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# Practical Cosmopolitans: The Diversity of a Changing Indian Ocean, 1500-1750

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Department: History

Advisor: Haimanti Roy, Ph.D.

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## **Abstract**

The Indian Ocean has served as a catalyst for trade throughout history, connecting multiple cultural and geographical spheres. My goal was to dissect the ways in which social and cultural norms were impacted by the large amount of diversity found within Indian Ocean port cities between 1500 and 1800. Specifically, I chose to investigate the possibility of the creation of a virtue of diversity, similar to the concept of Cosmopolitanism. In this case, this would mean a variety of people who differ in cultural, ethnicity, and religion sharing mutual respect within a particular space. Among the factors which shaped these changing values, I explored the impact of changing European influence and the ways in which it both fit and broke this mould. Within this broad framework, I incorporated a case study focusing on the trade city of Calicut, as well as other ports, to guide my inquiry.



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## **Introduction**

The period from 1500-1750 CE saw immense changes in what was, at least in older perceptions, a timeless system of trading within the Indian Ocean. This system, unrealized by many of its participants, connected together vast regions of the world, including the Far East, South Asia, East Africa, Persia, the Middle East, and ultimately Europe. My goal was to investigate how social and cultural norms were changed within specific port cities due to this interconnected and diverse trading structure. In doing so, I wanted to examine the possibility of widespread cosmopolitan thought existing within port cities like Calicut. Cosmopolitan ideas in this case include the belief in innate human value, and the need to understand others beliefs and viewpoints. Practically, the adoption of these ideas would allow for diverse people, in terms of ethno-cultural background, religion, or appearance to live in harmony within a space, such as a port city.

This thesis paper will be broken down into three chapters which build upon each other with the goal of answering this core question. The first chapter looks at how this system of trade functioned within the Indian Ocean, including how factors such as individuals, states, and methods of exchange have built this structure. This chapter is important to understanding the setting and role of pieces which may point towards diversity.

The next chapter focuses on the historicity of the time period which I am inspecting. Specifically, it inspects the history of Calicut, a port city on the southwest coast of the Indian Subcontinent, its Malabar Coast, which served as a large port for many centuries, and thus is a perfect case study to look for cosmopolitan thought. The information here is based mainly on a variety of the primary source materials which are

available. Many are European accounts, and must be parsed for that perspective. This chapter also includes a focus on the impact of Europeans as they entered into the pre-existing mercantile structure of the Indian Ocean. The role of Europeans stands as a possible antithesis to the relationships built between diverse people in Indian Ocean port cities.

In the last chapter, I discuss the theoretical concept of cosmopolitan thought, as well as how to collect evidence which would point towards the existence of this philosophy. Using this framework, I present instances found within sources which indicate a cosmopolitan school of thought within Calicut, and other analogue Indian Ocean port cities. I analyze each of these examples and make my conclusions about the probability of this concept within port society.

Past research on topics which relate to the Indian Ocean as an entity has varied in its focus throughout time. Previously, many historians concentrated largely on a narrative which explored large-scale political and military changes introduced to the Indian Ocean with the coming of Europeans to the Indian Ocean system. For example, historians in the 1940s and 1950s focused on the European narrative, including the various “landmark” moments which were seen as having the greatest effect on a static Eastern cultural and political structure.<sup>1</sup> S. Arasaratnam in his review of Indian Ocean historiography points out that the historian K.M. Panikkar went so far as to claim that the period after 1500 in Asia was a “Vasco da Gama Epoch”.<sup>2</sup> Historical work from this period saw the Indian Ocean as a space largely disassociated with the native states on land, and instead as a base of operations for the various European powers.

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<sup>1</sup> S. Arasaratnam, "Recent Trends in the Historiography of the Indian Ocean, 1500 to 1800," *Journal of World History* 1, no. 2 (1990), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20078468> (accessed April, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> K.M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance* (London, 1959), 13.

As the discipline has changed, more importance was granted to viewpoints which focused on pre-European and non-European viewpoints which looked more closely at the impacts and agency of native state and non-state power. Overlooked factors in the trading system were brought to light. Many of the authors which I have used for my research use this strand of Indian Ocean historiography. Ashin Das Gupta shows a transitional example of this as he reinforces the importance of Europeans during the period beginning in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century while changing his focus from purely powerful state figures to individual merchants and other contributors to trade. Others like Sanjay Subrahmanyam seem to more fully depart from traditional narratives of a strong European role, emphasizing the place of native systems even after Panikkar's "Vasco Da Gama Epoch".

My research seeks to acknowledge the role of Europeans in changing the Indian Ocean world, while bringing out the social and cultural impacts within particular spaces. This gives a more inter-connected focus unseen in the early historiography of the Indian Ocean. I hope to expand on the themes found by other recent scholars which focus on non-official European actors in trade, and their part in shaping the social aspects of life in this region.

## **Chapter 1: The Diversity of the Indian Ocean**

Trade between what were traditionally considered separate regions, sometimes considered the “East” and “West” by those contemporary to the pre-modern era, had for a long time flourished through the use of the various ports of the Indian Ocean. This area included a vast array of political entities, cities, and peoples who participated in the transfer of many types of goods, such as spices, pepper, and silks. There are a few effects which resulted from this system: First, these many factors combined to create a very complex system of trade. The many influences on the overall scheme of trade meant that outside observers, including the Europeans of the early 16th Century, were met with difficulty parsing it. More importantly for an argument which is investigating the possibility of cosmopolitanism, however, is that the vast extent of areas and goods connected to this network, the methods of trade which were used, as well as the political policies of the states which were involved influenced the development of a concentration of religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity amongst the populations found within particular port cities.

### ***The Three Conjoined Systems of Trade:***

To make an excursion into the many interactions which occurred within the Indian Ocean region at this time, trade must first be defined and also parsed into useable categories. Three main types of trade have existed throughout the length of the system: coastal trade, overland trade and overseas trade.<sup>3</sup> Overseas trade is a focus of many scholars on the subject, and is a key concept in forming the arguments which I attempt to

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<sup>3</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).



build here; however, the other two methods are huge contributors to the commercial system which are important to understanding how the system worked and expose the complexity of the economic transactions which occurred. Both played a role in the supply to, and exportation from, the notable emporia ports of the region, which served as central locations for a variety of goods throughout a sphere or several spheres of trade.

Coastal trade was one of the most traditional and engrained systems of trade found in the region, which gathered and sold goods between two port cities, or amongst several port cities throughout the span of a trade mission. This trade was vital in gathering and distributing both luxury goods as well as the often forgotten, but likely more substantial, food and materials trade. Sanjay Subrahmanyam explains that three characteristics of this coastal trade must be understood<sup>4</sup>: First, it was slow to change, as it was based mainly on products produced broadly across a region, including at small ports and in the hinterland; Second, it was seasonal, based both on the prevailing winds and agricultural production; And lastly, coastal trade was carried out by a huge amount of small trading vessels, as compared to large trading ships often found in overseas trade. These three attributes help to define coastal trade as one of the largest factors in allowing for the overall system of trade to occur in the region. One of the effects of this trade was to allow a concentration of food in the major emporia style ports in the area, which enabled further engagement in trade rather than agriculture. This relationship of specialization between the smaller ports and the larger emporia port cities was the cornerstone of creating a trade-based economy in big ports which supported a diverse population. Beyond this, goods which were likely to be spread throughout a large area of small ports could be collected and condensed by these merchants, creating an economic

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<sup>4</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*, 48-49.

opportunity as middle-men. A last effect was to allow for a significant amount of the population to be employed in this smaller-stakes trade. With a huge amount of participants, as well as smaller ships which held fewer goods, many merchants participated in coastal trade.

Overland trade also formed an important complementary structure within the Indian Ocean trade system. It was carried out by the use of pack animals but even more often following rivers from the coast into the interior. Its purpose, even more so than coastal trade, was to link vast regions of India to major trading centers. This overland trade existed as both a feeder and distributary for goods, connecting outlying areas, typically rural areas or “hinterlands”, to the wider market.<sup>5</sup> Although there is ongoing discussion amongst historians about whether this trade was mostly based on a state-controlled command system or autonomous private trade, the primary effect of both overland and coastal trade is clear: it allowed for increased specialization of different regions within India and the greater Indian Ocean system; for example the mountainous hinterlands of Malabar and Kanara could grow black pepper, a good which could not sustain the population without access to the wider markets of grain and foodstuffs.

Overseas trade existed as the connecting factor between vast regions of the world and the basis for a diversity of goods, people, and ideas within the cities and towns of the contributing regions of the Indian Ocean trade network. The particular ports from which these routes were facilitated changed over time; however their general course and purpose remained somewhat constant for a long time. This form of trade was carried out by both state entities as well as private trade missions.

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<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, 89

## *Participants and Factors in Overseas Trade*

Various people, groups, and other entities were needed to make this system of trade possible within the Indian Ocean network. One group of actors which is of course vital is merchants. The term merchant is definitely vague, and some definitions and sub-categories need to be placed on the term for it to be usable. This included ship-owners of Indian, Arab and Persian heritage, as well as some others. Das Gupta notes that their jobs often revolved more around the knowledge of logistics and economics than of navigation<sup>6</sup>; sometimes the owners would simply send a representative instead of going on the voyage themselves. As previously mentioned, there would be a great difference in the amount of participants and the size of the ships depending on whether the trade was overseas or coastal in scale. A huge amount small craft participated in coastal trade while a more select number of larger craft participated in overseas trade.<sup>7</sup> On each of these ships, however, there may be many merchants of various types along with their wares.

The transport of goods overseas required a large amount of capital to fund and could be difficult to manage, requiring complex systems of funding and cooperation. The amount of logistical work which this sort of trade required can be seen in the many logbooks and other sources which have been left behind documenting cargo, transactions, and travel.<sup>8</sup> Especially during the pre-European period, trade groups, such as the Jewish merchant organizations<sup>9</sup>, worked together to manage operations, maintain

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<sup>6</sup> Ashin Das Gupta, *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 23-27

<sup>7</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*, pg. 49

<sup>8</sup> Cap. William Keeling, *The East India Company Journals of Captain William Keeling and Master Thomas Bonner, 1615-1617*, ed. Michael Strachan and Boies Penrose (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, MN, 1971)

<sup>9</sup> Amitav Ghosh, "The Slave of MS. H.6."

communication, and provide capital for investment in goods. Private and state-sanctioned companies were used heavily by the European powers that later entered the trade network to accomplish similar goals. Examples include the Dutch company *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (V.O.C.) and the English East India Company. These structures grew to serve increasingly more political roles, with the companies serving as quasi-governments in the region in the 18th and 19th Centuries; these European organizations will be discussed more in later chapters.

One of the other major players within the system of trade established in the Indian Ocean, specifically at most major ports in India, was the broker.<sup>10</sup> Brokers served as intermediaries in trade deals between buyers and sellers within each port city, taking a cut of the deal for themselves in return for their services. Their skills were expansive and their services included finding potential buyers and sellers of goods, interpretation, translation, arranging for storage of goods, and representing the merchant to government officials. There were several types of brokers found within the Indian port cities: Some brokers catered to the sale handling of particular commodities, while others provided services for any number of goods. Brokers could be attached to one or multiple merchants; they could also work in an ad hoc style or could be appointed by the state.<sup>11</sup> Usually these brokers were not fully constrained to a particular style of operation or even to purely brokering as work; Pearson explains that those who practiced brokering were very likely to participate in some trade on their own to supplement their income. The use of brokers only increased with the introduction of Europeans to the trade network, as

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<sup>10</sup> M.N. Pearson, "Brokers in Western Indian Port Cities Their Role in Servicing Foreign Merchants," *Modern Asian Studies* 2, no. 3 (1988), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/312591> (accessed 2014).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 459.

many of these new merchants could not speak the language of their business contacts in the Indian Ocean region.

Although different port cities had different traditions related to their system of brokers, one common feature was foreigners settling in the port cities to act as intermediaries and brokers for merchants coming to the city. They had the advantage of both understanding the culture and language of the merchant while being able to serve as a gateway to local contacts, and to facilitate trade for their countrymen. By living in the target port city, they were able to learn its customs and language to assist in business ventures. These groups living in the cities were likely to be the relatives of merchants or members of a trade group. One interesting trait of these settler communities was their relative self-governed status within the port cities, a state that Pearson explains to be “extraterritorial”. Clearly, these foreign brokers would have been extremely important in allowing for the creation of consolidated diversity within Indian Ocean port cities, as they created a permanent foreign presence in the cities.

Pirates and naval powers were also amorphous but important players in the Indian Ocean trade system. Those practicing “piracy” and other maritime-based violence were another huge factor in determining the way trade was carried out. Although many scholars such as K.M. Panikkar<sup>12</sup> and K.N. Chaudhuri<sup>13</sup> claimed that the Indian Ocean was mainly free of political and military schemes of control (especially before widespread European influence), Sebastian R. Prange<sup>14</sup> argues for the importance of

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<sup>12</sup> K.M. Panikkar, *India and the Indian Ocean: An Essay on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History* (London: 1945), 35.

<sup>13</sup> K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 14.

<sup>14</sup> Prange, Sebastian R. 2013. "The Contested Sea: Regimes of Maritime Violence in the Pre-Modern Indian Ocean." *Journal Of Early Modern History* 17, no. 1: 9-33. ; Prange, Sebastian R. "A Trade of No Dishonor:

maritime violence throughout the history of the Indian Ocean. He shows how autonomous, organized bands of maritime raiders had existed in the Indian Ocean surrounding India, as well as in other regions such as near the Malaysian Peninsula, since at least the 13th Century. The “pirate” groups surrounding India included caste-based Hindus and Muslims and were an integrated part of society. Their presence made trade a dangerous affair and required secure ports and ships if it was to be safe and profitable. The importation of mercenaries, such as “Abyssinian” archers, secured ships from the danger of violence.<sup>15</sup> Their appearance in the trade narrative shows the diversity found even in this particular aspect of the Indian Ocean network.

The “pirate” groups found around India participated in multiple alternate professions, such as merchanting and fishing, based on a cyclical schedule. The dynamic of merchant-pirates complicates the traditional narrative of peaceful trade even further, blurring the lines between “parasite” and “economic participant”. Beyond this, these organizations often colluded with polities along the shore, making them beneficial to the rulers of port some cities. Some of these maritime organizations established racketeering-based systems of control which demanded payment for protection from a threat of violence *they* created, similar to the *cartez* system implemented by the Portuguese.<sup>16</sup> More simply, this constituted blackmail with a threat of maritime violence. Oftentimes, these were made in cooperation with rulers of fully fledged land-based states. The power of these groups sometimes grew into the control of states and near-states, spanning areas of sea and land.

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Piracy, Commerce, and Community in the Western Indian Ocean, Twelfth to Sixteenth Century." *American Historical Review* 116, no. 5 (December 2011): 1269.

<sup>15</sup> Prange, “A Trade of no Dishonor”, 1279.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 1276.

Clearly, based on the possibility of maritime kingdoms, political entities which existed in this region could not be judged by the standards of the European idea of the nation-state would be a terrible error. They functioned in a different way and must be considered on their own terms. All of these various kingdoms and political organizations did, however, have huge impacts on the way trade was carried out. The governments of the mercantile kingdoms and city-states of the Indian coast relied heavily upon money collected from merchants which used their ports. These duties were the sustaining factor for these rulers, who typically worked to increase their trade as much as possible. The different locations in which trade was focused before any European participation or intervention are marked with several common traits: First, they usually had fair but strong governments which imposed order over their ports. As mentioned earlier, maritime violence could pose a real problem for merchants, so they often would choose the safest port to avoid risk of capture. This led political leaders within large port cities to focus on creating a just and safe environment to encourage merchants. For example, the British took advantage of the safety factor to increase their traffic; Isack Pyke notes Bombay's strong defenses had made it the preferred port in the region by the 1710s, as both European and native merchant ships had been frequently raided at other ports.<sup>17</sup> The question of safety could often be more powerful than location or the quality of the port. Calicut is a great example of this tendency as it lacks a good, natural harbor, but the just and strong government made it a preferred port for a long time. The largest port cities also seemed to have the precedent of synthetic or at least tolerant cultural attitudes which allowed the largest amount of traders visit their ports peacefully from any region.

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<sup>17</sup> Isack Pyke, *India During the Raj - Diaries and Journals 1750 -1842* (Marlborough : Adam Matthew Publications, 2004), Reel 1.

François Pyrard of Laval notes the effect of both of these factors on Calicut saying, "...it has merchants from all parts of the world, and of all nations and religions, by reason of liberty and security accorded to them there."<sup>18</sup>

### ***The Goods and Places of Overseas Trade in the Indian Ocean***

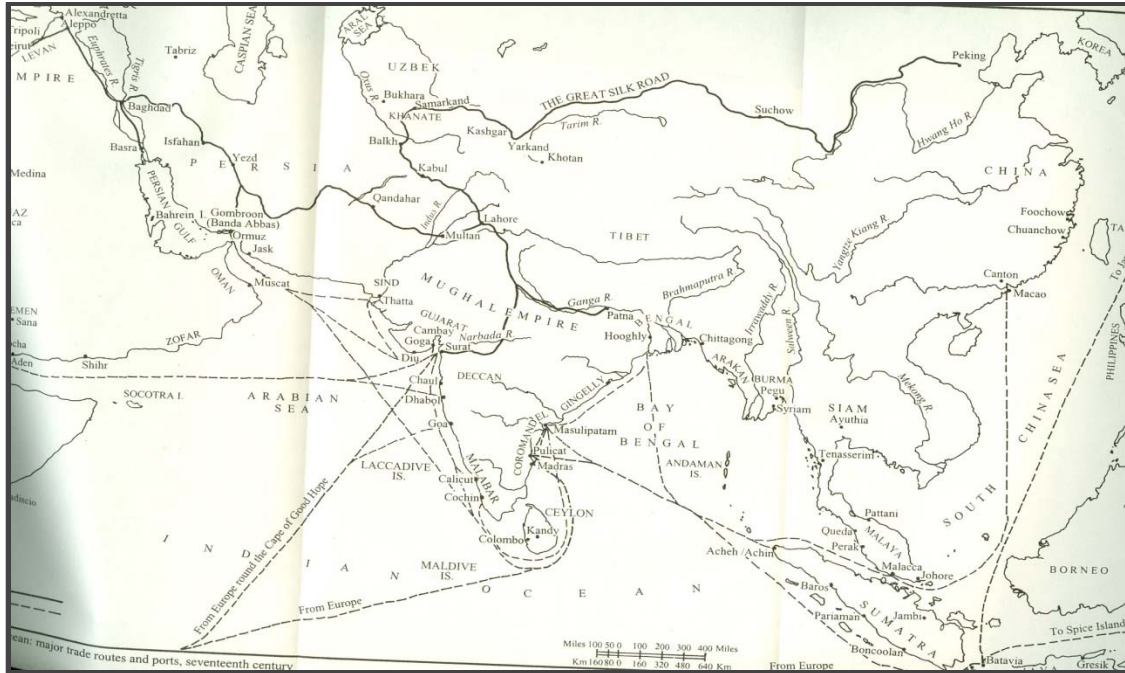
While the participants in this system are the moving parts which accomplished trade, the locations in which they inhabited were both the source of diversity and a point of exchange. The regions which were connected to the Indian Ocean trade network fueled its continued use. Because it constituted such a wide space physically and culturally, these locations were the source of diversity within both the system of trade and the individual port cities which were tied into it. This network is generally divided into two branches: the Western branch extended from India towards the Muslim world within the greater Middle East, while the Eastern branch encompassed the South China Sea and the various lands leading to both the spice islands and the Chinese ports.<sup>19</sup> A map on the previous page illustrates the huge scope of the regions which were connected, each of which provided a variety of goods, as well as the people and ideas which followed these. Some historians argue that this system is composed of four separate cultural spheres: African, Arabo-Persian, Indian, and Chinese. This may, however, be an oversimplification which ignores cultures such as the Malay; it also fuses together multi-cultural regions such as India into a mono-culture. The traits of each individual culture include diverse religions, tastes, preferences, ideologies, and social structures, all of

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<sup>18</sup> François Pyrard de Laval, trans. Albert Gray and H.C.P. Bell, *The First Voyage of François Pyrard of Laval to the East Indies, the Maldives, the Moluccas and Brazil* (1887; repr., Burt Franklin: New York, NY, 1960), 404.

<sup>19</sup> Ashin Das Gupta, *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant*, 35; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*.





which managed to coexist within the port cities of the Indian Ocean. Most important for trade, however, was the vast array of goods which accompanied these regions. This included goods which were luxury goods as well as basic commodities and necessities.

| Regions                    | Goods                              |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Swahili Coast              | Ivory, Gold, Slaves, Raw materials |
| Arab-Persian               | Weapons, Books, Horses             |
| South Asia (India)         | Pepper, Textiles, Rice             |
| Southeast Asia and Islands | Spices (Cloves/Nutmeg), Rice       |
| East Asia                  | Silks, Porcelain, Tea              |

The port cities themselves were impressive; Calicut, a focus of this work, was one of the largest ports for much of the trade's history. A firsthand account from Ma Huan in the 1300s explains, "Foreign ships from every place come there."<sup>20</sup> Other major ports mentioned by authors in the 14th and 15th Centuries included Cambay and Cochin in

<sup>20</sup> Ma Huan, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, pg. 143

India as well as Palembang and areas of Sumatra in present Indonesia. Many ports existed at that point in history, but a detailed description is hard to find within available sources. Safety and tolerance, as discussed above, can be combined with the essential factor of location to form the basis for the creation of mercantile port cities and states. Many primary ports conducted overseas emporia trade as well as coastal trade. Location played a huge role in determining the category of trade a port would cater to. Cities like Calicut, which were established at a waypoint between two spheres of trade, the China Sea and the Arabian Sea, could boast overseas emporia style commerce which brought the widest array of goods to one market. Likewise, a less well-positioned port, or one that focused on production, may serve coastal trade more often.

The various factors which influence trade which I discussed above have shown the complexity of the Indian Ocean system; however, the diversity of the system has been more implied. It is clear that diversity existed within the context of the Indian Ocean, as it spanned a large area which contained many cultures; however, to look for consolidated diversity within the port cities along the Indian Ocean takes this a step further. This puts forward the idea that many of the port cities connected to the web of trade were a microcosm of the Indian Ocean “world”. Using the different factors and players in the Indian Ocean trade discussed above along with particular primary and secondary sources, the idea of the “Small Indian Ocean” found in the largest port cities can be shown true.

The first chunk of evidence comes from the way in which trade operated in the Indian Ocean. Several factors induced foreign traders to settle or sojourn in port cities like Calicut: First, economic opportunities were available in settling in a major emporia port on the crossroads of the overseas Indian Ocean routes. Besides the typical career

possibilities which accompany large-scale trade cities, such as service sector jobs, opportunities which were especially suited to foreigners, such as brokering and local entrepreneurship, were abundant. As previously discussed, brokering often functioned on the basis of common culture and contacts; so, a foreigner could expect business from his former countrymen who visited with their wares. Additionally, seaborne mercenary work saw a great deal of experienced warriors from the Africa and the Arab world. Those who originally filled these economic niches would create a settler community which represented several cultural and ethnic groups within major port cities. Typically these communities “lived in separate and demarcated quarters in the port town in a manner typical of the period...”<sup>21</sup> Other evidence can be seen in Pyrard of Laval’s account, which describes Christian, Jewish, and Muslim sections of Calicut.<sup>22</sup> Other contemporary examples of settler communities, such as the Chinese and Italian enclaves in New York City, show how chain migration based on economic connections forms a basis for expansive communal growth. A similar process is likely to have occurred within the context of the Indian Ocean, although possibly at a slower pace due to the complexity of travel.

Another effect which increased the concentrated diversity of these port cities is dependent on both the impact of the Indian Ocean’s unique physical environment as well as the mercantile traditions which arose alongside them. Sojourning was the popular method of merchants temporarily settling in a city for several months or years to sell their wares. This was practiced by most coastal merchants and some overseas traders.

Chaudhuri illustrates the phenomena, saying “...Western [meaning Arab or Persian] ships

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<sup>21</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*, 96.

<sup>22</sup> François Pyrard, *The voyage of François Pyrard of Laval*, 406-407.

sailing to destinations in the South China Sea... had to wait for several months at safe anchorages for a change of wind. At these junctions...intermediate centres grew up...”<sup>23</sup>

So it can be seen that the foreign population of cities in the midst of the trade routes of the Indian Ocean would additionally grow due to seasonal sojourners, some of which would immigrate to the city for a long time.

The impacts of both a complex trade system and the resulting consolidated diversity make possible the idea of cosmopolitanism within these cities. The active encouragement of foreign merchants by political entities along the coast meant that many foreigners were drawn to these cities, either to trade, sojourn, or settle. With such a mixture of people, including bands of “pirates”, settled Arab brokers, sojourning Indians, and Persian merchants, diversity was the norm; however, in what ways did this fact affect the social and cultural norms of the port cities affected? Were these groups interacting in a way that glorified the idea of “the other”, or did they exist together in a forced and begrudged state?

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<sup>23</sup> K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean*, 103.

## **Chapter 2: Calicut, Trade, and European Escapades**

As the Chinese explorer Ma Huan reflected on his entrance into Calicut during his journey in the early 15th Century, he noted that “This is the great country of the Western Ocean.”<sup>24</sup> Huan had sailed from China with the famous treasure ships of the Ming Dynasty serving as a translator under his commander, Admiral Zheng He. His ability to speak and read Arabic was seen as vital to a successful mission to the west, to spread Chinese influence. Around 100 years prior, Ibn Battuta of the Maghreb made similar remarks about the city of Calicut as he stopped there on his grand voyage, or *Rihla*. He noted that Calicut was, “...one of the great ports of the district of Malabar, and in which merchants from all parts are found.”<sup>25</sup> The fame of the merchants of this city was well-established for Battuta, who noted the vast wealth of both the Muslim and Chinese traders coming to the city.<sup>26</sup>

The city of Calicut, visited by both of these explorers, is located on the southwest coast of the Indian Peninsula, its Malabar Coast. This region consists mainly of coastal areas surrounded by mountains. In the early 16th century, Calicut was possibly largest and most profitable port in the Indian subcontinent. A variety of factors lead to this prosperity: First, its location on the Malabar Coast allowed for its inclusion in multiple spheres of trade. Before the mid-15<sup>th</sup> Century, this included direct Chinese participation in trade. This is evidenced by the existence of Chinese communities and a marketplace for Chinese goods found in Calicut at that time.<sup>27</sup> This direct participation seems to have

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<sup>24</sup> Ma Huan, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 137.

<sup>25</sup> Ibn Battuta, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta*, 172.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 172-173.

<sup>27</sup> V. Kunhali, *Calicut in History* (Calicut :Publication Division, University of Calicut, 2004), 39.

eventually panned out with a more isolationist approach from the Chinese government. China, however, remained an important factor in the trade of Calicut even after its changes in policy as private merchants, especially those from southeast Asia, Indonesia, and India itself made frequent trade missions to the port cities of the Dragon Throne.

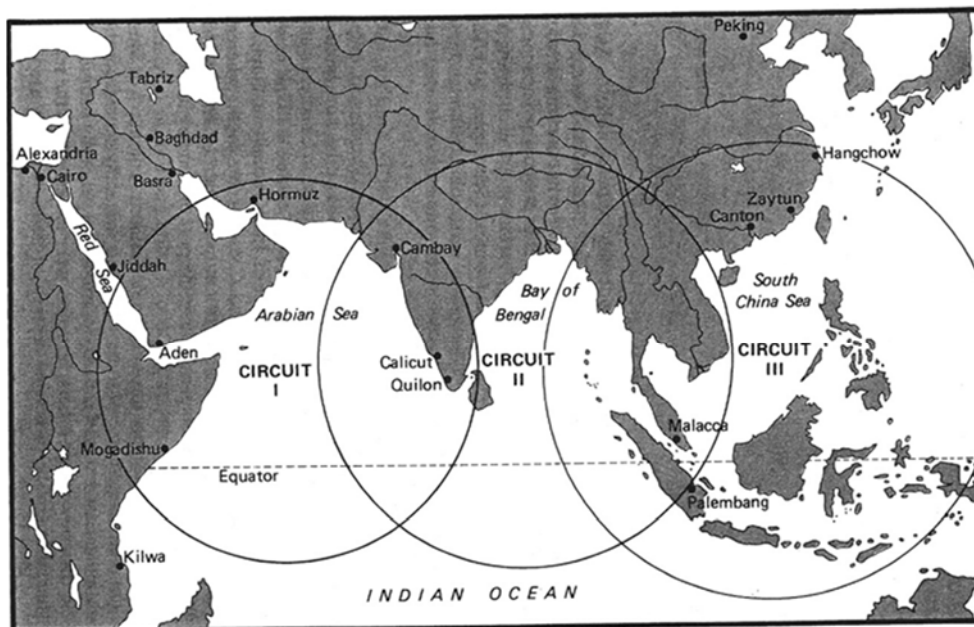


FIGURE 10. The three circuits of the Indian Ocean trade (based on Chaudhuri).

These goods combined with the very profitable rarities of the Spice Islands of the Indonesian archipelago were highly sought after in markets throughout the known world. Meanwhile on the Western sphere of trade, a wide variety of Muslim merchants, including Arabs and Persians, dominated much of the trade. The historian V. Kunhali, in his book *Calicut in History*, explains that this branch of trade, which spanned from Malabar to Arabia, Persia, and the Swahili Coast, or East Coast, of Africa was dominated by the “Pardesi”, which was used colloquially in the Malabar region to mean “foreign Muslims”, and implied Arabic origins.<sup>28</sup> Calicut was able to use this location-based

<sup>28</sup> Kunhali, *Calicut in History*, 92.

advantage to become one of the major Emporia trading centers in the region, trading goods from around the world.

Calicut's own production was another factor in its commercial success. The entire Malabar region was most well-known for its black pepper industry. For example, when Ma Huan, the Chinese traveller, visited Cochin in the Malabar region in the 15th Century, he remarked:

“The land has no other product, [but] produces only pepper. The people mostly establish gardens to cultivate pepper for a living. Every year when the pepper is ripe, of course, big pepper-collectors of the locality make their purchases and establish warehouses to store it; [then] they wait until the foreign merchants from various places come to buy it.”<sup>29</sup>

Cochin's pepper agriculture is a near analogue for Calicut's industry, although Calicut during the early 16th Century paired this with its mercantile influence to bring in an even greater amount of traders. Merchants found in Calicut a source of emporia goods from throughout the Indian Ocean world, as well as black pepper, which was valuable in its own right.

Calicut in the 15th century continued its prosperity witnessed by Ibn Batuta and Ma Huan. In 1498, when Vasco Da Gama of Portugal asked his Indian pilot to take him to India from the East African coast, they sailed toward a city called “Qualecut”.<sup>30</sup> The narrative of Da Gama's first journey focuses mostly on the intricate events which occurred upon the Portuguese party's meeting with the king of Calicut and his officials, which ended with strained tensions over Da Gama's lack of a gold tribute. Da Gama

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<sup>29</sup> Ma Huan, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 135.

<sup>30</sup> Vasco da Gama, trans. E.G. Ravenstein, *The First Voyage of Vasco da Gama* (1898; repr., Burt Franklin: New York, NY, 1963), 46.

contends to the Zamorin, the king of Calicut, that his only goal is to find Christian kings (and Da Gama is convinced that the Zamorin *is* Christian), and not to seek riches.<sup>31</sup> However, it is very apparent from the travelogue, to the same theme as Ibn Battuta more than a century and a half before, that riches were at the *forefront* of the explorer's mind; one of the few descriptive observations of the city taken in the journal, outside of mislabeling Hindus as Christians, is that the city of Calicut is the source of all the spices and various goods which all the world uses, the trade of which was then controlled by the "Moors".<sup>32</sup> Duarte Barbosa, a Portuguese scribe and interpreter, journeyed to India not long after Da Gama in 1500 CE. He is more descriptive of Calicut than Da Gama; specifically he is much more detailed in his accounts of the economic, as well as social and cultural inner-workings of India, and particularly Malabar and Calicut. Likely helped by his ability to understand Malayalam, the native language of Malabar, Barbosa manages to explain the semi-legendary creation story of the kingdoms of Malabar<sup>33</sup> as well as noting the various castes and groups present within Calicut and Malabar more generally.<sup>34</sup> His analysis of the various groups found throughout Malabar is important, beyond correctly distinguishing the Indian Hindus from Christians, because he shows the vast amount of diversity present, noting the many types of native Mapilla and foreign Pardeshi Muslims<sup>35</sup>, as well as noting the presence of Jews, Christians "of St. Thomas", and Christian converts by the Portuguese themselves.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>32</sup> Vasco da Gama, *The First Voyage*, 77-78.

<sup>33</sup> Duarte Barbosa, trans. Hon. Henry Stanley, *A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar* (1866; repr., Elibron Classics, 2005), 102-103.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 103-148.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 145-148.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 154-156.



Non-Portuguese travelers such as the Italian Ludovico di Varthema made journeys to India at this time as well, whether for adventure or profit. These sources give additional perspectives on the commerce and political situation in the region during the early to mid-16th Century. In Vatherma's case, this expedition was the chance to do what had never been done, including going to Mecca and the various pilgrimage cities of Islam. He managed to travel through much of the Middle East and Persia in the first decade of the 16th Century, largely with the help of Muslim friends whom he had convinced that he was a Mamluk Muslim. By insinuating he was a skilled cannoner who could help build arms to resist Portuguese aggression, Varthema was able to find his way to India, including to the city of Calicut. His explanations of the economic and social customs found throughout Indian and in Calicut, as well as explaining the political events in the region at this time, make Varthema's journal a valuable source.

Shortly after the arrival of the Portuguese in India, in the first two decades of the 16th Century, they attempted to establish a foothold in the region, economically and politically. After Da Gama, the following voyages of the Portuguese, including those around and after the time of Barbosa's trip to India, brought with them a methodological attempt by the Portuguese state to establish control of the lines of commerce within and stemming from the Indian Ocean region. This included the creation of fort-factories at Cochin and Cannanore, as well as at some sections of the southwestern Coromandel Coast of India, at places such as Pulicat. Eventually, the Portuguese made their capital of the *Estado da India*, or the Portuguese State of India, in Goa, a city north of Malabar on the West Coast of India. Looking at K.N. Chaudhuri's book *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean*, it is possible to note two distinct goals of the Portuguese in creating this

Estado da India, issuing out from their center of power in Goa: 1) to monopolize the overseas pepper trade and spice trade to Europe, 2) to facilitate inter-Asian trade which was controlled and tolled by the Portuguese.<sup>37</sup> To succeed at the first goal meant to challenge the system of trade practiced by Arab, Persian, and Indian merchants. These merchants wanted not only to sell goods luxury and exotic goods to consumers within their own territories, but also funnelled goods through the Middle and Near East to the Venetians and Genoese for huge profit. This rift between the two groups had been obvious since Da Gama's first entrance into Calicut, as the captain had little trust of the "Moors", which was mutual. For example, in Da Gama's journal, he explains that on trying to leave the city, the Portuguese were met with some resistance. The travelogue says, "...we were well aware that the Moors of that place, who were merchants from Mecca and elsewhere, and who knew us, could ill digest us. They had told the king that we were thieves..." Although Da Gama's claims may be inflated or even untrue, it is shown that the Portuguese were under the impression that it was clear to both parties by the end of that first Portuguese voyage that their attempt to make a claim to trade in the Indian Ocean was at the stake of the oligopoly held amongst the Middle Easterners. The Portuguese then came into direct confrontation with a variety of groups, with naval conflict and control of port cities being a foremost tool. Calicut was one such target, with Varthema stating that the Zamorin and the Portuguese were at war during his time there, in roughly 1506 CE.<sup>38</sup> With this war ultimately forcing concessions from the Zamorin,

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<sup>37</sup> K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean*, 69.

<sup>38</sup> Ludovico di Varthema, trans. John Winter Jones, *The travels of Ludovico di Varthema in Egypt, Syria, Arabia Deserta and Arabia Felix, in Persia, India, and Ethiopia, A.D. 1503 to 1508* (repr., Ashgate: Farnham, Surrey, 2010), 63.

there were of course effects on the Pardeshi traders. Barbosa, in his reflection on Calicut and the Malabar Coast, shows the impact of these policies in Calicut, explaining:

“After the king of Portugal had made himself master there [Calicut], and these Moors saw that they could not defend it, they began to leave the country, and little by little they went away from it, so that very few of them remain.”<sup>39</sup>

Barbosa’s observation is likely mostly true. However, keeping in mind that he was an official of the *Estado da India* means that he was likely prone to exaggeration and an optimistic view of the effectiveness of Portuguese actions and policies. Just around 7 years before, Ludovico di Varthema’s description of Calicut is quite different; it shows Calicut as a place full of Pardeshi traders and merchants from all over the world, listing a huge number of origins and countries, regardless of any conflicts with the Portuguese.<sup>40</sup> In fact, Varthema’s friend says there are over 15,000 Muslims in Calicut at this time, including both foreigners and Malabar natives, which make up the greater part.<sup>41</sup> It is likely there were dramatic demographic changes within Calicut between Varthema’s account and Barbosa’s observations. Beyond this, the continuous wars between the Portuguese and several of the groups within and around Calicut, with the Zamorin shifting between sides, would definitely hurt trade in the region overall. Even Varthema’s Persian companions admitted that trade was much diminished, and possibly ruined, due to the conflicts.<sup>42</sup>

The extent of the Portuguese success in their goals in a longer term scenario, advancing further into the 16th Century, is a contested subject. However, while some

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<sup>39</sup> Duarte Barbosa, *A Description of the coasts of East Africa and Malabar*, 147.

<sup>40</sup> Ludovico di Varthema, *The Itinerary of Ludovico di Varthema*, 61.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ludovico di Varthema, *The Itinerary of Ludovico di Varthema*, 71.

earlier historians in the field may have seen a European controlled commerce system and hegemonic rule as an absolute and a predestined end, many more recent historians, which have been the focus of my own secondary source analysis, make arguments that European success was limited. The *Cartaz System*, used by the Portuguese to expand the claims of the *Estado da India*, attempted to force merchants to register and pay a fee to the Portuguese state in order to operate, with a promise of protection for compliance and a threat of attack for resistance. However, some historians, such as Ashin Das Gupta, show a variety of holes in the system.<sup>43</sup> First, he claims, only larger vessels would have been a focus of the system and the Portuguese enforcement which it required; most small trading ships saw little to no effects from its implementation. Second, he explains that the distribution of *cartaz* passes was used as a political tool and was given out freely to those with whom the Portuguese wanted to gain cooperation or favor. This amongst other exceptions meant that many ships went unchecked, or undetected by the Portuguese state.

Besides the loopholes in the *Cartaz System*, another issue was the failure of the *Estado da India* to implement its monopoly on pepper and spices in the region. Reasons for this are various: For example, Da Gupta,<sup>44</sup> Chaudhuri,<sup>45</sup> and Subrahmanyam<sup>46</sup> all point out the rival system of trading ports which existed, which attempted to continue trade in the region outside of Portuguese control. Another example of this division is described by Ralph Fitch. Fitch was one of the first Englishman to make a trip to India in the 1580s, and although he did not see himself as an author, he eventually did write down the stories of his travels. Through his descriptions, we see the

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<sup>43</sup> Ashin Das Gupta, *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant*, 117.

<sup>44</sup> Ashin Das Gupta, *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant*, 116.

<sup>45</sup> K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean*, 74-75.

<sup>46</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*, 151.

changing world within India which has a system of Arab and Indian traders existent alongside European controlled trading centers. For example, Fitch describes an instance on India's west coast by saying:

“There be two townes, the one belonging to the Portugales, and the other to the Moores. That of the Portugales is neerest to the sea...A little about that is the towne of the Moores which is gouerned by a Moore king...”<sup>47</sup>

Here, Fitch shows how even in the western sphere of Indian Ocean trade, ports controlled by non-Europeans were still able to exist. Looking further in his account, it can be seen that ports such as this were still prosperous and lively, containing goods from throughout the Indian Ocean, such as “Elephants teethe” and “silke”.<sup>48</sup> The existence of these anti-Portuguese ports shows the weakness of the *Estado da India* to enforce its policies.

The wars of the mid-16th Century between Portugal and trading kingdoms of India spelled disaster for trade in Malabar, and Calicut specifically. Portugal's attempts to control the western branch of trade and eliminate the power of various Middle and Near Eastern states to conduct trade in luxuries reduced the overall capacity of this sector of exchange.<sup>49</sup> In addition, due to the continued pressure of the Portuguese navy, the Zamorin of Calicut signed a pact and made peace with the Portuguese. Due to this increased influence of the Portuguese, the port fell out of favor with the Pardeshi Muslims.<sup>50</sup> The Zamorin was eventually convinced, or more likely coerced, to turn on the paramilitary groups which had once been an integral part of Calicut's protection and government, namely the navy lead by the Kunjali Marakkar. This change in Calicut's

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<sup>47</sup> Ralph Fitch, *Ralph Fitch, England's pioneer to India and Burma*, ed. John Horton Ryley (1899; repr., Asian Educational Services: New Delhi, 1998), 58-59.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>49</sup> V. Kunhali, *Calicut in History*, 93.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

policy was observed by a traveller of the early 16th Century named Francois Pyrard de Laval, who witnesses the “piracy” of the Kunjali at their base in a place that Laval called “Montingue”, near Calicut.<sup>51</sup>

Pyrard is an example of the huge influxes of enterprising English and French expeditionaries made their way to the sub-continent and Calicut. Many were company-men seeking the profits promised of the East Indies. In the first decade of the 17th Century, the Frenchman Francois Pyrard de Laval set out as an officer of unknown capacity on French ships headed to the East Indies. While the expedition’s original plans were disrupted by sickness, and eventually a shipwreck which leaves the crew stranded in the Maldives, Pyrard is one of the few to make his way out of the islands and to the mainland of India. Pyrard’s work on Calicut flourishes for my purposes, as he spends a good deal of time observing the city and its social customs. Because Calicut is at this time at peace with the Portuguese, it creates an interesting dynamic which includes Europeans in the traditional social order of the city. In fact, Pyrard contends that, “...everyone lives there in great peace and concord, notwithstanding the great diversity of races and religions of the inhabitants, and of strangers and sojourners; for besides the native Gentiles and Mahometans, there are many Christians.”<sup>52</sup> He also takes note of the several quarters of the city, and how the factions living within each interact with each other.<sup>53</sup>

Just a few years after Pyrard’s trek, William Keeling gives his account of sailing with the English East India Company in the first two decades of the 17th Century. He

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<sup>51</sup> Francois Pyrard de Laval, trans. Albert Gray and H.C.P. Bell, *The First Voyage of Francois Pyrard of Laval to the East Indies, the Maldives, the Moluccas and Brazil* (1887; repr., Burt Franklin: New York, NY, 1960), 336-340, 352.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 404-405.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 407.

sailed with several ships to locations around the Indian peninsula, as well as to the islands of the “East Indies” including Sumatra and Java. By this time, Cochin and other Malabar cities had become much more powerful and more successful as trading ports than Calicut.<sup>54</sup> Calicut hoped to regain some of its ground as an emporium of trade, with Portuguese power weakening. So, it may be unsurprising to note the Englishman’s extremely friendly interactions with the Zamorin of Calicut, who offers the Company many deals to settle a factory in the kingdom, including promises of cheap lead, indigo, and cloth.<sup>55</sup> Although Portuguese ships in the area attempt to attack Keeling’s vessels, he nonetheless decides to leave a factory in the kingdom to represent the East India Company.<sup>56</sup> This shows how the war-torn region, especially Calicut, was attempting to recover as the conflicts with the Portuguese stifled trade. Although the 17th Century saw much reduced trade for Calicut, it did see the return of free and open trade in the first quarter with the decline of Portuguese power.<sup>57</sup> The introduction of more political players such as the Dutch, French, and English to challenge Portuguese attempts at hegemony, a more open system of trade appeared, which saw competition between many European and Indian Ocean powers.<sup>58</sup> One of the big advances in the mid to late 17th Century was the rise to affluence of intermediary ports such as Surat, which became very rich in the transshipping of luxury goods, such as pepper from Calicut, to the western sphere of Indian Ocean Trade.

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<sup>54</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*, 136.

<sup>55</sup> Cap. William Keeling, *The East India Company Journals of Captain William Keeling and Master Thomas Bonner, 1615-1617*, ed. Michael Strachan and Boies Penrose (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, MN, 1971), 130.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> V. Kunhali, *Calicut in History*, 93

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

Moving into the early 18th Century, the amount of routine Company sources increases, although many focus on recordkeeping and economic exchange. In many ways, these companies simply attempted to replace the political systems found within the region to extract porting fees. For example, the journal of Isack Pyke of the English East India Company, which chronicles 1712- 1713 on the ship *The Stinger* shows how the company planned to reinforce their new port of Bombay against pirates and other naval menaces, to attract the trade of regional merchants, such as Banyans and Parsees.<sup>59</sup> Some examples of company documents which are an exception to the purely economic focus do exist, such as Charles Lockyer's *An Account of the Trade in India*, which gives a description of many of the cities along the coast of the Indian Ocean in 1711 CE, including Calicut. Speaking of Calicut at this point he examines a variety of people living in the city. For example he notes, "They have a great many Roman Catholics, and Mahometans among them; the French have a Factory, and the Armenians live up and down the Town in Houses of their own, or Lodgings, as their Occasions require."<sup>60</sup> Lockyer estimates that Surat was the place of most economic importance by this time, discussing in depth the trade and ethno-cultures represented there.<sup>61</sup> However, the self-rule of Calicut comes to an end in 1766 with the invasion of Hyder Ali. This marks the end of the kingdom as a sovereign state, unless you count its inclusion as a princely state under the British Raj in the late 18th through 20th Centuries.

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<sup>59</sup> Isack Pyke, *India During the Raj - Diaries and Journals 1750 -1842* (Marlborough : Adam Matthew Publications, 2004), Reel 1.

<sup>60</sup> Charles Lockyer, *An Account of the Trade in India* (1711), 278.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 257-261.



### **Chapter 3: A Cosmopolitan World?**

The idea of cosmopolitanism is described by the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah as having two strands.<sup>62</sup> First, that we, as people, have an obligation to other human beings, regardless of social ties or other categorizations. Second, that value is recognized in individual human lives, prompting an interest into a particular person's or group's beliefs and practices. Although the first strand is implied in the arguments made in this chapter, it is the second strand which can be more readily found expressed.

Although surveyed throughout time in a changing Indian Ocean world, Calicut is shown by various authors from my period of focus to be a prime example of emporia port life in terms of diversity and the day-to-day interactions between peoples of diverse peoples. While this is not proof itself of cosmopolitanism, it creates a foundation which makes this concept a possibility. Although not a scholar in this area, Maya Angelou observes that, "...by demonstrating that all peoples cry, laugh, eat, worry, and die, it can introduce the idea that if we try to understand each other, we may even become friends."<sup>63</sup> The realities of living in a multicultural city such as Calicut meant that interactions with people who had different beliefs, customs, and appearances were almost guaranteed. If this is the case, bringing into consideration Angelou's implication of human interaction, it seems logical that there is the *possibility* that relationships could form that would begin to connect people and groups which are vastly different, and possibly break down barriers which may have been created which prevented the creation of the values of cosmopolitanism.

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<sup>62</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (W.W. Norton and Company, 2010), XV.

<sup>63</sup> Maya Angelou, *Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now* (1993), 12.

Considering this possibility surrounding the creation of values within Indian Ocean ports, the question remains over how evidence could be accrued for something which is essentially an ideology, especially one which may not be official, not formally recognized, and not universal amongst the population. I used the methodology of finding examples of policies, actions, events, and observations which have a probability of stemming from an underlying ideology of cosmopolitanism and the values which are connected to it. This includes evidence which shows specific interactions between groups, as well as observations of situations and settings which lay the foundation for the growth of cosmopolitan ideas. The context which has been established of the Indian Ocean trading system, which created the localized diversity found in trading ports, is vital to understanding evidence of cosmopolitan thought; the historical and chronological elements which changed this region overtime is similarly important.

Delving into the political atmosphere of Calicut at this time shows the way in which the State actively pursued a more cosmopolitan society. This was mainly due to the particular economic conditions which the kingdom had adapted to over time. Calicut was ruled by the Hindu Zamorin, or king, who ruled a kingdom which had a main source of income based on tariffs put on the import and export of goods, as discussed in the first chapter. To put this source of revenue into context, Sanjay Subrahmanyam explains that by the 16th Century, most kingdoms on the Malabar Coast, including Calicut, had abolished all taxes on trade by land and instead had only taxes on sea trade to support them.<sup>64</sup> This dependence on sea trade guaranteed that a ruler of an emporia trading center needed to continually reaffirm his city's place as an economic center. Calicut's rise to

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<sup>64</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 38.

economic prosperity is likely not based on physical geography, as it does not have a natural bay which would have been convenient for ships to dock or ferry their cargo.<sup>65</sup> Instead, it was matters of policy which secured its place as an economic powerhouse between the 14th and 17th Centuries.

Calicut's economic success was in many ways directly tied to its policies and laws regarding tolerance. The foremost factor in its success, however, was the tight security and prevention of piracy. Creating this security was also a foundation for tolerant policy in the city, however. In this case, a special bond between the Zamorin and Muslim leaders called the Kunjali Marakkar provided a semi-autonomous Mappila Muslim navy for the protection, tax enforcement, and sometimes legal racketeering of the Malabar Coast.<sup>66</sup> This agreement had the additional benefit of helping to ease tensions between the Hindu leadership and the huge Muslim constituency within the kingdom, while also fulfilling the needs of the State in a practical way. The setup described here lasted until the early 17th Century, when the Portuguese "convinced" the Zamorin to turn their loyalties on the group, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Another set of broader policies is shown to be enacted within Calicut by the primary sources predating the 16th Century, including Ibn Battuta and Ma Huan. The diversity which has been shown to be a side effect of emporia trade came with a variety of cultural and religious traditions, along with widespread ethnic differences. Due to this the Zamorins did their part to make Calicut a haven of cultural acceptance in the 14th and 15th Centuries. Ross Dunn, in her analysis of Ibn Battuta's text, explains this set of ideas, saying:

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<sup>66</sup> M.G.S. Narayanan, *Calicut: The City of Truth Revisited* (Calicut: University of Calicut, 2006), 126.

“The Hindu rajas of the coastal states left their Muslim subjects to worship as they wished, indeed encouraged it, since the rulers’ power and wealth depended almost entirely on customs revenues and the profits of their personal transactions in the maritime trade.”<sup>67</sup>

Here Dunn displays the idea that the Zamorin likely was tolerant of other religious ideas in the 14th Century because it was economically beneficial both to himself and his kingdom. Another example of these tolerant policies is recorded by Ma Huan, who says that during the time of his exploits the 15th Century, the Zamorin had declared no eating of beef *or* of pork in the city.<sup>68</sup> It would seem the Zamorin had made it his goal to promote tolerance, and attempt not to separate or distinguish their citizens based on religion. One last example of this in the older texts is the Zamorin’s tendency to hold a variety of Muslims in the position of governmental officials;<sup>69</sup> this included the Ghazis, who spoke on behalf of the Mappila Muslim groups within the city to the government, and were given special privileges for their position.<sup>70</sup> These Ghazis seem to have been an attempt to meet the needs of the largest minority group in the city, by giving them a direct representation in the government.

While all of these examples show a trend in government policy which attempted to create tolerance and unravel any tensions between some groups present within the city, it is, however, unclear to what extent these policies extended into the period during and after the 16th Century. However, some statements by authors during this period can be found which make reference to political leaders attempting to implement policies based

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<sup>67</sup> Ross E. Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 221.

<sup>68</sup> Ma Huan, *An Overall Survey of the Ocean’s Shores*, 138.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> M.G.S Narayan, *Calicut: The City of Truth Revisited*, 124.

on tolerance. Both of the observations come from Francois Pyrard de Laval, whose record of political, social, and cultural interactions are a precious resource in understanding the values held in Calicut at the time of his writing in the early 17th Century, at a time of peace between Calicut and Portugal. His first comment shows the policies of religious tolerance adopted by many of the kings of the Malabar coast at this time. Pyrard explains, “These pagan kings do not try to control religious beliefs in any way within their borders... The king has allowed them [Jesuits priests from Portugal and Italy] to engage in religious conversions without using force.”<sup>71</sup> While this observation of religious freedom discussed by Pyrard in his travelogue shows the way in which many Indian kings, including the Zamorin, allowed the missionary work of Christians, the traveller’s other comments on the subject of religious expression specifically in Calicut in some ways contradicts this while still showing the Zamorin’s support for a tolerant society. Pyrard explains that it was the policy in Calicut that, “...the king permits the exercise of every kind of religion, and yet it is strictly forbidden to talk, dispute, or quarrel on that subject...”<sup>72</sup> Under this approach, it would seem that the Zamorin likely would not have allowed open missionary work or conversion in Calicut, so as not to upset the balance, tolerance, and respect for intellectual boundaries which he had worked hard to create. In fact, Pyrard continues by explaining that, “If by chance there should arise any difference or disturbance on that subject, he who began it would receive corporal punishment, as being guilty of treason, without hope of pardon or remission of

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<sup>71</sup> Francois Pyrard, *The Voyage of Francois Pyrard de Laval*, quoted in V. Kunjali, *Calicut in History*, 40.

<sup>72</sup> Francois Pyrard, *The Voyage of Francois Pyrard de Laval*, 404-405.

sentence.”<sup>73</sup> Therefore, it can be seen that the Zamorin’s main policy related to the subject of ruling a diverse people was to restrict religious exchange, which he likely saw as the most likely place from which social disruption and division could extend.

These policies implemented in Calicut and the port cities of the Indian ocean present the possibility that the influence of government could slowly create a feeling of shared citizenship by minimizing social disruption due to religious or cultural differences while focusing on the civic connection. However, practices put in place at the highest level do not always transmit into understandings and virtues amongst citizens, and definitely not always throughout all sections of society. To more thoroughly investigate the possibility of a cosmopolitan virtue of diversity in Indian Ocean ports, it is necessary to find evidence and observation of actual social practices which point towards cosmopolitan philosophies amongst the various people and groups.

Many sources mention the adoption of customs from one group to another within Calicut. Duarte Barbosa is the first to note this trend, examining that, “These [Muslims] follow the Heathen custom in many ways ; their sons inherit half their property, and their nephews [sister’s sons] take the other half.”<sup>74</sup> This observation by Barbosa is reinforced by the findings of Narayan, who found that many Christians and Jews in the city also followed this custom.<sup>75</sup> In addition, Narayan notes that Muslims in Calicut were barely distinguishable from Hindus at all; “they lived rich and well, and used the same language.”<sup>76</sup> All of the above cases could be described as indicators that cosmopolitan ideologies were existent in Calicut during the early 16th Century. However,

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Duarte Barbosa, trans. Mansel Longworth Dames, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa, Vol II.* (1921, repr., Nendeln/Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint Limited, 1967), 74.

<sup>75</sup> M.G.S. Narayan, *Calicut: City of Truth Revisited*, 148.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 147.

noting that all of the adaptation which is described occurs by a minority adopting the customs of the Hindu majority, it could be seen as acculturation, a phenomena which by way of social pressure and potential economic gain pushes smaller groups to adopt the practices of the larger group in a society. This same situation can be seen in the adaptation of immigrants to the norms of a host country in contemporary society. Pure acculturation stands outside of true cosmopolitan adaptation because it is not based on the idea of universal humanity, but is instead a socio-economic phenomena; it affects only the minority, while the position of the majority is strengthened.

However, Pyrard de Laval returns again as the author who focuses the most on the social interplay within different groups, openly describing what can be seen as very convincing evidence for a cosmopolitan ideological root in Calicut. Overall, Pyrard's observation was that there was "... No place... where contentment is more universal than at Calicut... of the intercourse with men of all races, who live there in free exercise of their own religions."<sup>77</sup> The willingness of interaction between people of very different backgrounds expressed here by Pyrard is a key piece of evidence for the possible existence of cosmopolitan thought in early 17th Century Calicut. Pyrard goes on to give specific examples of the attitudes seen amongst groups in Calicut, as well as the application of these ideas by stating, "... Nairs, Malabars, and Mahometans, as all manner of foreigners, who are welcomed there.... here you see all sorts of temples and Pagodes, large and well built, for all the several religions..."<sup>78</sup> According to Pyrard, not only were the people of the city welcoming to foreigners of any variety, they also allowed them to build places of worship and other important buildings which celebrated their cultures of

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<sup>77</sup> Francois Pyrard, *The Voyage of Francois Pyrard de Laval*, 366.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 402.

origin; the building of diverse temples which celebrate difference goes against the evidence which suggested acculturation from earlier sources. One last citation from Pyrard's journal shows how intimate connections between diverse peoples could be. He observes, "The Christians all have their houses in the same quarter...[although] even in the same house will sometimes be found inmates of different religions."<sup>79</sup> The establishment of personal connections which extend beyond cultural backgrounds and religious convictions is another clear piece of evidence which supports the possibility of cosmopolitan philosophies amongst the populous of Calicut.

Overall, Francois Pyrard de Laval presents a strong argument for cosmopolitan ideas through his observations. The question that remains is whether the source is reliable. Pyrard spent a total of eight months in the city, definitely a good enough time to get a feel for the basic social structures and interactions which were present in everyday life. Beyond this, Pyrard had the ability, as a Frenchman, to announce that he was an enemy of the Portuguese, against whom most in the city would be very bitter, after being beaten following a string of devastation wars. This connection with the inhabitants of the city may have allowed Pyrard to be more able to participate in the lives and happenings of the civilians. Pyrard was also likely more willing to note the exchanges occurring as well due to the inclusion of Christians. Lastly, the lack of other texts available which are so blatant and outspoken about these sorts of interactions within the city may be due to a lack of time spent in the city, a lack of detail given in its description, an apathy toward the engagements of normal citizens, or could be simply a product of the language barrier, with additional sources in native languages of India full-well describing these connections.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 406.



Another factor in determining the possibility of cosmopolitanism is to look at the role of Europeans within this Indian Ocean system, and the ports which it connected. If these bonds and philosophies *did* exist in ports like Calicut, were Europeans, who in many cases had different goals than those in the region, able to integrate? It is important to note the actual effects of European states' influence and presence on the trade which merchants undertook in the Indian Ocean region. Historians such as Subrahmanyam argue that the Portuguese up until 1550 basically integrated into the existent structure, with their changes being overall a minor tax, although a tax which was sometimes, but not always, sought out with force.<sup>80</sup> Other scholars such as Dr. M.N. Pearson reiterate this idea, by stating that the Portuguese should be seen as closer to being a part of the system already in place.<sup>81</sup> The European states can be seen as different from the goals of those in the Indian Ocean region in a few ways: 1) that their geographic location was farther removed from the region than previous powers influencing military and economic control, 2) their economic goals *from the beginning* included cornering the market by limiting competition, namely the various traders who corresponded with the Middle and Near East markets, and 3) Much of their policy *from the beginning* was directed by strong central states or companies. These differences are in many ways what made their strategies stand out and were the link to some of their success.

However, regardless of the role of European states, the individuals from Europe who came to India did not always follow the same logic. Many integrated into the existing system of trade and adopted customs of the local populations. Das Gupta explains that these "unofficial" Europeans, especially amongst the Portuguese, had a

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<sup>80</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*, 108.

<sup>81</sup> M.K.S. Narayan, *Calicut: City of Truth*, 195.

huge effect on the region and were present throughout Indian Ocean ports, playing the same merchant roles as the native Indians or Arabs.<sup>82</sup>

With the example that many Europeans were able to integrate into existing patterns of trade, the question of how the groups found in Indian Ocean ports interacted is nearly complete. I see three possible outcomes to this question. Either: 1) Diverse groups operated within the Indian Ocean purely out of economic necessity, while retaining all of the traditions and cultural customs of their past, and with possible open opposition to groups which were different than their own; 2) True cosmopolitanism existed in most cases, with respect and understanding being a key aspect of the interactions between groups and individuals; or 3) In many cases a middle-ground existed which was supported cooperation based on economic success and in some instances led to the creation of cross-cultural connections and cosmopolitan ideas. It is this third instance that I would argue seems most likely for Indian Ocean ports in the 16th to early 18th Centuries. The intricate and complex economic exchanges within the region seen in the first chapter show the cooperation was a vital element to the success of a trade system in the Indian Ocean. Even with the examples of resistance to this cooperation by the European states evidenced in chapter two, many groups and ports continued to work towards mercantile success, including groups with diverse background as well as defecting Europeans. Lastly, the examples of direct policies of tolerance implemented by the Zamorin, alongside evidence of both acculturation and, as shown by Pyrard, possible true cosmopolitan thought shows that at the very least a practical system of cooperation and the possibility of cosmopolitanism was one of the key principles of life in Calicut.

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<sup>82</sup> Ashin Das Gupta, *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant*, 227-231.

## **Conclusion**

My goal throughout this research life within Indian Ocean port cities has been to investigate how history has affected change within the lifestyles of individuals and groups. However, to fully expedit these influences, I delved deeply into the historicity, complexity, and diversity of the Indian Ocean. I have tried to create a complete picture of the environment within the broader system of the Indian Ocean, as well as within Calicut on a more specific level. Building this context allows for thorough argumentation which does not exclude huge aspects of life in this region, or denies recognition of the many systems of exchange within the Indian Ocean.

The search for cosmopolitan thought was my ultimate aim within my exploration of the various sources which describe the Indian Ocean exchange and the port cities within it during the time period of the 16<sup>th</sup> to mid-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries. The idea of “cosmopolitanism”, which has generally seen as a product of modern globalized economics, “Western” political systems, and liberalized cultural interaction, seems unlikely to apply to this particular setting from a spectator-perspective. Therefore, I made it a goal to challenge these understandings and search for evidence which gave an example outside of convention.

While an undisputed claim of Calicut existing with a widespread cosmopolitan philosophy may be beyond the reach of the evidence available, and beyond the scope of this analysis, the evidence points in many ways to this as a possibility within a larger scheme of economic codependence or shared prosperity. Whether social norms evolved from this foundation of cooperation will need additional research in the future. With the addition of native language sources, a vast array of insight could be produced on the

nature of interactions between the many diverse people and groups which were present in this space.

What is more certain, however, is that trade systems in the region adapted continually throughout the long decades of exchange on the Indian Ocean, allowing the addition of extensive peoples, including even many Europeans, to enter into an environment and become a part of society. While their roles and relationships with other groups changed often, the foundational aspect of interactions between increasingly diverse peoples with many goals remained constant, and is a testament to the probability of cosmopolitan ideas within many of the Indian Ocean ports.

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