

TRADE IN CEYLON CINNAMON IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

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The use of the dried bark of the cinnamon tree to add flavour to cooked food dates from the ancient world. 'Cinnamon-wood' is mentioned in an hieroglyphic record of Queen Hatshepsut who lived about the year 1500 B.C.¹ The first specific mention of the use of cinnamon for culinary purposes in the West comes in a cookery account of the first half of the fifth century A.D.² No doubt research could unearth references to cinnamon in Chinese literature at as early a date for both the word *cinnamomum* and its Persian equivalent *darchini* indicate that it was first known in trading circles as a product from China.³

The first reference to Ceylon cinnamon is found in the *Ajaib-al Hind* (Wonders of India) compiled by Buzburg B. Shabriyar in the tenth century,⁴ but in the words of the Portuguese historian Diogo do Couto, it was only from the age of Parakramabahu II (1236-1270) that 'the Island began to be famous in the world on account of the much and very fine cinnamon that its jungles yielded'.⁵ By this time the use of cinnamon had spread to the furthest corners of the 'Old World'.⁶

In the period that followed the growth of the cinnamon trade, if steady, was slow. There were reasons for this. In the first place unlike pepper which was needed to preserve food, cinnamon merely improved its flavour. As a result it was in those days a 'luxury product' and its trade could never match the spectacular growth of

1. J. H. Breasted. *A History of Egypt*. New York, 1923, pp. 275-276.
2. Vitorino Magalhaes Godinho, *Os descobrimentos e a economia Mundial*. Lisbon, 1965. I, pp. 471-472. Cinnamon is mentioned as a product of 'India' by Herodotus (Book III Sec. 107).
3. Godinho, I, p. 524. *Cinnamomum* = *amamum* of China, *darchini* = tree of China. The Arabs called it *quartah ed darsini* or bark of the tree of China.
4. *University of Ceylon, History of Ceylon*. ed. by S. Paranavitana. Colombo, 1960. Vol. I, Part II, p. 707.
5. *Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, (JCBRAS)*, XX, 1908 pp. 65-66. A letter from King Bhuvanekabahu I (1272-1284) to the ruler of Egypt mentions cinnamon as a product of Ceylon. *JCBRAS*, XXVIII, 1919 pp. 82-85.
6. For instance cinnamon finds mention in the accounts of D. Dinis of Portugal (1278-1282). Godinho, I, 472.

commerce in pepper.⁷ Secondly, cinnamon was not cultivated until the Dutch established plantations in Ceylon in the late eighteenth century and the fragrant bark had to be collected from trees that grew wild in tropical and sub-tropical jungles.⁸ Thus in comparison to pepper both the demand for and the supply of cinnamon were somewhat inelastic.

There was however, a growth in demand especially as cinnamon was used not only for the pungent taste it added to the food but also in the preparation of medicines and ointments. Indeed the oil distilled from the cinnamon bark while it was still green was considered by the Sinhalese to have considerable medical value⁹ but it never became a product of much commercial importance unlike the dried bark which began to attract traders from many parts of the world to Ceylon.

Of course, cinnamon grew in other lands. Burma produced its own *cinnamomum burmannii*. Other varieties notably *cinnamomum iners* and *cinnamomum cassia* grew in places as wide apart as the Malabar coast, Java, Mindanao, Tongking, Hainan and Southern China.¹⁰ In fact although Ceylon's product was accepted as the finest and best, its higher price enabled its competitors to virtually exclude it from the markets of south-east and east Asia. By the end of the fifteenth century Ceylon supplied mainly the regions of India, Western Asia, Europe and coastal Africa and even in these regions she faced competition.

Information regarding trade in Ceylon cinnamon before the sixteenth century is rather scarce. This is not surprising for both in volume and in value cinnamon

7. Information on the pepper trade may be obtained from the following secondary sources—Godinho I and II; J. Bastin, *The Changing balance of the early south-east Asian pepper trade*, Kuala Lumpur, 1960; K. Glamann, *Dutch Asiatic Trade 1620-1740*. The Hague 1958; H. Kellenbenz, 'Le commerce du poivre de Fugger et la marche internationale du poivre autour de 1600' in *Annales, Economies Societes e Civilisations*. XI, 1956; Bal Krishna, *Commercial relations between India and England*, 1601-1757. London, 1924; K. N. Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*. London, 1965; M. A. P. Meilink-Roelofs, *Asian Trade and European influence in the Indonesian archipelago between 1500 and about 1630*. The Hague, 1962; C. R. de Silva, 'The Portuguese East India Company' to be published in *Luso Brazillian Review*, Winter, 1974; A. Das Gupta, *Malabar in Asian Trade 1740-1800*. Cambridge, 1967.
8. On the organization used to collect cinnamon see T. Abeyesinghe—*Portuguese Rule in Ceylon, 1594-1612*. Colombo, 1966, pp. 136-142. Information on the trade in cinnamon in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is available in the following: T. Abeyesinghe *op. cit.*, C. R. de Silva, *The Portuguese in Ceylon, 1617-1638*. Colombo, 1972; S. Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon, 1658-1687*. Amsterdam, 1958; Colvin R. de Silva, *Ceylon under British Occupation*, Vol. II, Colombo 1953. Vijaya Samaraweera, 'The Cinnamon trade of Ceylon in the early nineteenth century', in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, VIII, 1971; D. A. Kotelawela, *The Dutch in Ceylon, 1743-1766*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1968, and V. Kanapathypillai, *Dutch rule in Maritime Ceylon, 1766-1796*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1969.
9. Cinnamon oil "... is very pleasant both to drink and to smell but very hote and strong; it is used against colicks and other diseases proceeding of cold; it is likewise good against a stinking breath and evill savor of the mouth ...". J. H. van Linschoten, *The Voyage of John Huguen van Linschoten to the East Indies from the old English translation of 1598*, ed. by A. C. Burnell and P. A. Tiele, London, 1885. II, p. 77.
10. Godinho, I, 525; K. Glamann, p. 17; W. L. Schulz, *The Manila Galleon* New York, 1939, p. 23.

held a second-rate position among the trading goods of the Indian Ocean prior to 1500. The total volume of the Ceylon cinnamon trade was probably less than one and a half percent of the pepper trade in the Malabar region alone and in the Middle East the bulkier cinnamon when sold by weight fetched much the same price as pepper.¹¹ Even in Ceylon the export value of cinnamon was much inferior to that of several other items of trade such as elephants and arecanut.¹² What few records that existed on cinnamon trade have been destroyed by ravages of war, by the activities of termites and by sheer neglect.

Regarding the sixteenth century, however, the situation is quite different mainly due to the availability of Portuguese records. To the Portuguese, cinnamon proved a very lucrative product and while their records are often scattered and fragmentary, and moreover deficient in statistical details in comparison to archival material of a later date, they are sufficiently voluminous to give some idea of the nature and extent of the trade in Ceylon cinnamon during this period.¹³

Cinnamon grew in Ceylon almost exclusively in the forests of the 'wet zone' and in 1500 this region was under the political control of the king of Kotte who also styled himself Emperor of Ceylon. It is not certain as to whether the production and sale of cinnamon was traditionally a monopoly of the Crown as attested by the sixteenth-century Portuguese historian, Fernao de Queyroz¹⁴ but it seems clear that the king of Kotte had substantial quantities of the product at his command for he had no difficulty in handing over a large quantity of it on the occasion of the first arrival of the Portuguese to the island.¹⁵

In early sixteenth-century Ceylon some of the cinnamon was exported directly to Aden, Ormuz and ports in Gujerat, Bengal and the Coromandel Coast but a substantial portion was also taken to the Malabar coast, especially to Calicut, for transshipment. In fact cinnamon formed but one item in a trade network that brought a variety of products to Ceylon—sugar and rice from Bengal, rice from the Coromandel, sandalwood and spices from the East Indies, cloth from Gujerat, silver, copper, coral and quicksilver from the Middle East. It also must have been rare to find a ship that had cinnamon as the bulk of its cargo for other exports from Ceylon, coconuts and arecanut to the Malabar, elephants to the Coromandel coast and Bengal, masts, planks and yards to Ormuz formed were heavier and bulkier goods of at least comparable total value.¹⁶

11. Godinho II, p. 121.

12. C. R. de Silva, 'Some comments on the political and economic conditions in the kingdom of Kotte in the early sixteenth century' *Ceylon Studies Seminar*, 1969/1970 series, no. 10.

13. Daya de Silva, 'A bibliography of manuscripts relating to Ceylon in the archives and libraries of Portugal', *Boletim Internacional de Bibliografia Luso-Brasileira*, VIII and IX, 1967-1968 (issued by H. W. Cave & Co. in book form in 1972).

14. Fernao de Queyroz, *Conquista temporal e espirital de Ceylao...* Colombo, 1916, p. 728.

15. See below, footnote 23.

16. Godinho, I, p. 525 II p. 211; Couto, *JCBRAS*, XX 23; Gaspar Correa, *Ceylon Literary Register*, Third Series, IV, (3 *CLR*, IV) 1935-1936, p. 146; Duarte Barbosa, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa: An Account of the countries bordering on the Indian Ocean and their inhabitants*, trans. by M. L. Dames, London, 1918, I, p. 170.

When the Portuguese arrived in India along their newly discovered sea route they were primarily interested in obtaining a regular supply of the coveted spices and in disrupting the trading pattern which had hitherto secured a supply of these spices to their rivals, the Muslims of the Indian Ocean and the Venetians of the Mediterranean Sea. To achieve these objectives they were ready to use all the means at their disposal. Indeed the Portuguese had obtained supplies of cinnamon and other spices from the time of the arrival of their very first fleet.¹⁷ Soon their purchases became quite substantial. In 1501 for instance Pedro Alvares Cabral is said to have loaded four hundred or four hundred and fifty *quintals* of cinnamon at Cannanor alone.¹⁸ On the average the Portuguese seem to have secured about five hundred *quintals* annually in the first few years of the sixteenth century.¹⁹ However, this was largely because the Portuguese had been ready to pay prices much above normal on the Malabar coast and they certainly had no intention of continuing this practice if they could help it.

The Portuguese eventually reached the 'cinnamon isle' in 1505 or 1506.²⁰ Contemporary and near contemporary sources give varying accounts as to the results of their negotiations with the king of Kotte. Most sources hold that the Sinhalese monarch agreed to be a vassal and pay tribute to the King of Portugal but two Sinhalese sources and two Portuguese ones insist that all that occurred was an exchange of presents.²¹ This disagreement, which has found its echoes among historians of the

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17. Fernao Lopes de Castanheda, *Historia do descobrimento e conquista da India pelos Portugueses*. Coimbra, 1924, I, p. 58.
 18. *ibid.* I pp. 91, 94. A *quintal* = approx. 130 lbs. It consisted of 4 *arrodas* each made up 32 *arrateis*.
 19. The figure compiled by Godinho (II, p. 103) or amounts of cinnamon sent to Europe by the sea route are as follows: 1501-600 *quintals*; 1502-450 *quintals*; 1504-500 *quintals*; 1505-300 *quintals*. The estimate he gives for 1503-6000 to 10,000 *quintals* seem to be highly exaggerated one.
 20. 1505 is the date generally accepted by Ceylonese historians. The arguments against this date are given by D. Ferguson in *JCBRAS*, XIX, 1906-1907, pp. 284-385. See also C. R. de Silva, 'The First Visit of the Portuguese to Ceylon: 1505 or 1506?; Scheduled for publication in the *Senerat Paranavitana Memorial Volume*, 1975. Modern Portuguese historians seem to accept 1506; for instance see J. Cortesao, *O imperio Portugues no Oriente ate 1557*. Lisbon, 1968, pp. 79-80.
 21. Indeed the seventeenth century Sinhalese poem *Mahahatana*, ed. T. S. Hemakumar Colombo, 1964, stanzas 3-12 holds that it was the Portuguese who offered presents and promised tribute. The *Rajavaliya* ed. by B. Gunasekera, Colombo 1926, p. 73, mentions an exchange of presents, Gaspar Correa (3 *CLR*, IV pp. 146, 156-157) and a document at the *Archivo Nacional de Torre do Tombo* (ANTT, *Manuscritos da Livraria*, 1115, f. 38 v) record that the king of Ceylon gifted some cinnamon. Those reporting vassalage and tribute include Fernao de Queyroz, *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon*, trans. by S. G. Perera, Colombo, 1930, pp. 101, 177, 181; J. A. Magini, 3 *CLR* IV p. 50; Castanheda; *JCBRAS*, XIX, 1906-1907, pp. 347-8); Paulo da Trinidad, *Conquista Espiritual do Oriente*, Lisbon, 1967, III, p. 13; *Documenta Ultramarina Portuguesa*. Lisbon, 1962, II, p. 123; *JCBRAS* XIX, 1906-7, p. 337; *Documents on the Portuguese in Mocambique and Central Africa*, Lisbon, 1965, III, p. 620. The last document is an account first printed in 1512 and the penultimate one a letter dated 14th November 1506.

present day need not detain us.²² Nor is the actual amount of cinnamon delivered to the Portuguese—another matter on which there is conflicting evidence—²³ of vital significance. The crucial development was that the Portuguese had come to the area of production and certainly obtained the right to trade.

In any event what the Portuguese achieved was largely limited to this, for tribute, even if promised was certainly not regularly paid. In 1508 for instance Nuno Vaz Pereyra who came to collect cinnamon for that year failed to obtain any.²⁴ The evidence of shipments arriving at Lisbon however, suggest that despite such set backs the Portuguese were generally able to secure substantial quantities of the spice. In August 1513 three ships brought seven hundred and twenty *quintals* into Lisbon port. In the following year two more ships of the 1513 fleet arrived late with five hundred and forty eight *quintals* to be followed soon after with the five ships of the 1514 fleet laden with eight hundred and thirteen *quintals*. In 1517 six ships unloaded three hundred and fifteen and a half *quintals* while two years later eight ships are recorded as having collectively transported a further eight hundred *quintals*.²⁵

On the other hand the movement of prices at Cairo, Alexandria and Venice seems to indicate that at least in the first two decades after the arrival of the Portuguese in India, the overland route continued to handle large quantities of cinnamon. The price of a *quintal* of cinnamon which stood at 60 *ducats* in 1497 did rise to 65 in 1501 and 75 in 1502 but this was very moderate when compared to the rise in the price of pepper from 61 *ducats* in 1498 to 140 in 1502 and 192 in 1505. The prices of cinnamon at Alexandria too remained steady—65 *ducats* a *quintal* in 1505 and 60 in 1507. In

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22. T. Abeyesinghe, p. 10, argues that "... There is no ground to believe that the king of Kotte in 1505 was sufficiently impressed with the white strangers who came to his shores in a few stormtossed ships to promise a tribute of 400 *bahars* of cinnamon (the quantity Queyroz mentions) a year...". G. P. V. Somaratna in his *A political history of the Kingdom of Kotte, circa, 1410-1521*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1969 pp. 425-430 has challenged this view on the basis of some of the documentary evidence cited in footnote 21. It may also be noted that the Portuguese vessels stormtossed though they were, were vitally different from the usual run of ships in the Indian Ocean for they had cannon on board. Even the largest trading ships of the Arabian sea, the "naos Mouriscas" as the Portuguese termed them, were much less sturdy vessels fastened together by coir ropes without use of iron nails or wooden pegs and therefore did not mount cannon (*Studia* 33, (1971), p. 145). This might perhaps explain Sinhalese astonishment and fear as depicted in the *Rajavaliya*, p. 73. "... The report of their cannon is louder than thunder when it burst upon the rock Yugandhara. Their cannon balls fly many a *gawwa* and shatter fortresses of granite..."
23. The various estimates are as follows: 150 measures (A letter from D. Manoel to the Pope quoted in S. G. Perera, *A History of Ceylon for Schools, 1505-1911*. Colombo, 1943, p.11). 150 *quintals* (Castanheda, *JCBRAS*, XIX, 1906, p. 347. 200 *bahars* (ANTT Manuscritos da Livraria, 1115, f. 38 v), 400 *bahars* (*Documenta Ultramarina Portuguesa*, II, p. 123, Barros, *JCBRAS*, XX, 1908, pp. 22-24, Queyroz trans. S. G. Perera, p. 181, P. da Trindade III, p. 13) and 250,000 lbs. (J. A. Mazini, 3 *CLR*, IV, p. 50).
24. Castanheda, II, p. 259 but Queyroz p. 182, records an instance of successful lading of cinnamon at this time.
25. Godinho, II, p. 103. Queyroz p. 185. Of course some of this might have been Malabar cinnamon.

June 1505 seven hundred *quintals* of cinnamon arrived at Venice from Alexandria and Beirut. The price promptly fell to 48 *ducats* a *quintal*. In 1513 the price at Cairo was down to 33 *ducats*. There was no sign of a shortage of cinnamon²⁶ and the prices in the Middle East compared well with those at Lisbon—which amounted to 32 to 33 *cruzados* a *quintal* in March 1506 and 40 *cruzados* in 1510.²⁷

The expedition of Lopo Soares to Ceylon in 1518 changed this situation. After a few armed clashes the king of Kotte agreed to vassalage and a regular payment of three hundred *bahars* of cinnamon.²⁸ The construction of a Portuguese fort in Colombo and the burning of the Muslim quarter of the township were sufficient to deter Muslim traders from venturing into Colombo for quite some time. Thus for the time being the Portuguese became the sole buyers of cinnamon. One can well believe Gasper Correa's statement that in 1518 itself they were able to purchase a thousand *bahars* of cinnamon.²⁹

The consequences were immediate. In Cairo cinnamon prices shot up from 90-100 *ducats* a *quintal* in 1518 to 280-300 in 1520. Cinnamon brought round Africa to Lisbon began to make its way to the Eastern Mediterranean.³⁰ However, the situation changed gradually. The experienced Muslim traders no doubt re-opened links with Kotte through the other port of the kingdom. The Portuguese lacked the trading know-how and the contacts to make full use of their opportunity. Indeed they had much to learn about the products that had to be brought to Ceylon for sale or barter.³¹ A few Portuguese who had turned to private trade tried to make larger profits by taking cinnamon to the Red Sea ports. Cinnamon, therefore began to trickle back through the overland route. In February 1522 two galleys unloaded fifty one *bahars* of the spice at Venice.³²

26. Godinho, II, pp. 29, 121; *ANTT, Gaveta*, 15, *Maco*, 19, No. 4, *ANTT, Corpo Chronologico, Parte, II, Maco*, 9, *Doc.* 121. The values of currencies in the sixteenth century fluctuated a great deal but for purposes of comparison the following rough equivalents may be used: *ducat* = 1½ *cruzados*; *cruzado* = 4 shillings = 400 *reis*; *xerafim* = *pardao* of silver = 300 *reis*; *pataca* = *pardao* of gold = 360 *reis*. For further information see C. R. Boxer, *The great ship from Amacon: Annals of Macao and the old Japan trade, 1555-1640*. Lisbon, 1959.
27. Godinho, I, p. 484; II, p. 238. The report of the capture of four large junks carrying cinnamon to Calicut during the Viceroyalty of Affonso de Albuquerque (1509-1515) seems to indicate that the cinnamon trade with the Muslim merchants did continue. (Queyroz p. 184).
28. Tribute is also said to have included 12-20 rings set with sapphires and rubies and 6-10 elephants. Queyroz, trans. S. G. Perera, pp. 195-196; Correa, 3 *CLR*, IV, p. 199; Castanheda, II, p. 542; *Documents on the Portuguese in Mocambique and Central Africa*, V, p. 597; Couto, *JCBRAS*, XX, 73; P. da Trindade, 3 *CLR*, IV, p. 530; *Documenta Ultramarina Portuguesa*, II, p. 123. The first four sources cited maintain that the tribute was fixed at 400 *bahars*. This might perhaps be explained as being due to differences in calculating the weight of the *bahar*. To Correa for instance 400 *bahars* have signified 800 *quintals*. More commonly a *bahar* contained 3 *quintals* and sometimes 2 *quintals*, 1 *arroba* and 12 *arrateis*.
29. Correa, 3, *CLR*, IV, p. 201; *As Gavetas do Torre de Tombo*. Lisbon, 1964, IV, p. 140.
30. Godinho, II, pp. 121, 220.
31. In 1521, Christovao Lourenco had to take away unsold a cargo of coral, alumen and copper that he had brought to Ceylon.
32. Godinho, II, p. 29; Queyroz p. 204.

Meanwhile the Portuguese were having their own problems. Tribute was being paid but largely with cinnamon of poor quality. Indeed it was even alleged that the factor and other officials in Ceylon were accepting double-weight in spices of bad quality and making a good profit out of it.³³ An inquiry failed to prove the charge but it was realized that short of using force there was little that could be done about the quality of cinnamon received. In the context of their commitments in other parts of Asia opening a new front in Ceylon was recognized as being unwise.³⁴ By 1524 the Portuguese realising that the fort at Colombo served little purpose save rousing hostility against them, dismantled it and departed leaving a factor and a small token force to look after their commercial interests. Far away in Cairo the price of cinnamon fell from the peak of 280-300 *ducats a quintal* in 1520 to 160-170 in 1524 and 150 in 1525.³⁵

It was at this stage that political developments within Kotte began to favour the Portuguese. The partition of Kotte among three brothers had led to growing hostility between the eldest, Bhuvanekabahu, the king of Kotte (1521-1551) and the youngest Mayadunne, king of Sitawaka (1521-1581). The ambitious Mayadunne found that his brother, far from viewing his aspirations with favour was trying to improve his own position with Portuguese assistance. Bhuvanekabahu gradually began identifying himself with the Portuguese interest and increasingly relied on the advice of the Portuguese factor, Nuno Freyre de Andrade. Mayadunne thereupon turned for assistance to the *Samudri* of Calicut.³⁶

The first clash of arms between Sitawaka and Kotte occurred in 1526 and soon after the king of Kotte, probably on Portuguese instigation "... ordered the Moors of Colombo to quit the country within three days as traitors....."³³ It is not known whether this order applied only to the Muslims of Colombo but there is little doubt that it decisively altered the balance of control over Kotte's cinnamon trade in favour of the Portuguese. They had gained an export monopoly in all but name.

Meanwhile, the Portuguese Crown had become alive to the potentialities of the cinnamon trade. In the early sixteenth century all those who had obtained authorization from the Portuguese state had been allowed to participate in the east-west trade in spices. This facility was so freely utilized that after competition in sales had led to a fall in prices at Lisbon new regulations had been introduced in 1504. Thenceforth purchases in the East had to be made only from the king's factors at a fixed price and all spices on arrival at Lisbon had to be handed over to the *Casa da Mina*

33. ANTT, *Corpo Chronologico*, Parte I, Maco, 30 Doc. 36; Parte II, Maco 99, Doc. 102. Queyroz pp. 202-4 records information on the Portuguese cinnamon fleets of 1519, 1521, 1522 and 1524.

34. In fact the steps taken in 1519 by the Portuguese to attract shipping back to Colombo might well have been an attempt to avert a conflict with Kotte. *As Gavetas*, IV, p. 140.

35. Godinho, II, p. 121.

36. S. G. Perera, pp. 16-20.

37. F. de Queyroz, trans. S. G. Perera, p. 210.

(after 1506, to the *Casa da India*) which sold the goods at fixed prices and handed—over the proceeds to the merchants. In 1520, however, the Crown decided to monopolize the trade in cinnamon, pepper and a few other commodities on the oceanic route.³⁸

Inevitably, private trade in cinnamon in the Indian Ocean came under increasing restrictions. In 1524 Vasco da Gama, the Portuguese Viceroy in India, forbade ships bringing cinnamon to touch at any other port save Cochin. Stocks were released for sale elsewhere only after the homeward fleet was supplied. It was also about this time that the Portuguese factors in Kotte began the practice of burning excess cinnamon to keep the prices high.³⁹

Yet, even without such practices profits from cinnamon were high enough. It is calculated that between 1512 and 1516 a *quintal* bought at a third of a *cruzado* in Ceylon was sold at Calicut for four and a half *cruzados* i.e. at more than thirteen times the original cost. In 1521 a *bahar* of cinnamon cost three *cruzados* in Ceylon; fifteen at Cochin. At Diu it sold at thirty *cruzados* and at Ormuz at fifty or sixty. That was not all—at Lisbon in 1525 a *bahar* (of three *quintals*) could fetch 195 *cruzados*.⁴⁰ It is hardly surprising that the Portuguese Crown wished to have monopoly rights over the East-West trade in this lucrative product. Nor is there reason to wonder as to why the innumerable royal regulations failed to check 'illegal' trade. The profits were just too attractive.

The increasing scarcity, however, also led to rise in cost prices in Asia. The price per *quintal* as quoted by Malabari merchants rose from three and a half *cruzados* around 1506 to four and a half by about 1516 and five *cruzados* by 1521. The cost in Ceylon had likewise risen from a third of a *cruzado* in 1506 to one *cruzado* in 1521.

It was in this context that the cinnamon contract of 15th October 1533 was made. The Portuguese were interested in increasing the amount of the tribute, fixing a low purchase price and gaining legal monopoly rights. Bhuvanekabahu, increasingly dependent on Portuguese arms was in no position to refuse but his illness earlier in the month had given the Portuguese factor, Antonio Pessoa, reason to pause. If Bhuvanekabahu died at that stage his brother Mayadunne, who had welcomed the Muslims into his domains, would succeed to the throne of Kotte. It was perhaps time for a compromise.

The settlement agreed upon was as follows. The king of Kotte agreed to raise the weight of the *bahar* by which he paid tribute to three *quintals*, so that the Portuguese would obtain 900 *quintals* annually free of charge. He also agreed that the Portuguese should have monopoly rights over the purchase of the rest of the cinnamon

38. The other commodities included cloves, ginger, lac, tin and silk. Godinho, II, pp. 87-90; *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, IV Cambridge, 1967, p. 229.

39. Correa, 3*CLR*, IV, p. 203; Godinho, II, p. 207.

40. Godinho, II, pp. 53, 212.

41. *ibid.*, II, pp. 53, 212; Correa, 3, *CLR*, IV, pp. 152, 156.

produced in his kingdom at the low price of two *cruzados a bahar* for good cinnamon and one *cruzado a bahar* for the coarser variety. In return the Portuguese agreed to make two concessions. They would not insist on the full three *quintals* when purchasing by the *bahar* and they agreed to buy all the cinnamon that was offered.⁴²

There was little change in the trade in cinnamon for the next twenty five years. About the year 1548, Antonio Pessoa, the former Portuguese factor at Kotte estimated the production potential of Ceylon at 4500 *quintals*.⁴³ The amount delivered to the Portuguese as tribute remained at 900 *quintals* a year despite negotiations to alter the amount.⁴⁴ In the 1530's, however, the king of Kotte obtained the right to export twenty *bahars* of cinnamon on his own account every year. By the end of Bhuvanekabahu's reign he was allowed to export forty *bahars* annually. His successor Dharmapala continued to enjoy this concession.⁴⁵

By the middle of the sixteenth century the organization for conveying the cinnamon from Ceylon to India had become crystallised. Every year a large ship or two or three small ones sailed to Ceylon by October or early November to load the cinnamon. The destination on the return journey depended on where the annual Portuguese homeward-bound fleet was being loaded. Up to the 1530's this was regularly done at Cochin which thus remained the commercial centre even after the shift of the political headquarters of Goa. By the 1550's and certainly by the 1560's, however, the giant Portuguese carracks of the *carreira da India* came to be loaded at Goa. The transport of cinnamon to India was generally by vessels of the state but on occasion private vessels were hired. The freight rate for the carriage of cinnamon between Colombo and Goa during the sixteenth century usually amounted to six *xerafims a bahar*. This high rate of interest was probably due to the risk of attack by enemies. In 1538, for instance, a ship carrying cinnamon for the annual fleet to Lisbon was seized by the Kunjalis of Calicut.⁴⁶

42. *ANTT, Corpo Chronologico, Parte I, Maco, 51, Doc. 96.* The last part of the bargain was not adhered to. The Portuguese continued to reject and burn excess cinnamon. *Studia, 34, 1972, pp. 61-62.*

43. Godinho, I, p. 525.

44. In 1546 Bhuvanekabahu offered to cancel all debts due to him and to pay an extra 400 *quintals* annually if the Portuguese conquered Jaffna for him. The offer was not taken up. In 1557 after the death of Bhuvanekabahu, the Portuguese factor Gaspar de Azevedo, who proclaimed Dharmapala king, made a contract with the new monarch raising the tribute by 150 *bahars* annually. The viceroy de Noronha who came to Ceylon soon after is reputed to have made another contract with the king. However, in the troubled years that followed these agreements to do not seem to have been enforced and tribute continued as of old (Simao Botelho, 'Tombo do Estado da India', in *Subsidios para a historia da India Portuguesa*. Lisbon, 1868, p. 240; *Ceylon and Portugal Kings and Christians, 1539-1552*, ed. by P. E. Pieris and M. A. H. Fitzler. Leipzig, 1927, pp. 124, 246).

45. These concessions were, however, won only after prolonged negotiations. See *Studia, 34, 1972, pp. 61-62, 66; Documentacao para a historia das missoes padroado Portuges do Oriente—Insulindia*, ed. by Arthur Basilio de Sa. V, Lisbon, 1958, p. 38.

46. *ANTT, Livros das Moncoes, 17. f. 257. 3 CLR pp. 320-1, Queyroz pp. 202-4; JRASCB, XX, pp. 93-4.*

The captain of the cinnamon fleet was usually a commoner who has served the Crown loyally for long. He was also the factor of the fleet and was thus responsible for the payment of money for cinnamon bought in the island, its safe delivery in India and the rendering of accounts to the factor of Cochin or the *Vedor da Fazenda* at Goa. By the time the cinnamon fleet arrived in Ceylon, however, the Portuguese factor of Kotte had done much preparatory work. He would usually have collected the tribute and made purchases to the extent he deemed necessary. The cinnamon thus bought was gathered in small bundles of six to seven pounds in weight. These bundles were then wrapped in rattan mats and tied with coir rope to help prevent damage during the long sea voyage. The captain of the cinnamon fleet was supposed to check the cinnamon once more after his arrival.⁴⁷

Originally the captain was remunerated by being allowed to transport and sell 150 *bahars* of cinnamon on his own account. Later this privilege was withdrawn and the captain given a salary of 1000 *pardaos* per voyage. By the 1540's, however, the captain had secured both the salary and the privilege and in the second half of the sixteenth century the post was considered worth 4750 *cruzados* to the holder. Naturally it was much sought after and like most other posts in Portuguese Asia, promised by the king to loyal subjects years in advance.⁴⁸

The ships loaded at Cochin or Goa regularly carried their cargoes of cinnamon to Lisbon. Statistics for this period are difficult to obtain but it is known that 1000 *quintals* reached Lisbon in 1526, 726 in 1530 and 523 in 1531.⁴⁹ These estimates may be much too low due to smuggling and evasion of duty in Lisbon port itself. Of course smuggling was quite common in Ceylon. In 1541 King Bhuvanekabahu bluntly suggested that when cinnamon is collected it should be double-locked in a store with the Portuguese factor having one key and an official of the Sinhalese king, the other. This he explained was the best way to ensure that the factor did not take the best cinnamon for himself and leave the residue for his king and master.⁵⁰

Portuguese control over the trade in Ceylon cinnamon was, however, challenged and even eliminated for a period by political developments within Ceylon and it is to these that we must now turn. In the 1550's a formidable revolt was raised against the Portuguese and their puppet ruler of Kotte, Dharmapala (1557-1597) by Dharmapala's own father, Vidiye Bandara. To save the day, the Portuguese were forced to make common cause with their long-standing enemy—the ruler of Sitawaka. The evidence available suggests that the Portuguese at least tacitly gave up their claims to the

47. S. Botelho, p. 141; *Biblioteca da Ajuda*, 51-V-36, f. 38; *Studia*, 4, 1959, p. 265; *Ceylon and Portugal*, p. 69; Garcia da Orta, *Colloquios dos simples e drogas e cousas medicinas da India.....* Lisbon, 1871, II, p. 212.

48. S. Botelho, p. 141; Godinho, II, p. 210; *Archivo Portugues—Oriental*, ed. by J. H. Cunha Rivara. Nova Goa, 1861, V, p. 469.

49. Godinho, II, p. 104.

50. *Ceylon sur des konigs Bhuvaneka Bahu und Franz Xavers, 1539-1552*, ed. G. Schurhammer and E. A. Voretzch. Leipzig, 1928, pp. 100, 395.

area north-west of Colombo known as the Seven Korales, in return for support against Vidiye. In any case this area was occupied by the forces of Mayadunne by about 1555 and from then on the port of Negombo became an important outlet of the enlarged Sitawaka kingdom.⁵¹ There is little doubt that from this time onwards the sons of Mayadunne—Timbiripola and Rajasinha used the Salagama people of this area to peel cinnamon and sold it to Muslim traders who visited Negombo and Chilaw.

The renewal of conflict between Sitawaka and the Portuguese led to the progressive weakening of the position of the latter. A disastrous defeat at Mulleriyawa in 1562 led to the abandonment of Kotte city in 1565. Portuguese control over the cinnamon peelers became increasingly precarious. The cost price of cinnamon for the Portuguese in this context depended largely on the military position. In times of intense conflict such as the period of encirclement of Kotte 1562-1565 and the decade following 1579 local merchants were able to quote what prices they wished.

Table: Cost of a quintal of Cinnamon in Ceylon⁵²

Period	Cost in Reis
Nov. 1564 — April 1566	10,800
June 1565	9,600
January 1566	4,500
April 1566 — April 1569	6,000 to 2,700
April 1569 — April 1572	2,520 to 1,980
April 1572 — March 1575	2,400
April 1575 — April 1578	1,080
1578 — 1581	4,500
1581 — 1584	10,800
1583	4,500
1584	3,300
1585	12,000
1586	13,500
1587	12,000
1588	15,000
1589	9,900
1590	2,400
1593	1,800
1594	3,000
1596	3,000

51. C. R. de Silva, 'Lancarorte de Seixas and Madampe: A Portuguese casago in a Sinhalese Village' *Modern Ceylon Studies*, II, No. 1, 1971, p. 28; P. E. Pieris, *The Ceylon Littoral* 1593. Colombo, 1948, p. 25.

52. *Documentos Remettidos da India de Livros das Moncoes*. Lisbon, 1885, IV, pp. 242-243.

The lack of statistics prevents any assessment as to whether these developments adversely affected the volume of cinnamon taken by the sea route. Indications are that supplies continued even if less regularly than before and Lisbon continued to supply northern and central Europe with cinnamon *via* Antwerp. Three of the ships that arrived at Lisbon in 1587 are known to have brought a total quantity of 1498 *quintals* of cinnamon and five other ships that followed in 1588 a further 1735 *quintals*.⁵³ On the other hand it is almost certain that during the thirty years after 1560, the Muslim traders, obtained a large share of the cinnamon trade. In 1576 the Portuguese attacking Chilaw burnt a vessel laden with five hundred *bahars* of cinnamon which they found there. Another such vessel burnt in a raid on the ports south of Calicut. Rajasingha of Sitawaka was himself well aware of the revenue potentialities of cinnamon. Indeed, he is himself supposed to have followed the Portuguese practice of burning some of the cinnamon to keep prices high.⁵⁴ Some cinnamon certainly reached the Levant overland: The ship *Crose* is said to have brought some cinnamon from the Levant to Venice in 1561.⁵⁵

The Portuguese were naturally disturbed. The loss of the monopoly of cinnamon trade was of course a result of local political developments but it had coincided with a great revival of the overland trade route. By 1560 the pepper trade of Alexandria alone was equal to that of the Portuguese through the Cape route.⁵⁶

The *regimento* of 1st. March 1570 was the official Portuguese reply to this development. In order to divert trade to the sea route once more, the Goa-Lisbon spice trade was thrown open to private individuals. Two factors however, deterred private participation. The customs dues payable at Lisbon were high. In the case of cinnamon they amounted to thirty *cruzados* a *quintal*. When the freight charge of 4048 *reis* and other dues totally 100 *reis* were added the total expenses per *quintal* came to over 40 *cruzados*.⁵⁶ Secondly, the state too continued to trade in spices and would compete with private merchants in sales in Lisbon. Both in Portugal and in Asia there were safer and more profitable trading ventures available.

Within a few years it was clear to the Portuguese authorities that the *regimento* of 1570 could not achieve the desired result. By 1576 they opted for 'contracts' with various individuals or a consortium to arrange for the delivery of specified quantities of spices to Lisbon.⁵⁷

53. N. Steensgaard, *Carracks, Caravans and Companies*. Copenhagen, 1973, p. 166. Godinho, II, p. 231 quotes a document in the British Museum to show that 600 *arrobas* were imported to London from Lisbon for £ 900-0-00 between 1574 and 1576. But that would give a price of 12 s or 3 *cruzados* a *quintal* which is impossible for the duty alone at the Lisbon *casa da India* was thirty *cruzados* a *quintal*. I have not myself seen this document. However, it is possible that *arroba* is a mistake for *arratel*.

54. *JCBRAS*, XX, 266; Queyroz, trans. S. G. Perera. pp. 426, 429, 729.

55. Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the age of Philip II*. London, 1972, I, p. 552.

56. *Documentacao para a historia das missoes do padroado Portugues do Oriente*, ed. by Antonio da Silva. Rego. Lisbon, 1925 XI, p. 54.

57. On the contract system see Godinho, II, pp. 93-96; Braudel, I, 556-561; D. F. Lach *Asia in the making of Europe*. Chicago, 1965, I, pp. 131-140.

The system of making agreements with private individuals was extended to trade in Ceylon cinnamon in 1588. It is possible that this measure was a temporary one designed to meet the urgent needs for funds to fortify Colombo.⁵⁸ However, it is clear that there was a feeling among officials in Lisbon that reasons other than political and military ones had contributed to the steep rise in the cost of cinnamon. In particular it was felt that the privileges jealously guarded by the *casados* of Colombo, by the officials of Colombo and of other ports and by the captain of the cinnamon fleet had tended to raise prices by allowing competitive buying against the royal factor.⁵⁹

Therefore in 1588 Simao de Brito, captain of the fort of Colombo was authorized to collect cinnamon from the forests by traditional methods on condition that he handed over one third of the amount collected to the state at cost. The profits realized by the state were to be utilized to pay for the expenses of defending Colombo. The captain of Colombo also most probably gained the right to be the sole private exporter. Simao de Brito had a stroke of good fortune when the forces of Sitawaka retreated after the failure of the siege of Colombo, 1587-1588. The cinnamon districts fell into Portuguese hands and de Brito was able to amass a large amount of the product. His success led to a fresh contract in 1590 and a continuation of the policy of contracts thereafter.⁶⁰

The agreement between the Crown and Thome de Souza Ronches, the new captain of Colombo signed on 7th November 1595 gives us more details as to how this system worked. By this contract the captain of Colombo was given the sole right to collect and export cinnamon. Anyone who violated these monopolies was liable to be sent for five years service to the Moluccas after losing all his cinnamon. In return de Sousa Ronches was required to deliver one fifth of the first five hundred *bahars* exported at cost price to the state.

The monopoly thus granted was, however, modified by some exemptions. The *casados* of Colombo for instance could export forty *bahars* of cinnamon annually. The captain-general Dom Jeronimo de Azevedo was allowed a hundred *bahars* and the captains of the ports of Ceylon collectively awarded another hundred and fifty *bahars*. King Dharmapala of Kotte had the right to export one hundred *bahars* and the contract excluded the long-standing tribute payment of three hundred *bahars*.⁶¹ There were other exemptions not specifically mentioned in the contract. The Conde de Vidigueira, a descendant of Vasco da Gama was allowed to send hundred and eighty *quintals* to Lisbon annually. By royal orders dated 15th March 1588 and 24th April

58. T. Abeyasinghe, p. 144. This was the time when Sitawaka forces were massing for a final great attack on the Portuguese fort.

59. *Arquivo Historico Ultramarino (AHU)*, Lisbon, Codice, 281, f. 38.

60. *Ibid.*, 281, ff. 73v-74, 111; ANTT, *Corpo Chronologico*, Parte II, Maco, 112, Doc. 51. T. Abeyasinghe, pp. 143-144.

61. *AHU*, Caixa, 6, 10.11.1618.

1595 King Philip had allowed D. Catherina to remove two hundred *quintals* of cinnamon from the island every year.⁶²

De Souza Ronches protested against these numerous exemptions⁶³ but he did not rest content with that. He established control over the import of rice and bartered rice directly with the peelers and in this way was able to obtain a *quintal* of cinnamon at the price of about one *cruzado*. In 1597 he agreed to modify the contract to the advantage of the Crown. On representations made by the first *Vedor da Fazenda* or superintendent of revenue of Ceylon, Jorge Floim de Almeida, de Souza Ronches agreed to sell 15% of all exports above five hundred *bahars* to the Crown and to allow two further exemptions—twelve *bahars* to the factor and six for the writer and other officials of the Customs Department.⁶⁴ As he also seems to have agreed to deliver a minimum of five hundred *bahars* to the Crown he must have expected to export a minimum of three thousand *bahars*.⁶⁵

In the early 1590's it appeared as if the contract system had provided an answer to the problem of organizing the delivery of the maximum quantity of cinnamon to the state at Goa at minimum cost. Deliveries to Lisbon were also reaching record levels. In 1600 six ships unloaded 4508 *quintals* in Lisbon. Three years later four ships were recorded to have brought 3008 *quintals*.⁶⁶ By the early seventeenth century however the contracts system created a new problem. The sudden expansion of production up to around ten thousand *quintals* resulted in the collapse of the market. In the late 1590's cinnamon went a begging at Goa at eight *xerafims* a *quintal*. The value of the cinnamon delivered at cost price to the state fell correspondingly. As Duarte Gomes Solis shrewdly observed, if this was to be the end product of many years of war at great cost in lives and money the Portuguese might well have done better if they paid Rajasinha of Sitawaka a fair price for his cinnamon for at least when the Portuguese bought cinnamon from Sitawaka it had commanded a high price and a ready market.⁶⁷ The only way to secure higher prices was to restrict production drastically. This was advocated quite early in the seventeenth century but another three decades passed before it was effectively enforced.⁶⁸

62. *ANTT Manuscritos do Convento da Graça*, Tomo, 2 E, Caixa, 19, p. 497; *AHU*, Caixa, 12, 1635; T. Abeyasinghe, p. 143; C. R. de Silva, *The Portuguese in Ceylon*, p. 194.

63. *APO*, III, p. 937.

64. *AHU*, Caixa, 6, 10.11.1618. This last concession to the customs officials seems to be an extremely clever move.

65. T. Abeyasinghe, p. 144.

66. N. Steensgaard, p. 166.

67. Duarte Gomes Solis, 'Alegacion en favor de la compania de la India Oriental.... (1628), ed. by Moses B. Amzalak in *Anais do Instituto Superior de Ciencias, Economicas e Financeiras*, XXIII. Lisbon, 1955, pp. 30-32.

68. C. R. de Silva, *The Portuguese in Ceylon*, pp. 194-201.