw that his best interests lay in peace, not in war, this treaty would not have survived the death of Albuquerque in 1515. Lopo Soares, for example, demanded that the Zamorin should repair to the Portuguese fort and wait upon him. Hostilities were averted by the good sense of the Portuguese captains, who refused to draw their sword in such a silly and unjust cause.⁴⁷ The king Cochin did not like the treaty and so he looked for opportunities to create hostilities between the Portuguese and the Zamorin. The Portuguese too insisted on passes for the Muslim merchants once they completed the building of the fortress. The death of the Zamorin who concluded the treaty brought the matters to a head. The new Zamorin (1522-1531) was less friendly towards the Portuguese than his predecessor. In 1523 the Moors insulted the Portuguese governor Duarte Meneses,⁴⁸ and in 1524 an open fight took place in the bazaar between them and the Portuguese soldiers.⁴⁹ The captain of the fortress, Lima sent exaggerated reports about the event which precipitated the crisis.⁵⁰ At this juncture Vasco da Gama arrived at Goa as the Viceroy. In September he sent D'Souza with 300 men to assist Lima. Vasco da Gama on reaching Cochin adopted more vigorous measures against the Zamorin. He died on 24 December and Henry Meneses succeeded him. There followed fights between the Portuguese and the people of Calicut. Finally the Portuguese fort was abandoned in 1525. It was as strong as the fortress of Cochin and in the same shape. This fortress, on account of constant disturbances from the local merchants, was abandoned by the Portuguese in 1525.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Hermann Gundert (ed.), *Kerala Palama (1498-1531)* Kottayam, 1959, p. 145.

⁴⁸ H. Gundert, *Kerala Palama...*, p. 166.

⁴⁹ The *Tohufut-ul-Mujahideen*, p. 117; Gaspar Correa gives details about the fight put up by the Zamorin of Calicut against the Portuguese and the fortress at Calicut, ref. Gaspar Correa, *Lendas...*, tomo II, part II, pp. 810 ff.; *ibidem*, pp. 890-918; *ibidem*, pp. 941-964.

⁵⁰ R. S. Whiteway, *The Rise of the Portuguese Power in India 1498-1550*, London, 1899, p. 204.

⁵¹ J. Barros, *Da Ásia*, Decada IV, part II, Lisboa, 1973, reprint, pp. 451-52, Duarte Barbosa describes the fortress "Two leagues beyond this place (Capucate) is the city of Calicut where in more trade was carried on, and yet is, by foreigners than by the natives of the land, where also the king our Lord, with the full assent of the king thereof, holds a very strong fortress. To the south of this city there is a river on which lies another town called Chiliate, where dwell many moor, natives of the land who are merchants and have many ships in which they sail.", Duarte Barbosa, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, London, 1921, vol. II, pp. 86-87. The fort was built on the right bank of the Kallayi river at the southern end of the town close to the old jetty stormed by Albuquerque in 1510. In shape and size it was exactly like the Cochin fort. On the sea side there were two towers and the wall connecting them was pierced by a wicket gate so that the garrison might have easy and uninterrupted communication with the sea. The keep had three storeys. On the land side also there were towers and between them was the principal entrance of the fort defended by bastion. Ref. D. Barbosa, *Book...*, p. 87 foot note.

3. Fortress at Chaliyam in the territory of the Zamorin

A new Zamorin came to the throne in 1531. The Portuguese were very much interested in having a fortress at least in the neighbourhood of Calicut to stop the flow of a great deal of pepper and other spices to the Red Sea regions. It is believed that the governor gave some gifts to extract his consent of the ruler of Chaliyam⁵².

The Rajas of Bettet, Beypore and Chaliyam who were Kshatriyas and vassals of the Zamorin gave up their allegiance to the Zamorin. The Portuguese tried to build a fortress at Tanur. But for some reasons they did not succeed. Nuno da Cunha, the Portuguese governor took it up and discussed with the rulers of Tanor, Chaliyam and Beypore who were the vassals of the Zamorin. Then they turned to Chaliyam on the road to Ponnani and Cochin. Its Raja, Unni Rama listened to the plan being plotted with the raja of Vettet. But he did not want to irritate the Zamorin. The Portuguese sent a messenger to the Zamorin seeking his approval. The Zamorin approved of it and accepted the offer of half of the customs duties on the traffic that passed through the river. The Portuguese built a fortress at Chaliyam in 1531 (Chaliyam).⁵³ Church, house for the captain, the soldiers and place for keeping arms and ammunitions etc. were constructed at Chaliyam under the orders the governor Nuno da Cunha. The ruler of Chaliyam was approached to have *Jangada (Changathi)* for the security of the fortress.⁵⁴ The Chaliyam river was very suited for the anchorage of large number of vessels and also for the cargo of pepper. It was considered to be the best for navigation on the Malabar coast.⁵⁵

⁵² Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, *História do Descobrimento e conquista da Índia pelos Portugueses*, Coimbra, 1924, Livro VIII, p. 270. An amount of 1000 golden pardaos was given to the ruler for the consent.

⁵³ J. Barros, *Da Ásia*, Decada IV, part I, pp. 470-75; Simão Botelho, "O Tombo de Estado da Índia", in Rodrigo José de Lima Felner (ed.), *Subsídios para História da Índia Portuguesa*, Lisboa, 1868, pp. 130-32. Diogo de Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada IV, Lisboa, 1973, reprint, part II, p. 196 ff. Chaliyam is an island formed by the Beypore and Kadalundi rivers, held by the Portuguese after they left Calicut in 1525. "A mound where stood the Portuguese fort destroyed by the Zamorin in 1571 is still visible at the sea's edge. Ref. D. Barbosa, *Book...*, vol. II; p. 87, foot note. This fortress at Chale/Chaliyam was called Santa Maria do Castello, ref. Gaspar Correa, *Lendas...*, tomo III, part I, pp. 435-37.

⁵⁴ Diogo de Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada VI, part II, pp. 210-11 gives the nature of the work of *Jangada* or *Changathi*.

⁵⁵ G. Correia, *Lendas...*, tomo III, part I, p. 435. The details of the structure are furnished by Correia, *Lendas...*, pp. 437-38. He says that there was no problem for this fortress till 1563 when he was writing the history. The plan of the fortress is given by Correia in Tomo II, part II, before page 439. The plan shows a church and houses outside the fortress.

The peace with the Zamorin lasted only for a few years.⁵⁶ Troubles continued. However, the Zamorin sent Chinakuttiali, a merchant of Calicut in 1539 to the Viceroy in Goa asking for peace and friendship. At that time, the Portuguese fortress at Chaliyam was under the Captain Manuel de Brito.⁵⁷ The ruler of Tanur represented to the king of Calicut while the details of the terms of the agreement were finalized. The Portuguese Viceroy Dom Garcia de Noronha made a treaty with the king of Calicut on the ship St. Matheus at Ponnani on 1 January 1540.⁵⁸ Accordingly the king of Calicut promised to supply necessary pepper and other commodities to the Portuguese, to stop sending the ships to Mocha and to receive any ships from there. Peace lasted for ten years. Fight between the Portuguese and the Zamorin broke out in 1550. D. Francisco Coutinho, Conde do Redondo who was appointed Viceroy in 1561 established peace with the Zamorin in 1662.⁵⁹ He started from Cochin and met the Zamorin near Ticodi). The Zamorin was accompanied by a militia consisting of 40,000 Nairs and a number of Brahmins, Kaimals, and Panikkars and so on. The viceroy too had a big contingent. After usual courtesies, the Zamorin made an oath assisted by his Brahmin priests and the Viceroy took the oath touching the Missal and the Crucifix.⁶⁰

The fortress at Chaliyam was destroyed by the Zamorin in 1570. D. Jorge de Castro was the captain of the fortress of Chale when it was besieged by the Zamorin.⁶¹ Ultimately the Portuguese left Chaliyam with their wives on 4 November 1571.⁶² The fortress was completely razed to the ground.

4. Fortress at Ponnani

However the Zamorin in 1584 permitted the Portuguese to establish a fortress at Ponnani. The Portuguese viceroy, D. Duarte de Meneses being aware of the importance of the river at Ponnani and the necessity of stopping the flow of spices to the Red Sea regions and also to divert the attention of the Turks by sending a fleet from here to the Red Sea took up the matter of setting up fortress at Ponnani.⁶³ Dom Jeronimo Mascarenhas was instrumental in signing the

⁵⁶ F. L. Castanheda, *História do Descobrimento...*, Livro VIII, pp. 429-36. Details of the structure of the fortress are furnished by Correia.

⁵⁷ F. L. Castanheda, *História do Descobrimento...*, Livro IX, p. 560. Castanheda gives the details of the agreement *ibidem*.

⁵⁸ J. F. J. Biker, *Collecção de Tratados...*, pp. 88-94; Simão Botelho, "O Tombo de Estado da Índia", pp. 249-254.

⁵⁹ D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada VII, part II, p. 495.

⁶⁰ D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada VII, part II, pp. 516-518.

⁶¹ D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada VIII, p. 459.

⁶² D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada IX, p. 9.

⁶³ D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada X, part II, p. 144.

contract with the Zamorin.⁶⁴ So he was appointed the captain of the fortress at Ponnani and Ruy Gonsalves de Camara was nominated as captain of north and of the armada in 1585.⁶⁵ Rui Gomes de Gram in the capacity of captain of the fortress strengthened the fortification of the fortress in course of time.⁶⁶ Later Rui Gomes, the captain of the fortress visited the Zamorin at his residence and paid homage.⁶⁷ He was given a rousing welcome in the presence of Managat Achan, the chief of the administrators of the Zamorin and others.

By 1586 the relations between the Zamorin and Kunhali were not good. The Gaspar Fagundes who was in the fortress at Ponnani was asked by the Governor to offer his services to the Zamorin against Kunhali.⁶⁸ A few Portuguese were captured by Kunhali and were insulted later in his fortress.⁶⁹

5. Portuguese Factor at Calicut

The new Zamorin who came to power in 1587 was friendly with the Portuguese.⁷⁰ The new viceroy Dom Manoel de Sousa Coutinho who succeeded Dom Duarte de Menezes sent an armada against Kunhali.⁷¹ The Zamorin was highly impressed with the naval might of the Portuguese. Padre Francisco da Costa, a Jesuit who was at that time a captive in the fortress of Kunhali succeeded in the liberation of himself and his companions from the captivity and joined the other Portuguese. This Jesuit with the consent of the Zamorin contacted Captain in chief Dom Alvaro Abranches and explained the plan of concluding peace with the Zamorin.⁷² The viceroy was informed of it and peace was concluded with the Zamorin in 1591 who gave freedom to the Jesuits to do their missionary activities and agreed to lay the foundation stone for a church in Calicut.⁷³ The Zamorin allowed the Portuguese to settle in Calicut. A Portuguese factor was allowed to look after trade endowed with the authority to issue passes to the ships. The factor who was looking after the affairs was under Belchior Ferreira.⁷⁴ The king himself laid the foundation of the Church in 1591 for which

⁶⁴ D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada X, part II, pp. 27-29.

⁶⁵ D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada X, part II, pp. 148-149.

⁶⁶ D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada X, part II, pp. 186-193.

⁶⁷ D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada X, part II, pp. 190-193.

⁶⁸ D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada X, part II, p. 315.

⁶⁹ D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada X, part II, pp. 340-343.

⁷⁰ D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada VII, part II, p. 528. He writes that this Zamorin continued to rule till 1610.

⁷¹ D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada XI, pp. 72 ff.

⁷² D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada XI, pp. 72-73.

⁷³ D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada XI, pp. 73, 184.

⁷⁴ D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada XII, p. 70.

he generously granted not only the site but also the building materials. This was under the provisional treaty made with the Jesuit, Francisco da Costa.

During the time of Dom Antonio de Noronha, Kunhali obtained permission from the Zamorin to establish a fortress near Pudupattanam, with a view to attacking the ships loaded with pepper and passing through the Malabar coast. As per the terms of the treaty of 1591, the Zamorin was expected to keep all the pirates away from his land. Therefore he had the obligation of stopping the piratical activities of Kunhali too. Mahamet Kunhali Marakkar, the nephew of the previous Kunhali, succeeded him and started strengthening his settlement and fortress with more arms and ammunitions.⁷⁵ The Viceroy Mathias de Albuquerque sent Dom Alvaro de Abranches to the Zamorin cautioning him about the growth of Kunhali. Then an agreement with the Zamorin was concluded for joint action against Kunhali.⁷⁶

After some time, the Zamorin violated the peace established with the Portuguese. The Portuguese confronted three ships of Calicut and killed more than two thousand people on board.⁷⁷ This was during the time of Viceroy Dom Mathias de Albuquerque. Later the Viceroy was told about the intention of the Zamorin to start war with Kunhali and to destroy his fortress.⁷⁸ The negotiations between the Portuguese and the Zamorin were not promptly concluded.

Andre Furtado, the captain in chief made an understanding with the Zamorin in 1599 in the light of which the Zamorin promised to give a number chieftains, petit rulers like the prince of Tanor and Chaliyam and the administrator of Chaliyam and so on to attack the fortress of Cunhale.⁷⁹ It was further agreed that as soon as the fortress of Cunhale was conquered, it would be immediately razed to the ground. The Captain promised to build church in Calicut and to establish a factory in Calicut.⁸⁰

Again on 15 December 1605 the Portuguese made another agreement with the Zamorin and promised to have the church, the priests at Calicut for spiritual service of the people there and also factor and other officials.⁸¹

⁷⁵ D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada XI, pp. 185-186.

⁷⁶ D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada XI, p. 188.

⁷⁷ D. Couto, *Da Ásia* Decada XI, p. 177.

⁷⁸ D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada XII, p. 67.

⁷⁹ For the details of the fortress and the way in which Cunhali was caught and beheaded ref. Pyrard de Laval, *The Voyage of François Pyrard of Laval*, vol. 1, London, 1887, pp. 350-358; D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Década XII. The plan of the fortress of Kunhali at Kottackal is reproduced in the work of Francisco Pyrard de Laval, *The Voyage*, vol. 2, part II, between pp. 510-511. This is reproduced from *Livro da Índia* of P. Barreto de Resende, Sloane Collection, No. 197.

⁸⁰ J. F. J. Biker, *Collecção de Tratados...*, pp. 186-88; D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada XII, Liv. IV, Capt. II;

⁸¹ J. F. J. Biker, *Collecção de Tratados...*, p. 189.

6. Christian Community

Though an oratory under the Franciscans was begun in 1500 when the first Portuguese factory was established in Calicut it was deserted on account of the subsequent fight between the Muslim merchants and the Portuguese. In view of the treaty of 1513 a factory and a fortress came into existence in Calicut in the place offered by the Zamorin of Calicut. Place of Christian worship was as usual attached to the factory and the fortress. The governor made arrangements to send a couple of women from Cannanore to this settlement at Calicut In December 1513 eight women were sent to this settlement by the official of Cannanore for the service of Christians at Calicut.⁸² This fortress and the settlement continued to be there till 1525 when it was abandoned by Captain Dom João de Lima during the time of Henrique de Meneses. Again when another fortress was set up in Chaliyam, a parish priest was appointed to look after the local converts and the Portuguese residing in the fortress.⁸³ Zamorin in 1590 gave freedom to the Jesuits to do their missionary activities and agreed to lay the foundation stone for a church in Calicut⁸⁴. Andre Furtado, the captain in chief of the Portuguese during the agreement with the Zamorin in December 1599 promised to build a church in Calicut and to set up a factory there.⁸⁵

Pyrard de Laval who visited Calicut a few years later, found two Jesuit fathers greatly favoured by the Zamorin. He writes:

There reside also two Jesuit fathers, the one an Italian, [Padre Jacomo Fenicio] the other a Portuguese [Padre Hillarie] who were well received of the king, and get from him a pension of a hundred crowns a year, worth more than five hundred in Spain, besides what they have from the King of Portugal for their living and maintenance. They have builded (*sic*) a very handsome and large church with an enclosure and cemetery attached, near the sea-shore, on ground presented by the king; and they have the king's leave and license to convert the people to Christianity, so long as they use no constraint". Their labours had borne good fruit at the time of my departure, for there were already a good number of new Christians. They preached publicly in their church, and not elsewhere. They are very well housed, and have very fine

⁸² CAA, V, p. 466. "Senhores Francisco nogueira e gonçalo memdez eu mamdo llaa estas oyto molheres peçovos pro merçe que as tenhaes hy bem agasalhadas e estaram ao uso dos homens xpãos e nam mouros, mamdailhes dar seu mantimento darros e mamateiga e cadano averam seu parava. E sejam bem agasalhadas por vos e seu mantimento muito bem pago, e emcomemdo volas muito porque de tres em quatro meses viram estas e yram outras de cananore a iij de dezembro de 1513".

⁸³ S. Botelho, *O Tombo de Estado da India*, p. 132.

⁸⁴ D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada XI, p. 73.

⁸⁵ J. F. J. Biker, *Collecção de Tratados...*, pp. 186-188; D. Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada XII, Liv. IV, Cap. II.

gardens, and before their church is a large cross. The Christians all have their houses in the same quarter near to one another, which they have themselves built. There are, however, some among them that are not Christians, and even in the same house will sometimes be found inmates of different religions. Among these new Christians none, I believe, will be found to eat the flesh of cows, bulls or buffaloes, ... These Jesuit father had the ear of the king, who liked them much, and they took great care to do nothing displeasing, to him. They used to go often to the palace of the king to treat of affairs, assisted by the Portuguese, Indian Christians and Mestifa".⁸⁶

7. Shipbuilding

Calicut for centuries had been known as a great centre of shipbuilding and navigation. The Portuguese who established a Fortress and settlement in Calicut in 1514 took steps to take advantage of facilities at Calicut especially the availability of the best variety of timber. Comparatively timber for shipbuilding at Chaliyam near Calicut was cheap. The King of Calicut himself suggested to Afonso de Albuquerque that on account of the abundant supply of all varieties timber at cheaper rate at Chaliyam, the Portuguese could start building ships there.⁸⁷ Therefore as soon as the fortress was established in Calicut in view of the agreement of peace and friendship signed on 24 December 1513, Afonso de Albuquerque issued orders to build a Galley in Calicut in 1514.⁸⁸ Afonso de Albuquerque in September 1515 ordered two ships to be built at the Portuguese shipyard at Calicut at the cost of Chettis, merchants of Calicut under the supervision of Duarte Barbosa who was appointed as factor to deal with the construction of these ships.⁸⁹ In the same year, Duarte Barbosa got constructed two galleys for the Muslim merchants of Mocha. This was done when Francisco Nogueira was the captain of the fortress and Ginçallo Mendez the factor at Calicut. Thus the Portuguese installations at Calicut since 1514 built ships both for the Portuguese and for others under the supervision of the Portuguese. We find that galleys were the ones constructed here. This must be on account of the availability better timber in abundance at lower rates.

Conclusion

The Port town of Calicut enjoyed international fame as an emporium of maritime trade till the end of the fifteenth century. Merchants from various parts

⁸⁶ P. Laval, *The Voyage...*, vol. 1, pp. 405-406.

⁸⁷ *CAA*, I, p. 253, letter written by Afonso de Albuquerque at Cannanore on 24 December 1513.

⁸⁸ *CAA*, I, p. 295.

⁸⁹ *CAA*, I, p. 375.

of the world came to Calicut for getting a share of the international maritime trade. Calicut had attracted the Arabs and the Chinese besides the people of other nationalities who had their bases in Calicut. It had very important activities of shipbuilding. Similarly the port town supplied large quantity of pepper and other spices for the merchants. It was because of this that Vasco da Gama and his men avoided the insinuations of the Gujarati merchants and reached Calicut towards the closing years of the last decade of the fifteenth century. But on account of the constant confrontations between the Portuguese and the local ruler assisted by the local merchants, Calicut entered on a declining phase of its commercial activities. The Portuguese prospered in Cochin and other areas of the maritime India while the port town of Calicut went on declining as a centre of maritime trade. This decline continued for a long time till the battle of Gulnabad fought in the outskirts of Isfahan on 8 march 1722 and the collapse of the Safavid Dynasty. The trade of the merchants of Calicut to Persia was never to revive again. Somewhat differently affected were a substantial group of Asian traders, mainly Indians. Accustomed for a long time to trade in the Gulf, they were now obliged to seek their fortune elsewhere. They selected Malabar. With this turning of the Northern trade Calicut sprang to a new life and the whole of Malabar experienced a phase of intense commercial activity. In the year 1729 just when the northern vessels were abandoning the Gulf and the first stir was noticed at Calicut, a young man of twenty three called Martanda Varma ascended the throne of Travancore. He started a department of commerce, developed Aleppey as a major centre of trade. Price of pepper at Calicut rose on account of the progress made in trade. But it could not come up to the standard of Cochin. The Portuguese relations with Calicut had to say a lot about the vicissitudes of this port town. We conclude it by quoting the observation of Linschoten:

This town of Calicut hath in times past beene the most famous Towne in all Malabar or India, and it was the chiefe towne of Malabar where Samorin which is the Emperor, holdeth his court, but because the Portingales at their first coming and discovering of India, were oftentimes deceyved by him, they resorted to the King of Cochin, who [as then] was subject to the Samoriin, being of small power. But when the Portingals began to prosper [in their enterprise], and to get possession in the countrey, and so become maisters of the sea, Calicut beganne to decay, and to lose both name and traffique, and nowe at this time it is one of the townes of least account in all Malabar and Cochin to the contrarie, their King being very rich, and richer then the Samoriin, so that now he careth not for him, by means of the favour [and help he findeth at the hands] of the Portingalles.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ John Huyghen van Linschoten, *The Voyage of John van Linschoten to the East Indies*, London, 1885, vol. 1, p. 68.