



INDIAN SLAVE AND RICE TRADE

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Abstract:

The slave and rice trade in the Indian ocean is relatively well known to the historian of commerce.¹ The Indian ocean slave and rice trade has not attracted analysis akin to the Atlantic slave trade.² A few fundamental attempts have been made to delineate the significant aspect slavery in the sultanate period.³ The institutions of slavery in India witnessed relative decline from the latter of the 14th century till Akbars declaration of 1582 which freed the slaves.⁴ Akbar had prohibited slave dealing which implied disappearance of slave market from the Mughal Empire.⁵

KEYWORDS:

Indian Slave , Rice Trade , slave market .

INTRODUCTION-

In the present paper an attempt has been made to look at the material available in Dutch sources on their participation in the trade. The Dutch East India Company was procuring slaves mainly from Arakan, Indonesian Inlands especially Banda, Timur etc. Coromandel Coast and Bengal.⁶ The Dutch East India Company was importing slaves especially of Bengal origin on a regular basis from India's closest eastern neighbor Arakan. It was recommended that a reasonably strong and experienced person should be sent to Coromandel coast to fetch slaves. The Dutch East India Company and its trade relation with Arakan since 1625.⁷

It was felt in mid 1645 that slaves were essential for the existence of the republic at Batavia. It was reported that Thousand wild men were there and they should be taken to Batavia. December 1645 it was reported that slaves were no more available in Arakan. The King had prohibited export of slaves.⁸ Arakan continued to supply slaves for on 17th February and 14th March 1654 Batavia received 236 tons of Rice and 311 Slaves.⁹ It was felt that during the period supply of slaves had declined not only in Arakan but also in Banda and Formosa.¹⁰ On 17 December 1654 the Zalm reached Batavia from Arakan with 100 tons of Rice and 150 Slaves.¹¹ Arakan continued to be a stable source of slave trades. It sent 170 tons of Rice and 200 Slaves to Malacca.¹²

The men would be purchased of the age group 20 to 36 years old for 12 rials, women from 12 to 25 for 8.½ rials, boys between 8 to 19 for 7 ½ rials, girls from 7 to 12 years for 6 rials, and children between 3 to 6 years from 2 ½ rials. The number of women should be more than men, girls were not counted.¹³ On 15th February 1656, 288 slave and 70 tons of rice were brought from Arakan to Batavia.

The purchase of slaves on the Coromandel coast becomes expensive because the prices had gone up but ships the Vrede, Medenblice, Tanassary and Bon Remedia were sent to Arakan and they had brought back 250 slaves and 200 tons of rice.¹⁴ The Coromandel Coast also important source of supply of slaves and Dutch Company was important participant in it. Pieter de Carpentier, the Governor General wrote that on

25 December 1622 the ship *Neeuw Seelant* had arrived from the Coromandel coast with approximately one thousand purchased male and female slaves mostly young and small children in order to strengthen their colonies at Batavia, Amboina and Banda.

A famine was expected and hence it was expected that prices of slaves would rise because Bijapur's army had destroyed Karnataka. Not less than 150,000 men were sent towards Golconda and Bijapur as slaves. The Dutch had captured to small Portuguese ships carrying 180 packs of cloth and 300 slaves from Nagapattanam and hence it was captured.¹⁵ The king of Bijapur had waged a war against Shivaji and Nagapattanam fell under his Jurisdiction. Dutch East India Company found the situation conducive for slave trade from Nagapattanam. Nagapattanam had undergone a severe famine. Company purchased 3695 slaves against rice and took them to Gafnapatnam.

We also get some information of slave trade by the Dutch company from Malabar and Sri Lanka. 80 slaves from Malabar were sent to Colombo from Manaer.¹⁶ Only 19 slave could be obtained from Timor while more were needed for the gold mild of Salida. The people of the West Coast were too lazy to work for wages. The slaves were used for cultivating mace and Metmegs in Island of Ai although it lacked drinking water.¹⁷ At Onion the Dutch were assured of a supply of 200 to 300 slaves at very low price in exchange of cloths presumably from India.¹⁸

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