

Chapter 4

GOA : THE PEOPLE WHO TRADEDAn Overview

Goa being essentially a port town with long and short distance trade connections with the Indian Ocean ports as well as with Portugal, a large section of the people who lived in Goa were involved in commercial activities. In fact, after 1510, when the Portuguese chose Goa as the capital of their maritime empire of the Indian Ocean, it became a business centre with merchants and money changers of all castes and creeds gathered in the town out of their own business interests. The local trading community retained a position of special importance among them as the Portuguese administrators with all their claims of monopoly over the Indian Ocean trade remained dependent on them for the supply of pepper from the production areas, in the southern hinterlands. The new administrators maintained their merchant agents in all of their factories, first to contact their cultivators and then to exchange the pepper with rice, cloth or cash.[1] This dependence of the Portuguese government on the local business community being a necessity born out of their lack of local connections as also of their chronic shortage of manpower, went down through the centuries.

1. For details of the organisation of trade in the early period, passim, K.S.Mathew, Portuguese Trade with India in the Sixteenth Century, New Delhi, 1983.

The majority of these merchants, on whom the Portuguese depended, were indigenous Hindu merchants. Many of them even came from the fold of the Saraswat Brahmins.[2] This predominance of the Hindus in the Goan economy, specially despite a drive for conversion into Christianity on part of the Portuguese administrators has been a matter of particular interest among the historians. M.N.Pearson argued that the discriminatory legislation of the Portuguese failed to curb the preponderance of the local Hindu business communities to withstand the oppressive legislation.[3] T.R. de Souza, on the other hand, basically disagrees with the contention and points out that, the Portuguese had, in fact, succeeded in reducing the Hindus to a minority. If they, inspite of this, managed to maintain their dominance, it was due to their widespread connection with the hinterland that gave them an edge over the Portuguese government.[4]

2. The Saraswat Brahmins were originally from the North. They had migrated to Goa and originalley settled in the province of Salcct, in several phases. Trade being a common profession among them, many of them moved out in course of time to other places in Karnataka, Kerala, Sonda, Bijapur and Bombay, for trade. Large scale migration had taken place during 1541-61 and particularly at the time of the Inquisition in Goa in 1560. As the titles indicate, most of the important merchants of Goa during the period under review were Saraswat Brahmins. For a social and economic history of the Saraswats as a community, see V.N.Kudva, History of the Dakshinatya Saraswats, Madras, 1978.
3. M.N.Pearson, 'Indigenous Dominance in a Colonial Economy, The Goa Rendas, 1600-1670' Mare Luso Indicum,II,Paris,1974,pp62-73.
4. T.R,de Souza, 'Glimpses of Hindu Dominance of Goan Economy in the 17th century', Indica, vol.12, No.1, March 1975,pp.27-35.

'Their contact with their business partners on the mainland made it possible for the Hindus to run profitably whatever business they were involved in. Besides, most of the Hindus running business in Goa or acting as state revenue farmers had their household belongings and capital on the mainland, safe against the vagaries of the Portuguese administrators who often exploited all possible sources, particularly the purses of the businessmen to raise funds for their own expenses. This in fact, encouraged the Hindus to risk large investments (much of the money was borrowed on the spot) which is a must for any promising business.'[5]

Their Christian counterparts were deprived of this advantage as any connection with the neighbouring lands was regarded contrary to their new faith.

As the commercial importance of the port of Goa had already waned in the 18th century with connection with Lisbon restricted to a very few ships plying between Lisbon and Goa and the country trade confined to the handful of ports along the coast, the scope of trade to be carried on by the merchants of the port had also become very narrow. Even the Goa Governor pointed out in 1750 that the 'poor' merchants, who, by now, had only such a limited scope of trade, looked forward to the arrival of the annual ships in accordance to which they geared up their activities.[6]

5. Ibid., pp. 32-33.

6. AHU, India Maço 126, Doc.82, 30.12.1778.

The series of regulations, had, to some extent, boosted trade passing through the port of Goa, though their actual quantity and the impact on the trading community is difficult to ascertain.[7]

In fact, the impression that we gather from the documents is that there was a conglomeration of small traders carrying on their trade at various levels. There were no doubt a few big merchant families but we have no means to measure their opulence. However, even among them, the fortunes of a couple of such families declined rapidly, not always due to reasons related to trade. The house of Roula Camotim for example, used to maintain trade relations with various ports under the Portuguese control and had once given huge loan to the Jesuits of China. Yet, they suffered a setback after the earthquake of Lisbon that destroyed their big consignment of cargo worth 96,000 xeraffins. The house of the Corondos, another rich merchant family also lost their opulence due to family dissension after the death of the head of their family.[8] Regarding trade, on one hand, there was local trade of agricultural products exchanged with the nearby ports along the coast, on the other hand, their business with Lisbon. Keeping in tune with with Goa's lack of specialisation in any industry, the traders, in their transaction with Lisbon despatched all the articles they could lay their hands on. Even though cotton cloths was the main item exported in bulk, they also collected and despatched pepper, cinnamon, incense, saltpetre etc. Some random examples from the

7. For details see Chapter III, Goa, :Its Lisbon Connection.

8. Ibid, Maço 1, cover reference, 1770, March 3. According to Prof. Ashin Das Gupta, dispersal of accumulated fortune due to disputes within the family was a common trend among the merchants everywhere. This happened among the Parak of Surat and Prof. N.K. Sinha has also given several examples from early 19th century Calcutta High Court records. Ashin Das Gupta, 'Indian Merchants in the Age of Partnership', in Dwijendra Tripathi ed. Business Communities of India, New Delhi, 1984, p.34.

invoice of the ship São Jose will illustrate the matter.

Among the traders who had share in the cargo of the ship were Vitogy Naique and Company, Anta Krishna Sinai, Bula Govinda Naique, Narana Naique Tinurenkar, Bernardo Nugeira de Carvalho da Fonseca, Rama Chandra Naique and company, widow of Gopala Camotim and company, Bula Naique etc. Of them Vitogy Naique for example, sent seven bales of cloths, 19 boxes of cinnamon, 70 bales of the same and 25 bales of incense as consignment of Caetano Francis and João Andre Cambias. The articles were sent as per their orders. More bales and boxes of similar articles were despatched under different numbers and codes, either to the above mentioned business partners or to others. Some of these were purchased with the proceeds of the corals that their business partners had sent from Lisbon. Similar articles in similar packs were despatched by the other merchants as well.[9]

Because the scope of trade was limited from Goa, the local merchants, almost all of them Hindus (they are frequently referred to in the documents as gentios) tried to keep whatever trade there was under their exclusive control. Any attempt by any outsider to start business on his own was regarded by them as an intrusion into their monopoly, which they resisted. This is what happened to António de Souza in 1784.

Luis Barreto, his brother José Barreto and his cousins Antonio de Souza and Manoel de Souza were Portuguese businessmen settled in Calcutta doing private business with connections in Madras and other ports in the East Coast.

9. For details see, AHU, India Maço 16A, document without any one specific date but of the year 1771-72. Similar list for 1784 is in Maço 115.

Manoel de Souza, aware of the wide scope of trade from Goa, little of which he thought was utilised, decided to set up a business house in Goa. His brother António planned to do the same first in Macao and later in East Africa.

Manoel's plan was to do business, independent of the Goan traders. With his connections in Bengal, Malabar and Coromandel, he could collect the goods and supply those at a lower price to the ships without depending on the local merchants. However, all these plans came to a naught due to the resistance put up by the Goan merchants. Manoel did not spell out the methods used by the Goans to harrass him but complained that they had tried to ruin his capital as well as his reputation. His experience brought home the realisation that it had been a folly to have attempted to start the business. The Hindu merchants had practically monopolised the business by fixing the prices and exercising a complete sway even over the ship officials who depended only on them for the transactions. While describing the nature of the monopoly exercised by them on the business, he explained how everything remained under the grip of these traders. 'Everything is handed over to the brokers who are linked to and dependent on the Hindu traders. Nothing is practised that is not directed by them..... it is the custom to disclose the common price of the articles that are loaded for Lisbon. In the same manner, the [price] of those that the ship transports to this port[Goa], particularly that of coral is also disclosed. However, these are manipulated by the Hindus. They receive the articles either through purchase or as consignment. They are also the ones to sell

or remit these articles that constitute the cargo of the ship. In the same manner, the free merchants who come by the ship as well as the ones who send their articles from Lisbon remain totally under the control of the Hindus who purchase and sell for them, at a price that the same Hindus want to control'. [10] These merchants, he thought, were the most mischievous and the most vigilant enemies of any new businessman in Goa. Finally, it was these people that he held responsible for the destruction of trade from the port. [11]

Despite the monopoly, the little volume of trade prompted the merchants to remain on the lookout for alternative channels of business. One such alternative was provided by the other Europeans, viz. the English and the French, who often employed these Goan merchants as their agents to procure the cloths for export. [12] Thus, Narba, Vencatexa, Vitogy and Seguna Camotims were functioning either as agents of the French or the English. The successor to a particular agent was generally recruited from the family itself. The posts were sometimes sanctioned by the Portuguese Government of Goa. Even though the Portuguese documents are understandably silent on this aspect of activity of the Goans, we come across the instance of Seguna Camotim who applied for recognition as the successor of his brother Vitogy as

10. AHU, India Maço 35, Cover reference 1783-1786, 25.10.1784.

11. Ibid., Maço 35, cover reference 1783-86. The letters written by Antonio and Manoel de Souza are dated 25.3.1783, 25.10.1784, 12.12.1784, 20.3.1785.

12. Ibid., Maço 133, Doc.97, 18.4.1780, Undated document in Maço 85.

the agent of the English in Goa, which was eventually granted to him.[13]

Due to the limitations of the nature of the documents, there is hardly any elaboration on their functions in these capacities. The only exceptions are found when some confrontations broke out, as happened in the case of Manoel Antonio de Menezes and David Scott of Bombay.

Manoel used to function as the agent of David Scott of Bombay in Goa. After his death, it was discovered that he had disposed off the latter's stock of cotton piecegoods in the most irregular manner.

Of the whole stock, 24 bales were found with Anta Sinai who, again had sold them off and given the money to Menezes on credit. Menezes himself had mortgaged five bales to Antonio Caetano Colaço and Rama Chandra Porobo Sinai. Only 10 bales had remained unsold and Anta Sinai insisted on keeping these too. As per his statement, all the 24 bales were mortgaged to him. He even produced two documents to prove his claim. The letter showed, he argued, how he had authorised Menezes to take money on the silk for one Mr. Ribeiro, in case he needed it immediately. Menezes had also informed David Scott that he might have to borrow money on the silks and there were also documents showing how Anta Sinai had, in fact, lent him the money. What the documents point at is that Menezes, who was working as the agent of David Scott, was expected to sell the goods and remit the money to David Scott. In reality, he had embezzled the fund and kept David Scott in dark

about the sale of the 33 bales. The latter became aware of the entire situation only when Menezes died and Anta Sinai refused to return the bales to him claiming that these had already been sold to him.[14]

The private papers relating to the business transactions or family histories regarding these merchants are not available to us. Hence, surmises can only be made on the basis of gleanings from the Portuguese official documents. As a result, most of the windows into their private and family lives are nearly shut. Hence, the Goan merchants remain as 'obscure' to the present day studies as their counterparts in the other areas of the Indian Ocean.[15] They too preferred to remain 'faceless'— as Prof. K.N. Chaudhury described the merchants of the Indian Ocean in general. 'Neither their family history, nor even the history of the community was for sale.'[16]

The Merchants and the Government

The sources of information mainly being the Portuguese official records, the picture that we get about them in general, centre round the problem of their relationship with the government.

The government depended on these merchants mainly for two purposes, a. for collection of their articles of export as well as

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14. AHU, India Maço 149, undated document probably written around 1785. There is a bunch of documents regarding the problem of around 1783-1785.
 15. K.N. Chaudhury Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Oceans. An Economic History From the Rise of Islam to 1750, Cambridge, 1985, p.100.
 16. Ibid.

the provisions of regular use and b. for collection of revenues, which, they themselves being unable to collect, the government had to farm out to the indigenous business community. The result was a curious relationship between the merchants and the government.

The government, though not happy with the role of importance enjoyed by the merchants in general, could not dispense with them due to a perennial shortage of manpower to run the administration effectively. As a consequence, they always suspected them of advancing their own economic gains at the cost of the Fazenda Real, which in fact, sometimes they did, as they felt themselves indispensable to the administration.

Paucity or fragmentary nature of data once again makes it difficult to elaborate all of these activities. However, they are sufficient to give the impression that these functions were not mutually exclusive, but they often overlapped, i.e. a single person was often found to be performing more than one role at a time. To be more explicit, the same person, who engaged in trade with Lisbon also acted as a supplier of provisions or a revenue farmer. To give an example, the family of Rama Camotim performed many such functions. He and his son Nagana Camotim, apart from doing business owned a grocery shop and held the renda of tobacco.[17] In fact, involvement in more than one related activities, it seems, provided these people with the financial strength to survive in their profession when the scope of trade was steadily shrinking from the port.

17. AHU, India Maço 17, HAG, MR 131A, f1.212-17 and 124A, f1.94-95.

The Merchants as Supplier of Provisions to the Government

A practice, common among the business community was that of maintaining stores and establishments. Among the documents, there are many applications on part of these people seeking permission either to start a store or to pay tax at a concessional rate on the income from such a store.[18]

These shop owners also supplied provisions to the government. In doing so, it was not unnatural for them to raise the prices and make some extra money out of the contracts. Some such cases like this came to light in 1768, when investigations were ordered into such irregularities. Some of these suppliers could also be identified.

As in trade, majority of these suppliers were merchants from Hindu community. From the documents we come across the names of Narsu Naique, Vitogy Camotim, Fondea Porobo Luando, Seguna Porobo Sinai, Sadasiva Sinai, Bula Naique, Poquea Sinai Dumo, Babula Naique, Chircolea Porobo, Hodobodus Guzerate, Hira Chanda Nacuda etc. Among the Christians were Martins Barreto, Aleixo Barreto, Caetano Luis Fernandes etc. Some of these suppliers were also wellknown as revenue farmers. Among them were Narsu Naique, Vitogy Camotim etc.

Of them all, charges of misappropriation of funds were brought against Pandu Sinai, Bula Naique and Caetano Luis Fernandes.

18. There are several such applications in the volumes Requerimentos in HAG. Stray references are also scattered elsewhere, eg. in AHU, India Maço 1, cover reference 1778, February 2.

Pandu Sinai had supplied saltpetre of Balaghat, coconut oil, yellow and white wax, hemp, different types of wood and timber including that of teak, sesame oil, rice and wheat. The total amount paid to him for these articles was xeraffins 55357:2:31. 32685:0:15 had been paid for 152 candils of saltpetre alone. In October 1764, he was also asked to supply, among other items, rice, wheat, butter, beans, wine, vinegar, sweets and salt for consumption in the ship Nossa Senhora das Brotas and Sao Antonio e Brotas. The prices of these had not been put to question.[19]

Caetano Luis Fernandes had supplied saltpetre, magnet, paper, Persian carpets, sailcloths, some piecegoods, brimstone, sulphur, bullets of different sizes and specifications, small steel files and some more articles of war in addition to silk cloths. The total amount charged by him was 30820:2:35. [20]

Bula Naique had also supplied saltpetre of Balaghat, rice, beams, iron boards and many more mechanical items of various specifications. He had also supplied rice, sesame oil and coconut, cotton, wax, magnets, ropes of different qualities and paper. The total amount charged by him was the highest of all- 64741:4:5. [21]

In 1768 it was found out that the price of these articles, charged by these three was much higher than what it should have been. Detailed investigations and interrogations were carried on

19. HAG, MR 141B, fls. 676-77v.

20. Ibid., fl. 678-78v.

21. Ibid., fls. 679-681v.

and prices of all the articles supplied by them compared to those supplied by others. In course of investigations it was also found out that Pandu Sinai, who was penniless previously, had become so established only after he had put himself into the business of supplying provisions to the government. He was now carrying on trade with various regions and even presented himself as a bidder for the renda of the Royal stores. He had offered 10,000 xeraffins for this. It was alleged that he had cheated the government to the extent of charging 170 xeraffins for a candil of saltpetre of Balaghat and 120 per candil of hemp for which he himself had paid 110 and 50 xeraffins respectively.[22]

In course of his interrogation, Pandu Sinai denied any charge of unfair means. His was a family of reputation and he himself a businessman by profession. It was true that he had raised the prices of saltpetre and some other articles, but that was because he had to pay the taxes. He also had to clean and process the articles, in course of which they lost weight. In any case, his profit was not more than what was reasonable and not higher than what many others also made from such contracts. Rather, he himself had incurred losses on many occasions. For example, the 80 candils of wheat that he had supplied to the hospital at the rate of 40 xeraffins was purchased by him for 60. [23]

Charges of corruption were denied by Caetano Luis Fernandes.

22. Ibid., fls. 689-690.

23. Ibid., fls. 693-694.

We do not have the interrogation report of Bula Naique.[24]

Interestingly, the information that these three suppliers had embezzled the funds was given out by some small traders themselves. Names of Gopala Porobo of Ribander and Rama Camotim of Chorão were mentioned in this context. The report was translated and submitted by Fernando Xavier de Breu, who, however, tried to avoid involvement in the case at the time of investigation by saying that he was not sure that the information contained therein was true. Those two had brought him the report and assured him that those were the facts. He had merely believed them.[25]

From the incident, it may be inferred that there were fissures in the rank of the merchants itself. It is also highly probable that the reason behind the retraction by Fernando Xavier de Breu was the pressure exerted on him by the big merchants involved in the incident.

The Merchants as Holders of the Revenue Contracts

Acting as the holders of the rendas or the government revenue contract was another function of the Goan business community that brought them into direct contact and sometimes confrontation with the government.

It was a very old government practice to farm out the revenues to the highest bidders. Once accepted, the bidder had to present someone as the security and deposit one tenth of the renda price in advance before he could start collecting the revenues as

24. Ibid., fls. 695-696v.

25. Ibid., fl. 697-697v.

per the set of conditions laid down for each renda. The tendency in the composition of the renda holders that had set in during the 17th century has been discussed at length by M.N. Pearson. [26]

Pearson calculated that of the 355 names of the revenue holders which constituted 45.4% of the ideal total of the rendas during a span of 70 years from 1600-1670, 80% were Hindus, and the rest Christians. Regarding value, he points out that the value of the 327 rendas that are known for this period amounted to Rs.49,68,106. Of these again, rendas worth Rs.17,28,900 were held by Christians and Rs.32,39,206 by Hindus. The percentages are 34.8 and 62.5 respectively. Within the Hindu total, 69% by value were held by the Saraswats, who held 44.9% of the total value of all the rendas.

The share of the Christians were 34.8 and for other Hindus 20.3. The figures, he argues, points to the fact that the average value of a renda held by a Christian was higher than that of a Hindu.

While Pearson bases his conclusion on data covering a long period of 70 years, T.R.de Souza reaches a slightly different conclusion regarding the composition of the renda holders during the first decade of the 17th century. [27] At this time, de Souza points out, the total of the State rendas or non agricultural revenue amounted to 68,555 xeraffins per year on average. Of these, 62,815 or 91.7% were administered by the Hindus and the remaining by Christians. The tax farmers included 14 Hindus and

26. M.N. Pearson, 'Baniyas and Brahmins' in Coastal Western India: Studies from the Portuguese Records, New Delhi, 1981, pp. 97-98.

27. T.R.de Souza, 'Glimpse of Hindu Dominance of Goan Economy in the 17th Century' p. 32.

two Christians. Though he does not compare the value of the rendas administered by the Hindus and the Christians, the highest investments, he points out, came from the Hindus. The reason given by de Souza is that, while the Portuguese themselves did not have the aptitude of revenue administration, the Christian converts came mainly from the poorer section of the society. Hence, it was for the affluent higher caste Hindus to monopolise the revenue administration.[28]

The major rendas of the 18th century which were more or less regularly farmed out were those of the customs of Goa, Bardes and Salcet, tobacco, in leaf and in dust, arrack in Bardes and in Salcet, wine for export, wood and timber, gold and silver, spices, salt etc. The toll taxes yielded by the passes of Naroa and Daugim, São Lourenço, São Thiago, and São Bras were also farmed out, in addition to many more of the dizimos or the tax of one tenth of the agricultural produce of the various villages. With exception to a few minor ones, eg. the dizimos of some of the villages, none of the major ones were held by the Christians. Moreover, the rendas were being taken as family profession by some Hindus. Some particular families only monopolised the major contracts from generation to generation.

28. Some conversions into Christianity had taken place among the Saraswats too. V.N.Kudva has given a list of the Hindu ancestors of the Gaonkars of the Saraswat converts and the year of their conversion. Most of the conversions had taken place during the first half of the 17th century though some had taken place in the last quarter of the 16th century as well. History of the Dakshinatya Saraswats, pp.358-362.

Even though the names of the holders are nor always given, nor the relation among one another always spelt out, some important holders representing certain particular families clearly stand out in this period. This trend too was common in the 17th century.[29]

In our period, the Naiques, headed by Krishna Naique was one such important family. His son Santapa held the renda of the customs of Goa and grandson Sadasiva administered that of the Royal tobacco stores. Santapa's nephews, Vencu, Narsu and Rama Chandra too were important persons controlling the renda of the Goa customs at one time or another. Around 1779, Rama Chandra and Poquea were in charge of the Royal stores while Rama Chandra also controlled the renda of the arracks of Salcet.

A second family in the limelight was that of the Camotims. Gunea Camotim, rendeiro of the Goa customs in 1733 and described as the holder of many others including tobacco powder, was reported to be holding the renda for 11 years. In a document of 1751, it was mentioned that the renda of the customs of Bardes and Salcet were in the hands of Rama Camotim, who was reportedly one of the biggest rendeiros of the period. His father and even grand father had managed the rendas for nearly 90 years.[30]

Among the others, whose names are mentioned in the documents of the late 18th century were Narana Sinai Narlikar in

29. Ibid., p.31.

30. Names of the rendeiros and the relation among each other are mentioned in a scattered manner in the contemporary documents. See for example, AHU, India Maço 17 and document with cover reference ant.a. 1772. April 30, in Maço 43.

charges of salt in 1786 and tobacco. He administered the latter along with Seguna Sinai Narlikar in 1788. Roulo Sinai, holder of the renda of coleita in 1762 also held the renda of wood and timber.

Thus, contrary to the nature of trade at the lower level, where dispersion was the established mode of business, concentration of power of transactions in few individual families was the keyword in the administration of the rendas. These rendeiros, coming from eminent business families enjoyed a widespread network of connection, social status and economic strength as well, which they often utilized in their interest. This even bought them direct conflict with the Government from time to time. It was the governments dependence on rendeiros that made that particular group powerful. However, the government also resented the manner in which this group used this power against the fiscal interest of the state. The result was an inherent tension in the relation which often erupted in the face of a crisis.

One such crisis led to an estrangement of the relation between the government and the rendeiros as a group in 1768. This followed an enquiry into the acceptance of the receipts of the old debts by the government itself in lieu of the cash deposit of one tenth from the rendeiros. [31]

The debts, in spite of the many differences in their nature and origin were, in general, documents showing that the Fazenda Real had, in one time or another, borrowed money from various sources which it had failed to pay back. The loans were not always taken directly by the Fazenda Real. Sometimes they were also entered into the accounts of the factorss of the various Portuguese settlements

31. Details of the enquiry report in HAG, MR 141B, fls. 605-62, 6.2. 1768.

including that of Goa. The creditors were private individuals of different backgrounds as well as certain colleges and churches. In some cases, the debts originated from the failure on part of the government, to fulfill the commitment to pay stipends or aids to certain individuals or religious organisations.

The receipts of such debts were, in course of time, sold off by the actual creditors for a price lower than the actual value to the rendeiros. It now became the responsibility of the latter to make the government accept those receipts against the cash deposits to be made by them as part of the payment of the revenue contract and thus realise the debts that the Fazenda Real had failed to pay in cash.

The enquiry that was carried on in 1768 against the irregularities in accepting those receipts brought to light the widespread nature of this practice. Involved in it were the eminent rendeiros like Massana Sinai, Nagana Camotim, Narsu Naique, Dulba Sinai and Pondea Sinai.

From Massana Sinai alone were accepted 12 such documents, amounting nearly to 24,0,000 xeraffins. Most of the transactions, according to the enquiry report, were undue favours shown to the rendeiros. The justifications given for such allegation were many. In most cases, the receipts were transferred to the rendeiros either by the sons or the inheritors of the actual creditors. In cases of the religious congregations, the transfers were made by the attorneys representing the heads of these congregations or colleges. The transfers were termed 'extrajudicial' and illegal, as, in most cases they were accepted by the government officials

without verifying whether the persons transferring the receipts were bonafide inheritors or not. Some receipts were simply accepted without updating the accounts and showing the necessary care to check whether the claims were real or not. As a result of all this, many such debts had been paid which were not actual.

In reality, it was the shortage of cash faced by the Goa government since the 17th century that had necessitated taking of and inability to pay back such loans. On the other hand, government's lack of personnel to run the revenue contracts on its own had made it so dependent on the Goan rendeiros that it was left without an alternative to accepting their bids on their terms. Yet, it was once again the cash crunch that had led to the repeated instructions against the acceptance of such old claims. Order was issued by the Crown as early as 10.3.1608 to take great care before accepting such papers as part payments of the deposits. Henceforth, orders were issued repeatedly in 1610, 1611, 1660 etc. directing the Goa government not to entertain such claims.

The practice had become so common that in order to checklist them the Viceroy Marques de Castelo Novo had even issued an order to register those debts with the Fazenda Real, failing which those debts were no more to be recognised.[32]

In fact, many a transaction was declared illegal by the enquiry committee on the plea that they had not been properly registered with the Fazenda Real.

32. The exact date of the order is difficult to ascertain. Marquês de Castelo Novo (D. Pedro Miguel de Almeida e Portugal) had governed Goa during 1744-1750.

The accusation of malpractice, true as they were in some cases, speak more of the inefficiency and helplessness of the government rather than the machinations on part of the rendeiros.

The vast range of documents regarding the old debts, point to the widespread network of connections that these Goan rendeiros exercised even among the Portuguese creditors of the Crown. It was comparatively easy for the merchants to collect such receipts of old debts from the sons of the Hindu creditors eg. those of Parranga Sinai, who had given some money to the government on loan.[33] But the other receipts referred to Portuguese ecclesiastics and secular persons coming from different levels of the society and from different parts of the colonies. These included the treasurers of various churches, the Bishops of Malacca, Peking[34] etc. the husbands of the ladies who never received the stipends from the government they were due to, before they got married.[35]

On the whole, it seems that it was the government that was at fault. The rendeiros merely took advantage of the situation in which they were helped by their close acquaintance with the fiscal world and availability of ready cash to pay off those old receipts.

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33. 10731:2:30 was involved in this transaction. The money was taken on loan from Parranga Porobo on 24.9.1737. Massana Sinai managed to collect the receipt from his sons Biquea Porobo and Venquea Porobo.
 34. Records of such transactions with churches and colleges are many and scattered all over the enquiry reports. See for example, HAG, MR 141B, fls. 611,614,615v,616v-17.
 35. Aids were due to Esmeralda Borges and Rita Borges. They were asked to collect it later from the Governor as per the decision of the Treasury Board of 14.2.1750. Later, their husbands António da Silva and José Alves handed over these orders to Massanea Sinai.

In the working of the renda also, these people could be quite vocal in the assertion and protection of their rights. They could even pose a challenge to the government by noncooperating with the latter if the government policies went against any of their interests. The government became helpless under such circumstances, as, in most cases it was caught in a dilemma of running the administration, advancing the financial interests of the state and facing the realities of shortage of manpower leading to their dependence on this Hindu business community.

This trend too had set in earlier in the preceeding century. This has been pointed out by T.R.de Souza who cited a couple of instances of 1630 and 1678 when the Viceroy failed in their attempts to curb the growing importance of the rendeiros. [36]

At least two major instances of such confrontations took place in our period under review.

The first instance that we come across in the 18th century took place in 1744 over the question of the renda of coleita which was a tax on the rice and foodstuff brought into Goa mainly from the ports of the South. [37]

As per the conditions of the renda, it was obligatory for the Goan traders enjoying the protection of the Royal armada to pay a certain amount of tax on the foodstuff they imported into Goa. The outsiders, who did not avail of the protection of the Goan government, were exempted from paying the tax.

36. T.R.de Souza, 'Glimpses of Hindu Dominance of Goan Economy in the 17th century'.p.33.

37. AHU, India Maço 65, A bunch of documents, dated 23.3.1745, 15.12.1746, 9.12.1744, 11.12.1744.

As expected, the rule gave rise to several misuses, one of them being the evasion of taxes by the local traders. In order to do so, they not only smuggled their goods in through the forests but also entered into understanding with their counterparts of the south who brought in the provisions with money advanced to them. The necessary items were smuggled in by boats that looked different from those of Goa. The cargo used to be registered in the fake names of the outsiders.

With a view to check this misuse of the rule, the government equipped the rendeiro with the special right to interrogate the traders by making them take oaths in terms of the heads of their wives and children before stating whether the cargo belonged to them or to the outsiders.

The custom of swearing was an old one, in accordance with the general practice in the Goan customs office. Even the ecclesiastics were subjected to such oath taking before testifying that they were not getting any article brought in under fake names.

The renda of coleita was suddenly faced with a crisis when a certain Narsu Naique (it is not clearly stated whether he was the same as the rendeiro of the Goa customs, but in all probability, he was.) imposed an embargo on the practice through an order from the government itself that henceforth, the rendeiro himself would have to take a similar oath in the name of his wife and children.

This new condition totally jeopardised the renda itself as the rendeiro of coleita refused to do so. He considered this as highly ignominious for the Goan Hindus. Moreover, apprehensive that he would be asked to do the same, the rendeiro expressed reluctance to

force the traders to take any such oath. In fact, he even offered to give up the contract altogether, when still one more year remained of his term. To make the matter worse he began to grudge the government's failure to support him with regard to two more conditions of his contract. First, the government had failed to provide him with the watchboats for patrolling and secondly, they had given permission to the traders and certain other individuals to unload their rice whenever they wanted.

This placed the Goa Senate, that controlled this renda in an embarrassing situation. The new condition relating to oath taking put off all the possible bidders none of whom was ready to subject himself to this new condition and if they did, it was for a very low price.

The rendeiro was finally persuaded over to remain in office but only after his demand for a lowering of the price was accepted by the Senate. He would now pay only 10,000 xeraffins per annum, and 30,000 for a full term of three years. The original price being 137 00 per year, this meant a loss of 3700 xeraffins per year.

The Senate, unable to solve the problem by itself, referred the case to the Court in Lisbon. In response, the King advised them to consider the pros and cons of the extension of the tax to the outsiders as well.

The Senate approved of the suggestion. In support of the directive, it pointed out that, it would, in no case, hamper the interests of the Goans. The outsiders were equally responsible for this state of affairs. They not only acted in connivance with the

Goan traders by helping them to bring in the articles in the fake names but they themselves took passes from the 'pirates' and avoided being escorted by the Portuguese warships, for which they were expected to pay taxes. In Goa itself, they sold their provisions either at a price fixed by the Senate or at the one prevailing at that time in the market. Hence, it was the common people who suffered by bearing the inherent burden of tax. Moreover, the Goan traders themselves did not get any such privilege either in Bombay or in the ports of the South from where these traders came. Hence, the Senate saw nothing wrong in an extension of the tax to the outsiders as well.

The second case in example was the renda of tobacco which created a more serious problem in the mid 18th century.[38]

This contract, from its very inception was dominated by the Hindus. Though in 1690 and in 1693 the contract was taken by Antonio da Miranda, Fransisco da Costa and Salvador da Pereira, we also get the names of Hindus like Massena Sinai, Vitogi Sinai and Krishna Naique. Occasional use of terms like Bragmane (Brahmin) and Gãonkar (Village chief) to qualify the Christians indicate that some of them were Hindu converts.

Hindu contract holders became more numerous over the years. In 1732 for example, it was Rama Sinai who held the combined contract for Goa, Bardes and Salcet for two consecutive terms upto 1737. After this, it passed on to Gunea Camotim. In a later document of 1783 the Governor complained that this contract, like

38. For details, see, Karubaki Datta, 'Portugal's Experiment with Brazilian Tobacco in India in the Eighteenth Century' pp.95-111.

many others, was totally controlled by Hindu traders of Goa, particularly by some specific families who virtually monopolised the deal.[39]

The price of the contract began to fall from the mid 18th century onwards. The Governor explained it as a result of the deliberate 'death blow' given by the Hindus only. There was no 'human force' he commented, that could raise the price in this situation. In all the correspondence of the period between Goa and the Lisbon Governments regarding the problem is expressed the former's distrust and hostility towards the Hindu contract holders. The Governor also explained the various means they were pursuing their personal interests at the cost of the state exchequer.[40]

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39. HAG, MR 164B, fls. 1710, 9.4.1783. Complaints regarding their monopoly was also mooted earlier. In 1776 for example, the Secretary of State in Lisbon, while describing the nature of the problem that set in from 1750 onwards, pointed out that the Hindus were and are the only contract holders of the said contract. MR 157B fls. 651, 18.4.1776.
40. One of those 'means' was the payment of the prices in paper of old debts. The Governor, in his report to the Secretary of State pointed out that this was particularly true of the advance deposits of one tenth. Some of them even deposited the one quarter in those papers. This, though not the usual practice, was permitted as a special grace. The Council itself had passed a decree in favour of Massana Sinai and another in 1764 favouring Nagana Camotim. Even Vencu Sinai and Lakshmana Sinai, the previous rendeiros were reported to have paid their deposits in paper only. A detailed account of the problems faced by the government, in relation to this renda is given by the Goa Governor to the Lisbon authority in HAG, MR 151, fls. 166-174v. The nature of the crisis and malpractices of the rendeiros were repeated again, by the Secretary of State himself in MR 168, fls. 651-658. The same document is reproduced again in MR 158C, fls. 908-918 and MR 168, fls. 1069-1077. The purpose of these repetitions was to acquaint the new Governors with the problem as it was. The repeated reproductions of the story point to the seriousness with which the government took upon itself the challenge to control the rendeiros.

In fact, the monopoly of tobacco in 1776 was introduced with the very aim of curbing the machinations of the Hindu contract holders.[41] The economic advantages accruing from the reform would be an added advantage. Yet, the government's failure to supply good quality tobacco regularly worsened its position.[42] As a result of irregular supply from Brazil, the government was left with no other alternative but to solve the crisis locally with the help of the local merchants who were asked to secure the provisions from the ports of the south. This, though contrary to the initial spirit of the regulation, was given a semblance of regularity as permission was obtained from the Secretary of State himself for procuring tobacco from the south, in case of late arrival of the ship due to some unavoidable reason. What was allowed under special circumstances, became a routine affair.

41. Monopoly was imposed through a declaration of the Crown dated 18.4.1776. HAG, MR 157B, fls.651-658, MR 158C, fls.908-918 and 168D, fls. 1069-1077.
42. As early as 1783 the ship came late with Brazilian tobacco. Henceforth the Goa Governor's complaints to the Secretary of State about this late arrival increased in frequency and became a regular annual feature from 1790 onwards. Recurring complaints regarding the quality appeared as early as 1781 when the entire bulk of useless tobacco had to be burnt down. The inspection reports of 1782 also testified to this fact. The Governor complained that in Bahia the merchants were adulterating good tobacco with bad. The same accusations were repeated in 1783 and 1784 as well. HAG, MR 174B, fl.562, MR 163B, fl.184 and MR 164, fls. 1062-1069.
43. In 1783 tobacco was ordered twice from the south in the same year. This became a regular feature from 1790 onwards. The difficulty reached an extreme point when, due to an outbreak of war in 1790 it could not be secured from the south. This was unavailable at Surat also, where rainfall was scanty that year. In 1791 it was ordered not only from Surat but from Bengal as well. HAG, Assentos da Junta da Fazenda, pp.245,262,271, 7.5.1791,21.2.1794, 3.10.1795. For details of the various problems arising out of this, Ibid,p.245,5.7.1791.

As a result of all this, the relation between the government and the contract holders further worsened. The latter always complained about the insufficient quantity and inferior quality of provision they received from the government. The petitions of Rama Chandra Naique during 1790-91 and Mucundo Sinai Moleo in 1795 point to problems.[44]

The government was faced with a dilemma. It could neither dispense with the assistance of the contract holders nor curb the clandestine trade nor could it altogether ignore the terms of the monopoly. Rather it had to face the wrath of the Lisbon Government, which, unable to comprehend the reality, pointed out that the standard of inspection was being enforced only now in order to compare it unfavourably with the Brazilian tobacco. The contract holders were interested in their personal gains which they hoped to achieve by dislodging Brazilian tobacco from Goa. A connivance between the Goa government and the local business community was also hinted at.[45]

These two examples of the rendas of coleita and tobacco point to the importance the rendeiros enjoyed in the system. Their protests and insistence even forced the government to change the taxes and the mode of administration of the rendas

The first instance point out how the renda holder's refusal to comply with any particular condition of the renda could jeopardise its entire administration and force the government to change its fiscal policy. Economic interests predominated the

44. HAG, MR 174B, fls. 568-570.

45. Ibid., fl. 563.

relationship between the government and the rendeiros. In this case, oath taking was used merely as a pretext to serve the interest of either Narsu Naique or the state government. The proposal of the oath taking came from Narsu Naique himself, who belonged to the same community as the rendeiro. Being so, he could not but be aware of the sanctity of such an oath, which was considered more sacred than any written contract. Clearly, the alien government could not have thought of imposing such a condition on the rendeiros without the advice of the members of the same community. What is not clear from the document is that why did Narsu Naique insist on the introduction of such a humiliating condition. Was it just a roundabout way of getting the policy changed? Did the irregularities on part of the rendeiro of coleita clash with his interests as the holder of the renda of Goa customs? If so, in what way? These are the questions that the documents leave unanswered.

The issue, however, brought to light the social customs and the set of values held sacred by the community. The 'faceless' traders with all their fiscal interests and clandestine modes of profit making, remained a part of the community from which they came and could not rise above the dictates of the moral values upheld by the community.

The second case is a long drawn and complicated one. The government, by declaring monopoly on the Brazilian tobacco in India took upon itself a responsibility which it failed to carry out. In the whole process, it was the helplessness of the Goa government that became prominent. It was caught in the dilemma of

fulfilling the orders of the Crown, of running the administration efficiently and advancing the financial interests of the state on the one hand and the realities of shortage of supply and lack of uniformity of quality on the other. Even the Lisbon Government unable to realise the problems, suspected the Goa governor of conniving with the Indians and neglecting the greater interests of the state. This growing distrust of the Goa Government by the Lisbon authorities was another dimension to the entire problem which emerged out of the experiment. The whole experiment was initiated with a view to curbing the importance of the renda holders, yet, it ended up by bringing out the weakness of the government itself and the indispensability of the Hindu renda holders to the smooth administration of the renda.

Conclusion

The nature of relationship between the Europeans and the Asian traders has been the subject of many discussions among historians. In 1969, Prof. Holden Furber used the term partnership to denote the relation, which, he held, was characterised more by mutual respect than by hostility and assertion of power.[46]

The concept of partnership was later elaborated by Prof. Ashin Das Gupta. By partnership, he did not mean an absence of competition but an atmosphere of freedom in which both the groups traded according to the existing customs without twisting the rules of trade in favour of any particular group. The system continued till the late 18th century, when the British private

46. Holden Furber, 'Asia and West as Partners before Empire and After', Journal of Asian Studies, volume XXVIII(4), 1969, pp. 711-21.

traders, many of them top officials themselves, began to control the trade from the ports under their rule in order to serve their commercial interests alone. This coincided with the period of Asian weakness in the sea caused by some other reasons. This was contrary to the Mughal system where the Mughal officials delegated their trading business to their agents who, being traders themselves, did not go against the local trading customs.[47]

Prof. Das Gupta picks up the illustrations of freedom enjoyed by the merchants from the ports under the Mughal control. In doing so, he ignores the element of dominance brought in by the Portuguese in the 16th century which they tried to enforce through the issue of passes.[48]

The lacuna in Prof. Das Gupta's theoretical formulation has been filled up by Dr. Sanjay Subramanyam in his study of the political economy of trade in Southern India.

He cites many examples of the use of violence by the Portuguese as well as the resistance offered to the system by the many independent merchant groups as in the case of the Chatims of Basrur. In Coromandel too, the individual Portuguese had shown a remarkable degree of belligerence even in the unfortified settlements, for example in São Tomé of Meliapore. A reexamination of the European sources reveals to him a picture of a 'world permeated in its language and images as indeed in its actions by violence.' What distinguished this period was the extent to which

47. Ashin Das Gupta, 'Indian Merchants in the Age of Partnership', pp. 28-29.

48. Ashin Das Gupta himself somewhat modified his stand in 1987 when he stated that this partnership was not an unreserved human acceptance of each other, but a structure of trade and politics in which everybody functioned. Ashin Das Gupta and M.N. Pearson ed. India and the Indian Ocean 1500-1800, pp. 131-132.

this conflict and potential for violence remained bounded. The age, therefore to him, rather than an age of partnership, in reality an age of 'contained conflict.' [49]

None of these two characteristics are wholly applicable to Goa. The concept of partnership was greatly tainted in Goa, where the Portuguese racially discriminated against the Indians. [50] In trading practices also, element of coercion on one side and element of suspicion and distrust on the other were clearly visible.

The Mughal spirit of freedom existing in the other parts of the West coast was never operative in Goa which was directly ruled by the Portuguese Crown, claiming supremacy over the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese failed to back up their claims by arms of power in the other regions eg. in Gujarat, but it survived, even if notionally, in the parts directly under their administration. All the instructions regarding trade from the Portuguese Estado were aimed at serving the imperial interests alone. Moreover, in the late 18th century, the problem here was not merely one of fitting in or not into the existing trading structure, but one of day to day functions including collection of revenues when the scope of trade itself had narrowed down.

The only scope of trade open to the merchants was exports to Lisbon by Portuguese ships, the supply of provisions to the

49. In course of elaborating and illustrating the notion of violence Sanjay Subramanyam also explains the Dutch and English experience in South West Asia as well as intra European conflict in 17th century. (pp. 269-297.) We have only cited the examples from his discussion of the Portuguese role. (pp. 254-268.) The Political Economy of Commerce, Southern India 1500-1650, Cambridge, 1990.

50. This is pointed out elaborately by Prof. C.R.Boxer, who does not agree with Furber's notion of 'partnership', see, Portuguese Seaborne Empire, passim.

government and holding of the rendas. The government, in its turn, was forced by lack of personnel, to depend on these people for revenue administration. The relationship therefore can be described as one of mutual dependence within the notion of dominance.

Even though born out of necessity on both sides, it lacked the element of 'good faith' which is the basis of partnership. Rather, the relation had become full of tension and distrust. These cropped up on the slightest pretext and could assume different forms. The reasons of such conflict could either be the falling prices of the renda as happened in the case of tobacco, or the mode of payment as in the issue centring round the old debts. It could even erupt on the slight and apparently trivial issues like oath taking as in the case of the renda of coleita. Actually, these issues merely redefined the arena in which the merchants were to operate. The government's distrust on these people intensified, yet, none of the parties was in a position to bring the relationship to an end. Violent resistance to the system like those offered by the independent merchant groups outside the directly ruled Portuguese territories had to be ruled out in Goa of the late 18th century. The mutual dependence was to continue, however uneasy and burdensome it might have become. The pressures of compulsions were so strong that complete divorce was not feasible.