

Sunda through the Eyes of Foreign Travellers

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Abstract

Towards the close of the sixteenth century, Kanara attained significance due to a shift in the Portuguese pepper trade. The pepper trade had a significant impact on the political developments of the region; which at the time was ruled by several major and minor ruling houses such as Nayakas of Ikkeri, Nayakas of Sunda, and Bilgi etc. The focus of this paper is the principality of Sunda in the North Kanara ruled by the Nayakas of Sunda. The kingdom was known by various names such as Sode, Sudhapur, Swadi, Sondabhidana, Sunda, and Sonda. Although a minor kingdom, it has played a significant role in the history of North Kanara and Goa. Several foreign travellers visited the region. They have left behind an account of what they witnessed and understood. Their writings have helped to fill any missing gaps created due to the non-availability of the indigenous sources.

Here is an attempt to reconstruct the history of Sunda kings based on the writings of foreign travellers, such as Pietro Della Valle, John Fryer, John Francis Gemelli Careri, Captain Alexander Hamilton, Anquetil Duperron and Francis Buchanan. The account left behind by these travellers is significant to join the missing pieces of the region's history. Although these are valuable sources, one has to take utmost care while using them. Here is an attempt to critically evaluate the writings of these travellers and understand the history of the Sunda kingdom.

Keywords: *Uttara Kannada, Sunda, pepper, Portuguese, Pietro Della Valle, John Fryer, John Francis Gemelli Careri, Captain Alexander Hamilton, Anquetil Duperron, Francis Buchanan.*

Introduction

Towards the close of the sixteenth century, Kanara attained significance due to a shift in the Portuguese pepper trade. Portuguese who earlier largely depended on Malabar and the Cochin for their supply of pepper, found Kanara to be the place from where they could get good quality pepper. This new interest in the Kanara pepper, especially the Uttara Kannada (North Kanara) awarded new importance to the region. Besides the Portuguese, the English and the Dutch too were interested in the trade in the Kanara. This pepper trade had a significant impact on the politics of the region, which at the time was ruled by several major and minor ruling houses such as Nayakas of Ikkeri, Nayakas of Sunda, Bilgi etc.

This region was visited by several foreign travellers. They have left behind the account of what they witnessed and understood. Some of the information left behind them is valuable and provides important information about the politics of the region between the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century. While most of the past and present historians focused on Ikkeri and its rulers, seldom anyone paid attention to Sunda. Sunda rulers rarely find a place of significance in the writings of those who covered the Kanara region and its trade, especially the pepper trade. The focus of this paper is the principality of Sunda in the North Kanara, ruled by the Nayakas of Sunda. Several foreigners had visited the place in the past. Their writings have helped us to fill any missing gaps created due to the non-availability of the indigenous sources. In this paper, an attempt is made to understand the politico-economic history of the Uttar Kannada region and more significantly the principality of Sunda, known for pepper.

Background

Sunda kingdom in the North Kanara was known by various names such as Sode, Sudhapur, Swadi, Sodhbinagar, Sunda, and Sonda.¹ In a Kannada work, named 'Keladi Nripavijayam', the Sunda rulers are referred to as Sonde rulers.² The Sunda kingdom on the Karnataka side was comprised of four taluks of Kanara, such as Sirsi, Yallapur, Halyal and Supa.³ Present-day areas of Goa such as Ponda, Bali, Chandrawadi, Zambaulim, Sanguem and Cancona too formed the kingdom of Sunda. Some sources believed that Sunda chiefs descended from the Vijayanagara ruling house.⁴ Francis Buchanan supported the above view.⁵ However, other sources did not agree with the view. Suryanatha Kamat in the State Gazetteer maintains that there was no relationship between Vijayanagara and Sunda kings except that, Sunda was the tributary of Vijayanagara.⁶ In the absence of reliable sources, it is difficult to establish the blood relation between the Sunda and the Vijayanagara royal house. However, the fact remains that Vijayanagara rulers were the overlords of Sunda kings. Many scholars considered Arsappa Nayaka II to be the founder of the kingdom and were a feudatory of the Vijayanagar Empire.⁷ However, sources indicate that Arasappa Nayaka II in the sixteenth century was not the founder but the first recognized Chief of Sunda.⁸ A. K. Shastri believed that the Sunda kingdom originated in the eighth century, much before the foundation of the Vijayanagara empire. It is in the sixteenth century the dynasty started getting prominence in the polity of the North Kanara.⁹ The argument put forward by prof. Shastri holds merit since Arasappa Nayaka mentioned in the year 1555, succeeded his father Arasappa I. Except for Shastri, no other scholar seconded this view. According to Vasanth Madhava Sunda made its appearance in the fourteenth century and attained prominence in the seventeenth century.¹⁰ After the decline of the Vijayanagara empire, following the battle of Talikota (1565), Sunda became the tributary of Bijapur Sultans.¹¹ Before 1674, the Sunda kings used the title of Nayakas.¹² In the same year, Sadashiva taking advantage of the declining power of Bijapur assumed the title of *raja* (king).¹³

In 1686, Bijapur was conquered by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb and with the help of the chief of Savanur, the Mughals established their rule over the Kanara region, forcing Sunda king to pay tribute.¹⁴ Maratha warrior King Shivaji Bhonsle defeated Sunda Raya in 1679 and forced him to pay tribute. At a time Sunda was the tributary of more than one power.¹⁵ In 1763, Immadi Sadashiv

Raya had to take refuge in Goa with the Portuguese, as his kingdom in the North Kanara was overran by Haider Ali of Mysore.

Except for a few works, not much has been done to reconstruct the history of these rulers from the North Kanara. Some Portuguese, English and indigenous sources throw light on the history of said kings. Few foreign travellers had visited the region of Uttara Kannada over a different period and have left their accounts. Few of them had visited the kingdom of Sunda while others passed through the North Kanara. These travellers have left behind their observation and whatever they could understand. These travellers have made significant observations about the Sunda rulers and their kingdom. These hold significance as they are more objective and without any bias or favouritism. These people were distant observers. There are possibilities of misinterpretation by them due to a lack of understanding of language and culture. However, their objective observations and narrations make these travelogues valuable for the study and understanding of the Sunda rule.

Pietro Della Valle

In 1623 Kanara was visited by the Italian composer, musicologist, author and traveller Pietro Della Valle. *The Travels of Pietro Della Valle in India*, vol. II provided a detailed version of his travel and understanding of India. He had accompanied the Portuguese embassy sent to Venkatappa Nayaka, who had defeated the Portuguese. Della Valle did not mention the Sunda kingdom. In 1623, Venkatappa Nayaka ruled over Honnavar along with other territories. Formally, he was the vassal of Vijayanagara; however, he rejected its authority.¹⁶ Bombay Gazetteer suggested he ruled independently.¹⁷ Although he threw off the vassalage of Vijayanagara, Ikkeri became the tributary of Bijapur.¹⁸ Della Valle called Venkatappa the powerful ruler and opined that since he was a powerful ruler, the Portuguese sent an embassy to him.¹⁹ The embassy was sent to negotiate with Venkatappa who earlier had a conflict with the latter involving help given to the chief of Bangar and siege of Mangalore factory.²⁰ Following this conflict, a peace treaty was signed. However, the Bangar chief complained to the Portuguese about the non-fulfilment of the terms of the treaty by Venkatappa.²¹ Portuguese therefore, had decided to send an embassy to Ikkeri, which included Pietro Del Valle. In November 1623 he visited the kingdom of Ikkeri.

Della Valle visited Gersoppa. He described Gersoppa and its queen. Queen of Gersoppa was called, “*Reyna da Pimenta*”, (pepper queen).²² He described Venkatappa Nayaka’s conquest of Gersoppa. He did not visit the principality of Sunda. The reason for not visiting the region perhaps may be his inclusion in the diplomatic mission to Ikkeri and therefore, did not visit the other regions of the North Kanara. Although Della Valle did not visit Sunda nor he mentioned anything about Sunda, still, it is an important account to understand the political condition of the North Kanara region and pepper trade in the region.

From the writings of Della Valle, it appears that the region was very famous for pepper production and he pointed out Gersoppa to be the main region for pepper production. Between 1611 to 1615 out of the total export of the pepper to Lisbon the seventy-five per cent of the pepper was taken from the Kanara.²³ However, this trade-in pepper saw a decline especially after 1615. One of the main reasons for this decline could be the competition in the trade between the English and the Dutch and the Portuguese did not have enough resources to meet this challenge from the English

and the Dutch.²⁴ Moreover, the corrupt practices by the officials who privately sold the pepper and other items hurt the Portuguese trade interest.²⁵ Della Valle did not mention Sunda and nor its pepper which was quite surprising as the Sunda pepper was considered to be the best both by the Portuguese as well as the English. Portuguese often demanded and insisted on the Sunda pepper.²⁶ Even the British regarded Sunda pepper to be the best.²⁷ From the omission of Sunda, it is clear that Sunda was a minor kingdom and for him, it was inconsequential. Therefore, he did not find it necessary either to visit the territory or to mention them. Della Valle considered Ikkeri Nayaka to be the main player in the pepper trade. He was a strong ruler who had rejected Vijayanagara might and therefore, for Della Valle Sunda was not worthy of mention.

John Fryer

John Fryer a well-known English traveller visited Kanara twice between 1673 and 1675. He has left an account of his travels in the form of *A New Account of East-India and Persia, Being Nine Years Travels 1672-1681*. In October 1675 during his second visit to Kanara, he passed through the region of Sunda king. Fryer has left behind his account of Sunda territory. According to Fryer, "The best pepper in the world is of the growth of Sunda, known in England Carwar pepper."²⁸ Sunda was known for pepper. Fryer was unhappy about the fact that a small amount of pepper was sold to the Europeans since it was the best. Sunda king preferred to sell it in the local markets as he got the best price for it.²⁹ Sunda pepper was estimated to yield revenue of £1, 00,000. Out of this, he had to pay one-half to Bijapur and at a time even to the Maratha ruler Shivaji.³⁰ Sunda king made a good amount of money on his pepper trade. Sunda at this time was a tributary of two powerful players in Deccan politics, namely Shivaji and Bijapur sultan. The money out of the pepper trade helped the Sunda king to protect his minor kingdom from these powerful forces.

What is quite interesting about the account left behind by Fryer an Englishman was that for Fryer Sunda pepper was the best pepper and therefore, the English were interested in this pepper trade. Portuguese too were interested in the same. However, when Della Valle visited the region, his focus was on the kingdom of Ikkeri and he termed pepper from Gersoppa to be the best. Between the sixteenth and the seventeenth century, the Sunda region established itself as one of the significant players in the pepper trade. Even the Portuguese acknowledged the superiority of the Sunda pepper.³¹ Portuguese therefore, made every attempt to eliminate the foreign competition in the trade. This is evident from the fact that, in the war that took place between the Sunda king Sadashiva Raya and the English in 1717-18, Portuguese though did not directly involve themselves, however, prevented the English from getting any help from Goa.³² Moreover, the Portuguese saw to it that the Sunda raja compel the English to close their factory at Karwar in 1752.³³ One of the reasons for the Portuguese attack on Sunda Raya in 1752 was the Sunda Raya's permission to build a factory at Karwar, which was closed in the same year.³⁴

John Francis Gemelli Careri

An Italian traveller Gemelli Careri conducted a tour around the world in the seventeenth century. He began his world tour in 1693. While on his world tour he visited India and passed through some of the territories of the Sunda king. He strangely addressed the Sunda king as *Sonde-kirani-*

karaja.³⁵ One is not sure the reason for calling the Sunda king *Sonde-kirani-karaja*. Perhaps he meant *Saunde-kar-raja*. Marathas addressed Sunda kings as *Saundekar raja* (King of Sunda). However, this could be an error on the part of Gemelli who was not familiar with the language of the region. He regarded him merely as the lord of some villages among the mountains. Sunda king at this time was a tributary of Mughals and was required to serve in his army whenever such need arose.³⁶ Law and order was an issue in the Sunda territory as Gemelli found out that it was difficult to travel due to the presence of robbers in the region. From the account of Gemelli, it is evident that the Sunda chief lived not at Sunda but at a place called Sambrani about twelve kilometres south of Haliyal in an earthen fort with walls seven-span high.³⁷ This village, he said, was like the rest of the country, however, had a good market at Sambrani.³⁸ He was critical of the Sunda king for extracting £30,000 (Rs.3, 00,000), out of this one village and called him and Muslim rulers of the region cruel for imposing high taxes on people.³⁹ In the account of Gemelli, one can understand the plight of the ordinary people who were burdened by the demands of the state. Not only the Muslim rulers even the Hindu rulers did not show compassion when it came to the collection of revenue. Whether the state was oppressive only in one aspect of the rule, i.e., the collection of revenue or the people were oppressed due to misrule was not very clear, as Gemelli did not give further details on the Sunda king. Gemelli was suspected to be a spy by the Portuguese missionaries and hence he could not have open access to many places and therefore could not provide an elaborate account of the places he visited. Although he did not write much on Sunda, still it is an important source as one gets some idea about the condition of the time.

Captain Alexander Hamilton

Captain Alexander Hamilton has left behind a vivid description of the region he visited in his work. The account was first published in 1727. Hamilton has written *A New Account of the East Indies*, a travelogue while he was serving the East India Company. This is an account covering a period from 1688 to 1723. Besides other aspects, he described his encounters with the Portuguese and descriptions of various places he visited, such as Africa, India, Japan, Sumatra and China. It is a valuable source on the history Sunda kingdom and its kings, especially the relation of the Sunda king with the English company over the port of Karwar.

Sunda kingdom began with *Cabo de Rama* (Canacona, Goa) or as English would call *Cape Ramus* towards the North.⁴⁰ Sunda king had built one castle *Cabo de Rama*. However, there was no river or harbour for shipping till one reached Sevaseer (Shiveshwar) in Karwar. From his account, it is learnt that the harbour was in bad shape, although few guns were mounted on it.⁴¹ Hamilton pointed out that towards the south of *Cabo de Ram* lies the Karwar harbour. Karwar harbour, unlike Shiveshwar, was in a good condition.⁴² The river at Karwar was capable of receiving ships of 300 tons.⁴³

At the time of Hamilton's visit, the Sunda king was a tributary of Mughals, who previously paid tribute to the Bijapur sultan.⁴⁴ By 1686, Aurangzeb defeated Bijapur and since then Sunda became a Mughal tributary. The year of the Mughal conquest of Bijapur has given wrongly by Hamilton, as Aurangzeb conquered Bijapur in 1760 and not 1768.⁴⁵ The Sunda kingdom extended from *Cabo de Rama* to Mirjan, around 51 miles across the sea coast and around 150 to 180 miles within the

land.⁴⁶ Sunda was a mountainous region. Corn and pepper cultivated in the kingdom were considered to be the best in India.⁴⁷ From the writing of Hamilton, it was evident that the country was thickly forested and inhabited by various kinds of wild animals. This forest benefited the Sunda king as he traded extensively in timber. The English were not considered enemies, on the contrary, they were respected. He gave an interesting account of the English factory and the people. "The chief of the English factory was held in very great esteem and when he went hunting, was generally accompanied with distinguished people in the vicinity, who brought their vessels and servants with them, armed with firearms and other weapons, both massive and defensive, with trumpets, hautboys and drums".⁴⁸ However, all was not well between the Sunda king and the British. Perhaps the people of Sunda were on friendly terms with the English. The same could not be said about the Sunda King, as on many occasions' hostilities broke out between the king and the company, over Karwar. Both wanted to control the lucrative port of Karwar.

Karwar region at that time was a forested area inhabited by a variety of wild animals. He mentioned a hunting expedition where a large number of animals were killed by English for example, dozens of deer, two wild cows, four or five sows and pigs.⁴⁹ The region produced good quantities of timber. The teak wood was useful for building ships and houses. It was considered to be better than Oak.⁵⁰ This is the one reason; the Portuguese were not happy with the Sunda king when they appealed to the English for help against the Maratha invasion in 1697.⁵¹ Portuguese were threatened by the presence of English in the region as it would cost them trade in timber and pepper. Fortunately, for the Portuguese, the English put a condition before the Sunda king to surrender the Karwar port which was an unacceptable condition to the latter.⁵² Port of Karwar would have given the British access to the rich pepper and timber trade. Needless to say, the Sunda king did not surrender the said port. Ultimately, it was the Portuguese who came to the rescue of the Sunda king. Both the parties signed a treaty in 1697 promising protection to the latter from the Marathas.⁵³

Hamilton spoke about the muslin of this region was the finest.⁵⁴ However, he did not mention exactly which part of the region. Muslin was probably brought from Hubli. The English had profitable trade in muslin and had employed around fifty thousand people in their factory.⁵⁵ However, all these things were before the conquest of Bijapur by Aurangzeb as the conquest of Bijapur resulted in disruption of the trade. Mughal soldiers looted and plundered the area forcing the weavers to leave the area in search of a better and safer place.⁵⁶ English factory at Karwar was burnt and destroyed by a Mughal general who had taken possession of Sunda territory on behalf of his master

The English factory was burnt by treachery. The said Mughal general invited the English officer for dinner and while the officer was with the general, the Mughal soldiers went and burnt down the factory.⁵⁷ English however, rebuilt the factory. Hamilton was critical of the same. According to him, "...he who built it where it is, had no great foresight in choosing his ground, for it ought to have been built in a place of free communication with the sea, but now it stands a league from it."⁵⁸

In 1718, the English realized their mistakes when they were attacked by Sunda king Basavalinga Raya. The reason for this confrontation was attributed to the mistake of George Taylor, who was then the chief of the English factory at Karwar.⁵⁹ In 1715, Basavalinga Raya had removed the old

fort from Karwar, about three miles from the British factory. Taylor annoyed Sunda Raya by seizing the wreck for his use which came ashore about four miles from the factory.⁶⁰ Basavalinga besieged the Karwar factory of British for two months. Due to rain, the English could not get reinforcement. After two months, reinforcement of four thousand troops arrived for the English from Bombay. However, due to the rough sea, they found difficulty in fighting the enemy. After six weeks the situation turned in favour of the English. Sunda king's men who were on higher altitude above the English men would open fire at daybreak with little effect. English fired at the enemy with success. English caused a lot of harassment to the Sunda king. They burnt down villages at night and killed nearly two hundred men of the king, captured some vessels meant for the king laden with salt and three ships coming from Arabia with one hundred and fifty horses.⁶¹ English too, suffered a loss. Around 250 soldiers lost their lives in the war.⁶² In this war, around seven thousand men of the king were engaged in a fight against the English. This war put a lot of strain on the resources of Basavalinga who appealed for peace.⁶³ He sent a Brahman to negotiate peace with the commodore of the English fleet. Commodore heard the Brahman and advised him to make his proposal to Taylor. However, Brahman refused to do so as King would not agree as the king was miffed with Taylor. He was the reason for the war between Sunda Raya and the English and before the war, said Taylor had done some activities that were detrimental to the king and his subjects.⁶⁴ Taylor made the servants of the company sell out some company pepper in retail in the Sunda king's villages, resulting in the ruin of many poor villagers, who were left with no other means of livelihood, but by huckstering. Moreover, the English were given a concession of free trade by the king and his ancestors, which deprived the king of revenues.⁶⁵ However, being tired of the war he wanted to negotiate for peace. English too, were in favour of peace. Due to the mediation of a Siddi, who was a friend to both the parties, peace was proclaimed on easy terms for both the parties.⁶⁶ Hamilton did not mention the terms of the treaty. However, the terms of the treaty included the English desire to sign a contract of pepper trade with the Sunda King amounting to a thousand *Candys* of pepper per year. Sunda king to allow the English trade unharmed. He was to return the ship and *galvats*, and other goods looted by him.⁶⁷ In reply to these, Sunda King asked the English to stop fortification and reduce the number of guns mounted on the factory at Karwar. He asked them to pay war compensation amounting to 5000 pagodas and 25 guns.⁶⁸ The Sunda king disliked English and Taylor in particular and due to this maintained a hostile attitude towards the English.⁶⁹ This dislike and the pressure from the Portuguese resulted in the latter leaving Karwar.⁷⁰ The Bombay quarterly did not mention the Sunda rulers as kings; rather they were addressed as *Desais*. English factory according to the journal was not besieged by Sunda Raya but by *Desais*.⁷¹ *Desais* who styled themselves as *Raja*, thrown off allegiance of the Raja of Satara (Shahu).⁷² In 1718 it was Basavalinga who ruled over the Sunda kingdom. Portuguese every year sent a fleet to Kanara for corn.⁷³ There were two islands on the mouth of the Karwar river, both belonging to the king of Sunda. The Sunda king's dominion besides included harbours such as Ankola and Mirjan.⁷⁴

The account of Hamilton provided a piece of valuable information on Sunda king and English and their confrontation in Karwar. Hamilton's account threw light on the geography of the region with the description of the forest and the animals in it. His account is significant from the point of view that he travelled the region towards the closing years of the seventeenth century and the beginning

of the eighteenth. His account is a good primary source to understand the history of Kanara and the tussle between the Sunda, English and the Portuguese over the port of Karwar.

Anquetil Duperron

Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron a French man reached India in 1756. He passed through the district of North Kanara in February 1758. By this time lot of changes had taken place in the politics of the North Kanara. The English were trying to gain ground however, their efforts to strengthen their position in the North Kanara were met with failure as its Karwar factory was closed down by the Sunda king. The Marathas at this time was a dominant power. The power of Ikkeri Nayakas had declined. The region was somewhat disturbed on account of the murder of the young prince of Bednur, after the death of Basavappa Nayaka.⁷⁵ Since the murder of the young chief, the people had risen in revolt. Around this time the region came under the Maratha invasion. The kingdom was asked to pay the tribute of £50,000 to £60,000 (Rs. 5 to 6 lakhs) to the Marathas. Since the amount was big, a heavy tax was imposed by the state resulting in an adverse impact on trading activities. Even the Sunda king was at war with the Marathas.⁷⁶ Duperron claimed that the Sunda which was a former tributary of the Savanur chief paid tribute to the Marathas.⁷⁷ Duperron wrote that the Sunda king built a fort on the Karwar River, however, the Portuguese held the mouth of the river. The Sunda territory extended to the Assolna stream, five miles north of Cabo de Rama. On 24 October 1760, as the Portuguese dreaded a Marathas attack on Goa, the treaty of 1756 between the Portuguese and the Sunda chief was renewed.⁷⁸ On 12 September 1762, the Portuguese agreed to restore the island and fort of Shimpi (Ximpi) which they had held for some months. However, the year of the treaty between the two parties is not given correctly by Duperron. The said treaty was signed in 1755, and not in 1756.⁷⁹ This treaty was signed after the confrontation between the Sunda king and the Portuguese. This confrontation had taken place as Sunda king permitted the English to establish a factory at Karwar. The Sunda king's failure to provide religious freedom to Christians in his land and his attack on some Portuguese vessels were some of the causes of this confrontation.⁸⁰ Permission given to the English to build a factory at Karwar was another cause of this confrontation. The Portuguese viceroy attacked Sadashivgad and Ximpi (Kumargad). This hostility ended with both parties signing a peace treaty on 2 November 1755. As per the clause of the said treaty, the Portuguese were to expel the English from Karwar and ensure the freedom of Christians.⁸¹ However, those areas were not restored to the Portuguese as the Sunda king failed to fulfil the conditions.⁸² However, at a later stage, those areas were returned to them as they feared attack by the Marathas.⁸³ Duperron's account threw important light on the history of the region in the eighteenth century. The nature of Sunda- Portuguese relations can be understood from the writings of Duperron.

Francis Buchanan

Francis Buchanan was a medical officer with the East India Company. He spent some time in Asia in 1785, and from 1788 to 1789 and then again in 1791. He was finally employed as an assistant surgeon in Bengal from 1794-1815. This allowed him to travel extensively to India. In 1800 he was appointed a surveyor of South India following the British victory in the Fourth Anglo-Mysore against Tipu Sultan. He has written a travelogue *A Journey from Madras Through the Country of*

Mysore, Canara and Malabar in three volumes. When he visited the North Kanara region, the Sunda king no longer lived at Sunda. He was forced to take shelter in the Portuguese Goa following the attack on his kingdom by Hyder Ali of Mysore. At the time of his arrival, the entire region was under the control of the East India Company, which had captured it after the defeat of Tipu Sultan in 1799. His account was based on the information provided to him by the people of the region and the few inscriptions of the Sunda king. Although he visited the place long after the extinction of the Sunda king from the region, his account is valuable in joining the missing pieces of information on the rule of Sunda kings.

According to his travelogue, he reached Sunda on 13 March 1801. The kingdom of Sunda was called Sunda by Europeans and Muslims, however, in Kannada, it was called Sudha, a corruption from Sanskrit word Sudhapura.⁸⁴ The Sunda Kingdom was unfit for growing rice while, fit for growing betel nuts. The area was mainly occupied by *Haiga* (Havyaka) Brahmins who according to Buchanan were sole cultivators in the region.⁸⁵ Although Sunda pepper was considered as best by many, from the writing of Buchanan it appears that not much attention was paid at its cultivation as he says, “The pepper growing spontaneously; but it is neglected; and many of the trees that would bear it are stripped of their leaves and branches, which are used manure for the gardens”.⁸⁶

Buchanan gave an account of the family of Sunda chiefs. The particular list was provided to him by the family *purohit* (priest) of Sunda kings, who had a written account of the family of Sunda, with a copy of each prince’s seal.⁸⁷ From the information provided to Buchanan by the said priest it appears that, during the reign of Krishnadevaraya, the region was occupied by Polygars, who were Jains. The Brahmin informed Buchanan that Polygars paid tribute to the Vijayanagara ruler Venkatapati, the father of Achuta and Krishnadevaraya.⁸⁸ Buchanan however, did not agree with this. Buchanan relied on the Gokarna inscription. According to an inscription, the name of Krishnadevaraya’s father was Sadashiva. Venkatapati did not have an heir for many years hence promised the kingdom to his nephew (sister’s son) Arasappa Nayaka. However, later two sons were born to him; therefore, he made Arasappa the chief of Sunda.⁸⁹ However, the account given by Buchanan is not accurate. Venkatapati did not have any issue and he died in 1614 nominating his nephew Sri Ranga to the throne.⁹⁰ Moreover, Krishnadevaraya’s father was Narasa Nayaka; Sadashiva was the nephew of Krishnadevaraya and the son of Ranga.⁹¹ He was supposed to have built the capital Sudhapura by defeating Jain Polygars and settled Haiga (Havyaka) Brahmins.⁹² Arasappa was succeeded by his son, Ramchandra Nayaka, who ruled till 1618. He was succeeded by his son Raghunatha Nayaka till 1638, followed by his son Madhulinga Nayaka, who became a *Shiva- bhakta* (devotee of Shiva) and embraced the Lingayat faith, ruled till 1674. Madhulinga was succeeded by Sadashiva Raya till 1697, followed by Basavalinga Raya till 1674 and then by his Immadi Sadashiva till 1763, who was defeated and made to run away from the Sunda territory by Haider Ali. He took refuge in Goa under the protection of the Portuguese with a pension.⁹³

During the reign of the Sunda king, the region was brought under cultivation and towns were big and most of the region was fully inhabited.⁹⁴ In the reign of Immadi Sadashiva, the town was suffered due to the attack from the Marathas and Sadashiva was forced to pay Chauth to the Marathas.⁹⁵ For some time Basavalinga Raya was not able to pay the amount of Chauth to the

Marathas therefore, the Sunda king had to keep Panch-mahal,(Ashtagar, Hemadbarse, Baali, Chandrawadi and Kakode, (all Goan side of Sunda kingdom) obtained by Sadashiva Raya as a mortgage with a Maratha chief Gopal Rao, who restored them after the payment was made to the Marathas.⁹⁶ Panch -mahal areas were obtained by Sadashiva Raya on lease from the Mughals in return for Rs. 80,000.⁹⁷ After the conquest of Sunda by Haider Ali, Basavalinga was forced to take asylum with the Portuguese. He handed over Panch-mahal to the Portuguese for a Pension of Rs. 48, 000 per annum.⁹⁸ However, Buchanan believed that these areas were worth Rs. 80,000 per annum.⁹⁹ The Portuguese took advantage of the situation of the Sunda king and obtained the areas for almost half the actual worth.

Buchanan has given interesting information as to who founded the town of *Sudhapura*. Based on the inscription dated 1198, the town was founded by Sadashiva Raya of Sudhapura and not by Arasappa Nayaka as widely believed by many. Buchanan is not sure whether Sadashiva Raya mentioned in the inscription was a descendant of the Belalla family or the Kadamba family.¹⁰⁰

Buchanan referred to the two inscriptions of Sunda kings Arasappa Nayaka II. One is on a stone at Honavully (Honnnavalli) *Muth* and the second one at another *Muth* belonging to the Udupi Sanyasis. He did not mention anything about the two inscriptions of Sadashiva Raya. There is one inscription of Arasappa Nayaka about the gift of land he made Madhukeshwara temple dated 1598 and two inscriptions of Sadashiva Rajendra both Pillars, one in the above-mentioned temple and the other in the shrine of Virabhadra in the Madhukeshwara temple.¹⁰¹

Buchanan was the only foreign traveller who had written the detailed account of Sunda kingdom. His work dealt with the origin of the Sunda kingdom, and its decline. He was the only foreign traveller who has provided a list of rulers that ruled the kingdom from Arasappa Nayaka II to Sadashiva II. This detailed account makes Buchanan's work different from rest of the accounts by other travellers such as Fryer, Hamilton or Duperron. These travellers mainly focused on one event or one aspect of the Sunda kingdom. For example, Fryer was mainly concerned about the Sunda pepper with little description of Sunda, while Hamilton concentrated only on the Sunda-English relations. Buchanan travelled the region long after the decline of the Sunda kingdom in North Kanara and therefore, had to depend on the information provided by people in the region. While other travellers visited the kingdom when Sunda rulers were ruling over the region and hence they wrote their observations about the region. However, they did not provide any information about rulers. Buchanan's account is significant to construct the history of the Sunda dynasty. While the account of the other travellers is more reliable than it was eyewitness's accounts, Buchanan's used various sources. Again, the information provided by Buchanan's on Sunda rulers is based on a list provided to him by the *Purohit* (priest). Nevertheless, accounts of these travellers are significant to understand the history and political condition of the North Kanara region especially, the kingdom of Sunda.

Conclusion

Few scholars have written about the history of Sunda kings and their kingdoms. In Karnataka, they are regarded as the minor rulers and insignificant players in the history of Uttara Kannada. Scholars from Karnataka have written extensively on Nayakas of Ikkeri, or the rulers of Gersoppa or for that

matter even the Wodeyars of Mysore. However, they have neglected the contribution made by Sunda kings and therefore one may find only occasional references to these kings. Very little information has come down to us on the Sunda and their contribution to the history of Uttara Kannada. This information is mainly based on the account left behind by the foreign travellers who visited the region. From the Goan side too, where they took asylum after their southern territories from the Karnataka side were conquered by Haider Ali, not enough is written about them.

Accounts left behind these travellers not only shed light on the political developments of the region moreover but also provide useful information about the pepper trade of the region. The pepper trade played a significant role in the political developments of the region. These accounts threw light on the role played by the foreign powers in the pepper trade. Portuguese, English often competed to get pepper from the region since it was considered to be the superior quality compared to the Malabar or Cochin pepper. The account left behind by these travellers helped us to reconstruct the history of the Sunda kings. They are valuable in joining the missing pieces of the history of the region. In this regard Francis Buchanan's work is important. He has not only written about the geography of the region moreover a considerable light on the dynastic history of rulers of Sunda kings. He has provided the list of monarchs up to Sadashiv Raya II, which no other writer or traveller before him or after him have done. The list provided in the District Gazetteer of North Kanara is the same given to us by Buchanan. Although it is an important source it too has some inaccuracies and have to be used carefully and should be substantiated with other sources.

Through the works of these travellers, one can understand the political, economic and social conditions prevailing during the time of their visit to the place. These sources help us to understand the nature of the relationship Sunda rulers had with their neighbours. Although these travelogues are important, it is necessary to use them as carefully. Most of these were written or translated in old English, so it is necessary to get familiar with the words used, moreover, these people were foreigners and not familiar with the customs and usages of the region therefore, there can be the possibility of misinterpretation of certain facts. Even the names of some places written by them have changed; therefore it is necessary to verify the facts provided by them.

Although there are some inaccuracies, no one can deny the fact that without these sources our understanding of the history of Sunda kings and their kingdom would be incomplete. These travelogues gain more importance especially when the indigenous scholars have done little work to investigate the history of these rulers, whom we call Rayas of Sunda.

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