

HISTORICALLY TRACING THE SHIP BUILDING ACTIVITY IN THE COROMANDEL COAST

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Abstract

The history of Ship building in India dates back to the times of Indus Valley Civilization, Lothal in Gujarat has served first tide dock of the world for berthing and maintenance of the ships in about 2500 BC. Emulating the Portuguese the Zamorin of Calicut and adjacent Kingdoms started building bigger ships for transport of cargo and for war activities. The availability of Teak for ship building in Nilambur, Beypore, influence of Arabians, Portuguese, Chinese, Persians, Egyptians etc, brisk trade on spices like Pepper, Ginger, Cardamom, Cinnamon, Turmeric etc also lead to the ship building industry to flourish in the Coromandel Coast. Vanchi, Pattermari, Toni, Odam, Paduva, Kevu Vallam, Kettu Vallam Charakku Vallam etc where used to denote the designs of the ships manufactured by the skilled craftsmen of the Coromandel Coast. This industry brought a larger transformation in the socio-economic and life of the people of the region. Khalasis, Odayis, Baramis, Kammalas, Kayyaravaks and Aasaris were some of the communities involved in different processes of ship building. Intrusion of technology, migration of traditionally skilled craftsmen to other fields, scarcity of quality wood and restrictions of the government has made this ancient profession in wane. This research article attempts to historically trace the ship building activity in the Coromandel Coast with special focus on Beypore.

Keywords: *Ship, Spice Trade, Teak, Craftsmen, Culture, Technology.*