

**THE PORTUGUESE COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE  
AND  
THE SOCIETY OF JESUS  
IN THE COROMANDEL  
DURING 1540 - 1640**

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Certificate

Certified that the dissertation entitled '**The Portuguese Enterprise and the Society of Jesus in the Coromandel during 1540-1640**' submitted by **Mahesh Gopalan** is in partial fulfillment of Master of Philosophy degree from the university. The work presented is original and has not been submitted in part or full for any other degree to this or any other university to the best of our knowledge.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

**Dr. Yogesh Sharma**

(Supervisor)

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(Chairperson)

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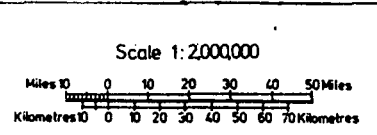
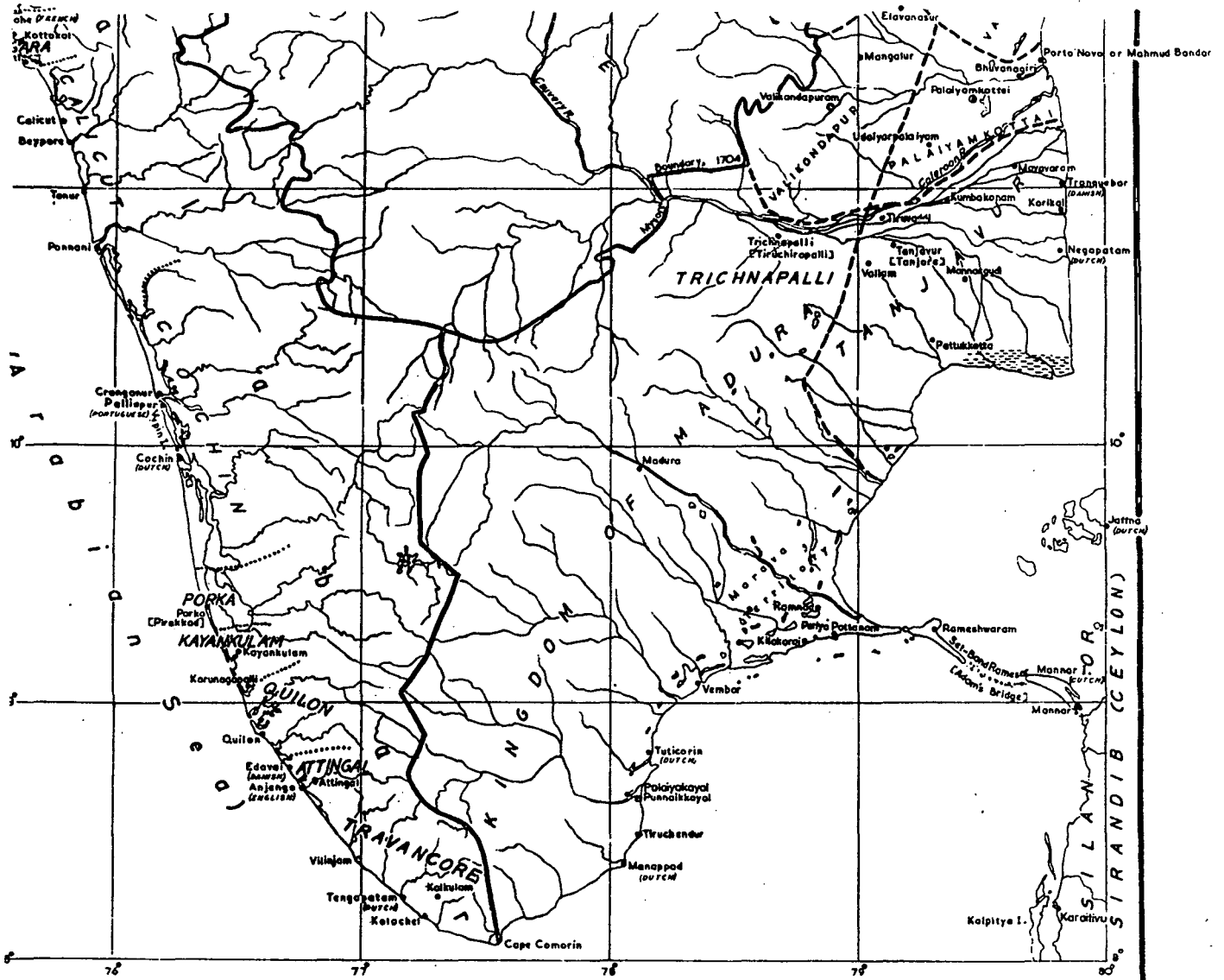
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# SOUTH INDIA POLITICAL 1707



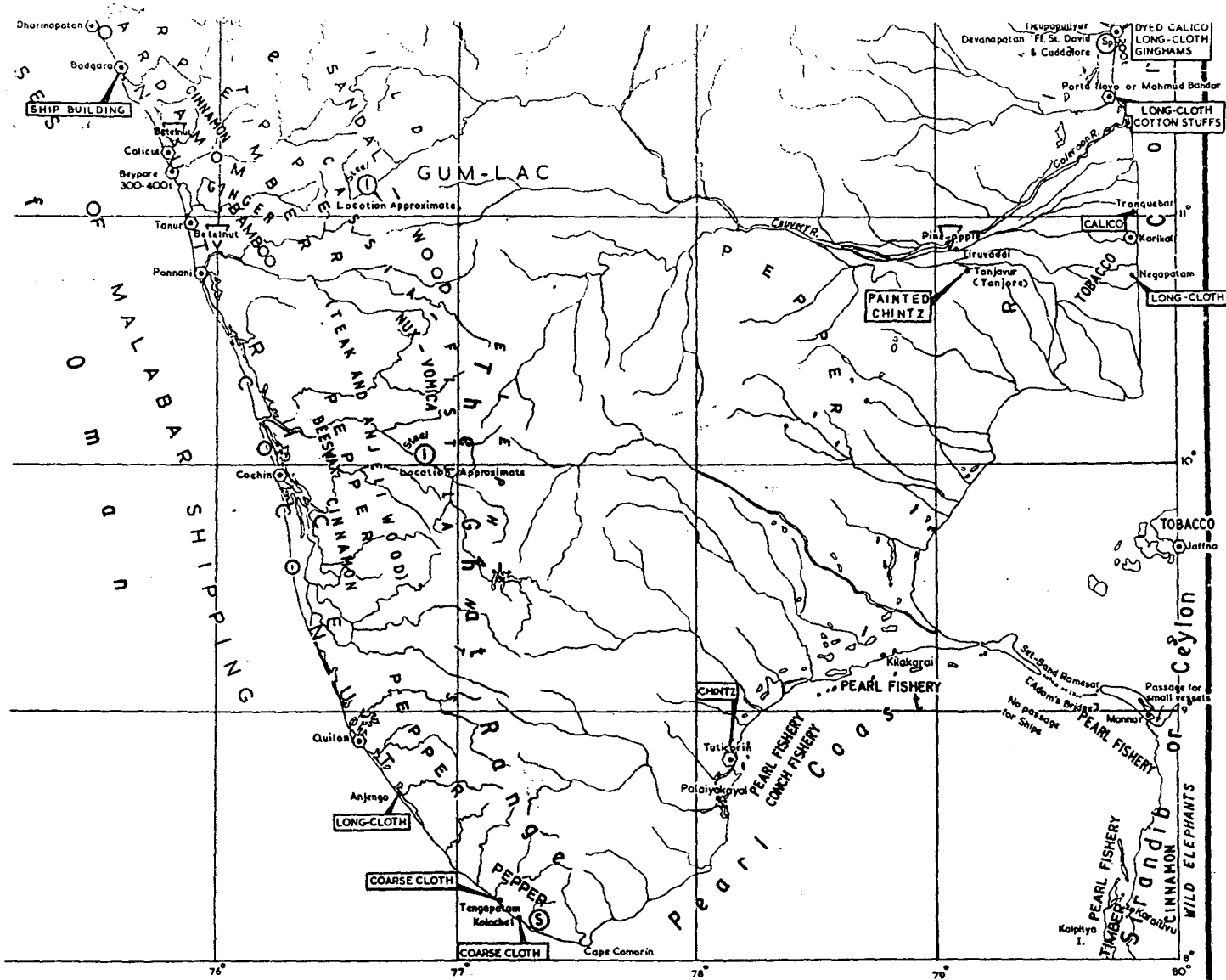
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- Sarkar boundary
- Other boundaries
- Sarkar headquarters  Chendragiri

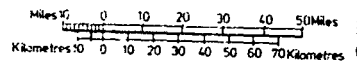
SOURCE: An Atlas of The Mughal Empire, Irfan Habib (Delhi: OUP, 1982) Plate no. 16 A

- ### INDEX
- ① TO ELLORE
  - ② TO KHAMBHAM-METT
  - ③ TO JINJI

# SOUTH INDIA ECONOMIC



Scale 1:2,000,000



### REFERENCE

- Port ⊙
- Tonnage of largest vessel anchoring 200-300t
- Route |
- Bridge |
- Diamond mine ⊙
- Iron mine ⊙
- Iron (convertible into steel) mine ⊙
- Salt ⊙
- Saltpetre ⊙
- Fruits, localised/processed agricultural product ⊙
- Indigo ⊙
- Craft product ⊙
- Rupee mint, Aurangzeb ⊙

SOURCE: An Atlas of the Mughal Empire, Irfan Habib (Delhi: OUP, 1982) Plate no. 16B

## INTRODUCTION

The Portuguese presence in the 16<sup>th</sup> century played an important role in the political, commercial and cultural changes experienced in the Indian Ocean. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Iberian enterprise which had a strong presence and impact on Asia was the only organized European commercial and maritime enterprise in the Indian Ocean. The impact of the Portuguese extended beyond the commercial and political spheres resulting in cultural, religious and social interactions. The Portuguese settled along the Coromandel Coast as in other places and shared a common but defined political, economic and socio-cultural space with the local populations. For the Portuguese commercial enterprise in Asia (the Estado da India) it was advantageous to align with the indigenous commercial groups settled at the ports. This was especially true in regions like the Coromandel where the Estado da India did not maintain a political presence like it did in Goa or Malacca<sup>1</sup>.

### I

The Fisheries Coast extended from the Island of Mannar along the southern coast of (modern day Tamil Nadu) of the Coromandel, southwards towards Tuticorin. This coastal strip provides a unique

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<sup>1</sup> This does not mean that the nature of interaction varied at these centers.



backdrop to the relationship between the Estado, the Catholic Church and the local society. The Portuguese did not possess a political and administrative base in the region but had a commercial interest to maintain. The Dutch and English companies threatened this non-political but commercial presence of the Portuguese during the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The geographical location of the Portuguese commercial<sup>2</sup> and the other non-commercial<sup>3</sup> settlements along the coast is essential in understanding the activities surrounding these populations. These settlements along the Coromandel were established during the early decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when Portuguese private traders commenced their commercial operations in the Bay of Bengal<sup>4</sup>. The two important settlements of this private commercial enterprise along the southern section of the Coromandel were Pulicat, with its satellite Sao Tome in Central Coromandel; and Nagapattinam, further south along the Coast.

Pulicat was located adjacent to the important Christian religious

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<sup>2</sup> The Portuguese Estado did not maintain any settlement along the Coromandel Coast. The settlements being referred to here are primarily private Portuguese settlements.

<sup>3</sup> the other settlements would include the non commercial settlements as the Jesuit stations across the region, that contributed to the European interaction in the region. It could also include other places in south India not along the Coast but with Portuguese and Europeans residing there.

<sup>4</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Political Economy of Commerce in South India, 1500-1650*, Cambridge: 1990, p.101.

settlement of Sao Tome. Its commercial importance declined during the last decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless it remained an important center for commercial enterprise in the region, with the Dutch and Portuguese during the early decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century vying for a dominant position in its commerce based at Pulicat. The Portuguese appointed Captains along this Coast to maintain their dominance over the maritime operations in the region. But these officials were in conflict with the local Portuguese settlers<sup>5</sup> and also with the Jesuits<sup>6</sup> along the Fisheries Coast. These private settlements though under some level of authority exercised by the Captains and the authorities at Goa, were by the 17<sup>th</sup> century effectively under the control of the local political structure<sup>7</sup>. These settlements were consequently susceptible to the fluctuations in local politics, especially since they did not maintain any independent military establishment with which they could defend themselves.

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<sup>5</sup> In 1540, the residents of Sao Tome in a letter to king Dom Joao III, pleaded that a permanent Captain be appointed from among themselves, being one who would have their interests at heart. G.D. Winus in his article '*The Shadow Empire of Goa in the Bay of Bengal*', mentions that the tensions between the two rested on the clash between the community that settled here so as to avoid the Estado's administration, which they believed they would avoid by settling here. For the Portuguese the significance of settlements as that of Sao Tome was in it being a place of patronage where the Portuguese crown could reward its officials by sending them here where they could trade and participate in their own private commercial activity. p. 87-88.

<sup>6</sup> The frequent conflicts between the Jesuits and the Portuguese captain along the fishery coast were caused by the attitude of the captain towards Pearl Fishing and the collection of taxes from the Parava community. The Jesuits often complained at the attitude of the captain, as a result the collection of taxes from the Paravas was handed to the Jesuits by the Portuguese crown. There is a lengthy discussion on the pearl fishery coast and the problems between the captain, Paravas and the Jesuits in S. Jayaseela, *The Portuguese on the Tamil Coast: Historical Explorations in Commerce and Culture, 1507-1749* (Pondicherry: Navajothi, 1998). Also in George Schurmaher's, *Francis Xavier: His Life and Times, India, (1541-45)*, (transl. From the German edition of 1963, by Costelloe, J. S.J.), Rome, 1977.

<sup>7</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Pulicat Enterprise, Luso-Dutch Enterprise in South Eastern India, 1610-1640, South Asia, 1978, p.20.*

The significance of Pulicat was also linked to the settlement of Sao Tome. This was a few miles south of Pulicat and an important Catholic pilgrimage center. It was regarded to be the place where the Christian Saint Thomas was murdered. Considered to be the founder of Christianity in India, the spot of his death and legends that are dotted across this Pilgrimage Centre helped it to develop into an important Portuguese settlement in the Coromandel.

The commercial significance of Nagapattinam, the other important Portuguese commercial centre that rose to prominence in the, mid 16<sup>th</sup> century lay in its links with the Island of Ceylon. It served as the second most important commercial centre specializing in commercial operations with Jaffna and the Malbar. By 1560 the traders in this port had developed an extensive commercial network that included Bengal, the ports of the Irrawadi delta extending up to Melaka. The nature of commercial activity from Nagapattinam is best described by Ceasar Federick who mentions that,

‘... (Nagapattinam is) very populous of Portugals and Christians of the country and part gentiles. It is a country of small trade, save a good quantity of rice and cloth of Bumbast, which they caree into diverse portes: it was a very

plentiful countrey of victuals, but now it hath a great deale lesse; and that abundance of victuals caused many Portugales to goe thither and build houses there with small charge... It is a country of great riches and great trade there come every year two or three ships very rich, besides many other small ships one goeth for Pegu and the other for Malacca...<sup>8</sup>

The Portuguese settlements and population in the Coromandel cannot be looked at without locating the role of the Catholic Church especially in the establishment and maintenance of Portuguese influence and socio-cultural interaction in the Coromandel. Sao Tome and the inauguration of Christian religious activity in the Coromandel in 1539 represent the beginning of Christian religious activity in the region<sup>9</sup>. The Portuguese and Spanish states posed themselves as important upholders of the Catholic Church and its influence through the Christian world. The expeditions seeking a sea route to the East were marred by uncertainty. At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the wealth that this trade and commercial enterprise could bring to the European economy was still unknown.

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Haklyut, *Principle Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, Glasgow: Haklyut Society, MCMIV, quoting Ceasar Federick, p.400-401.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Haklyut, *Principle Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, Glasgow: Haklyut Society, MCMIV, 89-90.

The use of religion as part of the rhetoric while European expansion materialized was essential both for those embarking on the risky adventure but also to the ruling establishments who could find reason in the need for divine sanction. The grant of the Padrado<sup>10</sup> right to the Spanish and Portuguese crowns by the Catholic Church (in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century) introduced a new dimension to European interaction in the Indian Ocean. By defining themselves as Christians the Portuguese could differentiate themselves from the 'others'<sup>11</sup> in the local society and construct a symbolic distinction between the Christian and non-Christian communities in the Coromandel.

## II

The Vijayanagara Empire dominated the 16<sup>th</sup> century political landscape of South India. Portuguese relations with the Vijayanagara State were important for its commercial activities in the Indian Peninsula. The relations between the two can be understood not only with an economic basis but also through an identical political, military and religious position vis-a-vis Islam<sup>12</sup>. In the Coromandel, which could be regarded as part of the periphery of the Vijayanagara Empire, the

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<sup>10</sup> The Padrado right was the right of the Portuguese and Spanish crowns to maintain their control over the Catholic establishment in the regions under their dominance. This right brought the entire Catholic establishment of the 'Indian Province' under the purview of the Portuguese Viceroy. It made the Iberian powers responsible for support of any kind as fiscal, military and political whenever required by the Catholic establishment in the regions of their activity.

<sup>11</sup> Others refer to non-Christians, William R. Da Silva and Rowena Robinson, Discoverer to Conquer: Towards a Sociology of Conversion in Teotónio R de Souza (ed.), *Discoveries, Missionary Expansion and Asian Cultures*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1984.

<sup>12</sup> Maria Augusta Lima Cruz, Notes on Portuguese Relations with Vijayanagara, 1500-1565, in Sanjay Subrahmanyam (ed), *Sinners and Saints: The Successors of Vasco da Gama*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi 1995, p.17.

be regarded as part of the periphery of the Vijayanagara Empire, the Portuguese dealt with the Nayaks or local Governors appointed by the rulers of Vijayanagara. These Governors belonged to Telegu and Kannadiga warrior lineages who migrated with the expansion of the Vijayanagara Empire during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. By the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century they established themselves as independent political formations at Madurai, Tanjavur and Senji. During the period under study (the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries) these new political establishments were undergoing the process of state formation and the assertion of authority in the regions under their control. The political disturbances of this period represent this process of transition within the political establishment of south India.

It is in the context of this political change and the growing European presence in the region that the history of the Paravas needs to be located. The Paravas were a Fishing community who fished for pearls along the Fisheries Coast. This community belonged to the lower castes and it remained under the dominance of the local political groups in the region. The Portuguese presence in the region, especially along the Fisheries Coast represented a new phase in the history of this community. Large sections of the Parava community converted to Christianity during the early decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Their conversion to Christianity was a result of an agreement between them and the Portuguese who assured

them protection if they accepted Christianity. The history of the Parava community and its association with the Church needs to be viewed as part of the larger pattern of political and social change. This change was occurring simultaneously with other demographic, political, social and economic transformations in the region.

### III

The Society of Jesus commenced its missionary activities in India in 1542. Among the first places where it inaugurated its missionary activities was the Fisheries Coast. Francis Xavier inaugurated the Jesuit enterprise along the Fisheries Coast when he visited the Parava Community in 1542. He realized that the community was Christian by name but did not have priests and Churches, to address its religious requirements. The Jesuits undertook this task of providing the community with its own tradition of Christian belief systems. The Catholic Church through the process of cultural interaction and assimilation into the social system of the Parava community established itself as an integral part of the daily life of community. This resulted in the creation of a new and distinctive set of rites, beliefs and cult traditions that became part of the community's newly acquired lifestyle<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Susan Bayly, *Saints Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South India 1700-1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p.346. This being an illustration of changes amongst one of the communities converted to Christianity.

history. The Society of Jesus established its missions across the world and formulated strict rules for communication and reporting of events from each Province. The constitutions of the Society stipulated that 'the local 'Superiors' or 'Rectors' who are in one province and those who are sent to produce fruit in the lord's field ought to write to their Provincial Superior every week, if facilities for this exist'<sup>14</sup>. This however, may not have been possible owing to the wide nature of their activities. But it was possible for the fathers to communicate with the Provincial every four months<sup>15</sup>. These letters and reports were in turn sent to Rome where the Father of Talent and Prudence analyzed and made extracts from the letters and compiled them to write the history of the Society for that year. This historical account was then circulated for reading within the Order in an attempt to tighten the bonds of union among members of the Society<sup>16</sup>.

The nature of these Jesuit letters it could be argued would have a limited scope in the writing of the history of the region and its people. These letters are indeed of a different nature as "...the (Jesuit) missionary was not expected to air his views concerning political matters, though he would be bound at times to warn his Superiors of past or

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<sup>14</sup> Ganss, George E, S.J. (trans.), *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970.

<sup>15</sup> Fr. Afonso Correia, *Jesuit Letters in Indian History*, Bombay: Indian Historical Research Institute, St. Xavier's College, 1955, p.5.

<sup>16</sup> Fr. Afonso Correia, *Jesuit Letters in Indian History*, Bombay: Indian Historical Research Institute, St. Xavier's College, 1955, p.6.



future complication which concerned the temporal as well as the spiritual welfare of his mission...<sup>17</sup>. The members of the Society in its Indian Province during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries had to negotiate with many independent and semi-independent rulers. This compelled them to include some information on the political establishments in the region during the time. These events had to be duly reported, though, not in a detailed manner so as to enable the writing of the political history of the region solely with the aid of the Jesuit letters. The letters nevertheless provide the Society's perspective of the political developments in the region. They also offer an insight into the role of the Jesuits and the impact of the internal factors (within the Society) on the stances taken by the Jesuit Missions and the attitude of the missionaries in the Coromandel.

Further, and more importantly, Jesuit letters help in writing a more specific history of the Fisheries Coast and its communities. The letters have not been frequently used in writing non-ecclesiastical histories. Histories of the region using Jesuit letters and other Christian documents have rather tended to provide an insight into the history of the Church or the social institutions of the community<sup>18</sup>. The lives and tribulations of the Christian community along the Fisheries Coast helps

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<sup>17</sup> Fr. Afonso Correra, *Jesuit Letters in Indian History*, Bombay: Indian Historical Research Institute, St. Xavier's College, 1955, p.8.

<sup>18</sup> Most prominent of these works is Susan Bayly's 'Saints Goddesses and Kings'.

further elaborate the impact that the process of the Nayaka state formation had on the 'micro region'. The migration of the community, its settlements at different places, the purpose of the migrations, the consequence of these migrations, the long term changes that the community experienced, the response of the Christian establishment and the ruling groups provide us with a different historical narrative. An attempt has been made here to understand this narrative through the letters.

#### IV

During the 17<sup>th</sup> century the challenge of the English and Dutch companies posed a serious problem to the Estado. The Society of Jesus with its influence in the region tried to resist the challenge of these European competitors. The resistance offered by the Society did not materialize much in favour of the Estado. The English and Dutch companies took advantage of the dissatisfaction with the Portuguese commercial enterprise in the region. The need seen by the Nayakas in ensuring a competition for the Portuguese so as to secure their own political position in the region ensured the permanence of these European competitors.

During this period the Society of Jesus was also undergoing a process of change within. The Jesuit Order was far from working as one united family. The problems within the Jesuit order can be traced back to the

rivalry between the Spaniards and the Portuguese. The most important issue of debate that constantly raged within the Order was that of Portuguese influence and dominance. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century with the gradual change in the composition of the Jesuit Order a new momentum of change and transformation of the Society of Jesus is obvious. The decline of the Portuguese influence both in Europe and Asia in the 17<sup>th</sup> century had an impact within the ecclesiastical establishment. The growing presence of other European nationalities within the Jesuit Order leading to new rivalries among the Jesuits coincided with the shift in the balance of power within the Catholic establishment in Rome.

The Dutch and the English companies, during their negotiations with the various local ruling groups attacked the Society of Jesus by maintaining that they (the Jesuits and the Portuguese) represented the same interests in the region. It was an argument that was exploited the most by opponents of both establishments. John Jourdain, referring to a conversation between Henry Middleton and the Mughal Emperor Jahangir, quotes the former as saying that,

‘ ... for they are like serpents which thrust themselves in princes affairs with their false reportes, thereby to induce them to warre against another; wonderinge much that your highness, being soe greate a monarche, to

live as it were in slavery to the Portugalls, in such sorte that your subjects shippes cannot make any voyage which if they should done otherwise, and goe to the sea without their passes...'<sup>19</sup>

The local rulers on their part invited other European competitors who exploited their non-Catholic and therefore anti Portuguese identity to establish their own churches at their settlements. The process of the establishment of the Catholic Church was a long and difficult one for the Catholic Church in the region. The problems with the conversions at Mannar are an illustration of the complexities involved in the process of interaction<sup>20</sup>. Similarly, along the Fisheries Coast there were many restrictions placed on those who converted to Christianity.

In the face of these complexities the Jesuit activities in the Coromandel during the 17<sup>th</sup> century need to be studied in a wider context. The Jesuit role in the resolution of the political disturbances of the 1590's was an important element in the process of interaction. It represented a new momentum through which the Catholic Church attempted to establish a new independent identity for itself in the region.

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<sup>19</sup> William Foster (ed), *Journal of John Jourdain, 1608-1617*, Madras: Asian educational service, Madras, 1992, p. 223.

<sup>20</sup> The Karaiyas of Mannar were converted to Christianity in 1544, but the king of Jaffna who objected to this conversion sent his troops and having failed to compelled them to renounce their new faith, ordered 600 executions, while others fled the region. Referred to by Fr. Correia-Afonso, S.J., in *The Jesuits in India, 1542-1773*. Bombay: Heras Institute of Indian Culture, 1997. p.12.

The Nayaka of Madurai granted the Jesuits permission to establish a new mission at Madurai while in 1599. In the same year the Nayak of Tanjor expressed his desire to have a Catholic Church in Tranquabar. Fr. Nicholas Pimenta, S.J., the Jesuit Visitor to the Province of India is quoted as having mentioned that, ... The Naich of Tanjor desired a Church in his Port, and at Trangobar sixe miles from Nagapatan<sup>21</sup>. The Nayak of Gingi on the other hand summoned the visiting Jesuit and ‘... he entertained us kindly... and dismissed us with gifts of precious cloths wrought with gold, desiring a priest of us for his new cite which he was building...’<sup>22</sup>. The Jesuits had by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century earned for themselves new respect and role in local society.

This study aims to examine two exclusive areas; one, the Portuguese political establishment, and the other, the Jesuit establishment, and their changing fortunes in the region often intersected with each having a bearing on the other. For the Catholic Church the Coromandel represented a region where it could function without Portuguese interference and pressures, making it an ideal region for it to work out changes for itself. For the Jesuits it was a sacred ground for their missionary activities, a land where they traced the beginning of their missionary purpose in India, when St. Francis Xavier began his ministry

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<sup>21</sup> Samuel Purchas (ed.), *Purchas his Pilgrims*, Glasgow: Haklyut Society, 1909 Vol X, p.207.

<sup>22</sup> Samuel Purchas (ed.), *Purchas his Pilgrims*, Glasgow: Haklyut Society, 1909 Vol X, p.208.

among the Paravas. The Malbar province, which was made independent of Goa Province in the first decade of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, indicates the beginning of the process. Its freedom from Portuguese domination made it a natural centre of activity for most of the non- Portuguese Jesuits, especially the Italians who worked to establish this new province and nourish it through its infancy.

# ***Commerce and Conversion in the Indian Ocean***

## **Chapter I:**

- 1.1. Introductory**
- 1.2. Understanding the Portuguese: A Background**
- 1.3. The Indian Ocean: Cross – Cultural Interaction.**
- 1.4. The Indian Ocean: The Political Establishment and Trade.**
- 1.5. The Indian Ocean: Its Commercial Network.**
- 1.6. Religion and Commerce**

A study of the Portuguese Enterprise in the Indian Ocean needs to be understood within the wider ambit of the commercial, political and social developments of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. The nature of the Portuguese impact on the macro region involves the need to understand the nature of the Portuguese settlements and their populations in the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese population in the region was given to commercial activity but along with the Iberians came the Christian missionaries with the intention of maintaining the Christian faith among the Christians settled in these regions. An important feature of the trading Diaspora's has always been the nature of their interaction with the local society where they were settled. This cultural interaction in turn leads one into the growth and development of Christianity in regions where the Portuguese population was active.

## **1.2. Understanding the Portuguese: A Background**

The commercial establishment of the Estado da India attempted to counter the dominance of Italian traders in the European spice market. This network (the Italian network) linked the Asian<sup>1</sup> and European economies with traders operating at the Italian commercial centers of Venice, Genoa and those in the West Asian ports of Alexandria and Beirut. The Portuguese presence did not result in the collapse of this existing commercial system. Instead it ensured a disruption of the ongoing commercial activity. The Estado da India in the Indian Ocean used any means at its disposal, including physical coercion, to control and influence producers and its trading partners<sup>2</sup>. The Estado da India could not influence the operation of the spice trade, as it would have desired. It could only influence the spice markets in Europe, but not control it<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The Asian economy includes the vast network that operated both on land and sea linking the Chinese, Indonesian, Indian and West Asian economies.

<sup>2</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Persianization and Mercantilism' in Om. Prakash and Denys Lombard (ed), *Commerce and Culture in the Bay of Bengal*, 1997, p.51.

<sup>3</sup> Neils Steensgaard, in *The Asian Trade Revolution in the 17<sup>th</sup> century*, (p.100-102) discusses the influence of the contractors in Europe and the nature of Portuguese capital and investments in the Asian Spice trade, it is essential to understand the Estado's activities in the Indian Ocean with regards to the Portuguese capital spread in the Indian Ocean. The Fluctuating price and supplies from the region. And the helplessness of the Estado to ensure a more concrete check and control over the supply markets.



The geo-strategic location of regions, like that of Malacca, made them the natural hub of activity linking India, west Asia, Arabia, east Africa to the east Indies, China and Japan and provided such commercial hubs with a role in the dynamics of change<sup>4</sup>. The maritime traffic along these routes provided these maritime centers with the economic wealth and a pivotal role in the cultural and religious changes taking place in this period. These centers became the focus of Portuguese activity in the Indian Ocean. The changes that resulted as a consequence of the Portuguese interaction with the various political and commercial groups especially in the strategic centers around the Malacca Straits and the Islands of Java and Sumatra which linked the Western and the Eastern Indian Ocean were important. It was in centers like these and other strategic locations like the Southern Coromandel, Malabar and the Straits of Hormuz that the Portuguese alliance and interaction with the local communities assumes importance.

The Portuguese commercial enterprise in the Indian Ocean 16<sup>th</sup> century was in its early stages of development. Its activities in the Indian Ocean need to be understood from the perspective of it being part of an older system of commerce as compared to its other European rivals of

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<sup>4</sup> Tome Pires (Vol I, p.287) mentions that whoever is lord of Malacca has his hand on the throat of Venice.

the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century Portugal was amongst Europe's most backward regions<sup>5</sup>. The Portuguese establishment did not grow and develop at the heart of the budding western capitalism<sup>6</sup>. The investments made by the Portuguese crown in the Maritime explorations need to be understood from this context. The maritime explorations could be looked on as an attempt by the Portuguese monarchy to tilt the economic balance in Europe in its favor. During this period Portuguese society also underwent both economic and socio-political transformations. The rise of the urban class at the maritime and commercial centers challenged the older land based ruling elite of the interiors. This rivalry between the old and new political formations in Portugal<sup>7</sup> provides an important background. It was this that eventually shaped and molded the internal politics of the Portuguese State and the Iberian Peninsula<sup>8</sup>.

The Portuguese State at the same time was also preoccupied with the need to consolidate its status and influence within the Catholic Church

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<sup>5</sup> G.V.Scammell, *After Da Gama: Europe and Asia since 1498*, p.513. *Modern Asian Studies*, 34, 3, 2000, p 513-543.

<sup>6</sup> As English, Dutch, French, and German commercial enterprises would later prove in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>7</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia 1500-1700. A political and Economic History*, London, Orient Longman, 1993.

<sup>8</sup> The role of internal politics within the Portuguese court forms an essential backdrop in understanding the early initiation of the expansionist policies into the Indian Ocean. Sanjay Subrahmanyam and L.F.F.R.Thomaz

and its establishment in Europe. The 15<sup>th</sup> century was important in the history of Portugal. It was a period when the Portuguese State was undergoing internal change. The Portuguese State had just reestablished itself after defeating the Muslim armies from North Africa that had dominated Iberian politics for over a century. It is in this context that one needs to understand Portuguese relations with the Catholic establishment. The Church during this period was an important rallying point both for the Portuguese State and Society.

The economic thrust of the Portuguese expansion was thus naturally combined with a rhetoric that sought to secure a route to India linking Christian Europe to the Kingdom of Prester John. It was an attempt as claimed by the rhetoric to surround the Muslim regions. The liberation of Jerusalem from the Muslims and the extension of the boundaries of Christendom<sup>9</sup>, was a dream of the Portuguese king Dom Joao that found

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<sup>9</sup> G.V.Scammell, *After Da Gama: Europe and Asia since 1498*, p.513. *Modern Asian Studies*, 34, 3, 2000, p.513-543. Also referred to by Sanjay Subrahmaniam, *The Career and Legend of Vasco da Gama*, (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

its reality through this route to the East.

### **1.3. The Indian Ocean: Cross - Cultural Interaction**

The trading Diaspora was based on the notion of autonomy of mercantile communities, and the existence of an, equilibrium based on mutual indifference between them and those who wielded state power<sup>10</sup>. The Portuguese settlements and along with it the Catholic Church in the Indian Ocean could be understood from the context of the cross cultural interaction that can be established with the local communities. It could be argued that the Diaspora and an individual being part of the settlement 'being a cross cultural broker while functioning as part of a scattered network of trade communities facilitating the passage of trade'<sup>11</sup>. This feature of cross-cultural interaction was not new to the Indian Ocean.

In regions like Pre Islamic Java there was a strong Indian cultural influence in the fields of literature and religion<sup>12</sup>. This was a result of the

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<sup>10</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Persianization and Mercantilism: Two Themes in Bay of Bengal History, 1400-1700*, in Om. Prakash and Denys Lombard (ed). *Commerce and Culture in the Bay of Bengal, 1997*, p.52.

<sup>11</sup> Philip D. Curtin, *Economic Change in Pre Colonial Africa*, University of Wisconsin, 1975, p.59.

<sup>12</sup> Dr.H.J.De.Graaf, *Islamic States in Java, 1500-1700*, The Hague, 1976, p.5

'Chola'<sup>13</sup> maritime expansion. The expansion was propelled by a need to dominate and consolidate commercial activity in the region. The Islamic trading communities also created their impact on the region in a similar manner. Among the Islamic communities participating in trade a majority were often clerics<sup>14</sup>. With the adoption of Islam, the Muslim traders in the Java came to form a part of the middle class. This new middle class was sandwiched between the Hinduised nobility<sup>15</sup> and a Buddhist society at the bottom of the social system. The impact of cross-cultural interaction and the expansion of religions also brought with them changes in the nature of the political establishments. The impact of Islam altered the social structure in Java from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards. It marked the beginning of the process of conversion of the political elite' to Islam. The conversion of Xaquem Darxa, to Islam provided a stronger ground for conversion of the population of Malacca to Islam<sup>16</sup>. A similar process occurred in South Asia, where Islam had begun to spread along the littoral since the first Millennium<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> The Cholas were a powerful south Indian kingdom that flourished between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>14</sup> Philip D Curtin, p.66.

<sup>15</sup> Dr. Graff, p.6

<sup>16</sup> Tome Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires and the Book of Francisco Rodrigues (1512-1515)*, Vol II, (London: Haklyut Society, 1944), p.242.

<sup>17</sup> There are references of there being settlements of Christians and Jews along the western coast of India Apart from these references there were settlements of Christians in the Persian Gulf during the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C and Jews during the same period. The movement of these groups across the Indian Ocean is linked to the political condition and procicusions they faced in various regions during different periods.

There existed a complex relationship between these commercial settlements and the ruling elite in these regions and kingdoms of interaction. This relationship could be viewed from a broad spectrum of possibilities. Reflecting various levels of 'relations of autonomy or dependence, between the host society and the Diaspora'<sup>18</sup> (or settlement). These variations in the relations between the Diaspora and the host society not only dictated the depth or intensity of exchange and interaction but also the level of influence that the population of the Diaspora could exert over the local society. The role of these settlements in effecting changes has been crucial in the commercial developments of the regions. This is best illustrated in the role played by the Kling merchants from South India in the Portuguese takeover of Malacca, and the role of the Muslim merchants in converting Malacca into a Muslim state.

#### ***1.4. The Indian Ocean: Political Establishments and Trade.***

The role played by the political establishments in the Indian Ocean was not restricted to that of an administrator or tax collector. It was

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<sup>18</sup> Philip D.Curtis, p.63.

more active than passive in its encouragement of maritime activities. Political guarantees to encourage commercial activity were important not only in ensuring the continuation of maritime trade but also in the production process of the hinterlands. There were variations in every region but political participation in overseas trade remained constant.

The rulers along the Tamil coast during the early medieval period sent trade representatives along with royal emissaries (mentioned in Chinese as *Soli Sanven*) with gifts to the courts with which they had diplomatic relations. During the rule of Narasimha Varman III (A.D.844-866) the Hindu Tamil merchant guild of *Manigramattar* had established a colony at Takua-Pa. While in the port-city of Nagapattinam a Chinese pagoda was constructed in A.D.1267<sup>19</sup>. The rulers in the Indian Ocean also invested in shipping, Tome Pires mentions that King Madafarxa, of Malacca invested in Junks and sent merchants out to trade on them<sup>20</sup>.

In the Indian Ocean during the 7<sup>th</sup> century long distance commercial flows began to develop in a north-south direction, with an increase in

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<sup>19</sup> S.Jayaseela, *Portuguese in the Tamil Coast: Historical Explorations in Commerce and Culture, 1507-1749*, Pondicherry, Navajothi, 1998, p.26. Commerce flourished between China and Nagapattanam between A.D.713 and A.D.1275. Chinese traders stopped visiting this port after the decline of the Cholas. This stems from the argument that commercial activity through the Indian Ocean did not decline or rise during certain periods. It instead flourished in certain pockets when there were obvious signs of political sanction of the ruling elite's of the region when they (the ruling elite's) were at the height of their political power. The decline of a port or commercial centre it needs to be argued occurred as a result of these external dynamics and were not a result of commercial decline. The commercial activity rather shifted to a new commercial hub within the geographical confines of the same region, owing to shifts and changes in the political and social alignments.

<sup>20</sup> Tome Pires, *Suma Oriental*, Vol II, p.243.

Indian trade with Southeast Asia and East Africa while the Chinese developed their trade with the lands of the *nanyang*<sup>21</sup>. Consequently during the reigns of the Tang (AD 618-907) and Sung (AD 960-1279) Dynasties in China, there was a marked development of maritime contact with the surrounding regions of the Indian Ocean<sup>22</sup>.

The Portuguese entered into the Indian Ocean with the burden of Medieval Mediterranean tradition of piracy, privateering and maritime war<sup>23</sup>. The naval tradition and the agenda of maritime expansion nurtured by successive Portuguese rulers like Dom Henrique and Dom Fernando constituted the early phases of Portuguese maritime expansion<sup>24</sup>. The thrust of the Portuguese maritime explorations in the Indian Ocean crystallized during the last decades of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of Dom Joao II. Successive Portuguese expeditions backed by its naval superiority helped establish a commercial dominance

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<sup>21</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Persianization and Mercantilism: Two Themes in Bay of Bengal History, 1400-1700*, p.53, in O.M. Prakash and Denys Lombard (ed) *Commerce and Culture in the Bay of Bengal, 1997*.

<sup>22</sup> Haraprasad Ray, 'China and the Western Ocean in the 15<sup>th</sup> century', p.109, in Satish Chandra (ed) *The Indian Ocean: Explorations in History, Commerce and Politics*, New Delhi, 1987.

<sup>23</sup> Luis Filipe F.R.Thomaz, *Portuguese Control over the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal: A Comparative Study* in Om Prakash and Denys Lombard (ed) *Commerce and Culture in the Bay of Bengal* p.122. The paper analyses the maritime policy of the Estado da India in the Indian Ocean.

<sup>24</sup> During this period of the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Portuguese Crown focussed its resources towards expansion in the Atlantic. Dom Fernando's main projects were towards the consolidation of the Atlantic possessions of the Portuguese crown Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Career and Legend of Vasco da Gama*, p.41-43.



in the Indian Ocean<sup>25</sup>. This naval superiority provided Portuguese commerce with the required protection helping it consolidate its commercial operations in the region. The Estado da India did not depend on territorial power but upon its mastery over the open seas and the resulting claim to sovereignty<sup>26</sup>.

The use of naval power was not new to the political establishments along the littoral<sup>27</sup>. There was a tradition of war fleets in the Malaya-Indonesia kingdoms and also with the Cholas, who established themselves across the Indonesian Archipelago and Ceylon. But the use of force by the Portuguese was part of a process of development and change in the Indian Ocean. The differences between the European and the

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<sup>25</sup> The Portuguese commercial presence through the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the gradual military presence that they established through the fortresses of Kilwa, Hormuz, Goa and Cannanore, after the establishment of their first factory at Calicut in 1502 (Sanjay Subrahmanyam) and the eventual takeover of Mealka in 1511. Represents the nature of Portuguese intervention in the Indian Ocean that is being implied here. D.G.E. Hall in *The History of Southeast Asia*, (Malasya: Macmillan Press, reprint, 1994), p.263, argues that the Portuguese naval vessels were superior to the Arab vessels that were designed to the seasonal monsoon requirements. This is also pointed out by Scammell (MAS 34, 3, 2000) who points out to there being a improvement in Asian seafaring vessels only in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century matching Portuguese maritime superiority. Nicholas Traling (ed) *Cambridge History of Southeast Asia* also refers to there being a change in Asian maritime constructions only by the later 16<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>26</sup> Nelis Steensgaard, p.89.

<sup>27</sup> Herman Kulke, in Om Prakash and Denys Lombard (ed) *Commerce and Culture in the Bay of Bengal*, The author here points out that the use of a navy and diplomacy was very much part of the Indian Ocean commercial tradition.

Asian establishments and their maritime presence lay in the nature and means of using this naval force in the Indian Ocean<sup>28</sup>. It was through this new maritime policy that the Estado da India altered both commercial and political equations in the Indian Ocean<sup>29</sup>.

The use of naval power it is argued was used either in defining a localized sphere of hegemony or to defend a maritime zone contiguous with an already existing territorial space<sup>30</sup> (Sanjay Subrahmanayam, 1998). There was a level of interaction between the commercial interests of groups and the maritime policies of the states along the Indian Ocean. The presence of the Ayyavole trading guild in the regions that were gradually incorporated into the Chola political map are indications of the association between political entities, the use of naval power and the

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<sup>28</sup> The Portuguese use of force helped it stake a stronger claim while bargaining with the traders and the ruling polities. The argument that since they could not offer any attractive goods (such as luxury fabrics) which were sought after in Malbar the Portuguese would resort to using force so as to make up for this weakness is another way of interpreting the use of force by the Portuguese (p.65). The author also argues that the economic weakness of the Estado da India would have been another reason for the use of force (p.70)

(Jan Kieniewicz, Portuguese Factory and Trade in Pepper in Malbar during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol VI, No I, March 1969).

The use of force as a means of bargaining is very obviously one of the main reasons as to why naval power was used differently as from the traditional Naval activities in the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese ships carried substantial batteries of artillery, whereas the traditionally built craft of the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea, with their planking sewn together, and not nailed as was the western practice, were unable to mount comparable weaponry since they would have disintegrated on its discharge. But the nature of Asian craft did undergo change by the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. With the Japanese and Koreans building crafts that were equally formidable,

(G.V. Scammell, in Europe and Asia since 1498, *Modern Asian Studies*, 34, 3, 2000, p516).

<sup>29</sup> The Portuguese Estado da India through its participation came to influence changes through its policies of trade with Europe and also through Intra Asian trade, etc. European collaborations with the various trading groups and the ruling elite's, etc, were part of this larger Portuguese impact that altered the commercial activity of the Indian Ocean

<sup>30</sup> The maritime Expeditions of the Cholas, and the campaigns of the rulers of Johr, Ache against the Portuguese at Malacca are a reflection of the established traditions in the Indian Ocean.

commercial system in the Indian Ocean<sup>31</sup>. The use of naval power as part of the Portuguese commercial arm represented a major shift in the nature of military activity in the Indian Ocean.

The nature of the Estado's geographical entity being a maritime one rather than a territorial one determined the nature of the establishment and its activity. Thus effectively creating a gap between Portuguese policy and practice<sup>32</sup>. The 'functional' autonomy between the various Portuguese establishments (the various factories and settlements) across the Indian Ocean played an important role in the developments, of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. There were debates within the Portuguese establishment as to the relationship that needed to exist between the factory and the central authority at Goa<sup>33</sup>. At the same time there were

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<sup>31</sup> The Chola expansion into Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka that was closely associated with the Ayyavole merchant guild had a larger dynamic. Their (the Ayyavole merchant guild) participation in this expansion was not only restricted to the commercial aspect but also in providing financial capital to the Cholas and by directly participating in the military campaigns,

Meera Abraham, *Two Merchant Guilds of South India*, (New Delhi, Manohar, 1988), p.58-60.

The fortunes of this trading guild changed with the decline of the Cholas and the rise of new dynasties. This is further evidence of the close links between the merchant communities and the political establishments in the Indian Ocean. The rise and decline of merchant groups being effected by political changes and not just by economic factors.

<sup>32</sup> M.N. Pearson, *India and the Indian Ocean in the Sixteenth Century*, in (ed) Ashin Dasgupta and M.N.Pearson, *India and the Indian Ocean, 1500-1800*, OUP, 1999, p71

<sup>33</sup> This contest within the Portuguese hierarchy in the Indian Ocean is pointed out by Jan Kieniewicz, in *The Portuguese Factory and Trade in Pepper in Malbar during the 16<sup>th</sup> century*, *IESHR*.( p. 65-66)

The author here makes mention of the debate, as to "whether the factory would in the future forward the economic purposes of the Estado da India, directed by Lisbon and Goa, or whether the Estado would be subordinated to the interests of the factory". The impact that this had on the crown trade and also on private trade is important to locate the changes and problems that the Portuguese crown had in the maintenance of its enterprise in the Indian Ocean.

interest groups in the Estado who pulled official policy in different directions<sup>34</sup>. The distinction that the Estado had to maintain while it looked after the Crown's interests, and those of private Portuguese traders<sup>35</sup>, provided the Portuguese diplomacy with conflicting priorities.

The Estado da India during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries should also be looked at as being part of a constantly evolving identity. That was not only transforming the developments along the Indian Ocean but also changing within. The study of the Indian Ocean and the cultural interaction of the Europeans and the Portuguese need to be located within this complex interaction.

### ***1.5. Commerce and the Indian Ocean:***

It was through the existing commercial network of the western Indian Ocean that the Spices reached Europe. The need to establish the Estado presence in this region was of important to the Portuguese. The two main commercial centers in the Arabian Peninsula were Juida (Jeddah) and Adem (Aden). At Adem traders came from Ormuz, Chaul, Dabul, Baticola

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<sup>34</sup> Om Prakash, *European Commercial Enterprise in Pre Colonial India*, Cambridge, 1998. p 26.

<sup>35</sup> This distinction between the interests of the Estado and the Private groups is referred to by Om.Prakash, p26.

and Calicut<sup>36</sup> with a great store of rice, sugar and coconuts. While ships from 'Bengala, Camutra, and Malacca brought an abundance of spices, drugs, silk, benzoin, lac, sanders-wood, aloes-wood, rhubarb in plenty, musk, thin Bengala cloths and sugar'. The commercial center of Aden was one of the most active in the Western Indian Ocean, 'this place has a greater and richer trade than any other in the world, and also this trade is in the most valuable commodities'<sup>37</sup>. The other important center in the Arabian peninsular was Ormus (Hormuz). Its importance lay in it being the center through which most of the spices reached Europe. The merchants, who traded here brought with them, 'spices of all sorts, to wit pepper, cloves, ginger, cardamoms...'<sup>38</sup>.

Another part of the Western Indian Ocean was the Malbar coast. The significance of this coast in the commercial map of the Estado da India was in it accounting for the bulk of pepper exported into Lisbon during the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>39</sup>. On the Malbar coast, Calicut, an important entreport, had an uneasy relationship with the Portuguese. As a result of the rivalry and clash between the Zamorin of Calicut and the Estado da India, the kingdom of Cochin assumed significance for the Portuguese who manipulated the politics of the period in an attempt to

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<sup>36</sup> Duarte Barbosa (Vol. I, p.46) mentions that 'it seems an impossible thing that they should use so much cotton cloth as these ships bring from Cambaya'. It is an indication of the volume of cloth that was traded in the region especially between merchants from Arabia and the western seaboard of India.

<sup>37</sup> Duarte Barbosa, vol. I, p.53

<sup>38</sup> Duarte Barbosa, vol. I, p.92.

<sup>39</sup> O.M.Prakash, p.42.

hold this commercial center with military force. The Portuguese base at Cochin was equally important being a center for the cultivation of pepper<sup>40</sup>. The Portuguese forcibly shifted much of Calicut's trade towards Cochin. The traders of the Malbar like the Nayars and the Syrian Christians worked in tandem with the Portuguese, as they would not only trade pepper at the markets but also procure them from the cultivation centers<sup>41</sup>. Most of the demand from Europe was satisfied by supply from the Malbar during the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>42</sup>, as against the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries when the Indonesian spices came to play a larger role.

It is essential to understand Portuguese control over Cochin as being well within the ambit of the already existing commercial system of the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese established a fortress alongside a settlement of Christians<sup>43</sup>. The settlement reflects the continuation of a pattern of cultural and religious interaction that was fostered by commercial activity across the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese also built a dockyard for the construction and maintenance of new ships (both Galleys and Caravels) for the Portuguese crown<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> Duarte Barbosa, vol. II, p.92,

<sup>41</sup> Kieniewicz, Malbar Pepper Trade Routes, in *Asian Trade Routes*, p.81.

<sup>42</sup> Duarte Barbosa (Vol. II, p.92) mentions that 'though there were other varieties of spices that came from Malacca, the spices from this region provided a bulk of the spices consumed in Europe'.

<sup>43</sup> The Christians being referred to here were both those who adopted the faith after the arrival of the Portuguese and those who were followers of the teachings of St. Thomas, who according to Duarte Barbosa came here after the establishment of the Portuguese fort, from the surrounding regions. The feature of religious interaction in the various maritime centers as conversion of sections of the community involved in commercial activity in Cochin to Christianity would have been similar to those who converted to other religions during the various periods in the history of the Indian Ocean

<sup>44</sup> Duarte Barbosa, vol II, p.92.

The Bay of Bengal was another geographical region of commercial activity in the Indian Ocean. The Bay stretched from the southwest towards the north along the Coromandel Coast to Bengal and then southwards in through the Coast of Burma finally into the Indonesian Archipelago. It was important for its textile trade. Among the other commodities traded in the region rice, which formed an important part of the cargo especially to commercial centers Malbar<sup>45</sup>. Its importance lay in its capacity to provide the international market huge quantities of relatively inexpensive agricultural products and highly competitive manufactured goods like textiles in exchange for gold<sup>46</sup>.

Along the Coromandel the Tamil coast played an active but important role. It provided pearls, corals and textiles<sup>47</sup>. The Kling's were a prominent merchant group who traded from the Ports of this region<sup>48</sup>. Among the important ports in the region was Pulicat, the printed cotton cloth exported from here was 'worth much money in Malacca, Pegu, Camatra (Sumatra), the kingdom of Guzarate (Gujarat) and Malbar'<sup>49</sup>. Another port of importance was Kilakkarai, it was important in the

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<sup>45</sup> Duarte Barbosa, vol II, p.124.

<sup>46</sup> Duarte Barbosa, vol II, p.21.

<sup>47</sup> S.Jeyaseela Stephen, p.19.

<sup>48</sup> Tome Pires, (p.271) They traded from the ports of Caile and Kilakari (Calicate), Adirampatnam (Adarampatara), Nagore (Naor), Trumalarjanpatnam (Turjmalapatam), Karikal (Carecall), Tranquebar (Teregamparj), Trmelwassel, Calaparco, Pondicherry, Pulicat.

<sup>49</sup> Duarte Barbosa, vol. II, p.129.

commercial links with Sri Lanka. Kayal also seems to be an important port where all the ships that came from the ports of West Asia such as Hormuz, Kis, Aden, etc touched. Towards the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century thousands of horses were imported at this port and they were sent to Madurai. The commercial tradition in this region was established with the Chola and Pandya rulers who took an active interest in commercial activities.

The port of Kayal was important for the pearl trade. The Portuguese from these ports obtained both seed-earls and pearls. The Parava community carried out the Pearl fishing along the Tamil Coast. This was a Hindu community that the Portuguese found employed by prosperous Muslim commercial groups<sup>50</sup>. The trading communities in the city of Pulecate (Pulicat), as in Cochin, comprised both of Muslim and Hindu traders who owned large merchant fleets<sup>51</sup>. The role played by these Muslim traders is significant especially in the trade between the Coromandel and 'the Kingdoms of Malacca, China and Bengula' (Bengal).

Another important center for trade in the region was the Island of Ceylon, it was known for the Cinnamon that was procured here<sup>52</sup>. The

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<sup>50</sup> Duarte Barbosa, Vol. II, p.62.

<sup>51</sup> Duarte Barbosa, Vol. II, p.129.

<sup>52</sup> Duarte Barbosa, Vol. II, p.112.



significance of this Island seems to have been down played by the early Portuguese travel accounts of the region. It did not find any significant reference in the work of Tome Pires. He claim's to have mentioned this Island only because of the availability of paper<sup>53</sup>. Merchants from this island played an active role in the commerce of the region<sup>54</sup>. The Island traded in elephants, cinnamon, ivory and areca with the whole of Choromandel, Bengal and Pulicat in return for rice, white sandal wood, seed pearls, cloth and other merchandise<sup>55</sup>. Ceylon was also an important center of Islamic pilgrimage. Adams peak was venerated as the point where Adam ascended to heaven. Pilgrims who came here carried much money to purchase precious stones<sup>56</sup>. The first Portuguese settlement and fortification in Ceylon appears to be a result of an agreement between Lopo Soarez and the Sinhalese ruler in 1518<sup>57</sup>. Their first major role in the political fortunes of the Sinhalese throne was against an invasion by the Zamorin of Calicut to help Mayadunne secure the throne. The Zamorin's fleet was intercepted by the Portuguese and driven back in 1537-38<sup>58</sup>.

An important center for trade along the eastern waters of the Indian Ocean was the commercial center of Malacca. It developed linking the

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<sup>53</sup> Tome Pires, Vol. I, p.84.

<sup>54</sup> Duarte Barbosa, Vol. II, p.109.

<sup>55</sup> Tome Pires, Vol. I, p.86.

<sup>56</sup> Duarte Barbosa, Vol. II, p.118.

<sup>57</sup> Valentijn, p.232.

<sup>58</sup> Valentijn, p.235.

eastern waters of the Indian Ocean with those of the Bay of Bengal and the western sections. The rise of its importance from the 13<sup>th</sup> century coincided with the growth of Chinese participation in maritime activities of the region<sup>59</sup>. The commercial activity at this port was important owing to its geo-strategic location and to the diversity of trading communities operating from here. It was regarded as the richest seaport with the greatest number of wholesale merchants and abundance of shipping and trade<sup>60</sup>. The traders from Java traded in cloth that came from Palecate (Pulicate), Mailapur and Cambaya<sup>61</sup>.

### **1.6. Religion and Commerce:**

The *jus patronatus*, the right of patronage over any ecclesiastical foundations, which might be established by the Order of Christ in the newly discovered or conquered lands, was given to the king of Portugal by Pope Eugenius IV, in 1442<sup>62</sup>. This Code of Cannon Law (No.1448) defined the *jus patronatus* as “the ensemble of privileges and obligations which, by the concessions of the Church, attach to Catholic founders of

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<sup>59</sup> Haraprasad Ray, China and the Western Ocean in the Fifteenth Century, in Satish Chandra (ed) *The Indian Ocean: Explorations in History, Commerce and Politics*, New delhi, 1987. P.111

<sup>60</sup> Duarte Barbosa, Vol. II, p.174.

<sup>61</sup> Duarte Barbosa, Vol II, p.169.

<sup>62</sup> Laurence A.Noonan, The First Jesuit Mission in Malacca, *Studia*, No 36, July, 1973. p. 404.

churches, chapels or benefices<sup>63</sup>. Consequently the Christian Missions depended on the Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean. This dependence intensified after the arrival of the Jesuits in 1542<sup>64</sup>.

The Portuguese interaction with the various communities through the Indian Ocean needs to be understood as part of a larger process of adaptation. The Catholic Church played a prominent role in the activities of the Estado da India. Though there was an obvious association with the Church and the rhetoric of Christianity the Portuguese did not use its anti Islamic sentiment as an excuse to disassociate itself from the commercial transactions of the Muslim traders. The Portuguese ire against the Muslims only took form in their opposition to the Mecca Muslim traders<sup>65</sup>. This needs to be understood in the context of the Portuguese attempt to break the commercial link between Asian Spice markets and those of the Mediterranean. The Mecca Muslim linked this spice network in the Indian Ocean to the Italian merchants in European.

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<sup>63</sup> Laurence A. Noonan, p.405, Along with these privileges also went the exclusive right, wherever the Pope's authority was still accepted, to exploration and trade with the new lands which the Portuguese navigators were encountering.

<sup>64</sup> Laurence A.Noonan, p.392.

<sup>65</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Career and Legend of Vasco da Gama*, p.184.

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Among the first trading groups with whom the Portuguese first established commercial were the Mappilla's. These Muslim traders were the first to provide the Portuguese with the spices they required<sup>66</sup>. The Portuguese commercial interests in Cochin were during this period also showed a preference to trade with the Mappillas and Syrian Christian merchants who operated from these ports<sup>67</sup>.

The Portuguese clash with the Mappillas occurred only when the commercial interests of the two along the Fisheries Coast clashed. This led to the Portuguese Mappilla struggle between 1524 - 1539. The Mappillas and the Portuguese become commercial rivals in the straits of Ceylon, forcing the Portuguese crown to constitute the *Armada de Ceilao*<sup>68</sup> (*The Ceylon Armada*). It was during this period that the role of Sri Lankan cinnamon assumes importance in the Portuguese commercial requirements. The second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century is marked by shifts in the demand within the European market<sup>69</sup>. It represents a part of this larger system of complex negotiations that the Portuguese had to undertake during the period. The nature of Portuguese diplomacy with

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<sup>66</sup> This struggle with the Mappillas is very significant as the first traders to establish commercial contacts with the Portuguese were the Mappillas in Cochin, Calicut and Cannanur, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Career and Legend of Vasco da Gama*, p.217 & 223.

<sup>67</sup> Om. Prakash, p.42.

<sup>68</sup> Luis Filipe F.R.Thomaz, Portuguese Control over the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal: A Comparative Study. In Om Prakash and Denys Lombard (ed) *Commerce and Culture in the Bay of Bengal*, p.151.

<sup>69</sup> Om Prakash, p.36-37. There is a detailed discussion in this section of the book which discusses the various figures and the relative demands in the European market and the supply of spices from the different procurement centres in Asia.

the Parava community<sup>70</sup> during this period was equally important as they intended to serve as a counterweight to the Muslim settlements along the coast<sup>71</sup>. It was feared that these settlements would aid the Mappillas in their struggle against the Portuguese. The Portuguese while on one hand ensuring that they could seek the support of a Christian group along the coast through this conversion also ensured that they maintained a degree of influence over the supply base of Pearls in the Coromandel.

The negotiations along the Indian Ocean were complex owing to the varied commercial features in each region. The Portuguese exploited to the maximum these complexities in the negotiations at each commercial center. Their use of these alliances with dominant commercial groups at these important commercial centers and the use of their services in possible military campaigns were important for the survival of the Estado's establishment. The rhetoric of the negotiation varied from region to region depending on the nature, composition of the trading groups and ruling elites.

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<sup>70</sup> The Paravas were Pearl Fishers and their conversion to Christianity was viewed as being very critical as a counter weight to the other Muslims along the coast.

<sup>71</sup> Jorge Manuel Flores, *The Straits of Ceylon, 1524-1539: The Portuguese Mappilla Struggle Over a Strategic Area*, p.63. in Sanjay Subrahmanyam (ed) *Simmers and Saints: The Successors of Vasco Da Gama*, Oxford University Press, 1995.

The openness to deal with diverse religious groups along the littoral tended and their social interaction with the local populations provided the Portuguese with an important element in their commercial negotiations<sup>72</sup>. The merchant groups played a significant role in the domestic economies apart from just operating as a commercial link between their settlement and their homelands. In Malacca there were “rich Moorish merchants, Parsees, Bengalees and Arabian Moors” who moved here from Pase<sup>73</sup>. Duarte Barbosa mentions that the traders of Malacca embraced Islam after the Muslim traders ‘became so rich thereby that they turned the people of the land into moors also and openly declared themselves against the king of Anseam....’<sup>74</sup>. Through this he was attempting to highlight an important process of political and cultural change that occurred through the littoral. The advantage that the Muslim merchants used here was of translating their common religious faith in relation to the network that was established by the Muslim trading communities through the Indian Ocean. It was the

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<sup>72</sup> Tome Pires provides us with a list of those who traded at Malacca. He lists, Moors from Cairo, Mecca, Aden, Abyssinia, men of Kilwa, Malindi, Ormuz, Parsees, Rumes, Turks, Turkomans, Christian Armenians, Gujaratees, men of Chaul, Dabhol, Goa, of the kingdom of Deccan, Malbars and Klings, merchants from Ceylon, Bengal, Arkan, Pegu, Siamese, men of Kedah, Malays, men of Pahang, Patani, Cambodia, Champa, Cochin China, Chinese, Lequeos, men of Brunei, Lucoes, men of Tamjampura, Laue, Banka, Linga, Moluccas, Banda, Bima, Timor, Madura, Java, Sunda, Palembang, Jambi, Tengkal, Indragiri, Kappatta, Menangkabu, Siak, Arqua (Arcot?), Aru, Bata country of the Tamjano, Pase, Pedir, Maldives. (Tome Pires, Vol I, p 268) This list provides us with a clear understanding of the existing connections that were established in the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean thus had to not only penetrate into this network but also attempt to dominate it from the inside.

<sup>73</sup> Tome Pires, p 240.

<sup>74</sup> Duarte Barbosa, (Vol I, p.169). The Suma Oriental by Tome Pires, p.241-242, also refers to the attempts to convert King Xaquem Darya to Islam by the merchant groups in the region.

acknowledgement of the influential role that religion can play and played in the commercial networks of the Indian Ocean.

It points to a conscious realization of a process that the Portuguese were consciously attempting to establish themselves through the processes that were already functional in the Indian Ocean. This provides a perspective to the gradual introduction of Roman Catholicism in the Portuguese commercial settlements. The adoption of Christianity by sections of the population<sup>75</sup> of Calicut, after the establishment of a Portuguese factory or fortification is another illustration of this religious expansion through the Indian Ocean<sup>76</sup>. The attitude of the Portuguese and the Spanish towards the 'Moors' and their relationship with the Hindu polity vis-a-vis this rivalry with Islam requires a closer examination in relation to commercial activity. Providing an understanding of the perception of the Christian establishment of the nature of interaction it maintained with various local groups. The common objective and interests that developed within the European

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<sup>75</sup> Duarte Barbosa, Vol II, p.92.

<sup>76</sup> Whether these attempts to convert sections of the population to Christianity were a conscious attempt of the Portuguese would divulge from the actual intentions of this chapter. The need to maintain a local population that would be friendly towards the Europeans at the various commercial centres is a factor in the Portuguese behavior that one cannot evade. The intentions of these conversions can be questioned but they nevertheless are a very integral element within the Estado da India. The encouragement of the Estado for such moves by religious sections of the establishment need not be overlooked so as to avoid controversy. It needs to be acknowledged as being part of a normal policy and occurrence that happened not only with Christianity but also with Islam from the 8<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The conversions in Southeast Asia to Buddhism and Hinduism during the Chola invasions and during the phase of Buddhist expansion into East Asia during the early historic period are all illustrations of religious expansion along the littoral.

establishment between the Catholic Church and the European polities and its impact on the Indian Ocean thus involves a wider interpretation.



# **The Society of Jesus: Its Mission in the East and The Fisheries Coast**

## **Chapter II:**

- 2.1.** Introductory
- 2.2.** The Society of Jesus: The Early Years in Europe.
- 2.3.** The Estado and the Society of Jesus: Sao Tome to the Fisheries Coast.
- 2.4.** The Mission on the Fisheries Coast.
- 2.5.** The Jesuits and the Integration of Parava Community Life

In 1493, the Spanish and the Portuguese crowns appealed to Pope Alexander VI to divide the world between them. The Spanish claimed the land's to the west and the Portuguese everything to the east of the Atlantic. As a result the two crowns reserved the right to “ send to the said firme lands and islands, honest, virtuous and learned men, such as feare God, and are able to instruct the inhabitants in the Catholic like faith and good manners, applying all their possible diligence in the premisses...”<sup>1</sup>. It was in the context of this right granted to the two crowns that the first missionaries arrived in Asia and the America.

Among the first missionary groups to begin their ecclesiastical activities were Franciscans and Dominicans, the Jesuits commenced their activities only after the formal inauguration of their order in the 1540's. They were the most effective and active of the missionary Orders in these regions. The original objective of the Jesuits was not to convert the local population but to help "the Portuguese settlers lead an upright and Christian life"<sup>2</sup>.

For the religious Orders and their members it was an opportunity to work beyond Europe in lands where there was no established Church. The discovery of the New World and a new sea route to the Orient was one of the motivating forces of the age, in which the possibilities of commercial exploitation, the advancement of knowledge and the propagation of faith were opened, this was mingled together in a single great adventure. The talents and zeal of the Jesuits through these centuries were channeled into works of the most diverse kind: diplomatic and quasi diplomatic missions for the Holy See, professorships at universities, the administration of schools and the maintenance of foreign missions<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Purchase (ed.), *Purchas his Pilgrims*, Glasgow: Haklyut Society, 1909, vol. 2., p.40-41.

<sup>2</sup> J.W. O'Malley, S.J., *The First Jesuits*, London: 1993, p.176.

<sup>3</sup> William V. Bangert, *The History of the Society of Jesus*, St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1989, p.23.

The deeply rooted conviction that their religion alone represented “the way, the truth, the life” and that all other creeds were either inherently false or else sadly distorted, was the bedrock of their belief<sup>4</sup>. Boxer argues that the Iberian missionaries came from a cultural background, which did not predispose them to manifest much intellectual curiosity about the people and other cultures they came into contact with. They were initially not consciously prepared to receive everything or to adapt themselves to local conditions and environment. They were consciously convinced of the superiority of their, culture and their way of life. The unwillingness to adapt to local conditions and being open to alternative ideas in their outreach ministry exposes their attitude and outlook of the mission that they saw for themselves in the East.

## ***2.2. The Society of Jesus its Early Years:***

The Society of Jesus commenced its activities during a period of change in Christian Europe. These changes originated with the Renaissance leading to a renewed energy in theological philosophy. The popular growth of reformation movement in Europe caused a parallel movement within the Catholic Church. The Counter-Reformation apart from attempting to check the growth of the Protestant movement inspired the

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<sup>4</sup> C.R., Boxer, *The Church Militant and Iberian Expansion, 1400-1700*, John Hopkins University Press, 1978, p.39.

growth of missionary Orders like the Society of Jesus. The Society was a creation of these changes that formed the core of reform in Catholic theology. In 1542 Ignatius Loyola the first Jesuit General along with his fellow founding members, of the Society envisioned themselves as disciplined workers of the Church upholding the Catholic faith. The Society began its early years in Portugal, Spain and Italy laboring with the Catholic Parishes for the progress of Christian life and doctrine<sup>5</sup>.

The Jesuits described their theology as “mystical” and contrasted it with the “purely speculative” theology of some of their contemporaries. Their understanding of “mystical” was for them translated into the way one lived. Mystical theology was a matter of the heart not the brain, it was to “seek God in the innermost movements of your heart, where he is found in serene quiet and sweet intimacy along with an unfathomable sense of his infinite energy”<sup>6</sup>. Being a creation of the existing intellectual atmosphere, the Jesuits were more open-minded than the other already existing orders attached to the Catholic Church. They saw themselves as differing from two schools of thought that exerted an influence on Christian theology. These were the “Scholastics”<sup>7</sup> who viewed theology as being a purely speculative or academic discipline and the

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<sup>5</sup> J.W. O’Malley, S.J., p. 70.

<sup>6</sup> J.W. O’Malley, S.J., p. 243.

<sup>7</sup> A prominent member of this school was Thomas Aquinas.

“Grammarians”<sup>8</sup> who believed that their skill in “humane letters” gave them the warrant to pronounce on theological and doctrinal issues<sup>9</sup>.

Amongst the founding principles of the Society of Jesus were:

- \* Its apostolic spirit looking primarily to the advancement of souls in Catholic doctrine and life;
- \* Its loyalty to the Holy See, expressed in a special vow to go anywhere in the world at the Pope’s behest;
- \* Its devotion to poverty by the sacrifice of the individual’s right to the possession of property;
- \* Its prompt and persevering obedience to the general; its sacrifice of the traditional and beautiful cant in common of the divine office in the interest of gaining time for the apostolic action”<sup>10</sup>.

As part of its activities the Society inaugurated schools through Catholic Europe with its first school at Messina being inaugurated in

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<sup>8</sup> Erasmus was a notable proponent of this school.

<sup>9</sup> J.W. O’Malley, p. 244.

<sup>10</sup> William V. Bangert, p.21.

October 1548. The school was primarily meant for secular students<sup>11</sup>. Because of local circumstances not every Jesuit school could offer a full curriculum, some being limited to literature and philosophy, and others just to literature. From its inception, the Jesuit schools became influential exponents of the spirit of Catholic counter-reformation. Bringing renewal to all classes of society it gave validity to the vaunt of many early Jesuits. The educational goal that Ignatius Loyola, the founding General of the Society, envisioned for the students was the formation of a cultured man, Catholic in outlook, and capable of participating intelligently and zealously in contemporary civil, cultural and religious life, always conscious of choosing the apt means. The Jesuit scholastic was taken through an educational path that took him through humanities, philosophy, scripture, positive and Scholastic theology, and terminated in the cultivated articulate and clear thinking of the Church's doctrine. These concepts were comprehensive in their embrace of the humanities, philosophy, and theology; flexible in their adaptation to the needs of time and place; practical in their concerns for the abilities of the students; complete in their attention not only to the mental but also the moral faculties of the person<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> William.V.Bangert, p.27.

<sup>12</sup> William.V.Bangert, p.43.

These schools helped influence the Society's new recruits among whom were members of the aristocracy, businessmen, retired soldiers, government bureaucrats, and worn out adventurers<sup>13</sup>. It helped the Society to shape the future course of its ministry. The schools through their curriculum played an important role in attracting these individuals to joining the Order and its mission. The ideal of reaching out to people irrespective of their status and their willingness to endure any hardship and self-sacrifice set them apart from any other Christian order. Another important feature was the yearning for lost sheep than seeing to define who they were and to rank their need. This helped account for the Jesuits' lack of discrimination while choosing persons and communities among whom they would work<sup>14</sup>. This lack of discrimination and desire to fulfill their mission were important motivating factors for members of the Society. Especially since it could be said that it was 'necessary for a missionary desirous of coming here to bring with him some money, to meet the initial expenses which are necessary to start his holy work, for to hope to acquire alms for such necessary expenses is a mistake... For want of these has seen many friars deprived of the power of carrying out their intentions, and thereby much dejected.'<sup>15</sup>. Though these were mentioned at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the situation on the

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<sup>13</sup> Dauril Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, its Empire and Beyond, 1540-1750*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996. p. 35.

<sup>14</sup> J.W. O'Malley, p. 73.

<sup>15</sup> William Irvine (ed.), Niccolao Manucci's, *Storia Do Mongor, 1653-1708*, Calcutta, Editions India, p 186.

ground had not changed. Such was the nature of the challenges that members of the Society of Jesus faced in the early years of its formation.

The Jesuits thus created for themselves a new philosophy through which they propagated their new lifestyle<sup>16</sup>. These influences form a relatively important link in understanding not just the philosophical content of their ministry but provides an insight into the nature of their activities during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The reputation that the founding fathers of the Society built for themselves with their activism behind the scenes at the Council of Trent during the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Displayed the Society's ability to function in a more disciplined and dedicated manner unlike other Orders of the period. The Jesuits through their active participation in the affairs of the Catholic Church developed close relations with the dominant Catholic political powers of the period. Their association with the European political establishment and their proximity to the ruling families can be traced to the Jesuit ideal of discipline and order.

The ruling elite in Europe stood for order and stability and this was essential for the Church and its institutions that were facing a challenge from within. The challenge came through the new revitalized thinking

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<sup>16</sup> The lifestyle that the Jesuits advocated was one of poverty and self-sacrifice. Its members were required to renounce all their worldly attachments and



stimulated by the Reformation and a dislike for Papal authority that was gradually becoming widespread in northern Europe. This relationship with the power centres of Europe was important for the Society and its future. The Society founded in 1540 marked an important phase not only in the development and the history of Christianity in Europe but also in the daily working of the various crown governments in Europe, especially that of Portugal. The Society's determination and vigor set it apart from the other orders. Since its early days the Society developed a close relationship with King John III of Portugal and with King Ferdinand of Habsburg. In Portugal, the Society in its early years came to exert considerable influence on the political establishment. The role of Jesuits as advisers and confessors to the rulers or to those in influential positions at the court provided them with the influence<sup>17</sup>. The proximity of the Society to King Sebastian and the debacles leading to the collapse of the Portuguese ruling family, led to the Society being accused of being responsible for the fall of the ruling family<sup>18</sup>. It was early in the 16<sup>th</sup> century that the Society of Jesus on the request of King Joao III of

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<sup>17</sup> There is a detailed discussion on the role of the Society in the court politics of Portugal. Its proximity to the ruling establishment could find its Self very pronounced with the changes during transition in 1557. On the death of the Portuguese king, John III, his wife Catarina de Austria, assumed regency for her grandson King Sebastian till 1562, before she transferred the regency to her brother in law Cardinal Henry and retired to a convent. King Sebastian's mother Juana on the other hand became the only female member of the Society. Dauril Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, its Empire and Beyond, 1540-1750*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996, p.82.

<sup>18</sup> Dauril Alden, p.80.

Portugal sent two Jesuit fathers, Francis Xavier and Samoa Rodrigues, to Lisbon to serve at the Portuguese trading stations in the east. The early decades of Jesuit activities in the Indian Ocean and its Indian province need to be understood through this background of the society in Europe and the ideals of its members who came to play an important role in the region.

### ***2.3. The Estado and the Society of Jesus: Sao Tome to the Fisheries Coast.***

The Portuguese were the first European power to establish themselves along the littoral the Coromandel. The region was known for its textiles, the important commercial centres from where the Portuguese operated were Pulicat, Nagapattinam and Mailapur. An important feature of the Portuguese commercial establishment along the Coromandel was the large presence of Portuguese private commercial enterprise. This private enterprise coexisted with the official trade conducted by the Estado. On the Coromandel, the Portuguese founded a settlement at Mailapur called Sao Tome. This was a significant centre for cloth while its proximity to Pulicat and to the local political courts of Senji and Chandragiri gave it a geo-strategic role in the region.

Sao Tome served the twin requirements of being an important religious, centre for the Christian community (being the city where St.Thomas was killed and buried) and as a centre for Portuguese private trade<sup>19</sup>. With the building of the Church at Sao Tome in 1524, the Portuguese established a settlement around the Church. The settlers here invested in the shipping that plied between the Coromandel, Bengal, Pegu and Malacca<sup>20</sup>. The commercial centre in south Coromandel was Pulicat, located to the immediate north of Sao Tome. It was an important centre of commerce between the Coromandel, Malacca and Pegu<sup>21</sup>. The third commercial centre for the Portuguese in this section of the Coromandel was Nagapattinam. This was located south of Sao Tome and was situated near the Sri Lankan coast and the town of Jaffianapattinam. Its commercial operations apart from including its links with Southeast Asia importantly centred on the trade of Elephants, and Rice with Sri Lanka.

An important feature of Portuguese commerce in this region of its

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<sup>19</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Political Economy of Commerce in South India, 1500-1650*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.105.

<sup>20</sup> George Schurmaher, S.J., *Francis Xavier: His Life and Times, India, (1541-45)*, (transl. From the German edition of 1963, by Costelloe, J, S.J.), Rome, 1977, p.597-98.

<sup>21</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Political Economy of Commerce in South India, 1500-1650*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990.

“Shadow Empire”<sup>22</sup> was the trading pattern that centered on Nagapattinam and Pulicat. Commerce from Nagapattinam focused on coastal trade and Ceylon and that of Pulicat with Southeast Asia. From the island of Ceylon small ships would trade with Nagapattinam and also with the city of Mailapur, where there was a ‘sizable population of Portuguese and Christians of the country and the part gentiles... It [the region] was regarded as the country of small trade’<sup>23</sup>. In spite of their active commercial participation in the Indian Ocean the establishment and maintenance of the Portuguese commercial enterprise in the Coromandel was not without disturbances and problems. The Portuguese while establishing their operations Nagapattinam encountered a hostile reception from the local Muslim trading community<sup>24</sup>. The Portuguese private trade also faced the same challenges as the official enterprise. In 1561, while the Portuguese considered transferring the Christians of the Fisheries Coast to the island of Mannar, the Viceroy was also interested in asking the Portuguese settlers at the ports of Sao Tome and Nagapattinam of

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<sup>22</sup> This is a term used by G.D. Winus in his article ‘The Shadow Empire of the Bay of Bengal’, in the *Iteneario*, 1983, Vol.2.

<sup>23</sup> Cesar Frederick, in Samuel Purchase (ed.), *Purchas his Pilgrims*, (Glasgow: Haklyut Society, 1909), Vol. X, No. 23, p. 108.

<sup>24</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Political Economy of Commerce in South India, 1500-1650*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p100

migrating with these Christians<sup>25</sup>. The Portuguese establishment continued but at the mercy of the local ruling groups.

The Vijayanagara kingdom held sway across the peninsula during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. It was during this period that the Telugu and Kannadiga warrior lineages and clans settled across south India<sup>26</sup>. The Nayakas, (rulers of the successor states of the Vijayanagara kingdom) with whom the Portuguese and the other European companies negotiated with during the late 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century were originally appointed governors in the region during the Vijayanagara period. These groups established their quasi-independent rule around 1558-1559<sup>27</sup>. The important Nayaka royal courts were established at Senji, Tanjavur and Madurai. On the Fisheries Coast the Nayaks offered the communities and their leaders special honors and patronage. To secure this alliance the elders of the communities were vested with rights and titles, the attempted to assimilate this community into the power structure that was being created by the new Nayak chiefdoms<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> V. Perinola, S.J., *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, Vol. I, 1505-1565*, Tisara Prakasakayo Ltd. Sri Lanka, 1989. Fr. A. Anriques. s.j. to Fr. J. Lainez, s.j., Mannar, January 8, 1561, No146.

<sup>26</sup> Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance: Courts and State in Nayaka Period Tamil Nadu*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 13.

<sup>27</sup> R. Sathyanatha Aiyar, *History of the Nayaks of Madura*, Humphery Milford, Oxford University Press, 1924, p10.

<sup>28</sup> Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, Oxford University Press, p. 323.

The Portuguese maintained a commercial interest on the Fisheries Coast. The Parava's were skilled divers and Pearl Fishers. They dived for these Pearls in the waters between Sri Lanka and Coastal Tamilnad. These Pearls were the most highly priced among those taken in the eastern waters. The need to maintain a degree of interaction with those involved at the base of the economic hierarchy was important to the Portuguese especially in a region where they lacked any substantive military or political presence. The Portuguese, while dealing with this community, had to at times confront the Muslim chieftains who collected revenues from the Paravas on behalf of the Nayak in the region. The failure of the Nayaka rulers to come to the aid of the Parava's during a dispute between the community and the chieftains collecting tax from them. Provided the Portuguese with an opportunity to intervene and guarantee their protection to the Paravas against harassment from the Muslim groups. This Portuguese protection was guaranteed only if the community converted to Christianity. After the Parava acceptance of this condition during the 1530's<sup>29</sup> the Padrado clerics baptized twenty thousand Paravas from at least thirty villages in the region along the coast<sup>30</sup>. There were at least 20 to 30 Parava villages along the coast stretching from Vembar (near the present day Ramanad district of Tamil

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<sup>29</sup> J.W. O'Malley, p180 and also in George Schurhammer, S.J, Francis Xavier his life and times. The author refers to a letter written by Francis Xavier who mentions the relationship between the Portuguese governor and the Parava's and his sending of a fleet to defend the community.

<sup>30</sup> Susan Bayly, p. 325.

Nadu) to a twenty mile stretch north of Kanyakumari along the south west coast.

The conversion of such commercially significant communities played an important role in the Estado's future commercial operations. These conversions do not suggest much about the establishment of Christianity along the littoral. But it importantly suggests the establishment of a broad matrix of commercial and ecclesiastical relations. The importance of commercial groups with an ecclesiastical background was not a unique feature but part of developments at the local level that accompanied political commercial and cultural expansion. A similar change occurred along the Travancore coast, where the Makkuas, another fishing folk who on learning of the conversion of their neighbors also adopted Christianity for the protection that it guaranteed them<sup>31</sup>. The movement of such groups towards the Portuguese signifies an attempt to proselytize groups at the base of the economic ladder through whom the Portuguese could play a larger economic role. The economic consideration seems to be important in light of the negotiations with ruling groups and other dominant groups in the regions of activity. The nature of protection that the Portuguese could provide these

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<sup>31</sup> William V. Bangert, p 31.

communities would have varied in each region. Along the Coromandel the most that the Portuguese could do for the Parava's was by providing them with security and protection on the seas while they fished for Pearls.

In such circumstances the role of the Catholic Church and the Jesuits should be viewed as part of a larger process. The process not involving an expansion of the Christian faith but an expansion that would secure and consolidate the Portuguese commercial activity in the region. It was here that the need to develop a Christian perspective among these non-European cultures was essential. Though the conversions did not provide an immediate improvement in the economic status of these groups. It provided an identity that was not just associated with the Portuguese commercial enterprise but also with a common religious faith that they shared, 'Christianity'.

#### ***2.4. The Mission on the Fisheries Coast.***

The Christian enterprise on the Fisheries Coast was already underway forty years before the Jesuits arrived. Before the arrival of the Jesuits, missionaries from the Franciscan and Dominican Orders manned the Christian Missions in India. The adoption of Christianity by the Parava community was interpreted as a change of fealty from the



local government to the King of Portugal, provoking measures for the assertion of Vijayanagara authority<sup>32</sup>. The assumption of such rights by the Portuguese led to frequent confrontations with the Nayaka. The entire civil and criminal jurisdiction of the Fisheries Coast was seized upon by the Portuguese, and ... all dues and taxes, including the valuable revenue arising from the Pearl fishery, had been assumed by the governors appointed by the Portuguese Viceroy<sup>33</sup>. The Christian fishermen were under the suzerainty of the Portuguese crown, which taxed all those who were involved in fishing. The dues paid were important not just to the Portuguese crown but also to “the Friars of St. Paul, [who were on the coast] which are in that coast”<sup>34</sup>. The major Parava settlements stretched along the coast from the village of Manapar extending till the village of Bembar ‘a stretch of fourteen leagues’ that contained the most important and populous villages of the coast<sup>35</sup>.

But the thrust of Catholic missionary activity in the region began after 1542 when the Jesuit Francis Xavier commenced his missionary activity amongst the Parava’s. The presence of Xavier along the Fisheries

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<sup>32</sup> R.Sathyanatha Aiyar, p 91.

<sup>33</sup> R.Sathyanatha Aiyar, p 92.

<sup>34</sup> Cesar Frederick, in Samuel Purchase (ed.), *Purchas his Pilgrims*, Glasgow: Haklyut Society, 1909, Vol. X, No. 23, p. 105.

<sup>35</sup> V. Perenola, *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, Vol. II, 1566-1619*. Fr. A. Valignano to Fr. E. Mercurian, Goa-Cochin, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1575, No. 26.

Coast and the nature of his activities symbolize the nature of Christian penetration in the region supported by the Portuguese civil government. Francis Xavier's first visit in the Coromandel took him through the Christian villages where the people had been baptized during the previous phase of missionary activity. The process of Christianisation in these regions was incomplete as the Christians here lived in ignorance of Christian doctrines.

Xavier's activities among the Parava's began with him rebaptising about 15,000 Parava's and Mukkuvar's<sup>36</sup>. Xavier also discovered that one of the main problems faced by the missionaries in the region was their failure to interact with the community in their native language Tamil<sup>37</sup>. Consequently the Christian community was one only by name without any one to instruct them in the tenants of Christian faith<sup>38</sup>. Before he began his activities in the region Francis Xavier began learning the local language. In three months he had the necessary sections of Catholic catechism<sup>39</sup> prepared in the local language. He would leave

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<sup>36</sup> Susan Bayly, p.328.

<sup>37</sup> Dauril Alden, p.49. This is also referred to by George Schurhammer, S.J, p. 595, in a letter from Xavier to friends in Goa, where he mentions "If any foreigners of our Society come who do not know how to speak Portuguese they must learn how to speak it, for otherwise they will not find a topaz who understands them.

<sup>38</sup> Fr. George Schurhammer, S.J., p. 302.

<sup>39</sup> Xavier had the Sign of the Cross, The Creed, The Commandments, The 'Our Father', The 'Hail Mary', Slave Regina and Confitear, written in the Latin script for him to memorize. George Schurhammer, p. 308.

behind a copy (these copies were written on leaves) of these religious instructions in every village he visited, asking them to recite them every day. Due to the shortage of Catholic priests<sup>40</sup> he appointed someone in each village to continue his work and assemble the people on Sunday for prayers. These efforts of Francis Xavier lay the foundations to the Jesuit enterprise in the region.

## **2.5. The Jesuits and the Integration of Parava Community Life:**

In 1577, there were twenty five to twenty six Churches along the Fisheries Coast which were under the charge of the Jesuits, with the exception of a church at Mannar and Punicale, where on account of the Portuguese there were two secular priests as Vicars<sup>41</sup>. The Jesuits had after the initial stimuli provided by Francis Xavier integrated the Catholic Church into the daily life of the Parava community. The establishment of Churches, hospitals and educational institutions throughout the region

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<sup>40</sup> G.D.Winus, in "The Shadow Empire" of Goa in the Bay of Bengal, *Itineario* vol. VII, 1983, no 2. Who mentions that for long (during the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century) there was only one priest in a important Christian site like Mylapore. At the same time it was only after the arrival of Francis Xavier in the region during 1542, that the Franciscans who first converted the Parava's to Christianity began to focus on the region rivaling the Jesuits. p.90-91.

<sup>41</sup> V. Perniola, *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1566 -1619*, Volume 2. A. Valignano, S.J., (Summary of Report on India), Malacca, November 22- Dec 8, 1577, No 34.

provided the Church with a larger role in the maintenance community life in the political, economic, social and religious spheres.

Among the first changes that the community underwent was the shifting of its political and administrative center located in the village of Virapandiyanpatanam. The adoption of Christianity and Portuguese political support led to the transfer of the political and administrative seat of the Parava community to the new Portuguese trading center of Tuticorin<sup>42</sup>. The transfer of the political center to Tuticorin represented a change in the power structure and the political dependence of the community from being dependent on the Nayaka State to being dependent on Portuguese patronage and protection.

At a social level the hierarchy of the community continued to remain the same under the Catholic Church. The Church established its authority within the community by recognizing the social and religious legitimacy of its existing social hierarchy and institutions. In the religious context while the village of Virapandiyanpatanam housed the community's most important Hindu tutelary Goddess<sup>43</sup> before their adoption of Christianity. The new political center of Tuticorin came to

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<sup>42</sup> Susan Bayly, p. 326.

<sup>43</sup> Susan Bayly, p. 326.

house the communities' new religious patron, the Miraculous Virgin of Tuticorin housed in the Church of "Our Lady of Snow".

Christianity became a lifestyle for the *patangatins*<sup>44</sup> and other notables within the community. They were through the course of the 16<sup>th</sup> century recognised as the guardians of the Church. They maintained rights of primacy within the Church. They were provided with special seats near the sanctuary. They were also recognised as the donors of the Church and led the community in local festivals<sup>45</sup>. These feasts were high points in the spiritual and social life of the community, with jubilees, solemn group baptisms, etc<sup>46</sup>. Social events of this nature were used by the Jesuits to expand their base and influence within the community. These occasions were also used to baptize new members of the community. In 1593, during the feast of Our Lady of Snow, the Jesuits baptized 100 people at the Church in Tuticorin, they also report the baptism of 800 people in other parts of the region<sup>47</sup>. The feasts were high points in the Christian calendar of the Paravas. The high profile participation of the *patangatins* in their new capacities (different from being Hindus to now being Christians) as upholders of the communities social traditions represent the integration of the existing social hierarchy into the newly

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<sup>44</sup> The Pattangattis were caste notables or caste heads of the villages.

<sup>45</sup> Susan Bayly, p. 342.

<sup>46</sup> Joseph Wicki, *Documenta Indica*, (Rome, 1984). (Introduction to Vol. 16).

<sup>47</sup> Joseph Wicki, *Documenta Indica*, (Rome, 1984). Vol. 16, p. 56.

formed Christian system. The festivals and the baptisms represent the attempt to create a new form of legitimacy that binds the larger community and to also consolidate the legitimacy and influence of the Catholic Church within the socio-political structure of the community.

At an administrative level the *patangatins*, participated in the administration of justice by appointing senior and respected members of the community in each village as judges. These were chosen in the presence of the Portuguese captain<sup>48</sup>. This combination of political and administrative authority to the heads of the community combined with the religious legitimacy that they received from the Catholic Church helped consolidate this new relationship between the Church and the dominant sections of the Parava community. This relationship while helping the *patangatins* to retain their traditional authority over the community also provided the Catholic Church and the Jesuits with an important role in influencing the daily life of the community.

The Catholic Church and the Jesuits further entrenched themselves in the lives of the Parava community after the opening of hospitals and schools for the community. A hospital was established at Punicale in 1561. It was maintained on funds provided and donated by the members

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<sup>48</sup> V. Perinola (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1505-1565, Vol. I, A. Anriques to J. Lainez (General)*, December 1561, No 152.

of the community<sup>49</sup>. The expenses of the hospital that were met by the contribution of the Christian community covered the expenses of maintaining the sick<sup>50</sup>, the salary of the professional nurses and other servants employed in the hospital<sup>51</sup>. By 1594, the Jesuits had opened two more hospitals one at Tuticorin and at Punicale, the local Christians also maintained these hospitals<sup>52</sup>. The Jesuits also maintained elementary schools teaching reading, writing, Latin and moral theology<sup>53</sup>. Separate spiritual education was conducted for the girls in the villages, who were instructed in Catholic Catechism. These schools were also paid for and maintained by the contributions of the community<sup>54</sup>. Apart from this special instructions were provided for 'the senior and pious members of the community' who were given special classes in religion<sup>55</sup>.

In 1593-1598, there were approximately seventeen Jesuit Fathers (the numbers Jesuits varied between sixteen in 1596 to nineteen in

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<sup>49</sup> V. Perinola (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1505-1565, Vol. I, A*, Anrriques to J. Lainez (General), December 1561, No 152.

<sup>50</sup> V. Perinola (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1505-1565, Vol. I, A*, Anrriques to J. Lainez, Mannar, December 29-30, 1562, No 155. The poor members of the community were provided free medical felicities at these hospitals for which the community made special contributions.

<sup>51</sup> V. Perinola (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1566-1619, Vol. 2*, Revenues and Payments in Mannar, December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1582, No 45. These statistics of the expenditures met by the hospital at Mannar in 1582 serve as an illustration of the nature of expenses that were met in the hospital. There are frequent references in the Jesuit letters on the economic strength of the Parava community and its ability to pay for and maintain the Church and its activities in the region.

<sup>52</sup> Fr. Wicki, (ed) *Documenta Indica*, Rome, 1984, Vol. 16. p. 56.

<sup>53</sup> Fr. Wicki, (ed) *Documenta Indica*, Vol. 18. Rome: 1984 in Jesuit Annual Letter, 1596-1597, No 46.

<sup>54</sup> V. Perinola (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1566-1619, Vol. 2*, Revenues and Payments in Mannar, December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1582, No 45.

<sup>55</sup> V. Perniola, *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1566 -1619, Volume 2. A*. Valignano, S.J., (Summary of Report on India), Malacca, November 22- Dec 8, 1577, No 34.

1594) on the Fisheries Coast maintaining 18 churches 2 of which were in the interiors. Among the Jesuits along the Fisheries Coast six resided at Tuticorin, the headquarters and around eleven to thirteen Jesuits served in the six smaller residences along the Fisheries Coast and Mannar<sup>56</sup>. Through their establishment and active participation in the lives of the Parava community the Jesuits in the region ensured a dominant role for themselves in the lives of the community and in role in the future political changes that the community had to encounter.

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<sup>56</sup> Fr. Wicki, (ed) *Documenta Indica*, Rome, 1984, Vol. 16. p. 56.

<sup>57</sup> William V. Bangert, p., 32.



***The Society of Jesus  
On the Fisheries Coast:  
Its Organisation  
1552-1600***

**Chapter III:**

- 3.1.** Introductory
- 3.2.** A Need for Jesuit Fathers
- 3.3.** Recruitment and the Problems of the Christian Community in the East
- 3.4.** European Rivalry
- 3.5.** Non Ecclesiastical Activities: Commerce and Corruption?

The Society of Jesus through the 16<sup>th</sup> century came to symbolize power and prestige within the Catholic establishment. There were in 1580 five thousand Jesuits serving the Order at its Missions across the world<sup>1</sup>. The close association of the order with the ruling establishments and its role in the Catholic Church Missions especially those overseas provided the Jesuits with the recognition, influence and ecclesiastical authority that attracted a many European Catholics.

The Indian province (excluding the Jesuits in China and Japan) comprised three hundred and twenty seven members in 1593<sup>2</sup>. Of the

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<sup>1</sup> William. V. Bangert, *History of the Society of Jesus*, St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1989. p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Wicki, (ed), *Documenta Indica, Volume 16*. Rome, 1984, p.1.

Jesuits in the province there were one hundred and thirty eight priests, seventy-nine scholastics, ninety-two *coadjutor*<sup>3</sup> brothers and twenty-seven novices<sup>4</sup>. The Society in India included nine 'large' houses<sup>5</sup>. Between 1588-1594, there were twenty-six members dismissed from the Order, while forty-one, died due to various reasons<sup>6</sup>.

The Coromandel during the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century assumed importance within the Catholic establishment in India. The Portuguese did not maintain a dominant political presence in the Coromandel. This provided the Church with an opportunity to play a more active role in the political and commercial developments of the region. Of the nine large Jesuit Houses in the Indian province, the House of St. John at Sao Tome and Our Lady of Snow at Tuticorin were situated along the southern Coromandel Coast. The House of St. John at Sao Tome, assumed importance on account of it being a sacred pilgrimage site for the Catholic Church<sup>7</sup>. The Jesuit establishment here comprised of three Fathers in 1595 and of the eight Jesuits in the settlement in 1597 there

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<sup>3</sup> The coadjutor brothers were lay brothers who helped the priests in the work of the apostolate, V.Pironela (ed) *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese period, 1566-1619*, Vol 2, p.77.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Wicki, (ed), *Documenta Indica, Volume 16*. Rome, 1984, p.1.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Wicki, (ed), *Documenta Indica, Volume 16*. Rome, 1984, p.2.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Wicki, (ed), *Documenta Indica, Volume 16*. Rome, 1984, p.3.

<sup>7</sup> Sao Tome was regarded as the city where the remains of St.Thomas are to be found. The Catholic Church through the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries established at least 6 churches in the city important among them were those of St. Lazarus, Our Mother of Rosary, The Luz Church and the Santhome Church (which housed the remains of the saint). As a consequence of this being a sacred settlement for the Catholic Church there were other Catholic missionary orders like the Dominicans and the Franciscans in the settlement.

were five Fathers and three Brothers<sup>8</sup>. Between 1592 and 1594, in the second Jesuit House, of Our Lady of Snow four Jesuits, of whom there were three Fathers and one Brother<sup>9</sup>. The activities of this Jesuit center were focused on the local Catholic community. The community by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century numbered forty five thousand Christians (mostly Paravas and Mukkuvars and other low ranking fishing and laboring people) scattered along the Fisheries Coast<sup>10</sup>. By the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Jesuit establishment in the south Coromandel was expanding and establishing itself in its own right as different from the already established center at Goa.

In 1596, owing to the growing activities and the demographic spread of the Christian community there were now thirteen Jesuits working in this region of who three were based at Mannar, and ten working along the coast (of who three would have been based in the House of St. John). In 1597 the Jesuit seminary at Tuticorin<sup>11</sup> began ordaining priests from the region<sup>12</sup>, this seminary was the first of its kind outside those at Bassein, Goa and Cochin (all on the western coast of India).

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<sup>8</sup> Joseph Wicki, (ed), *Documenta Indica, Volume 16*. Rome, 1984, p.1.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Wicki, (ed), *Documenta Indica, Volume 16*. Rome, 1984, p.17

<sup>10</sup> Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 380.

<sup>11</sup> This seminary would have been the first of its kind along the eastern seas of the Indian coast. It was the first in the Bay of Bengal apart from the seminaries at Goa, Bassein and Cochin, which were all on the Arabian Sea.

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Wicki, (ed), *Documenta Indica, Volume 16*. Rome, 1984 p.17

In the Coromandel, the Jesuit interaction with local groups provided it with a role in the political developments and in the daily life of the Parava community. The Jesuit interaction with the Christian and non-Christian communities is reflected in the internal problems and disagreements within the organisation in the Coromandel. A brief survey of these problems and disagreements within the Jesuit Organisation along the Fisheries Coast is essential in providing a broader understanding of their activities in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century.

These problems indicate the individual perception of what the Jesuits perceived to be their objectives while interacting with the local communities. It also echoes of the Jesuit involvement with Portuguese society, reflecting their European roots and lifestyle in India. The issues of debate within the Indian province of the Society especially those on the Coromandel (which later came to form part of the Malabar province) could be studied under two wide themes. One, relating to the nature and character of the missionaries and their interest in the ecclesiastical affairs, and the non-ecclesiastical needs of the Catholic Church. The second is related to the tensions among the various European nationalities serving under the banner of the Society, and the resultant problem within the Jesuit hierarchy in the region.

### **3.2. A Need for Jesuit Fathers:**

The Society of Jesus like most Christian missionary orders in the East faced the problem of a shortage of missionaries. It also had to simultaneously address the problem of members who 'strayed away' from their dedication to the Mission. In 1593, the Society of Jesus in its southern Missions that included the Fisheries Coast, Sao Tome, Mannar and the Malbar Coast had 21 resident Jesuits (18 priests and 3 brothers). Of these 11 Fathers, were stationed on the Fisheries Coast with 2 *Coadjutores*, 4 Fathers in Malbar and in Sao Tome, 3 Fathers and 1 Brother<sup>13</sup>.

Jesuit like Fr. Juan de Salanova, in their a letters to the Jesuit General (1592), refer to the problem of a shortage of missionaries. He in his letter requested for the appointment of Jesuits with the caliber to sustain and maintain the standards of work set by those who preceded them.

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<sup>13</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 53. The Annual Letter of the Province of India by Fr. Francisco Cabaral S.J., Provincial, Goa, November, 15<sup>th</sup>, 1593.

...There is a large absence here among these groups of Christians of workers of caliber; last year there had not occurred a shortage of priests...this year more particularly is being felt this lack [a lack of priests] and it is enough to consider how few have confessed this year [.] In a particular year of celebration due to the absence of workers in comparison with the many more that in previous years on the occasion of the celebration would confess themselves. The set necessity reached such levels that I have myself been left alone in a place where on the similar occasions in previous years there were 4 or 5 priests here in confession<sup>14</sup>.

Having just 11 priests in the region put tremendous pressure on the activities of the Society. The Jesuits on the coast also bore the responsibility of having to address the religious requirements of the Portuguese settlements in the region<sup>15</sup>. This problem that the Society confounded in the last decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was not new. Similar

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<sup>14</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, Rome: 1984, Letter No, 7. Fr. Juan de Salanova s.j. to Fr. CL. Acquaviva S.J., General, Punnaikayal, December 16, 1592.

<sup>15</sup> The important Portuguese settlements in the region included the settlements at the commercial centres of Nagapattinam, Porto Novo, Sao Tome, Tuticorin and Mannar. The settlements at Nagapattinam and later Porto Novo included a large number of Portuguese private traders while those at Mannar and Tuticorin would have consisted of a few Portuguese soldiers and their families. Mannar in 1580, was residence to about 40 to 50 Portuguese families this is mentioned in the annual letter of Fr. Valignano in V.Perinola (ed) *Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese period, 1566-1619, Vol. 2*. Fr. A. Valignano, S.J., (Summary of Annual Report), Shimo (Japan), August 1580, No 39.

problems were mentioned in the past. The wide geographical expanse that the Jesuits Missions were required to operate in intensified this problem.

In 1566, there were eight Jesuits (six Fathers and three brothers) who addressed the requirements of twenty-five to twenty-six Churches through the Fisheries Coast <sup>16</sup>. These churches would have stretched across more than 20 to 30 Parava localities stretching from Vambar (near Rameshwaram) to Kanyakumari<sup>17</sup>. During his visitation to the Fisheries Coast the Jesuit Visitor Fr. A. Valignano, S.J., assigned fifteen fathers to the Fisheries Coast, but this did not materialize.

In 1592, Fr. Nuno Rodrigues, S.J., Superior of the Fisheries Coast was compelled to stay along the coast due to a lack of priests.

2<sup>18</sup>. Most of this year I have kept my residence in this coast of Fishery being incharge of those associated with the Society, and consequently what can be repeated about it is what I have been

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<sup>16</sup> This was the number of churches mentioned by Fr. A. Valignano, S.J., in his Annual Report, in 1577. V.Perinola (ed) *Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese period, 1566-1619, Vol. 2*. Fr. A. Valignano, S.J., (Summary of Annual Report), Malacca, November 22 – December 8, 1577, No 34.

<sup>17</sup> Susan Bayley refers to the figure of 20 to 30 Parava localities as being the number during the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This would only be an approximate figure as the number of villages would have increased or been abandoned during the course of the century.

<sup>18</sup> Paragraph number in the original Jesuit letter.

repeating again and again to you V.P. and that is that in all these areas is a deficit of workers [.] This is one of the reasons for a large part of this community not being heard in confession except in moments of extreme necessity [.] What is a great distress and pain [to us] when we consider the good wishes this position and good nature shown by all, because it is true that this is the better and more faithful among the Christians who inhabit the area.<sup>19</sup>

The problem of a lack of priests was complicated with there being sent to the coast Jesuits not interested in working there. It was argued that many of the younger members sent to the Fisheries Coast were not keen to involve themselves in the activities of the Society in the region. There was a resistance among them in learning the language of the region. But this was not a result of them being disinterested in the cause of the Mission in the East. Instead, the problem was embedded in the larger issue of promotion and transferees within the Jesuit Order. The young Jesuits feared that if they learned the local language they would be 'condemned' to always live amongst the local Christian community. This would deprive them any hope of dealing with the Portuguese or

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<sup>19</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 9. Fr. Nuno Rodrigues S.J., Superior, to Fr. CL. Acquaviva, S.J., General, Fishery Coast, December 20, 1592.



going to Japan<sup>20</sup>. Though this can convincingly address and answer only part of the issue, it brings to light the organizational problems within the society in the East. The shortage of priests required the Jesuits to stay longer at each appointment enabling them to get accustomed to the place and with the experience of being in the region that they came to be the best the Society could provide for the region. Making the Jesuit in such circumstances to be appointed a permanent member of the Jesuit Mission in the region.

At the same time this issue of appointments was used by the Jesuit Superiors to assert their voice in the appointments of the Jesuits. They complained that they were not consulted on the requirements of their particular Mission. Nor were the appointees asked as to their preference for the area or mission they were sent to.

2. I have asked Fr. Nuno Rodriguez, that at the time of sending these fathers, if Fr. Provincial would consult those who were being sent to these areas. He replied in the negative and adding that if such consultations had taken place he would not have sent those sent. V.P. would inquire if would be of

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<sup>20</sup> V.Perinola (ed) *Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese period, 1566-1619, Vol. 2*. Fr. A. Valignano, S.J., to Fr. E. Mercurian, S.J., Goa-Cochin, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1575, No 26.

interest to consider this because here the practice is that we receive those sent by the provincials according to their decision. Consequently with the visit of Padre Nuno Rodriguez this situation was examined in the coast and we are happier than before his visit....<sup>21</sup>.

The cause of the younger Jesuits along the Coast was taken by senior members of the Society who expressed sympathy with them in their letters to the General at Rome. It was important to those incharge of the Jesuit organisation at the local level that those appointed to their regions were not hostile to the sacrifice required of them. In their letters to the Father General they highlighted the need for being more responsive to the opinions of the new young members of the Society. The letter of Fr. Francisco Duarao, S.J to the Fr. General is an example of the defense that the senior members of the Society in the region took in the cause of their junior brethren. Fr. Duarao, in his letter mentions to the General that Fr. Cataneo<sup>22</sup>, the outgoing Superior of the Fisheries Coast was a young but promising Jesuit. He further adds that with experience he could serve the Society well in the years ahead.

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<sup>21</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 5. Fr. Francisco Duarao S.J. to Fr.CL. Acquaviva S.J., General, Fishery Coast, December 6, 1592, no 5,

<sup>22</sup> Fr. Cataneo, was among the new appointees in the Coromandel. Being young and inexperienced he was ineffective as a Superior. He was transferred to Cochin and was awaiting Orders to return to the House at Goa.

Fr. Nuno Rodrigues<sup>23</sup>, S.J the new Superior in the Fisheries Coast replacing Fr. Lazario Cataneo, S.J. mentions in his letter to the General, the immediate problems that he faced on taking up his new appointment. On taking charge he was required to take disciplinary action against a few Jesuits in the Fisheries Coast to the extent of expelling some of them.

3. One of the most important measures I have faced, was to give conclusion to a measure initiated by the previous Provincial who favored expulsion from here 3 subjects who had been sent here without the consultation of the Superiors [.] Except if those sent here were among the less qualified and those in young age that were at the time serving in the college and beside this they have come and continue [to] live here much against their wish what is without an unbiased speculation much against their wish what was taking place and that was they had been expelled from the order especially 2 of them that have confronted it and what is worse is that I already possess a letter of the V.P. instructing that they would be expelled without further consultation, all these matters have led me to expel them from the coast<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> The appointment of Fr. Nuno Rodrigues to the fisheries Coast involved the politics within the Jesuit hierarchy in its Indian Province. Fr. Rodrigues along with Fr. Cabaral was regarded as a prominent critic of the then Provincial, Fr. Pedro Martins, s.j.. He was immediately transferred to the Fisheries Coast when Fr. Pedro Martinis took office.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 9. Fr. Nuno Rodrigues, S.J. Superior, to Fr. CL. Acquaviva, S.J., General, Fishery Coast, December 20, 1592.

At the same time the Jesuits made an attempt to reform the working of the Society in the region. The letters to the Fr. General reflect the need voiced by those in senior advisory positions within the Society to ask for changes in the style of functioning in the region. Fr. Francisco Durao S.J. (Consultor), in his letter to Fr. Acquaviva has pointed out that the problem lay in the reluctance and refusal of the younger Jesuits to learn Tamil the language of the people. This would have had an impact on the larger process of Jesuit interaction in the region. The importance of this interaction was that it was also not restricted to local Christian communities involving matters of faith but also included interaction with local ruling groups in the region.

There were thirty thousand Christians and only nine Jesuit Fathers who could speak the language, and three had a base knowledge<sup>25</sup>. It was a problem that needed to be addressed immediately. The success of the Jesuit Mission in the region relied on them being able to use their knowledge of the local language while maintaining the Catholic doctrine. The importance of using Tamil as seen by Francis Xavier and his insistence of translating the creeds and catechism lessons into the local

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<sup>25</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 68. Fr. Francisco Durao, S.J., (Consultor) to Fr. CL. Acquaviva, S.J., General, Tuticorin, November 29, 1593.

language marked the beginning of this Jesuit enterprise in the region. Thus the need to maintain a body of Jesuits who could understand the language and manage the Church across the Fisheries Coast was critical to the survival of the Catholic Church in the region.

4. All this is the result of being sent to these areas persons that have not been trained in the spirit of sacrifice and have not the experience of the sort of work they have to confront in these areas. They are young men in their early age and without experience. Their Superiors [those who worked in these regions before them] have learnt the language of the land<sup>26</sup> but do not give much care to these may God, that his blessings be addressed to these here and those who come in the future, because it is clearly seen that is being lost the high religious faith of those that in old days use to work in this area and were of great help to our lord; because they used to live in accordance with the spirit of the Society, and centered on a great preoccupation with the salvation of the souls and the wish to suffer for Christ.

5. In what concerns to learn the language the interest is being lost to those that have recently joined here. Those able to speak [Tamil] are only nine and more than 30,000 souls ask for bread, 3 or 4 Fathers have acquired the base knowledge may God be

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<sup>26</sup> Tamil.

progressed. It seems that as the superiors occupy their posts for many years that the nature of the dependents starts being less strong, particularly when the good knowledge is not very high. This is responsible for the progressive decay of the zealous lives shown in the old days by the children, sons of the Society may God that thanks to the sacrifice made and prayers and the care of the V.P would be possible to give new life to old principles within which the Society had lived<sup>27</sup>.

The letter also mentions another problem, that of the Superiors remaining in their posts for a long tenure. As a result of this they tended to be 'immune' to the organizational problems along the coast. This was viewed as being an indication of their reluctance to implement any changes to the working of the organisation in the region.

### ***3.3. Recruitment and the Problems of the Christian Community in the East:***

There was 'no real administration in India because the government of India with all its forts and other public offices is given as a reward and according to favour the persons enjoy in Portugal. The post is selected for

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<sup>27</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 68. Fr. Francisco Durao, S.J., (Consultor) to Fr. CL. Acquaviva, S.J., General, Tuticorin, November 29, 1593.

the person and not the person for the post<sup>28</sup>. The senior non-Portuguese Jesuit fathers felt frustrated with the working of the Estado da India. The delay in arrival and departure of the fleets and the fact the ships were not adequately guarded making them vulnerable and hence their transit being unpredictable worried the Senior Jesuits<sup>29</sup>. The corruption within the system further aggravated the problems. The impact of the corrupt and scandalous Portuguese society in India was felt through the Society of Jesus in the East.

The Jesuits who worked in India were appointed by the Provincial of Portugal and the Jesuit General at Rome<sup>30</sup>. The shortage of priests and the increasing requirements of the growing Christian communities compelled the Jesuit organisation to explore other alternatives. One such alternative was the recruitment of individuals interested in joining the order in India. But the Portuguese communities who refused to cooperate with the Jesuits who joined the Order in India hindered this move. The inadequate education of the Portuguese settled in India was sighted as

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<sup>28</sup> V.Perinola (ed) *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1566-1619, Vol. 2*. Fr. A. Valignano, S.J., to E. Rodrigues, S.J., Goa, December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1575, No 28.

<sup>29</sup> V.Perinola (ed) *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1566-1619, Vol. 2*. Fr. A. Valignano, S.J., to E. Rodrigues, S.J., Goa, December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1575, No 28.

<sup>30</sup> Fr. Wicki (ed). *Documenta Indica, 1592-1594, Vol. 16*, Rome 1984, p.47.

one of the reasons why such members should not be admitted<sup>31</sup>. It was a belief among sections of the Jesuit establishment in India that those admitted in India would suffer from the same vices as their fellow Portuguese living in the settlements. Thus these new recruits would be in no position to provide the required moral advice and guidance.

The Jesuit establishment at Rome attempt to pressurize its Indian province to admit Portuguese born in India, the Jesuit General Fr. Mercurian (1581) laid conditions for their admission into the Society<sup>32</sup>. But in spite of these orders from the higher authority in the Jesuit establishment there was a reluctance to admit the *Casticos* continued. The Visitor to the Indian Province, Fr. Valignano, S.J., expressed his support for these changes suggested by Rome, in order to tide over the problem of the shortage of priests India. The new Jesuit General in 1585, Fr. Acquaviva once again confirmed this drive to change and adapt when he authorized the admission into the Society of *Casticos* (Europeans born or raised in India)<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 17, 1595*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 31. Fr. A. Valignano, S.J., (Visitor of Japan) to Fr. CL. Acquaviva, S.J., (General), Goa November 17, 1595.

<sup>32</sup> Fr. Wicki (ed). *Documenta Indica, 1592-1594, Vol. 16*, Rome 1984, p.25.

<sup>33</sup> Fr. John Correia-Afonso, S.J. (ed.), *The Jesuits in India, 1542-1773*, Bombay: Heras Institute of Indian Culture; 1997, p.68.



The intensity of the resistance that seems to have been expressed by the members of the Society and the Portuguese population seems to have succeeded in stalling this attempt by Rome. In 1595 the Visitor, Fr. Valignano, S.J., in the face of this resistance adopted a stance contrary to that taken by him in 1585 and before, when he now in 1595 highlighted the problem of the *Casticos* being recognized within the Order and in Indian society.

9. The fourth point that I have touched upon in my last letter regards the lack of union that is maintained...among the Portuguese that have professed in India and those that have done so in Portugal. And with reference to those that are identified as professed in India, in this way we are referring more particularly to those called children of India, which are those born here, between this and those they are truly Portuguese born in Portugal neither by surprise the lack of union exists, neither for it there is another solution than what the V.P and that have been conformed by V.P in article 27 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian congregation. I repeat that I am not surprised that this poor union exists because the truth is that usually is very weak people in what concern their body and soul and that the Portuguese have for them low regard. Even when they are not in the order in this way it is a proverb with circulation among the Portuguese the sons of India are not worth anything and for this reason they do not allow in any way their marriage

with their daughters and even the daughters of Indians do not wish to get married to them because for them they are only when married to Portuguese and as the student of India have distinct characteristics which do not favour the religion, they need continuously being mistrusted when it occur they are professed in India and I would say that there would be no solution than to receive non or very few of them.

15. But these difference start being manifested after having arrived so many brothers, who were students and young men born in Portugal, because it is true India is not land for students and those received here for studying are soldiers or attendants (Pajens) of horsemen, they are totally ignorant and that are not of good level of education when received in the order or prepared to get the benefit of the knowledge so quickly as in the case of those that have initiate their studies in Portuguese having been in the University of Evora and Coimbra among others, and this inspite of the Society to receive only those having better knowledge and having being carefully selected and from this it could be concluded that coming from Portugal to this College of Goa so many brothers who are students, it seems that having placed in a secondary position some of those that have been selected in India and consequently each one looks for the company of those with which they are better acquainted as they are grown up together in '*Noviciado*' and in Colleges and another fact that contributes

although not intentionally in the situation that the superiors usually show preference to the students from Portugal giving them preference than they show to those entering in India, feeling the difference the latter better try to strengthen their position coming together...<sup>34</sup>

Fr. Valignano's perception of the Christian society in India (1580) reflected his experience with the Portuguese society in India. He classified the Christian community in India under the following sections. First, the European born Portuguese, *Reinol*, second, Portuguese born in India of pure European percentage, thirdly those born of a European father and a Eurasian mother, *Casticos*, fourthly the half breeds or *Mesticos*, fifthly the indigenous purebred Indians and those with hardly a drop of European blood in their veins<sup>35</sup>. C.R. Boxer points out that Fr. Valignano regarded the 'pure bred' as being unsuitable for admission into the Society. This because 'these dusky races are very stupid and viscous, and of the basest spirits, and likewise because the Portuguese treat them with the greatest contempt, and even among the inhabitants of the country they are little esteemed in comparison with the

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<sup>34</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 17, 1595*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 31. Fr. A. Valignano, S.J., (Visitor of Japan) to Fr. CL. Acquaviva, S.J., (General), Goa November 17, 1595.

<sup>35</sup> C.R. Boxer, *Race Relations in the Portuguese Colonial Empire, 1415-1825*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963, p.62.

Portuguese'. The *Reinol*, on the other hand were mostly illiterate pages or soldiers who would have to be taught to read and write during their Novitiate. Those born in India on the other hand were viscous, weak, and idle, being brought up by slave women in every kind of vice<sup>36</sup>.

.... Using the sermons in the Churches (that I used to deliver in the College and otherwise) in the context of the visit and as the brothers truly speaking are well prepared for virtues in their matter a poor importance used to be given and they easily correct themselves and the reasons for the implication off this lack of union was abundant I must also add that, being India not a land of studies and the Portuguese that come here have their activities in different other fields. They are very few and also know little where they could make any contribution to improve things. And as they hardly know anything when they joined and learnt to write quite well when they are in the early stages of their studies (Noveciona). They start improving their knowledge much slower than those coming from Portugal, this reason must not be taken as a barrier for those that our Lord has called to serve him<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> C.R. Boxer, *Race Relations in the Portuguese Colonial Empire, 1415-1825*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963, p.62-63.

<sup>37</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 17, 1595*, Rome: 1984, Letter No. 31. Fr. A. Valignano, S.J., (Visitor of Japan) to Fr. CL. Acquaviva, S.J., (General), Goa, November 17, 1595, no.31.

Fr. Valignano's alternative suggestion to the problems that he saw in India was in the Society sending students interested in joining the Order in Portugal to the Professed House at Goa for training and to eventually admit them into the Order in the East. Incidentally, those referred to by Valignano were originally denied admission into the Society of Jesus in Europe for lack of capacity at their various colleges and institutes. The Visitor in turn suggested that as part of the training process the students from Europe, who would be admitted at the collage in Goa, first help in the classes before being appointed to the various Missions<sup>38</sup>. But the differences in the opinion between the establishments in Europe and the east are evident. The shortage of priests was a problem that the administrative hierarchy of the Society wanted to resolve as soon as they could.

Irrespective of all their attempts the Jesuits found themselves drawn into a problem caused by the deep divisions within Portuguese society in India. Though the Jesuits could speak of their dedication to the Mission in these lands they continued to

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<sup>38</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 17, 1595*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 31. Fr. A. Valignano, S.J., (Visitor of Japan) to Fr. CL. Acquaviva, S.J., (General), Goa, November 17, 1595.

display of a level prejudice and reluctance to change and adapt to the requirements demanded by the circumstances.

### **3.4. European Rivalry:**

The presence of non-Portuguese within the assistancy became a source, of frequent complaint by the Portuguese Jesuits and by royal officials, especially during the Generalate of Fr. Everard Mercurian<sup>39</sup>. This problem within the Society in India had a bearing on the perspective and the future mission of the Jesuits. In Portugal the most delicate problem that the Jesuits faced arose from the union of the Spanish and Portuguese crowns in 1580. The union of the two crowns was a result of there being no successor to the Portuguese throne after the fateful defeat and demise of the Portuguese ruler King Sabastian, after the Morocco debacle in 1578. The Jesuits in Portugal who were dominant within the court were blamed as being responsible for this debacle. Consequently after the union of the two crowns the Portuguese Jesuits lost the hold that they maintained over the levers of power in Portugal. They could only hold to their 'Old Glory' and power in the Portuguese overseas

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<sup>39</sup> Dauril,Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, its Empire and Beyond, 1540-1750*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996, p.268.

establishment as in the Estado da India. In an attempt to keep their patriotism from breaking out into a defiance of the conqueror, the Superiors had to maintain constant vigilance. Though successful to an extent, they suffered their moments of embarrassment<sup>40</sup>.

This struggle in Europe found reflection in the power struggles within the Jesuit organisation in India. The attempts to change the working of the Society in the East were hampered by such rivalries within the organisation. While there was a need for more Fathers to man the Missions of the Indian province, the attitude of the Portuguese Jesuits did not permit any concrete implementation of reform and change. Among the Portuguese there was a belief that the loyalty of non-Portuguese Jesuits would lie in the lands of their birth and not with the Portuguese crown. This especially in light of the conflicts in Europe where the Spanish and Portuguese Jesuits expressed support for their respective crowns during the disputes of last decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The fear of the Portuguese Jesuits in the East is understood better when the statistics of the number of Jesuits being sent from Europe to the various Missions are examined. Of the Jesuits sent out of Europe, the Spaniards accounted for nearly two thirds of the non-Portuguese

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<sup>40</sup> William.V. Bangert, *The History of the Society of Jesus*, St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1989, p.119.

sent to Brazil and India<sup>41</sup>. These new appointments represent a phase of change that the Society attempted to foster on its lower organization in the Portuguese dominated centers. It was an attempt to change the Portuguese-centric attitude that at times caused an undesirable impact on the activities of the Church. The need to expand the mission and establish an independent identity for the Catholic Church was a pressing requirement that preceded the developments of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1592, the appointment of Fr. Jeronimo Xavier, S.J.<sup>42</sup>, a Spaniard, as Provost of the Professed House<sup>43</sup> was opposed by the Portuguese Jesuits<sup>44</sup>. In addition to these protests were objections against the Visitor to India, Fr. Valignano, S.J., accusing him of influencing the appointment of Xavier as Provost<sup>45</sup>. This reaction was an indication of the attitude of the Portuguese Jesuits who were interested in maintaining their dominance over the Indian province. In his letter to the General, Fr. Valignano dismissed his detractors by claiming that this was a natural reaction to their insecurity<sup>46</sup>. But the fear that these problems (between the Portuguese and Spaniards) could spread to other

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<sup>41</sup> Dauril Alden, p 267.

<sup>42</sup> He was the nephew of St. Francis Xavier.

<sup>43</sup> By being appointed the Provost of the Professed House he was entitled to become the caretaker Provincial, in the absence of the Provincial when he may be on a visitation around the Province.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 58. Fr. Nuno Rodrigues, S.J, to Fr. General, Goa, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1593.

<sup>45</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 50. Fr. Valignano S.J, (Visitor) to Fr. General, Macao, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1593.

<sup>46</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 17, 1595*, Rome: 1984, Letter No. 32. Fr. Valignano, S.J., to Fr. CL. Acquaviva, S.J., Goa, November 18, 1595.



nationalities led to the Jesuit establishment to give in to the demands of the Portuguese.

4. Also as in previous opportunities I have written to the VP. It seems to me that they (the Portuguese) have all the reason, as this conquest of India has been performed by the Portuguese and they with their blood and sacrifice of a large number of their own and with large expenditure and work have subdued it and conserve it up to now, on the basis of these factors it is normal that they should enjoy also the fruit that is a result from their own work and that in the same way as the seculars have control of the temple in India also among us (Jesuits) it would to give preference to the Portuguese in the administration with reference to other nationals, more particularly in the schools and houses maintained by the Portuguese in the conquest and preservation of India, the reason is showing that the places belong by right to their own naturals and besides that the positions occupied by ours also belong to the Portuguese, they rule better and succeeded in getting more fruits that other foreign nationals<sup>47</sup>.

There existed among the Jesuits in India sympathy and

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<sup>47</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 17, 1595*, Rome: 1984, Letter No. 32. Fr. Valignano, S.J., to Fr. CL. Acquaviva, S.J., Goa, November 18, 1595.

overwhelming opinion in favour of the appointment of Portuguese nationals on the grounds that the Portuguese were a majority in the Indian province. In addition to the problems caused by the Jesuits within the Order the officials of the Estado notably the Viceroys shared the hostility against the non-Portuguese. Eventually in 1594, the Provincial congregation removed Fr. Jeronimo Xavier from his post as Provost of the Professed House and appointed leader of the third mission to the court of the Mughal Emperor Akbar<sup>48</sup>.

Seeing the need to introduce change and possibly provide a fresh perspective to missionary activities in the region the General, Fr. Acquaviva, argued in favour of the appointment of Italian and Spanish Jesuits. He reminded the new Visitor to the East, of the need to ensure the proper running of the Missions and to ensure that the Jesuits worked in accordance to the ideals of the Society. He reminded them of their mission to convert the heathen and that the existing tensions within the Order should be avoided.

6. Being the province of India as well as the remaining beyond the sea adjacent of their priests and being necessarily to be sent from

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<sup>48</sup> Fr. Jeronimo Xavier, S.J., later became the first European to write a detailed account of the society and polity of Kashmir, during the Mughal's stay in Srinagar.

others (other nations) as the Portuguese have already so many obligations, and to comply with those of Brazil, it must be stressed the need to help the Indian province with priests originating from Spain and Italy, as has been a practice sending from there the best elements, with loss for colleges from which they are transferred, suffering this fact as an aspect that the Company [The Society of Jesus] and its institution has. Thus the importance that the VR deals with this matter with much efficiency in order to remove the bad behaviour and the spirit of less charity [..], that in the recent times has been identified here and there in which a few deal with and speak bad of foreigners that come to help in the salvation of the souls for the Master; it must also be kept in mind that this can lead to the ruin of the Province considering that where there is no charity and Union must not be expected any good from our effort and also because this is an event of large importance and which so many negative aspects can originate, and that those involved would not have not amended themselves, its clear to the VR the sort of negative complications that can originate from the Company, and also in the context of the Constitutions para. 2/8 Ch. II. I refer to what can be of help in the maintenance of Union<sup>49</sup>. It is not convenient that foreigners be

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<sup>49</sup> Fr. General is referring to discipline within the organisation of the Society. The second chapter of the constitutions deals with "Some cases about which a candidate to the Society should be questioned". The constitution states here in section 2. That in case of a candidate becoming infamous in distant lands and incase he "has completely brought himself back to the divine service the infamy will not exclude him from the Society". But that extreme care should be taken in such cases. (The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus, (trans.) George E. Ganss, S.J., St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970, p 86.

treated with love and that they must not be excluded for the above reasons only for the reason that they are foreigners as there is no law that contemplates their exclusion and effectively all of them are in the Union of the Company this Union should not suffer with their exclusion that in practice that are so frequently found<sup>50</sup>.

In 1589 Fr. Acquaviva instructed the Provincial inspector to punish any Jesuit in the Province who effected nationalistic sentiment<sup>51</sup>. In the Indian Province inspite of attempts by senior Jesuit's like Fr. Valignano to hold the Society together through this crisis. They continued to be criticized by Portuguese Jesuits. His attempts to assert his authority in light of these disagreements were seen as an attempt by the non-Portuguese to check the dominance of the Portuguese Jesuits. In spite of his attempts to pacify the Portuguese Jesuits by agreeing to accommodate their prejudices (as with the admission of the *Casticos*), Fr. Valignano continued to be looked at with suspicion. The Society had to sustain itself and shape its future in India with the continuance of these prejudices. The Visitor of the Indian Province, Fr. Valignano was eventually transferred as the Visitor to the Vice Province of Japan, in 1595.

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<sup>50</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 17, 1595*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 36. Fr. CL. Acquaviva, S.J., Instructions to the Visitor to the East, Rome, November 21, 1595.

<sup>51</sup> Dauril Alden, p, 92.

The attitude of Rome towards the solutions that it considered, essential for the Indian Province continued to be the same. Fr. Acquaviva in his letter to the new Visitor of the Indian Province (Fr. Pimental, S.J.) continued to insist on the need for adjustments and accommodation within the existing hierarchy of the Society of Jesus in India. He made an attempt to address the problem of the Portuguese society from within and his strictures attempt to enforce discipline.

8. We are informed that among us our Portuguese brothers [Hermanos] community there exists some sort of lack of union, what contributes to create a basis to advance of religious virtues and fraternal charity that the Company asks from us and also in certain other opportunities it has been remarked between those born there [India] and here in Portugal does not exist. A good closeness of opinions as would have been most wished, and inspite of the necessary advice now we have been informed that their bad development is expanding itself to include those born in Portugal but received in India into the order, being ones despised by the others equating those born here and those born there as being the same and despite the fact that we do not believe the events have gained dimension as reported to us, I can not stop regretting what occurs due to the great effect on us, that VR your reverence knows are born from the sort of the ways of think and opinions in the context religious facts send because in the

subjects of the lack of union, there are anything that must not be confronted or left without considered non important even if it is of apparent small importance, as with the passing of the time they usually become bigger and more serious, it seems to us more important to require your reverence with all your power do the best to uproot this bad grains and bad presumption, because the reason justifies and asks for that those that join us would enjoy larger natural and sub natural leanings (situation that can exist and be accepted among those that are seculars) among us the role must be to be friend, to obey and to serve the others with all our religious base and charity. And consequently your reverence can see what must be done to precipitate these bad trends while they are still small, we do not offer you any remedy, and look for the instructions that would come to curtail the bad connotations of this subject of Union and fraternal charity, what has been promised to us after the divine goodness, the good sense of your reverence and the natural goodness and virtue that once they have understood their mistakes they will be in a better position to correct them<sup>52</sup>.

In 1596, as a consequence of the changes being attempted in Rome, of the nineteen Jesuit missionaries who sailed east<sup>53</sup>, six were

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<sup>52</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 17, 1595*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 36. Fr. CL. Acquaviva, S.J., Instructions to the Visitor to the East, Rome, November 21, 1595.

<sup>53</sup> Fourteen sailed in 1581, thirteen in 1583, twelve in 1585, fifteen in 1592, seventeen in 1597, twenty in 1599, twenty-four in 1609. (William.V. Bangert, p.149.)

Italian, five Spaniards, and eight were Portuguese. The determination of Rome to push through reforms within the Jesuit establishment in India eventually led to a dispute between the Italian and Portuguese Jesuits. It could be argued that the first signs of the intensifying problems were seen in the discontent against the Visitor of India (1574-1595)<sup>54</sup>. Fr. Valignano, the Visitor in question and an Italian by birth was eventually transferred as the Visitor to the Vice Province of Japan after serving as Visitor to the Indian Province for almost twenty two years.. This created a peculiar situation where for the first time in the history of the Society of Jesus there were two Visitors within the same province reflecting the intensity of this problem.

Another development within the Indian chapter of the Society of Jesus was the establishment of the Malbar Province. This was a long-standing demand that was only discussed at the Provincial Congregations. The issue was referred to Rome in 1599. It was eventually made a Vice Province in 1601, and a full-fledged Province in 1605<sup>55</sup>. The Malbar Province of the Society of Jesus included the territory extending from Calicut along the west coast through the whole of Southern India (the regions covering the modern states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu)

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<sup>54</sup> Fr. Valignano was also the longest serving Visitor in the Jesuit establishment.

<sup>55</sup> Correia-Afonso, John, s.j. (ed.), *The Jesuits in India, 1542-1773*, Bombay: Heras Institute of Indian Culture, 1997. p.110

extending northwards through the Coromandel coast finally including Bengal. The first Provincial Fr. Alberto Laerzio, S.J., an Italian brought along with him on his return from Rome a contingent of sixty one Jesuits to the east of whom thirty-one were Italians. The new appointments made by the new Provincial of the Malbar Province attracted much criticism from Portuguese Jesuits. He appointed a fellow Italian as Fr. Antonio Schipani, S.J., to the post of Rector of Cochin, Fr. Nicholas Spinola, S.J., as Superior of Quilon, and Fr. Levanto, as Superior of Sao Tome de Meliapor<sup>56</sup>. These new appointees being Italians symbolise the changes that were beginning to transform the Indian Chapter of the Society of Jesus. The appointment of Fr. Roberto de Nobili another Italian Jesuit to the Madura Mission is an indication of the Italian Jesuits attempting to maintain their presence across the important seats of activity in the Province. Their independence from Goa further strengthened their resolve to move ahead and chart a new course for the Society in India. The Malbar Province through this distanced itself effectively from the Portuguese authorities in Goa. It was now treated as a 'step brother' by the official establishments at Goa. The Malbar Province was forced to chart out its own future but under the constant vigilance of the Portuguese at Goa.

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<sup>56</sup> Dauril Alden, p269-270.



### ***3.5. Non Ecclesiastical Activities: Commerce and Corruption?***

The relationship between the Society of Jesus and the Portuguese establishment was essential to the survival of the Society in the east. The close association of both the Catholic and the Commercial establishments helped foster a more involved and intense cooperation between the two. There were complaints against the Superiors on the Coromandel who showed little concern for the Mission<sup>57</sup>. The laxity of discipline was manifested in the participation of senior Jesuits in the commercial activities. The happenings in the Coromandel were similar to the problems faced by the Society in Europe. Increased participation in political affairs diverted them from their original mission. The identity of a “Portuguese Catholic” that was created as a result of this close relationship between the Church and the Estado came into sharper focus during this period. In the Coromandel, the Jesuits suffered from the distraction of commercial interests. This was natural especially owing to the fact that the Jesuits worked in a local society that was involved in commercial activities.

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<sup>57</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.) *Documenta Indica, Vol. 17, 1595*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 25. Fr. Francisco da Cunha, S.J, to Fr. General, Goa, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1595.

The relationship between the Jesuit enterprise and the Portuguese entered into a new phase during the last decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Estado during the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century began to face a financial crisis with there, being 'no money' within the Portuguese establishment that was burdened with debts. The Portuguese king was indebted to about one million pardaos in the Indian province<sup>58</sup>. The Portuguese administration in India according to Fr. Valignano was corrupt with there being instances of bribes taken by the Governors and the Captains. The Visitor to India criticised the officials for taking with them more than a million gold pardaos when they left India. The Jesuit missions in India thus worked alongside the corrupt Portuguese establishment in the East. Where the purpose of the officials was in ensuring a profit for themselves.

In the Coromandel though the Jesuits did not interact with the Portuguese establishment as in Goa, though it interacted with the Portuguese settlements in the region. The Jesuit interaction with the private merchants provided them with adequate scope for participation in such parallel activities. On the Coromandel the Jesuits participated in commercial activity by purchasing Pearls from the Parava's on behalf of private merchants.

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<sup>58</sup> V.Prinola, (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1566-1619, Volume 2*, Fr. A. Valignano, S.J, to Fr. E. Rodrigues, S.J., Goa, december 31<sup>st</sup>, 1575, No 28.

3. Now is being sent to this coast Fr. Diogo da Cunha who was superior here for many years, who is coming in the company of another who is Italian they have not yet arrived. As soon as they arrive it is said Fr. Nunu Rudriguez would be called back to Goa as he is largely needed there. It is also most necessary that the V.P would not send to this coast Fathers who would occupy themselves purchasing goods for seculars, because this situation is expanding and is also a scandal. This year has come one of our fathers who was "precurador" and has brought with him 10,000 or 12,000 pardaos to be invested in goods for persons from outside as well for the seminary. The sent father speaking to me on this subject told me that Father Provincial and other superiors knew about it. It was so great the lack of dedication of this father that he has not succeeded to purchase more than 2,000 or 3,000 pardaos of goods and it was necessary to remove him from his duty and may God that he change<sup>59</sup>.

On taking charge as Superior of the Coast, Fr. Nuno Rodrigues, SJ, complained to General that his predecessor<sup>60</sup> on the Coast participated in commercial activities bringing disrepute to the Society. The corruption

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<sup>59</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 17, 1595*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 5. Fr. Francisco Duarao S.J. to Fr. CL. Acquaviva S.J., General, Fishery Coast, December 6, 1592.

<sup>60</sup> The predecessor was Fr. Lazario Cataneo, S.J, mentioned earlier in this chapter with reference to the transfer of new Jesuit appointees from the Fisheries Coast. As a result of their reluctance to learn Tamil and the disinterest that they showed to the Jesuit activities in the region these Jesuits were regarded as not being interested in attending to the requirements of the Christians along the Coast and consequently transferred.

within did not just limit itself to a co-participation in the commercial interests of private merchants it also involved the use of Jesuit funds meant for the purchase of items for the Seminary. The Church was used as a base for conducting commercial activities in the region where the Portuguese Estado did not have a political presence. The ability of the Jesuits to ensure cheap means of transport and to use their moral and religious and moral standing with the local community to ensure a fair commercial deal was an important part of these commercial negotiations.

4. Another thing I have observed here and of interest to be brought to the knowledge of the V.P mainly to the doubt that I am looking for a remedy to the situation through the way of Fr. Provincial, [.] it is to had given an initiative to the last superior of this coast Fr. Lazero Catono who was the "*procurador*" at the same time<sup>61</sup> [.] he used to act with the permission of the last father Provincial as I believe that was the situation to take every year for himself a large amount of money from friends, that on the basis of a mutual understanding of the two to invest in goods [pearls] as there was a large demand for it, as it also asks for a larger need of occupation and dealings regarding the trade and correspondence and being of a large quantity the money that they would use, that I believe would have reached last year above 10,000 pardaos, it also involved a large risk for the owners of the money if something

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<sup>61</sup> Fr. Wicki, suggests that it could be Fr. Goncalo Fernandes, S.J., p.32

wrong would have taken place. Consequently such an occupation must be avoided which is strange to our order. Mainly considering that this takes place and brings with it scandals within the order and outside, and in order to avoid that you take notice true someone else I consider it my duty to advice about the V.P.

The constitution of the Society of Jesus explicitly states that its members devote themselves entirely to spiritual pursuits pertaining to their profession and abstain as far as possible from all secular employments. In India, the Jesuits, with their close relations with the Estado and its establishment, found it difficult to maintain a distance from the crown and its agents<sup>62</sup>. This could also be traced to the need<sup>63</sup> that the Christian religious orders found of maintaining close links with centres of power and authority. This problem would have been more pronounced in the Indian province owing to the constant help and support that the Jesuits would have required from the European society and the Estado's establishment.

5. And with the purpose to conclude this bad subject it seems to me that it be most necessary that you V.P would be informed

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<sup>62</sup> Dauril Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, its Empire and Beyond, 1540-1750*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996, p.335.

<sup>63</sup> This need was both financial and militaristic, in the context of the Portuguese ensuring the safety of the Jesuits in the East.

about the lack of principles or norms that preside over the purchase and sale of grains, mainly in the context of their price, and this not only in order that provision of the necessary would take place, as V.P under his title has considered this matter [and with it] but it also for the profit it carries. The worst aspect is that in the involvement of the Superiors and the "*procuradore*,"... I have also collected information quite reliable that also some private persons kept residence in the Churches of the Christians, who were recent converts, through whom it seems its been compromised the simplicity and correctness of those practicing the religion. I don't mention a few examples that have occurred in this context to avoid it complicating [the existing problems]. But the income of padre *precurador* of the province has great need to be instructed about this mainly considering that these facts take place with the hours that due to their activities proceed selling things by higher price<sup>64</sup>.

At the same time these complaints drew much criticism from the other members of the Society. The role of Jesuit politics and the hatred amongst some of its members for those who attempted reform the working of the Society is very obvious. The criticisms and the eventual non-implementation of directives, enabled commercial activity to

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<sup>64</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gómez, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 17, 1595*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 9. Fr. Nuno Rodrigues S.J., Superior, to Fr. CL. Acquaviva, S.J., General, Fishery Coast, December 20, 1592.

continue by the interest groups. There are repeated references to the problems but no mention of any action taken. The only instance to action taken, involved Fr. Cabaral, S.J., Provincial, during the last decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was criticized for his involvement in nepotism and seeking favours from the Portuguese Viceroy. Fr. Cabaral, S.J., before his appointment was not expected by many to be ordained the new Provincial. Fr. Joseph Wicki points out that Fr. Valignano was in favour of the appointment of Fr. Nuno Rodrigues as Provincial of the Indian Province

2. With reference of the election of Fr. Cabaral, the event was as something ordained by God. But very few of those that are better informed about would expect to see him as provincial. And consequently it is waited as probably one of the 2 following things, that the Fr. Alexandro Valignano on a visit to India by appointment would come here from China as it has happened this year with the Provincial, or that V.P, in one of the regular nau's that come here sent a *Visitador*, in the way that the Father would not remain supreme in the province and also that the same Fr. Alexandro writing to Fr. Gil de Mata about the events in China, suggested that because he considers as certain the coming of the Provincial in the place of Fr. Bishop, what was interpreted by some that he was not expecting that Fr. Francisco Cabral would be the successor.

3. There is something of this Order because the men who join the Order here usually have less knowledge both of letters as of religion, if compared with those who come from outside or from the *House* and in this way have been told few years ago that the Bishop of China<sup>65</sup> having had certain problems with Fr. Cabaral would have told him that he looked like a man who has received the order from the Cape of Good Hope to here.

[Summary of paragraph's 6-7.]

The basis of the previous paragraph in which there is very broad reference to events taking place and were identified as “imperfecciones faltas”<sup>66</sup> done by others whose names are not mentioned. These deeds were related to his relatives<sup>67</sup> who are soldiers and it is said that he occupies himself in giving them special favours; when another Father does the same for his brother he<sup>68</sup> advises him that he must not behave such. He has excused himself with Fr. Provincial, while others say that is he<sup>69</sup> the same Father who looks for greater interest in the friendship of the Viceroy to benefit and favour his nephews; and inspite of the

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<sup>65</sup> Fr. D. Melchior Carneiro.

<sup>66</sup> Imperfections and Fults.

<sup>67</sup> Fr. Cabaral's relatives

<sup>68</sup> Fr. Cabaral

<sup>69</sup> Fr. Cabaral.



fact that these events would have taken place its possible I have heard wrong. But that they are referred to would indicate there is some fundamental (problem with Fr. Cabaral's behaviour) in the case<sup>70</sup>.

Fr. Cabaral, S.J., was appointed Provincial in 1592, he succeeded Fr. Pedro Martins, S.J. The tenure of Fr. Cabaral was one that seems to have marked a high level of activism within the Order. Immediately on taking charge he undertook visitations across his Province. He first visited the Northern parts of the Province, 1592, followed by Salsette, May 1593, Houses at Goa, June-September 1593, southern parts of the Province, November 1593- January 1594<sup>71</sup>. He maintained the good relations with the administration of the Estado, and cultivated a friendship with the Portuguese Viceroy. The criticisms against Fr. Cabaral, S.J., came at a time when he attempted to change the practices of the Jesuits.

His attempts to check the wide participation of the Jesuits in commercial activity attracted criticism from those with their own

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<sup>70</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J. and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 30. Fr. M. Dias S.J., to Fr. CL. Acquaviva S.J., General, Cochin May 3, 1593.

<sup>71</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, (Rome: 1984), p.46.

interests in the region. The reference to the opinion of other Jesuits who were counsulted by Fr. Cabaral that the Viceroy would not take the Provincial's suggestions well, as to the Jesuit participation in the commercial transactions along the Coromandel. Is an important indicator to sections within the Jesuit establishment not being receptive of this move to de-link the participation of Jesuit Fathers from the commercial activities of the Estado.

18. With reference to the second member of the illicit act that The V.P wish be clarified I, had already taken the initiative inspired by the experiences, that larger was the loss of our good name and high opinion. Larger was the losses of the treasury and must be kept in mind by the V.P that the situation was involved in this way that one of the aspects of the document sent to viceroy against us was that we were dealing with pepper and have lost a sailing ship belonging to it<sup>72</sup> that only the king can use and the truth was that these facts were so well known at least in the fishery coast that some fathers were dealing in pearls for the benefit of some persons acting with certain extent as agents, and the viceroy has granted permission to Fr. Martaneiz<sup>73</sup> for the fathers of the coast to invest. I do not know how many "pardaos" and the Judges "*Ouvidor*"<sup>74</sup> through Fr. Jeronimo de Cotta, who was related to him, dealing

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<sup>72</sup> The Treasury.

<sup>73</sup> The Superior of Sao Tome.

<sup>74</sup> Lopo Alvares Moura.

that reach the amount of 5,000 “pardaos” this practice was so widespread that the viceroy used to entrust the fathers to sell for him the elephants that were used by the people of Ceylon to pay their duties, sending them through the means of the fathers as it was more sure and cheap.

19. But I have immediately written to the fathers that neither Pearls, rice or any another article could be brought or sold for the viceroy or anyone else as its against the norms of our Society and would not be of any other interest. Them to be reason of complaint about the fact that purchase price last year and have been sent to me by the viceroy to the “*Vedorda Fezenda*” (judge) who’s the second person in the state required me to write to the superior of the coast that he would buy for him rice and send it to Ceylon as trusting that this was of large importance for the service of his majesty. I have replied that in everything that would not have been against our norms we would help him best possible, but in each and every act that could not conform with our institutes, it would not be convenient that the viceroy would request us and that it seems not to be proper to do it; the maximum that I could do was that he (viceroy) would send a man with money to purchase these articles and then could be sure that to buy cheap and ship we could help him; and more must not be asked of us as we are not in a position to grant. Thank God he has accepted my suggestion as was not imagined possible by some of ours but also

it seems to him to have agreed such that we continue to maintain our friendship as before if not stronger. And the fathers since have freed themselves from being intermediaries and may God with my trip I do hope that this matter be settled forever<sup>75</sup>.

The participation of Jesuits in the commercial activities along the Coromandel needs to be understood from the context of the Christian society that they interacted with. The Christian community the Jesuits interacted with consisted of local Indian converts and Europeans settled along the coast. The Jesuit interaction with the Portuguese community at the settlements was an interaction with a group participating in commercial activity outside Goa which settled here after leaving the service of the Estado, and settling with their families in the region while participating in commercial activities. These settlements, like those of Nagapattinam and Pulicat, were important commercial centers in the Coromandel. The *Fidalgos*, amongst whom the Jesuits worked owned ships and maintained commercial contacts through the Bay of Bengal and the western coast<sup>76</sup>. The Mission in the Coromandel consequently was not one where the Jesuit organisation represents a disciplined force that interacted with the Christian community maintaining the faith

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<sup>75</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 82. Fr. Francisco Cabaral, S.J., Provincial to Fr. CL. Acquaviva, S.J., General, Cochin December 15, 1593.

<sup>76</sup> M.N. Pearson, *Portuguese in Coastal Western India: Studies from Portuguese Records*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing House, 1981, XCHR Studies Series, No 2, p.52.

among them. The Jesuits during the late 16<sup>th</sup> century faced a crisis within where it was required to provide more Fathers to serve the community. On the other hand the Society and the contradictions within, caused by issues dominating the Portuguese society in India further complicated the changes that the Society would have preferred to implement. The Society of Jesus in the face of these burning issues within its organisation also had to maintain the issue of the local Christian community utmost on its agenda. The Coromandel during this period was witness to changes where the Jesuits played an important role.

***The Politics of War and Diplomacy:  
The Fisheries Coast  
1588-1640.***

**Chapter IV:**

- 4.1. Introductory
- 4.2. Migrations along the Fisheries Coast: A Historical Background, 1552 to 1590
- 4.3. The Disturbances of the 1590's
- 4.4. Political Interaction: The Kingdom of Madurai.
- 4.5. Roberto Nobili: An Attempt to Change? (1600 and beyond)

The decline of the Vijayanagara Empire (during the late 1520's and early 1530's) led to the establishment of the three the Nayak kingdoms of Madurai, Tanjavur and Senji. The Vijayanagar governors in the region established these kingdoms. They (the Governors and their Clans) were not part of Tamil society but belonged to Telegu and Kannadiga warrior lineage's who penetrated into the region during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. They established their quasi-independent rule around 1558-1559 The kingdom of Madurai was the most economically and militarily powerful of the three. By the early 17<sup>th</sup> century its territory extended from Triunelveli into Kongunad it included much of modern day

Tiruccirappalli district<sup>1</sup>. The region during the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century witnessed changes in the political and social factors. During this phase the successors of the Vijayanagara Kingdom attempted to establish their authority by integrating the existing political establishment along the southern Coromandel. This phase of political adjustment included widespread political instability with war and disturbances common through the region. The Jesuits who resided along the Fisheries Coast from 1540's onwards thus operated in a region where the political establishment was in the midst of a process of establishing its authority and consolidating its rule<sup>2</sup>.

The expanding influence of the Catholic Church<sup>3</sup>, especially among the local Christian communities, coincided with these larger political processes in the region. The Jesuit Missions along the Fisheries Coast played an important role in the process of interaction involving both, the ruling groups and local communities. The absence of a substantial Portuguese political presence along the Coromandel compelled the Church to establish for itself in the region independent of the Portuguese establishment. There was a need for the Christian communities in the region to protect themselves against the disturbances caused by the

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<sup>1</sup> Velucheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance: Courts and State in Nayaka Period Tamil Nadu*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998. p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Narayana Rao, Velcheru, Shulman, David and Subrahmanyam, Sanjay, *Symbols of Substance: Courts and State in Nayaka Period Tamil Nadu*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998. p.39-40

<sup>3</sup> Mainly as a result of the growing Christian population in the region.

political processes in the region. The Estado that had assured the Christians protection used its presence along the Sri Lankan Coast as a springboard in their attempts to protect the community. The Catholic Church and the Jesuits in the region thus occupied the political vacuum that was created by the ineffectiveness of the Portuguese. They consequently assumed responsibilities of leading the community in times of war, migration (away from these zones of conflict), resettlement (in their old villages), managed their daily living requirements (as in food during the migration, medical services, education, etc. both in times of war and peace). The Jesuit participation in the negotiations between the Nayakas, the smaller chieftains and the Parava community that brought peace in the region provided them with the legitimacy to dominate the life of the Christian community in the region<sup>4</sup>.

These processes of change along the Fisheries Coast occurred simultaneously with new alterations within the organization of the Indian Province of the Society of Jesus. In the last decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century these structural changes included the creation of the new vice-province

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<sup>4</sup> The changes that involved the Parava community and the Catholic Church in the region have been highlighted in the last section of chapter 2.



of Japan<sup>5</sup>, the establishment of the first Jesuit Missions in Sri Lanka<sup>6</sup>. The interaction and the new relationship with the royal courts of the Nayka kingdoms in the region beginning from the last decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century together with the changes mentioned contributed to a new momentum of change away from the established center of the Catholic establishment at Goa.

In this larger picture of the political fluidity the shortage of Jesuit priests in the region represents a crisis where the Society needed more priests to serve its flock both spiritually and as leaders during these troubled times. The decline of the Estado and the growing challenge to the Catholic Church from the other European rivals in the 17<sup>th</sup> century enabled the Church to attempt to chart its own course of diplomatic negotiation and interaction. The 17<sup>th</sup> century marks a new era for the Catholic Church with the establishment of the Propaganda Fide (1623) independent of the Portuguese Padrado based at Goa. The newly created Province of the Malbar in 1605 consequently provided an 'alternative' for

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<sup>5</sup> This effectively became two separate Provinces as there were two separate Visitors appointed to each of the Provinces. But the only organizational similarity was them both being under the same provincial at Goa.

<sup>6</sup> The Jesuits did not maintain any Mission in Sri Lanka, the Catholic establishment on the Island were dominated by the Franciscan Missionaries. The Jesuit establishment on the Island was first established when the Portuguese viceroy invited them along the Franciscans to set up their establishments at the settlements of the Christians on the Island of Mannar (at a time when there were migrations from the Fisheries Coast towards Mannar).

non-Portuguese missionaries to continue their missionary work. This added another dimension to the activities of missionaries who would have preferred to stay away from the establishment in Goa. It is in this context that one understands the importance of the changes along the fisheries coast and the activities of the Catholic Church in the region during the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and into the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

#### ***4.2. Migrations along the Fisheries Coast: A Historical Background.***

The political disturbances were a regular feature along the Fisheries Coast. These disputes arose between the local political groups and the Paravas. In 1551 the Paravas agreed to pay a tribute of seventy thousand *pardaus* to the Nayaka<sup>7</sup>. Another attack was organized on the settlement in 1553, though the Portuguese defended the settlement they were defeated. The Nayaka of Madurai, Vishwanatha Nayaka (1559-1563) demanded that the Parava's pay him tribute. Consequently the army of the Nayaka attacked the Parava villages compelling the helpless Portuguese abandon the villages. In response to these problems the

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<sup>7</sup> Stephen Jayaseela, *The Portuguese in the Tamil Coast, Pondicherry*, p.74.

Jesuits frequently suggested that the Viceroy transfer of the Christians of the coast to the Island of Ceylon<sup>8</sup>.

The Island of Mannar on the coastline between the Fisheries Coast and the Sri Lanka was the ideal choice for the transfer of the Christians of the Coast. The Portuguese took control of the Island of Mannar after a military campaign against the Kingdom of Jafana in 1560. The Portuguese Viceroy erected a fort on the Island and permitted the Franciscans and the Jesuits to setup their houses on the Island<sup>9</sup>. This was an important station for the Jesuits, as they did not maintain a presence in Sri Lanka till the last decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>10</sup>. The Island was part of the Pearl Fishing banks. The annual Pearl Fishing was conducted along the coast stretching from the Island of Mannar to Tuticorin, the Paravas thus did not lose any advantage of shifting their base from the Fisheries Coast<sup>11</sup>. The Pearl Fishing banks in the region had during this period (1559-1579) also shifted away from Punnaikayal

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<sup>8</sup> As a result of the "Persecutions and Tyranny" that the Christian communities faced in the region, the Jesuits suggested that the Viceroy consider transferring the community to the Island of Mannar. V. Perinola (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1505-1566*, Vol. 1, Fr. A. Brandao, S.J., to the Jesuits in Portugal, Goa, 19<sup>th</sup> November, 1556. No.131.

<sup>9</sup> V. Perinola (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1505-1566*, Vol. 1, Expedition Against Jaffna, September-November 1560, No.142

<sup>10</sup> The Franciscans manned almost all the Missionary outposts in Sri Lanka till the Jesuits arrived on mainland Sri Lanka in the last decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>11</sup> V. Perinola (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1505-1566*, Vol. 1, The Franciscans in Mannar, 1560, No 143.

towards Mannar, the Pearl Fishers thus had much to gain from this movement<sup>12</sup>.

The first migration of the Christian community under the Portuguese from the Fisheries Coast to the Island of Mannar took place in 1560 when the Viceroy Dom Constantino de Braganza sent a message to the Captain of the Fisheries Coast Manoel Rodrigues Coutinho to shift the Christians<sup>13</sup>. This movement occurred in August 1560, though the Captain initially hesitated, fearing that the local political authority would harm a Jesuit father they held prisoner. The Captain also considered shifting all Christians from the other settlements along the coast, including those at Sao Tome and Nagapattinam. It was eventually decided to evacuate the Christians of the Fisheries Coast to Mannar<sup>14</sup> after burning down all their houses with no intention of returning<sup>15</sup>. The Portuguese in the meanwhile transferred their commercial activities from the city of Punnaikayal to Tuticorin<sup>16</sup>. Though the Jesuits and the

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<sup>12</sup> Stephen Jayaseela, *The Portuguese in the Tamil Coast, Pondicherry*, p.75.

<sup>13</sup> V. Perinola (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1505-1566*, Vol. 1, *The Franciscans in Mannar, 1560*, No 143.

<sup>14</sup> There does not seem to be any indication that the Jesuit Fathers also migrated with the Christians as the subsequent letters describing the Christian community settled on the Island of Mannar mention there being only two Jesuit fathers. This leads us to another conclusion that the migration to the coast was not 'total'. Not all the Christians of the coast moved to Mannar. This could be because the problem being referred to here would have effected only a section of the community.

<sup>15</sup> V. Perinola (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1505-1566*, Vol. 1, Fr. B. Dias, S.J., to M. Nunes, S.J., Goa, December 5, 1560, No 145.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen Jayaseela, *The Portuguese in the Tamil Coast, Pondicherry*, p. 77.

Portuguese would have preferred to have the Paravas continue staying on the Island of Mannar, the Christians from the Fisheries Coast were not keen on doing so, preferring to return to their old settlements<sup>17</sup>. They returned to their former homes in 1564, owing to the outbreak of an epidemic on the Island of Mannar, that effected only the migrant Christian community and not the original residents of the Island, who had developed a resistance to the epidemic<sup>18</sup>.

On the Island of Mannar there were three Churches. The Parava community attended the Sunday services in two while the Careas<sup>19</sup> in the third. The weekly Church service was held in only two of the three Churches owing to there being only two Jesuit fathers resident on the Island<sup>20</sup>. Though the Paravas returned to the Fisheries Coast after the outbreak of the epidemic sections of the community seemed to have continued to stay on the Island of Mannar as in 1566<sup>21</sup>, the Jesuits report the continued existence of three villages on the Island<sup>22</sup>. In the

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<sup>17</sup> V. Perinola (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1505-1566*, Vol. 1, Fr. A. Anriques, S.J., to Fr. J. Lainez, S.J., Mannar, December 19, 1561, No 152. The Jesuit mentions that the Paravas "...yearn for their fatherland just as the Jews for Egypt whenever they met with some adversity during their journey..."

<sup>18</sup> V. Perinola (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1505-1566*, Vol. 1, Fr. A. Anriques, S.J., to Fr. J. Lainez, S.J., December 24, Punnaikal, 1564, No 157.

<sup>19</sup> This was the Christian community that resided on the Island of Mannar before the movement of the Paravas across the Palk Straits.

<sup>20</sup> V. Perinola (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1505-1566*, Vol. 1, Fr. A. Anriques, S.J., to Fr. J. Lainez, S.J., Mannar, December 19, 1561, No. 152.

<sup>21</sup> This being a result of the shifting of the Pearl Fishing banks moving eastwards towards Mannar.

<sup>22</sup> V. Perinola (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1566-1619*, Vol. 2, Fr. A. Anriques, S.J., to Fr. J. Lainez, S.J., Tuticorin, December 30, 1566, No 6.

same year the Jesuits also report the baptism of more than nine hundred including slaves and free men<sup>23</sup>.

These migrations of the Paravas, reflects the frequent movement of people across the straits. The movement away from their original settlements in times of distress caused by natural or political factors seems to have been a normal feature in their lives. There seems to have been was a continuous movement of the Paravas to Mannar, probably due to the economic circumstances caused with the shifting of the Pearl Fishery banks. A Jesuit letter of 1569 mentions there being four villages on the Island of Mannar this being an indicator of a movement of people across the coast<sup>24</sup>. This is confirmed in another letter dated 1574, when Fr. A. Valignano, S.J., mentions that there are five thousand Christians and four churches on the Island of Mannar<sup>25</sup>. This was a sizable number, as it would imply that the Christian population of Mannar in 1574 would have numbered five times more than the Christian population at the

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<sup>23</sup> The number of baptisms reported by the Jesuits in their annual letters from the coast do not refer to anything less than eight hundred baptisms that given year. The question here is on the number either representing Mannar or the whole coast.

<sup>24</sup> V. Perinola (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1566-1619*, Vol. 2, Fr. D. Do. Soveral, S.J., to The Jesuits in Lisbon, Punnaikayal, December 18, 1569, No 16. This letter mentions there being on Mannar four villages instead of the three that the previous letters have mentioned. This indicating an increase in those residing on the Island.

<sup>25</sup> V. Perinola (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1566-1619*, Vol. 2, Fr. A. Valignano to Fr. E. Mercurian, S.J., Goa, December 25, 1574, No 25. The mention to there being four churches is an increase of the number of churches from three. Indicating the growth of the Christian community on the Island of Mannar. A large growth could not be a result of the local residents of the Island, it needs to be a result of external factors.

Jesuit center of Tuticorin between 1592-1594<sup>26</sup>. The movement of the Christian community to Mannar depended on political and economic considerations. The decline of Punnaikayal and the growing economic importance of Mannar played an important role in this migration. It resulted in another demographic shift to Virapandyapattinam of sections who did not wish to move across to Mannar<sup>27</sup>.

During the 1580's the Fisheries Coast faced a famine causing the another movement of the Christian community. This time the number of villages on the Island of Mannar increased to five and there were three priests instead of two in charge of the community<sup>28</sup>. The movement of the Paravas across the sea seems to have been the solution to most of their difficulties. The availability of rice that was one of the chief exports from Sri Lanka and the presence of the Jesuits and Portuguese who assured the community of support has been the reason for Mannar being the obvious choice.

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<sup>26</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, (Rome: 1984), p. 17. The statistics referred to with regards to the House of St. John, Tuticorin mention there being one thousand native Christians .

<sup>27</sup> Stephen Jayaseela, *The Portuguese in the Tamil Coast, Pondicherry*, p.76.

<sup>28</sup> V. Perinola (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1566-1619*, Vol. 2, Jesuit Annual Letter, Tuticorin, November 12, 1588, No 56.

### **4.3. The Disturbances of the 1590's.**

The most significant of the political disturbances seemed to have occurred in 1590. It resulted in the largest migration of the Paravas to Mannar in 1591. The Nayaka of Madurai attacked the community again demanding tribute, involving war on a larger scale along the coast. The dynamics of the disturbances along the coast was not just limited to the economic struggle between the Paravas and the local ruling groups. This war also had an effect on the Catholic Church in the region with the destruction of Churches in the region. During the course of the war there was widespread desecration and destruction of Churches. The Jesuit reports in 1577 mention the existence of twenty five to twenty six Churches<sup>29</sup> in the region and that in 1593-1594, there were eighteen churches in the region (including Mannar) of which two were in the interior<sup>30</sup>. Implying that during the course of these disturbances during the period there were at least seven to eight Churches abandoned. The attacks on the Churches were part of an ongoing battle that came to engulf places of worship. The Portuguese in 1591 organised an attack against the temple of Trichendur that helped intensify the anger against the Christian community.

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<sup>29</sup> V. Perinola (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1566-1619*, Vol. 2, Fr. A. Valignano, S.J., (Summary of report on India), Malacca, November 22- December 8, 1577, No 34.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, Rome: 1984, p. 56.



In retaliation the armies of the Nayaka attacked and burned down the native Christian settlements forcing the Paravas to flee in 'four hundred boats across the sea towards Mannar'<sup>31</sup>. While these events unfurled along the Fisheries Coast. The king of Jaffnapattinam attempted to retake the Island of Mannar from the Portuguese. He used the attack on the temple of Trichendur as a pretext for the attack on the Island of Mannar<sup>32</sup>. Though the reason for his attack was that the Portuguese military forces on the island were most at their most vulnerable, because of the campaign along the Fisheries Coast and the protection that was being provided to the pearl fishers. The migration of the Christian community to Mannar was almost total during this disturbance owing to the escalation of tensions occurring during the annual pearl fishing season. After the completion of this migration the Provincial, it could be argued in an attempt to facilitate the settlement of the Parava community on the Island, ordered the construction of another Church on the Island, and also of another hospital for the Christians on the Island<sup>33</sup>.

Along the Fisheries Coast there were one thousand Christians defending themselves against twenty five thousand to thirty thousand

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<sup>31</sup> V. Perinola (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1566-1619*, Vol. 2, Jesuit Annual Letter, Goa, November 30, 1591, No 60.

<sup>32</sup> V. Perinola (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1566-1619*, Vol. 2, Jesuit Annual Letter, Goa, November 30, 1591, No 60.

non-Christians<sup>34</sup>. In the skirmishes the Portuguese could not provide much help to the Paravas and in atleast eleven battles or skirmishes that would have taken place the Christians were left to defend themselves. The Jesuits stationed along the Fisheries Coast remained there to help and lead the Paravas in the war.

...Being in the Fishery coast at a time when there was a war<sup>35</sup> between Non Christians<sup>36</sup> vs. Christians have taken place, the Christians having no help except from the Fathers. I have been doing my best according to the received instructions helping with great exhaustion the Christian cause...The said duty if I had not assumed all the coast would have faced a moral loss and with the defeat of the Christians the Christian spirit would have lost face and there would have been the destruction of all the churches<sup>37</sup>.

Participating in armed conflict and leading the native Christian militia force was not an activity that the Jesuits did not participate in. During the course of their activities among these communities in the region they

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<sup>33</sup> V. Perinola (ed), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese Period, 1566-1619*, Vol. 2, Jesuit Annual Letter, Goa, November 30, 1591, No 60.

<sup>34</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 47. Fr. Rodrigo Pimentel, S.J., to Fr. CL. Acquaviva S.J., General, Goa November 10, 1593. These figures could be an exaggeration as in his letter Fr.Pimental, is defending his activities along the Fisheries Coast during these disturbances.

<sup>35</sup> *Guerras*, is the term used that can also refer to War or Struggles.

<sup>36</sup> *Gentios*, is the Portuguese term used. This term is generally used to refer to non-Christians, including or drawing no distinction between Hindu's, Muslims or any other religion.

<sup>37</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 47. Fr. Rodrigo Pimentel, S.J., to Fr. CL. Acquaviva S.J., General, Goa, November 10, 1593.

were already involved in mobilizing and training them into a militia force. In 1546, the founding father of the Jesuit Mission along the Fisheries Coast Francis Xavier effectively served as a trainer of a Parava militia. Under his tutelage the community also built defensive hedges and dikes, and negotiated peace agreements with neighboring tribes<sup>38</sup>.

The disturbances along the Fisheries Coast during this period were more complex, bringing to light the existence of deeper divisions that are understood among the communities in the region. The disputes in some instances involved skirmishes between, "...Christians [who] fought against Christians, Portuguese against Christians, Gentiles against other Gentiles, Hindus against Christians of 2 or 3 settlements, who burnt a Church and killed a few Christians...Besides larger number of confrontations in Mannar, [involving] the captain against the people and officers of his majesty"<sup>39</sup>.

In 1593 the Jesuits helped mediate a peace agreement between the Christian community and the Nayak of Madurai. With this the Christian community returned to the Fisheries Coast. Resulting in the commencement of reconstruction activities along the Coast. The

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<sup>38</sup> Aveling, *The First Jesuits*, London: Blard and Briggs Ltd, 1981, p.165.

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J. and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 72. Fr. Diogo da Cunha, S.J., to Fr. CL. Acquaviva, S.J., General, Fishery Coast, December 4, 1593.

reconstruction of the Churches also undertaken simultaneously was part of a joint effort involving the participation of both the local Christian and non Christian communities<sup>40</sup>. A Jesuit House was built with the help of funds provided by the Portuguese viceroy, "...The viceroy also granted half of the benefits (money) from the Justice in cases that would be judged on this Coast to be granted for the maintenance of the said House what has been of large importance for the purpose..."<sup>41</sup>.

The intense involvement of the Jesuits alongside the Christian community during these disturbances won them social recognition from the Tamil community settled along the Fisheries Coast. It was this good will that the Jesuits earned that enabled them to receive funds for the reconstruction. Consequently the funds for the Jesuit House were not only sourced through the Portuguese crown, but also from local donations routed through other sources within the Nayaka's administration.

150. One of the main *regedor* of the Kingdom has been so much an admirer of ours that every year he gives large amount of alms

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<sup>40</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J. and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 53. The Annual Letter of the Province of India by Fr. Francisco Cabral S.J., Provincial, Goa, November 15, 1593.

and says that this is the reason why God protects him and rewards him with benefits and he has promised to give us an land to build a house or church there and convert all the people there, and he promised a maintenance grant for the support of all those appointed there"<sup>42</sup>.

With their activities and the contacts that the Jesuits seem to have cultivated within the local ruling establishment, they show signs of looking beyond the Estado for financial support. The Jesuits now begin to interact with the local non Christian groups on a wider scale than before. Indicating the growth of a new level of cooperation and interaction between the Catholic establishment and the local society both in political and social terms.

#### ***4.4. Political Interaction: The Kingdom of Madurai***

It was during the tenure of Fr. Cabaral, S.J., that political negotiations with the Nayaka of Madurai were initiated. In his letter to the Jesuit General he mentions the changing attitude of the Nayaka. This change occurs at a time when the ruling groups in the region after a period of

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<sup>41</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J. and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 72. Fr. Diogo da Cunha, S.J., to Fr. CL. Acquaviva, S.J., General, Fishery Coast, December 4, 1593.

conflict were in the last phase of the process of accommodation and recognition of power and authority. During this phase of state formation the Nayakas actively sought to widen the religious base of their support by spreading their donative activities outside the ambit of Hindu religious institutions<sup>43</sup>. It was in the context of this process that when the Jesuit Fr. Fernandes visited the court of the Nayaka he was able to obtain concessions and permission to expand the outreach ministry among the non-Christian population. They were also permitted to establish a Jesuit Mission at Madurai.

146. This year has been sent to the Nayak the great master of these lands, one of our fathers<sup>44</sup> in whose company have gone some notable Christians and has obtained from him a large number of privileges and favors to the Christians [.] Of them were non-Christian (who were his vassals) who would be allowed to become Christians if they so wish, What we hope in the future to give us a larger tranquility than we have enjoyed till now: because if any honorable non Christian would convert to Christianity we

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<sup>42</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 53. The Annual Letter of the Province of India by Fr. Francisco Cabaral S.J., Provincial, Goa, November 15, 1593.

<sup>43</sup> Sanjay Subhramaniam, Velucheri Narayana Rao, and David Schluman (ed), *Symbols of Substance*, Oxford University Press. p.89-90.

<sup>44</sup> Probably Fr. Goncalo Fernandes

immediately had to face difficulties, as certain circumstances, that all places were abandoned and the Christians were compelled to suffer in the hands of the gentiles large difficulties.

147. They had agreed that in Madurai (a town where he keeps the residence of his court) we would be allowed to have a house, a thing that until now we have never succeeded to get from him. Another benefit that is a result of this mission and that is most important, it is that from now on ours will have open doors when we wish and think necessary to speak to the Nayak and his nobles. What would have shown bringing to them larger pleasure acquaintance with the fathers that wasn't there before<sup>45</sup>.

During his visitation to the southern parts of the Indian Province in 1594, Fr. Cabaral referred to the instructions given to the Jesuits on the Fisheries Coast to secure the permission of the Nayaka, for the construction of a Church at Madurai<sup>46</sup>. In his annual report to the General he informed the Jesuit head of the possibility of the construction a Church in Madurai. The success of these negotiations with the Nayaka leading to the establishment of the Church was reported in the Annual

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<sup>45</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J. and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 53. The Annual Letter of the Province of India by Fr. Francisco Cabaral S.J., Provincial, Goa, November 15, 1593.

<sup>46</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J. and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 16, 1592-1594*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 133. Fr. Francisco Cabaral, S.J., Provincial to Fr. CL. Acquaviva, S.J., Goa, November 20, 1594.

Letter of 1595. The Church was built on land provided by the Nayaka<sup>47</sup>. The nature of Jesuit activities along the Coast helped them earn the goodwill of the Nayaka.

The Jesuits also commenced a new phase of expansion along the Fisheries Coast with the college and seminary at Tutocorin<sup>48</sup>. The participation of Christians in the hospitals that were maintained by the Jesuits helped consolidate and entrench the prominent role of the Jesuits and the Catholic Church in the daily life of the Coast<sup>49</sup>.

Changes were being initiated in the activities of the Society in the region. After a period of crisis in the 1590s and a period of hardship when the Christian community was compelled to flee the coast and take refuge in Mannar, the Society was back with a larger range of activities and it received greater goodwill from the local community.

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<sup>47</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 17, 1595*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 46. Annual Letter of Fr. F. Cabral, S.J., Provincial to the Jesuits in Europe, Goa, November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1595.

<sup>48</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 17, 1595*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 46. In this letter he mentions in paragraph no 165. Tutacorin College and Seminary, teaching Latin and Moral Science regarding uplifting of the conscious responsibility of the seminarist.

<sup>49</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J. and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 17, 1595*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 46, paragraph no. 167



#### **4.5. Roberto Nobili: An Attempt to Change?**

##### ***(1600 and beyond)***

The Society of Jesus during the 16<sup>th</sup> century had established itself among the Parava community. The Paravas were low caste members of Tamil society and were important to the Portuguese commercial activity in the region. The Catholic Church and the Society of Jesus had established themselves among the Paravas but failed to influence other sections of Tamil society. It was essential if the Catholic Church wanted to survive in the region after the almost near elimination of the Portuguese establishment in the region to widen its influence among other dominant economic and political groups. The establishment of a House and Church at Madurai, the capital of the Nayaka represents an important phase in the widening of the Jesuit base in the region. Madurai was an important political center and the dialogue between the Catholic Church, the Nayaka and the local political groups, which ensured peace, enabled the Jesuits consolidate their position among the Paravas. It also enabled them to inaugurate their Missions in the Tamil heartland.

Economically the undercurrents of economic change also exerted a degree of influence on the activities of the Catholic establishment. The Paravas who were mainly Pearl Fishers along the Coast now began to

widen the nature of their economic activity in the local economy. The affluent or dominant sections of the community (mostly the elders of the community and the other heads) benefited from the economic interaction with the Portuguese. Their predominant role in the economic decisions of the community and the influential relationship that they maintained with the Estado, local ruling groups and the Portuguese private traders provided them with the opportunities to expand their economic horizons. They consequently diversified their economic role from Fishing to other commercial operations in the region. They by the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century began expanding their commercial activities into the Tamil hinterland and into the temple towns of Madurai, Palaiyamkottai, etc.<sup>50</sup>. A study of the Jesuit expansion into the Tamil hinterland thus should not be examined as part of a natural expansion into the hinterland that sought to widen the Christian base in south India. The expansion was very much part of a demographic and economic momentum originating along the Coast. The economic changes caused by the commercial expansion of the Parava community and the need to establish a separate network of influence within the ruling courts in the region ensuring the survival of the Catholic establishment were factors that influenced the changes during this period. This need for a separate independent dialogue with the ruling groups in the region was initiated after the disturbances of the 1590's with the grant of financial support and

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<sup>50</sup> Susan Bayly, p.324.

recognition from the ruler of Madurai. In his annual report the Provincial, Fr. Cabaral, S.J. reported the initiation of a dialogue with the ruler of Madurai. He was hopeful that the recognition would provide them with the much-awaited entry into these regions.

178. Another mission has taken place in the town of Madurai, where the court of the Nayak is, master of the whole fishery coast and of the kingdom existing in the hinterland he is rich and powerful. He like the natives of the land is Hindu. There are a few Muslims among them but very few. In this court for many years we have tried to establish contact as the king is the protector of the Christians and help them when their adikaris, 'resedores' persecute them as well as to have access to an area with such a huge population of Hindus and to help many Christian slaves that have found refuge there from their masters and received payment from the Nayak<sup>51</sup>.

The consequently the appointment of Fr. Fernandes, S.J. following a letter from the Nayaka, requesting the formal opening of a Jesuit Mission at Madurai was significant in the context of the changes in the region.

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<sup>51</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 17, 1595*, Rome: 1984, Annual report of Fr. Cabaral, Letter No 46.

179. Nayak has written to Rector of Fisheries Coast requesting a Father to be sent to Madurai and that he would give him a place to build a Church and for this he would be most welcome. Though it did not meet all our expectations we are happy<sup>52</sup>.

Fr. Fernandes was the Jesuit Father who maintained contact with the Nayaka court immediately through the 1590's. It was thus natural that the Madura Mission be placed under him. This helped Fr. Fernandes to make inroads into the region by winning the confidence of the Nayaka and his ruling court. Fr. Cabaral in his Annual Letter in 1596 mentioned the 'close friendship' that had developed between Fr. Fernandes and the Nayaka of Madurai.

The Madura Mission did not make much progress with the conversions of upper castes the attempts by Fr. Fernandes, S.J., to convert the Vadukans or Telegu people in the city failed<sup>53</sup>. He continued with his efforts to reach out to the upper strata of Madura society but continued to fail. This, his detractors claimed, was because he continued to interact with the lower castes (the Paravas in specific) constraining his influence and reach beyond the smaller groups and lower castes. It was here in this context of the new level of interaction with the Court of

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<sup>52</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Documenta Indica, Vol. 17, 1595*, Rome: 1984, Letter No 46.

<sup>53</sup> J.H. Nelson, *Madura Country A Manual*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1994. p. 115.

the Nayaka that the appointment of Fr. Roberto de Nobili, an Italian Jesuit, marked a new phase in the events surrounding the Mission at Madurai.

The nature of Fr. Fernandes's interaction with the local community needs to be understood in the context of his activities in the region's past. He like most Jesuits in the region was very involved in the affairs and lives of the local Christian community especially that of the Paravas. The role that this former Portuguese soldier played in the diplomatic negotiations that brought peace and the subsequent interaction with the local ruling court would have made him sensitive to the issues of the day. With the expansion of the Parava economic activities his contact with the community continued. Though being in the hinterland representing the interests of these sections along the Fisheries Coast, he came into regular contact with the community in the city of Madurai. The traders from the community would have expected protection and shelter from the Mission at times of need while in the city of Madurai. The Mission here would also have been required to address the religious needs to these Christians away from home. Thus the Church at Madurai was regarded by the upper castes as being a lower caste Church, consequently distancing themselves from the Church. A study of the Madura Mission would thus have to involve an understanding of what the Mission meant

for the different sections of Tamil society and how they related it to their daily lives.

The appointment of the Italian Jesuit Fr. Roberto de Nobili, S.J., to the Madura Mission, in 1607 initiated a new phase in the history of the Catholic establishment in the region. Fr. Nobili being a new entrant in the region did not share any sentiment or relationship that Fr. Fernandes would have shared with the Christian communities along the Tamil coast. Based at Madura, Nobili's missionary activity was centered on the Tamil hinterland. Thus the communities that were of concern to him would have been the affluent sections of Tamil society. The communities along the Coast who were the focus of the Catholic Missions till the last decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century were not part of Nobili's 'world view'. The concern of Nobili was also not in maintaining the already established relationship with the Parava community but to expand and establish new relationships and a new level of interaction for the Catholic Church in South India. Nobili used his aristocratic lineage while interacting with the Ruling groups in Madurai. His aristocratic past helped him relate himself to these groups. Within the Catholic establishment the Nobili family was influential with relatives within the hierarchy of the Church in Europe. He was the nephew of an influential

Italian Cardinal, Fr. Bellarmine<sup>54</sup> providing him with the required influence in Europe. In spite of his background Nobili insisted that he be appointed to the Indian Province, believing in his mission to serve in India. Nobili's presence in India coincided with the inauguration of the Malbar province. His appointment at the Madurai Mission came under the jurisdiction of the new Province.

The ideas advocated by Nobili were based on a new understanding of how to widen the reach of the Catholic Church in the Coromandel. The new idea advocated by Nobili argued that in order to reach out to the upper castes the Church had to incorporate the existing social systems and its customs of local Tamil society into the Christian way of life. The need to change the working of the Jesuit establishment in the region was an integral feature of Nobili's plans. His arguments called for a need to ensure that the nature of interaction with the various sections of the existing social hierarchy be different. The Paravas and most of the Christian communities belonged to the lower castes restricting their interaction with the upper castes. It was thus impossible for the upper castes to interact with the Jesuits and accept the Catholic Church if the Catholic Church failed to recognize the difference between the two caste groups. Nobili's new ideas recognized this cast distinction. Leading to a change in the attitude and nature of interaction of the Jesuit with the

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<sup>54</sup> Aveling, *The Jesuits*, p. 183.

Parava's and the upper castes. He attempted to be open to the upper castes whom he believed were the core of intellectual thinking in Tamil society.

This change in the treatment of the various sections of the society at the Madura Mission by the two Jesuits who worked there formed the core to the problems between the two<sup>55</sup>. Fr. Nobili established a separate residence for himself where he ensured that he did not interact with the Paravas or other lower castes. He also assumed the costume of a *Sanyasi* or *Aiyer*<sup>56</sup>, his portrayal of himself as being a Hindu religious man was an attempt to enforce the Hindu social restrictions that he attempted to enforce in his religious activities. He strongly believed that the failure of Fr. Fernandez's attempts to convert the upper castes in Madurai lay in his interaction with the lower castes.

Suppose one of them consents to be taught religion by a man whose habits and behavior are those of the lower strata of society, it will not take long before he suffers the consequences attached to such a step: his goods are confiscated, he is cut from his family

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<sup>55</sup> A detailed discussion and study of the dispute between the two fathers and the ideological debates between the two have been done by Ines Zubanov in her book "Disputed Missions"

<sup>56</sup> Aiyer, Priest, father, superior, king, a Saiva Brahman, were Nobili's priestly Tamil titles. Referred to in the Glossary of Ines Zupanov's, *Disputed Mission*.



and relations, and he is condemned to exile from his own country<sup>57</sup>.

The ideas and actions of Fr. Nobili are a direct attempt to open a dialogue with the upper castes through this new identity of his as being a *sanyasi*. His association with the upper castes represents a new shift in the perception of the Catholic Church towards opening a new religious dialogue among other sections of Tamil society. Nobili projected himself as an upper-caste, learned “Brahmin” for it was only through the conversion and the initiating of a dialogue with the upper castes who had access to the Court that the Catholic Church could open itself to newer avenues. It was here that he envisioned the role of the Brahmins as belonging to the social group which could provide the Catholic Church with the medium and intellectual influence to force open a wider cross cultural dialogue across society.

The first class is made up of learned men and philosophers, and those undoubtedly are Brahmins engaged as teachers not merely in the public academies, but also at the palaces of princes for since it is their normal occupation to hold forth and discuss about any and every subject, divine, religious, philosophical, moral, about astrology and poetry and all the other branches of

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<sup>57</sup> S. Rajamanickam, S.J. (transl.), Roberto de Nobili's, *Adaptation*, Palayamkottai, St. Xavier's College, 1971. p. 23.

learning,..., it is not surprising to find Brahmins employed in instructing people also in matters connected with worship and the gods, and that they are recognised and generally denominated as teachers of the Indian people; nor is it more surprising that both kings and royal notables, who habitually entertain Brahmins to lecture to them at home on philosophical problems and on any subject of general knowledge, should likewise in matters concerning the particular sect they severally adhere to engage a Brahmin well versed in the observances of that sect: such private tutors they denominate by a metonymy as the teacher, guru in Sanskrit, whose specific task consists in tutoring them in all duties of their particular sect<sup>58</sup>.

The interaction that he argued for viewed Hindu customs through two spheres: political and social, civil and religious. The latter according to him consisted of superstitions that had to be eliminated<sup>59</sup>. Symbolism and legitimacy of authority, status and power were important to Nobili's plans for Catholic expansion.

Were they to be forbidden, (the continuation of the wearing of

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<sup>58</sup> S. Rajamanickam, S.J. (transl.), Roberto de Nobili's *Indian Customs*, Palayamkottai, St. Xavier's College, 1972, p.67.

<sup>59</sup> Ines Zupanov, *Disputed Mission: Jesuit Experiments and Brahmanical Knowledge in Seventeenth Century India*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1999, p47.

insignias which Nobili regarded as not religious but social symbols) not only we shall not provide for that facility of conversion, which the sovereign pontiff orders from us, but we shall render almost impossible the teachings of the gospel to these people<sup>60</sup>.

Nobili's attempts to change the perception and the nature of interaction of the Catholic Church in the Coromandel did not meet with much initial success. He did manage to win the respect of many influential members of the Nobility but was not successful in convincing them to accept Christianity. The failure of Nobili was further compounded when those who opposed his new methods were successful in having an inquisition court constituted to inquire into Nobili's actions. Nobili was during the course of this inquisition suspended from the Order in 1611 only to be reinstated in 1623.

Nobili's arguments need to be looked upon as being an attempt to eventually open the door of India to Christianity by relinquishing western

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<sup>60</sup> S. Rajamanickam, S.J. (transl.), Roberto de Nobili's, *Adaptation*, Palayamkottai, St. Xavier's College, 1971.

"When we assert that the wearing of the insignia is to be allowed to the Brahmins, the princes and the merchants and many others who wish to embrace our faith, we do not pretend that they should be allowed in the towns subject to the king of Portugal; we believe that they are merely social emblems;..." p.5-7.

social concepts and adopting those of the subcontinent<sup>61</sup>. His knowledge of Tamil and Sanskrit made him more acceptable to the ruling groups and the caste-ridden society at Madurai<sup>62</sup>. It helped him acquire a social fluidity, enabling him to move among the classes of rajas<sup>63</sup> and also among the Brahmins, the Vaisyas.

This in the context of the larger discussion of change and reorientation within the Catholic establishment assumes importance. It indicates a move of the Catholic Church towards establishing an independent identity. The decline of the Estado during this period is an essential background to understanding the external stimulus that it provided to the Catholic activities in the Coromandel. It is through this external factor of change both in the commercial and political context that the Nobili debate requires to be understood within a wider interpretation. The dispute between the two fathers could be argued as representing two different schools within the Society and the Catholic establishment. The schools that stood for the continuation of the old policy that found its roots in the Portuguese era and a new school that sought to distance

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<sup>61</sup> William. V. Bangert, *The History of the Society of Jesus*, St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1989, p152-153.

<sup>62</sup> J.H. Nelson, *Madura Country A Manual*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1994, p. 116-117.

<sup>63</sup> Nobili on coming to Madurai and advocating his new vision of conversions and Christianity also identified himself strongly with his Italian aristocratic background. This he used to provide himself with the legitimacy to interact with the upper castes and ruling groups of the kingdom. The methods he used in associating himself with the ruling groups are discussed by Ines Zupanov in *Disputed Missions*.

itself from the old establishment in a new era without Portuguese dominance.

As sections within the Society fought to retain their link with the Portuguese commercial enterprise there was a simultaneous attempt to break from the existing establishment, with the tactical support of the influential sections of the Jesuit enterprise. The suspension of Fr. Nobili during the course of the debates and his eventual reinstatement in 1623, assume a new dimension with the promulgation of the Propaganda Fide in 1622. With this the Catholic Church claimed rights over all new Catholic Missions and establishments in the east. It denied the Portuguese any right over the Catholic Church in the East. This new mission was the first formal schism between the Catholic Church and the Portuguese establishment. The institution of the Propaganda Fide and the sympathy of its establishment towards the vision of Catholicism as envisaged by Fr. Nobili is critical in locating the shifts both within the Catholic Church and the declining fortunes of the Portuguese commercial enterprise. The Propaganda ministries that signify this shift (away from the Estado) were sent exclusively to the regions that were controlled by non-European, non-Christian rulers, structurally similar to the Madurai mission<sup>64</sup>. Proving that an understanding of the Catholic

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<sup>64</sup> Ines Zupanov, p.243.

Church and the changes that it was experiencing in the east during the 17<sup>th</sup> century have to be understood from the debates and political fluctuations that engulfed its establishment in the last half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

## **The Estado in Decline: European Commercial Rivalry in the Coromandel**

### **Chapter V**

**5.1.** Introductory:

**5.2.** Portuguese Commerce during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries:

**5.3.** The Catholic Church Commercial Negotiations:

**5.4.** European Rivalry and Negotiations:

The commercial fortunes of the Estado da India in the Indian Ocean experienced changes towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Estado while establishing its monopoly in the spice trade between Europe and Asia also introduced the use of naval force while participating in commercial activities in the Indian Ocean. This altered the nature of existing commercial system introducing changes. This aspect of naval power became an integral element of commerce and was an aspect that became a permanent feature that needed to be adopted by those seeking to establish themselves within the commercial system of the Indian Ocean during this period.

Apart from this element of military influence in the Indian Ocean the Portuguese also maintained diplomatic contacts at the various regional courts that helped it secure trade concessions. This negotiation in the regions varied depending on circumstances. An important aspect of this negotiation was on the Estado depending on the Jesuits as negotiators in areas where it could not maintain a forceful presence. The use of the

Catholic Church as part of this diplomatic network ensured that while trade was secure, an element of cross cultural interaction also materialized. The Catholic Church and its missionaries in the Indian Ocean a majority of whom were Jesuits provided the Society of Jesus with an influential role in the interaction with local ruling groups and society especially where the Estado did not maintain a political presence<sup>1</sup> (as in the Coromandel). This relationship between the ecclesiastical and commercial establishments came to play an important role in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century when the Estado was facing a decline in its commercial fortunes.

Its monopoly in the spice trade with Europe during this period provided the Portuguese State with a dominant economic role within continental Europe. This provided it with a dominant role in European politics. Its political status within Europe provided it with the required proximity to the Catholic Church. The Portuguese crown became an important donor and felicitator to the cause of the Church in the east. The granting of the padrado right to the Portuguese and Spanish crowns enabled them to pose as the cultural and religious representatives of Christianity in the lands of the "Gentiles"<sup>2</sup>. Consequently the commercial challenge of the other European rivals who were Protestant (the English

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<sup>1</sup> This does not deny the fact the Jesuits also played an important role in regions where the Portuguese maintained political authority.

<sup>2</sup> This term is frequently used in Jesuit letters during the 16<sup>th</sup> century to refer to non-Christians.



and Dutch) had to challenge this existing view of the Asian polities and society, of the nature of European Christianity. This was essential in drawing a distinction between the two establishments (Protestant and Catholic).

The challenge to the Portuguese establishment in the Indian Ocean was conducted on two fronts, the commercial and the religious fronts. The active participation of the Catholic Church in the activities of the Estado led to the constant association of both (the European/Portuguese and the Catholic Church as a religious entity) as being the same. The role of the Church, in adapting itself to the change in the fortunes of the Estado provided adequate scope for dissensions within its establishment. The reluctance of members of the Church especially the dissention among the Jesuits in the Coromandel advocating the distancing of themselves from the Estado<sup>3</sup> compelled the Vatican to promulgate the Propaganda Fide, in 1620. It was with this that the Church began the process of formally distancing itself and its Indian province from the Portuguese establishment.

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<sup>3</sup> The attempt to distance itself from the Estado was possible in a few stations as in the Coromandel where there were two sections within the Jesuit establishment. The Jesuits in the Coromandel by the 17<sup>th</sup> century began to concern themselves more with the affairs of religion and the maintenance of the settled Portuguese community in the region rather than the maintenance of the Estado's commercial presence there.

Though the Society as an Organisation did distance itself from the Portuguese. The disputes within the Society of Jesus between the Portuguese, Spaniards and Italians provide an insight into the debate for change, in the background of Portuguese decline. The need that some of the members of the Society (as seen in the Nobili incident) saw in attempting to resist the general tendency of local ruling groups in associating the Jesuits with the Portuguese represent an attempt to change. Any attempt to understand and study the Society of Jesus and attempts by its members to change their associations, importantly needs to be understood from the pressures that they faced not only in the localities where they were active but also within the Catholic Church. The Europeans who replaced the Portuguese establishment in the Indian Ocean did not succeed in altering the religious composition of the Christian groups in Asia. They instead were more open to associate themselves with the Catholic Church if it distanced itself from the Estado. Though this was eventually done with the Propaganda Fide, it gave an opening for other Catholic missionary orders like the Capuchins to establish themselves in these regions replacing the Jesuits<sup>4</sup>, through the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The century thus represents not just the decline of the Portuguese enterprise in the Indian Ocean but a critical phase of

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<sup>4</sup> The Capuchin missionaries came to administer to the Catholics in the settlements like Madras. The presence of these orders also provided the Jesuits with a sense of being attacked by the Catholic Church in the east.

development of the most successful Catholic missionary Order of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## **5.2. Portuguese Commerce during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries:**

The costs of war with the Dutch and the English stretched the finances of the Portuguese State. In 1591, for the first time no ship returned to Lisbon, while again between 1598-99 due to another English blockade of Lisbon no ship could leave or enter the port<sup>5</sup>. This was a period where Portuguese maritime hegemony was challenged by the Dutch and English naval fleets. This challenge to the Portuguese maritime tradition in the Mediterranean, Indian and Atlantic Oceans resulted in a financial crisis for the Portuguese State that reflected on the Estado and its activities. It had an impact of the shipbuilding and maintenance activities of the Portuguese. Though there was an increase by 38 per cent in the annual tonnage that left Lisbon for India, during 1591-1630, the Portuguese establishment was thinly spread across the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese navy was outgunned and out run by the

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<sup>5</sup> Donald. F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe, "The Continuing Expansion in the East"*, Book 1, Part I, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1917, .p.26.

Dutch navy and failed in protecting Portuguese maritime interests in the Indian Ocean<sup>6</sup>.

The Portuguese spice trade during the 17<sup>th</sup> century was struggling to meet the demand from Europe. The opening of Amsterdam as another European outlet for spices in the 17<sup>th</sup> century further worsened the Portuguese crisis. By 1640 the Estado could only meet 1 percent of the European spice demand, While its share of trade in Asian spices during its monopoly in the 16<sup>th</sup> century did not account for more than 2 per cent of trade in the Indian Ocean<sup>7</sup>. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Estado faced a challenge in the Asian procurement areas for spices that by now included the Indonesian archipelago. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century India almost met the demand of spices from West Asia and Europe, but with growing demand, the cultivation of spice required for commercial purposes began to gradually spread from north Sumatra down the west coast of the island, across into the Malayan peninsula<sup>8</sup>. The supply from the Indian market gradually became smaller as compared to that in Southeast Asia. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Indian market also began importing pepper from

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<sup>6</sup> Donald.F. Lach , p.27.

<sup>7</sup> Donlad.F. Lach, argues that this could be possible owing to the fact that the volume of trade in the Indian Ocean was voluminous enough to sustain itself independent of the Portuguese. Who were only one of the players involved in trade in the region. This role of the European companies began to change during the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries with other structural changes that the English, Dutch and other European companies introduced through the Indian Ocean.

<sup>8</sup> Antony Reid, *South East Asia in the Age of Commerce 1400-1500*, Yale University Press, 1988, p.9.

Indonesia. For the European rivals in the Indian Ocean their participation in intra-Asian trade exchanging textiles from the Coromandel for spices in Southeast Asia formed an important part in the changes that crystallized during the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The Portuguese during the 16<sup>th</sup> century developed a system of cartaz. The Asian merchants were compelled to purchase the cartaz to ensure the safety of their ships on the sea routes. This coupled with the use of force and the strength of its maritime fleet initially helped the Estado assert its dominance over trade and to initially resist European competition in the region. With the growth of European competition the revenues obtained from the sale of these licenses and from the custom duties paid at Ormuz, Goa, Diu, Cochin and Malacca helped sustain the Portuguese Asian enterprise during the early 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>9</sup>. In a letter to the English East India Company, Sir Thomas Roe, in 1619 mentions the significance of the Portuguese cartas system and its use.

...As regards (to) trade with Persia, Jask is the only port yet known, and there trade must eyther bee (either be) by contract with the Portuguese or by force sufficient to withstand them. The between Syndu (Sind) and Ormus (Hormuz) is passed by the Portugalls frigetts (Portuguese frigates) and so to Persia or by their

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<sup>9</sup> Donald.F. Lach,p.30.

cartass; but it is not so great as pretended, nor the profit to the Portugalls a tenth parte. The ould (old) trade is given over for the great avenues layd (laid) by the Portugalls to convoy native traders on payment may help in the establishment of trade...<sup>10</sup>

The challenge that the English and Dutch posed to the Portuguese had to initially address the question of naval superiority. The Dutch navy began to pose a threat to the Iberian fleets by the 1600<sup>11</sup>. The Portuguese were taken by surprise during the early Dutch foray into the Indian Ocean<sup>12</sup>, especially with their superior naval equipment. The significance of the use of force against the Portuguese lied not just in proving a threat to the Iberian naval presence in the region but importantly in attracting the attention of the ruling establishments along the littoral.

...The best way to force the Portuguese to consent (consent) is by chastising their neighbours for their stakes, as by obliging the Indian traders who take Portuguese passes to pay as much to the English; for the Portuguese hath noe other right but as lords of

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<sup>10</sup> William Foster, *English Factories in India*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906, (1618-1621). Sir Thomas Roe to Company, February, 1618, p.12. Though in the context of trade in the Persian Gulf this is an indicator of the impact and use of the Cartez system.

<sup>11</sup> Donald.F. Lach.

<sup>12</sup> William Foster's, *English Factories in India*, provides many references to the naval confrontations between the Dutch and the Portuguese naval vessels in the Indian Ocean.

the sea, which it is evident now he is not and therefore the tribute due to us. It is partly for this that Roe has pressed the sending of ship to the Red Sea. Another way is for the fleet to blockade Goa instead of remaining at for months at Surat...<sup>13</sup>.

The use of force and the threat that the European rivals posed provided the ruling groups along the littoral an avenue to the opening of commercial relations with the other European companies other than the just the Portuguese. In the Coromandel the Nayakas were not very satisfied with the Portuguese establishment. It could be argued that the attempts of the Portuguese to monopolise commercial activity in the Coromandel were not well received. Its use of maritime strength to dictate terms to the ruling groups during the course of the negotiations compelled the ruling establishments to look towards the other European companies to counter the Portuguese. The use of the cartaz system and other taxes that were levied on local merchants created a sentiment that sought a change in the existing system of commerce. This for the ruling groups would have translated into being free from the dominance of a strong and powerful entity as the Portuguese<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> William Foster, *EFI, (1618-1621)* Sir Thomas Roe, at Ahmadabad, to the Company, February 14<sup>th</sup> 1618, p14-15.

<sup>14</sup> S.Jayaseela, *Portuguese in the Tamil Coast: Historical Explorations in Commerce and Culture, 1507-1749*, Pondicherry: Navajothi, 1998. The author refers to instances where the Portuguese confronted with the local traders and the Nayaka's in the region with regards to their issuing of Cartaz and the other restrictions that they attempted to enforce in the region

### **5.3. The Catholic Church Commercial Negotiations:**

The problem for the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean was it had overtaxed her strength in Asia by trying to control far more territory than her own meager resources and population could support<sup>15</sup>. The Estado with its influence over a large geographical area had to adopt a flexible and complex establishment for the maintenance of its commercial operations. It is in this context that the Estado's relationship with the Catholic Church needs to come under an intense scrutiny. The proximity of the Society of Jesus with the Portuguese establishment in Europe and its domination of Christian missionary activity in Asia enabled it to provide the Estado with a support system in the Indian Ocean.

The use of Jesuit missionaries in regions where the Portuguese did not maintain a political presence was important in not only establishing a presence in the local courts but also in maintaining a constant dialogue on behalf of the Estado. The role of the missionaries in Japan during the 16<sup>th</sup> century elaborates on the role of the Jesuits in the Estado's activities. The breakdown in relations between the Jesuits and

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<sup>15</sup> C.R. Boxer, *Portuguese India in the Mid Seventeenth Century*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980, quoting Captian Joao Roberio, p.2.



the ruling elite in Japan during the 17<sup>th</sup> century had a direct impact on the Estado's commercial activity. While the Estado and the Catholic Church faced a crisis in Japan the English and Dutch companies ensured that they were not classified as being part of the catholic establishment. The participation of the Jesuits in Japanese politics proved detrimental to the Estado's commercial activity.

...It rested doubtful since our arrival in this place whether all Christians should be banished out of Japan or no, and I think that if it could have been proved that we had christened any children with papist priests we had been held to be of their faction or sect and banished. It is said that the Spaniards have direct order to depart with their ship from Orengava and in pain of their lives not to return anymore to Quanto neither with padres or without; and it rests doubtful whether they and the Portuguese will be permitted into come to Langasaque or no, especially if any padres be found in those parts...<sup>16</sup>

The expulsion of the Jesuits from Japan during the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century as mentioned above benefited English commercial activities.

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<sup>16</sup> F.C. Danvers, *Letters Received by the East India Company from its Servants in the East*, Sampson Law, Marston and Co., 1896, (Vol. IV, 1616), Richard Cocks to Richard Wickham at Miako in Japan, 13<sup>th</sup> September, 1616, p.171.

In Ceylon the Dutch company attempted in the very beginning to limit the influence of the Catholic Church in the court. Linchosten refers to a conversation between the ruler of Ceylon and Spilbergen when the latter landed in Ceylon and began a dialogue with the ruler on behalf of the Dutch company during the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

... The ruler asked him if we did also decorate our churches with images of Mary, Paul, Peter and all other saints as the Portuguese did and if we also believed in Christ, Spilbergen replied that we were Christians but not Roman Catholics nor like the Portuguese; that we had churches but with bare walls, without any images, and that we served God the creator of heaven and earth, in our hearts...<sup>17</sup>

The conversation between Spilbergen and the ruler of Ceylon is significant in providing the continued religious tenor of commercial negotiations. Valentijn refers to this conversation as part of the first dialogue between the Dutch and the ruler of Ceylon. The religious aspect of this conversation indicates the importance attached to a religious dialogue while negotiating commercial and political matters of the State. The Portuguese influence on Ceylon before the advent of the Dutch company was very prominent but this depth of the Portuguese on Ceylon

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<sup>17</sup> S. Arasarathanam, (transl.), Francois Valentijn, *Francois Valentijn's Description of Ceylon*, p.291.

is an outcome of the entrenchment of the Catholic Church. It represents the interaction between the Portuguese and the local ruling elite with the Catholic Church as a medium, that was countered and attempted at with the advent of the Protestant commercial enterprises.

As a result of Portuguese dominance in the Indian Ocean through the 16<sup>th</sup> century the perception of the regional ruling elite of Europe and European culture seems to be influenced to a great extent by the cultural and religious identity of the Portuguese and the Catholic Church. The role of the Catholic Church in maintaining its presence in the various courts in the region provided it with the means to counter the other European companies during the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In a letter to the English Company Thomas Roe while describing the first meeting between the agent of the English company and the ruler, where he mentions that after the meeting where the ruler (the Mughal Emperor Jehangir),

...Accepted your (the company's) present well. But after the English were come away, he asked the Jesuit whether the king of

England were a great king, that sent presents of so small value, and that he looked for jewels...<sup>18</sup>.

Though the English and Dutch gradually managed to overcome Portuguese dominance they had to initially ensure the gradual discrediting of the Jesuit influence in the region. The expulsions of the Jesuits from the various regions during the 17<sup>th</sup> century were even ascribed to the English and the Dutch companies. The expulsion of the Jesuits from Japan and with them the Portuguese and the Spanish was blamed on the English company and its politics in Japan.

... Since...the Emp(e)ror (of Japan) hath banished all Jesuits, priests and Friars and pulled down all their churches and Monastries. They put the fault on the arrival of the English in Japan; yet let them think what they list, I hope they will never be permitted entrance into Japan again. It is said that Fidaia Samme, the young prince, had promised them entrance again if he had prevailed against the empror which out of doubt, if it had happened, we had been all driven out of Japan and therefore better as it is...<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> F. C. Danvers, *Letters Received by the East India Company from its Servants in the East*, Sampson Law, Marston and Co. 1896 (*Vol IV, 1616*), Thomas Roe to the Honourable Governor and Committees of the English East India Company, Agimere, January 25<sup>th</sup> 1616, p.11.

<sup>19</sup> F. C. Danvers, *Letters Received by the East India Company from its Servants in the East*, Sampson Law, Marston and Co., 1896 (*Vol IV, 1616*), Richard Cocks to Richard Westby in Bantam, 25<sup>th</sup> February 1615, p 59.

Though a closer examination of the role played by the English in the expulsions of the Jesuits in Japan cannot be undertaken here, it is clear that the role of the Catholic Church and its link with the Estado did form part of a larger debate. The need in ensuring that both do not maintain their influence came to occupy a larger part of the agenda of the European rivals of the Estado during the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In the Coromandel the settlements of Sao Tome and Nagapattinam were important centres of Portuguese commerce. The commercial activity in the region centred on the purchasing of cloth and in the fisheries coast the trade of pearls obtained from the coast. This profitable trade was the occupation of a community called the Paravas. The Paravas and the fishery coast occupied an important position in the commercial map of the Estado. The conversion of the Paravas to Christianity provided the Catholic Church with a role to play. The attention given by St. Francis Xavier to the Christian life of the Paravas gave the Jesuits influence over the community and its activities. It served as an important link between the Portuguese and the community. The expulsion of the Jesuits from the region in 1605 caused a migration of the Parava community across the Palk straits to Ceylon, hindering pearl fishing in the region. They only

returned after sixteen years when the dispute between the Portuguese viceroy in Goa was settled<sup>20</sup>.

The role of the Catholic Church especially as a part of the Portuguese establishment in the region played a significant role in negotiating the attitude and concessions given by the Nayakas to the Estado's commercial activity. In 1639 the Nayaka of Madurai requested military assistance from the Portuguese against the Marava ruler who had revolted, though the Portuguese refused help for strategical reasons, the terms offered by the Nayaka were significant. Apart from him expressing his willingness to allow the Portuguese construct a fortress at Pampan or wherever they desired to do so along the coast. He also promised to build a church at Rameshwaram and seven other churches between Pampan and Tondi, and granting freedom to all those who might desire to become Christians<sup>21</sup>. This assumes significance because the Jesuits maintained considerable influence among the Paravas and along the coast. It signifies a formal recognition of their role in the commercial concessions and negotiations in the region. In 1638 the Jesuit Gaspar de Aguiar at the same time also held negotiations with the Nayaka of Madurai on behalf of the Portuguese for the purchase of saltpetre. The role of the Jesuits in the maintenance of commercial activity on behalf of

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<sup>20</sup> S. Jayaseela,

<sup>21</sup> S. Jayaseela, p.107

the Portuguese is evident through these illustrations. The role of the Catholic Church thus seems to have been critical in the maintenance of the Portuguese commercial network in the Indian Ocean. The decline of the Estado during the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the implications of this on the Society and the debates within its organisation need to be considered in light of the nature of their role in Portuguese commercial activities. The Society of Jesus and the Catholic Church seem to have been confronted with two questions at a time when the commercial rivalry of the other European nations was beginning to engulf the Estado.

#### ***5.4. European Rivalry and Negotiations:***

...(The great Nayak demands) of me what the reason is that the English doth not desire to trade in this land as well as the Portingall, saying thsy shall have pepper and anything the land doth afford, and likewise buye those commiodities that they doe bring with them as tin, lead, iorn and reed cloth is well sould. Little doth our nation know how they are excepted all this land; therefor the Danes doth trade under the name of the English and are marvilous well used, hath given them a towne and place to build a castel, which is furnished and hath thertie six peces of

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ordinance mounted therein...<sup>22</sup>.

On his visit to Tanjur John Jhonson, a factor of the English company, wrote back that on meeting the Nayaka it was demanded of him why the English company did not wish to trade in the lands of the Nayak of Tanjur. The English and Dutch companies (as mentioned earlier) while commencing commercial operations in the Indian Ocean had to first challenge Portuguese maritime hegemony and countering their influence at the various ruling courts. The Portuguese with the nature of their activities antagonized ruling groups compelling them to welcome the new entrants in the commercial system of the Indian Ocean.

Though (through the account referred to above) the Danish seem to have been trading in the region in the name of the English company. The Nayak's eagerness to widen European commercial participation in his lands is directly linked to this limiting the scope of Portuguese commercial domination. Though the ruling elites maintained their superiority on land they could not do so along the maritime routes leaving them at the mercy of the Portuguese naval fleets. The participation of the Portuguese commercial rivals who could match the firepower and challenge the Iberian fleets assumed importance in the

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<sup>22</sup> William Foster, *EFI, (1622-1623)*, John Jhonson at Tanjur to Thomas Brockedas, March 4<sup>th</sup> 1622, p.51.

commercial and diplomatic negotiations of the period. The significance of the Coromandel to the commercial activity of the English and Dutch caused them to focus on the region and establish their presence. Though the Dutch began to commence their commercial operations in Java and the Indonesian islands they gradually sought to establish themselves in the Coromandel in the first decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The establishment of the Dutch and English maritime operations were not very different from the Portuguese during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They also adopted the cartez system as part of their maritime activities along the sea routes of the Indian Ocean. Though it was the Dutch company with the seriousness that it attached to its commercial presence (especially its intra Asian trade) in the Indian Ocean that took this system seriously<sup>23</sup>.

...but it would be more profit able for the English to supply goods themselves. Moreover the English cannot keep the sea open all the year round, and when their fleet had departed the Portuguese would take revenge on the natives. In sum the Portugall houlds all the coast in absloute slavery and ther is no way to remide it unless eyther the kyng would build or give us a port or hyre our shipping (in context of persian gulf) <sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Om.Prakash, *New Cambridge History of India, European Commercial Enterprise in Pre Colonial India*, II.5, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p, 141.

<sup>24</sup> *EFI, (1618-1621)*, Sir Thomas Roe to Company, February, 1619, p.12.

The cartaz system was important for the English and Dutch companies but not as much for their financial requirements as it had been for the Portuguese in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It played a crucial role in their countering the Estado's maritime presence in the Indian Ocean. The need to engage the merchant groups in commercial activity was linked to breaking their feeling secure in the system established by the Portuguese. The need to prove themselves as being a better alternative to the Portuguese is reflected in the actions of the English and Dutch companies.

As part of a larger attempt to dislodge Portuguese hegemony in maritime trade through the Indian Ocean the European companies established a pattern of alliances that enabled them to trade in the Coromandel. The English, Dutch and as in the case below the Danish company, permitted the other to trade and carry out their commercial activities from their bases along the Coromandel.

...They (the English factors) intend to send the 'Hart' to the place the Danes have fortified on the coast of Coromandel where they understand that good cloths and paintings and store of pepper may be had. The prince of that country has sent a letter inviting them to trade in his domains; and they are told that the "Danes in

10 weeks time have laden 3 or 4 tones of pepper and that the Portuguese buy almost all their cloth in that country...<sup>25</sup>

The Dutch and the English companies also entered into an alliance that did not survive for long. The alliance between the Dutch and the English companies in the Coromandel was effected with the larger long-term plans of both companies. The obvious need to eventually overrun the other in the region and to secure the trade in the region for the sole benefit of the company was central to the actions of the companies. Sir Thomas Roe in his letters to the company in England warned the company of the intentions of the Dutch.

...The second is the Dutch, they wrong you an all parts and grow to insuffrable insolencies... you must speedely look to this maggat; els, wee talke of the Portugall, but these will eat a (worme) in your sides. I need not council you which way; only advice you never to join stoke to profit and loose, for their garrison chardges, looses by negligence will engage you to beare part of their follyes for no profit...<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *EFI, (1624-1629)*, President Brockedon and Council at Batavia to the Company, January 17<sup>th</sup> 1624, p.2.

<sup>26</sup> *EFI, (1618-1621)* Sir Thomas Roe, at Ahmadabad, to the Company, February 14<sup>th</sup> 1618, p14-15.

The apprehensions of Thomas Roe were proved true by the reaction of the Dutch to the English in the Indian Ocean when told by the English that the two companies had opened negotiations and that there would be an alliance between the two. The attitude of gaining as much before it cannot be done so as a result of the alliance was evident. The English company protesting against the Dutch is an obvious indication of the supremacy of the Dutch over the seas and the English need to depend on the former for support in these early stages of commercial activity.

...The "Peppercorn" met near Engano a Dutch ship, the Oranje-Boom, commanded by Captian Heart, who told them that, the two companies were accorded, and deliveres a letter written from the cape by Thomas Berwick, stating that the Dutch delegates had arrived in England before his depature to conclude an agreement. They were hopeful, therefore to hear shortly that matters had been accomodated; but the Dutch factors here state that there is 'no accorde' ; that the 'Star' has been captured by three Dutch ships after a six hour fight.; and that coen has sent three of his best vessels in persuit of Jourdain. They trust he will escape and meet at the appointed rendezvous (Pirman). In my opinion this fleet will not be able to perform anie great fights for want o men and good amunition. The Dutch in these parts are grown so insolent that there is little hope to be had of anie agreement where their

strength shall exede, for they doe ayme to be sole masters of the whole Indias...<sup>27</sup>

The agreement between the two companies in Pulicat (the terms referred to below), marked the beginning of such strategical agreements between the important European companies in the region. The significance of this agreement was in it centering on the Coromandel port of Pulicat. This was an important commercial centre through the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but though in decline since the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, it played an important role in the commerce of the region. The Portuguese satellite settlement of Sao Tome next to Pulicat was involved in coastal trade in the region and like its fellow settlements at Nagapattinam and Porto Novo (by the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century) maintained contacts with the markets in Southeast Asia. For the English and Dutch companies these centres were essential for their participation in intra Asian trade and in maintaining contacts with Southeast Asia from the Coromandel. According to the agreement between the Dutch and English,

1. The Dutch authorities will either provide the English factories with a house (chargin) a resonable rent or allot a site on which they

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<sup>27</sup> *EFI, (1618-1621)*, Augustine Spalding aboard the Unicorn in Massulipattanam to the Company, November 23<sup>rd</sup> and December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1619, p157-158.

may build for themselves, and in the meanwhile will find them convenient lodgings.

2. The English merchants will inform the Dutch what sorts and quantities of cloth they desire to buy, if the latter intend to purchase any of the same kind, the goods will be brought jointly, at a price agreed upon and afterwards divided.
3. The English share the charges and maintenance of the fort and wages of the garrison is fixed by the seventh article of the treaty of defence. If they cannot furnish the victuals or warlike munition required they will pay for any brought by the Dutch from Batavia at the rate fixed upon for the Moluccas, Amboyna, Borneo. Provisions brought in the country will be charged at cost price.
4. The damages to the fort, its ordnance, provisions and c???, will be repaired at the joint expense.
5. The wages and maintenance of the Dutch merchants and other inferior persons shall not be charged at the garrisons expenses.
6. The servants of both companies are expressly prohibited from private trade in cloth, under penalty of confiscation of the goods and further punishment.
7. (although charges would commence only after the publication of the joint treaty) the Dutch have agreed to wave for the present any claim for the expenditure anterior to the arrival of the English at Pulicat.

8. (the Dutch would render a monthly account of charges of the garrison, the English will thereafter pay charges to the Dutch governor.)<sup>28</sup>

Though this alliance did not survive long it provides the significance attached by both that control of commercial activity from this port was essential for either one to maintain control over trade with Southeast Asia. The failure of this alliance traces itself to the problems that the factors of the two companies encountered in the region, while trying to maintain either a balance between the two companies or to establish the trading network of either one. The problems primarily concerned the nature of trade and the attitude of the Dutch towards the English. These English complaints are constantly mentioned in the series of letters written to the company by the English factors (referred to below).

... our masters affayres to the southwards will maynley wante your helpe; which as it seems by letters from thence, comes soe fare shorte of necessary and expected means that manye of their newe settled factoryes must paye their propotion of charges and learne the course of that trade by lookinge upon upon the Dutch, who more plentifully than ever exporte masses of ryalls to supply

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<sup>28</sup> *EFI, (1618-1621)*, Agreement between English and Dutch presidencies at Batavia for regulating joint trade at Pulicat, April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1621, p.253.



all places. It was an easy composition; wee thought to enter into their conquests without disbursments of any former charges, but their senister proceedings in their falce and disemuled promyses, with their insolunte comportments in the places of command, doe daylie teach us that our masters had better have brought further lyberty with more experience; a touch whereof Pulicat hath have lately afforded us. You have longe since understand the agreement for that trade , that contractinge together to the full extent of the least capital, who had further means might proceede furthur, but in receipt of goods the joynt contracte was to have the preference, and beinge received to devide eqalye par lott or judgement...<sup>29</sup>

In Pulicat, the Dutch prevented the English company from gaining information of the cloth trade from the region.

...By letters received from Pulicat wee understande of the Dutches indirect proceedings with the factories there as in all other places, which their injorious dealings are insufferable, if we any waye could helpe ourselves....They senie to make us aquianted with whatt sortes of clothes they buy and if wee know os anyrthing of our experiences we must make them aquianted with it...<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *EFL*, (1622-1623), William Methwood, Mathew Duke and Francis Futter, at Masulipatam to Surat factory, February 26<sup>th</sup> 1622, p.46-47.

<sup>30</sup> *EFL*, (1622-1623) President Fursland and Council at Batavia to the Company, March 6<sup>th</sup> 1622, p.55.

The intelligence on trade was further restricted with the Dutch attempting to use the English to cover their costs in Pulicat. The English were restricted to a corner not just physically in Pulicat but also commercially the English company was forced to depend on the Dutch for the cloth that they required for trade in Southeast Asia.

...Have little news. 'Our residence nis placed in so obsquire a corner, soe meanly stocked and so little valued by our masters and ministers that if in 12 months wee may but see English shippe we occounte our indevours infinitely countenanced'. Their chief intellegence comes from the Hollanders, ' who with their store of shipping heere and everywhere upon their coast, discoverieng new traders and supprizing sometymes fatt bootyes although we can better afford them...<sup>31</sup>.

The Dutch were constantly treating the English as a smaller entity under their control and their dominance in Pulicat is the best illustration of this treatment. This was essential for the Dutch to ensure that they remained dominant and not loose their contacts to their rivals. Forester argues that the VOC did not encourage and receive English complaints well as they are under the Dutch umbrella in the region<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> *EFL*, (1622-1623), Factors at Masulipatam to Surat Factory, March 29<sup>th</sup> 1622, p. 70.

<sup>32</sup> *EFL*, (1622-1623), Pulicat Factory to Masulipatam Factory, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1622, p127.

The English on the other hand attempted to mend fences with the Estado in the Coromandel. Consequently feelers were sent by the English company to the Jesuits requesting for them to use their good offices to attempt to negotiate between the two. The agreements between the various companies are significant in context of the fluid commercial fortunes of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The English company attempted to use every avenue to establish and maintain its commercial significance in the region.

...Roe has tried to compound for the customs for a fixed anual payment, but the terms demanded were too high. As hopes of concluding a peace with the Portuguese, and the Jesuits at the court has written to Goa to further it,...<sup>33</sup>.

Though not much seems to have been achieved through these feelers the English company after its peace treaty with the Spanish crown in Europe attempted to extend the terms of peace into the Indian Ocean. This negotiation between the Estado and the English and the subsequent offer to send negotiators was again conducted under the auspices of the Jesuits.

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<sup>33</sup> *EFL, (1618-1621)*, Sir Thomas Roe, at Ahmadabad, to the Company, February 14<sup>th</sup> 1618, p14-15.

...Encouraged by the part already played by the provincial in removing misunderstandings between the English and the Portuguese in India, Methwold requests his assistance in perfecting this good work. (sighting the peace accord between the English and Spanish crowns, it is pointed that the treaty also includes the East Indies, hoping for desirous results in India)<sup>34</sup>.

The participation of the members of the Society of Jesus in aiding the Portuguese commercial cause and in ensuring the survival of the Portuguese establishment is evident in the letters regarding the negotiation between the two sides<sup>35</sup>. The English company president was offered accommodation at the Jesuit residence in Goa. The importance of this exercise with the Estado that was losing its commercial viability in the Coromandel was in the two companies agreeing to maintain peace such that the English could focus its energies in rivaling the Dutch company. The English company subsequently in 1639 established a fortified settlement Fort St. George at Madraspatam, between Pulicat and Sao Tome. It was from this settlement that the English could obtain 'a

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<sup>34</sup> *EFI, (1630-1633)*, President Methwold at Surat to Fr. Alvaro Tavares, December 14<sup>th</sup> 1633, p 331.

<sup>35</sup> *EFI, (1630-1633)*, Fr.Taveres at Daman to President Methwold at Surat, December 21/31<sup>st</sup>, 1633, *EFI* 1630-1633, p.331.

*EFI, (1634-1636)*, President Methwold at Surat to the Portuguese Councillors at Daman, January 4<sup>th</sup> 1634, p.2.

*EFI, (1634-1636)* Fr.Tavares at Goa to President Methwold, at Surat, January 17/27<sup>th</sup> 1634, p.2

*EFI, (1634-1636)*, Fr.Tavares at Goa to President Methwold at Surat, May 16/26<sup>th</sup> 1634, p.31.

great store of longcloth and morrees<sup>36</sup>. The English settlement utilised the services of the Capuchin missionaries to accommodate the Catholics in the surrounding areas and Fort St. George, also served in providing employment to the Portuguese settlers of Sao Tome. Through these developments, the English company began to establish contacts not only with the commercial participants in the region but also with the local Portuguese community in the Coromandel. This represents the beginning of another process of change in the Coromandel where the Portuguese community began interacting with the new Protestant companies. The need for a realignment of the Catholic community in the Coromandel to shift away from the Portuguese shows signs of developing independent of any of the factors that were linked to such interactions since the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>36</sup> H.D. Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Service, reprint, 1996, p.15.

## Conclusion

Through the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Portuguese commercial enterprise was challenged and eventually replaced by the English and Dutch East India Companies. The presence of these other European competitors in the Indian Ocean gradually eroded the Estado's political and commercial influence in the Indian Ocean. The declining fortunes of the Estado da India in the 17<sup>th</sup> century prompted the local political establishments to encourage commerce with the other European companies. In the Coromandel the Nayaka states welcomed the English and Dutch to establish their commercial enterprise along the coast. This commercial change also resulted in the development of old deserted trading emporiums like Kayalpatnam.

The Portuguese commercial and maritime activity continued from the port of Tuticorin under many restrictions in the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>. By the middle of the century the Dutch gradually replaced the Portuguese as the most important European commercial enterprise along the Fisheries Coast. The Dutch invaded Ceylon in 1638, finally capturing Jaffna the

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<sup>1</sup> S. Arasaratnam, *The Politics of Commerce in the Coastal Kingdoms of Tamil Nad 1650-1700*, *South Asia*, 1971, p.7.

last bastion of the Portuguese on Ceylonese soil in June 1658<sup>2</sup>. Along the Fisheries Coast Tuticorin was captured in 1658. In the same year the English established their factory at Palaiyakkayal<sup>3</sup>. This factory was however beyond the reach and influence of the Marava chiefs and away from the Catholic Parava settlements in the region. It enabled the English and Dutch to establish commercial relations with the Muslim community that also conducted Pearl fishing. In 1669 the Pearl trade of the Dutch East India Company was estimated at being worth five million guilders. While another estimate valued it at ten million guilders<sup>4</sup>. By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the political groups along the coast were bound to the Dutch by treaty. This gave the Dutch considerable commercial, extra-territorial and even political concessions along the coast<sup>5</sup>. In a treaty with the Nayaka of Madurai, in 1659, Dutch jurisdiction over the Parava community and other Christians of the coast<sup>6</sup>.

The decline in the fortunes of the Estado da India affected the Catholic

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<sup>2</sup> Dauril Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, its Empire and Beyond, 1540-1750*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).p.188.

<sup>3</sup> Markus. P.M. Vink, Images and Ideologies of Dutch-South Asian Contact: Cross - Cultural Encounters Between the Nayaka State of Madurai and the Dutch East India Company in the Seventeenth Century. *Itenerario*, 21,2,1997, p.92.

<sup>4</sup> Markus. P.M. Vink, Images and Ideologies of Dutch-South Asian Contact: Cross - Cultural Encounters Between the Nayaka State of Madurai and the Dutch East India Company in the Seventeenth Century. *Itenerario*, 21,2,1997, p.93.

<sup>5</sup> S. Arasaratnam, The Politics of Commerce in the Coastal Kingdoms of Tamil Nad 1650-1700, *South Asia*, 1971, p.1-2.

<sup>6</sup> S. Arasaratnam, The Politics of Commerce in the Coastal Kingdoms of Tamil Nad 1650-1700, *South Asia*, 1971, p.7.

Church and the Society of Jesus, which lost many of their valued possessions and with this their resources to sustain those that remained<sup>7</sup>. These commercial and political changes had an impact on the Church, especially in its relationship with the new developing political establishment. It is in light of these changes that one needs to understand the Jesuit enterprise and the new identity that the Catholic Church attempted to create.

The political changes in Europe and the rise of France as an important political power replacing Portugal and Spain in Europe prompted the Catholic establishment in Rome to realign its Missions. The Holy See sought to bring the various missionary orders in the region like the Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians and the Jesuits under its direct preview<sup>8</sup>. It was with this that the Vatican created the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide, in 1622<sup>9</sup>. The reorganization and reorientation of the Catholic Missions was important in Asia especially since the Church now functioned in regions under the rival European companies that were Protestant.

The changes in the European establishment not only altered

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<sup>7</sup> Dauril Alden, p.203.

<sup>8</sup> S. Jayaseela, *Portuguese in the Tamil Coast: Historical Explorations in Commerce and Culture, 1507-1749* (Pondicherry: Navajothi, 1998), p. 289.

<sup>9</sup> Kenith Blanchet, Cast, *Class and Catholicism in India 1789-1914*. (Curzon Press, 1998).p. 2.



commercial and political equations in the region, but also affected the nature and character of cultural interaction. The Protestant Church now challenged the Catholic Church that dominated cultural interaction in the region.

The attitude of the Protestant commercial entities against the Catholic Church and especially the Jesuits forms an important element in the history of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Attempts were made to restrict the activities of the Catholic Church. But the Church continued to maintain itself under disguise in the region. The restrictions imposed on the Catholic Church were relaxed by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. But Jesuit activities continued to be prohibited in the non-Portuguese European parts of the Coromandel.

In spite of these hostile conditions the thawing of relations between the Jesuits and the local ruling groups benefited the Order as it continued its activities from these territories that were under the control of the local ruling establishment.

The integration of Christian (Catholic) institutions into the local cultural system 'created a powerful fusion between the group's (the native communities)

caste institutions and their identity as Roman Catholics'<sup>10</sup>. It helped the church entrench itself in these areas. This was an important factor in the economic fortunes of the Parava community through the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. The challenge of the non Portuguese commercial enterprise and the success of the Catholic Church to maintain Catholicism in the region needs to be located within wider frameworks. The interaction of the Church with the non-Christian sections of local society and their support to its establishment is an illustration of the diverse nature of the relationship between the Church and the society around it<sup>11</sup>.

...the father has established close friendship with the "Gentile Resedores" Hindus of this areas that having business of large amount of money have helped in repairing churches that would have asked for a lot of money the event has taken place and has been counted with the large satisfaction of a large number of people this fact was felt with the exchange of gifts<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings, The Muslims and Christians in South India 1700-1900*, (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.332.

<sup>11</sup> In his annual letter to the Jesuit General Fr. Cabaral, S.J., mentions the support received from the local nobility and other sections of the non Christian community, in the reconstruction of the churches in the Fisheries Coast. This after the resolution of the disputes in the region, and the peace agreement brokered by the Jesuits and the Nayaka of Madurai.

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Wicki, S.J., and John Gomes, S.J., (ed.), *Monumenta Historica Societas Iesu (Vol. 133) Documenta Indica, (Vol. 18) 1596*, (Rome: 1984), Letter No. 46. Fr. Cabaral, S.J., (Provincial) to Fr. Acquaviva, S.J. (General).

The tradition within the Church of creating a systematic structure of linkages between itself, its congregation and the political system, has been a background in the process of the establishment of Catholic Christian faith. Maureen C. Miller, argues that “....religious indoctrination gradually aims to form the individuals view of the self and adepts such as the Catholic clergy underwent a more intensive ‘formation’ in order to set them apart from common believers. Religious formation functioned as a way to differentiate one group of people from another; it constructed differences in ways akin to race, ethnicity and gender.”<sup>13</sup>. At the core of this process lay an established system of hierarchy that the Church constructed to ensure the stability of its formal social standing within the society in which it functioned. It is essential in the context of the wide range of processes taking place to place the diverse factors within the larger perspective of change and adaptation. The Church while building a community that would identify itself strongly with religion and distinguish itself from the indigenous community.

## I

The restrictions on the Catholic Church in areas controlled by the Dutch continued till the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when any possibility of Portuguese threat faded away<sup>14</sup>. The Catholic Missions among the local society continued inspite of these challenges. The relationship between Church especially the Jesuits with

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<sup>13</sup> Maureen C. Miller, Clerical and lay cultures in the courts of North Italy, 1000-1300, *American History Review*, Vol.105, No.4, Oct 2000, p. 1099

<sup>14</sup> G.D. Winus and Marcus P.M.Vink, *The Merchant Warrior Pacified: The VOC (The Dutch East India Co.) and its Changing Political Economy in India*. ( New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.18.

the lower castes needs to be examined in light of the changes witnessed through the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The relationship shared between sections of the Christian community and the Padrado Church was a close this in turn having an impact on the developments that crystallized with the changing stance of the Catholic Church. It eventually resulted in another series of divisions within the Catholic Church in India.

Consequently the difference in the opinions of the Propaganda Fide and the Padrado Church as to the Missions in the East came to form the core of the institutional divisions. The association of the Society of Jesus with the requirements and needs of the local native Christian community formed an essential part of this change. The fission and split within the Catholic community in favor of either group (the Padrado Church or the Propaganda Fide) was based on the traditional relationship between the Padrado Church and the native Christian communities. This coupled with the economic changes and the economic mobility of the Christian communities, played a critical role in the alignment of the non-Portuguese companies with the local groups and native populations.

Along the Fisheries Coast Native Christians along the Coast who were mainly of the lower caste group aligned themselves with the Padrado Church. The Parana's and the Marava's in the region stayed with the Padrado Church owing

to a section of it supporting the rights of these communities. By the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the Paravas evolved into a powerful maritime elite in the region, differentiating them from the other fishing communities in Malbar and Andhra Pradesh<sup>15</sup>. Over a period of time the community benefited from its association with the Catholic Church. The impact of this change was not limited to a religious alteration. The shift within the Catholic Church and the new identity that it attempted to create needs to be located in this change that were taking place. The other sections that were more affluent and one could argue many Catholics in the new expanding territories of the Missions (as those of the Madura Mission) were in tune with the changes of the Propaganda Mission.

In the other settlements like those of Nagapattinam, Sao Tome and other stations along the coast the native Christian community and the Portuguese settlers sought employment in the respective Dutch and English enclaves<sup>16</sup>. It was in these centers that were taken over from the Portuguese and where the Jesuits continued to be banned while other Catholic Orders were allowed to commence their activities that studies need to re-focus. It was in these places (also in other centers where new missions were established) that the Propaganda Church now came to be the official Catholic establishment, satisfying the non Portuguese who wanted to curtail the Portuguese

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<sup>15</sup> Susan Bayly, p. 321.

<sup>16</sup> H. D. Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras, 1640-1800*, (New Delhi: Asian Educational Service (Reprint), 1996), p. 304.

establishment in any form. It also formed part of the larger process of the establishment of these European companies in the regions. The interaction and alliance formed between the native Christian communities and the new European powers were also established on the grounds of both being Christian. The new establishments of these companies requiring to employ new recruits to their enterprise be it maritime or administrative required the cooperation of these local Christian groups. The Catholic Church while adapting itself to these changes through the Propaganda Fide ensured that it continued to attend to the needs of these Catholic communities in the Coromandel.

A similar split within the Catholic Church is best illustrated in the disputes among the local Christian groups in Bombay Island during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. On Bombay Island the politics of interaction was different (as compared to the Coromandel), the upper class sections of the Catholic diocese sought maintain their association with the Padrado Church at Goa<sup>17</sup>. The lower class among the native Christian population supported the Propaganda Fide. This dispute resulted in the eventual intervention of the British administration and the construction of separate Churches in Bombay with an equal division between the Padrado and the Propaganda Fide. The Economic dimension in this dispute was the rise of the lower class that during the 18<sup>th</sup> century contributed to the development of Bombay Island as one of the most important commercial centers of British India. Similar to Pulicat and other centers the

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<sup>17</sup> Kenith Blanchet, p. 7.

Christian population on this Island and surrounding regions also sought employment in the new British administrative establishment.

## II

The Society of Jesus during these changes faced challenges of its own. The Society needed to redefine its role in the Catholic establishment in the East. The Society of Jesus has always been regarded as being close to the Portuguese establishment. The Catholic Church in its attempt to find an alternative identity for its establishment needed to ensure that it did not identify itself with the Portuguese identity of the Society of Jesus. The Society of Jesus on its part was also witnessing a parallel pull from within its establishment. The Jesuit establishment more in tune with the larger political changes in Europe attempted to propel the Jesuit organization away from the Portuguese while the Portuguese Jesuits in the East resisted this.

It is here that the split within the Jesuit establishment on the lines of the Propaganda and Padrado is evident. The Order needed to ensure that its network of influence was secure and its missionaries continued their activities without the threat of being expelled or molested. The Jesuit Missionaries who were expelled from the now controlled non Portuguese Centers could only operate from the territories under the jurisdiction of the local political establishment. This would imply the need to ensure the continuation of the Jesuit presence in the royal courts of the region. It is in light of this larger movement of change and adaptation that the arguments of Roberto de Nobili

appear realistic. His attempt to reach out to the dominant sections of local society can be located in the unconscious but a well directed attempt to establish and maintain the Catholic Church in the region beyond the less influential native Christian community.

He hoped to see Hindus belonging to the affluent sections being trained for the priesthood and Sanskrit adopted as the liturgical language of India<sup>18</sup>. This formed an integral part of his attempts to secure Jesuit contact within local courts. This was an attempt to reach out to a larger but more influential section of the local society. Alternatively it can be interpreted as being an attempt to accommodate a larger stratum of society, by acquiring a social fluidity<sup>19</sup>, within which they could function among the Brahmins, the Vaisyas, and the Sudras<sup>20</sup>.

Another parallel can also be drawn between this attempt of Nobili and the development of the Catholic Church in Europe where it is pointed out by Maureen C. Miller that within "...European society the clergy were different from the laity, and understanding these differences is important because power

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<sup>18</sup> William V. Bangert, S.J, *The History of the Society of Jesus*, (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1989). P.153.

<sup>19</sup> William V. Bangert, p153.

<sup>20</sup> William V Bangert, argues that the latter represented a kind of intermediate stratum, which embraced a greater part of the population, p.153.



was at stake..."<sup>21</sup>. Similarly the arguments of Nobili project the attitude of the Catholic Church towards the dominant sections of local society as being part of this process of adjustment with a center of power. The Church found comfortable support and protection in the Catholic establishment of the Portuguese while in its embryonic stages of development in the east. The decline of the Estado and the need for another alternative power center that could provide the church with the protection to function, was sought in this trend of a new identity creation and the opening of a dialogue with the upper castes and dominant sections of local society. The need for the Catholic Church was to stay in proximity to the centers of power. The debates between the Propaganda Fide and the Padrado missionaries through the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century continued to center on these concerns. The Propaganda Fide attempted to accommodate the arguments of Nobili, which in 1621 had received the sanction of the Vatican. But these arguments only served in alienating and causing more divisions within the Catholic Church in the Coromandel as reflected in the reactions of the lower castes to the missionaries of the Padrado and Propaganda Fide.

Towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the methods of Roberto de Nobili came to be questioned through these debates. In 1739 Pope Clement XII eventually ruled that all missionaries had to swear an oath to the effect that there would

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<sup>21</sup> Maureen C. Miller, Clerical and Lay Cultures in the Courts of North Italy, 1000-1300, *American History Review*, Vol.105, No.4, Oct 2000, p. 1096

be no compromise. While in 1744, Pope Benedict XIV ruled that all Catholics whatever their birth should hear Mass and receive communion in the same Church at the same time. However at the Madura Mission that the Jesuits provided separate entrances for low castes and built little walls to separate them from the high castes in their churches and provided separate burial grounds<sup>22</sup>. Though this was a setback to the proponents of the arguments that Nobili advocated, the Jesuits seem to have developed divisions from within. A section of them, especially those at the Madura mission continued to uphold the values of Nobili. The debates within the Catholic Church as a result of these divisions within its organisation in the Coromandel display its eagerness to maintain its standing amongst the local Christian community. This reflects the completion of a process of shedding off the Portuguese branding that it was compelled to function with.

### III

These trends within the Catholic Church and the other events of change that occurred in the 17<sup>th</sup> century provide a broader interpretation to the developments of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Coromandel has been an important center of activity. It helps to interpret historical development with an understanding of the institutions, communities and regions effected by the changes of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This in turn would provide an understanding of the factors that had a prominent impact on the political and structural developments of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>22</sup> Kenith Blanchet, p. 8.

The significance of this study of Jesuit letters during the last decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century provides an insight into the changes that the Society and the Catholic Church were undergoing. The need to establish an independent identity and be more accommodative and responsive to local society was at the core of the Catholic Church's internal debates. The letters represent the beginning of the debate, which requires a further exploration. A further examination of the letters through the 17<sup>th</sup> century would provide insights into the process of adaptation and transformation that the Catholic Church was undergoing. The close association of the Catholic Church with local society plays a critical role in their continuing activities. The question of the nature and depth of Jesuit interaction and the assimilation of Christian values, institutions and tradition into the local social system during the 17<sup>th</sup> century assumes larger importance in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

It needs to be acknowledged here that the study of the Catholic Church and Jesuit letters does not have a limited scope and role restricting it to only helping in the construction of a history of the Catholic Church. A study of these letters has provided insights into the life of the communities involved in pearl fishing and their relations with the political establishments especially at a time of state formation of the Nayaka State. Similar studies of Jesuit letters would help provide a broader understanding and knowledge not of the survival of the Catholic Church in the region but also of the failures and successes of

the Protestant missionaries. This would eventually be a history that is not just of the commercial enterprise but a history of the people and the evolution of local society resulting as a consequence of cross cultural interaction between the Europeans and the local population.

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