



DIAMOND INDUSTRIES IN THE ADIL SHAHI SULTANATE OF BIJAPUR

Dr. Kiran Sampatrao Jadhav

Assistant Professor in History,
Agasti Arts, Commerce and Dadasaheb Rupwate
Science College Akole, Dist.Ahmednagar.

ABSTRACT

Adil Shahi Sultanate was ruled for a period of 200 years in the Deccan. When the potential area for the diamonds was included in this kingdom its trade and commerce boosted. In Bijapur there were 15 mines, of which only those yielding the smallest stones were allowed by the Sultan to be worked, partly to prevent large stones becoming too common, and partly to avoid exciting Aurangzeb's cupidity. This paper mainly attempts to study the production and trade of diamond in Adil Shahi Sultanate and try to recognize the share of diamond industries in the trade and commerce of the sultanate. It aims to throw light on the locations, kinds of diamond traded and the merchants involved in the trade. It also deals with trade routes and the types of trade, it refers to the various kinds of trade routes and degree of trade carried out through these routes at local, regional, intra regional and overseas level. An endeavour is also made here to study the prices of the commodities and the salaries and wages of various services and how were it determined.

KEYWORDS : Diamond Industries , Adil Shahi Sultanate , trade and commerce boosted.

INTRODUCTION

In India , diamonds occur over three wide area: (a) the eastern side of the Deccan from the Pennar to the Son; (b) Andhra, especially in the Krishna and Godavari basins; and (c) Chota Nagpur and Madhya Pradesh to Bundelkhand.¹ Adil Shahi Sultanate was ruled in the Deccan from 1489 to 1686, i.e. for a period of 200 years. Vijaynagar Empire was defeated in 1565, after that some potential area of the diamonds came into Adil Shahi possession during its south and eastward expansion. The inclusion of diamond mines certainly enhanced the overall trade and commerce of Bijapur at considerable level.

DIAMOND MINES IN SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Barbosa (1500-1516) the Portuguese writer during the first two decades of the sixteenth century had observed, and mentioned that there were two diamond mines, one in Vijaynagar and the other 'in the kingdom of Daquem [Deccan]'.² This must be the eastern part of Deccan, but during the time mentioned by Barbosa, this part was not under Adil Shahi sultanate. Linschoten, a Dutch Protestant merchant, traveller and historian, was in Goa for five years between 1583 to 1588, while describing the Deccan diamond mines writes, 'they grow in the Countrie of Decam behind Ballagate, by the Towne of Bisnagar, wherein are two or three hills from whence they are digged, whereof the King of Bisnagar doth reape great profite....There is yet another hill in the Countrie of Deccan, which is called Velha³ [Roca Velha] that is the old Rocke: from thence come the best Diamonds, and are sold for the greatest price, which the Diamond grinders, lewellers, and Indians can very well discerne from the rest.'⁴ The kingdom of Bijapur had some deposits producing precious stones like sapphires, garnets, and jaspers,⁵ but the most important item in this category was diamond.

DIAMOND MINES IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

The existence of diamond mines in the 'Adil Shahi kingdom has been noted by all the travellers who visited the kingdom during the seventeenth centuries. There were in all fifteen diamond mines in the kingdom of Bijapur the principal of which was situated near Ramalakota or Raolkonda as it is called by Tavernier and the English merchants.⁶ In Bijapur there were 15 mines, of which only those yielding the smallest stones were allowed by the Sultan to be worked, partly to prevent large stones becoming too common, and partly to avoid exciting Aurangzeb's cupidity. The mines were as follows;

1. Ramulconeta [Rammalakota, i.e. Tavernier's Raolconda], diamonds of a mangelin weight were seldom found here, generally they were much smaller. Broken diamonds, called shemboes, were found there.
2. Banugunnepelle [Banaganapalle, 37 miles South-East of Karnul].
3. Pendekull [Pendekallu].
4. Moodawaram [? Muddavaram, 7 miles ESE. of Gooramankonda].
5. Cumerwille [Coomroly of A.S. close to Gooramankonda].
6. Paulkull [?].
7. Workull [? Oruvakal].
8. Lungeepoleur [Langapolur 5 miles South of Karnul].
9. Pootloor [Polur].
10. Punchelingull [Panchalingala, left bank of Tungabhadra].
11. Shingarrampent [?].
12. Tondarpaar [Tandrapad, left bank of Tungabhadra].
13. Gundepelle [?].
14. Donee [Dhone].
15. Gazerpellee [this is close to Baswapur].⁷

There seems to be some more mines out of the list mentioned by Tavernier.

Varthema also talked about the diamonds of Bijapur, and said that there was “a mountain in the kingdom of Bijapur where they dig out diamonds, which mountain is a league distant from the city, and is surrounded by a wall, and is kept by a strong guard.”⁸

PRODUCTION AND TRADE OF DIAMONDS

The diamonds produced from the Bijapur mines were generally good, but in size and weight they were not equal to the Golconda diamond.⁹ There were numerous diamond cutters near the mines to cut and polish the diamonds. But their work was of a crude kind and they were unable to give the diamonds such “lively polish” as the craftsmen of Europe did.¹⁰

The diamond mining industry was in the hands of Gujarati merchants. The mines were the king’s property and were farmed to intending prospectors. Many labourers flocked to the mines and were employed by the prospectors. There were also a number of skilled workmen to prepare the diamonds for the market after they were dug out of the mines. The finished product was sent by the merchants to their agents in Surat, Goa, Bijapur, Agra, Delhi and other places. Tavernier found a high sense of business honesty among the diamond merchants. The Bijapur diamond prospectors were a prosperous community and were apparently much better off than their counterparts in Golconda¹¹.

In 1615, Willem den Dorst, the chief factor of Dutch East India Company on Coromandel, submitted a report about the prospects of this trade in Coromandel. He reported that Sensier (Jinji or Gingee) had emerged as an important market for the diamond trade, and that merchant from Bijapur, Goa, Gingee and Vellore were trading there. He writes that due to wars elsewhere, merchants, with their households and families had migrated to Gingee. Some of them kept their factors, mostly Brahmins, to purchase diamonds there. He reported that he had seen 300-400 carats of diamonds with their merchants, and estimated that one could annually collect diamonds worth 100,000 reals of eight or even more. He had himself purchased diamonds from Bijapur merchants and had found that it was 18 to 20 per cent cheaper to purchase diamonds in Jinji. He explains that this was because the European currency yielded an 18 per cent profit when exchanged with local currency.¹² It was common practice to lease the diamond fields on certain conditions. Around 1615, the two diamond mines of Banganapalle and Cottecotte were leased out for approximately 200,000 reals¹³ of eight that is 400,000 rupees. The lease was based on condition of delivery of all the stones, which weighed from 4 to 25 mangelins, to the king.¹⁴ In September 1615, the factor Leonard Wolff was deputed to secure the rights to trade in diamonds in Bijapur. But this mission failed. Then Pieter Gillisz was sent, but he also failed in his endeavour. However the mission under Willem den Dorst purchased diamonds worth 6,000—7,000 pagodas in March 1616.¹⁵ It seems that by 1663, the output from the Ramalakota (Raolkonda) mines had reduced considerably, for the Dutch East India Company’s chief factor, Pieter de Lange, observes: ‘But now nothing of more interest [is] to be found’. He writes that one famous courtier, Balasahap (Balasaheb), of the Bijapur court had begun mining his lands situated around Minismoel in the hope that ‘what is lost in Rauwelcotte, appear there to be gained again’. It was hoped that it would yield a ‘good quantity of flatten or

white small diamonds (wit bort)'.¹⁶

STATES RIGHTS OVER THE MINES

The rulers of the kingdom of Bijapur and Golconda held proprietary rights over the mines in their territories. The mining of diamonds and its trade provided these rulers with the prospect of enormous profits. The rulers supervised the working of the mines through their officials. However, it seems that the ruler of Bijapur was often unhappy with his governors in respect to the management and income of the diamond mines.¹⁷ Tavernier testifies the encouragement of Adil Shahi and Qutub Shahi rulers to diamond industry, 'With extraordinary inconsistency, although the King of Golkonda, 'Abdulla Qutb Shah, and the King of Bijapur, Adil Shah, had agreements with the miners that all diamonds above a certain weight were to be reserved for them, still they would not only pay highly for large stones conveyed to their capitals secretly by the merchants, but would bestow dresses of honour upon those who brought such stones them for sale.'¹⁸ Apart from the payment to the governor of the place and the obligatory parting with diamonds above specified weights, the merchants also paid two percent on all purchases to the King, who receives also a royalty from the merchants for permission to mine.¹⁹ The rates were 2 pagodas per diem for 50 men and 4 pagodas for employing 100 men.²⁰

MARKET

There was a good market in diamonds in Jinji and Vellore dating from Vijayanagar times, but it seems to have declined after the fall of Vijayanagar. It is difficult to identify where the diamonds came from, but contemporary records speak of them as being mined in the territory of Jinji and the previous Vijayanagar kings. Later the country passed under Bijapur rule. Traders from Bijapur, Vellore, Goa and other places had their factors in Jinji.²¹ Prior to, the contract of 1643, [which took place between the king of Karnataka (Vijaynagar imperial family, who having control over Chandragiri and Jinji) and the Dutch company], the diamonds were purchased at Jinji and taken to Goa, from where they were sent to Portugal.²² A report of 1685 speaks of a number of wealthy merchants descending on Vellore for the diamond auctions and buying stones, large and small, for hundreds of thousands of reals. Obviously this market had moved in our period probably northwards to Golconda, after her conquests of most of the mining districts.²³

CONDITION OF LABOUR

The mine would naturally have greatly affected the economy of the surrounding villages by drawing their population to work in them. However, we do not know if such workers were converted into wage labourers in the modern sense of the word. The available evidence about labourers and their conditions in the diamond fields shows that their number was considerable and that they were paid low wages. This was

perhaps due to the lack of development of mining technology. Simple tools were used by employing semi-skilled and unskilled labour. Our sources do suggest some development in mining engineering. Tavernier mentions about the low wages of workers at Raolconda mines, 'these poor people only earn 3 pagodas per annum; i.e. equal to about one rupee or 27 pence per menses or less than a penny a day.'²⁴

CONCLUSION

After the fall of Vijaynagar Empire some potential area of the diamonds came into the possession of Adil Shahi sultanate. Since the state had proprietary right over the production and trade of diamonds this industry was encouraged. Ginjee, Vellore, Bijapur and Goa were the important market of the diamond. It was one of the important items of the Adil Shahi exports. Since diamond was sold on high prices provided capital to buy costly horses. Due to the lack of development in mining technology labourers were paid low wages. When the hold on Coromandel ports and other potential area of the diamonds areas was lost, then Adil Shahi Sultanate found it difficult to retain its trade prosperity.

ENDNOTES:

1. Sir George Watt, *The Commercial Products of India*, London, published under, Secretary of State for India in Council, 1908pp. 556-57.
2. M. Longworth Dames (ed.), *Duarte Barbosa, The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, London, Hakluyt Society, 1918; Asian Educational Services Reprint, Delhi, Vol II, pp. 202-3.
3. Roca Velha; this place is near Golconda.
4. John Huyghen Van Linschoten, 'The Voyage of John Huyghen van Linschoten to the East Indies', ed. by Arthur Coke Burnell, 2 vols. London, Hakluyt Society, 1885, first reprint by Asian Education Services, New Delhi, 2004, Vol II, pp. 137.
5. Sherwani, H.K. and P.M.Joshi (ed.), *History of Medieval Deccan, 1295-1724*, Hyderabad, Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1973, Vol I, p 410.
6. Tavernier, op. cit., Vol II, p. 354.
7. Tavernier, op. cit., Vol II, pp. 353-54.
8. Varthema, Ludovico di, 'The Travels of Ludovico di Varthema in Egypt, Syria, Arabia Deserta and Arabia Felix, in Persia, India, and Ethiopia, A.D. 1503 to 1508' translated by John Winter Jones and edited by George Percy Badger, London, The Hakluyt Society, 1863, p. 118.
9. Tavernier, op. cit. Vol. II, pp. 43-44.
10. Ibid, pp. 44-45.
11. Ibid. p. 46.
12. Pieter van, Dam, *Beshryvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie*, uitgegeven door, Dr. F.W.Stapel, Vol. II. 2, p. 174.
13. 1 real is equal to 2 rupees.
14. Pieter van, Dam, *Beshryvinge*, op. cit. p. 106.
15. Tapan Raychaudhary, *Jan Company in Coromandel, 1605-1690: A Study in the*

Interrelations of European Commerce and Traditional Economics,'s-Gravenhage, 1962, p. 171.

16. Ishrat Alam, 'Diamond Mining and Trade in South India in the Seventeenth Century', The Medieval History Journal, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 3, 2 (2000), pp. 294-95.

17. Ibid. p. 297.

18. Tavernier, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 354.

19. Ibid. p. 46.

20. Ibid. p. 46.

21. Pieter van, Dam, Beshryvinge, Op. cit.. p. 105.

22. Ibid., p. 105.

23. Pieter van, Dam, Beshryvinge, op. cit., pp. 105, 174-76.

24. Tavernier, op. cit., p. 46.