

Chapter IV

Social Composition of Pirates in the Western Indian Ocean



Seafaring and Seafarers: Glimpses Then and Now

- <https://www.thehindu.com/society/meet-the-forgotten-dhow-men-of-malabar/article26820920.ece/photo/1/>
 - Photo Collection: Adhya B. Saxena
- <https://www.pirateshowcancun.com/blog/scurvy-pirate-history/famous-pirate-ships-in-history/>

Macassas, Indonesian Ruler in 1615 has opined:

*God has made the earth and the seas,
has divided the earth among mankind,
and given the sea in common
It is a thing unheard of that anyone
should be forbidden to sail the seas*

Carr Laughton in 20th century asserted,

*Of all the things the ship is the most cosmopolitan
not only in itself, but also in the role it plays in history*

The first three chapters of this monograph establishes that Indian Ocean trade in the study period was predominantly ‘monsoon driven economy’ applicable for all. However, after the invention of steam-engine during the Industrial Revolution, Indian Ocean evinced sailing of both kinds of vessels: monsoon-driven and steam-driven. Seafarer as ‘mercantile trader or coastal peddler’ or ‘sailor or supporter of the sailor on board as crew’, hailing from the western seaboard of India or Swahili coast, or Gulf; for each one the pattern of economy circumnavigated around three circuits. These were trading between “Arabia to India; India to Southeast Asia; Southeast Asia to China”; coasts of Indian peninsula acted as ‘relay stations where Gujarat, Malabar and Coromandel Coast served the multi-layered purpose’, islands on both the sides of WIO and EIO as ‘ports and relay stations simultaneously’.¹ In fact, the key of trade economy with those mentioned above, remained a

¹K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*, 1985, pp. 98- 118 & *The English East India Company: The study of an Early Joint Stock Company, 1600-1640*, 1965 Appendix A, pp. 224-25 & Appendix B, pp. 226-34.

salient feature despite the fact that ‘time and space’ had been dynamic, registered shifts, and oscillated between ‘fortunes and misfortunes’.

M. N. Pearson observes for 17th and 18th century ships sailing in the Indian Ocean that though ships had both European and Asian as crew it was more of the Asians who manned the ships whether these belonged to *Estado Da India* or *VOC*, because they were excellent sailors. Among Asian crew were the Arabs, *Bengalis*, *Gujaratis*, Chinese, Moors, Goan Christians and Brazilian Africans who created ample bustle on board and lead to emergence of seaboard culture. For a seafarer, sea is a beginning and not an end; it is here the life begun where one dares to move from one destination to other. *Dhow / Junk / Battela* &c. as apparatus of maritime activity had been the dwellings of the seafarer and the life they lead in sea and ocean was their culture.

To Abdul Sheriff² *Dhow* or Indian Ocean Vessel was (were) a culture (cultures) which imbibed:

...movement of Arabian dates, dried fish, Indian and African timber, food grains, Indian cotton goods, Indonesian spices, Chinese pottery, and African ivory, as well as passengers or slaves in every direction... **dhow is not merely an inanimate transporter of goods, but an animated means of social interaction between different peoples who need to exchange those goods, and much more. The goods themselves are not inert merchandise either, but socially constituted necessities that may acquire a great deal of social and cultural meaning.** A date may be merely a sweet fruit for occasional dessert on a Western table, but for Muslims across the world, it is redolent with deeply-held beliefs and centuries of tradition. To have to break the fast of Ramadhan without dates would be considered a grievance that may undermine the efficacy of a government even as far away as the tropical islands of

²A wooden sailing boat used in many variations in the western Indian Ocean. It is often imagined as an uncouth leaky vessel with a triangular lateen sail, carrying a motley crew of Arabs... with miscellaneous cargo. Abdul Sheriff, *Dhow Culture of the Indian Ocean: Cosmopolitanism, Commerce and Island*, 2010, pp. 1 & 6.

Zanzibar or Indonesia. Moreover, much more than the modern highly mechanised ship, **a dhow of yester years was a labour-intensive vessel that employed perhaps as many sailors as a modern liner does several hundred times its tonnage today...**an inconvenience adding to the economic cost of transport, they multiplied opportunities for *social* interaction between the sailors and their hosts, **giving birth to cosmopolitan populations and cultures everywhere they made a landing...**The circulation of men and goods, both material and intangible, found concentric circles round the Mediterranean. We should imagine a hundred frontiers, not, one, some political, some economic, and some cultural. Economically, goods were exchanged over longer distances; **politically where littoral societies dominated or were dominated by their hinterlands; and socially and culturally to the degree that men and goods circulated between them.**

Pirates and Privateers venturing into Indian Ocean waters were the inclusive categories with respect to Abdul Sheriff's *Dhow* discourse whether vessels were 'large or small' or 'monsoon-driven or steam-driven'. It has already been observed in chapter II & III that those pirates and privateers which were coming from the west, particularly from the Caribbean or Western Europe (England), were fascinated to the riches of the east and ventured for plundering as far as Sulu zone in the arms of Eastern Indian Ocean.

The coast of the Western Indian Ocean belonged to the sailors, fishermen, salt-makers along with merchants, and many more occupational categories like fellow men of designated pirates as 'informers', people who had taken care of their supplies, and supporters in the time when East India Company was making a crack down on them. Being seafarers, they were dissimilar to merchants and traders who were engaged in inland trade. All seafaring communities living in 'the littoral of Western Indian

Ocean’ did not carry out aggressions. It depended on one community to other, their ‘occupation’ and ‘social structure’.

Therefore, it should be borne in mind that an agriculturist cannot become a robber on land or water unless there is severe crisis or it is part of his culture or lifestyle. It can be said that probably the economic reasons and natural environs may have shaped the groups of community to emerge as plunderers. Westerners, in their discourse have titled these plunderers as ‘pirate’ or ‘privateer’ or ‘*corsair*’ on the basis of their occupation.³ In case of discourse on native population, this may not stand true because in the case of *Kathiawad* and *Kachchh* it had migrant population coming from inland regions along the sea coast, who took to sea plundering for survival. This can be taken as a basic instinct which may be put in the cultural category. Another possibility within the native discourse could be regarding their settlements which were located in the pockets of *Kathiawad* and *Kachchh* which were stricken by famine, earthquake or cyclone. A critical scrutiny of the narration in the Foreign and Political Department files also suggests that it was not only due to the geographical circumstances but also the climate, ecology and sociology.

³Ruby Maloni, ‘A Profitable and Advantageous Commerce’: European Private Trade in the Western Indian Ocean, pp. 259-74, Rila Mukherjee, Introduction, “Marine, Maritime and Visionary Worlds” pp. 1-22 & “Ocean Connect/Fragment: A Global View of the Eastern Ocean”, pp. 215-40 in *Oceans Connect: Reflections on Water Worlds Across Time and Space*, 2013.

I have observed that these pockets were stricken by famine, earthquake or cyclone in the beginning of 19th century, well-documented in the Climate Reports of the Bombay Presidency Collection at Prof. S. C. Misra Archival cum Library Cell, Department of History, the M. S. University of Baroda. Therefore, it can be assumed that besides geography, environment also provided impetus to the occurrence of incidences of piratical aggressions (case of *Kathiawad* and *Kachchh-my emphasis*). Further, increase in the volume of trade at the new ports compelled people to do the acts of piracy.

The study of Political Department and Foreign Department files used for chapter II & V for study period, reveals the increase in aggressions from seafaring and fishing communities was mainly due to increased competition among the merchant companies and individuals from east and west. For instance, aggressions in Madagascar, Comoros, Pemba, Zanzibar, Swahili coast happened between 17th and 18th century in considerable volume but other areas recorded high in the first half of 19th century such as in the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, Gulf of *Kachchh* and Gulf of Cambay, Konkan and Malabar in WIO and along Coromondal, Bay of Bengal, South China Sea and Sulu Zone in EIO. This was due to international mercantile environs and was reciprocal to mercantile activity.

On the basis of reading of sections on demography in *Gazetteers, Surveys, Reports and Correspondences* it can be

comprehended that occupation of the sailors, fishermen and merchants was disturbed due to the arrival and monopoly of the European Companies: Portuguese, Dutch & English in particular on the Indian seaboard and by Portuguese, Dutch, English and French on the East African seaboard. Because of the growing monopoly of EIC, the role of native merchants also registered new dynamics as by the second half of the 19th century they appeared to misplace their status in comparison to pre-c.1750. In case of petty ones, livelihoods related to mercantile trade of many were snatched away, particularly native shipping suffered because big merchants preferred the European ships either due to the ‘superiority or pass system’ introduced by the East India Company⁴. But the European Companies did not always earn profit from trade and commerce in the Western Indian Ocean because there was stiff resistance from native rulers and merchants. Both native rulers and merchants sponsored seafaring people to engage in aggression and to share after the pirate plundered goods from European merchants. Arrival of the European Companies also benefitted merchants and sailors. They were in partnership with the East Indian Companies to carry their trade in strong and fast ships of the company and provided with convoys, which protected their ship from aggressions. Sailors

⁴K. N. Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company: The Study of an Early Joint Stock Company, 1600-1640*, 1965, pp. 89-108, Appendix A, pp. 224-25 & Appendix B, pp. 226-34; Amelia Polonia, “Jumping Frontiers, Crossing Barriers—Transfers between Oceans: A Case Study of the Portuguese Overseas Expansion, 1400-1800” pp.121-42 and Amandio Jorge Morais Barros, “The Portuguese in the Indian Ocean in the First Global Age: Trans-Oceanic Exchanges, Naval Power, Port Organization and Trade” pp. 143-204 in Rila Mukherjee, *Oceans Connect: Reflections on Water Worlds Across Time and Space*, 2013.

were hired as *lascar*⁵ in the British ships but not many sailors were employed and those who were not employed were engaged in other works or in piracy. It led to the decline of native shipping in case of Arabian Sea. However, today one finds several centers which continue construction of ships with certain adaptations: Gandevi, Bilimora, and *Kachchh*-Mandvi for instance in Gujarat. During the Conference organized by DIN on port Towns, I had an opportunity to move in the waters of Daman and observe the construction of native crafts at *Salaya*. My fieldwork enquiry suggests, for the entire *Kathiawad-Kachchh* coast who are identified here as pirates were good carpenters and had acumen of handling any kind of repair required on board for their vessel of craft. It was in this conference, Portuguese scholars discussed the difference of the native craft and Portuguese craft while they were sailing as per the wind directions. These discussions are now available in printed form in edited volumes by Lotika Varadarajan-2011, Sara Keller and M. N. Pearson-2015 and Yogesh Sharma-2014 (see Annexure XII).

The local potentates of the littoral of Western Indian Ocean came under the direct control of the British government and those who resisted against the control were labelled as ‘pirates’ (refer table 2 - chapter V).⁶ The British government introduced maritime regulations in the name of suppressing pirates but it was so to back

⁵Shompa Lahiri, “Contested Relations: The East India Company and *Lascar* in London”, pp. 169-82 in H.V. Bowen and Margarete, *et. al.*, *The Worlds of the East India Company*, 2002

⁶Gerald S. Graham, *Great Britain in the Indian Ocean: A Study of Maritime Enterprise 1810-1850*, 1967, pp. 147-328.

their initiative for construction of monopoly in trade and commerce; which could be visualized as politics of piracy and could be used for construction of paramountcy. The aggressions were committed by the seafaring communities which belonged to the fishing, pearl-fishing and seafaring communities of *Joaswami / Qawasimi*⁷, *Kharvas / Kharwas*⁸, *Vaghers / Waghers*⁹, *Sanganians*¹⁰, *Mianas*¹¹, *Angrias*¹², *Desais*¹³ of *Sawantwaree* and many more in case of Red Sea, and along the coast of Madagascar and Zanzibar. It must be borne in mind that natives, in case of Arabian sea carried out aggressions on ‘temporary basis’ according to monsoon wind, either independently or were sponsored by merchants due to their seafaring acumen and the local potentates backing, as their hold in the locality was checked due to the treaties with the native rulers / princely states after the establishment of Bombay Presidency and British Rule in 1858.¹⁴ Natives indulged

⁷ Sultan Muhammad Al-Qasimi, *The Myth of Arab Piracy in the Gulf*, Australia, 1986, p. xiv.

⁸ James M. Campbell, *Hindu Castes and Tribes of Gujarat*, Vol. II, 1988, pp. 520-21.

⁹ *ibid*, pp. 521-23 & C. A. Kincaid, *The Outlaws of Kathiawad and Other Studies*, 1905, pp. 10-11.

¹⁰ James M. Campbell, *Hindu Castes and Tribes of Gujarat*, Vol. II, 1988, pp. 525-27.

¹¹ C. A. Kincaid, *The Outlaws of Kathiawad and Other Studies*, 1905, pp. 2-3.

¹² R. N. Saleore, *Indian Pirates: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, 1978, pp. 99-125.

¹³ *British Parliamentary Papers, Appendix to Report from Select Committee (Political Appendix No.20) on the Affair of the East India Company*, 1970. p. 869.

¹⁴ Letter of 1815 [Bombay, 7th June, (1815, S. D. 290)] Francis Warden to James R. Carnac, Letter from Fategarh, 8th July, 1815 (1815, S.D. 290): The Governor-General to Bombay; letter from [Baroda, 5th August, 1815 (1815, S.D. 291)] by James R. Carnac to Francis Warden; Letter from Baroda [10th August, 1815 (1815, P.D. 423)] by James R. Carnac to Francis Warden; Letter from Captain Ballantine to James R. Carnac Report; Letter to Captain J. R. Carnac from Sundarji Sivji, received at Baroda, 8th August, 1815 on Okha Chieftains; Porbandar: 3rd January, 1816 (1816, P.D. 427) C.W. Elwood to James R. Carnac on pirates in Okha; 1816: Bombay, 15 January, 1816 (1816, P.D. 427) [Bombay Resolution - Offer]; 1816: Baroda, 29th January, 1816 (1816, P.D. 427) James R. Carnac to

in piracy had *modus operandi*: they carried out fish-catching and pearl-fishing, took labour work in land during the monsoon months and engaged in piratical aggressions during pre-monsoon and post-monsoon slots.

This chapter offers profile of those seafaring communities among natives of the western seaboard engaged in piracy along the Malabar, Konkan, *Kathiawad* coast and Persian Gulf based on the information in *Gazetteers*, Demographic profile of native states, accounts from Travelogues and Correspondences' of the officials in India and headquarters of the colonizers - Portuguese and English in particular of the study period and reports of the Residents' of the British Protectorates.

A description of seafaring community of *Kachchh* & *Kathiawad* is offered in chapter I which establishes the following coded as pirates in colonial archives but actually in their local traditions they have other names such as *Chanchiya* for Gujarat and they were compulsorily seafarers: *Machhis*, *Kharwas*, *Bhois*, *Vadhels/Bhadel/Vaghers*, *Sanghars*, *Mianas*, and *Dhebras* or *Dhimars* were the main groups who directly or indirectly indulged in the acts of aggression. Besides them, they have in their groups *Kolis*, who were skilled fishermen and sailors. Their residence was mainly in the coastal villages and even today they continue to reside in the same locations as identified in the descriptions of surveys made on *Kachchh* and *Kathiawad* in the Political Agent's

Francis Warden on Future of Okha. These letters have been quoted in chapter III. J. H. Gense, & D. R. Banaji, *The Gaekwads of Baroda*, Vol. X, pp. 45-53.

report. While a visit to these villages further verifies the stories related to the plunder of the sea because the *palias* erected in the memory of slain is illustrated in this chapter. I have come across several *palias* collection both in *Kathiawad* and *Kachchh* which has names inscribed on them (refer photo collection –Adhya B Saxena). These names match with the list of the pirates appearing in the Political and Foreign Department files.

Campbell¹⁵ has traced their origin and suggests that *Machhis*, *Kharwas* and *Kolis* were connected and it was due to the migration from the place of origin for socio-economic reasons. The seafaring community mentioned by Campbell also reveals that each community has specified acumen, for instance, if the journey was from coast to coast at a short distance, the clan group would be different, in case of long journey or voyage the vessel will be rowed under the leadership of *lascar* and *lascar* would be from *Kharwas*, *Kolis*, and *Bhadelas* group and in rare cases from *Vaghers* and *Mianas*. As *Kharwas* were the seafarers, they belonged to all religious groups. Traditional understanding for *Kharwas* of Gujarat is that: “having taken to salt-manufacture and seafaring, “they sunk and came to be known as *Kharwas*”. *Kachchh* and *Kathiawad Kharwas* could be *Rajput*, *Koli* or *Muslim*. As per the records of late 19th century *Rajput Kharwa* belonged to Mandvi and Veraval; the *Kolis* stayed between Diu and Bhavnagar, and the Muslims- *Pathans*/ *Kasbatis* were from the

¹⁵James M. Campbell, *Hindu Caste and Tribe of Gujarat*, p. 504.

vicinity of Gogha. *Bhadelas*- Muslim settlers were originally from Arabia but have their settlements in Byet, Diu, Dwarka, Jaffrabad, and the Jamnagar pockets near the *Salaya*. The *Kharwas*, *Koli* & *Machhis* of south Gujarat had their connections from Cambay, Bharuch, Surat, Rander, Bhimpur, and Dumas of south Gujarat and they were both Hindu and Muslim believers. Campbell further compares these categories in terms of fierceness while conducting raids on sea and in ocean if they had traversed long distance. For instance:

The *Vaghers* and *Mianas* are found chiefly along the Gulf of Kachchh on the Navanagar side, the *Vaghers* about Byet or Dwarka, and the *Mianas* about Vavania further east. Once notorious pirates and freebooters, the *Mianas* are less enterprising sailors than the *Kharwas* and *Kolis* and confine themselves to coasting craft. The *Sanghars*, once ferocious pirates and better known as *Sanganians* in history, continue partly as seamen on the north *Kathiawad* coast and as cattle-breeders and cultivators in Kachchh.

He also informs us about their clan and lineage, which, according to his information, shifted from one pocket to other depending upon their acumen that probably, established them with multiple roles in different localities. He provided their surnames depending upon their locations in different pockets of Gujarat. For instance:

- *Kachchh*: Jhelun, Jhala, Rathod and Solanki
- *Kathiawad*: Gohil, Jhala, Rathod, and Solanki
- Porbandar & Veraval: Gudhara, Jungi, Khodara, Kotiara, Madhavi, Motivara, Panjivara, Postaria, Solatvara, Seraji, Todarmal, and Vandaria

Koli Kharwas are the descendants of the pirates who carried out predations along the southern *Kathiawad* coast, identified as *Talajia* from Talaja in Bhavnagar; and *Shiale* from Shialbat near

Diu. Besides these places they can be located in Jaffrabad, Mahuva and their lifestyle is more or less that of *Kolis*. *Kharwas* found in south Gujarat were mainly from Surat, Hansot and Cambay and called as *Surati*, *Hansoti*, and *Khambhati* with surnames-Katiala, Machhi, Mujafaria, Sagaria, Vadia, and Vejporia. The Surat *Kharwas* and the *Kolis* of Rander and Bhimpur are recorded as strong sailors like the *Kasbati lascars* of Gogha. The Cambay *Kharwas* were deep-sea sailors, and as salt-makers were called *Agarvalas*.

- In the coast towns and villages of Surat and Bharuch *Kharwas* ply boats and serve in country craft and steamers. The hardiest sailors are of Rander, Gogha, Bhavnagar and Mandvi. They are skilful and daring seamen. Their crafts visited Zanzibar, Aden, coast of India, east Singapore;
- They are also largely employed and well known as *lascars* in steam-boats running between Bombay and Europe, in some cases forming the entire crew.

Kabavaliyas are Muslim *Kharwas* found in Mangrol, Porbandar, and Veraval and their surnames are Miyavar, Mukadam, and Pira; they are recorded travelling as far as Mozambique, Muscat, and Mombasa.

Vaghers / *Waghers* are partly Hindus and partly Muslims, originally of a common *Rajput* stock. They are the earliest settlers of the *Okhamandal* peninsula in north-west *Kathiawad*, but migrated towards the south coast of Gulf of *Kachchh* and are found in the coast villages and towns of *Halar* in the Nawanagar (Jamnagar) State.

Mianas of Bella, Malia, and Vavania and *Bhadelas* are mostly Muslim, like *Waghers* with some exceptions being Hindu. Their surnames are Chamadia, Chavda, Dal, Jam, Manek, and Subani; and Hindu *Wagher* surnames are Bhagar, Bhatad, Dina, Gad, Hathal, Kara or Kala, Ker, Manek and Sumania.

- *Mianas*¹⁶ belong to a fishing community of Sind and have settled in *Kachchh*. The population of *Mianas* was less as compared with the former two communities.
- The tradition of the *Maneks*, who are Sindh *Jadejas*, is that in the eleventh century *Okhamandal* was divided between the *Herols* and *Chavdas*, who were treacherously murdered by some *Rathods*, after peace was restored. *Herols* took refuge with the *Vaghers* and got incorporated with them.
- Later Hamirji, a *Vadhel* prince of *Kachchh* married a Herol girl, and their issue classed as *Vaghers* took the title of *Maneks* and became the rulers of Dwarka and south *Okhamandal*.

*Vaghers/Waghers*¹⁷ of *Okhamandal*, who rose against constituted authority four times between c. 1816 and c. 1873, since then they got settled in *Kathiawad* coast on the southern side. They are descendent of Rajput clan and belong to Hindu and Muslim community. There are 25 villages of *Wagher* community in *Okhamandal* and have a population of 3000¹⁸ Hindu *Waghers* in the 19th century. They had multiple roles as fishers, pirates, freebooters, and landholders, fishermen, since c. 1900 and the Muslims are hardy long-voyage sailors. They traversed in their own vessels commanded by *Vagher* captains or *nakhudas*. The

¹⁶C. A. Kincaid, *The Outlaws of Kathiawad and Other Studies*, 1905, p. 11.

¹⁷*ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁸James M. Campbell, *Hindu and Tribes of Gujarat*, Vol. II, 1988, p. 521.

family bards or *Barots* of the *Vaghers* are *Ravals* living at *Bara* near Salaya. Most *Vaghers* speak *Kachchhi* dialect and few speak Gujarati.

Of the large *Koli* population of Gujarat, those settled on the seaboard from *Kachchh* to Daman are chiefly sailors and fishers and divided in two-*Koli Machchis* and *Koli* proper. *Koli Machchis* are on board during the journey served Anavla, Parsi, and Muslim merchants by manning their vessels. *Koli Machchis* cultivated and worked as seamen while *Koli* proper fished and plied boats. They lived in small houses; ate *jowar*, millet, curd, vegetables and fish; and both male and female consumed *toddy* in the evening. They earned Rs. 5/- to sail in Bombay, Rs. 8/- for Goa, Rs. 12/- for Karachi and larger sum for East Africa, the Persian Gulf, and Arabian ports. *Kolis* offer coconuts and garlands to the sea before starting their journey.

Sangha'rs, are Hindu and Muslims settlers of *Kachchhi* and *Kathiawadi* coast in Navanagar (Jamnagar) pocket. They are said to be Sindh *Rajputs* who came with the *Jadejas* to *Kachchh* in the thirteenth century and to *Kathiawad* in the sixteenth century. They speak Sindhi derived from *Jadeja* dialect at home and Gujarati outside. They claimed to be descendent of Sanjan of *Okhamandal* who was a notorious pirate, his piratical acts spread from Nawanagar to Porbandar. They became more daring than the *Wagher* pirates along the coast of *Kathiawad*. The Muslim *Sanghars* have Hindu names but they do not marry their daughters

with the Hindus or share food with them. These pirates commonly stopped the merchant ships.

- For several centuries, the *Sangaras* or *Sanganis*, called *Sanganians* in the eighteenth and nineteenth century naval annals, were daring pirates, so far exceeding their *Vagher* associates in ferocity that their name became synonymous with pirate along the *Kathiawad* coast.
- The genius for seafaring shown by the actual and direct historical connection between the Gujarat coast (including *Kachchh*, *Kathiawad*, and the south Gujarat seaboard from Cambay to Daman) and Asia Minor, Egypt, East Africa, Arabia, the Persian Gulf, Sri Lanka and the Malaya archipelago, lends special interest to the seafaring classes of Gujarat.

Along the south *Kathiawad*, Cambay, and south Gujarat coasts these pirates were *Kolis* and to a lesser extent *Kharwas*, while about the Gulf of *Kachchh* and especially near Byet, Dwarka, and Porbandar, which was their chief haven, *Jats*, *Vaghers*, *Sanghars*, *Meds* or *Mers*, and *Mianas* terrorised merchants. *Sanghars* and *Vaghers* had been foremost.

According to the travellers' accounts, some instances on piracies are known to us. However, there are instances which are part of Political Department files under proceedings of Bombay Presidency; narration on pirates and piracy is quoted here:

- In 1813, Lieutenant MacMurdo discovered that *Nakwa Kasoo*¹⁹, a famous pirate, sought to the *Tindal* of three boats lying at anchor in the Byet Harbour. Out of the three boats, first and second refused but the third agreed to take him & another man and some four or five women. The boat belonged to a merchant of Koombalia / Kambhaliya in the Gulf of *Kachchh*. When the boat reached open sea, passengers unfolded their true colour. The Man and the women became the partners of *Nackwa Kasoo*. They plundered the boat at

¹⁹ *Selections from the Records of Bombay Government*, New Series, XV, Bombay, 1855, p. 18.

the open sea. These pirates were believed to have plundered another boat with cotton travelling between Surat and Bombay.

- In 1813-14, Hussain Narriadee²⁰, a *Wadhel* pirate from Terah village in *Kachchh* plundered goods of Shah Darab of Kabul, a client of the East India Company. His plundered goods included diamonds, gold, cloth and carpet of high value and killed two crew members. His attack on Shah Darab was narrated by another pirate Kassow *Nackwa*. This has been discussed in chapter III too.
- Piracy was also sponsored by Shivraj Shah of Mandvi. In 1812, Govind Raoji's cargo boat the *Ahmoody*²¹ was plundered which was sailing off from Bombay. The cargo includes rice which was forced and detained in Mandvi. Another pirate Lakhu²² who appeared in the coast of Mandvi has plundered several boats and took refuge in Ulmarrah, a small town of Makran.

Kharwas worship the cow, the planets, and the elements. They worship their own craft and offer coconut on *Nárel Purnima*, the full-moon of *Shrávan* (August-September). Some of the *Kharwas* are followers of *Svámináráyan* and some of *Kuherji*. They regularly worship in the temples as well as in the home. They also took pilgrimage to Dakor, Dwarka and Benaras. Irrespective of religion the *Kharwas* remained superstitious; believed in omen; witchcraft and exorcism.

Illustration 1: Varanu *Palliya* in the compound of Varnushwar Mahadev, Aadesar
(Photo Collection: Mr. Pradeep Zaveri)



²⁰Secret and Political Department Diary, No. 284 of 1813, pp. 896-915.

²¹Secret and Political Department Diary, No. 220/235 of 1813, Folio no.37.

²²Secret and Political Department Diary, No. 220/235 of 1813.

Malabar and Konkan Coast and *Angrias* (Janjira & Colaba):

Malabar was inhabited by seafaring people who belonged to both Hindu and Muslim communities since antiquity but it had Jews and Christians as well during c. 1750- c. 1850. *Mappila* - (Muslim) were seafarers with higher degree skills in comparison to other venturing on coast and high sea. They were the migrants and settled in Malabar before 7th century. *Malabari* pirate knew tactic of plundering when to strike and where to keep their prey.

R. N. Saletore²³ informs us about a popular story about the Malabar pirates:

In 1608 “a great ship of Cochin” was left alone when the Malabari pirates discovered the owner of the ship. But it was different to the European ship. According to Pyrard the case is different with Dutch ship, the Malabar pirates first hailed and intimated its crew that a Portuguese boat was in sight and they offered to show them where it lay and to assist in its capture but what transpired later is not known’.

Lot had been shared on the profile of Kanhoji Angria & his sons by both Biddulph and Charles Johnson, therefore description of their crew and fellow raiders belonging to other seafaring community is offered here. However, *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency: Kolaba and Janjira*, Vol. XI refers to *Angrias* as:

In 1705 Kanhoji Angria ‘a Shivaji or Maratha pirate’ is mentioned as harassing the trade between Bombay and Malabar coast. In 1707 he is said to have had a fleet of considerable strength, whose one object was piracy, and to have been to some extent politically distinct from the Maratha government, though he held a port on the Maratha coast... In 1717 Kanhoji seized the British ship *Success* and withstood a British attack on the fort of Vijaydurg. In October 1718 an English squadron attacked Khanderi which was then held by Angria...Between 1707 and 1710, during her struggle with Shahu, Tarabai, the widow of Rajaram, placed Kanhoji in charge of the coast from Bombay to Savantvadi with authority in Rajmachi near the Bor pass and over the district of Kalyan which seems to have stretched some distance north of Bhiwandi. In 1713 Shahu sent a force

²³R. N. Saletore, *Indian Pirates: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, 1978, p. 57.

under the Peshwa Bahirupant Pingle to protect the inland parts of the Konkan and check the spread of Angria's power. On hearing of the Peshwa's advance, Kanhoji marched to meet him, defeated him, and made him prisoner. He took the forts of Lohgad and Rajmachi near Khandala in west Poona, and prepared to march on Satara. All available troops were brought against him and placed under the command of Balaji Vishvanath. Aware of **Kanhoji's abilities, enterprise, and resource, Balaji agreed that if Kanhoji set the Peshwa free, gave up his alliance with Sambhaji, supported Shahu, and restored all his conquests except Rajmachi, he would receive ten forts and sixteen fortified posts commanding the whole of the Konkan from Devgad in the south to Khanderi in the north, and would be confirmed as admiral of the Maratha fleet with the titles of Vizarat Mai and Sarkhel.**²⁴

About Fishers and Sailors from Malabar:

According to estimates of 1880s there were four classes with strength of 16,633. *Bhois*, *Gabits*, *Kharvis*, *Kolis*, *Bhois* were spread all over; *Gabits* in Mahad and Ratnagiri; *Kharvis* in Alibag, Mangaon and Mahad; and *Kolis* spread all over and in Bassein. As *Kolis* are identified pirates it is important to mention about *Kolis* of Alibag; who were the leaders of the seafarers. They generally used *Konkani* and *Marathi* dialects while speaking and used to serve as soldiers, fort-guards, and sailors in the ships of war. The *Kolis* have been associated with Kanhoji Angria in his piratal / piratical aggressions. The *Koli Patil* inherited the position of the chief of *Kolis* and had 'great influence over his people'. The *Kolis* have two divisions: *Cheulkars* or *Son Kolis* and *Rahtadkars* based on their place of origin Cheul in Kolaba and Rahtad in Mangaon. The *Koli* men were dressed in a loincloth and always wore a small clasp knife hanging from the neck. They are reported fishermen

²⁴ Grant Duff, *A History of the Marathas*, 1826, p. 193. These ten forts were Khanderi (Kenery) and Kolaba on the Alibag coast, Avchitgad in Kolaba and Suvarndurg, Vijaydurg, Jaygad, Yashvantgad, Devdurg, Kanakdurg, and Fatehgad in Ratnagiri.

and as well as seamen, hardworking, and enjoyed high prospects as sailors.

Malabar also had another category of sea plunderers identified as Kunjali who could be placed in the category of either pirate or privateer. A brief description on them for the 16th century is offered here on the basis of European travelogues:.

The Kunjali Marakkar or Kunhali Marakkar was the title given to the Muslim naval chief of the Zamorin of Calicut. There were four major Kunjalis who played a part in the Zamorin's naval wars with the Portuguese from 1507 to 1600. The Marakkars are credited with organizing the first naval defense of the Indian coast.

Scholars have recorded about Kunjali using some hundred swift *paros* or *pattemars*, each manned by 30-40 rowers against the Portuguese. These small boats which could operate in shallow or deep water and could be swiftly deployed upon sight of a larger Portuguese ship, which in turn attacked, once near the target with small guns sling shots, javelins and bows & arrows, and sometimes with fire. This 'hit and run' tactic proved very successful and the Portuguese losses were heavy, not only to trade but also the Portuguese prestige as self-proclaimed lords of the western seas. Kunjali supported Zamorin to resort to the use of force and constant violence against Portuguese vessels to make profit and establish the right to free and equal status in maritime trade. They resorted to those very same acts, such as confiscation of the commodities and all other cruelties, which they had experienced from the Portuguese leaving 'little outlet for legitimate trade'. M. N. Pearson considered Kunhali / Kunjali between pirate and

privateer. According to him, some of them were pirates, some were *corsairs*, some were ‘guerrilla warriors’ and many were inoffensive traders. The *corsair* activities organized by the Zamorin and his naval chieftain Kunjali seem to have had the co-operation of some Muslim merchants of Cochin, because of their close and continued association. Kunjali also had their interests in the pearl trade and cinnamon trade of Kotte but their interest became called of contention which led to maritime violence with the Portuguese.

Pius Malekandathil²⁵ informed us that *corsairs* in Malabar Coast plundered Portuguese ships in the 16th century. Its description is as follows:

The fortress, as described by De Couto, was square, each side being of 500 paces, ending with the usual bastions at the corners. The walls were four paces thick. In the middle was the citadel, with its dungeon, where Portuguese captives were immured, and which, as De Couto sadly adds, "for our sins was seldom vacant." The fort walls had their parapets, port-holes, and loop-holes, with much good artillery; but the strongest bastion was that which guarded the bar of the river on the north-west of the town.

Qawasimi²⁶ Pirate in Persian Gulf:

According to Charles E. Davies²⁷, the Persian Gulf in the 18th century, was a battleground for ‘myriad competing religious, economic, and political interests’, a violent and uncertain place for commerce after the decline of Portuguese and then Dutch naval

²⁵ Pius Malekandathil, *The Maritime Trade of India, 1500-1663*, 2010, p. 224.

²⁶ Charles E. Davies, *The Blood-Red Arab Flag*, 1997, p. xi

²⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 63-90

influence. Since 1800, it has evinced plunder of the merchant vessels, cultivation of dates and pearl fishing. His book offers an exhaust live survey of cases of maritime predation by the *Qawasim*, particularly those based at the port of *Ras al-Khymah*, and they read like pirate narratives and survivors tales from any part of the world. It also provides the enlarged list of expeditions carried by EIC from Bombay in 1809-1810 and 1819-1820 to curb disturbances caused by *Qawasimis*. The political rivalry between *Ras al-Khymah* and Muscat was of particular concern, and Davies suggests that much of what was called *Qasimi* piracy in the years 1797-1804 was part of a vigorous response to the expansionist policies of Muscat's ruler.

Qawasimi belonged to Al *Qasimi*, one of the six ruling families of the United Arab Emirates and ruled two of the seven principalities - *Sharjah* and *Ras al-Khymah*. After the end of *Yaruba* dynasty in first half of the 18th century Al *Qasimi* dynasty formed a large principality of *Ras al-Khymah* previously known as *Julfar*. Its capital was shifted from *Ras al-Khymah* to *Sharjah*. One of the principality known as *Lengeh* was the first to split. The Al *Qasimi* had its base in *Ras al-Khymah* which was a major maritime power during the 18th century. *Qawasimi* is one of the Arab communities settled in the Persian Gulf which has given toughest challenge to the East India Company.²⁸ They were also very skilful mariner like their Indian counterparts who engaged in the

²⁸Gerald S. Graham, *Great Britain in the Indian Ocean: A Study of Maritime Enterprise 1810-1850*, 1967, pp. 219-62.

transportation of commodities and passengers. They faced odd situation when the European Companies started monopolizing the markets of Persian Gulf. Sultan Muhammad Al-Qasim²⁹ advocated that the British were the main reason for piracy in the Persian Gulf. Their imperialist policy was resisted by the local people in the form of piracy and the *Qawasimi* community engaged in aggression during the first half of the 19th century. Their activities were spread both in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf which extended further to places in Sind and Gujarat-*Kachchh*. Al-Qasimi's argument has two points regarding piratal aggressions. First, he argued that *Qawasimis* were peace loving and skilful mariners and their position was dislocated by the coming of European Companies. Another argument is that the British government interfered in the internal politics of the native rulers. Imposing maritime regulations and forcefully issued pass to the independent sailor and merchants. They sent Indian Navy patrol to back their claim or monopoly in trade and commerce. They installed their Resident and look after administration of the ruling dynasty.³⁰ The British took control over the regions minimized the share of native Arabs such as the *Utub*, the *Omanis* and the *Qawasimi*.

Qawasimi community had superior naval strength which put the *Omani* navy at the bay. But *Omanis* tried to destroy strength of

²⁹See Sultan Muhammad Al-Qasimi, *The Myth of Arab Piracy in the Gulf*, 1986.

³⁰A note on Administration system of Persian Gulf under Bombay Presidency is discussed in chapter V.

Qawasimi navy with the help Bombay Marine. It further gives opportunity for the company to interfere in the internal politics of the Persian Gulf to dominate trade which is discussed in chapter V.

In the 19th century, David Seton became the British Resident of Muscat who convinced his superior to make alliance with the *Omanis*. They ruled littoral and islands of Persia such as *Bandar Lengeh* just opposite to United Arab Emirate between 1800 and 1890. The Persian Gulf was a bone of contention between Al *Qasimi* and *Oman* to control trade and commerce but later, the British government was successful in establishing foothold in the Gulf. In 1819, the British defeated Al *Qasimi* after several maritime battles. *Qasimi* remained engaged in fishing, trading and sailing in their vessels or were hired by others for the seafaring ventures.

A review of the book, *The Blood-Red Arab Flag* suggests that author dislikes calling *Qawasimis* as pirates, because he believes that their social structure and political-circumstances compelled them to undertake maritime raids on merchant vessels passing through the Strait of Hormuz and neighbouring seas between 1797 and 1820. He also brings in the geographical difficulties for the inhabitants who preferred to go for attacks on vessels because rival port cities like Muscat, and occasional Persian, Ottoman, Saudi, Egyptian and European meddling.

Gerald S. Graham provides insights in the nature of piracy in the Persian Gulf: John Malcolm traversed Persian Gulf in the first

decade of 19th century as first envoy since the crown controlled it and he was on mission to meet the ruler, on the way he heard a lot about the sailors “Sons of Sindbad” On board, he was informed in the following words regarding maritime raids:

They are of the sect of Wahâbees, and are called Jouassimee; but God preserve us from them, for they are **monsters**. **Their occupation is piracy, and their delight murder; and to make it worse, they give you the most pious reasons for every villany they commit.** They abide by the letter of the sacred volume, rejecting all commentaries and traditions. If you are their captive, and offer all you possess to save your life, they say "No! it is written in the Koran, that it is unlawful to plunder the living, but we are not prohibited in that sacred work from stripping the dead;" so saying, they knock you on the head. "But then," he continued, **'that is not so much their fault, for they are descended from a Houl, or monster, and they act according to their nature.'**

Graham equates *Joasmee* pirates with Indian *thugs* of the British period whose target were the British merchants because the British were also like the pirates in the Persian Gulf. According to Graham the British government in India took severous measures and planning to curb piracy in 1835. A vivid description follows:

...the Bani Yas fleet, which included three *baghalahs* of 300 *tons* was cruising along the main Gulf trade routes. Commodore Elwon, went to put an end to these wrongdoers to action. ...Elphinstone's broadsides demolished an impetuous Beni Yas detachment before the vanguard could engage for boarding; the result was unconditional surrender and the eager return of prizes and cargoes...'not a soul of us was touched', wrote one of the officers. 'Had they boarded us, all must have been put to death; or, as they say, "boiled in oil". I am not surprised at their assurance, for it is supposed that upwards (I shall speak within bounds) of 600 men were in the boats, and what could 150 do against them ...?' ...the conference called in Bassadore by the acting Resident, Captain Hennell, inaugurated the first Maritime Truce. **From 21 May 1835 it was agreed that for six months the various claims, should remain in abeyance, and that any infraction of the truce should be treated as piracy.** Aided by a strengthened **Indian squadron, the scheme worked. It was renewed in the following year for eight months, and again during the next six years for periods which in 1838 were extended from eight to twelve months, to the undisguised satisfaction of the less bellicose chiefs.** ...the merchants of the Trucial Coast used their resources into the pearl fishery or the coastal trades...Despite incidents that might have flared to perilous proportions, between 1835 and 1843 organized piracy practically vanished from the Gulf.

In January 1836 under instructions from Bombay a neutral area was established which covered the main tracks of the Gulf trade, and within this area, which was subsequently extended, cruisers of the Indian Navy were able to ensure that no form of hostilities should take place under any guise. ...The visit of the steamer Hugh Lindsay in July 1839 no doubt contributed to the rise of British prestige. Puffing clouds of impressively black smoke, she was the first large war vessel to penetrate the sandbanks and approach the famous beach at Ras al-Khaimah. ...The ten-year truce that was signed on 1 June 1843 was accepted as inviolable because the Arabs wished it so. In 1844 the Assistant Resident in the Gulf, Lieutenant A. B. Kemball, was able to inform his Government that: ...Such a pledge demanded much of Arab mankind; nonetheless, on 4 May 1853, the Perpetual Maritime Treaty of Peace marked the end of a long and barbarous era in the Persian Gulf.

Red Sea Pirate

In 1815, *Qawasimi* pirate infested the entrance of Red Sea and their power increased with the increase of numbers in 1816 under *Ameer Ibrahim*³¹. He captured four vessels near Mocha which were bound from Surat to Mocha. The vessels were carrying precious goods and sailing under the British flag which carried the British pass but pirates were not afraid of British punishment and massacred crew. To punish the pirate, a squadron was assembled at Bombay which consisted of His Majesty's sloop Challenger with 18 guns, a cruiser Mercury of the East India Company with 14 guns and Vestal with 12 guns. The British government at Bombay sent a letter to Bruce, the Resident of Bushire instructed him to take demand for restitution from the chief of *Ras al-Khyma*. The long expedition was also disastrous to the ship such as the main mast of the Mercury was lost at the sea, Challenger and other vessels reached lately at Bushire. A war vessel Ariel was sent from

³¹J. S. Buckingham, *Travels in Assyria, Media and Persia including a Journey from Bagdad by Mount Zagros to Hamadan, the Ancient Ecbatana*, Vol. II, 1830, p. 247.

Bushire to *Ras al-Khyma* along with a letter from Bruce regarding not following the truce agreement with the British but flatly denied the accusation of plundering the vessels. Bruce and Tylor along with their writer and interpreter went to *Ras al-Khyma* to make demand restitution of the Surat vessels and their cargoes.

In the Ras al-Khyma area, “there was a deficit of dry dates, tamr, and on the coasts, of grain; people inland obviously did not produce their own fresh or salt fish.”

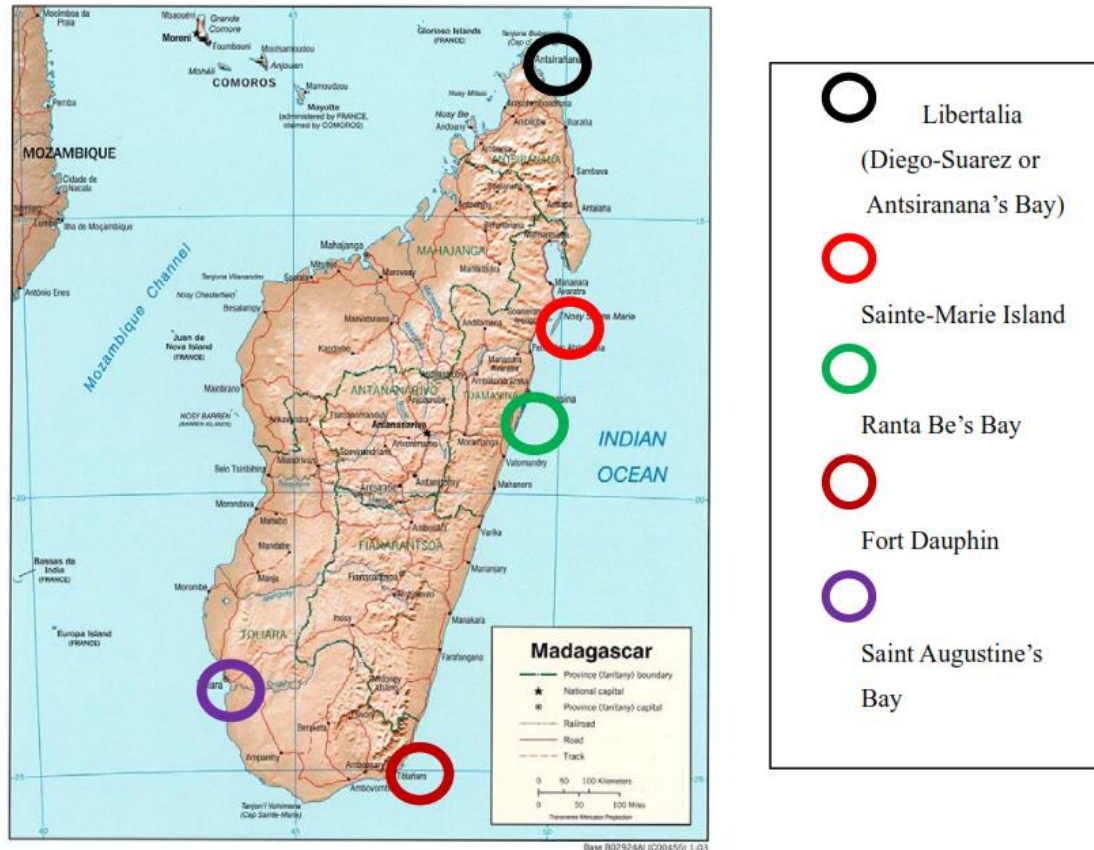
As noted by historian Frauke Heard Bey, “when one studies the climatic conditions and the geographical environment, it becomes obvious that for the tribal societies of the Arabian coasts and the hinterland of the Gulf, survival was a challenge and an achievement. It often meant that families had to combine a number of economic pursuits.”³²

Madagascar Pirate

Madagascar is well known pirates destination for hiding, shelter supplies, favourable geography along the location close to two trading routes which are the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean for those coming from the Caribbean to Indian Ocean. In 17th century, Sainte Marie became a prime destination for European pirates as discussed in chapter III. Beginning around 1685, a number of marauders from the Caribbean made their way to the Arabian Sea. Their target was richly laden pilgrim fleet that sailed annually from Surat in India to Mocha and Jeddah on the Arabian Peninsula. After raiding the Indians the pirates usually steered for Sainte Marie to repair their ships, restock provisions, and divide the loot. They then made their way back to the New World. The number of sea rovers increased considerably after 1689, when the colonial

³²Abdul Sheriff, “The Persian Gulf and the Swahili Coast: A History of Acculturation over the Longue Durée,” in Lawrence G. Potter, (ed.) *The Persian Gulf in History*, 2009, p.175. Also Lawrence G. Potter, “Society in the Persian Gulf: Before and After Oil” 2017, p. 8.

authorities issued privateering commissions to treasure hunters. In 1695, however, many marauders failed to acquire the desired booty. Most of them decided to wait for the next pilgrim season or to search for alternatives targets.



Map. 1 Bases of pirates in Madagascar in seventeenth and eighteenth century

Source: Jean Edmond Randrianantenaina “Maritime Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships: Exploring the Legal and the Operational Solutions: The Case of Madagascar” The United Nations-Nippon Foundation Fellowship Programme 2012 – 2013, p. 6.

Jean Aubin's statement that Gujarat was the "keystone of the commercial structures of the Indian Ocean"³³ throughout and in 19th century, it was *Kachchh* and *Kathiawad* which had undergone distinct scenario.³⁴ Both of these regions could evolve together as potential partners in the growth of their economies due to the existing politico-economic circumstances emerging in the era of colonialism.³⁵

Available secondary³⁶ source material on the navigability of the WIO suggests that enough references are available in contemporary Arabic, Persian and European accounts of the topography and littorals of WIO; the region was well navigated, explored and a variety of knowledge systems existed in the littoral societies-Arabian Sea, Persian Gulf, Gulf of Aden, Red Sea, and

³³Edward A. Alpers, "Gujarat and the Trade of East Africa, c. 1500-1800", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1, (1976), p. 24; Calvin H. Allen, "The Indian Merchant Community of Masqat", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 1981, pp. 39-53; and Eric Gilbert, "Coastal East Africa and the Western Indian Ocean: Long-Distance Trade, Empire, Migration, and Regional Unity, 1750-1970", *The History Teacher*, Vol. 36, No. 1, Nov., 2002, pp. 7-34.

³⁴Erik Gilbert, "Coastal East Africa and the Western Indian Ocean: Long-Distance Trade, Empire, Migration, and Regional Unity, 1750-1970", *The History Teacher*, Vol. 36, No. 1, (Nov., 2002), pp. 7-34 and *Dhows and Colonial Economy of Zanzibar, 1860-1970*, 2004.

³⁵A. B. Saxena, "Mandvi-Dynamic Port Town Of Kachchh-Gujarat, c. 1600- c.1850", *PIHC*, 65th Session, Kolkata, 2008, pp. pp.427-51 and Ghulam A. Nadiri, "Exploring the Gulf of Kachh: Regional Economy and Trade in the Eighteenth Century", *JESHO*, Vol. 51, No. 3, pp. 465-68.

³⁶Gus W. van Beek, "Pre-Islamic South Arabian Shipping in the Indian Ocean-A Surrejoinder", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 80, No. 2, Apr. - Jun., 1960, pp. 136-139; Archibald Lewis, "Maritime Skills in the Indian Ocean 1368-1500", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient (JESHO)*, Vol. 16, No. 2/3, Dec. 1973, pp. 238-264; A. J. Qaisar, *The Indian Response to European Technology and Culture*, 1982; Lotika Varadarajan, "Indian Boat Building Traditions: the Ethnological Evidence." in M.-F. Boussac and J.-F. Salles, (eds.), *Athens, Aden, Arikamedu*, 1995, pp. 167-192; H.P Ray, "Seafaring and Maritime Contacts: An Agenda for Historical Analysis", *JESHO*, Vol. 39, No. 4, 1996, pp. 422-431; B. Arunachalam, "Technology of Indian Sea Navigation, c 1200-c.1800, *The Medieval History Journal*, Vol. 11, Part 2, 2008, pp. 187-227.

the Swahili coast throughout ages. My understanding on navigability is constructed on the basis of narration of Buda Fofindi, a Muslim *Kharwa* in *Kachchh*-Mandvi who had sailed in Indian Ocean waters on several occasions and now makes models of ships and explains to scholars like me on how the native *dhow* mentioned in chapter I was built, sailed and what was the acumen of the *Malam / Mallum* (pilot of the ship). My second understanding on navigation in *Kachchh* water got constructed by reading of Ibn Majid's navigational manual and Tod's observation in *Western Travels* (pp.494-99). Their narration not only indicates about vessels, techniques of sail, route, crew but also about the communities in long span of time from 15th to 19th centuries. Mention to Lotika Varadarajan's et. al. article is necessary to understand the sailing and different kinds of vessels because Rupal Mankad and Himanshu Ajabia (pp. 155-80) place their argument on the basis of fieldwork. It was in 2010 *Darshak Itihas Nidhi* carried out workshop in *Kachchh* Mandvi to understand the navigation of native seafarers and the Portuguese vessels. The Annexure section of this monograph has images of Portuguese vessels collected from edited volume by Yogesh Sharma (pp.727-62).

Referring to commercial structures of the Indian Ocean, *Kachchh*-Mandvi, Mundra, Muscat and Zanzibar had added a new dimension in the 19th century which not only affected the mercantile destiny of these sub-regions in terms of exchange of

commodities but also the attitudes of settlers in several ways along with the colonizers measure to control the Afro-Asian Seas.

Kachchh came to prominence in the middle of the 18th century when the Al-Busaidis came to power in Muscat (c.1749). This commerce-oriented dynasty promoted trade and commerce in the Arabian Sea. The rise of this “Omani Commercial Empire,” accompanied by a “commercial renaissance” at the Swahili coast, inspired confidence among merchants and created an atmosphere that was conducive to trade between south Gujarat, *Kathiawad*, *Kachchh*, the West Asian, and East African ports. The East African rulers maintained close political relations with the rulers of Sind and *Kachchh*, which in turn, promoted commerce with these territories. *Kachchh*’s chief port Mandvi was a major emporium of trade where East African ivory, slaves and precious metals from West Asia were exchanged for Indian textiles.³⁷ The Gulf of *Kachchh* gained further prominence in the mid-18th and early 19th centuries due to the nascent interests of Dutch for a short time span and British for political hegemony. Dutch in Mandvi c.1750 found that it was visited by merchant-ships from different directions, affluent local merchants engaged in local and overseas commerce, and a fertile interior. The ports were well connected with the interior through a network of river and land routes. Mandvi was

³⁷ Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Ships and Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770-1873*, 1987; M. Reda Bhacker, *Trade and Empire in Muscat and Zanzibar: Roots of British Domination*, 1992; Pedro Alberto da Silva Rupino Machado, *Gujarati Indian Merchant Networks in Mozambique, c. 1777-1830*, Ph. D. dissertation: SOAS, University of London, (unpublished), pp. 157, 162-5, 207, 210, 227 & 230.

therefore a prominent port and being close to Bhuj, the administrative centre of *Kachchh*, remained frequented by merchants. Other than Mandvi, ports like Anjar, Tuna, Mundra, Tiku *bandar*, Aranga *bandar*, and Lakhpat *bandar* on the northern rim and Bedi *bandar*, Jhakau, and *Salaya* on the southern rim nurtured seafarers which are identified as *Kharwas*, *Kolis* and *Badhels*. When EIC aspired for controlling this part of the Indian subcontinent and took ‘piracy’ as a pretext of controlling it, the native seafarers resisted who are recorded as pirates and their aggressions as piratical phenomenon.

From the published literature³⁸ on navigation one can infer about the seafarers: their spirit and skills; their identity and place of origin or settlement; inspiration; construction of brawny, seagoing, leakage free sea-vessels; material used; their categories; frequency; tonnage; weather conditions and sailing time-period; location and identification of destinations in the absence of modern technology and transformations as a result of new technology with the coming of Portuguese and Dutch.

Historiographical survey of seafarers accounts and their description in the western Indian Ocean, documents *Gujaratis* as better seamen and who did more navigation than others in the

³⁸ L. M. Devic, *The Book of the Marvels of India* 1928; R. Lebaron Bowen, “The *Dhow* Sailor”, *American Neptune*, II, 1951, pp. 161-202; L. Gopal, “Art of Ship-building and Navigation in Ancient India”, *JIH*, Vol. 40, pp. 3 & 13-27, G. R. Tibbets, *Arab Navigation*, London, 1971; H. P. Ray and J. F. Salles, (eds.), *Tradition and Archaeology: Early Maritime Contacts in the Indian Ocean*, 1996 and David Parkin and Ruth Barnes, (eds.), *Ships and the Development of Maritime Technology in the Indian Ocean*, 2002, pp. 28-61, 174-208 & 209-26.

second quarter of the sixteenth century with large vessels manned by big crew under excellent pilots.³⁹

They trade with the kingdom of Deccan and Goa and with Malabar and they have factors everywhere ... as the Genoese do in our part of the world... in places like Bengal, Pegu, Siam, Pedir, Pase and Kedah. There is no place where you do not see Gujerat merchants. Gujerat ships come to these kingdoms every year... If Cambay were cut off from trading with Malacca, **it could not live**, for it would have **no outlet for its merchandise... The Gujeratees were better seamen and did more navigating than the other people of these ports, and so they have large ships and more men to man them. They have great pilots and do a great deal of navigation.**

(*Tome Pires*, Vol. I, p. 45)

Their knowledge was precise so much so that they could sail during favorable and unfavorable wind conditions.⁴⁰ This often recorded statement by the Europeans⁴¹ during 17th, 18th and 19th h centuries is substantiated by observations of Alexander Burnes⁴² for *Kachchhi* seafarers based on the understanding of Mr. Eyde (1834)⁴³ for a voyage between *Kachchh* and Arabia via Red Sea; to Zanzibar on the Swahili coast; and also from *malam-ni-pothi* acquired from the pilot of the vessel sailing between Bombay and *Kachchh* in May, 1835:

It will strike a European with some surprise when he finds that distant voyages undertaken by such vessels, and the more so, perhaps, when it is added that they are **navigated with precision and no small skill by the pilots who have acquired the use of quadrant, and steer by charts.** Some of these, latter,

³⁹ *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires*, Vol. I, trans. by A. Cortesao in Hakluyt Society, 2nd Series, LXXXIX, 1944, pp. 33-47.

⁴⁰ *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, Vols. I, trans. by M. Dames in Hakluyt Society, 2nd Series, XLIV, 1918, pp. 108-57 and *The Travels of Ludovico di Varthema*, trans. by J. Jones in Hakluyt Society, I Series, XXXII, London, 1863, pp. 105-07.

⁴¹ *Tome Pires*, Vol. I, pp. 41-42; and *Duarte Barbosa*, Vol. I, pp. 19-21 and 26-28.

⁴² Alexander Burnes, "On the Maritime Communications of India, As Carried on by the Natives, Particularly from Kutch, at the Mouth of the Indus", *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, Vol. 6, 1836, pp. 25-26.

⁴³ J. Edye, "Description of the Various Classes of Vessels Constructed and Employed by the Natives of the Coasts of Coromandel and Malabar", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. I, 1934, Vol. I. Here a drawing of *Kachchhi* vessel is also traceable.

indeed exhibit, an originality that would not, I am sure, be disputed by Eratosthenes first construction of map whose name has been handed down to posterity. (“Maritime Communications...”, p. 25)

It is remarkable to understand that the *Kachchh* remained connected by sea since sixteenth century and had its destinations to Zanzibar and the Swahili coast, with Red Sea and Arabia, with the Persian Gulf, Makran and Sind, Malabar and as far as Sri Lanka in the WIO corridor. Mandvi-*Kachchh* was the significant destination besides Lakhpat, Jakhau, Mundra, Koteshwar and Anjar on way back to Sind. The vessels used in this extensive commerce varied in size from 25 to 200 *tons*. They carried a large *lateen* sail, had two masts and were ‘never decked’. This testimony is of course stands true for second quarter of the nineteenth century; but other empirical evidences from National Archives, Zanzibar and House of Wonders, Zanzibar further widens the scope of our understanding which my supervisor demonstrated me by showing a video shot by her.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Files entitled “List of Zanzibar Vessels registered at various Ports: 1892-1905”, Reference AT 1.5; and “Registers of Ship”, AT 1. These provide information of vessels plying to *Kachchh* Mandvi from Zanzibar with details on crew, owner, and commodity of trade; and receipts of port duties. House of Wonders/ *Beit-el Ajaib*, Zanzibar houses exhibition of *dhow*s. It has been generously funded by the Danish Embassy in Dar-es-Salaam. It is located in the central courtyard of the House of Wonders on the Ground Floor, and consists of the following major elements the *Mtepe*. The exhibition includes an exposition of the delicate local coastal habitat, including the mangrove swamp and the coral reef, and related industries, including fishing, boat building, and mangrove and coral cutting. The emphasis is on its sustainability, detailing traditional methods of conservation of the marine environment and resources, and the threat posed by modern developments, including dynamite fishing and tourism, with audio-visual programmes. My interaction with the scholars, *Gujaratis* settled in Zanzibar and the natives made me understand the navigating ethos on part of *Kachchhi* sea farers revealing. I am thankful to Prof. Adhya B. Saxena who has shared her reference-card notes from the documents she acquired from National Archives, Zanzibar.

Pirates, English East India Company and Local Intelligence Network:

The East India Company employed natives to gather information on their colleagues who were suspected pirates in order to curb piracy in the Arabian Sea. The company employed former pirates to gather information about the pirate-havens and black markets.⁴⁵ Juma *Nackwa*, a former pirate was employed to catch the *Chanchiya* (pirates) as he was familiar with the topography and the vessels used by the well-known pirate Jecha *Nackwa*⁴⁶. He pursued the Company to provide him two armed *pattamar*, seamen and twenty sepoys so that he can catch pirates for the Company. According to his estimate and assurance given to the Company, Jecha *Nackwa* could be brought into custody within one and half month. However, he was not sure for Kassow *Nackwa*. Jecha *Nackwa* was supported by Shivraj Shah-Mandvi chief and *Badhela* community. Shivraj Shah had freed Jecha *Nackwa* which led to conflict between the Chief and the Company. Frequent piratical attacks and counter attacks by the Company figure in the Secret Files for 1813.

In the confessions, the pirates gave reasons for their piratical acts: starvation and sponsorship by petty chieftains. Kassow *Nackwa* confessed that his family belonged to Byet but he resided in Mandvi. His father used to operate there but issues between Mandvi and Bhuj led to his indulgence in this occupation. *Jamdar* Fateh Mohammed fined him and forced him to pay 5 *cories* per

⁴⁵*ibid.*

⁴⁶Secret and Political Department Consultations, Vol. 220/235 of 1813, Folio No. 37.

day, employed him and also took most of the share. *Nackwa* plundered goods for Bhuj from Mandvi and was blamed for piracy. The East India Company knew about the *Nackwa* hideout. He had travelled to Veraval where he found his old friend Abdulla Mukadam and his brother Hussain Mukadam who offered *him* to take plundered goods and they would protect his family. But he refused the offer and went to Bhuj. He sent his wife to Pattan with 6 bags of silver from Veraval to live under the protection of Syed and Meya of Pattan.

Deposition of Pirates:

Reading of Secret and Political Department Diary provides us sketches of lives of various natives who functioned as pirates. Their *modus operandi* has been discussed in chapter II, here, I provide insights on their operations:

Hussain Nerriadee, a Badhel, plundered Shah Darab⁴⁷ Kabul-EIC's client and his ship carrying valuable cargo-diamonds, gold, cloth, and carpets valued about a lakh and a half rupees in 1812-13. His piratical activity was based in *Kachchh*. Kassow *Nackwa* testified that Hussain killed two crews of Shah Darab and took away all his valuable goods. The plundered goods were carried to Koteswar-a haven for the pirates for redistribution. Some of the cargo was carried to Bhuj to be given to Fateh Mohammed. The *Jamadar* employed Hussain for piratical aggressions and gave

⁴⁷Secret and Political Department Diary No. 284 of 1813, pp. M14-15.

shelter and protection from the EIC which was entirely against the authority of the Company; and also against the threat from several pirates based in Seer, Jakhau, Mandavi, Bhuj and Mundra. Another pirate, Jecha *Nackwa* along with his ten or twelve associates, his brother Ishaq and son-in-law Jumna with his three brothers were protected and sheltered by the *Jamadar* and Jecha *Nackwa* commanded a fleet of twelve boats until many of these were destroyed by the Company around 1802. Hussain Nerriadee was active through the years 1812-14. He knew about the creeks and grey markets to hide and shelter plundered goods. He attacked small fleet and plundered goods were shared according to their posts.

Kassow *Nackwa*, a *Kachchhi* pirate who was supported by the Mandavi chief as well as the *Wadhel* / *Badhel* community of seamen which led to an increase in his raids. In 1813, several piratical aggressions took place under Kassow *Nackwa*, Dwarka inhabitants Umar and Waddoo, Lakhu *Nackwa*, Dossa Damjee, Ismail Jamil (an inhabitant of Porbandar), and Jecha *Nackwa*. The Company acted strongly against the piratical aggressions and took counter-measure against the pirates. Pirates were captured and their statements were taken before they were punished. They voiced the material conditions that explained piracy and the interconnected circuit of markets, shrines, and distribution centres. Thus, Ismail Jamil in his brief deposition, upheld that he had been prompted to the act by Lakhu *Nackwa* and a state of starvation. The petty

chieftain of Veraval, an important distribution centre for clandestine goods was the chief sponsor of Dossa Damjee. Local bosses included *pirs* of shrines such as Randhanpur, a common resort for the pirates, whose presiding *pir* was often presented with some presents before the pirated property was conveyed to Sind. It seems that Randhanpur enjoyed a symbolic relationship with Jakhau, strategically and socially giving pirates obvious advantages in deceiving the authority.

Neya *Nackwa*,⁴⁸ a resident of Mandvi had signed a security bond to Seth Shivraj and Thakursa, to the agent of the East India Company to abstain from piracy in 1810. *Nackwa* boat was sailed and captured by the East India Company from Byet without his knowledge. He sent a letter to S. A. Greenwood mentioning about the non-criminality or innocence and that his boat should be released.

Jeeah (Jewa) *Nackwa*,⁴⁹ a resident of Koteswar in *Kachchh* plundered a ship belonging to Mandvi port under Shivraj in 1810. Fateh Mohammed and Shivraj were enemies and a ship was captured at Koteswar by Jeeah *Nackwa*. In 1810, J. R. Carnac, Acting Resident of Baroda sent a letter to Francis Warden, Chief Secretary to Government of Bombay regarding the detention of a ship by Jeeah *Nackwa*. On 22nd May, 1810, Captain Greenwood, Acting Resident of Porbandar sent an intelligence report to J.R.

⁴⁸Political Department Diary, No 360 (3) of 1810, pp. 4025-28.

⁴⁹Political Department Diary, No 361 (5 & 11) 1810, pp. 3107-10.

Carnac and informed that Jeeah *Nackwa*'s brother was detained by Remasa, *Jamadar* of Meer of Sind. Further, they found three boats and one vessel belonging to Jeeah *Nackwa* that contained Chinese goods.

Family and Security of Pirates

Nackwa Jewa known pirate in Lakhpat had plundered *Pattamar Sallamutty* of Veenarsee Pragjee in January 1810 which was coming from Bombay to Gogha with cargo. Veenarsee was attacked with armed which included matchlock and killed two of the passengers. He came on board and examined the tindal and crew. He forced to take off all the clothes to searched money or papers. They found that the vessels possessed English pass which was torn off. There were two other pirate boats at the anchorages, when the *Sallamutty* and Pirates Boat arrived; no other boats except pirates' frequented the creek of Seer. The piratal property was *Padala* 15 coss from Lakhpat. They sailed to the Seer and set free the passengers of *Sallamutty*. The pirates had given 2 *Cories* for each men to buy food. A guide was also provided to lead them in Lakhpat Bandar. The condition of pirates became worst because the piratal acts were no longer safe. Earlier, *Nackwa* Jeeah⁵⁰ had 100 men to carry piratal aggression with 3 or 4 boats but as piracy was restricted, he was left with 50 men and 2 or 3 boats. Jeeah settled in the Lakhpat Bandar. Jeeah *Nackwa* had three dingy to

⁵⁰Deposition of Ramjee Inhabitant of Gogo, Political Department Diary, No. 390 (3, 5 &12) 1810, p. 2734.

carry out piratal aggressions. In 1812, Lt. Thomas Blast was in Lakhpat and was informed that Jeeah *Nackwa* was at Koteswar. He proposed Lt. Henry Hardy to proceed in Koteswar and capture Jewa *Nackwa* but also feared that they could get into conflict with Fateh Muhammad. On 12 July, 1812 pirate, *Nackwa* Jeeah took shelter in the creek of Seer in Sind and had two piratical vessels. His brother *Nakwa* Jehaik and along with his family were sheltered in the village of Terah belonging to the Jaheejah Dewajee.

Pirates Lifestyle: Pyrard observed on pirates of the Indian Ocean- "by land the best folks in the world, the most humane and tractable." The pirates life can be examined from their behaviour, belief, to the community the belonged to. As their occupation was different from the land people, we can gaze on their life through the attitude towards their victims, types of ships, methods of confrontation, relationship with their informers and with merchants when they were not pirates. Detailed narration in chapter II & III gives us an insight about their lifestyle which has salient features: religious in nature and had different Gods, and were superstitious.

As per Campbell's information, the natives of *Kachchh* and *Kathiawad*, believed in the Sea-God and often took pilgrimage to Byet, Dwarka, Somnath and Dakor within Gujarat if they were Hindus. It is interesting to note that the booty was offered to God at Dwarka and the priest of this temple sponsored piratical aggressions as per the accounts of EIC, while curbing the *Okhamandal* piracy has communication with the Gaekwads of

Baroda. In case of Muslim pirates who revered *Pirs*, if one moves around *Okhamandal* territory, one comes across several mausoleums and *dargahs* which are visited by *Kharwas*, *Kolis*, even today. For instance:

In 1813 the *Siddi* pirates of Searbett island where they have collected all the pirates on the west coast of replenishing their grain stocks and water, “always gave a part of everything they took as a tribute.” The colours of all the vessels taken were placed over the tomb of a Muslim saint called *Sallee (Sali) Pir* interred on the eastern neck of that island. He had also some relation on the island, who was allowed a few of the flags and two men were appointed to watch them.

A word regarding omens and superstition related to pirates needs mention:

...From Sankhodara, and beheld “one of the wonders of those parts”. Between the 9th and 14th of the 9th month of *Ashadh*, which the Hindus called *Puranmasi* (Poornima-the bright fortnight of the month) at the commencement of the rainy season, a small bird about as large as a *sarang*, of a peculiar appearance, not resembling any “other living creature” came from the direction of the sea and perched on the top of the idol temple in the village of Madhopur in the *pargana* of Manglor (Mangrol) and remained there for two or three hours. When it arrived, the inhabitants assembled and deduced omens from it regarding rains.

...From the white and black colour of its plumage they augured what kind of rainy season they would have: whether the rains would fall early or late or otherwise, implying not at all. If nothing but black or naught but white was seen, they inferred that the rains would be continuous throughout the season or that there would be a drought. **No year ever passed without the appearance of that bird at that season. It was also said that in the same manner “a creature” came and sat on the idol temple of Pattan Diu and on that of Jagat (Dwarka) which lay on the sea-shore.** The local people likewise also divined auguries from them. Such birds must have been migratory birds which arrive at a particular season, visit a specific place and after some time fly away.

Ibn Battuta informs us about the food habits of pirates with reference to Sakrawati, a pirate base of 14th century where he was entertained by the pirates with a fine "with a fine banquet, the chief dish at which was buffalo calves" which they hunted in the forest

and brought home alive. Similarly, Fitch describes that ‘coconut’ was their ‘chief food’ for it was their ‘meat and drink’ and yielded ‘many other necessary things.’

In 1684 the *Sanjanian* pirates, after capturing Captain Say's ship, the Merchant's Delight mentioned earlier in connection with a pirate queen, after cutting his hand when he resisted, when he surrendered, grew compassionate. **They refreshed him with some water and opium which was the nourishment they found most proper for themselves after any hard labour or languid hunt of spirit and the speediest relief for decayed nature.**

European travellers also inform about the application of local medicine by natives to cure the wound so that it may not become gangrenous due to the deepness of the wound. This medicine was good in curtailing bleeding. Once the blood flow was controlled, wound was cleaned and wool of the sheep was tied. In a short period of time, wound was cured.

Pirates and Paintings: despite being extremely violent by nature, we come across numerous references about the Malabarīs who were patrons of painting. This was seen by Francois Pyrard in the palatial homes of some of Kunhali's nobles. The frescoes depicted the exploits of Kunhali on various occasions. In his words,

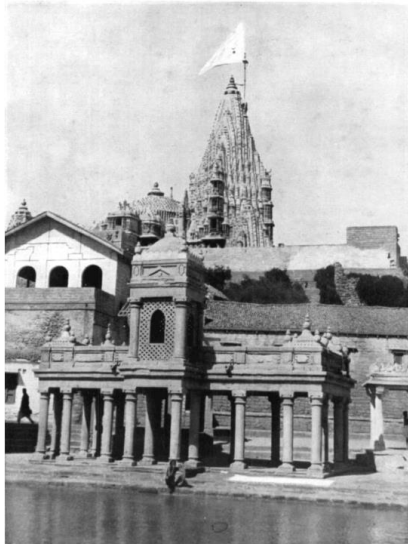
...In a hall of the mansion of a great Malabar Lord of the place, I saw all the adventures and victories of Cognialy (Kunhali) as well by land as by sea, very well painted and coloured, with all the galiots, galleys and other vessels he had taken or sunk, very skilfully represented. They took innumerable ships and galleys of China, Goa and other places as I observed in these paintings...

Palias of Pirates

The word *palia* (*pālīyā*) has Sanskrit root ‘*pal*’, which means, ‘to protect’ and are traditionally raised in the memory of heroes who died while protecting the community or in a battle. The *palias*, hero-

stones are commonly found in the *Kachchh* and *Kathiawad* region and according to Tod (1920), *palias* are found among the communities of “the Kathis, Khuman, Bala ... are conspicuous under the walls of every town, arranged in lines, irregular groups and circles...On the coast, the pirates of Buddha, at Dwarka, are depicted boarding from the shroud.” The *palias* are recorded by James Burgess in his report on Antiquities as:

...generally contain three panels. The upper panel on the semi-circular or triangular portion of the stone depicts the symbols of the sun and the moon. The middle panel shows a warrior riding a horse, or a *padāti* (footsoldier)... The lower panel contains the inscription regarding the event.



TEMPLE AND BATHING GHAT, DWARKA
The lower part of the temple building is recorded by the survey and which served as the principal defence of the ghat in 1920.
Ph. 1-11, Ph. James Burgess

facing p. 296



FOUR VERY OLD PALIYAS OF UNUSUAL DESIGN BETWEEN VELAN AND KODINAR



OLD AND FINELY SCULPTURED PALIYAS OUTSIDE THE SHANK NARAYAN TEMPLE, BEVT. ALL THE RIDERS ARE ARMED WITH SPEARS



PALIYAN VILANEDH ARAMBA
The one whereas a third arm is sculptured is dedicated to the memory of a wife who committed suicide. The blurred appearance of the figures is due to repeated rubbing with vermillion paste by devotees who separate their interiors of sacred women, when their hungry ghosts have to be fed and placated

Illustrations: Adopted from James Hornell, “Hero Memorial-Stones of Kathiawar”, *Antiquity*, Vol. XVI No. 64, December 1942, pp. 289-300 and plates

Having surveyed the social composition of the communities involved in piratical aggressions it can be inferred that they were in diverse roles. These communities' lifestyle was not different except their occupational acumen within their larger group who were necessarily not engaged in seafaring. Whether it were *Kharwas*, *Kolis & Machhis* of Gujarat or *Kharvis*, *Kolis & Machhis* of Maharashtra, their lifestyle, beliefs remained same as other occupational categories within their caste categories. If we interact with them today, they accept themselves to be belonging to *Chanchiya* category and consider their act as revered. Table I of chapter I has classified the *Chanchiya* category for *Kathiawiad*, *Kachchh* and Malabar by providing illustrations of *Chanchiya's* hero-stones, the insiders story along the Indian western seaboard in this chapter establishes them as an integral part of the Indian Ocean Community. The case of Persian Gulf and Red Sea is more or less the same. The Privateers of the merchant companies who ventured in WIO waters also have narrations: good or bad; which speak in volume about their valour despite the fact that they plundered, slaughtered and terrorised in the bygone period. The pirates community has been tried, penalised and dishonoured by their own apparatus. What can be therefore inferred from the narrative offered here is that there existed commonalities between the littoral societies of the Western Indian Ocean.



**Illustration 2: Pirate Symbol at Fort St. Angelo (Kannur)
(Photo Collection: Nongmaithem Keshorjit Singh, 2008)**