

FOREIGN TRAVELLERS WHO VISITED THE COURT OF VIJAYNAGAR AND BAHAMANI KINGS

I. Abu Abdullah/Ibn Battuta: Ibn Battuta was one of the great geographers and explorers of the 14th century and his book “Travels of Ibn Battuta” is a treasure trove for anyone wishing to know more about Asian trading routes and hubs of this era and the people and cultures that populated and surrounded them. He was from Morocco, who travel thirty years of his life from North Africa, West Africa, Southern Europe and Eastern Europe in the West, to the Middle East, Indian subcontinent, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and East China. He left an account of Harihara I’s reign in his book Rehla (Tuhfat-un- Nuzzar fi Gharaib UL-Amsar WA Ajaib-UL-Assar).

II. Nicolo Conti, an Italian, was at Vijayanagara in about 1420, just after the accession of Devaraya I. The first known foreign traveller, he mentions the fortifications of the city and the thousands of men employed in the army of the rulers.

III. Althanasius Nikitin: Russian merchant of Tver and one of the first Europeans (after Niccolò de' Conti) to travel to and document his visit to India. He described his trip in a narrative known as The Journey Beyond Three Sea . He visited Bahamani kindoms during the years 1470- to 1474 in the reign of Muhammad Shah III Nikitin studied the population of India, its social system, government, military (he witnessed war-games featuring war elephants), its economy, religion, lifestyles, and natural resources

IV. The next visitor in about 1443 was **Abdul Razzaq**, an envoy of Shah Rukh, the Timurid sultan of Herat. Abdul Razzaq noticed seven rings of ramparts protecting the city, but not all these can be traced today. He also gives details about the ceremonies of the rulers, and the processions of the Mahanavami festival. (Reliefs on the Hazara Rama Temple in the Royal Centre carved about the same time may portray scenes from this festival.) He was a Persian, Timurid chronicler and a scholar who visited the Vijaynagar Kingdom at the time of Dev Raya II as an ambassador of Shah Rukh, the Timurid dynasty ruler of Persia. He gives an account of the reign of Devaraya II in his Matla as Sadain Wa Majma ul Bahrain.

V. Duarte Barbosa: He was Portuguese Writer, Traveller and explorer who had given a vivid account of Vijaynagara governance under Krishna Deva Raya in his book i.e. An Account of Countries Bordering the Indian Ocean and their Inhabitants.

VI. Domingo Paes : The most detailed chronicles of Vijayanagara are those provided by two Portuguese visitors, one a soldier and the other a trader in horses. (The rulers were always in need of horses imported from the Arabian Peninsula. After the Portuguese captured this trade from the Arabs in the early 16th century, Portuguese traders frequently visited the capital.) Domingo Paes was at Vijayanagara in about 1520-22, during the reign of Krishnadevaraya. The visitor gives invaluable information on the walls, gates, streets and markets of the city, as well as the major temples of the city, including the Virupaksha at Hampi, together with its colonnaded

bazaar. Paes describes the Mahanavami festival at some length, beginning with the preparations within the king's palace where ceremonies were held at the House of Victory, all hung with precious cloths. According to Paes, the festival included numerous processions of animals, warriors and courtly women, as well as wrestling matches, fireworks and other entertainments. The climax was the review of the troops that was held at some distance outside the city. The description of the king's palace with which Paes's account concludes seems to apply to Krishnadevaraya's new residence in what is now Hospet.

VII. Fernao Nuniz, a Portuguese horse-trader, composed his account around 1536-37. He was in the capital during the reign of Achyutaraya and may have been present at earlier battles fought by Krishnadevaraya. This visitor was particularly interested in the history of Vijayanagara, especially the foundation of the city, the subsequent careers of three dynasties of rulers, and the battles that they fought with the Deccan sultans and Orissan Rayas. Nunez, too, gives details of the Mahanavami festival, noting admiringly the extravagant jewels worn by the courtly women, as well as the thousands of women in the king's service.

VIII. Cesare Frederici, an Italian traveller who spent seven months at Vijayanagara in 1567, two years after the city was sacked, suggests that the capital was only partly destroyed and that Tirumala of the Aravidu dynasty intended to re-establish the Vijayanagara capital there. This attempt turned out to be unsuccessful and the city was eventually abandoned for good.

IX. After Frederici, no foreign accounts of the city have come down to us until that of Colonel Colin Mackenzie, the Scottish antiquarian who visited Vijayanagara in 1799. Mackenzie's description of the site, accompanied by a watercolour map and views, represent the first modern step to study the ruins.