

C H A P T E R - I V

RURAL LIFE, AGRICULTURE AND REVENUE

The island of Bassein was bounded by the Ulhas river in the south, by the Vaitarni in the north, Arabian Sea in the west and by the adjoining Sopara creek in the east. The island was divided into two parts, the main part consisting of the Bassein fort and the town, was called South Bassein which had the main villages like Mudrapur adjoining the fort wall; Bassein proper, Papady, Manickpur, Sandor, Dhauli, Bene, Girij, Chulne and Gokhivara. The northern part had the important villages like Bhuigaon, Nirmal, Wagholi, Vatar, Nándakhal, Virar, Agashi and Arnala. It was generally known as Agaçaim by the Portuguese.¹

The owners of those villages were the Portuguese Fidalgos or the noblemen who did not reside on their estates but lived either in Goa or in the fort town of Bassein. The land was leased to the locals who sometimes sub-leased it to the tillers. In this way, the villages were officially leased on

1. Tombo de Baçaim A D'Costa, Indica, 1969, pp.105-118
Original Mss in HAG. Cod.3067, gives the details about the villages and their owner as follows :

- I. Casbe de Baçaim - the main land.
- II. Pacaria de gris - Margarida Teles de Menezes fl.26
- III. Malora - Maritinho da Silveira de Menezes, fl.27.
- iv. Mulgaon - Fernão de Brito de Melo, fl 27_v.
- v. Camariari - Cosme Dinis, fl.28
- vi. Umela - Fernão de Souza, fl.29_v.
- vii. Manikpur - Jesuit Priests. fl.30

somebody's name who did not reside there. This was the peculiar aspect of medieval feudalism. They were known as 'Absentee landlords'.

The Village and its Functionaries

The village was the most important component of rural life around which the entire social and economic life of the

- VIII. Carda - Dom Manoel Henrique fl.30_v.
- IX. Rangaon - Fernão de Silveira e Menezes fl.31.
- X. Sandor - Jorge de Silva Coelho, fl.32_v.
- XI. Darbhat - Cosme Dinis, fl.33.
- XII. Calvary - Dona Mariana Pereira de Castro, fl.33_v.
- XIII. Kirvali - Fernão Brito, fl.34.
- XIV. Kerangli - Ferancisco de São Laxaro, fl.34_v.
- XV. Saloli - Talapete - Dona Joana Pereira, fl.35.
- XVI. Douli - Dom João de Castro fl.35_v.
- XVII. Sida Bhat - Luis Carvalho, fl.36.
- XVIII. Camaonery - Cosme Dinis, fl.36_v.
- XIX. Umela, (below the hill) Dona Catarina de Vasconcelos, fl.37.
- XX. Sobojam - Joseph da Cunha, fl.37_v.
- XXI. Calvary Grande - Antonio Pereira de Souza, fl.39.
- XXII. Rajouly - Lourenzo Diaz, fl.40.

Casabe de Aqaciam

- I. Calavaria - Dominiquos Pereira de Azvedo, fl.43.
- II. Vagoli - Manoel de L'ma, fl.43_v.
- III. Agashi - Dominigos Pereira, fl.44.
- IV. Nala - Louis Soraes de Costa, fl.44_v.
- V. Borgoan - Paulo Gracias, fl.45.
- VI. Vatar - Manoel de Varia Fonseca, fl.46_v.
- VII. Mugir - Minguel Francico, fl.47.
- VIII. Carshot - Antonio de Souza, fl.47_v.

region revolved. It had several common names like grāma, mauiā, khede, wādi, etc. In the case of adjacent villages having the same name, the bigger one was called budruk and the smaller, khurd. When the Portuguese took charge of Bassein, they did not interfere in the village pattern or its functionaries. They allowed the existing practice to continue. So even today you will find the names of the villages like Kaular Khurd and Kaulār Budruk in Bassein.

The residents of the village were divided into several groups such as Desak signifying hereditary officials, Desāi, Deshmukh etc., Mirāsdārs paying regular revenue, Balutedārs, who worked for the village and got their salary in kind, especially agricultural produce, called Balutā. This system not only existed in the Muslim period but also prevailed in earlier period. Among these Balutedārs there were washermen, potters, goldsmiths, carpenters, blacksmiths, shoemakers and also untouchables like the Mahāras and Māngas.²

There were some village officials or rank-holders like Watandārs, Pātil, Kulkarnis, Deshmukh, Deshpānde, etc., who were responsible for the proper functioning of the village.

Watandār was the royal lease-holder of land, who held this office as long as he enjoyed the confidence of the king. The villagers paid him in cash and kind for his services. The Watandārs were the officials who were in charge of the village

2. A.R.Kulkarni, Maharashtra in the age of Shivaji, (Poona, 1969), p.27.

administration. Though their main duty was to collect revenue they also looked after local disputes, organising village festivals and ceremonies, maintenance of peace and order etc. The Watandārs who were connected with the village administration were the Pātil, Kulkarni, Deshmukh and Deshpānde.

Pātil - The village headman was called Pātil and was the chief hereditary officer of the village. He was also called Gaupātil. His main duty was to bring the barren land under cultivation. He was responsible for fixing the revenue of the villages. He appeal for the remission of revenue to the state authority.³ He was the sole responsible authority for the collection of the revenue, and suffered if there was any shortage in the collection. He was an important member of the village council who also looked after peace and order in the village.

Kulkarni - was the village accountant who kept a record of all leaseholders and their properties. Sometimes there were several villages under the control of one Kulkarni. He also worked as a village astrologer if he was a Brahmin.⁴ Even though the Pātil was the supreme administrative authority, he had to depend upon the Kulkarni for several reasons. The state could take action against him, if found guilty, though his office was hereditary.

3. A.R.Kulkarni, op.cit., p.27

4. Ibid. p.35.

Deshmukh - held some land of the village. His main duty was to supervise the work of the Pātil. He had the annual round of the village under his control, and personally collected the information about the condition of the village. He could take action against the Pātil if he did not pay correct revenue. During the time of famine, it was the Deshmukh who decided the remission of revenue. He was the link between the ruler and the ruled. Sometimes he acted as a Pātil for the village.⁵

Deshpānde - enjoyed some land in the village and supervised the work of Kulkarni in his region. So his duties were like those of Kulkarni. He was subordinate to Deshmukh. He enjoyed rent-free land for his service to the state. He acted as Kulkarni of the village in absence of hereditary Kulkarni. He received several facilities from the villages. At the time of village festivals, he received sugar, betel nuts, pan and clothes which were called Shelapāgote from parties.⁶

Village Administration

The Portuguese tried to impose their rule in Goa and other colonies but in Bassein their attitude was quite different. They did not dictate their administrative system in Bassein, in the rural areas. There can be several reasons for this attitude.

First, Bassein was quite far away from their headquarters

5. A.R.Kulkarni, op.cit., p.43.

6. Ibid. .

in Goa. Secondly, it was surrounded by the kingdom of Shivaji on the eastern side. The neutrality between these two rulers was the need of the time. Shivaji was fighting against the Muslims, and the Portuguese were fighting against their European enemies. So except for a few minor clashes, they did not have trouble with each other.

Having taken into consideration the above situation we shall see the village administration in Portuguese Bassein. For all practical purposes, the administration of the village was in the hands of the village panchāyat. Government help was sought only in the case of revenue collection, justice to a certain level and the maintenance of law and order.

Village Panchāyat

In the normal life it was the village Panchāyat that took all the important administrative decisions in the village. It comprised of the elders of each wādi. The meetings were held at the residence of the chief of the panchāyat who was called pātil⁷ or at an open place under a huge banyan or pipal tree. Sometimes it was also held in the church verandah especially when a religious matter was under discussion or when the case was against an important Christian person in the village. The chief thānedār who used to look after law and order in the village, called such meetings occasionally.⁸

7. Patil - This name was common in all communities even among Christian.

8. T.A. de Souza, Medieval Goa, (New Delhi, 1979) p.70.

The thānedār was the provincial⁹ head of the village. These thānedārs possessed the administrative, police and judicial powers.¹⁰ Every village had a village watchman. His responsibility was to guard landed properties and private houses against thieves. His main duty was to keep contact with the province head or captain regarding strangers visiting the village, and keeping a watch on them.

The village had also a seth or sāwakār¹¹ who was considered higher than the other village servants in the society. The sāwakār generally tried to claim Brahmin class because of his financial position which was not correct but the people treated him as vaishya.¹² The village had a goldsmith who pierced the ears of the females and sometimes of males as well. The silver and gold ornaments were procured from the goldsmith. He was authorised to check the currancy collected by the revenue collector. The village authorities paid him some remuneration for this service.¹³

There were gaulwādās¹⁴ in the village. Generally, there

9. Here provinces means sub-division of the Province of the North of which Bassein was the capital and not the entire Province of Bassein.

10. APO, (CR), Vol.V, Part I, p.3

11. Seth or Sāwakar were the money-lenders, who were generally goldsmiths.

12. Bragança Pereira, Ethnografia da India Portuguesa, (Bastora, 1940), Part II, p.39.

13. Mss. HAG, No. 100037.

14. Gaulwādā means stable.

was one gaulwādā for each village but in larger villages, there were many gaulwādās, one for each ward of the village. Every eight head of cattle had one gauliwādā. The person who looked after the cattle was paid not more than one xerafim per head for the entire year.¹⁵

The village had different types of artisans as goldsmiths, blacksmiths, potters, etc. These artisans were very well treated by the villagers as they provided the articles of day-to-day use. They were welcomed and honoured by the villagers on certain occasions like the religious feasts in the village. They were given sweet rice cakes specially prepared on such occasions as a token of gratitude for their services to the village.¹⁶ These artisans had to make their rounds through the village every week and attend to the needs of the villagers. If they refused, they were liable to be fined by the village panchāyat. Generally, this kind of fine did not exceed one tanga but in certain cases it could be five tangas.¹⁷

Rural Life

The original settlers of the North Konkan belonged to different castes, creeds and religions, spoke a variety of languages, and came from different social environments. The reasons for these settlements were purely economic. The availability of the food in substantial quantity in this region might have

15. Mss. HAG, No.10022.

16. Mss. HAG, No.10032, fl.541.

17. Mss. HAG, No.10042, fl. 31.

attracted these people from the interior to come and settle down in this prosperous part of the country.¹⁸ We can compare this population with the people of Western Europe, where the scarcity of food made them loyal to the crown for a long time. There was no alternative left for them. It was necessary to their survival against the impending Muslim invasion from the east.¹⁹ We can confirm this fact from the argument of D.D.Kosambi who says that the existence of some of the edible fruits like the coconut might have attracted these people to settle down in this flourishing part of the west coast.²⁰ But this cannot be the only reason for the early settlements in this part. The availability of sweet water in Bassein from the two rivers, Ulhas and Vaitarni, was another attraction. Moreover, the black soil of this region was so fertile that the people could produce not only crops but also various kinds of vegetables and fruits. The original settlers of Bassein must have been Kolis and Agris who came to settle down here for the above mentioned reasons, which completed the first phase of settlement of this part.

The second phase of the settlement of these regions started from the early medieval period and continued till the end of the medieval period. This was due to the religious persecution of the Muslim rulers of the north which compelled many people to run away from their home-towns in Gujarat and Kathewad. Rural Bassein was

18. V.K.Rajwade, op.cit., p.100.

19. Ibid.

20. D.D.Kosambi, The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline, (Delhi, 1972) p.189.

situated in a large grove of coconut palms and other fruit trees with a number of large and prosperous villages and artificial ponds.²¹ This extensive native town was chiefly inhabited by Hindus including Brahmins, farmers and craftsmen, especially weavers and able baniya merchants and Parsees from Gujarat and Mohamedans from the south.²² They were engaged in various trades in rice, flax, vegetable, poultry, butter and especially in valuable wood that was found in the neighbouring forests.²³ They were Sāmvedi Brāhmins, Somavanshi Kshatriyas, Sesnavanshi Kshatriyas, etc. They settled in between the Vaitarna and Ulhās rivers which join the Arabian Sea and the fame of the flourishing part of Bassein known as Sopara attracted many Muslim traders and adventurers from Africa, Arabia and Persia.²⁴ After the arrival at the Portuguese in Bassein in 1534, the population of Bassein remained same at the initial

21. These ponds were dug to get water for cultivation. Most of them are in existence even today. The bigger ones are called tale and smaller ones bāwadi in the local language.

22. Castanheda, op.cit., 8,62,9,10.

Schurhammer, op.cit., Vol.II, p.407.

João de Castro, Roteiro ... , op.cit., p.110.

23. Simão Botelho, Cartas Ed. R.J. de Lima Felner in Subsidios para a historia da India Portuguesa (Lisboa, 1868), p.7.

Hereafter referred as Cartas.

24. Braz Fernandes, In the Mission Field, op.cit., p.511.

stages. Garcia da Orta²⁵ who visited Bassein in 1534 and wrote his famous book, gives some details of the people of Bassein. But when the Portuguese started religious persecution, many of these people fled to different parts, especially to the Hindu region controlled by Shivaji and the Muslim controlled territory in the North, first by Gujarat²⁶ Sultans and then by the Mughals. Only a few Muslims, chiefly those who had intermarried with the Hindus, remained in Bassein after the Portuguese took over.²⁷

25. Garcia da Orta - Garcia da Orta was born in Elvas in Portugal. During his youth he was sent to the Spanish universities, where he studied in Salamanca and Alcala de Henares from 1515 to 1525. After his return to Portugal in 1526 he worked as a village doctor for some years in Castelo de vidq, near his native town Elvas. He taught in the Lisbon University from 1532-1534. In 1534 he came to India with Martin Afonso de Souza, who later in 1542 became the governor of Goa. He was a personal friend of Martin Afonso. Garcia da Orta visited some important places with the governor, like Bassein, Diu, Cochin and Ceylon. He was present at the signing of the treaty of Bassein on 23rd December 1543 between the Portuguese and the Sultan of Gujarat. He settled down in India and worked as a practising physician. He was granted a long lease of Bombay in 1534, when it came under the Portuguese control, which he sublet to one Simão Tuscano. He wrote his famous book called Colloquies dos Simples ...op.cit. in 1561-64. He stayed for thirty six years in India and died in Goa in the year 1570.

26. Garcia da Orta, op.cit.,

27. Donlad F.Lach, Asia in the Making of Europe, (London, 1971) p.405.

Garcia da Orta speaks mainly about the Hindus and Parsees of Bassein as the Portuguese had not started the conversion of the local population to Christianity when he visited Bassein in 1534. They were gardners who watered the gardens and cultivated flowers and fruits.²⁸ He also speaks of the Baniya community of Bassein which was involved in the commercial activities of the town.

After the Portuguese took possession of this region, rural life began to change very swiftly. First of all, the ultimate authority having the supreme control over the affairs of the state changed from the ruler of Gujarat to the Portuguese. Secondly, the local landlords went into the background as Portuguese landlords came at the helm of affairs. Thirdly, in the rural society, a new group of converted Christians emerged to power and supported by the state, established its importance. This new group did not change the places of their residence or migrate to some other part of the region.

SOCIETY

Dress of the People.

Gemelli Careri gives the details of the dress and the general outlook of the people of Bassein. He says that due to the excessive heat, the people wore the minimum amount of clothing. Men and women used to come out of the houses especially during the summer season, half-naked, the men wearing

28. Garcia da Orta, op.cit., p.342.

only a clout and the women, a piece of linen covering their breasts and thighs.²⁹ The rich and the fashionable people wore silk and very thin muslins in the form of paijama kurta.³⁰ the men did not use shoes or stockings though they generally used sandals or chappals.³¹

The Hindu women of Bassein bored their noses to put rings through. The Christians used the minimum clothes at home but outside they used typical clothes. Elderly men generally wore a shirt and dhoti. The red cap which they used during this period is still retained today among certain communities. Christian women also used dark red lugade which is also retained in Bassein even today. This peculiar type of clothing in dark red colour were given by the Portuguese to the new converts. The men were prohibited to wear dhotis when Portuguese established complete control.³² The main purpose of giving this type of dress was to distinguish them from their original communities and make them feel that they were different from them. Moreover, their own people, who remained Hindus,

29. Gemelli Careri, op.cit., p.168.

30. Paijama Kurta - This is a typical Indian dress, which was very popular among kings and princes, even during the British Raj. It is still popular in India. Generally it is the dress for men. But now a days it is more popular among young ladies.

31. Gemelli Careri, op.cit., p.168.

32. A.K.Pryolkar, Hindustanche done Darwazae - Marathi, (Bombay, 1974), pp.309-10.

avoided contact with the people wearing this red dress. This indirectly helped to isolate Christians from their original religion, who gave up the said religion forever and became staunch Catholics.

HOUSING

The pattern of village housing was more or less the same as in other parts of Maharashtra. The villages in Bassein were isolated from each other. They were known as wadis. In between these villages, there were low-lying paddy fields or vegetable gardens. The Hindus stayed in houses made of mud, wood and covered by palm leaves. The well-to-do Hindus lived in well constructed houses. The Christians also lived in the same manner. The houses were lighted by the lamps known as panti³³ and generally fed with coconut oil. The churches outside the fort wall were lighted with wax candles.³⁴ All the Christians could not stay in good houses. On the contrary, many of them lived in small houses which were overcrowded and without proper facilities. A contemporary Muslim writer compared these houses with pigsties.³⁵

33. Panti - is a typical Indian lamp made of mud after baking. It was a traditional lamp all over India, which was fed with coconut oil before the use of other burning oil. It is retained in India even today but it is used to light houses and temples at the time of big Hindu festivals like Diwali.

34. Pyrard de Laval, op.cit., pp. 47-8.

35. DI, (JW), Vol.VIII, P. 316.

SOCIAL INTERACTION

India is the only country in the World where people of different castes, creeds and religions have lived together for hundreds of years, though with some stains of communal riots here and there. But the people in general know that it is their prime duty to understand the environment and to lead their lives peacefully.

When the Portuguese became the rulers of this area, they needed the support of the local people. First of all, they followed the policy of mixed marriages which could not succeed as they expected. Secondly, they attempted to establish communal harmony among the new converts, trying to abolish caste distinction among them. But soon they realised the hurdles in their way, as the Indian people were aware of the caste distinction. It was difficult for them to compromise with this immensely powerful and deep-rooted social and religious system.³⁶

The Portuguese soon came to the conclusion that their policy of communal harmony was futile. Moreover, after a certain period they completely changed their attitudes. This was the result of the rigorous conversion policy of the newly arrived European missionaries, especially the Jesuits.

The Portuguese promoted the interest of the converts in Bassein. They encouraged them by providing some government

36. C.R.Boxer, Race Relations in the Portuguese Colonial Empire - 1415-1825 (Oxford, 1963) p.75. Hereafter referred as Race Relation ...

posts to those who showed a certain mark of intelligence or were employed by the Fidalgos in their personal service. The orders were issued that no Portuguese officials were to employ any Hindu in government or private service.³⁷ The Prabhus who had been employed as village clerks were to be replaced by capable converts. The Hindu artisans were not to produce anything connected with Christian workshop. The Hindu fishermen were forced to help the state navy.³⁸ A non-Christian tailor owning a workshop, was prohibited to have a Christian partner or to employ any Christian in his shop.³⁹ The Portuguese purposely modified the traditional laws of inheritance in favour of the converts. This change enabled female converts to inherit the property when a Hindu head of the family died without a male heir.⁴⁰ The Hindus were not permitted to celebrate their feasts publicly.⁴¹

The Portuguese government introduced several ruthless regulations to curb the influence of Hinduism among the newly converted Christians. It was done mainly after 1580 when Portugal came under Spanish control from the time of King Philip I (II of Spain). The Christians were threatened with severe punishment if they admitted these people as their partners in

37. Joseph Wicki (ed) O Livro do Pai dos Christãos, (Lisboa, 1969) pp. 84-85, 104-105, 113-22.

38. Joseph Wicki, O Livro, op.cit., pp.184-85.

39. Mss. HAG, Livro de Postura, No.7795, fl.55.

40. A.K.Priyolkar, The Goa Inquistition (Bombay,1961) p.114.

41. Mss. HAG, No.7864, fls. 136-39_v.

business or lent them money or gave them shelter in their houses. In Bassein, no Hindu was allowed to serve public office as a clerk, naik, peon, mukādam, interpreter, attorney, solicitor, broker or shroff.⁴² The Christians of Bassein were not permitted to sell their property to the Hindus. The Hindus were forced to attend the catechism classes which were held on Sunday afternoon and those who failed to attend, were fined.⁴³ The Portuguese destroyed and burnt many idols. They even destroyed a tank in Bassein where the Hindus used to bathe for the remission of their sins. The Portuguese persecution was so severe that many Hindus, Muslims and Parsees fled to the neighbouring kingdom of the Mughal emperor. So a major part of Bassein remained uncultivated for some time.⁴⁴

The result of the changed policy of the Portuguese was quite important. Many people in Bassein embraced Christianity. The Portuguese built churches for these converts outside the fort wall and they were put into different parishes. There were nine parishes in Bassein during the Portuguese period of which six were in South Bassein,⁴⁵ and three were in North Bassein.⁴⁶

42. J.G. da Cunha, Chaul and Bassein, op.cit., p.144.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. The names of the parishes in South Bassein (1) St.Thomas, Sandor (2) Our Lady of Remedy, Dhawali (3) Our Lady of Grace, Papdi (4) Mother of God, Pali (5) St. Michael, Manickpur (6) Our Lady of Mercy, Mercas.

46. The names of the Parishes in North Bassein (1) Holy Spirit, Nandakhal (2) St.James, Agashi (3) Mount Calvalry, Nirmal.

It was through these parishes that the Portuguese established their control over Bassein. The converts were completely separated from their original communities by the Portuguese.

The Portuguese purposely kept these new converts aloof from their original communities, so that they did not retain any contact with their counterparts. On the other hand, the Hindus of Bassein in this period were so orthodox that they tried to remain away from those members of their family or relatives who accepted Christianity. So it became impossible for the Christians of Bassein to mix with other people. In this way, the relationship among the Hindus, Muslims, Parsees and Christians became so rigid that there was hardly any chance for them to come together.⁴⁷

The people of this area were separated due to their religion, caste and creed. So it was quite difficult for them to come under any common social banner.⁴⁸ There were not many Jews or Parsees in this area. The remaining Hindus, Muslims and the converted Christians lost social contact for some time during the initial rule of the Portuguese in Bassein. The orthodox Brahmins of Bassein became so isolated that they completely lost control over society. This was exploited by the Portuguese who established their social control over the people.⁴⁹ The people of different castes and religions could come together at the time

47. V.K.Rajwade, op.cit., p.97.

48. Ibid. p.98.

49. Ibid.

of the weekly markets but generally the Hindus tried to avoid the converts. The Christian converts were disowned by their original community for embracing Christianity. So it was necessary for the Portuguese to compensate the Christian converts for accepting their religion. They were appointed to certain posts, even though not very significant. They were given certain concessions.

In this way the Portuguese tried to crush by force the Hindu influence in Christian Society. But they were not always successful because through the service of any Hindu artist was prohibited by the Government, the local missionaries still preferred them for the decoration of the churches.⁵⁰ Though the Portuguese tried to keep the converts separate from their original community, the Hindus did not mind it. They sometimes visited the Christian churches to pay homage to the Virgin Mary, The image of the Church of Our Lady of Remedy in South Bassein was venerated by them. They used to come to this church and salute the image, bowing to the ground and removing their shoes. They used to put oil into the lamp that hung before the image and burnt wax candles and offered money.⁵¹

SOCIAL PRACTICES

Village life revolved round the temple. The temple was the headquarters of village life in the case of the Hindu and the church was for the Christians. Every important activity had to be initiated at these places. On various occasions, offerings

50. Couto, O Soldado Pratico, Ed.by Rodrigues Lapa, (Lisboa, 1954) pp.56.

51. APO (CR), op.cit., Vol.IV, pp.24-55.

were made to the God and family deities by the Hindus. The children were educated in the temple and the adults organised their cultural activities especially their religious dramas.⁵² The temple also served as repositories of the village records including the land survey and the land revenue registers. Similarly, the churches maintained the personal records namely baptism, death records etc. in the parish church which covered many villages.⁵³

During Portuguese rule, the people of Bassein in rural areas lived in wādis. Even after conversion, some of them did not give up their estates. They simply detached themselves from their original communities and started living separately. We can get enough information about the people of Bassein from the letters written by the missionaries to their higher authorities in Rome or their colleagues in Europe especially of Portugal. We also get this kind of information from the travel accounts of some of the European travellers who visited Bassein during this particular period of Portuguese rule.

First of all we shall examine the social practices of the Hindus. According to Gemelli Careri all the Hindus bored their noses to wear rings.⁵⁴ The people used to rub their teeth

52. A.S.Altekar, History of Village Communities in West India, (Madras, 1927) p.115.

53. T.R. de Souza, Medieval Goa (New Delhi, 1979) p.91.

54. Gamelli Carerri, op.cit., p.168. The author sarcastically compares boring of the noses of the Hindus of Bassein to boring of the noses of the buffaloes in Italy.

with a stick, generally known as datun⁵⁵ and sand⁵⁶ nearly for two hours.⁵⁷ They did not use quilts because of the heat but used blankets to lay down on the beds. They used the beds made of wood and cord.⁵⁸ The daily bath was compulsory to the Brahmins, Baniyas and the Hindus, who could not start their daily life without it. The Muslim used to bathe at least after every third day.⁵⁹ The Hindus were compelled to use the sacred thread known as Janava. If they neglected this practice, they were expelled from the community.⁶⁰

The Parsees looked towards the East while praying. They did not circumcise, and pork and beef were forbidden to them.⁶¹ These Parsees originally came from Persia. They had many superstitions. Garcia da Orta provides the information about the

55. Datun is a local word for indigenous tooth-brush. Even today the poor people of Bassein use it to rub the teeth. It is obtained from a particular tree called Babhul.

56. This is not the sand as described by the author but the powder of coal or ash.

57. This seems to be the exaggeration.

58. Gemelli Careri, op.cit., p.168.

59. Garcia da Orta, Part I, op.cit., p.36.

60. Mss. ANTT, Collecção São Lourenço, II, fl.48.

61. It is quite surprising that there is not a single Parsee family in Bassein today. Most of these people must have left Bassein after 1665 and went to settle in Bombay which came under British control, after that year. They left Bassein to avoid religious persecution by the Portuguese.

funeral of the Parsees. At the time of the death they used to take the body of the deceased person from another door and not the one which was generally used. They had sepulchres where the dead bodies were put and kept until they corrupted and dissolved.⁶²

Though the Christian converts changed their religion and mode of prayer, they retained certain norms from their original religion. They worshipped the Virgin Mary as a representation of Sita, taking off their shoes and made many other reverene gestures, put oil in the lamp and put money into the box. But the Portuguese later on decided to stop this kind of worship because it reminded the converts of their earlier religion. If the Portuguese had allowed them, they would have anointed the image and offered it fruit.⁶³ The people also believed in the theological philosophy that when they venerated the Holy Trinity as Father, Son and the Holy Spirit they worshipped the three Hindu Gods called Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh.⁶⁴

Gemelli Careri was astonished with the behaviour of the people of Bassein. He was carried out of the fort in a traditional palanquin which the Portuguese called Andora.⁶⁵ The

62. Garcia da Orta, Part II, op.cit., p.343.

63. Tavernier, op.cit., Vol.II, p.379.

64. Garcia da Orta, part II, op.cit., p.342.

Mss. Biblioteca da Ajuda, 49-IV, 49-fl, 124_v and 49-IV 50 fl 371_v. Hereafter referred as BNL.

Silva Rego, Documentação ..., op.cit., Vol.V, p.23 and Vol.VIII, p.399, DI Vol.II, p.184.

65. Andora was a palanquin, sometimes made of bamboo and palm leaves.

person who was carried by the slaves had to salute the person being carried in another palanquin going in the opposite direction. According to Careri, this was quite amazing and also humiliating. He said "this, in Naples would produce a duel and in India is done out of respect even to the viceroy himself."⁶⁶

We have already seen that the Portuguese encouraged marriages between Europeans and the local people. Those were known as Eurasian marriages. The Portuguese soldiers (soldados) were encouraged to marry the local women and were given many concessions and facilities after such marriages. This was the policy adopted right from the time of Afonso de Albuquerque. There were two or three main reasons behind this policy. From this new Eurasian community marriages, the Portuguese hoped to raise the army loyal to the Portuguese crown. Secondly, this kind of marriage system would accelerate the process of the conversion of the local people to Christianity.

But this attitude of the Portuguese was not entirely successful. It is due to the meticulous efforts of the Portuguese officials and missionaries that some Portuguese did marry the local women. They married them only to the high caste women who had been converted to Christianity from Hinduism.⁶⁷ But most of Portuguese who were of marriageable age were either soldiers or fugitives from other colonies. The high class

66. Careri, op.cit., p.170.

67. C.R.Boxer, Race Relation ..., op.cit., p.76.

people from Bassein were not prepared to allow their daughters in marriage to these kind of people. Secondly, the Portuguese were not sincere in their marital responsibilities.⁶⁸

Moreover, the efforts of the Portuguese to wipe out social feelings among the newly converted people from the different communities to Christianity, were not so successful. They could not come out of the rigid shell, having the pride of the caste.⁶⁹ They not only hesitated to give their daughters in marriage to the Europeans or the mestigos⁷⁰ but also kept aloof from other communities. The touchables and the untouchables could not come together at all. But the relationship among the low caste converts in Bassein with other high class converts is not rigid as among Goans where there is a direct separation as among Brahmin Christians and Shardos.⁷¹ In this way we can classify the people of Bassein as Hindus, Christian converts, Muslims, Parsees etc. The Hindus of Bassein including Brahmins, Vaishya⁷² and Shudras⁷³ were in a majority.

68. C.R.Boxer, Race Relation ..., op.cit., p.76.

69. Ibid.

70. Mistigo mixed blood person or Eurasian.

71. A.K.Priolkar, Don Darwaje, Marathi, op.cit., p.338.

Even today these converts in Bassein do not come together on the marital ground. But they are not dispised like their counterparts who are staying in Goa today. In Goa even today the Christians called Brahmin Christian and Shardos Christian or non-Brahmin Christians. One will be astonished to read an advertisement in Goan dailies stating wanted a girl from Brahmin Christian caste for marriage. There is no such type of classification among the Christians of Bassein.

72. Merchants community.

73. Untouchable.

PERSONAL HABITS

The personal habits of the people were varied. During this period, the people chewed pan on a large scale. When they wanted to visit a person of quality they purposely went with a pan in their mouth as a deodorant. The people detested any person having a bad smell. So the common people covered their mouths with the hand while speaking to another. A woman having a love affair never sought her man without first chewing a pan. Generally many chewed it after meals⁷⁴ when they ate fish. They also chewed for indigestion. The people did not chew during fasts or after the death of a close relative like a father or mother when they abstained from chewing it for several days.⁷⁵

Garcia da Orta gives in detail of this popular habit of the Bassein people,⁷⁶ and describes how they enjoyed it. He mentions the method in which these pans were prepared. A betel leaf was taken in one hand and torn with the thumb nail. The people kept long nails with a sharp point for this purpose. They applied lime and areca of catecheu (cate).⁷⁷ The leaf was folded three or four times before it was chewed.⁷⁸ Generally, people chewing the pan spat out the first juice. They carried

74. Garcia da Orta, op.cit., p.390.

75. Ibid.

76. Pan-chewing betel leave with lime, catecheu etc.

77. Cate is a peculiar indigenous juice prepared from the trunk of a particular tree, which is generally mixed with calcium while chewing pan.

78. Garcia da Orta, Part II, op.cit., pp.390-91.

these betal leaves with lime and catecheu in a taffeta purse, They used mashed-up lime but in small quantities as it did not harm them. A guest visiting a house for lunch or dinner, never returned without a pan.⁷⁹

Superstition prevailed among all the communities. The Hindus not only worshipped many gods but also venerated different types of Bhutas or pishachas.⁸⁰ The Christians and Muslims worshipped one God. The Parsees worshipped one of the Pancha-mahabutas⁸¹ called fire.⁸² In this way, popular belief in different kinds of gods and evil spirits made the people the prey of many superstitions. When the European countries were making tremendous progress with the help of new scientific inventions, the people of Bassein lacked foresight and remained backward due to their religious beliefs and superstition.⁸³ Niccolao Manucci,⁸⁴ who was in Bassein for some time, mentioned some events he experienced personally. He writes that superstitions prevailed in Bassein on a large scale. The ladies who could not bear a child even after using various kinds of drugs, visited a particular place having a banyan tree (vad). They observed certain vows and made some sacrifices. He mentioned that

79. Garcia da Orta, Part II, op.cit., pp.390-91.

80. Bhut-Pishachya - The people in Bassein even today believe the existence of the evil spirit whom they call Bhut or Pishachya in local language.

81. Pancha-maha-bhutas - Five great spirits, viz., earth, water, fire, air and ether.

82. Even today the Parsees of India worship fire.

83. V.K.Rajwade, op.cit., p.97.

84. Ibid., pp.97-98.

in some cases the women bore the child but the tree under which some sacrifices were made, yielded no fruit in the remaining years of its life span.⁸⁵

Gamelli Careri also mentions incidents which prove the existence of superstition in Bassein. Once he went to visit a village called Mudrapur,⁸⁶ to see a Muslim who was a vagabond well-known in the village. He performed many amazing feats.⁸⁷

He further mentions the story of a young man desiring to marry a lady. He proposed but she rejected the offer and married another young man. Her lover came to his window on the wedding day singing a melancholy song. "Ah Tyrant thou knowest not the laws of love". After singing he broke down with the musical instrument. Her husband died after twelve years. She got married to another young man though her first lover boy proposed once again. But ultimately she came to know that her second husband was not a man but a girl. The young lady kept quiet and never grumbled about the same. Manucci praises the women for her patience.⁸⁸

85. Niccolao Manucci, Storia do Mogor, Ed., William Irvine. First published in 1907, (reprint New Delhi, 1981), Vol.III, p.189.

86. Mudrapur is modern Koliwada and adjoining area presently called Hatimahal where the Muslims are in majority even today.

87. Gamelli Careri, op.cit., p.168.

88. Niccolao Manucci, op.cit., p.113.

Manucci relates one more story of a boy who was brought up as a girl but at the marriage she was detected. This story was told to Manucci by a priest called Father da Costa who pointed out that boy to Manucci.⁸⁹

Manucci also gives an example of a pregnant woman carrying a child for three years. He argues that it could happen because the women took different types of drugs. But this statement of Manucci cannot be accepted because it is highly impossible.⁹⁰

SOCIAL AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The Portuguese did not follow a specific policy regarding social and criminal justice. They applied their own rules and regulations to different cases and events. But one thing is clear they protected their Christian subjects against any law. There was a great disparity between the two culprits. The Christian culprits were dealt with more liberally than the others. This was one of the major drawbacks in their administrative policies.

The Christians were not imprisoned on mere accusations against them. Only criminal cases like murder and crippling, etc., were registered against them. But the accuser was compelled to deposit two hundred xerafins for the same. Moreover, the Christians were tried by Christian judges only.⁹¹

89. Manucci, op.cit., p.113.

90. Ibid. p.114

91. Thevenot, op.cit., p.97.

A contemporary historian writes very sarcastically about the concessions which were given to the Christians. He says that a Gujarati was arrested and undermined only for urinating publicly, a Hindu was put in irons for quarrelling with his fellow-men. But a person who was in favour with the authorities was not punished even though he robbed the Hindus.⁹²

The Hindus venerated the cow and as she was considered a goddess, she was used for to take an important oath even in the case of justice in Bassein. When taking the oath, water was put on one side of the animal and fire on the other. Having done this, they used to take a knife in the hand and utter certain words which meant that the cow was filled with the knife and was enriched with burning fire and water. This was to prove the sincerity of the person taking the oath. If he failed to keep this oath, he would suffer by being burnt in the fire.⁹³

We can cite one more example of the social behaviour of the high class people and the result of a criminal case. In Bassein there was a rich lady named Dona Luiza de Abell, who was quite influential in high class society. She had fifty slaves in her house for her personal service. She was a voluptuous lady and always invited beautiful Portuguese youths to enjoy carnal pleasure. She used to kill them after her purpose was served and bury them in her orchard.⁹⁴ Once she invited a handsome boy

92. Joseph Wicki, O Livro ..., op.cit., p.143.

93. Garcia da Orta, op.cit., Vol.II, p.342.

94. Manucci, op.cit., Vol.III, p.108.

to her house and he was never seen again. She could do all these things because she was related to an important person of the city. The people could not do anything though they knew of her misdeeds. They waited for an opportunity to punish her. They hired a negro slave girl among her slaves and advised her to kill the lady. She killed her mistress by crushing her head with stone. The slave girl was arrested and was sentenced to death. But she was set free when a Jesuit priest interceded for her.⁹⁵

This entire story reveals two important facts regarding criminal justice of the Portuguese in Basseln. First, a person could get away with murder if he had somebody to protect him. Secondly, the religious had a say in criminal case. They could influence any case.

SOCIAL WELFARE

The Portuguese government made enough provision for the problems of social welfare during the 16th century. In fact, the process had already begun at the end of the 15th century. King John II and his wife Eleanor were interested in a human approach in society. The king founded his famous All Saints Hospital on 15th May, 1492, and the queen with Father Michael Contreiras, her confessor, founded on 15th August, 1498, the confraternity of Our Lady of Mercy or Controria de Nossa Senhora de Misericordia generally known as the Casa de Misericordia.⁹⁶

95. Manucci, op.cit., p.143.

96. Antonio Silva Rego, Portuguese Colonization in the sixteenth century (Johansburg, 1959) p.16.

This organisation became so famous in the Portuguese colonies that it was considered a part and parcel of the Portuguese administration. It was composed of a layman of good social standing which looked after visiting the poor and sick, distributing alms etc. It also helped the orphan girls to find husbands by offering them dowries and jobs to men willing to marry them.⁹⁷ The Headquarters of the House of Misericordia was always kept in the Portuguese Fort. The ruins of this house can be seen even today in Bassein. It was the centre of all social welfare activities. We will see more details of Misericordia in the next chapter since it worked mainly for the Portuguese in Bassein.

The missionaries helped this organisation. Some of them were entrusted with particular duties. A Priest who looked after the Hindu orphans and sometimes obtained them by force, if necessary, was called O Pai dos Christãos.⁹⁸ This priest, who had a wide range of power, was the overall superior of the new converts. He looked after the welfare of the converts, protecting and favouring their spiritual and temporal interests. Sometimes, the new converts tried to hide their children when they came to know about the atrocities of the Inquisition.⁹⁹

97. APO. (BP), Part I, pp.81,101,109, Tomo III, pp.2,7,15,720 and Tomo V. pp. 3,399,1000 etc.

98. C.R.Boxer, Portuguese Seaborne Empire, (Middlesex,Penguin Ed., 1973) pp.76-77. Hereafter referred as PSE.

99. Ibid.

The father of the Christians looked after the measures of social welfare. He made arrangements for the training of the converts in different fields which enabled them to find work to earn their daily bread. This priest also looked after the slaves who were treated badly by their owners.¹⁰⁰ The parish priests, who were working in different parishes of Bassein, also looked after the activities of social welfare. They promoted the interest of their parishners. They were fully backed by their mother-houses in the Bassein Fort.

They also looked after the monetary transactions among individuals to prevent quarrels. They checked rural indebtedness. Generally, some kind of pawn or mortgage was insisted on. According to the law, the rate of interest could not exceed 9 per cent when the loan was taken without the pawn or mortgage. But when the loan was taken with any pawn, only 7 per cent interest was permitted.¹⁰¹

The government also checked for exploitation of the villagers by the money-lending class. A law was enacted to relieve them from the clutches of the money-lenders. According to earlier contracts, the money-lender could confiscate the property under mortgage if the property was not redeemed on the day indicated in the contract. But the new law made such transactions illicit.¹⁰²

100. Mss. HAG, No.49 fls. 298-8.

Joseph Wicki, *O Livro*, *op.cit.*, pp.155-57.

101. APO. (CR), Vol.IV, p.277.

102. Mss. HAG, No.7846 fls. 156_v-7.

Some attempts were also made in the field of social welfare from the government side. The portuguese government was against the extravagance of the people. A law was passed in 1605 which banned weddings in Christian families with fabulous banquets for more than thirty persons and also in the families of Brahmins, Baniyas and Hindus.¹⁰³

This was not the only field when the Portuguese government looked after the social welfare of the people. It also made some attempts in other directions. The surplus rice in every village was procured and preserved in the villages, and was sold to the poor and the needy people of the village at a fair price. The village community looked after the selling of this rice through a fairprice shop administered by it.¹⁰⁴

AGRARIAN ECONOMY

Inhabitation of Land

Many historians and travellers have written enough about the prosperity and the fertility of the land of Bassein. No sooner it came under the Portuguese control than Bassein became a rival of Goa. Its great tracts of land were cultivated very much on the same lines as those of Goa. But the black soil of Bassein was more fertile than Goa. When the Portuguese started to settle here, manorial houses rose here and there. European colonisation of this part changed the landscape. Many Portuguese Fidalgos were attracted to Bassein because of its climate as well as the natural beauty and the fertile land.

103. MSS. HAG, Monções, Vol.53, fl 26_v

104. Mss. HAG, No.7846, fls., 169-9_v

There are several reasons why these Europeans were so fascinated by Bassein. First, it was more fertile with crops and forests and excelled over other parts of the kingdom of Cambay when it was under the Muslims.¹⁰⁵ It had very good land clear skies and a healthy climate.¹⁰⁶ According to Simão Botelho, Comptroller of Revenue, Bassein was the best province and yielded more revenue than any other Portuguese colony.¹⁰⁷ Being at the centre of Cambay in the south, it would get whatever it needed or could provide so many things to all Portuguese colonies in India.¹⁰⁸

The beautiful climate and the fertility of the land were not the only reasons for the Portuguese inhabitation of Bassein. There were one more specific reason for it. The Portuguese Governor D.João de Castro who is well-known in Indo-Portuguese history for his successful campaign against the second seige of Diu in 1546, distributed many villages from the province of Bassein to the Fidalgos and warriors who fought gallantly in this battle.¹⁰⁹ There were some Fidalgos who received more than one village. Antonio Pessoa, received five villages from the governor, which

105. Barros, Decada IV, op.cit., Part I, Liv.II, p.223.

106. Manuel Godinho, op.cit., p.30.

107. Simão Botelho, Cartas, op.cit., p.7.

Simão Botelho, Tombo, op.cit., p.133.

ANTT. Gaveta 15-19-32.

DPI, Vol.III, p.212, Vol.V, p.108.

108. Simão Botelho, Cartas, II, op.cit., p.7

Manuel Godinho, op.cit., pp.12, 19.

109. Simão Botelho, Cartas, I, op.cit., 1 and 3.

yielded 2500 pardãos per year.¹¹⁰ In a letter dated 22nd October 1548, the governor requested the king to give the sanction to this extraordinary award¹¹¹ to Antonio Pessoa to which the king agreed to by his royal orders.¹¹² Similarly, George Cardin received four villages and Diogo Fernandes and D.Alvaro received two each.¹¹³

Most of the Fidalgos who received landed properties in Bassein did not stay there but enjoyed life in Goa on the revenue they received from those properties. Hence cultivation was neglected. Accordingly Viceroy Costantino de Bragança issued an order dated 30.8.1559 by which landholders having properties in Bassein were asked to go and settle on their estates in Bassein. But most of them ignored the order.¹¹⁴ When the Portuguese king was informed of this matter he issued a royal order by his letter dated 13th March 1595 compelling all those having properties in Bassein, to reside on their Estates. The Viceroy was instructed to punish defaulters by deporting them to Ceylon and confiscating their properties.¹¹⁵

When these strict measures were enforced, many Fidalgos who had properties in Bassein came and settled there. This added to the glory of town, where rich people had already started

110. Mss. ANTT, Corpo Chronologico, Part I, Maço, 79 D 134, fl.1.

111. Simão Botelho, Cartas, II, op.cit., p.6.

112. DPI, Vol. IV, p.79.

113. Mss. ANTT, Chorp Chronologico, Part III, Maço, 17 D.S.

114. OP (BP) 1935, p.160.

APO (CR) Fsc.III, p.413.

115. OP., (BP), op.cit., p.161.

settling down.¹¹⁶ The villages outside the fort wall were already thickly populated.¹¹⁷ When the rich Fidalgos of Goa came to settle in Bassein, they were followed by many Brahmins.¹¹⁸ But these Brahmins were not happy. Sometimes they abandoned the land and went to other villages. So the Captains of Bassein deprived them of their property rights as they did not take proper care of their land.¹¹⁹ In the initial stages, the Portuguese brought Negroes by force to work in the fields of Bassein. Simão Botelho wrote to the king that instead of forcing the negroes to work, more Portuguese should be sent to Bassein.¹²⁰ Similarly, the people from Thana and the surrounding areas were encouraged to come and settle down in Bassein.¹²¹

In addition to the Portuguese Fidalgos having landed properties, foreign missionaries who started the missionary work in this region began to cultivate the land. The Jesuits were quite ahead of all the missionaries in this field. They brought many barren places and forests under cultivation. A Jesuit priest Gonsalo Rodriques, bought a lot of uncultivated jungle land in Bassein, knocked the trees down and prepared it to grow crops. The people who worked on the land lived on the crops and by fishing. The population of this place grew from 500 to 3000 in

116. APO, (CR), Fsc.III, p.465.

117. Simão Botelho, Cartas II, op.cit., p.9

118. Ibid. p.10

119. OP., (BP) 1935, op.cit., p.158.

120. Simão Botelho, Cartas II, op.cit., p.11.

OP., (BP) 1935, op.cit., p.158.

121. Mss. HAG Livros das Manções No. 9-10-11 D.85 fl.49.

a year. The said priest bought 1000 oxen and a lot of agricultural equipments for the people. Since the population increased, he constructed a factory of agricultural products and provided work for many people. He named it as Deus Trino. In this way, the village Trindade was founded in Bassein.¹²² It was in this village that the Jesuits had an agricultural school.¹²³

In this way, the agrarian inhabitation of the Province of Bassein was completed very soon and a beautiful Eurasian colony came into existence on the west coast of India. The natural beauty of this land attracted many foreigners who visited the Portuguese city of Bassein. Gemelli Careri who visited it, writes that when he visited the villages outside the fort wall, he was delighted with the beautiful fruits such as palm, fig, mangoes and some fields abounding in sugarcane, throughout the area of fifteen miles.¹²⁴ The land was cultivated by Christians, Mohamedans and Hindu peasants residing in the villages. The farmers watered the garden with a particular indigenous machine¹²⁵ called rahat¹²⁶ made of wood and driven by an ox or a buffalo. The Portuguese Fidalgos who owned these villages had their pleasure houses on their properties.¹²⁷

122. Francisco de Souza, O Oriente Conquistado ..., op.cit., Part II, p.32.

123. OP. (BP) 1935, op.cit., p.151-52.

124. Gemelli Careri, op.cit., p.158.

125. Ibid.

126. Rahat is a local name of indigenous machine having two wheels. Due to the fast modernization of agriculture they are disintegrating.

127. Careri op.cit., p.168-69.

Agricultural Production - Crops

The cultivation of paddy and the production of rice was the most flourishing agricultural activity in Bassein. It produced such a huge quantity of rice that it sufficed not only for many Portuguese colonies in India but also for some of the Portuguese settlements in Africa. Each and every historian and traveller who visited this part during the Portuguese rule speaks about the abundance of rice in Bassein. We can make special mention of Antonio Bocarro,¹²⁸ Manuel Godinho,¹²⁹ John Fryer¹³⁰ and others. Since there was a lot of demand for rice from outside, a factory to clean the paddy was necessary. The Jesuits of Bassein founded this kind of factory in Bassein. The administration of the factory from the time of Count of Alvor was taken care of by the rectors of the college of Jesuits. It was supervised by Fr. Theotonio Rebello. The factory flourished because of his hard work and made a good profit.¹³¹ From this money, the Jesuits bought more villages, where they produced a huge quantity of rice giving 15000 xerafins per year.¹³²

The cultivation of sugarcane and the production of jaggery and sugar was another important agricultural industry in Bassein.

128. Bocarro, Livro, in O Chronista de Tissuary, Part III., p. 243-48.

129. John Fryer, op.cit., p.192.

130. Manuel Godinho, op.cit., p.12-29.

131. Bocarro, op.cit., p.247-48.

132. Mss. HAG, Livros das Manções, No.58 fl.342.

Gemelli Careri provides us with the information about the production of sugar in Bassein from the juice of the sugarcane. The sugarcane was pressed between two wooden rollers turned by oxen. The canes were thoroughly squeezed before removal from the machine. The juice was boiled in a huge metal vessel and set out to cool at night in an earthen vessel till it hardened into white sugar.¹³⁴ Bassein produced a large quantity of sugar every year which was exported to the English in Surat, Turks, Arabs, Gujaratis and Baniyas of Gujarat.¹³⁵ Bassein also produced a small quantity of wheat.¹³⁶ But the wheat was mainly brought from the northern provinces of Muslim control, in sacks, carried by bullocks. They collected salt in return.¹³⁷ As the soil was very fertile and with the availability of plentiful water, the land produced different kinds of vegetables in abundance in the villages outside the fort wall.¹³⁸

Fruits and Plants

Due to the fertility of land and the abundance of rainfall, Bassein was famous for various kinds of fruits. When it came under Portuguese control, they introduced a variety of fruits in Bassein as they did in other colonies in India under their control. They brought the papaya from South America, pineapple from Peru

134. Gareri, op.cit., p.169.

135. Manuel Godinho, op.cit., p.29.

136. Bocarro, op.cit., pp.243. Godinho, op.cit., p.29.

137. Simão Botelho, Cartas, II, op.cit., p.7.

OP. (BP), 1936, op.cit., p.151.

138. Bocarro, op.cit., p.243.

Manuel Godinho, op.cit., p.12.

DI, Vol. V, p.186.

and Mangoes from Africa.¹³⁹ The Portuguese introduced two kinds of Mangoes in this region known as Alfonso and Pereira.¹⁴⁰ These Portuguese names were delatinised by the local people as Aaffos and Pairy.¹⁴¹ Bassein produced a variety of coconuts.¹⁴²

There were other varieties of fruits. Jackfruits were grown in abundance in Bassein.¹⁴³ Linschoten writes about two more varieties of fruit in Bassein. According to him, one was called Iangomas and the other Carambolas. The Iangomas were like cherries, dark red in colour, were seedless and round in shape.¹⁴⁴ The Carambolas had eight corners and were the size of a small apple. They were sour in taste.¹⁴⁵

Garcia da Orta provides us with information regarding some of the plants and herbs which were very essential for the cure of certain diseases and which were easily available in Bassein. They were Bele, Bibva, Turbit and Sripkala¹⁴⁶ which was known as the holy fruit.¹⁴⁷ The Bilva or Bibva¹⁴⁸ was a destroyer of disease.¹⁴⁹

139. Kokanatil Dhanya Va Fale,^{Marathi,} Pissurlencar Collection, P.G.Centre, Goa, p.302.

140. Imperial Gazetteer of India No.1, p.358.

141. Aaffos and Pairy are the local words for the Mangoes known as Afonso and Pereira, which are influenced by local Marathi.

142. OP. (BP), 1935, op.cit., p.151.

143. Garcia da Orta, op.cit., Vol.II, p.26.

144. J.H.Linschoten, op.cit., p.32.

145. Ibid. p.33.

146. Here Sripkala means coconut.

147. Garcia da Orta, op.cit., p.375.

148. It is called Bibva in local language.

149. Garcia da Orta, op.cit., p.375.

The Beli or Bale was a sacred leaf which was in pharmaceutical use.¹⁵⁰

The turbit¹⁵¹ was available in great quantities in Bassein. It was exported to Persia,,Arabia and Turkey and a small quantity to Portugal. Garcia da Orta sent forty quintals to the king of Portugal which was considered a great quantity.¹⁵² Bassein also produced a great quantity of chicken and fish. Meat and butter byproducts of agriculture, were also available in abundance.¹⁵³

Village Markets

The person who looked after the village market was called Seth. He supervised the activities of the market. He also worked as the Kotwal of the market and had police and magisterial duties. He was a member of the village Panchayat. He had several facilities like a reserved place and house in the Peth. He also supervised the collection of octroi in which duty he was aided by local officials.¹⁵⁴ These village markets were well-guarded by the state. Sometimes, they were raided when there was no proper security. The merchants and traders always considered the security of the place when they decided to develop commercial activities in a particular village market.¹⁵⁵

150. Garcia da Orta, op.cit., p.375.

151. Turbit is the Arabic word Turbund, a corruption of Sanskrit Tribet or three virtues namely anti-costive, anti-bilious and anti-plegmatic. In western India it is also known as Chivaka.

152. Garcia da Orta, op.cit., p.328.

153. Simão Botelho, Cartas, op.cit., p.7. DI (JW) Vol.V, p.186.

154. A.R.Kulkarni, op.cit., p.206.

155. Ibid.

The village markets were frequently visited by merchants of different nationalities like the English, French, Dutch etc., besides the Portuguese merchants. The Persians and Arabs were quite forward in the commercial activities. But they were restricted to particular areas only. They were not permitted to visit the important seaports. These foreign merchants had their factories on the sea-shore; so they kept contact with the markets held in the interior part only. They purchased commodities which were brought to their factories for export. Similarly, they sold their imported goods in these markets.¹⁵⁶

REVENUE REFORMS

Bassein was under the Muslim yoke for several years, first under the Sultan of Delhi and then under the rulers of Gujarat. The Muslim rulers of the North did not take keen interest in this region. In fact, it was under their nominal control that the local chiefs exercised their influence. They continued the age-old revenue system and did not bother either to reform it or to provide an effective system for the welfare of their subjects. It was not a good revenue system. In fact, it fostered several injustices to the people.¹⁵⁷

Immediately after the cession of Bassein to the Portuguese, Bahadur Shah of Gujarat surrendered with immediate effect, all the

156. A.R.Kulkarni, op.cit., p.206.

157. Joseph Wicki, Ed. "Os Percalcos das aldeias a terras de Bacaím vistos e julgados pelo p. Fransisco Rodriques por. 1570" Botetim do Instituto Vasco da Gama, separata, p.6.

powers of the collection of revenue to them by clause No.6 of the treaty. When Nuno da Cunha visited the town after its surrender, all the Thanedars and Patels of this place started respecting the governor with great obedience and the people of neighbouring houses presented him with official documents. The governor asked to organise a new Tombo for the collection of the revenue.¹⁵⁸ Thus soon after the capture of Bassein by the Portuguese, the collection of revenue was directly in favour of the state. We see notes in the early years saying "It collected by His Majesty" or "Collected by your majesty." Thereafter as recovery became different and complicated, it resulted in a system of leasing the land one way or the other, finally leading to the contract system.¹⁵⁹

The Portuguese who became the masters of this region did not enforce a new revenue system but tried to continue the one existing under the Muslim rule.¹⁶⁰ After the conquest, Simão Botelho had been commissioned by the king to write a land register (Tombo) for Bassein as he had done in Ormuz.¹⁶¹ He came to Bassein for the same purpose and stayed here for nearly two years.¹⁶² He surveyed the land of Bassein and sent a detailed report to the King informing him about how D.João de Castro had given several villages of Bassein to the Portuguese Fidalgos and how the latter had failed to pay many of their taxes. Simão Botelho became the

158. Couto, Decada IV, op.cit., Part I, Livro IV, Cap.II, p.321.

159. OP. (BP), 1935, op.cit., p.184-85.

160. Joseph Wicki, "Os Percalcos", op.cit., p.6

161. George Schurhammer, ST Francis Xavier, op.cit., p.605.

162. OP.(BP), 1935, op.cit., p.185.

object of mortal hatred as he kept a sharp eye on the land leases. But Botelho challenged them asking the king to have his head struck off if he was found guilty.¹⁶³

Even Jorge Cabral, the successor of D.João de Castro severely criticised the policies of his predecessor. He even wrote to the King that God had granted a great favour to the king in the death of D.João de Castro. Otherwise he would have completely ruined India with his misrule. He is critical particularly about leasing several villages of Bassein to the Portuguese who paid their rents with great reluctance and did not obey the court.¹⁶⁴ He blamed D.João de Castro for leasing five villages, yielding 2000 cruzados to Antonio Pesoa.¹⁶⁵

Ultimately Simão Botelho completed the Tombo in the year 1548¹⁶⁶ and tried to reform the land revenue system in Bassein.¹⁶⁷ It was the first attempt on the part of the Portuguese to introduce a new revenue system. Simão Botelho obtained 4000 Pardãos per year by cancelling the lease sanctioned by D.João de Castro which caused the loss of the about 20,000 pardãos to the crown during several years.¹⁶⁸ The Portuguese influence in Bassein was extended and it became one of the most important places yielding revenue for the crown. So certain measures were taken

163. Simão Botelho, Cartas, II, op.cit., p.18

164. George Schruhammer, op.cit., p.604.

165. Ibid.

166. R.J.de Lima Felner (Ed), Tombo, op.cit., p.154.

167. Simão Botelho, Cartas, II, op.cit., p.10.

168. OP. (BP), 1935, op.cit., p.162.

to modify the revenue system in Bassein. The king gave some instructions to this effect by his letter dated 3 August 1594,¹⁶⁹ in which he urged that those villages in Bassein which were leased at a low price, be increased in revenue.¹⁷⁰

The Fidalgos obtained land in Bassein for their services in India against the foreign and local enemies. They became very rich as their properties yielded revenue between four to twelve thousand Cruzados per year. They constructed huge and beautiful palaces and enjoyed luxurious lives with plenty of servants. They even forgot their responsibilities towards the state. So certain restrictions were imposed on them. Now it was made necessary for them to produce a certificate of eight years' residence in India before getting any leasehold land.¹⁷¹ It was made compulsory by the royal order dated 22 Feb 1605, that in order to avail of government land one ought to be in service of the government for eight years in India to prove which they were supposed to bring the certificate from the book of registry to be approved by the viceroy or governor stating that the concerned person had been residing for more than eight years. If they failed to bring such a certificate, their papers were not considered for the benefit of lease.¹⁷²

When the villages from the provinces of Bassein were leased, the absolute right of the king was overtaken by the lease-holder

169. Mss., HAG, Livro Vermelho da Relação, fl.185.

170. OP. (BP), 1935, op.cit., p.162.

171. Mss., HAG, Livros das Manções, No.37, fl.179.

172. Ibid. No.6 fl.33.

or the head of the village. These lease holders started selling their villages without taking the selling licences which caused a great loss to government revenue. Secondly, it resulted adversely on the economic system of Bassein. The rich Fidalgos of Bassein started purchasing more and more villages which resulted in the centralization of monetary power in the hands of a few. D.Rodrigues de Castro owned twenty-one to twenty-two villages, Gaspar de Mello eighteen to nineteen and others, ten to eleven villages. They became so powerful that they ignored the government authorities and did not care for justice.¹⁷³ Moreover, they started to give their properties on sub-lease or gift without government permission, and this was a great loss to the revenue. Instructions were issued to check this kind of disorder.¹⁷⁴ The Factor of Bassein was empowered to hear the cases regarding heirs of lease holders and landholders in a proper manner in which he was supposed to contact Almoxarife of the factory. If the case was not settled by the factory, it was referred to the city judge or Tanadar or Merinho.¹⁷⁵ In order to regulate the revenue system in Bassein once again, instructions were issued by a royal order dated 4th February 1624.¹⁷⁶

REVENUE AND TAXATION

The Portuguese received the rights of collecting revenue by the treaty signed on 23rd December 1534 and as it was the

173. Mss. HAG, Livros das Manções, No.37, fl.179.

174. Mss. HAG, Livros das Manções, Livro 44, fl.75.

175. Pissurlencar, Regimentos ..., op.cit., p.324-22.

176. Mss. AHU, Caixa 9, D.150.

custom of its former ruler to receive the revenue half yearly from his subjects. The Portuguese got all the revenue due for that half year beginning according to the local tradition with 9th June. The revenue was paid in the Indian coin called Fedea, equivalent to twelve reis. The amount of the year 1535 was 158,475 Fedeas. This sum was derived from the taxes and duties levied on the sale of coconut oil, opium, cotton, toddy, vegetable, fish, sugarcane, betel leaves, and on the professions of butchers, dyers, fishermen, shepherds etc.¹⁷⁷

Thereafter, they surveyed the land and modified the revenue system. During the 16th Century, three different authorities tried to the reform Portuguese revenue system at different times. They were Simão Botelho, Antão de Naronha and Diogo de Velho in 1554, 1564, 1574 respectively.¹⁷⁸

The Portuguese made many new experiments in the revenue system. The Marathas were supposed to be the pioneers of Chauthai, that is one fourth of the collected revenue to be paid by the subordinate ruler to the sovereign. But the Portuguese sources inform us that it existed in the pre-Maratha period. The king of Ramnagar was called Chauthai King (O rei Chautea) by the Portuguese,¹⁷⁹ who paid him one fourth revenue for some time. It

177. R.J.de Lima Felner, Subsidios para..., op.cit., Part II, p.140

178. OP. (BP), 1935, op.cit., p.159.

179. Mss. HAG, Livros das Monções, No.9,10,11, D.11, fl.22.
 Bocarro, Livro das Plantas..., in Chronista de Tissuary,
 Ed Cunha Rivara, op.cit., Vol.II, p.149.
 Bocarro, Decada XIII, p.248.
 Couto, Decada VII, Part II, pp.8,40.42.
 Pissurlencar, "A Origem de Triboto Chauto",
 Antiquilhas, Boletim do Instituto Vasco da Gama, Sept.,1941,
 pp. 62-71.

shows that Chauthai was in existence even before the rise of the Marathas. When the entire coastal area from Diu to Malabar came under the Portuguese control, the insignificant chieftains of the North like Ramnagar, Johar accepted their sovereignty for which the Portuguese started paying Chauthai to them for their expenditure which was a little less than the earlier period.¹⁸⁰

In Bassein there was a system of joint leasing with a principal leaseholder taking two or three villages on lease with some others.¹⁸¹ The Pakharis were rented for three years of contracts, the revenue of which was collected by the Factor. The Casabas were leased by viceroys or governors and their revenue was collected for the king by the Factor of the city. The Portuguese changed the earlier half-yearly payment to quarterly assessment.¹⁸² The financial year was from June to May.¹⁸³ Soon after the end of the quarter, fifteen days were given to effect the payment by the lease-holders. In the event of default they were Factor was allowed to take action against them which resulted in the suspension of the villages.¹⁸⁴

The chief revenue superintendent was the highest authority at the state level. He was above the crown attorney who looked after the crown land in the village.¹⁸⁵ The Factor was the

180. Pissurencar, Assentos do Conselho..., op.cit., I.pp.260-61.

181. OP, (BP), 1935, op.cit., p.186.

182. Pissurlencar, Regimentos..., op.cit., p.303-4.

183. Ibid. p.305.

184. Pissurlencar, Regimentos..., op.cit., p.303-4.

185. Mss. HAG, Livros das Manções, no.53, fl.50-51.

overall responsible person for the collection of revenue. If he failed in his duties he was punished.¹⁸⁶ The captain was not supposed to interfere in matters of revenue except at the time of war or emergency.¹⁸⁷ Bassein had a house for verification (Casa da Vereação) of the revenue.¹⁸⁸

The tax and duties imposed by the Portuguese varied from city to city. In the province of Bassein, the actual collection of revenue was entrusted to the Thanedars and small custom posts (mandovi) all over which were headed by a juiz da Alfandega or custom appraiser.¹⁸⁹

VILLAGE TAXATION

The Portuguese chronicles hardly provide any information regarding different types of taxation that was levied on the villagers in Bassein by the local authorities. We get this information from a document available in ANTT.¹⁹⁰ It is a report prepared by a missionary named Francisco Rodriques¹⁹¹ about the taxes in the villages of Bassein and his comments on the justice of the taxes.

186. Pissurlencar, Regimentos..., op.cit. p.308.

187. Pissurlencar, Regimentos, op.cit., p.302.

188. OP. (BP), 1935, op.cit., 179.

189. Luis Philip Thomas, "Portuguese Sources on sixteenth century Economic History" Indo Portuguese History (Sources and Problems) Ed.by John Correia Afonso, (Bombay, 1981) pp.105-6.

190. Mss. Os Percalços das e terras de Baçaim vistos e julgados Pelo p.Francisco Rodrigos, S.J. (por 1570), ANTT.Cod.280 Livraia 805 fls.173-185.

191. Francisco Rodriques - was a Jesuit priest born in 1515 at Bejor in Portugal. He was a teacher of Diogo de Couto, the great Portuguese chronicler. He came to India in 1557 and was in Bassein, about 1570.

There was a tax for Kotwali paid to a Kotwal, an official who ruled over limited jurisdiction. The businessmen and the vegetable merchants were to give some part of their income as revenue to the Kotwal.¹⁹² Similarly there was a tax paid to Sona, or a person who guarded the village and looked after the paddy during the harvest season. In the villages where there was no problem of guarding, this tax was not collected.¹⁹³ The Kunbis (farmers) also paid some tax to a Prabhu who worked for them in maintaining the accounts.¹⁹⁴ They also paid a kind of house rent which was not in cash but in kind. Every house provided a pair of hens every year to the village chief. This practice of giving a pair of hens was not of Portuguese origin. It prevailed in the pre-Portuguese period but continued even after the Portuguese take-over. If they could not give hens, they could substitute with some seirs of butter. This was not an official tax but whenever people visited the village chief, they carried something or the other. Sometimes the chief used to request them to bring it. Later on, it became habitual and the custom became a kind of tax.¹⁹⁵ The people paid a kind of octroi when they passed from one village to another with their goods. Formerly this tax was collected by the Thanedar but later on, the municipality objected to it.¹⁹⁶

192. Mss. ANTT, Codice de 280, Livraria 805, fls.173-185. It has been published by Joseph Wicki in Boletim do Instituto Vasco da Gama, Goa.

193. Mss. ANTT, Livraria 805 op.cit., fl.176_v.

194. Ibid.

195. Mss. ANTT, Livraria 805 op.cit., fls.174, 176.

196. Mss. ANTT, Livraria 805 op.cit., fl 174_v.

Strangers were not allowed to visit the village frequently. They paid a kind of tax on each visit.¹⁹⁷ Every toddy tapper or Bhandari paid some tax to the lease-holders every year. Such contracts were generally signed for three years.¹⁹⁸ The tax was paid in kind in the form of pots (kalashas) of toddy. Moreover, the servants of the lease-holders who were working on the fields, used the toddy for their personal consumption at the cost of the toddy tapper.¹⁹⁹ The additional tax was collected from the persons who converted the toddy into liquor.²⁰⁰ The sale of liquor was restricted. Nobody could sell it, except the lease-holders or others with his consent.²⁰¹ Even the sale of opium was restricted upto 1/2 seir.²⁰²

There were property taxes on the villages and additional taxes on merchants, money-lenders, goldsmith, shoe-makers, washermen, fishermen, tailors, shopkeepers and vegetable merchants.²⁰³ The shoemaker gave Chappals to the chief, because he utilised the leather of dead buffaloes.²⁰⁴ Similarly, the potter paid a certain tax to the lease-holder as he used mud and the firewood to bake his pots, from the land of lease-holder.²⁰⁵

197. Mss.ANTT, Livraria 805, op.cit., fls.176, 176_v.

198, Ibid., fl.176.

199. Ibid., fl.176_v.

200. Ibid., fl.154.

201. Simão Botelho, Tombo., op.cit., p.154.

202. Mss.AHU, Caixa,4,D.124.

George Schurhammer, St.Francis..., op.cit.,p.142.

203. Mss. ANT.T., Livraria 805, op.cit., fl.175.

204. Ibid.

205. Ibid., fl.173_v.

The farmer paid a certain tax in kind for keeping buffaloes. He paid six seirs of milk to the landlord or leaseholders and 2 seirs to the temple priest. Initially this tax was collected when the animals were newly brought from other villages but later on it became a practice in the case of local animals also.²⁰⁶ The farmer, too, paid some tax at the time of purchase of a bullock or a buffalo. It was called Shingoti or tax on horn or shing in Marathi.²⁰⁷ The farmers also paid for maintaining a bullock-cart⁴ which was needed to carry their paddy from places of cultivation to the markets or the port for sale. This tax was sometimes paid in cash.²⁰⁸ They paid a certain tax to the leaseholder for cutting grass²⁰⁹ and for cutting firewood from the land of the lease-holders.²¹⁰

Every farmer was to pay to the chief one kudav of paddy. It was not a Portuguese custom but prevailed in the earlier period.²¹¹ No one could ask the oil crusher to produce oil from groundnuts or coconuts without the prior permission of the leaseholders. Generally, they themselves controlled such kind of production.²¹² Similarly, the people were not supposed to sell oil without the consent of the lease-holder.²¹³

206. Mss. ANTT., Livraria 805, op.cit., fl.175.

207. Ibid., fl. 175.

208. Ibid., fl. 176.

209. Ibid., fl. 175_v.

210. Ibid., fl. 175.

211. Ibid., fl. 174.

212. Ibid., fl. 154.

213. Ibid., fl. 175.

In addition to these taxes, the farmers paid certain dues towards the state at the time of public works, especially at the time of constructing public houses. They supplied local material such as palm leaves, wood, firewood, etc. These houses were quite simple as they were not constructed with stones.

Land leasing System

The land leasing system during the Portuguese rule was somewhat complicated. In the beginning immediately after taking over Bassein from the Muslims, they leased the villages from Bassein to some Fidalgos who initially stayed in Gba.

But later on, as we have already seen, these Fidalgos were compelled to settle in Bassein. Some of them stayed in the fort and looked after their villages through agents or leased the land to somebody. But some of them stayed on their estates and looked after their properties personally. Most of the Portuguese leaseholders did not cultivate the land personally but distributed the properties on lease. Generally, leases were renewed every three years.

Some landlords were insincere in their dealings. After leasing the land to a particular lease-holder, they waited for someone else who paid them more. Thereafter, they withdrew the lease from the former lease-holder, to give it to the highest bidder without giving any reason for such behaviour.²¹⁴ At times, landlords were unfaithful in certain cases. If they saw that the crop was good, they changed the contract with another party under

214. Mss.ANTT., Livraria, 805, op.cit., fl. 180_v.

the pretext of some problems. In such cases, the cultivator who sowed the seeds, suffered a lot.²¹⁵

In some Paraganas, the landlords leased their properties to the lease-holders in exchange for produce like coil, palm, leaves etc. The transaction was done in advance. If they paid less, they were to settle the issue at the time of handing over charge. In the event of failing to do so, they were compelled to pay in cash, which had a higher value.²¹⁶

The lease-holders received regular payment, mostly in kind. In some parts of the province, some additional paddy was collected by the revenue collector. It was not a Portuguese custom but existed during the Muslim rule.²¹⁷ Some lease-holders were wise and did not collect the paddy in the form of lease at the time of harvest as it weighed less but collected it after a time when it was completely dry and weighed more.²¹⁸

Sometimes the lease was collected in cash. The price was fixed at harvest time. If the lease was fixed as 100 maunds of paddy, the farmer used to give the lease-holders 600 pardãos at the rate of 6 pardaos per maund.²¹⁹ There was a separate lease system for the Kharland.²²⁰ If it was overrun by salty water, resulting in loss of crops, the lease-holder was allowed to pay the lease the next year.²²¹

215. Mss. ANTT, Livraria, 805, op.cit., fl.180_v.

216. Ibid., fl.181.

217. Ibid., fl.183.

218. Ibid., fl.185.

219. Kharland means plot of land adjoining the creek which is not so productive.

220. Mss. ANTT., Livraria 805, op.cit., fl.181.

221. Ibid. fl.182.

The property of a deceased person who did not have an heir was taken over by the state but some landlords usurped such villages and leased them to farmers as if they belonged to them. Some farmers who had no heirs used to transfer their land to somebody with false documents. Later on, it was acquired for their own relatives.²²² In this way, the selfish land owners used to fool the government as there was no control by any revenue officer at the department.

222. Mss. ANTT., Livraria 805, op.cit. fl.182.