

CHAPTER 4—PORTUGUESE SETTLEMENTS ON THE WESTERN COAST

ON THE WESTERN COAST OF MAHARASHTRA during the 16th century was the Portuguese. They secured firm footholds in the coastal belts of the districts of Kolaba and Thana and extended their authority over Goa, Div and Daman. In doing so they followed a policy of political and religious expansionism. They clashed with the *Sultans* of Gujarat who wielded authority over the territory extending up to Mahim in Thana district in the first half of the 16th century. Later they came in contact with the *Sultans* of Ahmadnagar and Bijapur. The occasions for their confrontations with these Muslim Sultanates proved to be one sided affairs. Though less in number, they were fired with a religious and political zeal. They enjoyed superiority in arms and ammunition and deployed and manoeuvred their forces with easy facility. This gave the Portuguese a distinct advantage and edge over their numerically superior Muslim rivals and enabled them to defeat the latter. It will be interesting to detail here briefly the Portuguese conquests on the western coastal belt of Thana and Kolaba districts in the early half of the 16th century¹.

It may be recalled here that by the close of the 15th and the early years of the 16th century. Gujarat extended its sway over the Konkan coast. In 1495 the Konkan was divided by Mahmud Begada of Gujarat into five districts of which Thana was the head². He also effected his designs against Bassein (Vasai) and Bombay. He established a garrison at Nagothna and sent an army to Caul³. At this time, according to *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, Daman, Bassein and Bombay were included within the Gujarat kingdom. Among the ports which yielded revenue to the Gujarat kings were Agasi, Danda, Sorab (probably Sopara), Bassein, Bhivandi, Kalyan, Bombay and Panvel⁴. The early Portuguese accounts as well as the accounts of the Italian traveller Varthema support the claim of Gujarat to a large area of the north Konkan coast. The Portuguese make the Bet or Kalyan river the border line

¹ The confrontation of the Portuguese with the kingdoms of Ahmadnagar and Bijapur in the 16th century has been dealt with in the respective chapters pertaining to those Sultanates.

² Briggs's *Ferishta*, III, 191-92.

³ Bird's *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, 214.

⁴ All of these ports were not necessarily under Gujrat as in the same list are Included Dabhol, Goa, Kalicat, Kulam or Quilon and the Maldives, *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, 129-30.

between Gujarat and the Deccan and notice that in 1530 there was a Gujarat governor at Nagothna and that in 1540 there were Gujarat commandants of the hill forts of Karnala in Panvel and Sahksi in Pen¹. Varthema places Caul in Gujarat².

At the end of the 15th century, when the coast line from Goa to Bassein had passed to Bijapur and Gujarat, the Portuguese rounded the Cape of Good Hope and appeared on the Calicut coast. The first Gujarat ships which were taken by them were restored unharmed with a friendly message³. In 1510 Goa was captured by them from the *Sultan* of Bijapur. Ferishta says that the Portuguese, observing their treaty had made no further encroachment on the Adilsahi territory⁴. With the Nizamsahi kingdom of Ahmadnagar they maintained cordial relations. They attacked them only on three occasions, and on each occasion in self-defence⁵. Mahmud Begada, however, could not tolerate an alliance with the Portuguese. Being a staunch Muslim, he formed an offensive treaty with the Egyptian Mameluke Soldan. The allies defeated the Portuguese at Caul but the Portuguese retaliated soon after (2nd February 1507) by destroying the joint Gujarat, Calicut and Egyptian fleets off Div. The Portuguese viceroy on his way to Cochin tried to befriend Ahmad Nizam Sah but demanded immediate payment of 30,000 cruzodos and an annual subsidy of 10,000 cruzodos. Perhaps, intimidated by the recent Portuguese victory, Ahmad Nizam Sah accepted their friendship by agreeing to pay 2,000 cruzodos to the Portuguese. A Portuguese factor was later (1514) appointed at Caul. The Portuguese tried to instigate the Hindu chiefs on the Thana coast against Mahmud Begada and Mahmud is described as putting out disturbances at Bassein and effecting his designs against Bassein and Bombay. In the same year the Portuguese secured supplies from the fort of Mahim on their way to Div. The garrison at Mahim fled⁶. On the return of the victorious Portuguese fleet the governor of Caul agreed to pay a yearly tribute⁷. A few years later the southern boundary of Gujarat had shrunk from Caul to Bombay. In 1516 the Portuguese under Dom Joao de Monoy entered Bandra creek and defeated the commandant of Mahim fort. In the same year they established a factory at Caul and built a fort after securing the permission of Burhan Nizam Sab. I⁸ who had

¹ *Faria-e-Souza* in *Kerr's Voyages*, VI, 83.

² *Badger's Varthema*, 114.

³ In 1502 Vasco-da-Gama's orders were that the ships of Cambay were to be let pass. *Da-Gama's Voyages*, 376.

⁴ *Briggs's Ferishta*, III, 34.

⁵ In 1530 when the Gujrat King forced Ahmadnagar to break with the Portuguese ; in 1572 when the *Sultans* of Bijapur, Ahmadnagar and Calicut joined against the Portuguese ; and in 1594 when Burhan Nizam Shah II of Ahmadnagar attempted to fortify Korle hill at the mouth of the Chaul river.

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⁷ *Ibid*, 120.

⁸ *Ibid*, 191, 192.

succeeded his father Ahmad Nizam Sah. The Portuguese governor entered into a treaty with Burhan Nizam Sah and immediately commenced building the fort on the northern margin of the creek about half a league to the South. Among the stipulations of the treaty was the one concerning the importation of horses for the use of Burhan Nizam Sah who agreed to assist the Portuguese against the Gujaratis¹. Malik Eiaz, the Gujarat governor of Div sent a fleet to stop the building of the fort but had to withdraw². The Portuguese could now freely sail to Bombay. In 1526 the Portuguese established their factory at Bassein³. In 1528 an action was fought between the Gujarat fleet under Ali Sah and the Portuguese fleet under Sampayo in the Bombay harbour. All Gujarat ships except seven were captured by the Portuguese. Putting Da Sylveira in command Sampayo returned to Goa. Da Sylveira, after resting his men at Bombay, attacked Nagothna and burnt six Gujarat towns. He then went up to Bassein and plundered that port. He defeated Ali Sah who had come at the head of 3,500 men, with great slaughter. Now Thana came under Portuguese protection when the lord of Thana, a Hindu chief, agreed to become their tributary. In 1530, Da Sylveira, on his way back from plundering Surat and Rander, destroyed the towns of Daman and Agasi and carried successful raids on the coastal possessions of Ahmadnagar.

In 1531 the Portuguese made great preparations for the capture of the Gujarat possession of Div. They gathered 400 ships and an army of well over 20,000 men. This expedition made no impression on the strong fortifications of Div. Nuno, who was in command, left for Goa, leaving Saldhana to plunder the Cambay ports. On his way south he destroyed Balsar, Tarapur, Kelva Mahim and Agasi⁴. In 1532 the Portuguese attacked Bassein. Though it was defended by 12,000 men under arms, the Portuguese dashed against it and took it by assault. The coastal towns between Bassein and Tarapur were burnt. In the same year Nuno again requested the Gujarat king to allow the Portuguese to build a fort at Div. Bahadur Sah of Gujarat refused. His difficulties with Humayun, however, enabled the Portuguese to capture Daman by entering into negotiations with Humayun. Bahadur Sah, in order to wean away the Portuguese from Humayun, entered into a humiliating treaty with the Portuguese, one of the terms of which was the cession of Bassein and its dependencies. It may be mentioned here that when Bahadur Sah was engaged in war with the Moghals, Burhan Nizam Sah taking advantage of his difficulties decided to capture the fortresses of Sanksi and Karnala on the southern frontiers of the Gujarat Kingdom. Accordingly he marched against them and captured them. The commandants

¹ *History and Antiquities of Chaul and Bassein*, pp. 36 (n).

² Da Cunha's *Chaul and Bassein*, 36, 37.

³ *Ibid*, 171.

⁴ *Faria* in Kerr, VI, 223.

of the forts sought the assistance of Dom Francisco, the Captain of Bassein on condition that they would hold them in the name of the Portuguese. Accordingly Francisco marched with 3,000 Portuguese and other native soldiers, and by escalating the walls captured the forts. Burhan Nizam Sah sent troops to devastate the adjoining territory and besieged the fort of Sahksi. But he was repulsed with heavy losses and was forced to conclude peace with the Portuguese. The forts remained in Portuguese possession for some time but the Portuguese governor Dom Estavao considering that Burhan Nizam Sah was their ally ordered the reluctant Dom Francisco to hand over the forts to Burhan Nizam Sah in lieu of an additional subsidy of 5,000 pardos in gold.

The defeat of Bahadur at the hands of Humayun forced him to agree to the Portuguese condition of building a fort at Div, The Portuguese in return are said to have helped Bahadur to free Gujarat from the Moghals. Bahadur Sah, however, repented for his concession and invited the *Sultan* of Turkey and the Chief of Aden to attack the Portuguese. In 1536 he went to Div and paid a visit to the Portuguese governor Nuno Cunha. There, Bahadur was treacherously murdered. In 1540 Mahmud Sah III, the Gujarat *Sultan* besieged Bassein but was defeated and forced to withdraw. A few years after, in 1546, the *Sultan* of Gujarat again tried to capture Div but failed in his attempt. In 1547 on account of the strained relations between the Portuguese and Ibrahim Adil Sah, the former entered into friendship treaties with the *Raja* of Vijayanagar and Burhan Nizam Sah (6th October 1547). One of the conditions of the treaty stipulated that there was to be friendship between him (Burhan Nizam Sah) and the Portuguese who were to help each other, when necessary, against all the Kings of India with the exception of the King of Bijanaga (Vijayanagara). The Portuguese governor of Indian possessions also bound himself not to make peace with the Adil Sah without previously giving notice of the same to Iniza Moxa (Nizam Sah). In the following year the Portuguese viceroy Dom Joao de Castro received envoys from the Zamorin, Canara, Nizamaluco, Cotamaluco and other princes who wished to ratify the former treaties of peace. Burhan Nizam Sah often employed Portuguese in his services and one Simao Peres, a Portuguese renegade was appointed by him as one of his ministers and a General of his army. In 1556 the Portuguese captured the hill fort of Aseri and the important station of Manor on the Vaitarna river¹. After the death of Burhan Nizam Sah, the Portuguese governor Francisco Barreto being not quite sure of the continued friendship from Husain Nizam Sah, the son of Burhan, decided to secure the promontory of Korlai and fortify it into an outwork of defence for the city of Caul. To secure the approval of

Husain Nizam Sah, an ambassador was sent to the Nizamsahi Court. Husain Nizam Sah, however, refused to comply with the

¹ Nairne's *Konkan*, 44.

request considering that the object of the Portuguese was to levy duties on merchandise leaving or entering the port and deprive him of this important item of revenue¹. He also imprisoned the Portuguese envoy and sent his General Farhad Khan along with Rumi Khan and Maulana Sah Muhammad Ustad with 30,000 men directing them to build as early as possible an impregnable fortress there². The Portuguese governor of Caul was alarmed at these activities of the Nizamsahi general. He made representations to the Portuguese viceroy and obtained a fleet under the command of Alvaro Peres to blockade the port till he (the viceroy) arrived to stop the progress of the work begun.

Soon after, the viceroy Francisco Barreto arrived with a well equipped fleet of 4,000 Portuguese troops, besides the natives, and prevented the construction of fortification by a continuous charge of bullets. Husain Nizam Sah, with a view to stop the conflict sent his envoy to the viceroy with the following message "that he was a friend to the King of Portuguese, having inherited that feeling from his predecessors, who had given them a place where they had already built a citadel, a gift which he certainly never thought of revoking but that he had reasons to apprehend that, allowing them to build a new fort would eventually lead them to place them under his yoke and deprive him of the custom duties which belonged as hitherto to him alone as sovereign of the place"³.

The Portuguese viceroy was convinced of the argument and concluded peace on the condition that the construction of the fort should be suspended and Koriail should remain as it was before. In 1560 Cangiz Khan, one of the leading Gujarat nobles, ceded to the Portuguese, the belt of coast from the Vaitarna to Daman in return for help in taking Surat⁴. In 1569 the Portuguese attacked the Jawhar Kolis and passed through their country as far as the foot of the Sahyadris.

It may be mentioned here that after their success in the battle of Talikota, the Muslim Powers decided to turn against the Portuguese. A coalition which took about five years to materialise, was formed between Bijapur and Ahmadnagar and the Zambrin of Calicut against the Portuguese. Plans were drawn for the distribution of their expected conquests of the Portuguese territory. Accordingly, in 1570 Adil Sah marched to open the siege of Goa and Murtaza Nizam Sah marched towards Caul to besiege it. The Portuguese viceroy, to reinforce the garrison at Caul, sent a fleet with 600 men under Dom Francisco. He himself left Goa in September 1570. The Nizamsahi general, Farhad Khan, who had marched to besiege Caul had an army of

¹ *History and Antiquities of Chaul and Bassein*, p. 46.

² *Ibid*, p. 46.

³ *Ibid*, p. 46.

⁴ *Watson's Gujrat*, 56.

20,000 infantry, 8,000 cavalry and 25 elephants, He moved into the environs of the town sending 4,000 horsemen to cut off the supplies of the enemy and prevent the arrival of reinforcement from Bassein and Karanja. The Portuguese governor of Caul, raised fortifications to repulse the attack of Nizamsahi forces. The position of the Portuguese was strengthened with the arrival of Dom Francisco. They beat back the attack of the Nizamsahi forces and inflicted heavy losses upon them. The battle had lasted for three hours. Now Murtaza Nizam Sah arrived with 74,000 horse, 1,00,000 foot, 16,000 sappers, 4,000 smiths and other artisans, 360 elephants, an infinite number of buffaloes and oxen and 40 pieces of cannon. Farhad Khan, Ikkhalas Khan and Zamiri Khan took up positions surrounding the town from all sides, whereas the flotilla sent by Zamorin to assist Murtaza Nizam Sah was directed to engage the Portuguese in the port of Caul. The Portuguese decided to defend the fort of Caul against heavy odds and the Portuguese viceroy turned down all suggestions to abandon Caul. Zamiri Khan opened the assault on a position defended by Henrique and Fernando, two Portuguese Officers, but was repulsed with the loss of 300 men. An attack against the monastery of Sao Francisco was similarly beaten off by the Portuguese Commander Alexandre de Sousa. On the next day the Nizamsahi troops attacked the Portuguese positions with great vigour but the Portuguese fought valiantly sallying forth from the fort and covering the field with the dead bodies of the enemy. The ranks of the defenders had considerably thinned and they had to give up the fort and the monastery of Sao Francisco. The attack on Caul synchronised with that of an attack on Bassein. Once again the Nizamsahi army was defeated. It then withdrew towards Karanja. Commanded by Estevam Perestelo, the Portuguese fell upon the Nizamsahis with such force that they fled leaving behind a number of dead and wounded. At Caul, the Nizamsahis directed heavy fire against the town causing much damage to life and property. The bastion of the cross was levelled to the ground. The contest, however, continued unabated. In the meanwhile, the rainy season was approaching and Murtaza Nizam Sah decided to continue the siege by raising earth-works. The Portugues, however, under the command of Alexandre de Sousa and Dom Menezes attacked the Nizamsahi encampment and destroyed a part of the earth-works. Murtaza now directed his army to launch a general attack on all the Portuguese possessions. But the attack was beaten back. Preparations for continuing the siege however, continued and were completed by the Nizamsahis Farhad Khan now made secret overtures of peace to the Portuguese without the knowledge of Murtaza Nizam Sah. Suspecting that Farhad Khan had accepted bribe, Murtaza imprisoned Farhad Khan and decided to attack the place and effect a large breach in the fortification to enable his soldiers to pass through it. On 29th June 1571, Murtaza Nizam Sah gave the signal for attack. A furious and hotly contested battle took place. "The days were darkened by the flames of burning buildings, the

slaughter and confusion being great on all sides"¹. The drunk elephants being scorched and wounded ran madly in the field trampling their own men. Till sunset the battle raged with the Portuguese still entrenched firmly and slaying about 3,000 of the enemy. Both the sides had suffered heavily in this unequal contest and were now eager to conclude peace. Negotiations soon began and a treaty of offensive and defensive alliance was signed between Ahmadnagar and the Portuguese. Murtaza now raised the siege and returned to Ahmadnagar by the end of June 1571. The defeat of the Ahmadnagar forces could be attributed to the hollowness of the alliance forged against the Portuguese and the duplicity and the dubious role of Farhad Khan and Ikhlas Khan, the Habsi officers of Ahmadnagar. The success of the Portuguese enabled them to establish their sway on the western coast. Their trading stations included Daman, Bassein, Caul, Salsette, Dabhol, Karanja and many other places. In 1583, on his final conquest of Gujarat, Akbar attempted without success to conquer Bassein and Daman. The Portuguese power was at its zenith now. For a period of fifty years or more they had lost none of their possessions on the Konkan coast. However, the Portuguese received a serious setback with the appearance of the Dutch on the scene. The Moghals with their southward expansion also posed a great threat to the Portuguese.

During the reign of Burhan Nizam Sah II hostilities again broke out between Ahmadnagar and the Portuguese. Burhan Nizam Sah was forced to fight the Portuguese when the latter plundered a vessel bringing a large number of pilgrims. Fahim Khan, the Nizamsahi governor of the district, failing to recover goods seized by the Portuguese reported the matter to Burhan Nizam Sah. Burhan Nizam Sah called for a plan of the villages of Revdanda and Caul and the hill of Korla overlooking the sea between Caul and Revdanda. He decided to build a fort at Korla with a view to close the way of supplies to the Portuguese. The Portuguese, however, obtained their supplies from other forts and continued to harass the Muslim population by resorting to terror and massacre. Burhan Nizam Sah showed great concern at the tragedy which was occurring at Caul². He declared a holy war against the Portuguese in spite of most of his troops being away in Berar, and in spite of his strained relations with Ibrahim Adil Sah of Bijapur. A force commanded by Farhad Khan and consisting of officers such as Itimad Khan, Sujat Khan, Taj Khan, Bijli Khan, Bahadur Khan, Nasir-ul-mulk, Anne Rav, Kamil Khan, Mustafa Khan and Saikh Farid Raja set out towards Caul. Bahadur Gilani was appointed governor of Korla and ordered to blockade Revdanda. A Portuguese attack on Revdanda was repulsed with a loss of 300 men. Elated at the success of his officers, Burhan Nizam Sah, instead of a follow up action, engaged in revelry and buried

¹ *History and Antiquities of Chaul and Bassein*, p. 55.

² *Briggs*, III, p. 284.

himself in wine and women at Ahmadnagar, not sparing even the families of his nobles. The officers, resenting the behaviour of Burhan Nizam Sah, neglected their duties and looked for an opportunity to retire to the capital to save the honour of their families and depose the King. This gave the Portuguese time to store supplies into the fort at night. A convoy carrying 4,000 men soon arrived. On the next morning the Portuguese proceeded to deliver an attack on the fort. On the approach of the Portuguese, the Nizamsahi army fled in confusion towards the fort. They were closely followed by the Portuguese who gained entrance into the fort and slew 12,000 of the Nizamsahi army. They set fire to the fort and destroyed it completely¹. Now Burhan Nizam Sah appointed Fahim Khan, the governor of the district, to assist Farhad Khan in besieging the fort of Caul. Troops under Bakhtiyar Khan, Asad Khan and Rumi Khan, three experienced officers were also sent as reinforcement. In April 1592, the Nizamsahi army opened the siege of Caul. The Nizamsahi troops plundered the environs of Caul and continuously bombarded the walls of the fort. The Portuguese had now a strength of 1,500 men. They sallied forth, attacked the besiegers, and defeated them with heavy losses. The besiegers had, therefore, to abandon the siege. In 1594 Burhan Nizam Sah again assembled an army to attack the Portuguese but the invasion was postponed because of the rebellion of Ismail Adil whom Burhan wanted to support against his brother Ibrahim Adil Sah II. The period that followed the death of Burhan Nizam Sah was full of turmoil and confusion in the kingdom of Ahmadnagar. This gave the Portuguese a respite and an opportunity to pursue their own course of action in their possessions on the western coast. The Moghals now stepped in the Deccan and the Portuguese, whose position had become as critical as that of Ahmadnagar, tried unsuccessfully to forge an alliance between the Deccan powers against the Moghal invaders. The perpetual discord prevailing among the Deccan Sultanates, however, blinded them to the fate which lay in store for them. The occupation of Ahmadnagar by the Moghals did not finally extinguish the Nizamsahi Kingdom. It was given a fresh lease of life by Malik Ambar. Malik Arhbar did not ignore the past history of the Portuguese nor their recent attitude towards the Nizamsahi Kingdom in its struggle with the Moghals. Guided by the instinct of self-preservation the Portuguese sought an alliance with Malik Arhbar and obtained from him the right of collection of half of the land revenue in the vicinity of Caul. However, the highhanded behaviour of the Portuguese towards the *rayats* caused rack-renting, violence and bloodshed. Traders as well as peasants fled to Revdanda, Dabhol and other adjacent villages. Manur Khan, the local officer, brought the matter to the notice of the Portuguese captain who agreed to return the excess revenue collected from the peasants. Conditions soon returned to normal. In 1605 the Portuguese again made heavy

¹ Briggs, II, p. 286.

exactions from the *rayats* and spread violence and terror. Disgusted at their obnoxious behaviour, Abdul Karim, the provincial governor of Caul, with the assistance of the Dutch fitted out a fleet of thirty sails against the Portuguese and plundered all their ships that came their way¹. The Portuguese retaliated by attacking many villages, killing the inhabitants and burning houses. An attack on Caul was planned by the Portuguese and a force of 350 men marched towards upper Caul. The Muslim garrison drew up in battle array but was defeated and put to flight. The Portuguese Captain Dom Francisco Rolim then set fire to the residence of Abdul Karim and devastated the surrounding country. Both sides now made preparations for a full scale war. Several skirmishes took place but the issue could not be decisively fought. The impending campaign of Khan Jahan Lodi, however, forced both the parties to conclude peace.

During the conflict between the Moghals and the Deccan powers the Portuguese directed all their energies to knit the Deccan powers into a close bond of friendship against a common enemy and opened negotiations with Bijapur and Ahmadnagar to confirm the alliance which they had formerly entered into. Nevertheless minor incidents did continue to occur.

Trouble also arose at Caul in 1612-13 when the *thanadar* of Caul brought about the assassination of Balthasar de Almeida, the commander of the fort of Caul. The Portuguese in retaliation, opened the gates and put all Muslims to the sword. Thereupon Abbas Khan, the Nizamsahi general, marched with a body of troops to Karanja which he plundered. When the Nizamsahi army was busy in collecting their booty, the Portuguese fell upon them and killed a number of them. Enraged at this, Malik Ambar decided to attack the Portuguese strongholds of Salsette, Bassein and Agasi. He however, failed to capture them. The following year, the Moghals besieged Daman, Div and Caul and desolated the country. They had to be bought off².

In 1615 the Portuguese, Burhan Nizam Sah III and Adil Sah concluded a treaty ratifying the terms of the treaty of 1571. The relations between the Portuguese and Ahmadnagar continued to be cordial till 1625 when trouble again arose in Caul resulting in the annexation of Dabhol by Ahmadnagar. After the death of Malik Ambar, the political fabric of the Nizamsahi kingdom of Ahmadnagar began to crumble. The Moghal advance now began to imperil the safety of the Portuguese. In 1634 the Portuguese concluded a favourable treaty with the Moghal emperor. For the next 35 years, though they suffered heavily at other places, they stuck on to their possessions on the Konkan coast, without loss in area. In November 1664 the island of Bombay passed from the Portuguese to the English. It was ceded to the English by the king of Portugal as part of the dower of his sister Katherine who was given in marriage to the

¹ Nairne's *Konkan*, p. 47.

² Nairne's *Konkan*, p. 36.

king of England. The English and the Portuguese now combined to fight the growing menace of the Dutch, but the friendship that worked so well in Europe, could not succeed in India. The main reason was the anger of the local Portuguese for the cession of Bombay to the English. The friendship, therefore, soon turned into deep hatred and enmity. The period that followed saw the keenest rivalry between the English and the Portuguese and also the rise of the new naval powers. The Marathas and the Siddis entered the fray for supremacy over the sea. The Portuguese lost heavily in this struggle for supremacy and their power declined completely from the western coast in the early forties of the eighteenth century.

The identification of the Portuguese authorities with the proselytising activities of the missionaries created a strong feeling among the rulers and the population of the Deccan. But their downfall was primarily due to the rise of the English and the Dutch on the West coast.

