

Pondering the Splendors of Zamorin's Court: Ibn Battuta and Abdur Razzak

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Abstract

Ibn Battuta's travelogue *Rihlah*,¹ also known as *Tuhafat un-Nazzar fi Gharaib il Amsar wa Ajaib il Asfar*,² and Abdur Razzak's travelogue *Matla-us-Sadain wa Majma-ul-Bahrain*³, also known as *The Rise of Two Auspicious Constellations and the Confluence of Two Oceans*, are the two different travelogues that are known to my study. Both travellers made extensive notes of the Muslims in Malabar and the Zamorins of Calicut. Therefore, using this travel narrative to connect the past and contemporary histories is highly useful. The Zamorin of Calicut was a renowned king throughout that time up until the arrival of the Portuguese, and his name travelled throughout Europe. These reports reveal numerous untold tales about the Zamorin and Calicut Muslims, particularly the introduction of Islam to this nation. Additionally, the method of transportation and shipbuilding used at the time, etc. We cannot ignore these travel accounts since they contain a wealth of previously unrevealed Malabarian history.

Key words: rihla, matla us sadain, arab, malabar-zamorin, calicut, Islam, sufi, Portuguese, islam in Kerala.

Introduction

Many travellers⁴ had already been to Malabar before Ibn Battuta, but when it comes to the number of nations visited, the total distance travelled, and the intriguing and educational travelogues with a focus on socio-cultural issues, Ibn Battuta easily outshines them all. He made his first overland pilgrimage to Mecca. He continued his journey to Mecca, where he finished his pilgrimage and received the title of "Haji." Calicut and Zamorin⁵ enjoyed a very prosperous and illustrious period of history during the Varthema,⁶ Durate Barbosa and Portuguese Period." During the reign of Dev Raya II, the most important king of the Sangama dynasty, Abdur Razzak, an Islamic scholar, and historian, travelled to the Vijayanagara Kingdom in India. We can insert these two eminent travellers named Abdur Razzak and Ibn Battuta during the pre-Portuguese period. The two distinct journey accounts are only relevant to our investigation and initially appeared in Ibn Battuta known as *Rihlah*, or *Tuhafat un-Nazzar fi Gharaib il Amsar wa Ajaib il Asfar* and the second from Abdur Razzak⁷ and his travel account known as *Matla-us-Sadain wa Majma-ul-Bahrain*, or *The Rise of Two Auspicious Constellations and the Confluence of Two Oceans*.

Ibn Battuta's depiction of the Muslim-Zamorin connections in Calicut.

His travel account was called Rihlah, or Tuhafat un-Nazzar fi Gharaib il Amsar wa Ajaib il Asfar, in which he provides incredibly thorough, tremendously helpful, and interesting information about practically all facets of Indian life, especially Malabar. Multiple languages have versions of it. There is a tonne of knowledge and helpful content in this book, which implies that the author read extensively before writing it. Without doubt, he has taken information from other people's accounts, but his work has been extremely beneficial to humanity overall, especially the Keralites who owe him a great deal. The sultan of Fez ordered him to narrate his adventures to Ibn Juzayy, the royal secretary, after his most frequent expedition in 1353, and this narrative, which has been preserved for us in fine copies, aids us in understanding Ibn Battuta's journey. There is now insufficient information to definitively say how much of it was altered by Ibn Juzayy.

Before Ibn Battuta's arrival to Malabar, the Mappilas, a group descended from Arab traders, local women, and Islamic converts, were a dominant force in the region.⁸ Due to Perumal's conversion and immigration to Mecca, Islam first appeared in Kerala. However, Battuta doesn't describe this conversion. He has preserved the legend that one of the monarchs of Kottayam's forefathers, "Kuwayl," converted to Islam. Although the phrase is vague, it is conceivable that Perumal, the monarch of Kerala, was the ancestor mentioned. He discovered several rich Muslim communities in various parts of northern and central Kerala that were supported by them due to their requirement for merchants. Except for the fact that they will not let Muslims into their homes or dine with them at meals, he discovered that Muslims are highly respected among them (the Hindus).

When describing his journeys, he claims that in the fourteenth century, "No one travels in these areas on animals of burden; nor is there any horse found except with the King."⁹ However, merchants must rely on people who are always available to do so for hire if they want to buy or sell products. The goods are carried by these men on their backs. However, no mention of Calicut can be discovered before Ibn Battuta. Before Battuta, the traveller Marco Polo visited Malabar, but he made no mention of Calicut or its ruler. But given Ibn Battuta's depiction, we might be able to infer enough about the city's ruler.¹⁰ This is unequivocal proof that Calicut had gained notoriety by this point in the early 14th century, or possibly even earlier.

The Zamorin's Kingdom and its capital are prominently included in his extensive observations of Malabar. Throughout the entire distance, the road is shaded by trees, and every half-mile, there is a wooden hut with benches where all travellers, whether Muslims or Hindus, are welcome to sit. According to him, there are wells for drinking water "at each shed, and a Hindu, he gives him water in vessels; if he is a Muslim, he pours the water into his hands." In the Malabar region, it is customary for Hindus to forbid Muslims from entering their homes or using their food; if they do, they either smash the objects or give them to the Muslims. All areas had homes owned by Muslim merchants, who were highly esteemed. "If a Muslim encountered a Hindu in the middle of the night on the road, they stood aside to allow them pass."

It is implied that He made six trips to Calicut. First, on January 2, 1343, second, on April 18, 1343, third, on January 7, 1344, fourth, on March 18, fifth, and his final visit is in May, 1346. He stayed in this location for several months. He explained the causes of Calicut's fame and renown and concluded that the region was completely safe to travel through. It is customary that whenever a ship is destroyed, all that is taken from it belongs to the treasury across the Malabar region, apart from this one area.¹¹ Calicut has prospered and attracted many traders as a result of the fact that it is still preserved there by its proprietors. The same thing was said by Abd al Razzaq (1442).

The renowned shipowner Mithqal, who has immense riches and a fleet of vessels for his commerce with Yemen, Fars, India, and China, resides in this town. When he arrived in the city, the important locals and businesspeople as well as the Sultan's emissary greeted him with drums, trumpets, bugles, and standards on their ships. With considerable grandeur, he approached the harbour. Kalikut is how he refers to Calicut.¹² People from China, the Archipelago, Ceylon, the Maldives, Yemen, and the Persian Gulf frequented it for trade, making it one of the finest ports in the entire world. Samari was the King's given name. He spoke with the zamorin after meeting him. He describes the monarch as an idolater, the Sultan of Calicut. Every king is referred to as a sultan by him. He also mentions Ibrahim, the leader of the merchants in Calicut and the Chief of the Port, who was born in Bahrain and had a reputation for the generosity that led to other merchants gathering in his home and dining at his table. When he met Fakhr-ud-din, a Qazi from Calicut, he was struck by his kindness.

He also compares Calicut and Quilon to Alexandria. It is a very lovely, sizable area filled with marketplaces and plants. With traders arriving from Phoenicia, Arabia, China, Rome, and Greece on a regular basis, it was one of the busiest ports. Most Chinese traders travel to this city because it is the Malabar town closest to China.¹³

There are twelve Hindu Sultans in the Malabar region, some of which are powerful with armies of 50,000 soldiers, while others are weak with armies of 3,000. However, there is absolutely no conflict between them, and the strong do not wish to take the weak's belongings. Each ruler's territory is delineated by a wooden gateway with the inscription "Gate of Security." According to him, Sultan Samari (Zamorin) was described as having a fire set in front of him on the beach, wearing a wide white robe around his waist and a little turban, and walking around barefoot with a parasol carried over his head by a slave. He is an elderly man who, like several Greeks, shaves his beard. The Sultan of Mangalore is referred to as Rama Daw, Cannanore as Kuwayl, (Kolattiri). Calicut as the Samari, (Samari in Malayalam Samutiri or Samuri meaning "Sea King" is more familiar to European readers in its Portuguese form zamorin). Quilon as Tiwari. According to Ibn Battuta, one of the most powerful Sultans of Malabar named Kuwayl ruled over Jurfattan, Dahfattan, and Budfattan. Ibn Battuta may have given its ruler the title Tiwari, which may be the Tamil-Sanskrit composite Tirupati, according to Yule (Holy Lord).¹⁴ Jala ad-Din is the Sultan of Hinawr, and he is ruled by Haryab, a Sultan who is Hindu. He claims that theft will result in death here, speaking of security and justice. The fact that they execute anyone caught stealing even one nut makes this the safest road he has ever travelled on. Additionally, if any fruit falls, only the owner can pick it up. Any Muslim or Hindu criminal who escapes the jurisdiction of one of the rulers and enters the territory of another is safe from capture, even if the prince from whom he has escaped is strong and has a large army. To the exclusion of their own offspring, the rulers of these nations transfer their power to the sons of their sisters.

Abdur Razzak's observations regarding Zamorin and Calicut

Sir H.M. Elliot K.C.B., The history of India as told by its own Historians, The Muhammadan period, Vol. IV clearly describes about the travels of this great traveller. Jalal-ud-Din Ishaq gave birth to Abdur Razzak¹⁵ on November 7, 1413, in Herat (now in Afghanistan). Jalal-ud-Din Ishaq was the Qazi and imam of the Shah Rukh's court in Herat and the father of Abdur Razzak. Shah Rukh presided over the Timurid dynasty in Persia (Timur was succeeded by his son Shahrukh). Abdur was chosen to serve as the Qazi of Shah Rukh's court following the death of his father in

1437. He prospered as a legal courtier, trustee, and ambassador under Razzak. From that point on, he participated in military and diplomatic missions while also being a witness to political and military events in the capitals of Herat and Samarqand.

At the time of Dev Raya II, the monarch of the Sangama dynasty, the Timurid chronicler and Persian-born Muslim scholar Abdur Razzak travelled to the Vijayanagar Kingdom. The following is a list of some pertinent details about him: Kamal-ud-din Abdur Razzaq was dispatched on a three-year journey by Shah Rukh of Persia in 1441, mostly to the court of the Zamorin of Calicut (King Samutiri of Kozhikode in Kerala). The Bahmani Empire, which was established by a family of Iranian ancestry, was the dominant Muslim force in the Deccan at the time. On the given website, you can read in-depth about the Bahmani Kingdom from 1347 until 1526. Razzak had a bad travel habit. Because of the Monarch, left Herat in January 1442. He braved the dangers of the sea, made a safe landing at Muscat, and travelled to Kariat where he became gravely ill from the heat, but eventually recovered enough to make the 18-day journey at sea to Calicut in the southwest of India.

He was not very impressed by the people of Calicut; he described them as polyandrous and wearing scant clothing. He did not spend much time in Calicut because the Vijayanagar King requested him to reside in his dominion. As Razzak travelled via Mangalore, Belur arrived in Vijayanagara. As part of his ambassadorial duties, Razzak toured Eurasia. His most important project was a government job. In 1442, Abd al Razzaq left Herat to travel, and after several months of travel, he arrived in Calicut. For five months, he lived in Calicut. Although the King rejected his desire to convert, his major objective was to convert the Zamorin to the Mohammedan (Islamic) faith.

Abd al Razzaq reports that Calicut's seafaring population was known by the moniker "Chini bachagan" (China lads)¹⁶, that the principal product traded with Mecca was pepper, and that a wide variety of goods were delivered to Calicut from maritime nations, including Abyssinia, Zirbad, and Zanzibar. He provides evidence of the dominance of Malabar trade with Arab nations and the important role the Arab community played in it.¹⁷ One can find anything they may want in this harbour. There is only one thing that is prohibited: eating or slaughtering cows. Anyone caught eating or slaughtering one of these animals would be put to death right away. The cow has so revered in this area that the locals use its dried dung to massage their foreheads.

He praises Calicut Harbour¹⁸ for being completely secure and reliable.¹⁹ He attested to the supremacy of Malabar trade with Arab nations and the role that the Arab people played in that trade.²⁰ Rich merchants bring big cargoes of goods from marine nations to that city, disembark, set them in the streets and markets, and then leave them there for a while without giving them anyone's care or putting them under protection. Such confidence, security, and fairness prevail there.²¹ The responsibility of keeping an eye on the goods is taken on by the customhouse officers, who are on duty day and night. When a sale occurs, they impose a duty of one-fortieth of the products' value; if they are not sold, they are not subject to any charges.

He also makes comparisons between Calicut and other ports, saying that in other ports, when a ship sets sail for a specific location but is unexpectedly diverted by a decree of Divine Providence into another roadstead, the locals plunder the ship under the pretext that the wind drove it there, but in Calicut, every ship, regardless of where it originates from or where it is headed, is treated like other vessels when it enters this port and faces no difficulties of any kind.²² Abd at Razzaq also observed that the officials in Calicut did not remove the destroyed vessels.

Regarding the people, he claims that Malabar was the first place he had ever seen black people, and he was taken aback by their clothing. Black people in this country wear only bandages around their middles, known as lankoutah, (Garment) which extend from the navel to just above the knee. He had no idea that there were any half-naked persons on this planet, and he questioned whether they were humans or demons.²³ He had anticipated that humans would have lovely looks like the moon. They both hold a sword in one hand and a shield in the other. The king and the beggar both wear this outfit.

Addressing the Caste, he claims that there are several different classes of citizens, including the Brahmins, the Djoghis (Hindu ascetics), and others. Each sect has its own unique practices, even though they all shared the essential ideas of polytheism and idolatry. He has also witnessed Malabar polyandry. Amongst them, there is a class of men, with whom it is the habit for one woman to have a huge number of husbands, each of whom has a certain role and fulfils it.²⁴ Each of them spends a specified amount of time in the house, dividing the day and night between them, and no one else is permitted to enter while he is there.²⁵ This sect is comprised of the samuri (Zamorin).

Different names for Calicut were used by travellers. The name Kalikut was used by the Arabs, Kalifo by the Chinese, Calicut by the Europeans, and Kozhikode by the natives. The King's name, according to Abdur Razzak,

was Samuri.²⁶ He witnessed the Zamorin and requested a meeting with the prince. Some well-informed experts believe that Samuri is a borrowed term from Arabic or Persian, the meaning of which has long since vanished. The explanation from Abd al Razzaq clarified the intent.²⁷ His hall was packed with 2,000 to 3,000 Hindus wearing the attire indicated above, together with the major Muslim figures. A lavishly caparisoned horse, an embroidered pelisse, and a ceremonial cap were among the gifts he gave after reading his Sultan's letter. However, Zamorin did not accept his conversion despite his polite reception of him.

He remembers his time in Calicut as being very unpleasant, and in the middle of it all, the Vijayanagar King asked him to visit his court. Abd al Razzaq left Calicut feeling incredibly happy. He left Calicut and travelled to Mangalore, Belloor, Vijayanagar, and then back to his home in Herat. His description of Vijayanagar is admirable.²⁸ The fact that Calicut had a stable, independent government and was able to provide merchants with protection accounts for the prominence to which the city rose during this period.

When the King of Calicut passes away, his sister's son succeeds him, and his inheritance does not go to his son, his brother, or any other of his relatives, according to the Malabar Marumakkatayam, which he also mentions.²⁹ No one uses a strong hand to ascend to the throne. This story acknowledges earlier writers' accounts as well. Mohammedan traders appear to have been the only ones who traded in Malabar goods. The Mohammedans were becoming more powerful and influential. Muslims in Calicut have constructed two mosques where people gather every Friday to pray. They primarily belong to the Shafi³⁰ sect and have one qadi, or priest. The Muslims dressed superbly in Arab style, exuding luxury in every aspect.³¹ He got the chance to observe a sizable number of Muslims.

Conclusion

During the Middle Ages, India was frequently visited by foreigners. They had numerous reasons for travelling to India. Most of the travellers who came to India wrote their accounts. These travellers' accounts covered a range of topics. While few traveller accounts are concentrated on religious matters, other accounts deal with court problems. They both hail from other nations. Building a bridge between the subjects of comparison enables us to get over their differences and emphasise their commonalities. Here the Moroccan and the Persian, two individuals from opposite cultures Moor and the Persian—are depicted in "The Two Travelers" as having the same Islamic beliefs. One is from Morocco, while the other is from Persia. Both have different intentions. Both travel to Malabar over

the open sea. It is easy to get a basic picture of how Muslims are distributed throughout Kerala and how they interact with locals who are not Muslims by reading the reports of both travellers' visits to the state. Ibn Battuta has a lot to say about the history of Malabar and its ruler if we contrast his accounts with those of Abdur Razzak. Ibn Battuta discusses the caste system, rulers, rule, justice, the mosque, Muslims, and other topics such as safety, Ceremonies of rulers, Merchants, security, trade, Place names, dress, harbour, shipowners, crime and punishment, and social life. Along the Malabar coast, Muslims were present in every port Ibn Battuta visited. The ceremonies of Ariyituvaycha (opening of Rule) and the ruler's name serve as a reliable historical record. Most of the people mentioned came from southern Arabia and the Persian Gulf; Yemen, Oman, Bahrain, and Bagdad are all mentioned. These names and the Sahafi branch³² of Islamic religious law's usage offer a prescient hint of Kerala Muslims' close contact with and development of a predominately Arab-Islamic culture any event, Ibn Battuta's Rihala is a very important book, and we should thank him for visiting Malabar; otherwise, the world will miss a significant portion of Kerala's history. The author of this book has personally travelled and seen the cities and locations that he covers. Both demonstrate the importance of the Arab community and the supremacy of Malabar commerce with Arab countries. Regarding Abd al Razzeq's visit to Kerala, it is possible to gain a thorough grasp of the population of Muslims there as well as how they interact with non-Muslim people. On the other hand, Abdur Razzak describes Malabar Marumakkatayam, Zamorin, Calicut Port, Security and Justice, Dress, Mosques, Qadi, Muslim traders, Inheritance, Calicut, Malabar Polyandry, Ascetics, Caste system, Colour of the people, Principal product, Arabs, Seafaring population, Ships, shipwreck, even though Abd al Razzaq's attempt was unsuccessful, he did mention that Muslims had established themselves in Calicut Port and were in contact with other significant ports in Arabia. Both of the explorers are our older sources of knowledge, especially since their writings have been translated into many different languages and published in books, especially those that are older and whose worth is rising.

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