

## Contentious Issues in the Early Interaction between Kotte and the Portuguese (1505-1521)

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The European expansion which commenced at the middle of the fifteenth century, culminated with the discovery of America in the west and arrival of Vasco Da Gama in Calicut on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1498. The discovery of the Portuguese, the sea route to the East heralded a new era in the history of south and East Asia, where European expansion followed changing the political economic, social and cultural map of the Asian countries.

A careful examination of local and Portuguese sources is necessary as these sources are either bias or not contemporary. The indigenous sources such as Asgiriye Talpatha, Rajavaliya, Maha Hatana, Sithawaka Hatana, Rajaratnakaraya, Alakeshwara, Yuddaya, Mahawansa and various inscriptions and Sannas have to be carefully analysed. Moreover the vast area of Portuguese sources, such as written by Castenaeda, Diogo De Couto, Joao de Barros, Gaspar, Correa, Fernao de Queyroz and Duarte Barbosa have to be carefully analysed. The Portuguese Thombu of 1614 although important has to be carefully examined. The first Portuguese national to come to Calicut in Asia was not Vasco da Gama. He was Pedro da Covilha who left Lisbon in 1487, thorough Cairo, Aden and arrived at Calicut in 1488. Although he never returned back to Lisbon, settled down in Ethiopia and sent a report to the king of Portugal, In this report he has informed the king to make Colombo the headquters, preferring to Cochin and Calicut. This shows that Portuguese were aware of Colombo as early as 1490.

On 7<sup>th</sup> July 1497, Vasco Da Gama left Lisbon and reached the East African coast after a sea journey. He bombarded Mombasa and Milindi in order to terrify the rulers, who became friendly with the Portuguese. With the help of the best navigator, Ahmed Ibn Majid he reached the west cost of India, the port of Calicut on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1498. The Zamorin of Calicut received Vasco Da Gama cordially and came to an agreement.

The second voyage of Vasco Da Gama to the Indian Ocean introduced piracy, killing of innocent people and destruction of property. The practice of establishing “padraos” or commemorative stones in the places that the Portuguese first visited is important to ascertain to a large extent the date of their discovering countries and places. Accordingly, in Congo, Brazil, Cape of Good Hope, Mombasa and Milinde, they erected the padrao on stone or across on a pillar to signify their arrival. Faria de Souza states that till 1484, the custom was to set up wooden crosses in all the discoveries. Thereafter, the padrao was made of stone.

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<sup>1</sup> National Archives, Sri Lanka.