

CHAPTER - VURBAN SOCIETY AND CULTURE

There is no definite information of urban life and civilization before the advent of the Portuguese in these parts. But there is a possibility of urban centres in Bassein during the ancient period, since the signs of the urban life are seen in the excavation done in 1882 in Sopara, where a stupa was discovered under the debris of a small hill. Except this centre, there may not be urbanized locality in Bassein before the arrival of the Portuguese in this region. The Portuguese settlement was still small. The cazados (married Portuguese) were still few and most of them hoped to obtain one of villages of the hinterland.<sup>1</sup> In 1564, the Portuguese settlement had less than four hundred Portuguese cazados.<sup>2</sup> But at this time Bassein was one of the headquarters of the Portuguese government. The town was swarming with soldiers and Fidalgos.<sup>3</sup>

So great indeed was the prosperity of Bassein, so abundant the wealth of its inhabitants and so lavish the display of costly dresses and splendid equipages that in common parlance the city was known as Dom Bagaïm or Lord Bassein.<sup>4</sup> As a result, according to a letter of the king dated 9th Feb., 1611, the privileges of the famous city of Evora in Portugal were given to the

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1. Simão Botelho, Cartas, op.cit., p.6.

2. DI. (JW), Vol.VI, p.341.

3. Nunes Leonardo, Cronica de Dom João de Castro (Cambridge, 1936), pp. 221-23.

4. C.A.Kincaid and D.B.Parasnis, op.cit., p.257.

city of Bassein<sup>5</sup> which was a rare honour given to an Eastern city.

#### URBAN POPULATION

A celebrated Italian Jesuit priest, Alexandar Valignano, who was responsible for the reorganisation the Jesuit mission in Asia had classified the population of Portuguese India, in the narrower sense of the term, into the following categories. First, the European-born Portuguese of REINOL. Secondly, the Portuguese born in India of pure European parentage, who were very few and far between. Thirdly, those born of a European father and an Eurasian mother, who were termed CASTIÇOS. Fourthly, the halfbreed or MESTIÇOS. Fifth and last, the indigenous purebreed Indians and those with hardly a drop of European blood in their veins.<sup>6</sup>

He further writes, "The European-born Portuguese were mostly illiterate pagans or soldiers who would have to be taught to read and write. Those born in India were vicious, weak, idle, being brought up by slave women in every kind of vice. As far as the Indians themselves, none of them should even be admitted into the Society,<sup>7</sup> both because all these dusky races are very

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5. Bulhão Pato, Documentos Remettidos da India, (Lisboa, 1880-1935) Part III p.95. Hereafter preferred as DRI (BP).

6. Alaxandar Valignano, Sumario de las casas que pertenencen e la provincia de la India Oriental..., August 1580. Quoted by A.Silva Rego in Documentação..., India, Vol.XII, pp.577-81. also C.R.Boxer, The Christian Century in Japan, 1549-1650, (University of California Press, 1951) pp.80.81.

7. Society - here means the religious congregation of Society of Jesus. During this period there was a complete ban on the recruitment of Indians in this Order. For details see De Mello C.Merces, The recruitment and formation of native clergy in India (Lisboa, 1955).

stupid and vicious, and of all basest spirit, and like-wise because the Portuguese treat them with great contempt.<sup>8</sup>

But this seems to be a cynical picture of the Portuguese population in India. Fr.Valignano believes in the European superiority of blood. As far as the Portuguese were concerned, most of them were soldiers, so one could not expect them to be highly civilised but it was too much for a priest to brand all Indians as 'stupid and vicious'. So this is not an apt description of the people of Portuguese India.

The white population of the city can be classified into five different sub-groups, namely (i) The married settlers known as moradores cazados, (ii) The high-ranking government officials who generally returned to Portugal on completion of their term of office, (iii) The soldiers who came in the ships of Carreira to serve in the East, (iv) The inmates of the religious monasteries, and finally, (v) The community of white businessmen, particularly the Portuguese Jews who were known as Cristãos Novos or gente da nação. In the sixteenth century, the moradores cazados who were five hundred in Bassein<sup>9</sup> belonged to two distinct groups each considering the other as socially inferior but both sharing the responsibility in the city administration.

During the medieval period most of the Indian capital cities were mainly reserved for the noblemen who stayed with the king or the governors or captains and participated in day-to-day administration of the state. Other people stayed outside the city wall.

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8. C.R.Boxer, Race Relation..., op.cit., p.63.

9. Mss. British Museum, Additional Collection No.5027 A, fl.61.

The fort of Bassein was not an exception to this system. A major portion of the city population comprised of these noblemen of Portuguese India who were called the Fidalgos.<sup>10</sup>

Enchanted with the beautiful climate the Fidalgos lived in Bassein enjoying the large incomes which they had derived from the villages which the king had bestowed upon them for their services to the state.<sup>11</sup> Sometimes these villages were also given by the viceroys of Portuguese India. We saw how Dom. João de Castro distributed many villages from the province of Bassein to some of the Fidalgos who participated in the brilliant campaign against the second seige of Diu.<sup>12</sup> These Fidalgos always used the title of Dom<sup>13</sup> before their names. Sometimes they stayed in the city while at other times, in the villages on their estates outside the city walls. They had their personal guards to protect their estates and they were bound to supply these warriors to the king during the time of emergency.

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10. Fidalgo-Filho de algo that is the sone of somebody.

11. J.G. da Cunha, Origin of Bombay (Bombay, 1900) p.188.

12. OP (BP), op.cit., p.157.

13. DOM. The title Dom was first adopted by Palayo, king of Asuria in the eighth century. Like many other royal customs the title was adopted in Portugal from Castile and the grant of it was among the highest rewards which the king could confer. The liberally, however, it was bestowed by Dom Afonso V distracted very much from its value. Dom João II however, took steps to right matters and the title once again resumed its high position. When Vasco-da-Gama returned in Portugal from his discoveries, the title of Dom was the chief and the most appreciated and coveted reward which was conferred on him by the king. Under the Spanish rule (1580-1640) its use was again extended.

There were different categories of Fidalgos. The most important category was Fidalgo da Caza del Rey Nosso Senhor that was 'the gentleman of the king's house,' which was the most honourable title among the government officials. Then there were Maços Fidalgos who were next to the above mentioned category. They were the sons of gentlemen or persons to whom the king used to shower favours for outstanding services rendered to the kingdom. In the third category was Caveleiro Fidalgos, who were not as honourable as the earlier two. They were promoted from the government officials and the army. In addition to these, there were Escudeiro Fidalgos who commanded the degree of credit.<sup>14</sup> The title Escudeiro was given to nobleman who, after a battle, had the honour of "knight" conferred on him. Escudeiro rode on the horse in full armour with shield and lance.<sup>15</sup> Sometimes the title was awarded to a soldier or a labourer who faced danger with great courage and was raised to a higher rank, although he had not been born a Fidalgo.<sup>16</sup>

The Fidalgos of Bassein played an important role in the social life of the city. Some of the Portuguese Fidalgos of Bassein had a very noble lineage, such as the two families named Naronha which were the most aristocratic among those established in India. The one descending from D.Lourenço de Naronha domiciled in Goa, D. Pedro Manuel Noronha, being one of the last survivors of their

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14. Linschoten, op.cit., p.188.

Braz Fernandes, ARMAS, op.cit., p.188.

15. Ibid, pp. 8, 112.

16. Silva Rego, Portuguese colonization..., op.cit., p.12.

family and the other belonging the House of Count of Accos D. Gil Eanes de Naronha. Another noble family Melo de Sampio, was established in Bassein in 16th century. Vasco Fernandes de Sampio married with Dona Mecia de Melo, was 3rd Lord of Vile Flor de Lasim.<sup>17</sup>

But by the later part of the 17th century most of these illustrious noblemen had either died or left for their motherland when calamities befell them. The viceroy in India could not find a sufficient number of Fidalgos to fill the responsible posts that were falling vacant.<sup>18</sup>

In 1634, there were 400 Portuguese families in Bassein.<sup>19</sup> But this is not a correct picture of the Portuguese population because the city was very compact and one third of it was unoccupied; the remaining part was occupied by big churches, convents and monasteries. Only a quarter of the land was occupied by the houses of the Portuguese settled in Bassein. It is highly impossible to accommodate 400 families in this part. There were not 400 families but 400 married Portuguese in the whole of Bassein. Antonio Bocarro gives the following account of these Portuguese of Bassein.

"The white married Portuguese were 400 in number, most of them were Fidalgos and suffered from bad effect of the climate, the least rough upbringing which was convenient in that climate

17. L.A.Rodrigues, "Noteworthy Luso - Descendants of Portuguese India". Boletim de Instituto de Menezes Braganca No.3, 1975, p. 65.

18. Mss, HAG, Livros das Manções, No.55-B. fl.438.

19. OP (BP), 1935, op.cit., p.148.

made their blood honourably and good.<sup>20</sup>

### EURASIANS

The component of the lesser standard consisted of mestiços or half-breeds generated by the mixed marriages encouraged by Afonso de Albuquerque. According to Antonio Bocarro the number of the mestiços in the city of Bassein was 600 and they had a 3 slaves each. The castiços were the descendants of the Portuguese parents but born in India. They considered themselves racially superior to the former group of mestiços.

The soldiers were known as soldados, which means "bachelor" in common parlance because the cazados or married settlers were not compelled to perform military service and were distinguished from the former by a clock they wore.<sup>22</sup> The exact number of the Portuguese serving in India, particularly in the armed forces, was kept secret for the reasons of security.<sup>23</sup>

20. Bocarro, Livro das Plantas..., Ed. Cunha Rivara, in O Chronista da Tissurary, Part III, op.cit., p.243.

21. Fr. Alexander Valignano, is particular about this fact. He calls Reinols to them instead of Castiços and according to him castiços were born of a European father and an Eurasian mother, and not of an European mother.

22. Pyrard de Laval, Viagem de Franciso Pyrard de Laval, Translated by Portuguese by J.H.Cunhan Rivara and Edited A. de Magalhais Bareto, (Porto, 1944) Vol.II, p.92.

23. Pyrard de Laval, op.cit., p.93

According to the opinion of Manuel Godinho the number of the soldiers in Portuguese Bassein was 5000. They were not all Europeans but most of them were from neighbouring villages. (Ref. Manuel Godinho, op.cit., p.28)

The Portuguese government in India also faced a major problem regarding the soldiers, who on their arrival in India sought to escape the military services by entering the monasteries. It is noticed in a record of complaints of the state officials that in 1636 there were altogether 1730 men in different religious orders in Portuguese India, while the number of soldiers to defend the state did not reach that figure.<sup>24</sup>

### INDIANS

Another groups of city population consisted of native or local Christians, who were disparagingly called Canarins<sup>25</sup> by the Portuguese and who generally belonged to the poorer section of society, though not necessarily from less noble castes. Some of them had succeeded in getting education from the schools of religious convents and were employed as clerks of low category in various government departments.<sup>26</sup>

But most of these local Christians stayed outside the fort walls. Their share in the urban economy as artisans or as tax farmers or in any other capacity was just marginal, but their services were exploited to some extent for manning state fleets

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24. Pissurencar, Assentos do Conselho do Estado, (Bastora, 1953) Vol.II, pp.32,36. Hereafter known as ACE.

25. Canaris meaning living on the costs of Kinara in Marathi. The Portuguese called all non-Europeans settled on the western coast of India, Canaris. They need not be persons belonging from Canara or Karnataka.

26. J.B.Tavernier, op.cit., Vol.I, p.156.

and for menial work in the state departments, and in the private houses.<sup>27</sup>

### JEWS AND OTHER EUROPEANS

The one section of the white population was of various nationalities but more particularly of the Portuguese Jews. These Jews played an important role in the national economy of Portugal especially during the period when it came under the control of Spain from 1580 when as many Jews went to the Portuguese colonies to settle down with their capital and skills.<sup>28</sup> Besides the Jews from Portugal and Spain, there were other Europeans in the city of Bassein. Garcia da Orta who visited Bassein, met a doctor who was his relative.<sup>29</sup>

Formerly there were other European nationals,<sup>30</sup> who were in many Portuguese colonies in the East but in 1606, the Portuguese government imposed a ban on the foreigners visiting and living in Portuguese overseas possessions excepting the islands of Azores and Maldiva after one year of the proclamation of the order.<sup>31</sup> But it seems that this order was not strictly executed because even

27. Mss. HAG, Livros das Manções No.19-A fl.128, J.H.Lischoten, op.cit., Vol.I, p.260.

28. H.V.Livermore, A New History of Portugal, (Cambridge,1967) pp 133-4.

Manuel Godinho who was in the fort of Bassein in 1662 mentions the presence of the Jews. (Ref. Relação..., op.cit., p.28).

29. Garcia da Orta, op.cit., Passim.

30. When Dellon visited this city in January 1674 he met Sieur de Segvineau, a French physician who formerly came with Dellon to India from Madagaskar and settled in Bassein.

31. Mss. HAG, Livros das Manções, No. 6A, fl.106.

after that many foreigners visited the fort city of Bassein like Pyrard de Lavel in 1608, Pietro della Valle, an Italian in 1623, John Fryer in 1675 and Gemelli Careri, one more Italian visiting Bassein in 1695.

### RELIGIOUS

One important section of the city population was the religious people residing inside the fort. There were four major religious orders which were quite active in Bassein during the Portuguese rule. They were the Franciscans, the Jesuits, the Augustinians and the Dominicans. There were two more orders working in Bassein. They were Hospitallers and Order of St. John of God.

These missionaries had their mother-houses inside the fort which controlled the outside churches which were constructed in different parts of Bassein. The mother-houses appointed the priests in these churches. The Jesuits had a big training college for the priests, named College of the Holy Name. The city thus had enough religious people who played an important role in the history of this region.

Finally the last section of the city population which consisted of slaves, who were the social underdogs providing cheap labour. A comparatively small number was state-owned and they were employed in the gallees and in gunpowder manufacturing. The city of Bassein was very compact and mainly reserved for the high class of Portuguese who tolerated no artisans or locals among them.<sup>32</sup>

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32. Braz Fernandes, ARMAS, op.cit., pp.5,109.

But we have already seen from the account of Antonio Bocarro that there were local Christians, Muslims and negroes<sup>33</sup> inside the city. There is a possibility that a ban on outsiders must have been put afterwards because Manuel Godinho who was in the fort in 1662 says that in that year, there were hundred Portuguese and four hundred local Christian families in the city.<sup>34</sup>

But once again Braz Fernandes has raised one more controversy by refuting the argument of Manuel Godinho. According to him, the population of the city of Bassein was never large. It never exceeded 1500. He does not agree with the information provided by Manuel Godinho who says that the population of the city of Bassein was 3400 in 1662.<sup>35</sup> Here Braz Fernandes is being confused with the statement of Manuel Godinho which runs "De Portuguese haverá nella (Cidade de Baçiam) trezentos fogos; de cristãos naturais, qutrocentos,"<sup>36</sup> meaning that there were 300 Portuguese houses and 400 local Christians in the city of Bassein.

#### SOCIAL INTERACTION AMONG THE CITY PEOPLE

Though Afonso de Albuquerque promoted the policy of the mixed marriages, the Portuguese were not psychologically prepared to accept the black people of the East so easily. That the majority of the European-born Portuguese were convinced upholders of

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33. Mss. British Museum, Additional Collection, No. 5027-A, fl. 61.

34. Even John Fryer who visited the fort city of Bassein in 1695 says that none but Christians stayed in the city, the Baniya merchants leaving the city before the sunset (Ref. Account. op.cit., p. 192) Manuel Godinho, op.cit., p. 28.

35. Braz Fernandes, ARMAS, op.cit., pp. 10 and 114.

36. Manuel Godinho, op.cit., p. 28.

white superiority, was shown by the history of their religious orders and the armed forces of the Crown in India. After some preliminary hesitation and the admission of a few Indians or half-caste to their ranks with disappointing results by the end of the sixteenth century, all the religious orders refused to admit these categories. They maintained this system over a century and even when they began to admit a few Japanese, they still retained their ban on the Indians and Mestiços.<sup>37</sup> Even a Portuguese Franciscan priest born of white parents in India, complained in 1640 that even he and his likes were considered Niggres, by the then European-born colleagues. These latter argued that though some of the creole friars might be of pure European descent, yet the fact is that in their infancy, they had been suckled by Indian Ayahs which was sufficient to communicate their blood and their character for the remainder of their lives. The correspondence of the successive viceroys of Goa is full of complaints against the real and alleged physical and moral inferiority of Mestiços as compared with the European born and bred Portuguese. Whenever possible, while Portuguese were placed in the chief government posts, just as they were in high ecclesiastical offices, Mestiços and mixed blood had to play second fiddle.<sup>38</sup>

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37. C.R.Boxer, Race Relation ..., op.cit., pp.65-66.

38. Ibid. The first breach in the theory and practice of which superiority in the ecclesiastical hierarchy of Portuguese India was made when the Christian Brahmin Matheus de Castro, was consecrated Bishop of Chrysopolis in Partibus infidelium at Rome in 1635 and sent to India as vice Apostolie of Bijapur three years later. He was not allowed to function in Portuguese territory and he avenged himself by inciting both the Muslim Sultan of Bijapur and the Calvinist Dutch East India Co.to attack Goa. The Portuguese repaid his dislike with interest, the venerable Jesuit Patriarch of Ethiopia Dom Afonso Mendes terming the Bishop a "barebottom nigger".

In 1561 the Crown actually went so far as to prohibit the enrolment of Mestiços in royal service but these measures were certainly not enforced for long. Some of the diplomats were not so harsh with them. They tried to accommodate the Mestiços in some position or the other. In a letter dated 20th December 1561, written by a viceroy, Count of Redonde, to the crown, he says, "In chapter thirty-first in which your majesty orders not to accept those Mestiços you may accept my suggestion that some of them may be given some minor jobs"<sup>39</sup> The viceroy, Count of Ega, deplored the way in which the Indians were treated by the Portuguese who often insulted and treated them with cruelty. In the same way, early in the seventeenth century the members of the council of India at Lisbon advised the crown that "India and the other overseas territories, where government was the concern of this council, were not separate from this kingdom, but they are actual members of the same kingdom and thus anybody born in Eastern Portuguese provinces was just as Portuguese as one who was born and lived in Lisbon."<sup>40</sup>

This was the attitude of some of the viceroys and higher diplomats of the Portuguese hierarchy but generally European-born Portuguese (Reinols) or even local Christians converted from high castes like Brahmins tended to despise the Mestiços or the Indo-Portuguese of mixed blood although this was precisely the

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39. STUDIA, Vol. 1958, II, p.59.

40. Consulta, of the Conselho da India, which functioned at Lisbon as an advisory council on colonial affairs to the Crown from 1604 to 1614, quoted by Francisco Poulou Mendes da Luz, O Censelho da India.

class that Albuquerque regarded as the main support of the Portuguese power in Asia.

But although the Mestiços with a greater or lesser mixture of Eurasian blood were more numerous than the Reinols from Portugal, they likewise tried to become something of a caste, not wishing to intermarry with the Christian Brahmins and other Indians.<sup>41</sup> The main ambitions of most Mestiços was to marry their daughters with European-born Portuguese, failing which they would wed with men of their own kind.<sup>42</sup>

This was the state of the relationships between the European-born Portuguese and the Mestiços but it is interesting to note that these Mesticps, who were despised by the Europeans, tried to remain aloof from the local Indians of whatever caste, whom they called canarins.<sup>43</sup> The Mestiços remained intensely proud of their Portuguese ancestry and they even began to think themselves as superior to the European-born Fidalgos, boasting that their own aristocracy put that of Portugal in shade.<sup>44</sup>

The policy of the Portuguese crown towards the colour bar in Estado da India was not always clear and consistent but on the whole the Portuguese kings considered that religion and not colour should be the criterion for portuguese citizenship and that all Asian converts to Christianity should be treated as the equals of

41. C.R.Boxer, Race Relaxation ..., op.cit., p.78.

42. Diogo de Couto, Dialogo do Soldado Pratico Portugues, (Lisboa, 1790) pp. 36, 109.

43. C.R.Boxer, Race Relation ..., op.cit., p.79.

44. Mss. 1725 in C.R.Boxer's collection, 48, quoted in C.R.Boxer's Race Relation ..., op.cit., p.79.

their Portuguese co-religionists. Laws to this effect were passed in 1562 and 1572, but they were not fully implemented.<sup>45</sup> The Portuguese community continued to hate the Mestigos and other local communities. Ultimately, the viceroy, Antonio de Castro, wrote in 1664 "Our decay in this part is entirely due to our treating of local people thereof as if they were slaves".<sup>46</sup>

#### FOOD OF THE URBAN SOCIETY

The Portuguese of the city of Bassein brought all kinds of European eating habits. The Portuguese, even today are well-known for various kinds of delicious preparations. This was the influence of their rich colonial life. For the first time they introduced in Bassein their European dishes like Vindello, Sarpotel, Moilas, Abafados, etc. These were mostly pork dishes. They ate enough beef and chicken. They also used other kinds of liquors. The colonial rule promoted wide spread use of tranquiliser, the palmarack,<sup>47</sup> distilled from palm toddy was popular among the Portuguese and Christians, and it was sold all over in Bassein.

Tobacco was consumed for smoking, snuffing and chewing. Apparently it was very popular even among the priests. In the year 1638, Fr. Vitelleschi, the superior Gen. of the Jesuits had instructed his visitors to India to check three types of abuses prevailing among the Indian Jesuits and one of these was the way

45. Mss. 1725 in C.R.Boxer's collection, 48, quoted in C.R.Boxer's Race Relation ..., op.cit., p.79.

46. Ibid.

47. Arrak. The local Marathi word Ark (अर्क) meaning juice.



Portuguese Lady carried in palanquin

in which they spend freely on tobacco.<sup>48</sup> The narrative entitled Viaggio... India Orientals of the Garmelite Vincenzo Maria, one of the emissaries of Pope Alexander VII explains better the depths that their depravity had reached. He was quite indignant with the women of Bassein for eating areca and betel (pansupari) but though not so elegant, it perhaps was not worse than tobacco smoking, at least physiologically.<sup>49</sup> Even Garcia da Orta who was in Bassein in 1534, writes about the betel-chewing with cate<sup>50</sup> as we have already seen.

As regards table ware, the Portuguese had Chinese crockery imported from Macao, while clay pottery manufactured in the villages served the needs of the local Christians and the non-Christians served their dishes in containers made of leaves called patravali.<sup>51</sup>

Monasteries were famous and made public place of entertainment unnecessary.<sup>52</sup> Gemelli Careri, who visited Bassein in 1665 speaks about the hospitality of the Portuguese missionaries residing in the fort city of Bassein. He writes, "There being no houses of entertainment in the city (of Bassein) we were received by Falicionus of the Nativity --- Prior of the Monastery of the Augustinians, who treated us all very courteously and like a true Portuguese."<sup>53</sup>

48. T.R.de Souza, op.cit., p.160.

49. Gemelli Careri, op.cit., p.146.

50. Garcia da Orta..., part II, op.cit., p.391.

51. Pyrad de Laval op.cit., pp.54,6. J.T.Wheeler, op.cit., pp.168-9.

52. J.G. da'Cunha op.cit., p.225.

53. S.N.Sen, Ed. Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri, op.cit., p.167.

URBAN HOUSING

As regards the urban housing there were fashionable mansions of the Portuguese settlers in the city and also magnificent houses in the suburbs or on their estates outside the fort city in the neighbouring villages.<sup>54</sup> The Fidalgos of Bassein had stately dwellings graced with covered balconies and large windows, two-storeyed high, with panes of oster-shell which was the usual glazing among them in India or else latticed.<sup>55</sup> The space between the college of the Holy Name and the Church of the Franciscans in the fort of Bassein was occupied by these stately mansions and the magnificent gardens.<sup>56</sup>

When the wealthy Fidalgos<sup>57</sup> of Bassein stayed in these stately mansions the ordinary citizens or the Mesticos lived in common houses. There were separate dwellings for these people. These houses had very limited furniture. The house in which Gon-salo Garcia and his family stayed in the fort had only two chairs, one bed and it had the minimum facilities.<sup>58</sup> Sometimes these people slept on the ground as beds were a luxury enjoyed by the very rich. Most of the Portuguese of those days followed the

54. Bocarro, op.cit., p.243.

55. John Fryer, op.cit., Part I, p.192.

56. On both sides of the old street nearly parallel to the new high road which leads along the middle of the fort to the Sea Gate area, there are the remains of these mansions.

57. On the Maratha conquest, later on most of such families returned to Goa and all their mansions lost their glamour and after sometime turned into the form of ruins. The only trace of their luxury is an ornamental bath-room of hard cement like material studded with shells and pieces of porcelain.

58. Jense and Conti, op.cit., p.55.

Indian custom of sleeping on a mattress spread on the floor.<sup>59</sup>

As the Portuguese city of Bassein was well-populated, the personal care of the city dwellers required the service of barbers, who were also bleeders and surgeons of those days; the washermen, the cobblers and so on. There was a scarcity of these kind of people who were prepared to do all the menial work. So the services of the local Christian people who stayed outside the city walls were exploited. There were pandits or quack doctors, whom the Portuguese appreciated very much. The government officials and the religious houses relied on these pandits, who were their house doctors.<sup>60</sup> Only the rich Fidalgos could call outside doctors by paying them lavishly. Dr. John Fryer was called by João de Mendes to treat his only daughter when she got ill.<sup>61</sup>

There were some foreign doctors, who were settled in the city. Dr. Dellon met the French Dr. Sieur de Segvineau who had settled in the city of Bassein. But such examples are very few. Even in 1534 when Garcia da Orta visited Bassein, he mentions one of his relatives as practising in Bassein,<sup>62</sup> as we have seen earlier.

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59. Braz Fernandes, "Dellon and Goa Inquisition", Anglo-Lusitano (Bombay, 1936, p.31).

60. Pissurlencar, Agentes da Diplomacia Portuguesa na India, (Bastrea-Goa, 1952) p.52, Linschoten op.cit., part II, p.230.

61. John Fryer, op.cit., p.190.

62. Garcia da Orta, op.cit., passim.

### THE CITY TRANSPORT

The city of Bassein was small and so there was no major problem of transport. No vehicles pulled by the animals were used inside the city. Most of the city people walked on the road. They used parasols which were made of woven palm leaves and had a cover for the rainy season.<sup>63</sup>

Many Portuguese used the palanquins which consisted of a chain or net hanging from bamboos and having an overhead cover made of woven palm leaves. The bamboo cane was placed on the shoulders of two men in front and two behind.<sup>64</sup> Initially the Portuguese government did not approve the use of the palanquin in the colonies. It was prohibited to men in Portuguese territories.<sup>65</sup> But in spite of several legislative efforts to ban the use of palanquins for the convenience of persons, it continued throughout the 17th century and even later.<sup>66</sup>

The Fidalgos of Bassein always showed their greatness by their number of Sumbreeroes (umbrella-holders and Cofferries (slaves who followed). These palanquins or the parasols were carried by persons belonging to a special class of bhoya of the Mahar class. Gemelli Careri mentions the palanquin carried by them when he says that he was carried down to the shore by Boes (Bhoyas) as they call porters in India.<sup>67</sup>

63. Pyrard de Lavel, op.cit., pp.50, 72.

64. Ibid.

65. Pietro della Valle, op.cit., Vol.IV, p.167.

66. Mss. AHU, India, Caixa 31, doc. 31 and 93.

Mss. HAG, Livros das Mancões, 53, fl.250 ff.

67. Gemelli Careri, op.cit., p.100.

The women, both Portuguese and local Christians, did not show themselves in public, except on rare religious and social occasions. A tradition is recorded to the effect that the proud and fastidious Portuguese ladies of Bassein would not walk in the streets unless they were carpeted. They had private entrances even to the churches. The church of St. Paul in Bassein fort had this type of an entrance. These ladies belonged to those one hundred Portuguese families considered as the highest and the richest in India. As an illustration of their opulence we may mention the fact that at the close of the 16th century, ladies of a few of the most favoured Portuguese families of Bassein subscribed no less than 10,000 pounds to build the convent of St. Monica.<sup>68</sup>

#### SOCIAL LIFE

Though the Portuguese chronicles give enough account of the political, administrative and commercial aspects of the Estado da India, little can be gleaned from them as to the social condition of the citizens of Bassein. Some of the travellers, however, refer to their customs and manners, the way the grand ceremonies were conducted, the etiquette observed at social gatherings and affluence and wealth that surrounded their dwellings. Though they throw a great deal of light on this subject, this cannot be authenticated by historical documents although in some cases, perhaps, much subsidiary assistance can be derived even from them. Moreover,

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68. J.G. da Cunha, Chaul and Bassein, op.cit., p.246.

the letters written by the government officials and the missionaries to their higher authorities in Goa, Rome or Lisbon give some idea about the society and the culture of urban Bassein during the early part of the Portuguese rule when it was at the zenith of its glory.

The Portuguese who stayed in the city of Bassein had varied dress habits which ranged between the simple and the most exquisite styles. At home, even the rich covered themselves with the bare minimum. In cases of women, even this bare minimum is described by several European travellers as so transparent that it hardly covered anything.<sup>69</sup> But when they moved out of the house, they wore colourful and fashionable European dresses. The wealthy made an ostentatious display of damask, silk and velvet garments and jewellery. Even the servants, who accompanied them as palanquin or parasol-bearers were dressed up in gay and fanciful dresses.<sup>70</sup> Those who were not so well-off tried to imitate the rich and even bachelors who lived together in rented houses kept at least one good suit which they all shared in turn when moving outdoors.<sup>71</sup>

But there was a great contrast between the clothes of the wealthy Portuguese and the poor citizens of the town. The poor local Christians and the male slaves did not have more than a cloth to cover themselves. So a Jesuit priest compares them to Adam.<sup>72</sup>

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69. Pyrard de Laval, op.cit., Part II, pp. 13, 57.

70. T.R. de Souza, op.cit., p.158.

71. J.T.Wheeler, op.cit., p.205.

72. APO (CR), Tomo, IV, p.267. Pyrard de Laval, op.cit., p.52.

The Fidalgos of Bassein celebrated the Christian feast of Paschoa or Easter lavishly as Christmas. They wore costly dresses and enjoyed family celebrations. The natives also enjoyed with them.<sup>73</sup> But the common people who were generally poor, toiled hard to earn their daily bread.<sup>74</sup> The government took severe action against those who tried to harass the poor. In a letter dated 15th February 1593, the Portuguese King Philip II urged the viceroy, Mathais de Albuquerque, to take action against those money-lenders in Bassein who tried to extract more money from the poor.<sup>75</sup> Special instructions were issued against a case in Bassein.<sup>76</sup>

#### PRIVATE CEREMONIES

##### Baptism, Marriage and Burial

The Portuguese of the city of Bassein who were away from their motherland had, in Europe, a distinct urbanised life but it was quite impossible for them to enjoy the same kind of life in India, especially in Bassein, which was isolated from their other colonies. So their private ceremonies like baptisms, marriages and burials were influenced partly by their Occidental culture and partly by their oriental environment. In fact the Portuguese enjoyed a very luxurious life due to the colonial atmosphere. Most of them had government facilities and some of them minted money from private trade and other unfair means. The Portuguese who

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73. Arthur D'Sa, Documentação para a Missões do Padroado..., Vol.V.P.489. Hereafter referred as D,P,I.(A D ).

74. Mss. AHU, India, Caixa 10.D.16.

75. DPI (AD), op.cit., Vol.V, p.211.

76. Ibid. Vol.V., p.151.

stayed in the fort city of Bassein were quite rich and their wealth always reflected in their social life.

They had a distinct baptism ceremony. The child was taken to the church with a great ceremony in which the god parents played an important role. After reaching the church, the child was baptised by a priest. Some offerings were made to him. The baptism was celebrated with a melodious music.<sup>77</sup> The same kind of practice is still observed in Bassein even today.

The marriage system of the Portuguese in the East was very complicated. The male Portuguese who went out to the East and who married after reaching India, were allowed to have the royal services and settle down as citizens or traders, being then termed Cazados or married men. The remainder were classified as soldados or soldiers and were liable for military service until they died, married, deserted or were incapacitated by wounds or disease.<sup>78</sup>

The Portuguese bachelor soldiers faced the problem of marriage because of a particular reason. The wars were fought continuously and partly because of this non-stop warfare, very few white women went out to India. There would seldom be more than a dozen or so women in a fleet which might carry six or eight hundred males.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, if the evidence of several contemporary chronicles is to be trusted, few of these white women who reached India alive, were found to be barren.<sup>80</sup> Though this was the case

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77. Linschoten, op.cit., pp. 198-99.

78. C.R.Boxer, Race Relation ..., op.cit., p.58.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.

with the European women, the Portuguese authorities did not encourage the marriage of the Portuguese men with the low class Sudra and Curumbin women.<sup>81</sup> Many Portuguese males preferred to live with their slave girls rather than enter the bonds of holy matrimony.<sup>82</sup> If this was the case with the European-born Portuguese, the Eurasians faced similar problems as the wealthy Eurasian parents sought white partners for their nubile daughters.<sup>83</sup>

It is interesting to note the marriage ceremony of the Portuguese in Bassein. Linschoten gives us a very interesting account of the marriage ceremony that was performed when he was in Bassein. Gemelli Careri also provides the description of a marriage that took place in the fort city of Bassein. He personally attended this ceremony. As he was informed about the marriage of a high-class Portuguese family in the Church of Nossa Senhora da vida he went to watch the ceremony. He was surprised to see that the bridegroom did not give his right hand to his bride. Thinking it was an extravagant custom used in royal families, he asked the reason from a Portuguese, who told him that the same custom was observed in Portugal because the gentleman should have his right hand at liberty to draw his sword in defence of the lady. He further says that the bride was richly clad after the fashion but he did not like the music that was played at the time of the marriage. He says that the trumpets went along sounding a doleful tone, little different from which that used when conducting the criminals to executions.<sup>84</sup> The local Christians celebrated a wedding for

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81. Belong to farmer community, known as Kunbi in the local language.

82. C.R.Boxer, Race Relation..., op.cit., p.58.

83. Pyrard de Laval, op.cit., pp.98-9.

84. Gemelli Careri, op.cit., p.170.

nearly fifteen days, squandering money and time. So at the end of the sixteenth century, the government order prohibited them to continue the practice of celebrating a wedding for so many days. The decree restricted such a celebration to a single day.<sup>85</sup>

But it is surprising to note that child marriages prevailed among the Portuguese community who resided in the city of Bassein. It shows that the Portuguese were facing marriage problems in the city. The parents were very keen to marry their daughters at an early age. The fact is clear from the Fryer's account where he states the cause of his visit to this city. According to him, he was asked by John de Mendez to cure his only daughter who was supposed to marry the admiral of the North and was not even full twelve years old.<sup>86</sup>

The Portuguese of the fort city of Bassein followed the ~~Portuguese~~ traditional methods of the burial. Most of the churches inside the fort are full of tomb-stones. Important persons, or donors were buried at places reserved for them. We get many references of such kind of burials. Isabel de Aguiar who had financed the Jesuits of Bassein was buried in the Sanctuary of the Church of Holy Name and an inscription was placed on her grave.<sup>87</sup>

But it is a surprising fact that the Portuguese followed the ancient practice of burying a general along with his charger. In the church of Nossa Senhora da Vidq, while the foundations were

85. APO., (CR), Vol.III, Part I, pp.659-60.

86. John Fryer, op.cit., p.190.

87. Braz Fernandes, ARMAS, op.cit., pp. 19 and 122.

being laid for the sugar factory <sup>88</sup> a grave came to be accidentally opened, and in it they found the bones of a man and horse together with a rusty rapier.<sup>89</sup>

#### MORAL PROBLEMS

Though Afonso de Albuquerque promoted the policy of mixed marriages, it did not solve the major problems. As it was quite difficult to get a suitable wife in the colonies, the Portuguese male bachelors did not bother about marriage but relied upon the local women and the slave girls for their carnal pleasures. The Indian nautch girls and the temple prostitutes<sup>90</sup> exercised a fatal fascination even over many Fidalgos. We can very well judge these problems through the official denunciations and legislations against using temple prostitutes, by successive viceroys and archbishops from 1598 onwards.<sup>91</sup> The lasting connection which numerous Portuguese Fidalgos and soldiers formed with Hindu Bailadeiras or nautchgirls caused the viceroy and archbishops constant concern. Much futile legislation was enacted with a view to curbing the

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88. Sugar Factory - In 1830 the entire fort of Bassein was leased to Mr. Lingard who started sugar business, but the promoter died and soon after the business was closed. In 1860, major Littlewood revived the sugar business and cultivated fields in the North.

89. J.G. da Cunha, Chaul and Bassein, op.cit., 277. This was the practice followed in Europe till the end of the 18th century. A case of burying a horse with his dead master occurred as late as 1781 at Treves in Germany.

90. The temple prostitutes were called Dev Dasis.

91. C.R.Boxer, PSE, op.cit., p.308.

passion of Fidalgos for bailadeiras, but in any case these illicit unions were often childless, as the women usually practised some form of birth control or abortion in order to avoid having children by their European admirers.<sup>92</sup> There were innumerable Portuguese in India who bought droves of slave and slept with all of them.<sup>93</sup> If this was the case with the Portuguese men, then the ladies were even ahead of them. The Portuguese women mostly Mestiços always had one or two soldiers with whom they had extra marital relations.<sup>94</sup>

In this way, Portuguese society was involved in all sorts of immoral activities which was a great concern to the government as well as to the ecclesiastical authorities. The missionary reports from the time of St. Francis Xavier onwards, are full of complaints concerning Lustianian concupiscence on a staggering scale as the nautchgirls were lavishly patronised by the Portuguese Fidalgos of Bassein.<sup>95</sup> A Flemish visitor to the Portuguese colonies in 16th century, Nicholas Cleonardo records that many nobles kept numerous and well-dressed servants, though not in a position to maintain such expensive household.<sup>96</sup> Even an ordinary European or Eurasian would have fifteen to twenty female slaves.<sup>97</sup>

Padre Lancilotto likewise deplored the unbridled sex which

92. C.R.Boxer, "Fidalgos Portugueses a Bailadeiras na India as seculo XVIII", in the Revista de Historia, No.56, (São Paulo, 1961) pp. 83, 105.

93. DPI, (SR) Documentação ..., op.cit., Vol.VII, p.32.

94. Linschoten, op.cit., p.209.

95. C.R.Boxer, PSE., op.cit., p.70.

96. Silva Rego, Portuguese colonization..., op.cit., p.9

97. C.R.Boxer, PSE, op.cit., p.306.

was such a characteristic feature of Portuguese colonisation. He writes to his superior, "Your Reverence must know that the sin of licentiousness is so widespread in this region that no check is empowered on it, which leads to great inconveniences, and to a great disrespect of the sacraments. I say this of the Portuguese who have adopted vices and customs of the land without reserve, including their evil customs of buying <sup>As. de r. e.</sup> droves of slaves, male and female, just as if they were sheep, large and small. There are innumerable Portuguese who buy droves of girls and sleep with all of them and subsequently sell them. There are innumerable married settlers who have four, eight or ten female slaves and sleep with all of them and this is known publicly... most other men, as soon as they can afford to buy a female slave almost, always use her as a girl friend (amiga)".<sup>98</sup> According to C.R.Boxer, this is an exaggerated picture of the Portuguese morality in 16th century Asia, and he says that the number of respectable Indo-Portuguese married families was undoubtedly greater than could be inferred from this account.<sup>99</sup>

Though most of the slave women and young girls involved in the immoral activities, consumed some medicine for birth control or preferred abortion, there were many illegitimate children born every year. There were many problems regarding these children. If the father of the child happened to be Portuguese or other "Freeman", it was a custom to proclaim the fatherhood of such a

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98. Nicolas Lancilotto's letter to St. Ignatious Loyola dated 5th Dec., 1550, quoted by a Silva Rego in Documulação..., Vol.VIII, pp.32.

99. C.R.Boxer, Race Relation..., op.cit., p.61.

child within eight days, resulting in the declaration of the child's freedom, but the slave mothers were never set free. If the father came to claim the child after eight days, a high price was collected from him by the mother. The illegitimate children of the European fathers were always sent to foreign colonies where they were looked after by the missionaries in the orphanages.<sup>100</sup> But the children of these relationships seldom had a chance for a proper upbringing or education and were liable to be despised by new arrivals from Europe, whether they were learned Jesuits or teenage soldiers from the slums of Lisbon and Oporto.<sup>101</sup> The illegitimate children were no shame to kings, lords and even to the clergy.<sup>102</sup> Simão Botelho, the Comptroller of Revenue who was in Bassein in 1548-49, also speaks about immorality among the religious. In a letter written to the king of Portugal, he narrates the story Antonio de Sa Pereira, son of a priest and nun, who was notorious and had killed several men.<sup>103</sup>

Moreover, the sexual licence accorded to men whether 'Soldados or Cazados', was not extended to their women folk in any Portuguese colonial society. The husbands were never blamed for killing their erring spouses and men who slew their innocent wives on mere suspicion were seldom punished for it.<sup>104</sup> The

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100. J.H.Linschoten op.cit., Vol.I, p.216.

101. C.R.Boxer, Race Relation..., op.cit., p.62.

102. Silva Rego, Portuguese colonization..., op.cit., p.16.

103. Simão Botelho, Cartas, op.cit., p.12. This person must be from other colony since there was no convent for nuns in Bassein.

104. C.R.Boxer, PSE, op.cit., p.308.

Portuguese brought the European vice of drinking wine and hard drinks. In addition to the local arak, the Portuguese enjoyed European wines. We get a reference that a cook named Martinho in the church, who was a resident of Bassein, died of excessive drink.<sup>105</sup>

### SOCIAL WELFARE

The complicated social life which was a mixture of Europe and Asian civilisation, created many problems. The Portuguese viceroys and ecclesiastical authorities tried to eradicate some of the evils. They were also supported by the Portuguese government because public welfare scheme had developed greatly in Portugal by the end of 15th century.

The Confraternity of Miserioordia which was composed of laymen of good social standing, maintained the fulfilment of the Christian charity in all-over alms-giving, visits to the sick and the needy, prisoners, granting of dowries to girls, running of asylums and the administration of hospitals, maintenance of poor families etc. The properties of the deceased without heirs was transferred to Misericordia.<sup>106</sup> Since it looked mainly after the city people, we will see more details about it,

The Misericordia was indeed the answer to the needs of the day and it soon spread all over Portugal and the overseas colonies. In these colonies, the Misericordia soon<sup>107</sup> occupied

105. DPI (SR) Vol.V, p.480.

106. Mss. ANTT, Corpo chronologico, Part I, Moço 81, No.72.

107. L.A.Rodrigues, op.cit., p.23.

the same important place it had already carved out for itself at home. So much so that it was one of three institutions that formed the mainstay of any Portuguese settlement - the Factory, the Fortress and Misericordia. It was in Misericordia that religious services were held and alms could be distributed. The nobles and the labourers, rich and poor alike, were proud of belonging to Misericordia.<sup>108</sup> The House of Misericordia was established in Bassein in the year 1540. The governors, vice-roys and even the captains of the fort took active part in its activities.<sup>109</sup>

It was then that the orphan girl began to be sent regularly to India in the annual fleets called Carreira. This scheme was aimed at relieving the burden of the growing number of Portuguese families who were losing their bread-earning members in the national adventure of colonial expansion,<sup>110</sup> and at the same time, it would help in retaining the purity of blood of the ruling race in India.<sup>111</sup>

In addition to the problems of illegitimate children and the orphan girls, there were other problems too. Beggars, the vagabonds and robbers always created trouble in the city. They were checked for the genuineness of their needs and all the able-bodied were despatched to the galleys, in the case of men to gunpowder factory.<sup>112</sup>

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108. Silva Rego, Portuguese Colonization..., op.cit. p.16

109. Mss. ANTT, Corpo Chronologico, Part I, Maço 81, D-72.

110. DI. (JW), Vol.II, p.184.

111. Adolfo Costa, "Urfas det rei" in Boletim No.17,1940.

112. Mss. HAG, No.512, Cartas Patentas e Alvara, No.44, fl.32.

In addition to this house of Misericordia, there was another orphanage in Agashi. In fact it was founded by Antonio de Porto but in the earlier years it was burnt along with the orphan boys. It was reorganized later on, and it received 240 xerafins per year from the Factory of Bassein.<sup>113</sup> One of the captains of Bassein wrote to the king that 3000 cruzados ought to be granted for this work. Moreover, he complained that the three year's tenure of the captains was not enough to execute their plans in this direction.<sup>114</sup> In a letter dated 31st October, 1548, the Provedor of Bassein and the missionaries in charge of the house of Misericordia informed the king about the poverty of the people of Bassein. They needed clothes and provisions. So they requested the king to sanction some additional grants to meet their needs.<sup>115</sup> These pleas were repeated several times.<sup>116</sup> The house of Misericordia in Bassein received 150 khandis of polished rice every year from the Factor of Bassein.<sup>117</sup>

The house of Misericordia which was almost a department of municipality even helped the orphan girls to find husbands by offering them cash dowries and jobs to men willing to marry them. The posts offered in this way were all below the grade

113. DPI (SR) Documentação ..., op.cit., p.504.

114. Mss. ANTT.Corpo Chronologico, Parte I, Maço 197 No.68.

115. Mss. ANTT.Corpo Chronologico, Parte I, Maço, 81.D.72.

116. Mss. ANTT.Colecção São Lorenzo, Vol.II, fl.217.

Pissurlencar, Regimentos..., op.cit., Vol. p.330.

117. Pissurlencar, Regimentos..., op.cit., p.330.

of Factor and did not require confirmation for the appointment by the home government. The service requirements were also reduced by four years to those persons who married orphan girls.<sup>118</sup>

In the Portuguese city of Bassein, there was royal hospital attached to the Misericórdia. The hospital looked after the poor people, the wounded soldiers, and also after the high-class citizens.<sup>119</sup> It received 64,800 reis equivalent to 1680 pardãos at the rate of 140 per month, for the meals of the patients and their treatment, the salary of the surgeon, physician, the expenses incurred on the medicine and the salary of the officials and the servants of the hospital was paid from this amount which was borne by the Factory.<sup>120</sup> It also received 600 xerafins from the lease-holders of villages.<sup>121</sup> The administration of the royal hospital was given to the priests of the Order of St. John. They looked after it on behalf of the Factory.<sup>122</sup> It had a physician, a surgeon, a nurse, a porter, a chaplain and a clerk.<sup>123</sup>

#### SLAVERY IN BASSEIN

The Portuguese empire was a colonial one which required many things for the proper functioning of the government. As it

118. APO (BP) Part I, pp. 81, 101, 109.

Tomo III, pp. 2, 715, 720., and  
Tomo V, pp. 3, 999-1000 etc.

119. Mss. British Museum, Additional Collection, No. 5027 A.  
fls. 60 and 61.

120. Pissurlencar, Regimentos ..., op.cit., p.331.

121. Mss. HAG, Livros das Manções, No.58, fl.155.

122. OP (BP) op.cit., p.181.

123. DRI, (Bulhão Pato), Vol.I, p.332.  
OP (BP) 1934-35, op.cit., p.178.

was not possible for the Portuguese to provide all the men for the army and the administration and many other works, slaves<sup>124</sup> were employed for menial work. In fact, this was the practice of medieval Europe. In the Iberian peninsula as well as all over Europe, slavery was maintained for many years. Owing to the continuous wars between the Christians and the Muslims, the prisoners taken on both sides were practically reduced to slavery.<sup>125</sup>

After the discovery of the African coast, the Pope granted the Portuguese the right to reduce the bondage of servitude of the enemies of Christianity. The slaves were usually baptised and thus entered into Portuguese society. As only rich people could own them, their situation was more or less on the same footing as the poorer class.<sup>126</sup>

After many rich Fidalgos settled in Goa, Bassein and other parts of India, they needed the slaves for their routine work. They were obtained from different parts of Asia and Africa. In the beginning, the bulk of the slaves arrived from Japan, Macao, Bengal, East Africa, where native agents captured people from the interior and sold them to the Portuguese traders who visited

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124. Slave - It seems that the word 'slave' has etymology in 'slav'. In their war against slavs the Germans made so many of them prisoners that 'slavs' became 'slave' a person without freedom. Slavery would thus be natural off-shoot of the servitus, admitted by ancient German Visigothic and Roman law, on which the old European society was built.

125. A Silva Rego, Portuguese colonization..., op.cit., p.16

126. Ibid.

these regions. A limited number of slaves was obtained by capturing Muslim vessels that visited Mecca every year or any other vessel that failed to comply with the Portuguese passport regulations.<sup>127</sup>

Sometimes when the Portuguese arrived on the western coast and plundered the towns of Bassein, Thana, Tarapore etc, - they captured many people who were taken to Goa and other parts. We have already seen how Diogo da Silveira captured 4000 people of Bassein in 1533, who were afterwards employed in the building of convents and churches in Goa.<sup>128</sup>

The slaves were treated very cruelly by their masters. We get information in Portuguese documents and from foreign travellers who visited these parts.<sup>129</sup> Linschoten and Pryard de Laval give enough information in their travel accounts regarding this problem.

But this was not the case with all slaves. Sometimes slave women have played a great role in the life of some of the celebrated Portuguese who were in this region. Camoes and Garcia da Orta had the slave girls who accompanied them and helped them in their work. Camoes treated the slave girl, Barbara, who helped him, "more as an 'Amiga' than as 'Cativa' " who later on writes, 'Redondilha, Endrechas a Barbara escrava' beginning, Aquela Cativa Que me tem Cativo,<sup>130</sup> which has been the theme of voluminous discussion by Camoes commentators.<sup>131</sup>

127. T.R. de Souza, op.cit., p.125.

128. J.G.da Cunha, Chaul and Bassein, op.cit., p.134.

129. APO (CR) op.cit., Vol.IV.1862, pp.31-54, 186.7, 267-70.

130. Luis de Camoes, Os Lusíadas, op.cit., *passim*.

131. C.R.Boxer, Race Relation ..., op.cit., pp.61,62.

In the city of Bassein, some of the richest and wealthiest Fidalgos, had many slaves. They were employed as soldiers, and farm servants. Some of the Fidalgos had invested nearly a million 'Cruzados' only in the slaves they had acquired from Japan in the last quarter of the sixteenth century.<sup>132</sup> Not only the Fidalgos owned the slaves but other well-to-do citizens and officials of Bassein also owned between fifteen to hundred slaves and rich ladies sometimes owned 300. These slaves were maintained on a large scale to give social stature and prestige to their owners.<sup>133</sup> In the city of Bassein every rich person had at least three slaves for his personal use.<sup>134</sup>

The male slaves were generally required to do all kinds of tough menial jobs or help in the construction work. Their most common occupation was to carry water and to bear the palanquins and parasols. The male slaves were also employed by their masters to punish their enemies and rivals. But they were not usually employed by their master as instruments of their revenge and occasionally their brute was used to intermediate friends and strangers.<sup>135</sup>

The female slaves attended to their female owners and nursed their children, if necessary. Many were engaged in selling

132. APO, (CR), op.cit., Vol.I, p.2, 127.

133. C.R.Boxer, PSE, op.cit., p.308.

134. J.H.Cunha Rivara, O Chronista de Tissuary, op.cit., Vol.III, p.243.

135. D.I. (JW), Vol. X, p.401.

Niccolao Manucci, Storia do Mogor, op.cit., part III, pp.162-63

clothes and pickles along the city streets.<sup>136</sup> Many of them sold liquor in the town and made money through the prostitution. Generally, they were compelled to hand over their entire incomes to their masters but sometimes they tried to hide a part of their earnings.<sup>137</sup>

They were also used by their owners as intermediaries to convey messages to their secret lovers to evade the eye of jealous husbands who tried to keep their wives chaste by keeping them confined within their house walls.<sup>138</sup>

The women slaves generally could not leave the city but always followed their mistresses wherever they went either to social gathering or church services. While their mistresses were occupied during this period, the women slaves always tried to involve themselves in love-making. Any slave woman who chanced to have a Portuguese or whiteman as her lover, was so proud that no woman held comparable to her.<sup>139</sup>

In this way the Portuguese in Bassein needed slaves for their day-to-day life. Though most of them worked in the city and lived with their masters and mistresses, the bulk of them also lived outside the city walls on the estates of the Fidalgos, who also lived there. Even after Portuguese rule, the Maratha landlords<sup>140</sup> had obtained the special permission of the Peshwas for the employment of the slaves. This means that the negroes

136. Pyrard de Laval, op.cit., Vol.II, p.100. Linschotten, op.cit., Vol.I, pp. 186-109-10.

137. C.R.Boxer, PSE, op.cit., p.300

138. Mss. HAG, 7856.

139. Linschotten, op.cit., Vol.I, p.216.

140. Peshwas sent some Brahmins families from Poona to settle in Bassein. After the Portuguese Fidalgos, these new community rose to power in Bassein.

who had been working here as farm labourers and other menial workers were not taken away by the Portuguese alongwith them in 1739 when most of them left for Goa after leaving their properties.<sup>141</sup> The negroes who remained here in Bassein could not presume separate identity, as they were too few to do so, and hence they have merged with the other Christian communities of Bassein.<sup>142</sup>

#### MANAGEMENT OF THE FORT-TOWN

The fort-town of Bassein was managed by Government officers like captain.<sup>143</sup> Factor, ovidor, judge, mayor, jailor etc, and a civil body known as camara or senate. The captain was the first authority on civil and military affairs.<sup>144</sup> Every three years, the captains were transferred. Some of them were promoted to higher ranks as governors of Portuguese India or of any other colony. There was a custom that no new captain ever made his entry until his predecessor made his exit.<sup>145</sup>

The captains were permitted to have private trade. This facility made the position of the captains more corrupt. Being at the helm of the affairs only for three years, the captains involved themselves more in trade than in actual administration.<sup>146</sup>

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141. E.P.Coelho, op.cit., p.19.

142. Ibid.

143. At the later period in addition to the captain of Bassein, the Governor of the province of the North was appointed from 1690, but his position was quite insignificant.

144. Manuel Godinho, op.cit., p.28.

145. Pyrard de Laval, Discovers dv voyage des Francois aux Indes Orientales, (Paris) Part II, p.76.

146. J.H.Linschoten, op.cit., Part I, p.221.

Being the head of the administration, the captain had many officials and servants whose salary was paid from the royal treasury. The salary of the captain of Bassein fort was 6,00,000 reis a year. He was given one Naik, fifteen peons, and two servants, their salaries amounting to a total of 14,400 reis a year. Moreover, he had four torch-bearers, four candas of oil for which he received 42,200 reis a year and three water and one umbrella-carrier, their payment amounting to 14,400 reis per year.<sup>147</sup> This was in about 1550 but in 1634, the captain of Bassein had under him eighteen persons, one Naik, four torch-bearers, one door-keeper, one sobre rolda or the chief of the night-watch departments and one Oriental translator, their salaries amounting to 3420 paradãos a year.<sup>148</sup>

The factor of Bassein was the second dignitary among the high officials of the city with a salary of 2,00,000 reis a year.<sup>149</sup> He had under him two clerks, each of whom earned 50,000 reis a year, two torch-bearers, whose pay with the price of the two maunds of oil amounted to 28,800 reis a year, twenty peons, each of whom was paid 3 tangas a year.<sup>150</sup> The factor was responsible for the land revenue and was appointed by the king.<sup>151</sup> He also held the job of chief Mayor.<sup>152</sup>

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147. Bocarro, op.cit., p.245., APO (BP) op.cit., p.180.

148. J.G. da Cunha, Chaul and Bassein, op.cit., p.215.

149. Bocarro, op.cit., p.245.

150. Bocarro, op.cit., p.246.

151. Manuel Godinho, op.cit., p.28.

152. Bocarro, op.cit., p.246.

Next to the Factor came Ovidor or judge whose salary was 1,00,000 reis a year. He had under him five peons with the same pay given to the peons of the Factor.<sup>153</sup> He was in charge of justice to the same extent as the captain.<sup>154</sup> Then followed 'meirinho', a police officer whose business was to apprehend to the criminals and his salary was 1,00,000 reis a year.<sup>155</sup>

These were the main administrative officers who looked after the management of the town. There were also some minor officials like Alcaide do Mar or sea bailiff, Almoxarife dos Almazens, provedor de defunctos, or administrator in estates and the master builder whose duty was to look after the construction of ships.<sup>156</sup>

In addition to these government officials, the city had a civil body known as camara or the municipality. It comprised of the elected people of the town. This municipal authority was invested in two kinds of office-holders comprising three or four vereadores or councillors or aldermen, two Juizes ordinarios or justices of peace, and four mistress<sup>157</sup> or representatives of the working class. They were collectively known as the officials da

153. Bocarro, op.cit., p.246.

APO. (BP), op.cit., p.181.

154. Manuel Godinho, op.cit. p.28.

155. Bocarro, op.cit., p.247.

APO. (BP), op.cit., p.181.

156. J.G. da Cunha, op.cit., p.221.

157. Mestry - During the Portuguese rule the word Mestry was very commonly used. It was referred to technician, carpenter and so on. But here it is referred to man connected with the church service or a carpenter only.

camara, all of whom had the right to vote at the council meeting. The officials of the camara were elected by a ballot system for three years.<sup>158</sup>

The Portuguese were always overburdened with administrative expenditure. In spite of the good financial resources in Bassein they faced great problems of coping with financial demands especially during the governorship of João de Castro. The constant warfare during this time emptied the treasury, ruined trade and lowered the revenue.<sup>159</sup> He collected 25,000 gold pardãos from Bassein to pay the salaries of soldiers at Chaul. But in Bassein the soldiers were also suffering from hunger and there was no money to pay their long overdue salaries.<sup>160</sup> When he was residing in the fort of Bassein around 1548, the soldiers tried to revolt against him but they were persuaded to desist by Manoel de Souza.<sup>161</sup>

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158. C.R.Boxer, Portuguese Society in the tropics, 1510-1800 (Madison Wisconsin, 1965) Passim.

159. George Schurhammer, Vol.II, op.cit., p.413.

160. Ibid.

161. Ibid., p.414.

Out Line map of  
Bassein

