

HIS5B07 KERALA SOCIETY AND CULTURE: ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL

MODULE-1

TOPIC-ARAB-CHINESE ACCOUNTS

PREPARED BY

PRIYANKA.E.K

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

DEPT OF HISTORY

LITTLE FLOWER COLLEGE

GURUVAYOOR

- Trade relations – b/w Kerala & Arabs- ancient period onwards- accounts were available about trade contacts
- Sea trade was controlled by Arabs & Chinese
- Arab accounts- b/w 8th & 12th C- provide information about Arab as well as Chinese trade
- Also provide information about culture also
- Kerala – intermediary b/w east & west
- These travel accounts call Kerala as ‘Manibar’, ‘Malaibar’ – known as land of pepper

- Important ports – Ezhimala, Valapattanam, Panthalayani kollam, Kappad, Kozhikod, Chalam, Kodungallur, Kochi & Kollam
- Principal goods exported- pepper, ginger, cardamom, sandalwood etc
- **ARAB ACCOUNTS**
- Arabs- great demand for pepper & cardamom
- Arab traders from-Morocco, Trippoli, Tunisia etc
- Trade relations b/w Kerala & Arab started after the establishment of Arab Caliphate

- Arab accounts – 9th CE onwards
- Earliest Arab writer- Sulaiman an Arab merchant
 - 851 CE he visited Kerala
 - but another opinion he did not actually visited Kerala & wrote on the basis of second hand information
 - –observed Quilon was the ‘most considerable port in South India at a time
- account about Arab relations- Arab work – Sisilat-al-Tawariq-by Abu Zayd
- Ibn Khurdad Beh-’ Kitab-al-Masalik’- 9th C Kerala
 - travel route b/w Europe & Asia- guide for future travellers & traders

- refer to Malabar coast & export of rice to Ceylon from Valapattanam in North Malabar
- high official in Arab Caliphate & able to make contact with traders
- give importance to geography, climate & everyday life of people of Kerala
- vivid description about pepper plant & role of climate in its cultivation

- Abu Zayd- compiler of Sulaiman's account- wrote about Kerala
- Persian geographer & traveller of 10th C-first writer to mention about Chaver Patayalikal of Kerala
- Other writers- Ibn-al-Fakih, Ibn-Rusta, Al-Masudi- refer to Kerala in 10th C- among them only Al-Masudi alone actually visited Kerala-most of other writers only repeat the statements of Sulaiman & donot furnish any fresh informations

- Al-Idrisi- Moroccan-12th C-about Malabar- coastal towns & customs- calls Malabar as 'Malai' & reports about the places like Fantarina(Pantalayini Kollam), Balipattom(Valapattanam), Srikantapuram
- To him Fantarina was the important city of Kerala- shows the change of port trade from southern Kollam to Northern Kollam by 12th C
- Other writers- Al-Kwazini- Arab geographer, compiled his work by the information from other authors & wrote about Quilon

- Dimishqi (1325AD), Abdul Fida (1273-1331 AD)-wrote about Malabar of 13th & 14th C
- Ibn-Batuta-14th C- Moroccan- account of foreign trade-visited Calicut 6 times & wrote about its king, port, people etc-also visited Quilon- “one of the finest cities in Malabar with magnificent markets & wealthy merchants”- refer about pepper trade-huge Chinese ships on the port-among writers he is more objective, reliable & accurate-given an eyewitness account of Arab muslims seen at Kannur, Pantalayini Kollam & Calicut

□ **CHINESE ACCOUNTS**

- Brisk trade b/w Kerala & China- pepper, cardamom, coconut, arecanut to China & imported Chinese silk, wares, copper, mercury, lead etc
- Trading centres- Pantalayini Kollam, Calicut, Quilon
- Chinese had separate settlement at Quilon
- Wang ta Yuwan-Chinese merchant –Tao-i-Chilio(Description of Barbarians of Isles)- eyewitness accounts of places like Kayamkulam, Mount Eli, Calicut

- Ma Huan-C15th C-Chinese muslim trader- visited Kozhikode, Kochi, Quilon-report on Chinese trade- records Chinese traders brought pepper from chettis of Kerala –description about port of Calicut- first foreign traveller refer to Kochi
- Chou-ju-Kua-12th C-states traders in Kerala were honest –kerala exported spices,clothes, pearls to China-important ports Pantalayini Kollam, Quilon, Mangalapuram- met traders from different parts of world