

# The Commercial World of the Tamils before the Arrival of the Portugueses

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## ARTICLEINFO

## ABSTRACT

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 article. 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.

**Keyword:** Cholas, Pandyas, Pallavas, Coastal trade, Portuguese, Chinese, Tamil Nadu, Territories, Sampurvarayas.

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## INTRODUCTION

Geographically, the Bay of Bengal is located in the centre of the vast Indian Ocean. It played an important role as a meeting point and transit point for the long-distance maritime trade between India and the coast of the Midlands. The east coast of India became famous for its valuable exports such as pearls, corals and textiles. Ptolemy notes that the maritime areas of the east coast of India were interestingly important. Pearl from a Pandyan king in the second half of the first century BC. A portion of the Hatikumba Sasana of Karavelak mentions the Kalinga king's purchase of precious stones and ornaments. Through this we can know that domestic trade was also very prosperous at that time.' The depredations of Kalaprara and the subsequent decline of the Roman Empire led to a decline in overseas trade, which was restricted from the Tamil Nadu coast. In the period that followed, trade with the Chinese revived long-distance trade. Various seaports emerged on the coast of Tamil Nadu due to the maritime activities and trade carried out in the East-West trade zones. But nowhere in this did the Chinese establish their trading settlements.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main Objectives of the Study are to highlight,

1. This study explains how the commercial world of the Tamils came before the arrival of the Portuguese.
2. Later on the overseas trade with the Chinese describes how the Pallavas, Cholas, Pandyas and government emissaries made efforts to promote their maritime trade.
3. DescribesthecomfortablelifestyleofthePandyasandthepolicies theyestablisheddue to the development of sea trade with the Arabs.
4. Who are the Marakais? To describes their growth and rise in coastal trade.

5. Describes how interregional maritime trade flourished under the rule of the Telugu Cholas and Sampurvarayas in Tamil Nadu in the twelfth and 14th centuries.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Already there are some books which have been written on this topic. However this topic is just different from others.

The works like 1. George. W. Spencer, the Politics of Expansion: The Chola Conquest of Sri Lanka and Srivijaya, Madras, 1983.

2. Tansen, 'Maritime Relations between China and the Chola Kingdom, AD, 850-1279', in K.S. Mathew (ed.), Mariners, Merchants and Oceans: Studies in Maritime History, Delhi, 1995, pp. 25-42.

3. 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.

### METHODOLOGY

Historical, Analytical and Questionnaire methods are used for writing this article

### THE EFFORTS OF PALLAVAS, CHOLAS AND PANDYASASEMBASSIES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF OVERSEAS TRADE WITH THE CHINESE

A study of the earliest contacts of Tamil Hindu traders with Chinese ports dates back to the Pallava period. The Pallava king Narasimha Varman III(84-66 AD) sent ambassadors to the Chinese court with gifts such as talking parrots and leopards.' Along with these developments, a guild of Tamil Hindu merchants was formed during this period that also traded in the ports of Far East and South East Asia. In fact, during the reign of Narasimhavarman III, the Tamil traders association of Manigram established a trading settlement at Taguva-pa.' The Bay of Bengal, the centre of the eastern Indian Ocean, was the most important part of Tamil merchant trade with Southeast Asia. Agricultural expansion and steady growth in the production of non-agricultural commodities during these centuries of Pallava rule had innumerable effects on their political system. Spices, rice and textiles are the exports. The Tamil Nadu coast developed during this period by playing an important role in the trade between the various trading ports of Far East and South East Asia. This maritime trade across the Indian Ocean depended largely on the climate and agriculture of the Tamil Nadu coast. Maritime trade from the Tamil Nadu coast across the Indian Ocean depended mainly on climate and agriculture, as Fernando Brauthal calls the harmony between nature and human existence, unaffected by external conditions. The Cholas Empire, which was a powerful empire in Tamil Nadu in the 10th century, witnessed the rise of the Tamil Nadu Coast. Southeast,

The policy of the Cholas, who were engaged in trans-oceanic trade with Asia, was an important feature of this period. The port of Nagapattinam, located in the river basin of Uppannad, flourished during this period. The Sudamani Vihara construction at Nagapattinam confirms the presence of traders from Southeast Asia. A donation to this Buddhist temple by Raja Chola (985-1014) in AD 1006 is mentioned in the Cependes. And it is well known that the temple was funded and supported continuously during the reign of the Chola ruler Kulothunga (1070-1120).' Another important source that sheds light on the expansion of the Cholas is the naval attack by Rajendra Chola (1014-44) in 1025 AD on Sangama Vijayatungavarman, king of Srivijaya (Java). The Chola ruler Suryavarman I of Java, daughter of the usurped Malay king Tambrilingal, had matrimonial relations. In 1067 Chola kings plundered Kheda (Malaysia) from Tanjavur inscriptions.

As mentioned in the Chinese documents, the port of Nagapattinam was one of the main ports of the Cholas. Chinese coins found between 1942 and 1944 in Pattukottai taluk in Vikraman village, an inland part of Nagapattinam, reinforce this fact. Spices and aromatics from Malabar were continuously arriving at Chola coast for export to China. An 11th century inscription of Rajendra Chola mentions that Nagapattinam had 87 three-quarters of gold brought from China." The inscription also mentions that Chinese gold was gifted in lieu of funds. The temple at Nagapattinam harbor was named Kidaratu Nayanar (Chief Merchant of Kheda). It is mentioned that the named dealer gave the gift. The name of that merchant named Srikukutan Koval Akralegai is mentioned.

In 1088, members of the Five Hundred Sangha established a settlement at Labo Towanear Warosu, Bansur, and Sumatra. Even in the Far East the Cholas adopted a policy of maritime exchange. Chinese documents mention four different groups being dispatched from the Tamil Nadu coast. In 1015 King Rajarajan sent a team. Two groups were sent in 1000 AD and 1033 AD during the reign of Rajendra Chola. And in 1077 AD during the reign of Kulothunga Chola a team was sent. Actually AD In 1206 the port of Kollam was brought under the control of Kulothunga Chola. Therefore, the spices required for export to China were easily brought to the Chola coast. These undisputed facts confirm that the boundary of the Tamil Nadu coastline extended up to the Kollam port in the medieval period. A naval attack by the Cholas against the Srivijaya kingdom in South-East Asia draws our attention to the extent of the new power that arose in the middle Ages. Raja raja

Chola's naval expansion led to the suppression of the Srivijaya ruler and the establishment of control over trade in the Malacca Straits and Chanda Islands.

The marauding politics of Rajendra Chola from the Tamil Nadu coast is also mentioned in inscriptions of this period." Along with trade representatives, the king's private ambassadors were sent with gifts. Chinese documents refer to them as Chozhi Sanvan (Chola leader). At one time 21,000 tall pearls, 60 lumps of gum and 60 pieces of ivory were sent. Another time was a private messenger named Chozhi Samudra (Chola Samudran). 6600 tal pearls, 3300 lumps of gum, He also provides perfumes and medicinal herbs. This time mention is made of Tamil Nadu having settlements in Kwanga (Kandol) and Kiangka (Saidon) in China. Also Ahua Quipped mentions the Cholas in the twelfth century in his Vinglai Taitai. Saho-Rukua mentions the Cholas (Zhullon) in his Note on the Neighbours (Zhutan-Zhi) in 1225 relatively expensive. The Tamil Nadu coast had the capacity to support a large volume of international marketable goods that could be exchanged for gold, such as agricultural produce and highly competitive manufactured goods such as textiles.

A Chinese document dated 1280 AD mentions the king of Kollam as Pandyar. In fact it was Maravarman Kulasekaran I who annexed Kollam territory and its port to Tamil Nadu. It is mentioned in inscriptions found on the coast of Muthukulukum that the first Maravarman Kulasekaran was known as Kollam Kondan/Seranai Sathanan (meaning the conqueror of Kollam or the conqueror of Cherana). After that the port of Kollam started to prosper. It also became a destination for Chinese tourists. In the same year 1280 the Chinese emperor sent a fleet and invited the Pandya ruler to develop maritime trade with his country. It is known that the government of Maravarman Kulasekharapandian had strong trade relations with China. A Pandyan ruler several times in eight years, only in the brief period between 1283 and 1291. The Chinese emperor also exchanged ship blocks. Inscriptions of the reign of Maravarman Kulasekaran mention the establishment of Pandya's rule on the Malabar coast, including Kollam. In 1279 a government delegation reached China with a live rhinoceros and elephant. It was greatly appreciated by the Chinese rulers. For this, A delegation sent by the Chinese emperor as a tribute reached Kollam in 1280. Then in 1281 Sambandha Perumal, who went to China with local traders, installed an idol of Lord Shiva in the temple at Kianga. A Tamil Merchants' Association was also established at the famous port at Kiam. Haraprasad Roy, who uses Chinese documents, thinks that the Sambandha Perumal mentioned in the Tamil Nadu inscriptions may have come from the Kumbakonam area. It is a doubtful one. Because the name Perumal comes after the name of Pandya or Chera rulers. But it does not come after the name of the Chola kings. There is another reference to the Chinese emperor being sent in 1284 a shipload containing precious stones, cloth and other goods from the Pandyan court. In response, the Chinese sent a fleet in 1285 to obtain more supplies from the Pandyan court.

Pandyar's third fleet reached China in 1286 and delivered rewards. In 1287 a fleet including a strange animal was again sent to pay homage to the Chinese emperor. In 1288 another fleet arrived in China from the Pandyan court. The following year in 1289, two zebras were presented to the Chinese emperor as a gift. In response, in 1291 the Chinese emperor sent a fleet of two high-ranking officials to the Pandyan court. Later in 1296, the Chinese emperor sent more ships to the Pandyan court. Again in 1297, the Chinese emperor sent the Pandya ruler two precious stone medallions as a gift." All these contacts, however, remained primarily governmental. It paved the way for the establishment of trade relations between the two countries in the early days. Government delegations often reached China via Java." King, Jayanagara Sundarapandian was distinguished by the name Devadeeswaran. This sheds light on his contemporaneous political connections with the Pandyan kingship of South India. Java was an important meeting point in medieval trade. In the Nagarakirthakama (1365) of Prapancha, there is mention of a large number of fleets constantly approaching Java from the Pandyan coast.

Chinese documents from the end of the thirteenth century mention a ban on the export of gold, precious metals, and other valuables from China to the ports of the Pandyans." Important exports from the Pandyan coast included pearls and perfumes. A Chinese document named Sufan-Chi states that the value of a pearl is acceptable only if it is perfectly round. It was common practice to keep the pearls rolling on a plate to ensure that they were kept hidden in the handles of their clothes thereby escaping China's heavy duty on pearls." Chinese traders landed at the port of Kayal for the first time on India's southeast coast. They then proceeded to the west coast to reach the port of Kollam." This is mentioned in documents from the Yan (1281-1368) and Ming (1368-1500) periods. Panhai-Chi Hich in his note in 1304 mentions Kaial port as one of the ports that traded with China. The last delegation from China was Pandiya sent to the court in 1314 and response the Pandya ruler Kayal.

A delegation was sent from the port as a tribute to the Chinese emperor." In Ming documents the backwater port is referred to by various names such as Jiayi, Jia-Yijing, Jiacheng and Jiayil. The entire southeast from Suvarnabhumi was called this. The merchants who came brought gold bars with them to the Tamil Nadu coast. The Chinese emperors also received gold in the same way. Trading became a very important requirement. Gold was added to the imperial seal to attract foreign merchants." As a result, large quantities of gold from China arrived on the Cholamandala coast. Nagapattinam, a major port, flourished throughout the thirteenth century. Chinese traders called this port Na-Keap-Pat-Dana. The Chinese Pagoda was built here in 1267 AD because of the remarkably large number of Chinese in the Naga Famine. Hoards of Chinese coins with square holes in circular copper have been found in Talikottai Olayukunnam, an inland part of the Tamil Nadu coast. All this ensures that between 713 and 1275 AD there was a flourishing trade between China and the Tamil Nadu coast. After the fall of the Cholas, the Chinese stopped coming to these ports.

## **THE DEVELOPMENT OF MARITIME TRADE WITH ARABIA WAS THE MONOPOLY OF THE PANDITS**

Following the rise of Islam in the seventh century, Arab Muslim traders came to the coast of Tamil Nadu to trade and settle. They also established matrimonial relationships with local Tamil women. They were naturally more interested in seafaring and ocean trade than becoming landholders. They noted the seasonal sea character, tides and trade conditions along the Bay of Bengal. Also during the southwest monsoon they sailed from Sri Lanka to Bengal from June to September. Also during the Northeast Monsoon, they sailed from India to Sri Lanka from October to February. In the thirteenth century, the port of Kayal began to develop into an international port. By conducting long-distance trade with West Asia. And more importantly, by importing horses from Hormush and Aden, the land became more prosperous under Pandyan rule. West Asia. Before all the ships coming from various ports like Hormuz and Aden passed through, Qayal Port was the most important port of call. By the end of the thirteenth century, thousands of horses were imported through this port and shipped to Madurai. A horse was bought for 500 sagi. It is equivalent to 220 dinars or red gold. Another document mentions that 16 thousand horses were brought here in one season. There was always a greater demand for horses than imported horses as most of them died during the transport of horses. However, as per the terms of this commercial contract, the importer had to pay the full amount. It was given from the treasury of the Pandyas. Various agents, Brokers and traders were involved in this horse business. Also traders belonging to the Chettiar community became famous in horse trading. Hence the inscription mentions that there was a sect known as the Horse Chettiars. Thus the Pandya ruler also imported horses for his army. This prompted the Pandyas to adopt a monopolistic policy. So Hindus were allowed to do business in places like Tiruchirappala, Gunnar ago and Nagore.

Only Muslim traders and Pandyan rulers were allowed to sell horses. Such importation of horses and other animals led to the need to hire skilled workers, variously called kuthiraammal, "horse-andan", mentioned in various inscriptions of this period. So the port of Qayal became a place where the Arabs brought their merchandise and sold it. (Vasap's travelogues indicate that the pearl trade also flourished in the port of Kayal as the pearling industry flourished under the reign of Satyavarman Sundarapandian I (1251-66). Coyal Harbour had a large expanse of water in the sea which made it convenient for large ships to anchor. So, like the boatmen on the coast of Tamil Nadu, fishermen and pearlmen began to settle here due to these various advantages. Ships were anchored and effectively stopped. When high tides came, small boats and logs were lowered into the sea and allowed to pass. During these months of heavy rains, sailing is dangerous. The port of Khayal is variously referred to as Kahal, Salia, Chayal, and Qal." Kiya-mi-li". Goods such as spices and pearls were exported from Qayal port to places like Syria, Iraq and Khurasan. The importance of this port can be seen from the travelogues of Marco Polo (1293) and the writings of Rashid-al-Din, Wassab, and etc. "Rashid-al-Din mentions that Chinese goods brought in China wood were kept at this port and exchanged for goods brought from the Islamic world. The arrival of woodblocks filled with Chinese goods and their active trade led to the fifteenth century by Abdul Razzak, Nicolas Conti (1442-44) Tseng-ho and Ma-hu An. Even featured in popular traveller's travelogues of the quarter.

The Bay of Bengal began to grow in importance following trade with Persia, Arabia and China. It also increased the use of gold and copper in coastal Tamil Nadu. Different types of gold were in use. Gold is called by the names Kudinaikal, Sembon, Maripon. It seems that a merchant from Viruthiur gave 11 kalanju and six manjati of gold as a gift in 1138." Then Kulothungan III Povvari (it is mentioned that he ordered the collection of tax on gold and the Tiruvetiyur village council refused to pay it. Thus in 1212 he arrested the members of the village council and collected the tax from them. In 1224 three kalanju were imposed on the culprits. Gold has been levied as a fine. In places like Ilupaikudi and Udatur, gold has been collected as a gift. In 1295, the Pandyas also minted gold coins such as Kanaku, Varagan, Kasu, and put them into circulation. Gold. After long-distance trade began to decline in the thirteenth century, merchants traded in the localities of the Bay of Bengal. During the medieval period there were local traders who traded different goods in different streets of Tirunelveli. These traders were divided into different categories like retailers and wholesalers, domestic and foreign traders. The cloth merchants were known as Arakhi Vaniyas. They traded sarees in various places. A few merchants were skilled in the jewellery business. He can see the mention of pearl traders in Kalimangal. Trade with traders who are skilled in such private commodity trading during this period, 12164 in Ilayyankudi trade, they bought land and lived a prosperous life with the profits from Vilamani life. In the inscription of Pandyas found in Periyapalayam, a list of traders who came from long distances for trade is given. In the list of names Kuthan Kannan from Binnai Nadu and Irulapuram. The name of the merchant is also mentioned from Thiruvallur, Sundarapandiapuram, Telangakulagappuram, Vanjimanagar, Aimpohil, Kodumbalur and Deshikonda Pattinam. In Mahapalipuram, the age and the amount of possessions of the merchant were taken into account and from landless merchants half gilt per annum were levied, and from landless merchants who hired men, one-eighth of gold was levied annually.

There was also an association of domestic traders here. That is, there was an organization called Vaniyagramattar who was doing business in more than 18 districts. This area on the banks of river Cauvery was called Patinenbhoomi (18 areas). The traders belonging to this merchant association lived only in the streets called Perunderu," the Ayatukkatavar would collect the taxes from the merchant families in these places. The tax collectors were known as Akhumopati Beralars, dated 1236-37 AD. Inscribed in the inscription." Inscriptions dating from 1303 show that in a few places they were called Berelaras.\* A tax of half a rupee per head was levied annually on every private Chettiar merchant living within 24 kadams of the Kudumianmalai trading center and its environs. Uniform taxation and multiple taxation in the name of



Tiruvettiyur Chettiars have paid such taxes. Thus the growth in domestic production and exchange was the driving force behind the economic growth of the period.

### **RISE OF THE MARAKAIS AND DEVELOPMENT OF COASTAL TRADE**

The economic activities of the Tamil Muslims known as the Marakais were important during this period. The Marakalarayan mentioned in the Varosuk inscription may have been used to refer to a series of Indianite Arab Muslim traders. During this period, Islam spread along the coast of Tamil Nadu. Muslim merchants also developed trade in a few ports. It attracted the Sultans of Delhi. In fact, on 18 October 1311, Malik Kapur, on his way back to Delhi from Madurai, took 96,000 gilts, 312 elephants, several chests of pearls and precious stones with him." Jalaluddin Hasan was appointed as the governor of the Pandyan kingdom in 1329-30 AD. It then expanded into 23 territories of the Tughlaq Empire. The maritime trade of Tamil Nadu extended from Kollam (Nellore) to the period of 1333 to 1378. The Delhi Sultan paid no attention to the prosperity of Tamil Nadu. When the Muslims invaded Tamil Nadu, Muslim traders started settling in the port of Nagor. The port of Nagore is situated at an important place at the mouth of the river. After the decline of Nagapattinam, which had flourished under the Cholas, Nagor grew into a very important trading center in the 14th century.

Vascoda Gama's diary mentions how important the port of Nagor was to the Marakai community in the late fifteenth century. A tax called corn tax was levied on the Arabian merchant engaged in trade between the ports. Another port that flourished during this period was Veerapandian Pattinam." This port was frequented by Arab Muslim traders as well as by Tamil Muslim traders known as Maraikayars. When Abu Pabha was the chief officer of the port, an order issued in 1387 was beyond the scope of cargo trading at the port. According to that order, traders a quarter of a cent is to be paid towards the maintenance of the Jumma Masjid. The Marikayas also settled in Kunimedu, which is close to Chatiravasan Pattinam port in the south. The Italian traveller Santo Stefano noted that it emerged as a famous port in the fifteenth century and became a loading point for the goods of the Cholamandala coast. The word Kunimedu refers to the estuary of the salt lake there. Vascoda Gama's description and Thomas Peirce in his note refer to this Muslim port as Gunjumora.

### **TRADE BETWEEN TERRITORIES UNDER THE RULE OF THE TELUGU CHOLAS AND SAMPURVARAYAS**

The port of Krishnapattinam (Kudalur Taluk in Nellore District) emerged as an important trading center for the Telugu Cholas. This vibrant port was patronized by the Telugu Cholas who ruled Pasunat (northern Penarau Valley) from the twelfth to the 14th century. The Vijayanagara and Kandagopala rulers supported the maritime trade in this area. After the death of the famous Telugu Chola ruler Raja Kandagopala (1291-20), the port of Krishna Pattinam was called Kandagopalapattinam. During Vijayanagara rule this port was called Rajavipadhanapatnam. This part Inscriptions indicates that the association of merchants was a very powerful one. In 1304-06, this body of merchants defined the rules to be followed in conducting trade. One of its members was murdered because he was mistaken for a traitor. However, the trade association publicly apologized for his death and handed over a document to his family heirs. Accordingly, his successors will be able to carry on the business in future free of charge. The same body of merchants issued a document to another person at another time on 15 October 1322. It was given to show their gratitude and appreciation for killing two corrupt customs collectors in the area. Various duties were levied on different types of goods imported at Kulitpur port. As for others, the tax was levied on the timber, boats and caravans they brought.

Ulagamathevi Pattinam Port, also known as Devipattinam, is an important port in Chevviruk. From 1216 to 1241, documents mention that pearl trade flourished in Devipatnam. A century later in 1348, it was called Srivallapattanam after the death of King Srivallabha, who developed the port during his reign to the point of importing nutmeg from Sri Lanka and spices from Malabar. Various sizes of ships classified as large and small were used for sea voyages and maritime trade was carried on. A quarter of the entry fee for canoes was collected as tax. A boat larger than a canoe called a chituru was charged half a tax. This is mentioned in the notes of the International Hindu Traders Association, which was involved in overseas trade. Famous canoes were in use in Devipatnam to transport goods. Rajanarayanan, the Sampurvaraya ruler, wanted to develop a port for his kingdom. Sathiravasan Pattinam was called Rajanarayanan Pattinam after his death. An inscription dated 3rd February 1353 mentions that various customs and taxes were collected through this port from the traders who traded here from different places depending on the nature of their cargo. The maritime trade carried out at this port included pearls, long cloths and other types of cloth. After the fall of the Sampurvarayas, the arrival of the Vijayanagara rulers in Ektipatikuthi began. We can find that Kumara Kampanna, the head of the Vijayanagara army, confirmed the collection of taxes from Thirukkalukunram peddlers who were engaged in selling and exporting cloths to Sathiravasan Pattinam port.

### **CONCLUSION**

Medieval rulers such as the Pandyas, Kadavarayas, Sambuvarayas and the Vijayanagara Empire of Tamil Nadu focused primarily on increasing government revenue by attracting foreign traders from the Islamic world. Along with the foreign trade, domestic trade took place in the hinterland of Tamil Nadu. Trade also began to flourish. The importance of private traders in Tamil Nadu can be confirmed when we see that private traders had their own warehouse at Chinnamanur (Pandya period). After the Muslim invasion, traders were encouraged to settle in the Anjanan sanctuaries near the temple. Thus, these temple cities paved

the way for the resurgence of artisans and merchants. Fabric production was supported at various centres' in the hinterland by establishing a weaver's settlement called Tirumadaivalagam near the temple. It brought income to the temple and the ruler.

The ports on the coast of Tamil Nadu, which were the final destinations of ships during the Cholas, shrunk to stopovers for ships bound for Kozhikode, Kochi and Kollam on the west coast of peninsular India during the Pandyas. Spices were exported directly from Malabar to China instead of via ports on the Tamil Nadu coast. Another important aspect of this development was the migration of the Tamil-speaking Chettiars and Marakais from the ports of the Tamil Nadu coast to Malabar and set up their settlements there. Due to such circumstances, there were very few opportunities for overseas trade from Tamil Nadu ports during the arrival of the Portuguese. And the interconnectedness of the regional trade system that developed in the Bay of Bengal meant that ports could only function as redistribution centres for interregional distribution of goods. At that time only the ports of Palavekadu, located a little to the north of Madras on the eastern seaboard, and Kayal, to the south, became active. Before the arrival of the Portuguese on the pearling coast, pearls were exported to China due to a severe shortage of pearls at the time. As the demand for pearls was so great, traders travelling from the coast of Tamil Nadu hid pearls in the inside of their clothes and in the handles of their umbrellas to avoid heavy customs duties in China. As Vijayanagara emerged as a famous market for gold and precious stones during the late medieval phase, pearls were transported there.

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