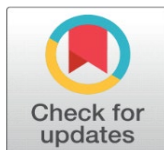
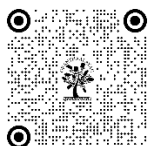


NAVIGATING EMPIRES: THE EVOLUTION OF MARITIME TRADE AND REGIONAL POWER DYNAMICS IN MEDIEVAL SOUTH INDIA

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DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i5.2024.2354](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i5.2024.2354)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

The Vijayanagara Empire's expansion in South India during the 14th and 15th centuries transformed regional maritime trade, extending its influence to overseas territories and integrating into global trade networks. Key rulers such as Harihara II and Devaraya II played pivotal roles in enhancing port facilities and trade routes, notably developing Palavekkad and Thirumenapatto as major trading hubs. The Later Pandyas revived trade relations with China during the Ming Dynasty, navigating the tribute system and facilitating the flow of goods such as pearls and textiles between Tamil Nadu and China. The 15th century saw a shift in trade routes from Tamil Nadu to the Malabar Coast, with ports like Kozhikode and Kochi emerging as prominent trade centres, reflecting changes in global trade dynamics. These developments reshaped regional economies, influenced trade patterns, and highlighted South India's role in the broader medieval global economy.

Keywords: Vijayanagara Empire, Maritime Trade, Overseas Expansion, Later Pandyas, Ming Dynasty, Economic Impact, Global Trade

1. INTRODUCTION

The medieval period in South India was marked by a vibrant and complex network of maritime trade that profoundly influenced regional and global economic landscapes. Central to this period were the Vijayanagara rulers, whose strategic expansion and engagement in international trade reshaped the economic and political dynamics of the Indian Ocean world. This era witnessed the flourishing of maritime trade routes that connected South India with distant regions, including Sri Lanka, China, and the Arabian Peninsula. The Vijayanagara Empire, established in the 14th century, emerged as a significant maritime power under rulers such as Harihara II and Devaraya II. Their reign saw the annexation of important territories and the enhancement of port facilities, which facilitated extensive trade networks. Notable among these were the ports of Palavekkad and Thirumenapatto, which became crucial nodes in the empire's trade routes.

Concurrent with the rise of the Vijayanagara Empire was the revival of trade relations under the Later Pandyas. During the Ming Dynasty, the Later Pandyas re-established and intensified maritime trade with China, navigating the complexities of the Ming tribute system. This period was marked by an increase in the flow of valuable commodities such

as pearls, textiles, and spices between Tamil Nadu and China, with significant government delegations and tribute missions further cementing these trade relations. The 15th century witnessed a notable shift in trade routes as ports on the Malabar Coast, such as Kozhikode and Kochi, began to overshadow the Tamil Nadu ports. This transition reflected broader changes in global trade dynamics, with the rise of the Malabar Coast as a prominent hub of maritime commerce and the decline of traditional Tamil Nadu ports. This introduction sets the stage for an in-depth exploration of how the Vijayanagara rulers and the Later Pandyas navigated these evolving trade routes, the impact of these changes on regional economies, and the broader implications for medieval maritime trade. Through this lens, we can better understand the complexities and significance of South India's role in the global economy during the medieval period.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main Objectives of the Study are to highlight,

- To understand the political and economic landscape of the Tamil Nadu coast during the Later Pandya period and the Ming Dynasty in China.
- To explore the cultural impacts of trade, including the exchange of ideas, technologies, and customs between Tamil traders and Chinese merchants.
- To investigate the factors leading to the shift of trade from Tamil Nadu to the Malabar Coast, examining the roles of emerging ports and changing trade patterns.
- To assess how the trade connections between Tamil Nadu and China fit into larger global trade networks of the time.
- To assess the role of regional powers like the Cholas and Vijayanagara in shaping trade networks and economic policies.
- To examine the transition of trade from the Bay of Bengal to the Malabar Coast and its implications for local economies.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Already there are same books which have been written on this topic. However this topic is just different from others. The works like, S. Krishnaswamy Ayyangar, *Sources of Vijayanagara History*, New Delhi, 1986, p.53, M. Ganesan, "VanigaKuzhuKalvettu" in *Avanam*, Vol.6, July, 1995, pp. 36-40, P. Shanmugam, "The Revenue System of the Cholas" 850-1279, Madras, 1987, pp.93-94, Rockhill W.W. 'Note on the Relation and Trade of China with the Eastern Archipelago and the Coast of the Indian Ocean during the Fourteenth Century', in *Toungpao*, Vol. XVI, 1914, pp. 419-447, Vol. XVI, 1915, pp. 61- 159.

4. METHODOLOGY

Historical, Analytical and Questionnaire methods are used for writing this article. Review historical documents, trade records, and inscriptions from Tamil and Chinese sources to gather data on trade practices. Use economic models to analyze trade volumes, the value of goods, and the overall economic impact on the Tamil Nadu region.

5. MARITIME TRADE AND VIJAYANAGARA RULERS

The maritime trade extended the boundaries of the Vijayanagara Empire in Tamil Nadu in AD. In 1361-62 he annexed the territory of the Sambuvarayas to his empire. The Alambundi plates of Virupaksa mention that the son of Harihara II, the ruler of the Vijayanagara Empire, attacked Sri Lanka in 1385 AD and brought back to his father great wealth in the form of precious stones, crystal, rubies, and ornaments etc. as spoils of war. A literary work of the same period, *Narayana Vilasam*, mentions that Harihar II erected a victory symbol in Sri Lanka. The Vijayanagara rulers extended their reach not only to South India but also to the overseas countries which served as a stimulus for overseas trade and commerce. In 1378, *Berishta* mentions with interest that he was forced by the Vijayanagara kings of Sri Lanka to send an ambassador to the Vijayanagara court in which annually expensive gifts were sent from the Sri Lankan royal court to the Vijayanagara emperor. The Portuguese traveller *Bernaunish* also confirms that the rulers of Sri Lanka paid tribute to Devaraya II. A charter found at Nagar near Chengalpattu also confirms this. It records that Devaraya II received tribute from Sri Lanka. "The port of Palavekkad, located at the mouth of the Araniyar, was developed during the reign of Devaraya II (1422-46). At that time it was called Anantarayan Pattinam. A Telugu charter found on the south wall of the Adinarayana Swamy temple at Palavekkad mentions that it was frequently flooded by sea water. It is mentioned that the area was called Pralaya Kaveri and there were facilities and large scale arrangements for seagoing ships to stay here during floods.

In the 14th century Vijayanagara rule extended to Tamil Nadu. Tirumalairayan also led to the development of another port called Pattinam. Portuguese documents also confirm that this port, located near Nagore, emerged as an important port during the Vijayanagara regime. It is mentioned in Portuguese documents as Thirumenapatto. Thirumalaideva Maharayar (1450-86), one of the Mahamandaleswaras of the Vijayanagara dynasty, ruled the Cauvery delta regions including Papanasam, Pattiswaram, Thirukkatupalli, Srimushnam, Kudumianmalai and Srirangam. After him this port was called Tirumalairayan Pattinam. The fort is situated between two rivers. He improved Tirumala to Rajanar in the north and Purudaiyar in the south." These waterways were used to connect the rice-growing regions of the interior with this port to export paddy and rice from this port.

6. LATER PANDYAS REVIVING TRADE WITH CHINA

During the reign of the Ming Dynasty in China, a firm policy of maritime alliances with foreign kings involved in overseas trade with China was observed. All states wishing to trade with China were required to pay tribute to the Ming court. It also had to adopt the Seal calendar, the system of succession, and the recognition of China's greatness. Overseas trade in China was almost monopolized by the state. And Chinese rulers began to directly participate in treaties with foreign governments during this period, and overseas trade in China was limited to government support. On the other hand on the coast of Tamil Nadu it was left to the initiative of private traders.

1369 was the year when the Ming dynasty began to take keen interest in overseas trade on the Tamil coast. The first emperor Min-tai-tsu sent envoys to all foreign countries in succession. He appointed Viu-tsu Mien as the noble envoy to meet the Chola king. Due to the tremendous growth of overseas trade during this period, in 1374 the emperor felt the need to appoint superintendents of overseas trade. They operated from Ning Po, Chiang and Quang respectively. The last mentioned was responsible for receiving the trading parties from India, Siam and Arabia. After that the Chinese ships came to the pearling coast. A study of the Genizah letters written by Jewish merchants sheds light on the details of Chinese porcelain being sent to Patimid in Egypt by Chinese merchants stationed at the ports of the Bay of Bengal. Satayavarman Kulasekaran (1395-1411), Maravarman Srivallabhan (1402-1404), Satayavarman Parakrama (1401-1434), Maravarman

The reigns of Vikramapandian (1404-45) and Maravarman Veerapandian (1421-46) bear witness to the flourishing of overseas trade from the pearling coast. Pearls, corals, precious stones, cotton and other textiles, animals and spices were exported from the coast of Tamil Nadu to China from the ports here. It is mentioned that on 17 October 1408 a government delegation consisting of Tseng-he and some others was sent to the ports of Periyapatnam and Kayal. In response a tribute-paying party was dispatched by the ruler of the Tamil Nadu coast from the port of Kayal on 5 August 1411. However, his name is not mentioned in Chinese documents. Once again, on 18 December 1412, a government delegation consisting of Cheng-he and others was sent to the backwater port. Again a delegation was sent from the port of Kayal on 26 February 1421 with Tamil Nadu government ambassadors to pay tribute to the Chinese Empire. Once again on 24th October 1423 Tamil Nadu delegation went to China and paid tribute. Then again some others, including Cheng-he, were sent back to the harbor on 29 June 1430. On 14 September 1433 and 11 August 1436 again a group of Tamil Nadu government ambassadors were sent from the port of Kayal to pay tribute to the Chinese Empire.

Chinese documents Huang Senkouyang's Sibang-Shaogang-Tianlu (Records of Amounts Received from Western Ocean Countries) written in 1434 King Chen's Xiang-Fangzhi (Notes on Western Ocean Countries) Fe-Sh, Yang-Sha Chenglan (General Notes on Government Activities) written in 1436) documents such as Mahuwan's Yi-ye-lan or Mingyi-sheng-alan (Studies on the Ocean as a whole) and Cheng-hen's Shen-yi-jua (a collection of notes written by Cheng-he on his voyages to the Western Ocean) written in 1451 were also to China. The commercial activity between the coast of Tamil Nadu has been set up as a flood of light, on which the date of commencement and return of my journeys, the date of addition by Government orders, etc. have been mentioned. During this period the trade between India and the Tamil Nadu coast reached its peak. Between the years 1405 and 1633, more than seven government delegations were sent, organized and led by Cheng-he alone, ordered by the Ming emperors of China. During this period Chinese porcelains were imported in large quantities to Tamil Nadu coast.

The Periyapatnam port mentioned in Maravarman Sundarapandian's cullet came into existence during this period. Marco Polo mentioned that the pearling industry was carried out in areas between 10 and 12 feet deep on the coast of Rameswaram. It is mentioned that the boats for pearling were first anchored at Patala (Vedalai). It is mentioned that a traveller named Ibn Pattuda arrived at a port called Phatan (which is identified with the Periyapatnam sector face), six kilometres south of Rameswaram on the Gulf of Mannar. Ibn Battuta's ship reached a place called Patala, which later

became the ship's anchorage. Periyapatnam port was called Parakramapatnam. From the inscriptions at Maramangalam near Tirunelveli, it is known that traders went to Periyapatnam port for trade from there. In this inscription, the names of various traders who were involved in the pearl trade are included. Also, Anj Samaram and Manikramat from southern Sri Lanka who took interest in the pearl trade in this area. References to a guild of traders such as Valanjiar are found in an inscription dated 1263 AD from Thirandathanam. Grave inscriptions belonging to Beryl Famine Jews Goo Elucidates trade relations during the Great Famine.

A Chinese document dated 1350 AD, Wang-tayu's Tao-yi-shi-lu, mentions the port of Tabaton. It was identified by Noburu Karashima as the port of Periyapatnam. Chinese pottery chips of the 13th century Lunging ware and blue and white ware of the 14th century Jingdezhen pottery found in the area attest to the flourishing trade between Periyapatnam and China.

7. TRADE SHIFT BAY OF BENGAL TO MALABAR

The rise of ports like Kozhikode and Kochi accelerated the movement of merchants and trade from the Tamil Nadu coast on the Bay of Bengal towards the Arabian Sea region. The capital of the Vijayanagara government was located far inland from the coast. Hence the development of maritime trade in the 14th century required the development of ports here. As this did not happen the Chettians on the coast of the Bay of Bengal shifted their trade to ports on the west coast. They also expanded their trade relations with Arabia. Anbarasan was a Cholanmandala Chettiar merchant. On his voyage from the Red Sea to Malabar he was carrying a heavy load of gold bars and faced the risk of drowning. So he gave most of it to the Samudhri (Chamorin) of Kozhikode for safekeeping of the wealth and gold boxes and left it safely in a specially dug ground for this purpose. On his way back, this merchant gave half of the preserved wealth to Samudri in 1493 AD. But the king refused to accept it, and what to expect from him as a ruler that's what I mentioned I accomplished. Thus, the trade protection measures given to traders from the Bay of Bengal on the Malabar Coast increased the motivation of Tamil Nadu traders to shift their trade there.

A study of the activity that began to develop the lower bank as a port leads us to Anuthokaimangalam, which was a coastal settlement during the medieval period. After the idol of the presiding deity was installed in the village temple, it was called Pilliyar Pattinam. Arab traders, attracted by the pearling operations carried out here, started settling in the area south of Anuthokai Mangalam. They began to call it Keejakarai (a coastal settlement). It arose as a very important trading center towards the end of the fifteenth century. The nearby port of Periyapatnam suffered a decline when Chinese traders stopped coming there. In fact, during the 14th century, the Chinese arrived at ports on the Malabar Coast like Kollam and Kozhikode, which became international ports. Agents from Mecca and traders from Zenta began to exchange their trade here. By the end of the fifteenth century, when trade activities were at their peak, Muslim merchants from the ports of India's south-east coast were sending goods such as pearls and even textiles.

The shift of overseas trade from the Tamil Nadu coast to ports on the Malabar Coast is also likely to have contributed to the decline of overseas trade in those ports in the fifteenth century. In fact, between 1402 and 1433 AD, more than ten government delegations from China were sent to the port of Kozhikode between 1404 and 1433 AD, the Chinese even visited the port of Kochi of Tamil Nadu.

The fact that trade in pearls and corals available on the south-east coast took place at Cochin port confirms the fact that the trade on the Tamil coast was gradually shifted to the western Malabar coast of India. Tamil-speaking Chettiar traders, referred to as Chettiar in Siva documents, were hereditary traders. Cochin and Kozhikode harbours were monopolized by the embargoed pearl and coral beads trade. This further corroborates the view that the trade migrated." According to Chinese documents even textiles were sent from the Tamil Nadu coast to Malabar for export to China. It is a confirmed fact that there was no textile production in Malabar. Birani cloth (bai-lan lu), printed blankets, printed red silk handkerchiefs (xiang- Various types of cloths have been exported to China such as horse, elephant and other cotton handkerchiefs painted on the coast of Tamil Nadu were prepared.

There is solid evidence of medieval maritime trade in the Bay of Bengal, mainly horse trade, carried out by Arab traders from the Red Sea ports of Zenta, Mecca and Moga, and Aden. Even under the Pandyan rulers, horse trade flourished with Persian Gulf ports like Basra, Bandar Abbas and Ormuz. Mombasa, Melende, Mogadishu during this period. There is insufficient evidence to confirm that trade took place between the Bay of Bengal and ports on the East African coast such as Chobala and Mozambique. In the Bay of Bengal Maritime trade in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago in the east ports and undertaken with China.

Ports along the coast of Tamil Nadu became a stopover for ships on the east-west trade routes of the Indian Ocean, and after the transformation of the Tamil Nadu coast into a stopover for long-distance trade in the fifteenth century, its

commercial activities became regionalized. Ports on the coast of Tamil Nadu became stopovers for ships going to the ports of Kozhikode, Kochi and Kollam. Instead of being shipped to the Tamil Nadu coast and exported to China, the spices were exported directly from the Malabar coast. In this situation there was very little scope for trans-sea trade with other ports in Tamil Nadu apart from Palavekadu and Kayal ports. Another important aspect of this development was the migration of the Tamil speaking Chettians and Marakais from the Tamil Nadu coast to the Malabar Coast and established their abode. As the Vijayanagara rule extended to Tamil Nadu, traders were attracted to the island of Sri Lanka and engaged in the trade of precious stones. The arrival of Arab and Ceylon traders connected the Malabar Coast with the Sarvato trade network. So Tamil Nadu was gradually excluded from it at the end of the 14th century, when the port of Malacca rose, Chettiar. Mudaliyar traders started trading there. And they played an important role in the expansion of international trade along the coast of Tamil Nadu. However, the decline in long-distance international trade in the second half of the fifteenth century made Tamil Nadu's maritime relations a regionalized one. Regional trade with Sri Lanka and Malabar began to flourish. Medieval rulers focused only on increasing their government revenue by attracting foreign traders. The Kovilpatti inscription mentions in detail about the 4 cities that existed on the east coast.

Different Traders involved in the trade of various goods gathered at one place. And they formed their own associations. These regional associations were known as Mahanadu Chettiar. An inscription from Branmalai mentions trading groups known as 16 cities that traded only specialized goods. These traders are cloth, betel nut. They organized themselves into a union by engaging in trade in only one commodity like oil." Thus one can see that these inland settlements of trading guilds were urbanized before the arrival of Europeans through overseas trade.

Ravi Arvind Balad and Immanuel Wallenstein have argued that there must have been a world empire and a world economy before capitalism. According to them, the Indian Ocean is an example of global economy. They mention it as far back as 1500. They took into account only up to 1500, when rice cultivation was coupled with the growth of trade and the concentration of the wealthy in the commercialized Chola coastal region. This does not necessarily refer to the growing division of labor that is mentioned in the concept of world economy. The situation in the Bay of Bengal is different from that of Europe. While the capitalist world economy emerged in Europe, it did not emerge in India. Especially here the division of labor required by capital is not a real division of labor. This is the most important aspect of the development of capitalism. So this is the primary question here. Nowhere in Ballard and Wallenstein's study is it mentioned in the Bay of Bengal before 1500 AD. And this is the most important period in the study of world economy.

8. CHOLA TRADE ROUTES FROM CHINA TO WEST ASIA

Global trade emerged during the reign. It should not be considered that every small part of the world is attached to it. Rather, large parts of Asia as a whole can be considered specific. Especially Rajarajacholan (985-1014 AD). The expansion and deepening of trade relations during the reigns of Rajendra Chola (1014-44 AD) and Kulottunga Chola (1070-1120 AD) provided a great opportunity. The potential for this long-distance trade to flourish was based on the rise of a huge Chola empire. The Cholas also developed the transportation facilities and communications necessary for international trade. Maritime trade between the Red Sea, Persian Gulf regions, the Bay of Bengal, Southeast Asia, the Bay of Bengal, and China and the Bay of Bengal became a regular system. It is mentioned that Kulottunga Chola was called the Chola who avoided customs because he abolished customs duties and encouraged trade.

During the Cholas rule, economic revolution in the islands and overseas countries in the fields of agriculture, textile industry, money, shipping and trade was halted. A large amount of money was brought into circulation and a money economy was introduced. This money economy penetrated even the agricultural villages. According to Kenneth-R-Hall, markets (the city) grew too fast and were gradually organized. These features did not provide the necessary basis for the development of capitalism. On the contrary, trade activities developed to the extent necessary for urbanization, which had a major impact during this period. During this period the Tamil community was one of the most economically advanced in the Bay of Bengal region? The same economic system was allowed to continue during the medieval Pandyan rule. However, following a decline in trade with China in the early fourteenth century, the economy stagnated, and Tamil Nadu's economy subsequently declined. Started so, the traders who were engaged in maritime trade here gradually started withdrawing. After that, business in the area became a local one. By the middle of the 15th century this development had become complete. The most important reason for economic decline is the lack of strong political power in Tamil Nadu.

Following the establishment of Vijayanagara rule in parts of Tamil Nadu, the economy began to grow once again, but in a different way. After Vijayanagara rule, urban areas became centers for the accumulation of precious metals, and Tamil Nadu became less important. Metals can also provide more revenue. Pearls became a source of corals. The reason for

describing core and sub-core areas here is to indicate uneven economic growth. An important aspect of the Bay of Bengal world system is that the theory of Ballad and Wallerstein cannot be imported and studied here as a whole because one must distinguish between the relations between monarchy and the modern capitalist system. All world systems have central and subordinate relationships. The question must be posed here. Trading principles are not very satisfactory. And it does not provide a general explanation of the emergence of the global state. Instead, it focuses only on the state that emerges in a particular region. Most recent trade theories suggest that high-quality exchanges for valuable commodities are completely implausible. Even if we assume that the exchange of rice and textiles as bulk commodities, the basic needs of the Bay of Bengal region, cannot play a very important role in the formation of the state, the rare commodity Couldn't understand how exchange could be so important. Andre Gundam Frank argues that only one world system existed for 500 years and now the entire world system is surrounded by its shape.

It was during the medieval period in South India that the upsurge in Burjal Duva appeared. It can also be referred to as the initial period in capital. It was involved only in activities such as the circulation of goods or the exchange of goods, such as commerce. And the seller is not the manufacturer. According to Karlmark, industrial capitalism depends on 3 aspects. The existence of a social organization called the bourgeoisie, which monopolized the products, the existence of wage labor as the basis of production, profit as the driving force in production, and long-term capital accumulation were very common in the coast of Tamil Nadu and its inland areas. It had some distinctive forms, particularly in the textile sector. Like Marx, Max Weber is adamant about the importance of free labor. He also believes that capitalism is not possible without free workers. However, Wallerstein, who belongs to the Marxist tradition, deviates from the Marxist way in some places while describing capitalism in his works. He makes no mention of the need for independent labour. He rejects the distinction between religion-specific commercial and industrial capital. And according to him the so-called industrial capitalism is only a part of the development stage of world capitalism; as far as Wallers is concerned capitalism is only an economic system for the sale of produced goods in markets. And in this its economic objective is only to make profit and raise capital immediately.

Early forms of capitalism which may be called proto-capitalism or embryonic capitalism about can be pointed out here. Although Melerich Taube is a Marxist, he argues that the distinction between merchant capitalism and industrial capitalism is interrelated. He posits that merchant capitalism began to emerge in the cities that arose following the collapse of the feudal system of production during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. For the word capital, the Tamil word for first is used. Also, during the medieval period, the term Kaikolamudi or Mudaliyar was in circulation to refer to the employers of the textile industry. The term Velala mudaliyar was used to refer to large landowners who owned land. The word was also used to refer to those who made their wealth by trading in agricultural products. 'The early bourgeoisie in South India amassed their wealth from trade rather than from production. As in Europe, merchants from various cities invested their capital in possessions. Before the arrival of the European in the Bay of Bengal, one can generally find that the merchant capitalists who emerged in the textile trade began to gain control over production at some point.

Fernand Proteal records the early development points of the beginnings of capitalism. However, he says that it should not be considered as equivalent to absolute capitalism, but rather as a form of raw capitalism. There was no great difference between the development that began after the arrival of the Portuguese in the early sixteenth century and the capitalist development that prevailed in South India before that. Traders focused more on selling agricultural produce. Not luxuries or expensive items. And it was through this that they created the basis for a global economy in the Bay of Bengal.

Capitalism has emerged and expanded and a world order has developed. The global economy of the Bay of Bengal is politically decentralized. And it was linked through the bonds between commodity relations of production and exchange. Capitalism in the Bay of Bengal as a global economy had three important features. It was also the richest region in the world economy of the entire Bay of Bengal due to the highly centralized and powerful economic system that prevailed in the Tamil community. And the high quality textile manufacturing operations produced here were accompanied by this system. Even the most modern technologies in weaving and dyeing were used in the region. Medieval Tamil society had very powerful political and military states like the Cholas, Pandyas and Vijayanagara empires under this world system.

Peripheries of the Telugu country were frequently invaded by the centre attacked frequently by Rajendra Chola in particular. Kulothungachola also invaded the territories of the Kalinga rulers and exploited the economically backward regions of Andhra and Orissa coasts. Industries such as diamond mining to produce goods for sale in world markets were operating in South India under the patronage of the Vijayanagara rulers. Diamonds were also being exported to Europe. However, a flourishing trade in luxury goods was still outside the system. Andhra and Orissa's coastal fringes were

politically and militarily weak, making them vulnerable to Chola invasion. Cholas were the first capitalist state. This would be the first powerful Indian government to establish countless merchant settlements in Southeast Asia and East Asia. By 1350 AD, the Tamil world system had begun to disintegrate as trade relations with China began to deteriorate. Considerably weakened from this it can be seen that a single world system depended on different aspects for its existence at different times. The first phase of world economy capitalism on the coast of Tamil Nadu started from about the tenth century and lasted until the thirteenth century. This is discussed in detail later in this book. As mentioned earlier, the Tamil Nadu medieval rulers focused exclusively on increasing their government revenue by attracting foreign traders. Along with foreign trade, domestic trade also began to flourish in Tamil areas. From this point of view, it would be right to study how the Portuguese rulers in Europe initially penetrated the trade in the Tamil areas in the name of the king and then allowed private traders in the growing trade. It is interesting to research the Portuguese establishing their rule over the sea and their control over the ports, merchants and cargo on the coast of Tamil Nadu. How the Portuguese suddenly invaded the Tamil Nadu coast, and how they attracted Muslim and Hindu traders into their trade, and how the advantages of fitting them into the pre-existing trade network operating along the Tamil Nadu coast, are examined closely here.

9. CONCLUSION

The maritime trade networks of medieval South India reveal a dynamic and transformative era in the region's history. Under the Vijayanagara rulers, the expansion of maritime trade was not merely a reflection of economic ambition but also a testament to the empire's strategic foresight and diplomatic acumen. The empire's development of key ports and its active engagement in international trade facilitated robust exchanges with regions such as Sri Lanka and China, reflecting a period of significant economic prosperity and cultural exchange. The Later Pandyas' revival of trade with China during the Ming Dynasty highlights the shifting dynamics of international commerce. Their adept navigation of the Ming tribute system and the subsequent flourishing of trade relations underscore the importance of maritime diplomacy and strategic trade partnerships in the medieval period. This period saw a peak in maritime trade, with Tamil Nadu emerging as a crucial player in global trade networks, exporting valuable goods such as pearls and textiles.

The shift in trade from the Bay of Bengal to the Malabar Coast marks a pivotal change in the region's economic landscape. As the prominence of Tamil Nadu ports waned, Malabar ports like Kozhikode and Kochi rose to prominence, driven by their strategic coastal locations and the evolving trade dynamics of the Arabian Sea. This transition illustrates the fluid nature of global trade routes and the impact of regional developments on international commerce. The Chola Empire's extensive trade routes established from China to West Asia laid the groundwork for future maritime commerce. Despite the decline in Tamil Nadu maritime prominence by the late 15th century, the Cholas' pioneering efforts in international trade set a precedent for regional economic integration and global trade practices.

In conclusion, the medieval maritime trade of South India was characterized by its strategic significance, diplomatic engagements, and economic transformations. The interplay between regional powers and their global trade networks not only shaped the economic fortunes of South India but also left a lasting impact on the broader history of international commerce. The evolution of trade routes, the rise and fall of prominent ports, and the shifting centres of economic activity all highlight the intricate and dynamic nature of medieval maritime trade and its enduring legacy.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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