

Some Important Shipwrecks on Goa Coast

P. Gudigar and Sundaresha

Marine Archaeology Centre
National Institute of Oceanography
Dona Paula, Goa.

Goa being one of the ancient gateways of India, played an important role in the history of maritime activities from the earliest times. Goa is mentioned in the *Geography* of Ptolemy datable to 150 A.D. Two memorial stones depicting naval battle scenes in the archaeological museum at old Goa confirm intense maritime activity during the Kadamba period (11th Century A. D.). The greatest handicap for the Marine Archaeologist in India is the absence of written records about sea voyages, ship building and commercial activities for the period of before 16th century A.D. He has to depend on literary and archaeological evidence. The Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama's arrival at Kapukad, 12 km. north of Calicut on the Malabar coast on the 17th May 1498 is an epoch making date in East - West relations. The route to India via Cape of Good Hope rapidly increased European maritime activities in the Indian Ocean in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Portuguese were successful against the Indians but not against the Dutch, British and French naval power. They had to fight naval battles in the Indian Ocean. It is because of these violent actions that the Indian Ocean is littered today with hundreds of wrecks. Many more were destroyed in severe storm. Other main causes of shipwrecks during the 16th - 19th centuries were reckless overloading, careless caulking, structural crankiness of a vessel and shortage of trained seamen.

The paper deals with some significant ships lost on Goa coast during 16th - 19th century. The main source of information is Portuguese Records from Goa State Archives, Panaji and Marine Records from

Maharashtra State Archives, Bombay. The factors that contributed to the loss of ships are analysed in this paper.

Portuguese conquest of Goa

Francisco de Almeida the first Portuguese Viceroy to India was succeeded by Afonso de Albuquerque (1509-1515), the ablest of the Portuguese conquerors sent out to the East. He conquered not only Goa but also Malacca in 1511 and Ormuz in 1515. In 1510 he captured Goa for its strategic position and commercial importance with the help from Thimoja who was regarded by the Portuguese as a pirate, but who was actually commander of the Vijayanagara fleet on the West coast of India. He met Albuquerque at the port of Mirjan in North Kanara. Albuquerque's fleet of 23 ships with 1200 men entered the River Mandovi on March 1, 1510, and launched a successful attack on the fortress of Panaji. The defenders fled and the victors plundered the fortress of its arms, etc. In the meantime, Thimoja successfully attacked the defences on the northern bank of the river.

Dutch attack over Portuguese

Mohammed Adil Shahi of Bijapur, who had his own grievances against the Portuguese, entered into an alliance with the Dutch against them in 1637. It was agreed the Adil Shahi forces should attack Goa by land while the Dutch would blockade the Goa bar in September 1637. Goa and its neighbouring lands were to belong to the Adil Shahi if successful, and Dutch were to get a place and many privileges in the Kingdom of Bijapur.

The Dutch blockade of the Goa bar was in fact frequent and effective during the years 1636 - 1641. In 1639, they burnt three Portuguese war ships at the Mormugao Harbour. Those were the best warships the Portuguese had. Indeed in the 1630's their losses were heavy. It is estimated that during 1629 - 1635 they lost 1499 men and 155 ships in their confrontation with the Dutch in the East.

Shipwrecks from Portuguese Records

According to archival sources a majority of shipwrecks occurred in the shallow waters mainly due to severe storms, hidden rocky reefs and sand bars. It is said that twelve Portuguese ships which were to go to Calcutta from Goa sank owing to a severe storm near Aguada in 1648. And seven smaller vessels were also lost in Nerul river due to cyclonic wind on 24th April 1648, the loss being estimated at one million xerofins. (Bothelho de Sousa.)

In 1651 A. D. five Portuguese sailing ships namely *St. Helena*, *S. Joan*, *Evangelista*, *St. Francisco*, and *St. Thome* set sail from Portugal to Goa. Only two ships reached Goa Coast and they were also wrecked on 10th March 1651, due to storm. (Comandante Antonio Marques Esparteiro, 1974) Another vessel *S. Cristovam* wrecked in storm when she came back to Goa on 17th August 1594. The nau *Santo Andre* under the command of Brito de Melo, which left Lisbon on 17th February 1607 reached Goa in May 1608 and was lost in bank of Goa (Portuguse Archival Records). During storm two Portuguese vessels namely *Nossa Sra Dos* and *remedios* sunk on the bank of Goa on 28th January 1616. The people were saved from the wreck. However the Captain lost everything that was aboard the ship. (Anees da Marinha Portuguese, Part I).

The tragic story of a British vessel "Brig Champion"

Brig Champion, an East India Company

vessel which was supposed to go to Karachi from Bombay, left Bombay on 30th August 1862. Two days after she left the port, the captain (Newman) fell severely ill. Subsequently Alexander Fraser, who was the second officer of the *Brig Champion* was made the first officer to continue the voyage. On 7th September in Lat. 10.43'N. and Long. 69.22'E. due to severe wind and rough sea the crew refused to work at the pump unless the course of the vessel was changed in order to return to Bombay. The Captain being very ill, the first officer ordered immediately to change the course of vessel, directing her to land in whatever country she might arrive. The vessel reached Aguada (Goa) on 13th September 1662 and immediately sent Captain Newman onshore to Hospital where the physicians pronounced his disease incurable. On the 15th September, same day evening the vessel *Brig Champion* left Port of Nova Goa (Panjim) and while crossing the Aguada sand bar the vessel refused to obey the rudder and was entirely at the mercy of the wind. All efforts of taking her by any course whatever having proved futile, the pilot ordered to anchor the vessel which was at once done, the vessel at the same time touching the bottom. The first officer slipped about 8 to 9 fathoms of cable. In the meantime the Pilot lost courage and commenced praying, without caring for the safety of the vessel, all his attention and energy being apparently directed to lay hold of the ropes of the main mast and supplicating mercy and calling upon the names of all the saints to save him. Viewing the poor old man in this distressed state and having in the meantime little better weather the first officer attempted to get up anchor in order to extricate the vessel from the position in which she was, but all in vain for the vessel continued with redoubled strength to strike on the bar. At 1 A. M. while the side of the vessel was giving way all on board jumped overboard. The crew and passengers finally succeeded by a small boat to reach the shore with the exception of losing only an

individual. On 16th September Alexander Fraser could see nothing of the wrecked Brig Champion except broken timber and planks floating towards the shore. (Marine Records, Vol. 1862).

Results

Under the direction of Dr. S. R. Rao the Marine Archaeology Centre of the National Institute of Oceanography, Goa has explored two shipwreck sites one each at Grandy Island and Ameer Shoal in Goa waters. The Grandy Island wreck was explored in November 1987. It is a steel hulled cargo vessel with cabin, hatch, bridge and accommodation. It is a more than 32 m. long vessel, it might have sunk in a severe

storm after it lost anchor and drifted towards the rocky shore. The Ameer Shoal wreck was discovered in December 1989, in a water depth 3.7 m. Well dressed granite blocks and three cannons are among the cargo. There are two iron anchors also in the wreck.

Acknowledgement

The authors are extremely thankful to Dr. B. N. Desai, Director, NIO, Dr. S. R. Rao, Advisor, Marine Archaeology Centre, and Sri. K. H. Vora, Scientist-in-Charge, Marine Archaeology Centre for encouragement and valuable guidance and permission to publish this paper.

References

1. *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*. Edited by V. T. Gunc (Panaji - 1979) p. 141.
2. *Pissarelencar Fragmento Historica* pp. 64-65.
3. Boxer, C. R. *Portuguese and Dutch Colonial Rivalry 1641 - 1661*. (Lisbon, 1958) pp. 13, 18.
4. Botelho de Sousa. *Subsidios para Historia Militar Maritima da India*. Vol. VI. p. 434.
5. *Tres Seculos no Mar*. Edited by Camandate Antonio Marques Esparteiro (Lisbon. 1974) part. I. p. 93.
6. *Anees da Marinha Portuguesa* part. I.
7. *Anees da Marinha Portuguesa Quatra Marinha*, part. I.
8. *Marine Department (Maharashtra State Archives Bombay)* Vol. 331, comp. No. 14.

**APPROXIMATE POSITIONS OF WRECKS IN GOA WATERS BASED ON NAVAL
HYDROGRAPHIC CHARTS AND MARINE RECORDS IN GOA STATE ARCHIVES.**

Sl. No.	REFERENCE	LOCATION	LAT., LONG	DEPTH	DESCRIPTION	REMARKS
1.	Map No. 2020 Scale 1:25,000	South side of Grandi Oisland	Lat. 15.21' N Long. 73.46' 8E	9m	Marine Archaeology Centre has located this steel hulled boat in 1987. This ship is about 100 years old, half portion is buried in the sediment.	Hull is visible rocky area.
2.	Map No. 2020 Scale 1: 25000	Amee Shoals	Lat. 15.26' N Long. 73.46, 8E	4m	Marine Archaeology centre of NI located the wreck in 1988. The main cargo is granite blocks; a few cannons were also noticed in the wreck	Hull is visible rocky area
3.	Map No. 2020 Scale. 1:25000	Amee shals	Lat. 15.26' 1" N Long. 78.46, 8E	4m	Wrecked in rocky area	Hull is not visible
4.	Map No. 202 Scale 1:25000	Amee shola	Lat. 15.26'9"N Long. 73.46' 5"E	8m	Wrecked in shallow waters (rocky bottom)	Hull is not visible
5.	Map No 2020 Scale 1:25000	Amee Shoals	Lat. 15.25'8"N Long 73.46'8"E	5m	Wrecked in rocky area of Amee Shoals.	Hull is not visible
6.	Map No. 2020 Scale 1.25000	Amee Shoals	Lat. 15.25'8"N Long 73.468"E	5.5m	Wrecked in rocky area of Amee SHoals	Hull is not Visible
7.	Map No. 2020 Scale 1:25000	Amee Shoals	Lat.15.26'1"N Long.73.47E	3m	Wrecked in shipwreck Zone Amee shoals	Hull is visible
8.	Map No. 2020 Scale 1:25000	Chitkolna Bay Vascoda Gama	Lat.15.22'9N Long.73.48'3"	3m	Wrecked in shallow waters near Bimpade	Hull is not Visible

Sl. No.	REFERENCE	LOCATION	LAT., LONG	DEPTH	DESCRIPTION	REMARKS
9.	Map No. 2020 Scale 1:25000	Off Marmugao head	Lat. 15.24'2"N Long. 73.46'8" E	8m	wrecked near Marmugao head about 350m from the shore	Hull is not visible
10.	Map No. 2020 Scale 1:25000	Off Mirmugao head	Lat. 15.24' 4N Long.73.45'4"E	13m	wrecked near Marmugao harbour about 3.5 Km	Hull is not visible
11.	Map No. 2020 Scale 1:25000	At break waters Marmugao harbour	Lat.15.24'9"N Long. 73.47'4"E	9m	wrecked about 250m. from the shore and very close to break waters (Mamagao harbour)	Hull is not visible
12.	Map No. 2020 Scale 1:25000	Vasco bay	Lat. 15.24'1"N Long. 73.48'7"E	2m	wrecked in shallow waters very close to Vasco city about 100 meters from the shore	Hull is visible
13.	Map No. 2020 Scale 1:25000	Aguada bay (Caranzalem)	Lat. 15.28'4" Lat.73.47'8" E	5m	wreked in caranzalem bay about 1.25 KM. from shore	Hull is visible
14.	Map No 2020 Scale 1:25000	Aquada bay	Lat. 15.29'2"N Long.73.47'8"E	4m	May be Brig Champion which was wrecked in while crossing the sand bar near Aguada	Hull is visible
15.	Map No. 2020 Scale 1:25000	Aguada bay	Lat. 15.29'2"N Lat. 73.47'4"E	3m	wrecked near sand bar (Aguada bay)	Hull is visible
16.	Map No. 2020 Scale 1:25000	Calanguta beach	Lat. 15.31'5"N Long.73.45'5"E	4m	wrecked very close to Candolim beach about 250, from shore	Hull is visible
17.	Map No. 2020 Scale 1:25000	Zuari river	Lat. 15.24'8"N Long.73.50'3"E	2m	wrecked in shallow waters	Hull is visible

APPROXIMATE POSITIONS OF WRECKS IN GOA WATERS
BASED ON NAVAL HYDROGRAPHIC CHART
AND MARINE RECORDS IN GOA STATE ARCHIVES

